

Back and Forth Cost Estimates, Breastfeeding and Turnaround Strategies

Positions of Our Generation

05.10.–20.11.2023, Gallery

Opening: Wed 04.10.2023, 18:00

Press conference: Wed 04.10.2023, 11:00

The exhibition “Back and Forth Cost Estimates, Breastfeeding and Turnaround Strategies” brings together the most pressing questions, positions, and demands of young architects in Austria. The challenges are great: actively helping to shape the construction turnaround, creating fairer work structures, and widening one’s own radius of action through changed basic conditions.

“Back and Forth Cost Estimates, Breastfeeding and Turnaround Strategies” is a snapshot of a generation of young architects who, despite multiple crises, are acting with tactical optimism. In the middle of crucial challenges – the climate crisis, rising construction and rental costs, buildings as speculative objects, and limited scopes for action – they are setting up their own practices. They want to work in fair work structures and cooperatively for a socially responsible construction turnaround. The exhibition title builds the framework for a comprehensive, collectively curated mapping that gathers positions and asks questions to open spaces for discussion. At the same time, the exhibition temporarily expands the Az W’s display collection Hot Questions – Cold Storage to include the perspectives of the latest generation.

“We make up just a small fraction of the many young architects. We cannot speak for the entire generation. But we can point out trends and reveal our pressing questions, demands, and already tested practices in this mapping and invite criticism and expansion,” says the curatorial team that developed the exhibition in a collective process with 60 participating architects.

Subject Areas of the Exhibition

The exhibition at the Architekturzentrum Wien is divided into seven subject areas. They show and collect the concerns that were frequently mentioned or are particularly relevant in the joint workshops, interviews, and discussions. Comments and extensions by visitors are welcome.

Of Starting and (Not) Failing: What motivates young architects to set up their own practice? And what are the problems they face? – With conviction, prospective architects open a wide range of activity fields, away from the classically conveyed image of the newly building male architect. Creative project acquisition and cooperative work structures are required here.

Architecture-Life-Balance: How can we design fair(er) work structures? – In dialogues, the architect JUL shares practical experiences straight from the shoulder. The discussions make it clear that a healthy daily working routine with quality standards is often not present in architectural production, but that it could be arranged.

Exclusivity//Diversity: Who actually designs the space and for whom is it designed (or not)? – Accessibility to the profession, as well as access to affordable and high-quality (living) space, must be made fairer. The current, incomplete state of research on equal opportunities and participation shows that the architectural field still has a lot of necessary work to do.

Carrying Along Instead of Tearing Down: Are we still allowed to build (ew) in times of the climate crisis? – Away from new construction and towards refurbishing, reorganizing, repairing, converting, and maintaining, but this requires changed framework conditions. Demands of young architects show the urgency of a social and climate-friendly restructuring of architectural production.

Form Gangs and Spread Seed Bombs! How do we band together to expand our scope of action? – To make structural changes happen, many colleagues have to join forces and form stronger networks. An organized consolidation could help allies gain more political effectiveness.

Phase 0 and Phase 10 – Circular Planning as the Key to the Construction Turnaround: What does the planning process have to look like to be able to pursue social and ecological concerns? – Participatory needs assessments and critical usage analyses are necessary to bring planning processes into a holistically conceived cycle in the future and to be able to design the built environment in a more needs-oriented and prudent manner.

Tactical Optimism: With which practices can we maintain our socially fair and climate-conscious attitude and produce architecture that corresponds to it? – Exemplary projects show how young architects keep up their optimistic drive through various strategies. A look behind the facades and in work processes shows how playfully they are working on a livable future.

Collective Process

A total of 60 young architects who are setting up their practices in Austria and neighboring countries were involved in the preparatory work for the exhibition. 34 of them came together in spring 2023 for workshops in Linz, Dornbirn, and Graz. Several from this group and 26 others were also asked about their concerns in 2022 by the two initiators Ella Felber and Silvester Kreil in the nextroom interview series “Young Architects Locate Themselves.” Eight of these 60 young architects form the zkmb core team: Solveig Furu Almo, Ella Felber, Anna Firak, Silvester Kreil, Lukas Pankraz Mähr, Natascha Peinsipp, Theresa Reisenhofer, and Felix Steinhoff. They made sure that the workshop series and the exhibition could take place.

Exhibition Design

The wood from the previous exhibition, Yasmeen Lari: Architecture for the Future, was visibly reused and transformed into an expansive structure with just two new cuts. Freed from the walls, visitors can move through the three-dimensional mapping. The Lari furnishings once again invite visitors to linger and discuss. Cross-references on the floor create connections into the display collection as well, and show that some of the demands formulated in the exhibition have existed for a long time.

Blank spaces were deliberately left in the exhibition design because this mapping should continue to grow through comments from visitors. Once a week there is also the opportunity to talk directly to the curators and exchange ideas. As a closing event, there will be a full-day workshop for interested people on November 18, in which the comments of the visitors will be taken up. The exhibition does not want to be an endpoint, but rather a prelude.

zkmb core team (curators and design): Solveig Furu Almo, Ella Felber, Anna Firak, Silvester Kreil, Lukas Pankraz Mähr, Natascha Peinsipp, Theresa Reisenhofer, and Felix Steinhoff

Exhibition graphics: Stella Kucher

Project coordination: zkmb core team and Katharina Ritter

The press release, as well as high-resolution press photos, are available free of charge for download at www.azw.at/press.

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