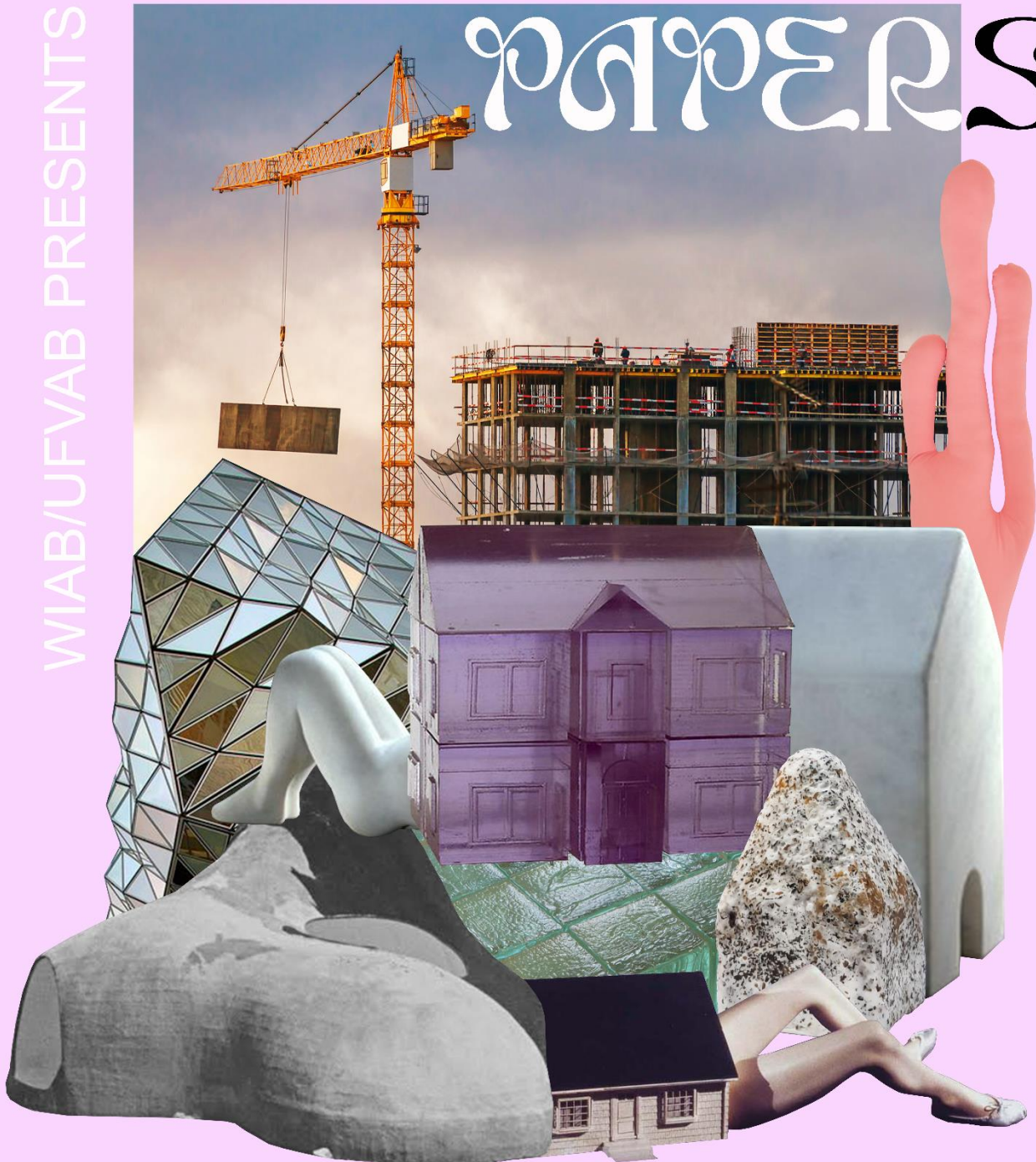




WIAB/UFVAB PRESENTS

# CALL FOR PAPERS



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## CALL FOR PAPERS 'Think Tank 2023'- Women in Architecture Belgium

**Women\* in Architecture Belgium** seeks new and alternative ways of expressing the progresses of architecture, underlining the role of the women working to its evolution.

