



L-Università ta' Malta  
Faculty for the  
Built Environment

**B.Sc.(Hons) in Built Environment Studies**  
**BEN 3102 – Design Workshop**  
**Occurrence B – A Desirable Real**

**Unit Coordinator:**

Perit Ella Fleri Soler

**Tutors:**

Perit Ella Fleri Soler, Perit Peter Brincat, Perit Patricia Risiott

**Specific Instructions:**

**Date Assignment Set:** 14th November 2024

**Submission Date:** 13th January 2024

**Presentation Date:** 15th January 2024

**Deliverables:** Digital presentation/printed material, physical models, constant weekly developments and participation

**Participation:** This brief is solely the basis of the Design Workshop that is fully developed through the Design Studio sessions. The Design Studio sessions introduce the full scope of the brief systematically and guide students in achieving learning outcomes through weekly milestones. They also present the theory required by the Design Workshop task not covered in study units. The Design Workshop sessions combine lectures, class discussions, student presentations (pinups), and feedback sessions. Students' participation in all components is essential to design development. Students must follow peer feedback throughout the session and recognise and take on board aspects that apply to their design process. Students have to carry out each weekly task and follow instructions for weekly submission of materials. Weekly Design Workshop reviews are as valuable as the final one as they offer an opportunity to present work and gain timely feedback. For this reason, attendance is mandatory for the entire duration of the Design Workshop sessions. Poor attendance will impact students' progress, results, and ability to develop expected deliverables at the required level.

**Credits Assigned:** 3ECTS

**Method of Assessment:** <https://www.um.edu.mt/courses/studyunit/BEN3102>

PERIT ELLA FLERI SOLER

PERIT PETER BRINCAT

PERIT PATRICIA RISIOTT

# RETHINKING THE DESIGN STUDIO

*“Sites of education are places to exercise new ways of thinking”*

- The Architectural Review, 2022

The academic year of 2024/2025 might be the last for University of Malta students at the Faculty for the Built Environment building which has housed Malta’s architecture students for decades. In this state of transition, the space of the design studio will shift - from the old, to the temporary, to the new. This shift prompts us to reflect on *‘what is the design studio?’* and if rethought, *‘what might the design studio be?’*

The exercise of Rethinking the Design Studio will evolve over 2 Acts; BEN3101 B (3 ECTS) and BEN3102 B (3 ECTS) are two Design Workshops for third year architecture students in the B.Sc.(Hons) in Built Environment Studies programme which will run in Semester 1, one after the other, each lasting seven and eight weeks.



## BEN3102 B - BRIEF

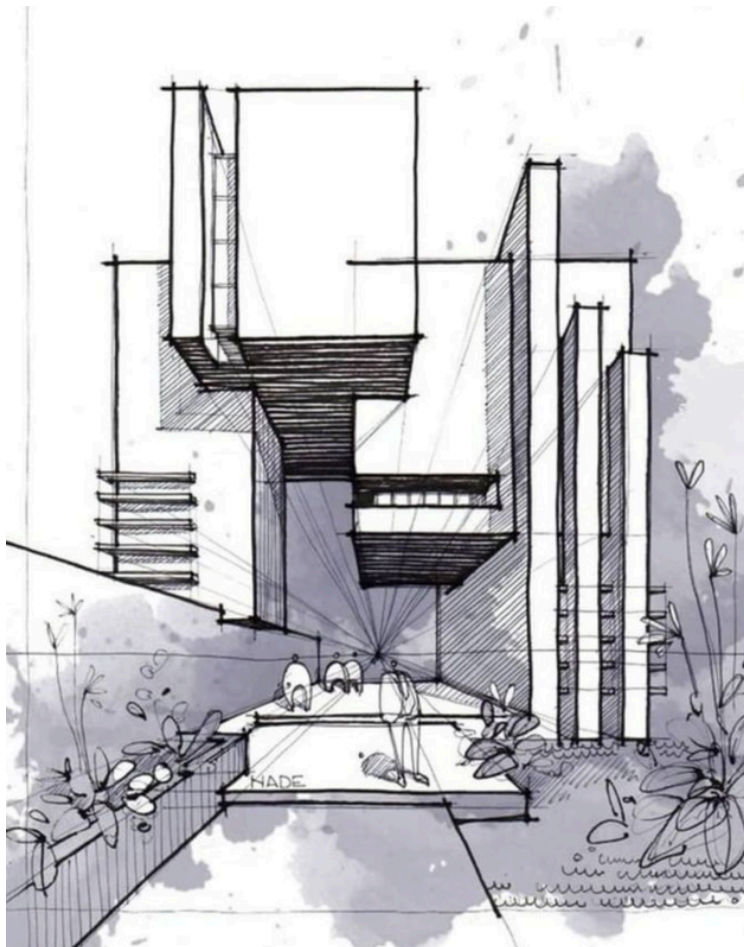
B.Sc. (Hons) Built Environment Studies at University of Malta BEN3101 Occurrence B

