



VUB Engineering Fellow 2019: Philippe Block

Text
Lars De Laet

The VUB initiated in 2012 its Fellowship programme to act as a platform where academics and the worlds of society and business meet. Through the VUB Fellowship Programme, all who are involved discuss joint challenges, exchange experiences, share good practices and learn from one another for the benefit of research, innovation, academic education and society in general. “VUB Fellow” is the highest grade of membership at our Alma Mater, a title bestowed upon unique personalities: top level business people, visionary decision makers, socially relevant personalities. [from VUB Fellow - <https://www.vub.ac.be/fellowship/fellowship>].

This year, it is the first time that the department of Architectural Engineering nominated a Fellow. In June 2019, Philippe Block was inaugurated as VUB Engineering Fellow, with Lars De Laet as Proximus.

Philippe Block graduated in 2003 at the VUB as an Architectural Engineer. He then studied architecture and structural engineering at MIT (USA), where he defended his PhD in 2009. Philippe is now a professor at the Institute of Technology in Architecture at ETH Zurich, where he co-directs the Block Research Group (BRG) together with Dr. Tom Van Mele, also an Architectural Engineer from the VUB. In addition, Philippe is director of the prestigious Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) in Digital Fabrication, and founding partner of Ochsendorf DeJong & Block (ODB Engineering), a structural engineering consultancy with expertise in the assessment of (historic) masonry structures and the design of novel masonry structures.

Philippe Block and his research group are internationally recognised for their innovative research in the field of structural and computational design and analysis of structures. With his team, he succeeds in translating research knowledge into ‘award winning’ prototypes and built constructions that inspire the daily practice of building. With their developments, they aim to have a social and industrial impact, e.g. from building ‘Sustainable Urban Dwelling Units’ in Ethiopia and ‘Droneports’ for Africa to rethinking and optimising floor plates that allow our construction industry to save enormous amounts of material.

Philippe Block gives lectures on his work around the world, both at top universities and world-renowned architecture and engineering firms. Philippe Block is then a true ambassador for the VUB: he is not only proud to be a VUB alumnus, but also appreciative of the qualitative and unique training he received in Architectural Engineering at the VUB. He does not fail to keep telling this in his many lectures. This recognition for his Alma Mater translates into the annual lecture that Philippe gives for our Master students, the internships he offers to VUB students and the fact that he welcomes PhD students to his research centre at ETH Zurich for a research stay abroad.

We are proud to welcome Philippe as our very first VUB Fellow. Congratulations Philippe and looking forward to your ambassadorship the following years!

Philippe Block (left) with
Patrick Schumacher from
Zaha Hadid Architects
under KnitCandela
(Mexico City, 2018)
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