



From Postmodernism
Into the Digital Age

Beginnings

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Postmodernism was at its peak and the IBA Berlin (1978–1987) became the first International Building Exhibition dedicated not only to new constructions, but also to conscious urban renewal and public participation. Against this backdrop, Aedes Architecture Forum opened in 1980 in a forty-square-metre gallery space on Grolmannstraße 51 in Berlin-Charlottenburg.

The journalist Kristin Feireiss, who had been working at the International Design Center Berlin (IDZ), and Helga Retzer (†1984), who was active at the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), were neither architects nor regularly engaged with the subject of architecture in practical or theoretical terms when they founded Aedes. Their respective institutions only sporadically touched upon the topic of the built environment. In founding Aedes, both women were merely following their intuition that engaging in a discussion of architecture and urban space as important facets of everyday life with a broader public was a worthwhile endeavour: an open dialogue that would reflect changing societal conditions independent of questions of style and, most importantly, beyond expert discourses. Looking back on decades of successful programming since its inception, Aedes itself has become an integral part of contemporary international architectural history. While historically, major museums have periodically presented exhibitions on architecture within broader cultural programmes, Aedes was the first public cultural space of its kind worldwide to instigate a continuous debate dedicated to the subject.

Under the co-direction of Kristin Feireiss and Hans-Jürgen Commerell since 1994, Aedes has developed a management structure as pioneering as its programme. Today spanning across approximately 600 square metres of exhibition, event and office spaces, Aedes has remained an independent institution for contemporary architecture, urban design and related topics without public funding. By mapping a financially autonomous course, Kristin Feireiss and Hans-Jürgen Commerell have had the freedom to pursue their curatorial practice, the development of new formats and the expansion of their network outside of mainstream tendencies. Driven by the cutting edge, best practices and visionary concepts from around the world, Aedes has presented the avant-garde, established luminaries and young talents in the field of architecture in over 500 exhibitions and counting, continually seeking, above all else, fresh ideas.



Helga Retzer, Kristin Feireiss, Grolmanstraße, 1980



First exhibition at Aedes: Peter and Alison Smithson, Grolmanstraße, 1980



Kristin Feireiss in installation by Hans Dieter Schaal, Grolmanstraße, 1982

Aedes Venues

Reflecting its aim to reach a wider public, Aedes' exhibition spaces have been situated near Berlin's city centre and have always maintained free entry. The expansion of the Aedes 'universe' over time was dynamic. In addition to first relocating to the S-Bahnbögen at Savignyplatz in 1988, then to the Hackesche Höfe in 1995 and Pfefferberg in 2006, Aedes' influence already transcended the borders of Berlin and Germany soon after its founding. Aedes also significantly shaped the development of the neighbourhood surrounding its present location in the former industrial complex at Pfefferberg in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg, which has since become home to the studios of artists such as Ai Weiwei and Ólafur Elíasson as well as the Tchoban Foundation. Museum for Architectural Drawing and the ICI Berlin (Institute for Cultural Inquiry) – each with its own extensive networks of global impact. Adding to Aedes Architecture Forum's two exhibition spaces, the Aedes Network Campus Berlin, ANCB The Aedes Metropolitan Laboratory moved into the neighbouring building in 2009. Beyond Berlin, Aedes opened temporary branches in Vienna from 1992 to 1993 and in Barcelona in 2004.



Aedes West at Savignyplatz



Public opening event at Aedes Pfefferberg



1980–1988

Aedes Grolmanstraße



1988–2009

Aedes Savignyplatz



1995–2006

Aedes Hackesche Höfe



2006–2020+

Aedes Pfefferberg

Aedes Exhibitions

With every exhibition, Aedes tries to develop new strategies and methods for presenting architecture to serve both a cultural and a societal dialogue. Exhibitions are no substitute for reality. They have to communicate complex subjects and the public's cooperation is needed. Each show not only has to provide information, it has to stimulate a lively discourse on architectural design and urban development by confronting, provoking and entertaining. A successful presentation requires a skilful combination of both: information and enjoyment using different kinds of media. Presenting architecture as a thought process rather than a singular framed art-piece has been Kristin Feireiss' approach in the performance of the exhibitions at Aedes. From the very beginning, all sketches, drawings or photographs have been kept between large sandwiched glass panels leaning on the gallery's walls to emphasise the processual course and workshop character of spatial design.



