

RESEARCH

ARCHIVE PRAXIS

MANUEL ABENDROTH

"In choosing LAB[au] as a collective name, we made an artistic and conceptual statement. Uniting LAB—the laboratory as a method of research—with BAU—the construction and development of practice—the name expressed our shared vision: to develop a language of art as an expression of its time rather than as an individual signature. This page traces my path from the formative experiences preceding LAB[au] through thirty years of collective practice and conceptual inquiry."

Manuel Abendroth

Artist, Curator, Architect

Founder of LAB[a

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Manuel Abendroth was born in 1969 in Wels, Austria, into a theatrical environment: his mother, Karin Abendroth, was a set designer, and his father, Michael Abendroth, an actor. From the age of seven, he was regularly involved in productions at the Stadttheater Pforzheim, acting and later drawing costumes, painting posters and assisting with stage direction. In 1988, he presented his first solo exhibition at Galerie Raum in Pforzheim.

Following his civil service, he worked from 1988 to 1991 as an exhibition assistant and coordinator at the Deichtorhallen Hamburg, working closely with Zdenek Felix on the preparation and realisation of exhibitions. He worked directly with Hanne Darboven and Gerhard Merz and contributed to exhibitions by Michelangelo Pistoletto, Elaine Sturtevant and On Kawara.

In 1992, he moved to Brussels to study architecture at La Cambre, graduating in 1998. During his studies, he developed a series of competition entries and realised architectural projects, including Maison 15h05 in Philippeville in 1995. In 1997, his proposal Liquid Axis won an international ideas competition in Thessaloniki. Initially conceived as an individual project, it became the catalyst for founding LAB[au] that same year as a collective artistic and conceptual framework. Alongside his studies, he collaborated with artists and curators, including Marin Kasimir, Christoph Blase, and Joël Benzakin.

Alongside his artistic practice, he co-founded and artistically directed the exhibition platforms MediaRuimte and Société. He currently continues this curatorial research through TOPO?, conceived as a more nomadic platform activated through occasional exhibitions and curatorial projects.

His path unfolds across art, architecture, curatorial practice and writing, with a particular focus on language, systems and how art becomes an expression of its time.

WORKS



SELECTED INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

SINCE 2025 — STAMPS, REVISED

Ongoing artwork series reactivating the postage stamp as image, printed matter, unit of value, political sign and instrument of circulation

DEVELOPED WITHIN THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF LAB[au] , Signed: LAB[au], Manuel Abendroth

— ERASE ON KAWARA — ENTROPIE — TONERCHROMES— MONOCHROMES — UPB — Pb, Cu DIARY

BEFORE LAB[au] — SCHICHTUNGEN

Artwork series exploring the constituent layers of classical oil painting, revealing architecture as intrinsic to painting itself.

ARCHITECTURAL PROJECTS, 1992–1997

1995 — MAISON 15H05

Realised residential project, Philippeville, Belgium

COMPETITION-WINNING ARCHITECTURAL PROJECTS ART BOX, A WAY OF LIVING, VAX SCHOOL

1997 — LIQUID AXIS

Winning proposal, International Ideas Competition, Thessaloniki, Greece

Catalyst for the founding of LAB[au]

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1987

FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION

Galerie Raum, Pforzheim, Germany

1988–1991

EXHIBITION ASSISTANT AND COORDINATOR

Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Germany

Worked closely with Zdenek Felix on the preparation and realisation of exhibitions. Worked directly with Hanne Darboven and Gerhard Merz and contributed to exhibitions by Michelangelo Pistoletto, Elaine Sturtevant and On Kawara.

1992–1998

ARCHITECTURE STUDIES

La Cambre, Brussels, Belgium

Diploma in Architecture, 1998.

1992–1998

SELECTED EXHIBITION AND ARTIST ASSISTANCE

Joël Benzakin — exhibition assistance, Le Nouveau Musée, Villeurbanne, France

Christoph Blase — exhibition assistance for Le Monde critique, Kunstverein Hamburg, Germany

Marin Kasimir — artist assistance, Atelier Calder, Saché, France

1995

MAISON 15H05

Realised residential project, Philippeville, Belgium

1995–1997

SELECTED ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITIONS AND PROJECTS

Art Box — competition-winning architectural project

A Way of Living — competition-winning architectural project

VAX School — competition-winning architectural project

1997

LIQUID AXIS

Winning proposal, International Ideas Competition, Thessaloniki, Greece

Initially conceived as an individual architectural project, Liquid Axis became the catalyst for founding LAb[au] in 1997.

SINCE 1997

FOUNDER AND ARTIST

LAB[au], Brussels, Belgium

Collective artistic practice bringing together art, architecture, language and conceptual inquiry.

2003–2013

CO-FOUNDER AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

MediaRuimte, Brussels, Belgium

Exhibition platform presenting exhibitions, performances, residencies, workshops and international curatorial projects.

2015–2021

CO-FOUNDER AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Société, Brussels, Belgium

Exhibition platform investigating conceptual strategies and their continued relevance within contemporary artistic practice.

SINCE 2022

CO-FOUNDER AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

TOPO?, Brussels, Belgium

Nomadic platform activated through occasional exhibitions and curatorial projects, exploring new forms of presenting, contextualising and reflecting on art.

WRITINGS

2026 — FROM REPRESENTATION TO REPRESENTABILITY

Towards an Operative Aesthetic

A philosophical and linguistic essay examining how something becomes representable through the structures and processes that condition what can be shown—and where the unrepresentable begins.

2026 — FARBEN | FERNAB (COLOURS FAR AWAY)

Another Approach to Colour

Through the permutation of the German word Farben into fernab —far away—the essay approaches colour through language and etymology, developing a previously unwritten taxonomy of colours.

English, German, French

2025 — PUNCTUM, ZEIT SETZEN (INSCRIBING TIME)

Writing Time, Reading History

Tracing an unwritten lineage of artistic thought from Almir Mavignier through Hanne Darboven to LAb[au].

English, German, French

2022 — FROM VISUAL AND CONCRETE TO ALGORITHMIC AND INTELLIGENT POETRY

Curatorial research paper written in preparation for the curated group exhibition P,OE?!e

TOPO?, Brussels, Belgium

French, English

2021 — LE LANGAGE DE L'IMAGE ET L'IMAGE DU LANGAGE

Curatorial research paper written in preparation for the unrealised exhibition project Remplacement et Ekphrasis.

French, English

2018 — FROM ANALOGIES TO TRANSCODING

Curatorial research paper written in preparation for the group exhibition Transcoding

Société, Brussels, Belgium

French, English

