The MSc1 studio addresses questions concerning the preservation of existing structures and proposes meaningful interventions in the existing fabric of our cities. We ask ourselves whether it makes sense to demolish (and what exactly) and how to re-use. The motives for preservation are not necessarily architectural value, but also rest-value of written-off material for social, non-profit uses and, especially, ecological value of used material.

For the coming semester we will look at an existing school building in Ghent. We examine the iconic yet relatively unknown building from the 70s, propose several interventions in the existing structure and design an (entirely new?) extension. We learn to appreciate the building’s intended and present use, its original ambitions, its qualities and shortcomings, get to know more about its time and contemporaries and develop a strategy to make the structure future proof. We look at the spatial needs of present day primary education and design a rich, contemporary learning environment consisting of new and old elements and indoor and outdoor spaces.

During the design process architecture, space, functionality and (sustainable) materialisation are closely related. We question the in our eyes artificial boundaries between building technology and architecture (as they don’t exist outside the University!) and work on well-crafted buildings with beautiful proportions, good daylight, tactile qualities and well-considered plans. We will make use of innovative building technologies such as engineered timber, study brutalist concrete and visit important school buildings in The Netherlands and Belgium. By doing so we work on an assignment that is both realistic and idealistic and will therefore serve as an intense introduction for a master programme closely related to present day architectural practice.

Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten, Extension obs ‘t Landje Rotterdam, 2014, photography Luuk Kramer