Basler & Hofmann contributes to new centre for digital planning and construction

Visualization of a virtual collaboration environment for the ETH Immersive Design Lab. The lab will open in 2021 and provide necessary research infrastructure for the new Design++ center.

The engineering, planning and consultancy firm Basler & Hofmann is participating in a new centre at ETH Zurich as a strategic partner with a generous donation to the ETH Foundation over six years.

The centre for Computationally Augmented Design in Architecture, Engineering and Construction, known as Design++, is intended to help ETH to further strengthen its globally leading position in the field of digital design, planning and construction.

The donation from Basler & Hofmann will primarily go towards establishing a new professorship for Augmented Computational Design at the Design++ centre. The aim of the new centre is to develop digital instruments and processes that simultaneously improve design, boost productivity in the construction process, increase the quality of buildings and reduce their environmental impact. To this end, the areas of architecture and civil engineering incorporate current knowledge from the fields of artificial intelligence, with a focus on machine learning, and augmented reality.

Holistic view of digitalisation

The centre and the new professorship aim to build a bridge between architecture, civil engineering, construction

and computer science. “We very much welcome the attempt to break down the silos of individual disciplines. We are convinced that the only way to take full advantage of the benefits of new digital technology is by focusing on the bigger picture. That requires interdisciplinary collaboration,” says Dominik Courtin, CEO of Basler & Hofmann.

Long-standing, close relationship

Basler & Hofmann’s substantial donation to the ETH Foundation is a further example of the close relationship that exists between the firm and ETH Zurich. “For me, the donation also has a personal significance,” explains Dr Konrad Basler, Chair of the non-profit Basler & Hofmann foundation, at the signing of the grant agreement: “As the son of a farmer, I initially trained in carpentry. From there, I switched to the Technical School in Winterthur and then to studying civil engineering at ETH Zurich. Studying at ETH opened up the world for me and enabled us to set up the company Basler & Hofmann in the 1960s. For the company now to work with ETH to help shape the future of planning and construction – this fills me with pride and joy.” Basler & Hofmann has been involved in research and teaching at ETH several times in the past, including in the Master’s programme in Integrated Building Systems.

The new centre is due to be officially launched in early summer. In spring, the Immersive Design Lab will begin operating as the central research infrastructure of Design++.

Design++ research centre

Basler & Hofmann press release