Besides highlighting their architectural work, **WIAB** aims to showcase the leadership skills female architects have, giving them the space to become role models for the future generations and increase the proportion of women in leadership roles within architecture.

**Women\* in Architecture Belgium** warmly invites researchers, writers, critics, professionals and scholars in architecture, interior design, landscape design and urban planning to submit an **original abstract** for consideration at our upcoming **'Think Tank 2023' - Women in Architecture Belgium** Event.

Guest curator **Katrien Vandermarliere** invites you to write about the following topics:

- 1. Liquid, fluid, flowing. Concepts and values take on new interpretations in the world and in architecture.**
- 2. Representation of women in architecture. What are new role models and why are they important?**
- 3. Ecofeminism / Regenerative architecture and self-building, activist and feminist.**

You can find more information [below](#) or consult our website [www.ufvab.be](http://www.ufvab.be)

*This call is written by the following committee: Katrien Vandermarliere, Li Mei Tsien, Livia de Béthune, Giulia Lazzara, Afrah Baccouche.*

*The ufvAb/WIAB committee*

*President: Li Mei Tsien - Vice-President : Livia de Bethune - Treasurer : Ioana Plesca - Vice-Treasurer : Silvia Passoni - Secretary : Chiara Russo - Vice-Secretary : Isabelle Jakhian - Public Relation : Savina van de Put*

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## **Deadline for abstracts is 4th of October 2023!**

Upon receiving the abstracts, the committee will invite 3 authors to complete their paper of 2000 words for November 13th. The selected authors will present their paper to the 'Think Tank 2023' - Women in Architecture event on Thursday 07 December 2023 in Brussels.

**A fee of €750** for the paper and presentation will be provided. (Travel expenses not included).

A publication of the selected papers and articles will follow.

### **Submission guidelines**

Language: English

Abstract of 200 to 500 words

Necessary Information:

- Title
- Keywords
- References
- Author(s)

Bibliography: Please include a brief 3–4-line biography with your submission to ensure a full understanding of your background.

You have the flexibility to choose the format of your submissions. This includes multi-author submissions.

### **Criteria of Selection**

We welcome research from a variety of disciplines, including but not limited to architecture, art history, anthropology, sociology, literature, design, geography, and urban planning...

Relevance, innovative perspectives, and exploration of intersectionality will determine the selection of articles.

## Planning

Deadline for submission abstracts: **4<sup>th</sup> of October 2023**

Invitation to write the paper: **9<sup>th</sup> of October 2023**

Deadline for submission paper: **13<sup>th</sup> of November 2023**

THINK TANK 2023: **7<sup>th</sup> of December 2023**

## How to submit your abstract?

To submit your abstract, please send us a pdf document with all the required information to: [connect@ufvab.be](mailto:connect@ufvab.be) or visit our website [www.ufvab.be](http://www.ufvab.be).

For any questions, please do not hesitate to mail us as well at: [connect@ufvab.be](mailto:connect@ufvab.be)

## 1. Liquid times, fluid concepts, flowing meanings. Concepts and values take on new interpretations.

Through various media and forums, we read that architecture as it has been practiced so far can no longer continue. Economic, social and ecological realities are putting pressure on the old system: CO2 emissions must be reduced, reuse and regenerative construction are high on the agenda. Building commissions need to be formulated differently, they need to be more inclusive, connecting people and not excluding them.

But the figure of 'the architect' itself is also under pressure. 'The architect' today is no longer the middle-aged white cis-man in charge alone. In a business where half of master's degrees are obtained by women, the meaning of 'architecture' firms is becoming more fluid, broader, and different.

What does being an architect mean today? Is the client also an 'architect' and perhaps the occupant? Who is the author of a building? Hasn't designing a building been a group effort for a long time? Critic Beatriz Colomina stated this already in the 90ies. Why does competition still work in this discipline and what is the consequence of that? What is the interpretation of 'a career' as an architect? Is the time ripe to clearly indicate the collective nature of architecture? Examine meanings and 'deconstructing concepts' also have negative consequences; they bring uncertainty and doubt.

Is all this also related to the 'fluid zeitgeist' we live in? Or is it related to the fact that more women are working in the profession? Or still to the fact that more women are in more representative places and giving more weight to certain decisions?

Is fluidity also related to opening up the concept of gender - what is still typically masculine or feminine?