Exhibition: Urban Projects, Zaha Hadid, Hackesche Höfe, 2000



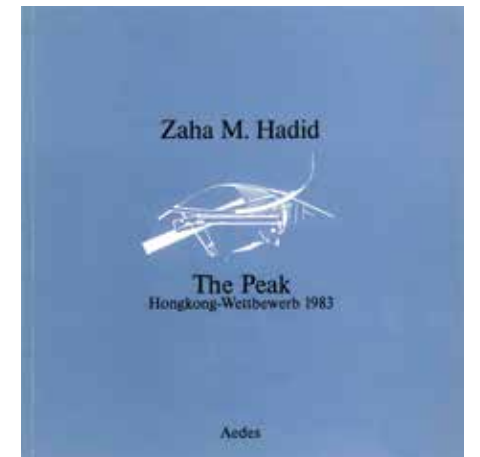
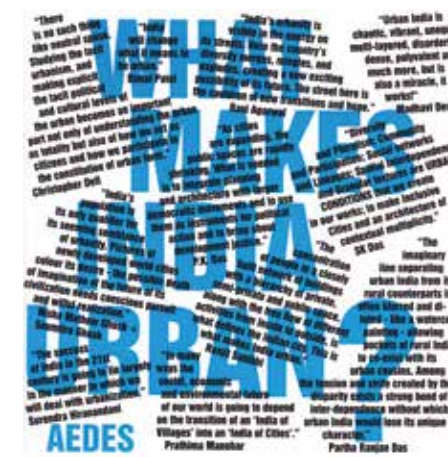
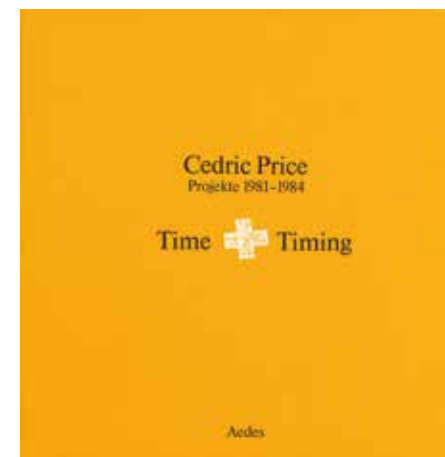
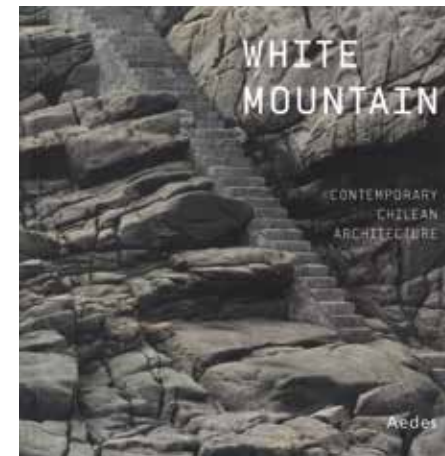
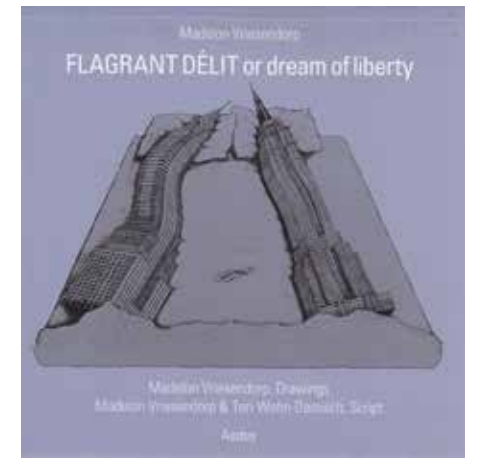
Exhibition: The Shed, Diller Scofidio + Renfro Pfefferberg, 2017



Exhibition: Instituto Óscar Domínguez de Arte y Cultura Contemporánea, Herzog & de Meuron, Hackesche Höfe, 2003

Aedes Catalogues

Accompanying most of the exhibitions, Aedes publishes a small square-format catalogue that has become an iconic trademark of the architecture forum since its opening days. Designed as a conceptual part of the programme by the acknowledged Berlin graphic design team Ott+Stein, it was the first publication for many young architects, while for the already established ones it has become a 'must have'. The first catalogue was published for the exhibition *In Memoriam Kongresshalle Berlin* in 1980, which was printed in a second edition because of its success. That same year, the square booklets accompanied shows on the works of Peter Cook and Christine Hawley as well as on OMA's proposals for Rotterdam, followed by many others. In 1984, Zaha Hadid had her first international publication with an Aedes catalogue for the *Hong Kong Peak* exhibition. In the past four decades, more than 450 titles have been published, some of which have reached the status of collector's items.



