Architecture as a Mirror to the World

"Everything that is completed ceases to be the dwelling of our spirit."
Max Frisch, *Das erste Haus. Notizen eines Architekten*

The Department of Architecture D-ARCH at ETH Zurich offers a holistic architectural education that understands design and construction as a reflection of constant transformation. Thanks to an outstanding environment, we are able not only to provide solutions to the challenges of our age, but to implement these in the physical world. Architecture is the medium by which we translate expanding knowledge and opportunities into a principle of decisive, anticipatory action and communication. We work tirelessly to reach our goals both in the present and the future.

The starting point for all of our decisions is the benchmark of excellence, paired with a culture of facilitation that also allows for original currents of thought to which present-day standards do not apply. Here it is our professors, our non-tenured staff, and the students themselves who test the "tools" – the processes, materials, constructions, historical and theoretical deliberations, as well as the mind-set that determines our actions – and are prepared to constantly redefine the framework in which architecture is created. An open discussion concerning not only the defined fundamentals and fields of knowledge but also
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the integration and intuitive handling of the non-quantifiable dimensions of architecture are the essential components that make up our department’s practical and intellectual culture.

building upon the ETH’s tradition of research and discovery, today’s students design and construct our world of tomorrow, based on the teaching and research conducted at our seventeen independent chairs and in the Institutes for the History and Theory of Architecture (gta), Technology in Architecture (ITA), Historic Building Research and Conservation (IDB) as well as the Network City and Landscape with its institutes for Urban Design (ISB), Landscape Architecture (ILA), and the Contemporary City Institute (ETH Studio Basel). Competition is the mainspring for developing and, together with our partners and stakeholders, testing innovative solutions – in Zurich at the Hönggerberg campus, in Oerlikon, at the ETH Studio Basel, at the Future Cities Laboratory FCL in Singapore, or in any of the other places the ETH calls home.

the nearly 2000 students from Switzerland and all over the world seeking a holistic education at the D-ARCH can choose from our offerings in the bachelor and/or master programmes as well as our doctorate and continuing education programmes. Our offerings are supported by an outstanding, globally unique teaching and research infrastructure which includes, for example, the gta Archives, the Werner Oechslin Library, and the Material Collection as well as the laboratories, workshops, and studios in which architecture is experienced.

the D-ARCH takes seriously its responsibilities vis-à-vis society. The manifold challenges with which we are daily confronted, such as climate change, scarcity of raw materials, massive urbanization, the asymmetrical balance between rich and poor, as well as less familiar phenomena which we are exploring, such as new media, big data, digital fabrication, or the ethical and political aspects of our built environment, are integrated into our approaches to solving problems for architecture, cities, and landscapes. This liberating task requires not only great ability, but also empathy and sensibility in a world in which the top-down master plans of the past collide with deeper understanding of bottom-up
processes and constantly redefined realities requiring our scrutiny as well as our intervention.

I trust that the new generation of students – together with their professors – will clear a new path for architecture in which others are sure to follow. Only thus can the D-ARCH's 159-year tradition continue to develop in light of socio-cultural changes while putting itself to the test – always open to new ideas, always looking beyond restrictive boundaries, and always prepared to swim against the current.

Hubert Klumpner
Dean of the Department of Architecture