



A Clay Sermon, Theaster Gates, 2021

# When content becomes form

Museums have begun to acknowledge that they are not neutral and that their internal structures and displays reproduce power. They also recognise that they might possess too many objects and that their collections are often of questionable origin. We cannot simply shut museums down, because public institutions are the repositories of shared memories and ideas and are at the core of any idea of a sustainable society. If museums are in crisis, how can their relationships with the societies that they are a part of become more productive and what role can architecture play in this process. This semester we will speculate about new museums and the architecture that could support them.

We will start by looking at small collections that comprise art, social documentation, and other archival material. With the help of people who run and use museums and with reference to contemporary discourses on institutional critique, we will engage with this material to find the stories and deeper relationships that exist between these artefacts and the societies from which they emerge, complex networks that are spatial as well as social.

The research will be developed into ideas for the arrangement and the interpretation of collections in the production of catalogues and exhibitions, work that communicates the meanings and material qualities of these collections in vivid ways to more diverse audiences.

The main design phase will expand these ideas so that the collections become a core around which other exhibitions, programmes, and ideas of the civic are developed into new ideas for the architecture of museums. Sited within disused industrial, retail and institutional spaces in Zurich it is intended that these experiments could find their way back through the doors of the city's existing museums and archives.

Diploma, FS 2024, ETH Zürich

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