# A DESIRABLE REAL

## PREMISE

“*A Desirable Real*” is a continuation of our exploration into the nature of the Design Studio typology, transitioning from conceptual desire to virtual and actual form. In “*An Other Design Studio*,” we reflected on what the design studio could be, rethinking both its tangible and intangible aspects to craft new possibilities for architectural inquiry.

This workshop, “*A Desirable Real*,” asks you to turn those desires into a constructed reality. To shape a project in the “real” is to probe deeply into the interplay between the tangible and intangible, while navigating the technical demands that arise in translating an idea to a physical structure. This involves questioning reality as we build it—taking a lab-like approach where every stage of the process is critically reflected on. In this environment, each step forward will be guided by reflection on the value structures underpinning our work.



## TASK AND PROCESS

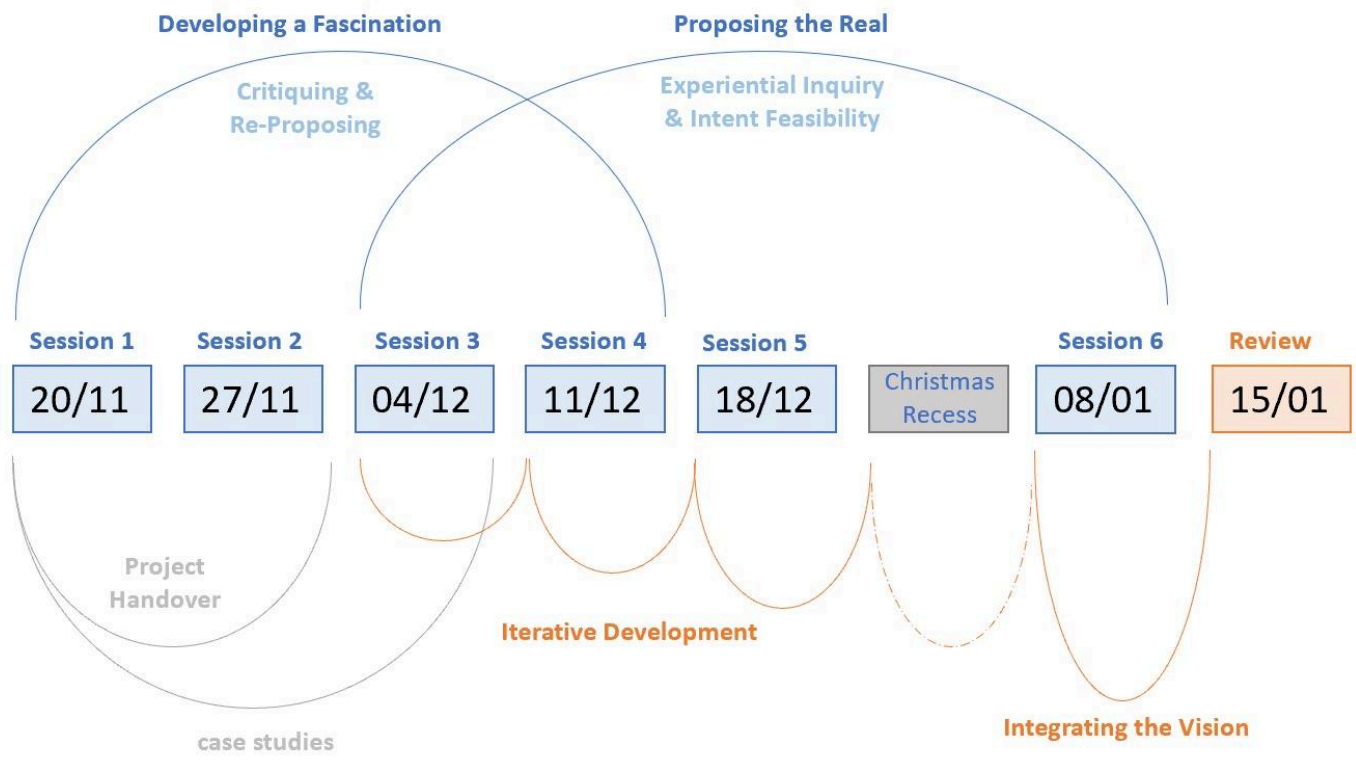
Bringing a concept to life is not a linear journey; rather, it requires a balance between rigour and openness to new insights. A *Desirable Real* will challenge us to retain a desire-driven approach through the technical stages of architectural development. Our task is to nurture the project's core value structure, continually asking *What? Why? How?* as we progress.