Funding

Since the founding of Aedes to the present, hardly any public cultural support programmes have allocated financial support to architectural culture. As a result, Kristin Feireiss and Hans-Jürgen Commerell have fully embraced entrepreneurial and innovative funding paths, as well as the associated risks. Each project has to be realised individually through project-specific sponsorship or funding. For monographic exhibitions on architecture, sponsorship mostly comes from project partners, predominantly the construction industry. Financing for more thematically complex programmes is achieved through individual applications for funding from foundations or other sponsors. Businesses have become close cooperation partners through long-term commitments to support the work of Aedes as a leading international cultural entity, to jointly promote the amplification and dissemination of discourse on architectural culture and to create a broader awareness for the design of contemporary living environments. These international companies have coactively addressed questions surrounding the development of the built environment, mobility concepts, and living and working scenarios.



Hans-Jürgen Commerell and Kristin Feireiss

International Dialogue

Aedes has been a critical conduit in fostering the international dialogue on manifold subjects regarding the urban environment, space and society. In creating an experiential cultural space in which the communication of architecture and urban/building culture could evolve into a genre of its own, Aedes developed new thinking spaces, curatorial concepts, techniques and formats for its mediation and discourse. The platform has become a reference point for innovative public educational formats for international museums, local architecture centres and cultural institutions from various fields. Aedes has established an international network of impressive depth and reach, which is shaped by the diversity of the presented ideas, strategies and designs. Together, these reflect an architectural, urban and cultural history of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The critical examination of established and speculative concepts of city, periphery, countryside and architecture is a core objective of Aedes Architecture Forum.



Exhibition and workshop with the city of São Paulo, Pfefferberg, 2010



Aedes conference in Songyang, rural China, 2018, Remy Sietchiping, Wang Jun, Hu Haifeng

Aedes and Berlin

The peak of Postmodernism shaped the 1980s, which the aforementioned International Building Exhibition IBA Berlin reflected. Aedes acted as a critical counterweight to the IBA, in part by providing architects, who had no or very little perception, with a compelling space to present their positions. In this context, a young Zaha Hadid, virtually unknown at the time, showed her first exhibition at Aedes. Architects and offices such as Venturi Scott Brown, Cedric Price, John Hejduk, OMA (Office for Metropolitan Architecture), Peter and Alison Smithson, and Bernard Tschumi also presented their architectural and urban ideas and designs at Aedes. The culmination of the first decade of Aedes came in the form of two major exhibitions: *Berlin – Denkmal oder Denkmodell?*, part of 'Berlin Kulturhauptstadt Europas' 1988 commissioned by the Berlin Senate, and *Paris: Architecture et Utopie 1989*, commissioned by Jacques Chirac, then mayor of Paris. The exhibitions took place at the Kunsthalle Berlin and the Pavillon de l'Arsenal, with contributions by international avant-garde architects. As a topic of critical concern, the urban landscape of Berlin continues to inform exhibitions and discourses at Aedes, such as the development of the GSW high-rise on Kochstraße; Alexanderplatz (1993) and Moabiter Werder (1995) competitions; alternative counter-designs for the Berlin Palace in Catherine Feff's mock-up palace (1993/94); the proposed *Central Park Berlin* by Christoph Ingenhoven (2001); and most recently, the petition to save the 'Mouse Bunker' and Hygiene-Institute buildings (2020).



Aedes catalogue



Philip Johnson at the exhibition on the in 1992 heavily discussed GSW high-rise tower for Berlin by Sauerbruch Hutton Architects



Exhibition: Central Park Berlin, Christoph Ingenhoven, Savignyplatz, 2001

Aedes and the World

In striving to exhibit and discuss exciting examples of architecture and urban development from around the world in Berlin, the new and unique platform provided by Aedes in turn became an important international barometer for sophisticated design, planning and building culture. The 1988 exhibition *Berlin – Denkmal oder Denkmodell?* curated by Kristin Feireiss was subsequently shown in Paris, followed by Bern and the Eastern European cities of Krakow, Kiev and Moscow. Kristin Feireiss went on to develop exhibitions for the Kunsthalle Hamburg, the Deutsches Architekturmuseum (DAM) in Frankfurt, the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and the Centre Pompidou in Paris. In recognition of her expertise, the growing reputation of Aedes and its expanding global network, the Ministry of Culture of the Netherlands named Kristin Feireiss Director of the Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAi) in Rotterdam in 1996, the largest museum for architecture worldwide at the time.