And don't other insights from other than Western culture also bring new perspectives in thinking about building, inhabiting, making?

Hence the question to delve deeper into this: an evaluation, moral judgement or critical look at this time and the discipline of architecture.

- This article takes a deeper look at one or more concepts whose meanings are changing and are highly relevant to women's (and men's) practice of architecture in the future. It situates the discipline of architecture in today's world from a philosophical, anthropological point of view.

## 2. Representation of women in architecture. What are new role models and why are they important?

The article should answer what the new role models for the female architect could be? What is needed to make these new role models visible and accepted?

### What is the traditional male role model of an architect?

The traditional role model of the architect that has long been valid typifies itself with the following adjectives: creative, responsible, problem solver.... It is somewhat stereotypical and fueled by narratives such as the lone genius, full of ambition, totally dedicated, the work and the person coincide. In addition, a cult of big names, of 'star architects' came into vogue in architecture and discourse in the 20th century. Large offices with more than 100 employees were marketed as a brand with the proper name of just one architect (Frank O Gehry, Richard Meier...). Every city saw an iconic building by a 'star architect' as 'city marketing'. The 'star system' was confirmed by major architecture awards, chairmanship and curatorship of important exhibitions, etc. In this, the 'western' masculine tradition was continued, and it has only become feminized and non-westernized since the early 21st century. (cfr. Pritzker Prize, Venice International Architecture Biennale)<sup>1</sup>

### What is the problem with the 'cult of stars' or role models of male architects?

- Female architects (or some of them) today do not recognize themselves in that role at all.
- In addition, this is only a limited representation of the reality of architecture in the 20th century where many women were also trained in architecture and spent a lifetime in the profession of architecture. Yet, for many reasons, their work is invisible and undocumented.
- Women architects and their knowledge, experience and merits are consequently not employable to act as role models for young architects. So many young architects drop out instead of learning from the struggles, approaches, insights, and achievements of their previous generation.
- One sees that competent women who are successful pay a price for this on a personal level; they often do not have a partner, no children, their social life is more limited, ... They are not rewarded for their success. Women at the top are given a hard time. Men seem to suffer less from all these disadvantages.

### Why are role models important?

"Where can a woman still be a woman and truly make it in the system or change it? That is the function of a role model." <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.readingdesign.org/room-at-the-top>

<sup>2</sup> Karin Hartmann, Black Turtleneck, round glasses, Quote from Rebecca Volpp podcast Denklabor, episode 0. Frauen in Architektur, jovis Verlag GMBH, 2022, Berlin.

Role models are affirming and provide security. For the group itself to learn the profession, to know what you stand for, to identify with it as a professional community in a society. They also provide security for the clients, you know what to ask of them, what to expect from them and that can be an interesting and a good stimulating interaction.

What is needed to make these new role models visible and accepted? Change attitudes and culture.

-Female role models are not easily adopted by women; they are valued professionally, but not as role models.

-Get rid of myths and stereotypes about what an architect should be, how they should practice their profession.

-To be a successful female architect, you feel the pressure to suppress your femininity: in your behaviour, in your dress code, ... this comes into conflict with your female gender identity. Women experience that their professional and gender identity are in conflict.

“So, women do not decide on an individual basis to do this or that in a professional architecture career, they consciously or unconsciously adapt their behaviour to social norms to avoid being sanctioned.”<sup>3</sup>

Change is in sight, but it does mean that certain things will change, privileges will fall away and men will have to behave differently. And some of the taken for granted things will have to be given up. Also men in the profession have the responsibilities to make the change happen and be open to different ways of working and living.

Rewrite a gender-equitable history of architecture – need for new canons and representation by new research.

Many women architects in the 20th century were present as partner male architects. What is called 'shared biographies' 'Couplings'. Their part in that partnership should be made clear by themselves and new research.

How and with what criteria do you assess historical architects, recent and contemporary buildings? And can you open up the historical architectural canon in the curriculum? How should we look at women's past in order to (re)recognize their role in architecture?

Archivist and historian Catja Edens argues in the book 'Women in Architecture'<sup>4</sup> to look at women's practice with a different perspective: with a more empathetic view, looking differently at other archives and using other sources.