The workshop will simulate a ***micro studio collective***. You will work in small teams, with each team collectively establishing a design position and driving forward an architectural proposal to its reality. While each team member will independently explore aspects of the project, your individual inquiries should ultimately drive the collective vision forward.

- **Collective Effort:** Each team must establish and continuously refine a shared architectural position and approach.
- **Individual Contribution:** Within the team, individual members will focus on specific aspects of the project, adding depth and dimension to the overall proposal.

The workshop will take the wealth of iterations explored in 'An Other Design Studio' as its catalogue of ideas. Collectives will sample a project from that stock of proposals and will refine the concept to drive a collective proposal, probing the following aspects of the project and questioning what may further be relevant to comprehensively explore and fully appropriate the proposal;

1. **Defining the Scope:** Clarifying the scope and rationale of your project. What are you trying to achieve, and why does it matter?
2. **Site and Stakeholders:** Consider the relationship between your proposal and the assigned site. What role does the context play? Define the key stakeholders and spatial programs essential to your project.
3. **Material Exploration and Form:** Delve into material research and the development of architectural gestures, exploring how materiality communicates the essence of your concept.
4. **Detailing the Project:** Transition to construction detailing and project sequencing, establishing how your concept could become a feasible, buildable reality.



*Diljá Sigurðardóttir*  
*'Building With Nature: Geothermal Baths in Hafnarfjordur, Iceland'*



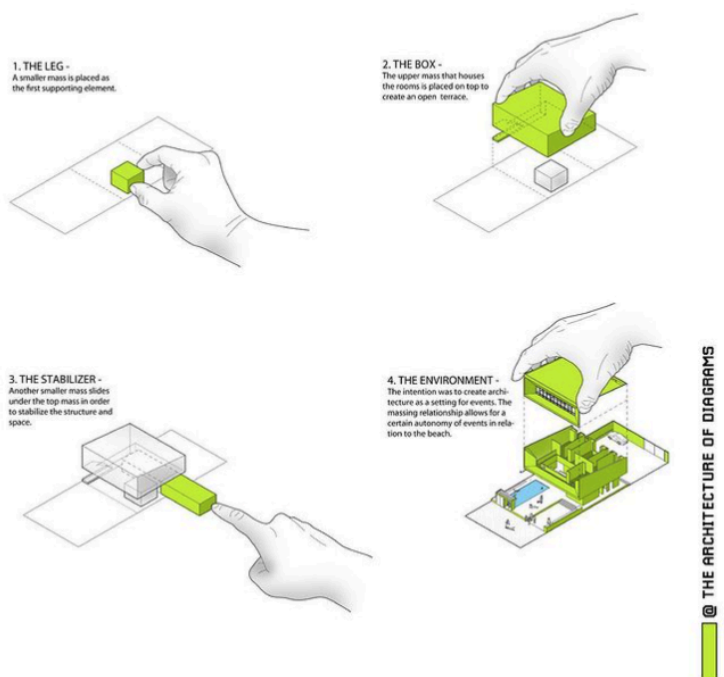
## OUTCOME

By combining independent and collaborative work, we will build projects that are both investigative and technically coherent. In keeping with a *bottom-up* approach, the developmental phases are essential in themselves, not merely steps to a final product. The outcomes should be both conceptually rich and practically rooted, serving as potential blueprints for further realisation.