The Siza Pavilion for Camerich at Shanghai Furniture Fair, 2019, initiated and moderated by Aedes including accompanying symposium



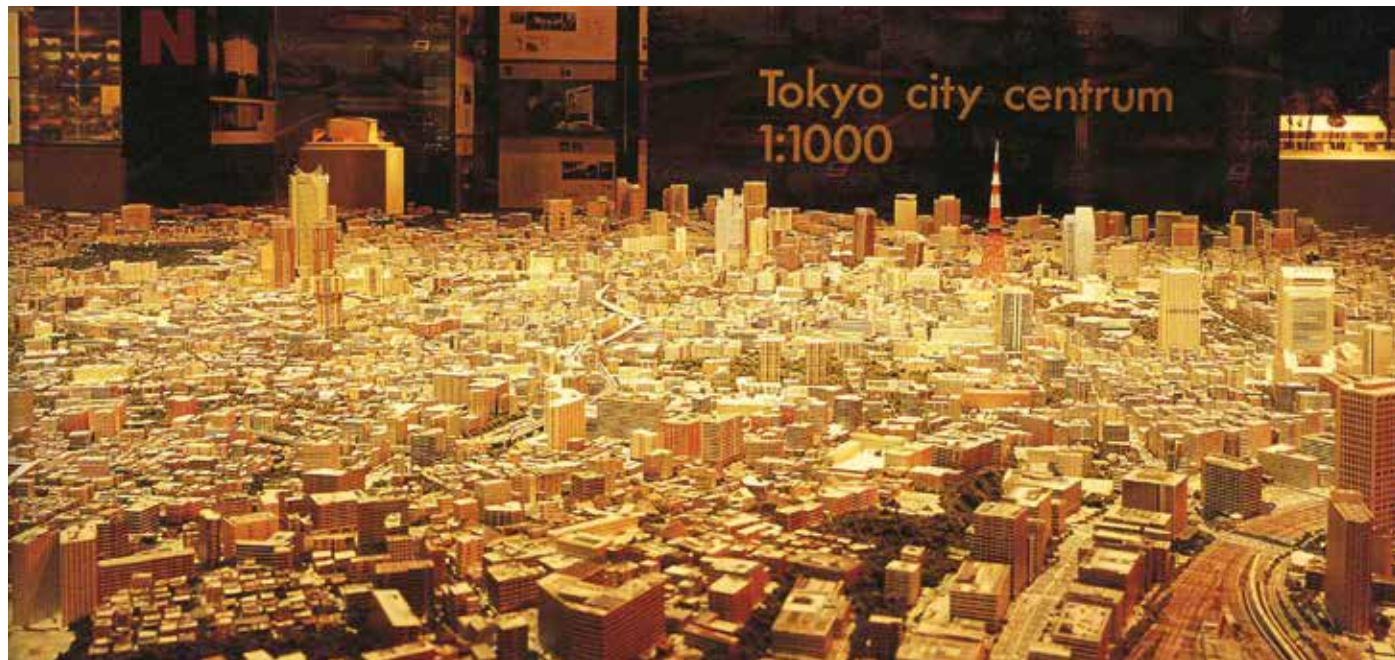
Exhibition: Made in Germany – Architecture + Ecology, touring through 80 locations around the world



Aedes is guest of '2004 Cultural Year' in Barcelona with four exhibitions

Kristin Feireiss and the Netherlands Architecture Institute, NAI

During her tenure as Director of the NAI from 1996 until 2001, Kristin Feireiss introduced important topics to the social discourse on architecture that significantly strengthened the museum's international standing. She introduced the NAI and its programme to a wider public and redefined the cultural and curatorial parameters of the organisation with exhibitions about architecture and spatial development in post-apartheid South Africa; the relations between city, periphery und countryside in Japan; and the significance of sports stadiums in the city as well as through her contribution as commissioner of the Dutch Pavilion at the International Architecture Biennale in Venice, among many other important exhibitions. Large-scale and spatially experimental exhibitions spawned new communication formats with a broad public impact and inspired architecture museums and institutions around the world.



Exhibition: Japan. Towards Totalscape, NAI



Kristin Feireiss at her office at NAI



Publication: The Art of Architecture Exhibitions, NAI

Aedes and Hans-Jürgen Commerell

While Kristin Feireiss introduced local, national and global themes of urbanism and architecture to the agenda in the Netherlands, Hans-Jürgen Commerell was diversifying the programme of Aedes back in Berlin. Around the turn of the millennium, Aedes opened Europe's view towards China and Asia. While Europe and the Western world went to China in pursuit of architectural missions, Hans-Jürgen Commerell asked questions about the state and identity of Chinese architecture itself, thus fostering a discourse on the spatial production and architectural identity of China's avant-garde since 2001. Exhibitions looking at Asia, such as *Smart City: The Next Generation. Focus South-East Asia, What Makes India Urban?* or *Water – Curse or Blessing!?* also broadened the western perspective on common challenges of urbanisation. In 2012 Commerell conducted the collaboration with the BMW Guggenheim Lab from Aedes' side.

