

Core Program Master-Thesis HS 2024: Topic description

Cooperation Partner 1: Prof. Adam Caruso

Cooperation Partner 2: Chair of Being Alive, Stefan Breit, Teresa Galí-Izard

Cooperation Partner 3 (optional):

Picture (optional):



Inferno (detail), chalk on masonite, 242 × 1219 cm, Tacita Dean, 2019

Title and short description (ca. 300 words):

Switzerland at a crossroads

Control of the mountain passes is a historic source of Switzerland's wealth and a powerful part of its national mythology. The passes were like switches that enabled individual cantons, and the whole federation, to be transformed from a fortress in the middle of Europe to a crossroads and marketplace at its centre. The passes were not only conduits for goods and services but have historically provided routes of migration between cantons and from beyond. Today with the main business of exchange displaced to tunnels deep within the mountains, the passes have become liberated, becoming places that encourage the informal, the peripheral and the uneconomic. It might not be easy to gain a foothold at 2000 metres, but there is a lot of air, stone, and sky there. With rising temperatures and receding icefields, the passes will become more accessible and habitable. In response to the diploma's overarching question of 'how will we live together', our focus will be on those places away

from the density of the centre that are necessary for society to be sustained and at ease with itself.

The semester will start with a series of close readings of the living systems such as geology, vegetation, climate, and water of the Klausenpass, the things that make the atmosphere of the place and the material for future interventions. At 1948 metres the pass is where the cantons of Glarus and Uri meet. We will study and map the social and the historical, finding out who inhabited the pass before the walkers, bikers, soldiers, and maintenance crews that one meets there today. With cartographies, handbooks, and chronicles we will go on to design intimate settlements, newly constructed places that with buildings and gardens provide a space for contemplation, assembly, and quiet industry in this special place at the top of Europe.

Description of preparation and elaboration phase in key-words:

Work to be done in preparation phase: teaching formats (crits, seminars, lectures; individual, group work, ...), inputs (lectures, visits, ...), research and working formats (literature review, archival research, lab work, site survey or analysis, experiments, ...), expected outcome (ca. 300 words):

Preparation phase:

-learn how to do field work and compile a site journal while being a naturalist and an observer.

-production of surveys, studies, drawings, and maps that describe the human conditions, history of the Klausenpass, and the material resources present on the site.

Elaboration phase:

-development of small settlements based on the site, material and social knowledge of the research phase.

Ratio of grading by cooperation partners for preparation and elaboration phase:

Preparation phase:

Percentage designer(s): 50

Percentage non-designer: 50

Elaboration phase:

Percentage designer(s): 50

Percentage non-designer: 50



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Diploma, HS 2024, ETH Zürich

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