The iterative process in 'An Other Design Studio', was leveraged to push means of idea generation and testing, leading to the proposal of a design concept. In 'A Desirable Real', the collective will 'frame' its design concept after 2 weeks of refinement and will leverage the iteration of new tools to new means to effectively 'realise' their desire. The workshop will explore a new set of tools under a new process of iteration. **Architectural scale drawings, ambiance sketches, building process diagrams/GIFS/videos, detail and sectional models and material mood boards** will form part of our arsenal to create a full bodied project, delivered by each member of each collective, each week for 4 weeks. **Each member of the collective will carry an aspect of the project forward using these iterative tools, but the collective remains responsible for driving the project forward holistically and in a manner consistent with the collective desire framed at the start of the project. The collective should both shape and be shaped by the individual iterations.**

The final submission will be in the form of a collective presentation of the collective's desire, explored through the individual team members' iterated tools which realise the various strands of the project. Presentations will incorporate mixed media, following formats established during studio sessions, varying from printed media, physical models, and audio/visual digital material, collectively demonstrating the journey from conceptual framework to architectural detail.

### DIAGRAM TYPE: SEQUENTIAL



## **CLASS ETHOS AND AFFECT**

The ethos of this workshop emphasises active reflection and critical engagement. By “slowing down” the design process, we create space for in-depth research and reflection, which will shape our design decisions. Weekly tutorials and discussions will establish a foundational discourse that invites participation, debate, and collaborative thinking.

This workshop is a shared, evolving space, and you are encouraged to listen and make space for all voices in discussions. Peer critique will be central to this process, helping you to cultivate a balanced perspective on your work and develop tools for independently navigating the design process.

## **STUDIO CULTURE**

*“A Desirable Real”* invites students to form a cohesive studio culture. Class time will emphasise collaboration and shared inquiry, but we also encourage you to extend this culture beyond the studio walls. Because final outcomes are blended between the individual and the collective, the workshop seeks to forge a studio culture where each member’s insights contribute to the overall advancement of the group.

Class pin-ups and discussions will foster collective engagement, and peer review will be integral to the studio’s ethos. Criticism will be constructive, aiming to clarify and strengthen each project through feedback from tutors and peers alike.

## **FORMAT**

The workshop will take place over 6 (excluding holiday recess) structured studio sessions. Each Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., students are expected to participate fully, engaging with both individual and group assignments. Weekly deliverables will be submitted online and reviewed collectively during class, and all students are expected to be present and prepared for participation.

Final examination will include a formal digital submission and physical presentation of your project, using the prescribed formats. Participation in weekly sessions and adherence to interim submission requirements are essential. Projects will be assigned with 60% weighting for individual work and 40% weighting for group work as carried out within the collective.



## OUTLOOK

The outlook of “*A Desirable Real*” is to cultivate students’ ability to navigate both the theoretical and technical dimensions of architecture, ultimately producing work that is rigorous, insightful, and resonant with contemporary architectural discourse. This workshop does not prescribe a single way of creating architecture; rather, it is an invitation to broaden your thinking about what architecture can be and how it can be realised.

By the end of the workshop, students will have demonstrated:

- **Critical Framework Development:** The ability to establish and act upon a conceptual framework for architectural inquiry. Also, to pursue architectural design as a critical process of research and inquiry and to follow the consequences of this across the full range of the architectural scale
- **Contextual and Experiential Sensitivity:** An understanding of the relationship between architecture and its context, with an emphasis on the experiential and emotional dimensions of space.
- **Communication and Representation Skills:** Proficiency in using a variety of media and techniques to convey design proposals clearly and effectively.
- **Material and Technical Exploration:** The ability to consider alternative materials, processes, and construction techniques as part of the architectural process.
- **Collaborative and Individual Working Skills:** A demonstrated ability to work effectively within a team, contributing to collective goals and supporting group development, while also cultivating the independence and discipline necessary for individual contributions to the project.

In “*A Desirable Real*,” you are invited to explore architecture as a field of possibilities, integrating desire and pragmatism into a comprehensive, reflective process. Through this workshop, you will define your own approach to creating architecture that is grounded, theoretically informed, and capable of engaging meaningfully with the contemporary world.

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