Another focus was corporate architecture, which was presented in exhibitions e.g. on the *DZ Bank* by Frank Gehry, the competitions for *BMW Welt* and *Mercedes-Benz-Museum*, and the architectural strategy of Louis Vuitton. Apart from monographic exhibitions, the view also turned to the city as a social, cultural and political habitat: urban strategies of major global cities from Mexico City to Hong Kong have been and are continuously presented at Aedes.



Aedes catalogue



Aedes catalogue

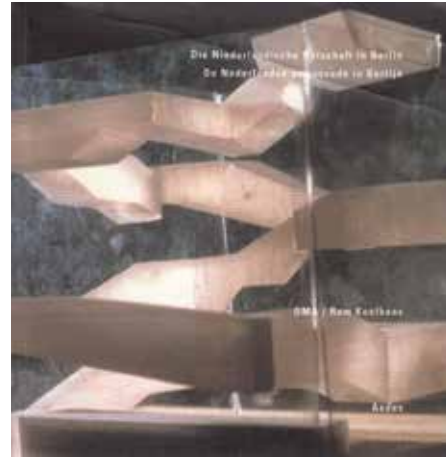


Collaboration between BMW Guggenheim Lab and Aedes next to ANCB at Pfefferberg, 2012

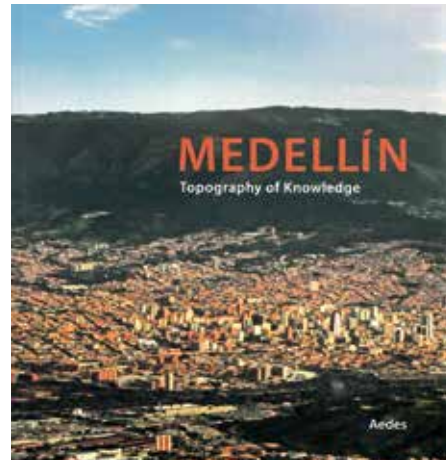
Embassies, Cities and Honours

Since the mid 1990s, Aedes has accompanied the era of new embassy buildings. Berlin became the capital of re-unified Germany and many nations started positioning representative embassies throughout the city. 'Architecture as cultural mission' became the focus of exhibitions on the design of the embassies of Austria, India, Mexico, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the Nordic countries and the United States. Since then, the embassies and their affiliated cultural institutes have become continuous partners in the Aedes programme. Through exhibitions or debate series such as *Missions in Architecture* or *Design and Politics* with the embassies of the Netherlands, Japan, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Sweden, Denmark and Norway, to name but a few, Aedes Architecture Forum became the platform for 'Foreign Architecture Culture' in the German capital. On the occasion of a state visit in 2009, the President of Portugal opened an exhibition on Portuguese architecture at Aedes Architecture Forum. In addition to the collaboration with embassies, international metropolises also play an important role in shaping the topics at Aedes. In this context, Seoul, Ningbo, Mexico City, Hongkong, Johannesburg, Hamburg, Singapore, Frankfurt, Vienna, Moscow, Medellín, Madrid, Zurich amongst many others have discussed their respective relations between people and city, now and in the future, at Aedes.

With these cities as partners, however, critical current questions are also negotiated in other places than Berlin: for the City of Moscow at a symposium in Venice, at conferences in Shanghai and rural China or at workshops in Medellín, Rotterdam, Vienna and other places. The great appreciation of the continuous commitment of Aedes for architecture culture has resulted in numerous important international honours such as the Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Art, Knight in the Order of the Netherlands Lion, German Federal Cross of Merit, Honorary Doctorate by the University of Braunschweig or Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects.



