



**Img. 01** Stillshot from Ariella Aisha Azoulay, *Un-Documented - Un-learning Imperial Plunder*, 2019.

## **2050: Can we afford the Museum?**

Museums have been and are still denounced to be complicit in colonization and imperial dominations. Museums are instrumental in the production of national, cultural and historical narratives which play a fundamental role in the naturalization of systemic inequalities, racism and colonial legacies. Looted objects are widely overrepresented in museum collections, while many other museums hold artifacts that have been bought by private collectors whose fortune has been built on extractivism, exploitation, and/or colonization. Far from preserving, or conserving objects and artifacts, museums were an essential piece of legitimation of a systematic destruction of culture and knowledge worlds that has been coined as epistemicide—destruction, silencing, annihilation, or devaluing of a knowledge system.

Many institutions addressed these colonial legacies and present and developed strategies to decolonize their museums and collections, while scholars and activists ask us: postcolonial museum, museum without objects, or no museum at all?

We'll scrutinize museums as complicit in colonization, prompting redesigns for postcolonial, anticolonial, or decolonial relations with their collections. We'll imagine institutions, societies and their architecture "at the end of the World," following the invitation of Denise Ferreira da Silva to imagine the end of this World, rejecting linear histories and calling for solidarity in dismantling oppressive systems, reevaluating our relationship with nature amidst environmental collapse.

In the context of the extreme urban pressure Europe and Switzerland are and will be facing in 2050, museums represent a highly significant and strategic building stock, for many in the city centers and possessing green spaces. However, they are rarely integrated within everyday life of inhabitants, as they are highly specialized, monofunctional, and unevenly accessible. Combined with the structural issues faced by these institutions, will museums be obsolete in 2050?

Questioning the role and the futurities of museums will allow us to unlearn and rethink museums' purposes, the naturalized presence of looted objects, and the spatial dispositives of museal narratives. Our focus on sustainability and heritage in institutional and architectural practices thrives toward futures in which museums shift their focus away from object acquisitions and possession, inspiring positive, innovative solutions as we address pivotal questions in our journey.

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Chair of Architecture Heritage and  
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### **Critical questions**

- How to denaturalize the uneven access to objects, knowledge, and the production of memories and histories?
- How to deal with (colonial) pasts and their violent histories, and which traces to keep of them?
- What are the roles of the museums in the anticolonial, antiracist and decolonial futures?
- How to think spaces for restitution, conciliation, memory reconstruction, repair and what is beyond repair?
- What are the futurities of museums at the End of the World?
- In which way these futures could be designed in the present?

### **Schedule**

#### **Unit I - Research Phase**

In the first three weeks, we want the students to step back and define their own understanding and position in relation to the topic of the master thesis. The aim is to formulate a position that refers to the current debate on museums and colonial studies.

#### **Unit II - Reprogramming and Spatial Strategy**

During this phase you will choose a site, develop a spatial strategy and a programme. You will prioritize architectural design that acknowledges complexity and social responsibility. Emphasizing sustainability, it aims to uncover architectural techniques and implement knowledge and technologies toward sustainable futures. Addressing decolonization, social vulnerabilities, memory policies, and intersectional sustainability, it seeks design solutions aligned with local contexts.

#### **Unit III - Materializing and Constructing a Sustainable Transformation**

The design process aims to refine conceptual positions for a balanced solution. It involves intensively developing architectural expressions, particularly focusing on building structure and assembly. The detailed exploration aligns projects with specific climates, resources, knowledge systems, and building traditions. Material choices and construction methods strengthen conceptual ideas guiding programmatic and spatial strategies.

### **Criteria of evaluation**

**Research and Critical Thinking**

**Media, Projections and Representation**

**Intersectional Sustainability**

**Architectural Heritage**

**Design**

**Communication & Collaboration**

**Reflexivity, Engagement and Consistency**

### **Ratio of grading by cooperation partners for both, preparation and elaboration phase**

Percentage design chair: 50%

Percentage history of art and architecture chair: 50%