If we let women architects of today speak, we see that they profile themselves as ecologists, artists and feminists. They talk about landscape, city, environment, space, lore and the climate crisis. So we should also explore their 'legacy' in other fields and also pass it on in education.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, page. 53, quote by Kate Manne in Down Girl

<sup>4</sup> Catja Edens, e.a. Women in Architecture, Documents and Histories, nai10 uitgevers, 2023, Rotterdam

### Architecture teaching is crucial and a key for change.

Gender-equity of teachers, systems of teaching, change content of courses and designs, incorporate women and diversity research.

Architectural training by women are characterized by: less authoritarian behaviour, they engage less in idolatry, focus more on the content and not the students' individual character. And one need to encourage women with alternative practices to teach, because they will usher in the change.

### Responsibilities of the architectural cultural institutions

Exhibition makers, curators and critics of written and digital media also have a role to play in this. They need to push forward other portraits or 'formats' of presentations of women's work. They can analyse their letters, read novels, watch films and listen to interviews. They can examine women commissioners, exhibition makers, publishers, private and public commissioners, project leaders fin administrative positions, ... and hold them up as examples.

- The article choices one of the above topics and explores what the new role models for the female architect could be? What is needed to make these new role models visible and accepted?



### **3. Ecofeminism / Regenerative architecture and self-building, activist and feminist.**

This article, other than underlying the practice of women architects, could discuss the link between environmental destruction and social injustice. The correlation between ecology and feminism was first theorised in the 1970s by Françoise d'Eaubonne:

“L'écoféminisme est une philosophie, une éthique et un mouvement né de la conjonction des deux « surgissements du monde moderne » que sont l'écologie et le féminisme. Ce nouveau concept opère la synthèse entre l'idée d'une double exploitation: celle de la nature par l'homme et celle de la femme par l'homme.”<sup>5</sup>

With the foregrounding of a more sustainable building culture, attention to climate-neutral natural materials, traditional building techniques and self-building with earth, clay, stone and wood is back. On the side-lines of architectural practice, communities of women in European countries have recently emerged to re-learn these techniques and pass them on to others. From collective learning, working together and talking about it, a form of pride and empowerment emerges. This practice also stands for artisanal quality, a short distance between designing and making, care for good and quality space and bringing in other values. A different 'atmosphere' emerges on the building site. Which is not marked by the logic of 'market thinking, efficiency' and time is money'.

The commitment to build carbon neutral is in line with activism and feminism that is becoming an emerging contemporary form of architecture practice.

In African and Asian communities, building with earth, including with and by women, has never disappeared. Learning, passing on, archiving and studying this knowledge is not only inspiring but also a form of survival in places where climate change is putting pressure on safe living environments.

We refer, among others, to the French group Terre, femmes et savoir-faire. But persons like Germany's Anna Heringer, Scotland's Becky Littel are also examples of these female architectural practices. We refer as well to the Pakistani architect Yasmin Lari who currently has a monographic exhibition at MAK in Vienna where her humanitarian and climatic approach to architecture is explained.

- This article explores what a female architectural practice of DIY stands for, where does the making itself and regenerative values comes from, why they never disappeared and seem universal? What does it tell us to explore other ways of doing architecture nowadays.

**Proposal for WIAB by curator Katrien Vandermarliere.**

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<sup>5</sup> Françoise d' Eaubonne, *Ecologie et féminisme: Révolution ou mutation*, 1978.

Collage artwork by Giulia Lazzara (Cinéma Jolia).

1. Construction site picture from article “Changing Views and Opportunities for Women in Construction” By Charlie Myers, 2019, DMagazine, Shutterstock.
2. KKEKK, Tangible Web, 2022.
3. Zaha Hadid, Port House, Antwerp, 2016, Hufton + Crow Photography.
4. Louise Bourgeois, Femme Maison, White marble, 12,1x24,4x7,6 cm, 1994.
5. Rachel Whiteread, Ghost, Ghost II, 2009, polyurethane (fourteen parts), Agnes Gund Collection.
6. Alison Knowles, House of Dust—Helicopter, 1971, Photo by Dan Grant. Courtesy of the California Institute of the Arts Institute Archives.
7. Ann Veronica Janssens, 16 Aquatic Blocks, Cast glass, 20x48x48 cm, 2017.
8. Bento Architecture, Unity of Mycelium, 2019, Bruxelles.
9. Laurie Simmons, Lying House, Photolithography on paper, 1949, New York.