

# Unit 3: Monumentum

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*Unit 3 is fascinated by exquisite making, the craft of drawing, and hyper-contextual projects with the thrill of the unexpected. This year we travel to Sir John Soane's country retreat in west London, a site of constant renewal which Soane used as a testing ground for ideas and an archive of architectural fragments. We will expand these functions and redefine the physical and social meaning of memorial as something which can adapt and change through time. Then for our major project we will create a contemporary archive – a place offering physical access to preservation of time, culture and information.*

*Students will be presented with experimental workshops to nurture and inspire making as a process. There will be a healthy exchange between physical and digital models, to build an understanding of the interfaces between building components and their performance over time.*

## Monumentum

In 1980, the Einstein Tomb project was created by Lebbeus Wood to celebrate the life and work of Albert Einstein, a symbolic structure in the same spirit as Boullee's Cenotaph to Isaac Newton.

Because the self-effacing Einstein had explicitly stated that after his death he wanted no such memorial as a site of veneration, Lebbeus Wood designed it to be launched into deep space, traveling on a beam of light, never to be seen in terrestrial space and time.

As an architect we design our building to withstand the test of time and we hope that the building will stay intact throughout its lifetime and will continue its existence beyond ours. We are interested in a *cause*

*célèbre* whereby an incident creates widespread controversy and public debate progressing into a social reform as in the case of Stephen Lawrence.

This year we will explore the theme of *monumentum*; not only as a memorial to an individual life but as a place for celebration and preservation of our present culture and time. These themes will be explored through the typology of 'memorial' and 'archive', engaging with life's agonies and ecstasies while fantasising about the continuous renewal of existence.

Our site will be Pitzhanger Manor and the adjacent Walpole Park. This site presents a raft of spatial opportunities and the opportunity to engage with Soane's preoccupation of memory and memorial. As a unit, we will design memorial architecture that retains the ability to change through time with a flexibility of programme and meaning.

#### Project01:

As an introduction to the unit theme, we will start the year with a short 5 week project.

Each student will design a memorial space by determining an appropriate way to celebrate a protagonist, event or process. This should be combined with appropriate temporal and spatial qualities derived from a fragment of the text accompanying Lebbeus Woods' Einstein Tomb project.

In project01, each student will make a 1:10 spatial concept model (approx. 50x50x50cm) to express the physical size, movement, material and the perception of their environment through interaction.

Inspired by follies and eccentric homes and shrines, these concept models will develop into a memorial space which will be placed within the former site of John Soane's colonnade. Soane's houses became a physical aggregation of curiosity and discovery, and in the same spirit we will bring new protagonists and spatial devices to Pitzhanger Manor.

#### Project02:

Using memorial as a point of departure, we will slingshot into a major project programme of *archive* proposing an alternative future for the site of Pitzhanger Manor Gallery. The archive should relate to Project01, taking elements from its function, theme and construction to extrapolate into a more complex programme.

Year 2 students will revisit the function of the site between 1902 and 1984 by concentrating particularly on the typology of 'library'. This could, for example, be a material of printed matter, in protest at the current cuts to libraries, or of film, with reference to the nearby Ealing Studios. It is essential that these projects reinterpret the library for a contemporary context, where in response to digitisation many have begun to incorporate other public facilities such as makerspaces to maintain their relevance.

Year 3 students are invited to more broadly address the typology of 'archive'. This could house architectural materials and fragments, as Soane assembled at his own house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, or biological material in the manner of a seed bank. These projects will have a more explicit programme of public engagement, needing to demonstrate how the subject of their memorial can be resurrected in spirit. A deeper analysis of historical construction, physical conditions, and wider context is required, and with sufficient justification these projects may be proposed for alternative sites in the surrounding grounds.