Aedes catalogue on the Dutch embassy in Berlin by Rem Koolhaas, OMA



Aedes catalogue on the urban development of Medellín



Exhibition: Seoul: Towards a Meta-City, 2014

Architecture and Ecology

As discussions of green architecture gave way to concepts of sustainable architecture in the 1990s, Aedes absorbed this topic into its exhibition programme, drawing connections between societal demands for ecological processes in construction with new design questions and the renegotiation of the relationship between people and urban space. Aedes conceptualised and produced the touring exhibition *Made in Germany – Architektur und Ökologie* for the Goethe-Institut in 2004. Due to international demand, the exhibition travelled in two further iterations over the course of seven years to forty-eight cities around the world. Similarly successful was another exhibition Aedes conceptualised for the Goethe-Institut: *Made in Germany - Architecture and Religion* was shown for six years in thirty-six cities worldwide. In 2007, Aedes developed an international architecture award for the Austrian lighting manufacturer Zumtobel connecting aspects of sustainable construction with demands for better living standards and a healthier environment. Today, the *Zumtobel Group Award – Innovations for Sustainability and Humanity in the Built Environment* is an internationally renowned architecture award.

From ecology to sustainability, resilience has become the new holistic parameter for a 'better built environment'. Aedes exhibitions such as *Measure of Man – Measure of Architecture* in 2010, *ArchiAid: Rethinking-Reconstruction* in 2013 or *After Hurricane Sandy – Rebuild by Design* in 2014 have contributed to this demand.



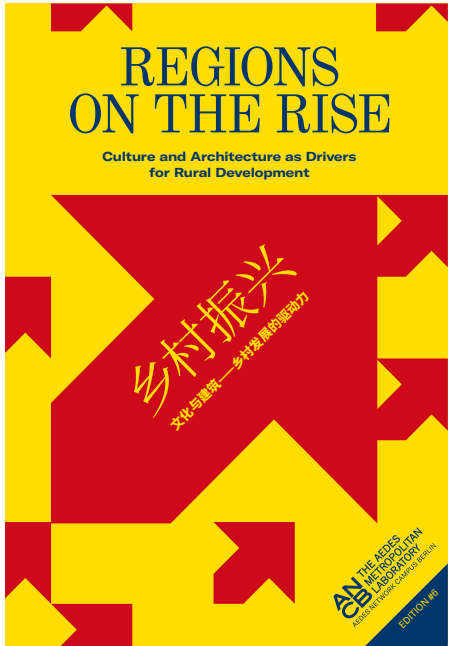
Exhibition: ArchiAid: Rethinking-Reconstruction after the great earthquake in East Japan in 2011, Pfefferberg, 2013



Aedes catalogue

Aedes Network Campus Berlin, ANCB

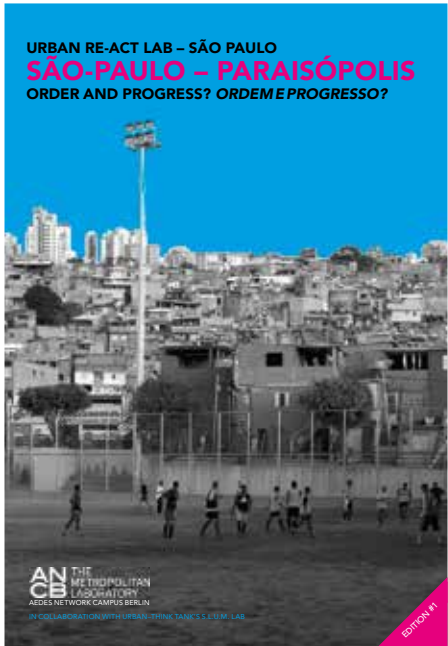
An important step in the internationalisation of the Aedes programme was the founding of the Aedes Network Campus Berlin, now called ANCB. The Aedes Metropolitan Laboratory, initiated by Hans-Jürgen Commerell in 2009. The starting point for this new joint experiment was once again Aedes' strong network, built through years of cultivating personal relationships, including many leading universities. At ANCB, global topics are negotiated in a local context. This takes place, for example, through exchange and experimentation in multi-week workshops with architecture schools from all over the world. Increasingly, international governmental agencies, municipalities, foundations, embassies, industry partners and institutions of civil society have taken an interest in the transdisciplinary approach of ANCB, resulting in new collaborations and formats. Similar to Aedes Architecture Forum and its exhibition programme, ANCB has shaped an international dialogue that extends far beyond its physical borders.



ANCB publication



ANCB magazine



ANCB publication



Students working at ANCB

Digital

Apart from its pioneering role in highlighting sustainable architectural practices, Aedes has also been at the forefront of exploring the possibilities of the digital realm within the broader architectural discourse.

In exhibitions and public talks that reach beyond questions of aesthetics, Aedes investigates the ways in which novel digital tools allow for an integrated and affordable approach in the design of new living and working typologies. Moreover, Aedes continues to explore the value sets in need of change in a global system of connectivity.



ANCB publication



Installation view: Shenzhen exhibition, Pfefferberg, 2018

Aedes and the Arts

In numerous exhibitions throughout the course of Aedes' existence, renowned artists like Eduardo Paolozzi, Madelon Vriesendorp, Annett Zinsmeister, Alexander Brodsky, Ólafur Elíasson, Ursula Schulz-Dornburg and Ai Weiwei have presented a wide variety of artistic positions that deal with architectural and urban space in the contemporary cultural discourse in both critical and playful manners, employing a range of media, from installation to sculpture, photography, film, painting, illustration, music, dance and performance. The common thread of all these artistic explorations is the creation of new spaces of possibility and thought. At Aedes, the interplay of art, architecture and the city is both an object of discussion and an active mode of experience that consciously challenges conventional forms of architectural practice. In tandem with international contemporary artists, Aedes has explored architecture and urban planning as concrete manifestations of social, political, economic and cultural conditions, while examining how transformations of these conditions are manifest within society.



Exhibition: Eid Hthaleen + Ai Weiwei, Post Resettlement in Palastine, Pfefferberg, 2016



Exhibition: Mediating Space – A Laboratory, Ólafur Elíasson, Pfefferberg, 2006



Exhibition: The World of Madelon Vriesendorp with drawings from Delirious New York, Pfefferberg, 2008

Outlook

It so happens that the fortieth anniversary of Aedes coincides with a worldwide pandemic of unprecedented proportions. In just a few months, the world has fundamentally changed.

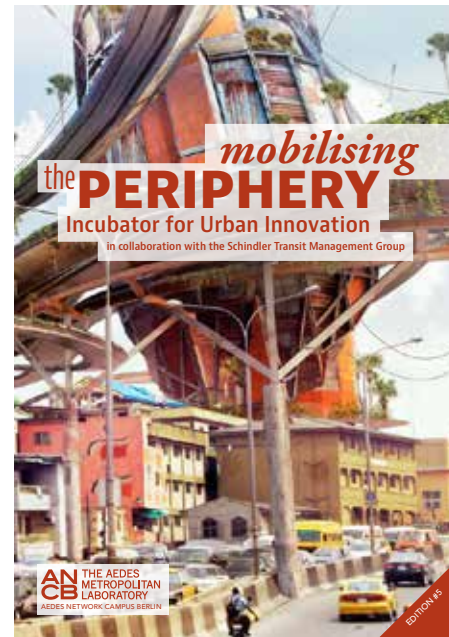
Beyond the current crisis and its as-yet-unforeseeable consequences, Aedes is aware that the global challenges we are facing today and in the decades to come are economic, technological and political as much as they are social, cultural, legal and ethical. These challenges demand a profound and inclusive dialogue between all actors in society. Aedes looks forward to continuing to actively provide a platform for the much-needed conversations to come.

Aedes and the Cooperation Partners from Economy

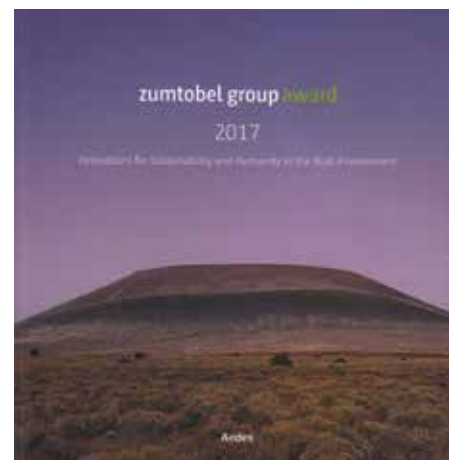
Since the beginning, Aedes has not received public funds, as architectural culture is still underrepresented in most cultural funding programmes. Thus, the entrepreneurial responsibility and the associated risks have always been 100 per cent with Kristin Feireiss and Hans-Jürgen Commerell. Each project must be funded individually through project-related sponsoring or targeted support. While in the case of monographic architecture exhibitions, these sponsors are most often recruited from the circle of project partners – predominantly from the construction industry – more complex programmes must be financed through individual funding applications to foundations or sponsors.

In this context, Aedes associates with globally operating companies – the Aedes Cooperation Partners – that strengthen Aedes as an internationally active cultural institution in its organisational structure and its targets to promote an interdisciplinary discourse on the beneficial interdependence of culture, societal demands and technology in relation to architecture and urbanism. Aedes involves these international companies in the formulating of questions related to the development of the present and future built environment, mobility concepts, living and working scenarios, and so forth.

The transdisciplinary exchange promoted and moderated by Aedes enables companies to detect emerging innovative processes in society early on. Aedes has thus become an 'open trade zone' of knowledge acting as an impulse generator for the topic 'intelligent city'. The direct links of Aedes to the world of architecture and design are definitely also of interest to the industry. These connections are forged in workshops, symposia or joint trips to many international destinations. All cooperation partners are united by a sense of cultural responsibility based on the common understanding that technology is part of culture and society and that 'being housed' – and thus the entire built environment – is one of the most important cultural achievements of mankind.



Publication in collaboration with Schindler



Aedes catalogue for the Zumbobel Group Award



Exhibition: Two Sides of the Border: Reimagining the Mexico-United States Region, a collective academic initiative led by Tatiana Bilbao, with Yale University, in collaboration Cemex

At present in 2020, five companies belong to the group of Aedes Cooperation Partners.

Zumbobel Lighting

This year, Aedes and Zumbobel, the globally operating Austrian lighting manufacturer, celebrate their 25-year-long relationship. Several Aedes exhibitions have travelled through Europe in partnership with Zumbobel. Their 'Light Centres' in Vienna and at the headquarters in Dornbirn are high-quality cultural venues in their own right to which Aedes adds the architectural aspect. The connection of networks and many joint collaborations with international designers and architects have led to projects of mutual benefit. A 1.5-year workshop with six universities from around the world led by Aedes investigated the relation of light and the design of workplaces. Since 2007, the jointly developed and internationally acknowledged *Zumbobel Group Award* results from this synergetic partnership.

Carpet Concept

Aedes has enjoyed the cooperation with the German carpet manufacturer Carpet Concept for almost 15 years. In addition to linking networks, defining and following common goals in the improvement of living environments and the workspace, this relationship is also reflected in joint exhibitions and publications such as *Between Arts and Politics*.

Schindler / Port Technology

Together with this leader in smart urban mobility, Aedes had realised international symposia over a period of four years, focussing on socio-political and economic shifts in the peripheries of the global cities. Such transdisciplinary formats offer an 'early recognition of potential' beyond Schindler's current core business, while their experience and knowledge contribute in manifold ways to the network exchange programme of Aedes. As an upcoming joint research project, Aedes and Schindler will focus on the 'vertical habitat'.

Cemex

Since 2019, the partnership with this global player in the production of cement – one of the most important products in the international construction industry – offers a rich knowledge source for the mutual benefit of Aedes and Cemex. In the continuous research on design and sustainable construction promoted by Aedes, cement plays a key role while being constantly confronted with environmental challenges and the finite nature of raw materials. Jointly curated lecture and experimental workshop programmes give impulses for innovation on all levels.

Camerich

Recently welcomed to the 'Aedes family' is the Chinese furniture manufacturer Camerich. Together, Aedes and Camerich are searching for the meaning and interrelation of functionality, design and sustainability in the development of an east-western everyday lifestyle. This worldwide operating high-end furniture brand is interested in the themes and synergies that Aedes makes accessible in the context of an all-scale spatial production while supporting the rich cultural exchange with China and Asia.



Aedes in Numbers

With our information Aedes reaches around 900,000 people per event.

Visitors: each exhibition is visited by 3,000 - 6,000 guests on site. Between 300 and 600 people attend the openings. Throughout the year student groups continuously visit the gallery receiving guided tours by the Aedes curators. Through the mediation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other institutions Aedes receives many visitor groups and international delegations.

Newsletter: 22,000 people who are registered with Aedes directly receive the Aedes newsletter globally. In addition to that the information is spread through partner networks world wide.

Invitation cards: Aedes mails 3,500 invitation cards to fans world-wide.

Website: each exhibition is published on the Aedes website. Approx. 35,000 visits are registered during each exhibition period.

Social media: all exhibitions are published on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn. Aedes has 12,000 subscribers on Facebook, 4,500 followers on Instagram and 1,000 LinkedIn followers. Live streams generate between 500 and 2,000 views.

Online Portals: Aedes exhibitions are regularly featured on many online portals such as Arch Daily, Baunetz, Arc Guide, World Architects and many more. An estimated 800,000 people is being informed this way.

Video: Aedes produces a short video for each exhibition which is published on the Aedes website as well as on Vimeo. Around 1000 people watch these videos.

Catalogues: for most exhibitions Aedes produces a catalogue in the infamous Aedes format. It is printed with 1,000 - 3,000 copies and distributed around the world. In the meantime Aedes has published more than 450 titles.

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Dance performance on the occasion of the opening of Smart City: The Next Generation – Focus South-East Asia, Pfefferberg, 2013