Graduation Plan P2
The Public and Academic accumulated

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Personal information

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Studio information

Theme: The Public Retreat, a new university library in Amsterdam
Teachers: Mark Pimlot and Christoph Grafe
Argumentation of choice studio: Strong affiliation towards chair’s philosophy towards design and practice, interest towards project theme and trust in value of mentoring.
Personal theme: The Public and Academic accumulated

Problem statement

The city of Amsterdam sees itself as a key place for academic education and student life. Simultaneously it unconditionally boosts the tourist industry, which is able to almost completely overtake the historic centre. Theme park Amsterdam matches however badly with academic and public life. It leads to a conflict the latter gradually seem to lose. The assignment for our graduation studio, the establishment of a new university library, has the potential to resist this process.

For centuries the library was the accumulator of knowledge and its safeguard. Under the pressure of digitalization it now becomes more and more a place solely dedicated to academic study. A natural development, but also quite threatening since library management is all too willing to throw out the “inefficient” old books and policies. The architect should be wary that the university library does not turn to an obvious office building. It should strive to keep the enigmatic while still being highly tangible.

The university library hosts both the open student community as the intimate intellect of the individual. It asks for a gradual sequence of spaces and experiences, keenly articulated in its architecture. Key is understanding the student as a human being in close interaction with his surrounding environment and fellow academics, actively undertaking the process of gaining and producing knowledge. It is here where his personal and communal memory will reside.
The question becomes where the building should arise, what exact program it should accommodate, how it should address the city, its interior, its users and most fundamental, how it would be capable to successfully accumulate the Public and the Academic, regain the *sui generis* of the university library and collaborate with the academic community and individual.

**Goal of final project**

At several points this graduation project must intentionally satisfy. It should be an accurate and critically argued intervention in the urban fabric, addressing the city on several levels. It should accommodate and signify specifically towards the programatic elements and those using it. It should be designed to bind academic (students) and public users (citizens) on both a physical as mental level.

It should contain the enigmatic spirit of the university library and relate to the rich history of knowledge institutions. Of importance is that this is an interpretation of precedents and not a mere process of replication. Current and future implications must be addressed as fully as those past.

Finally, the worked out proposal should accommodate the academic climate and the student on a human level. The sequence of spaces and events should act as an integrated whole, while still being able of having highly articulated architecture in its several parts.

**Method of design and research**

The research done is twofold. First theoretical and anthropological investigation is undertaken. The emotional binding of the student to his academic city. The motivation of the chosen site in Amsterdam, in terms of historic, sociocultural and political aspects. Academic places in Amsterdam seen as Foucauldian heterotopias. And the use of university libraries through the intended use (analysis of made design), controlled use (interviews with management and policymakers) and the actual use (observation of user behavior).

Secondly the research is aimed on critical and systematic analysis of precedents developed through group work. In a same manner the sites are typologically investigated. National (Amsterdam, Leiden, Utrecht) and international (Antwerp, Vienna, Dublin) excursions are undertaken to physically encounter and scrutinize cities in relation with knowledge institutions and culture. Extensive stands are developed by writing and stating (and restating) a personal position paper. A handbook includes all made (group) work till so far, allowing communal inspiration and reflection.

The personal design methods applied are also twofold and simultaneous. Books (theory and fiction), paintings, movies and personal precedents sources are consulted. At the same time sketches (pen on calque), CAD drawings, diagrams, mass and open models (wood, styrofoam, cardboard, clay) are made on several levels, generally from rough and broad (urban 1:10000/1:1000) towards more precise and narrow (building 1:200/1:50) and finally very detailed and definite (interior and building parts 1:20/1:5). These are presented on paper (A0 or A3), in model and orally to appointed mentors and possible audience. The critique given and discussion held is written down and taken to rework the design, slowly becoming more coherent, settled and articulated.
Literature and precedents

A multifold of sources is consulted to generate inspiration and guidance. Theoretical books on the city\(^1\), the university of Amsterdam\(^2\), library typology\(^3\). Research data of the UvA and historic photos and maps\(^4\), fictional books\(^5\) and movies\(^6\).


General experience of the city of Amsterdam and the many libraries, palaces and other public buildings (new and old) visited are used more intuitively.

Reflection

The graduation project will in first sense be fictional and personal, while it is strongly linked to immediate issues in an existing problem field. The need and debate of an university library is a real topic in the city of Amsterdam, the chosen sites are relevant in terms of their relation towards the university and the urban. The project will be contributing to the self but also, indirectly, to a larger sociocultural and scientific framework. As architect I will bring along the knowledge and skills gained, using it in future design projects.

The graduation project can besides act as a precedent for other fictional or real assignments, even in other academic and artistic fields. The library is still a present architectural assignment of great potential towards the city and the academic in general. The architecture itself can also inspire other creative undertakings.

In any case a fully engaged and dedicated approach towards the graduation project is eminent.

\(^2\) Curatoren van de Universiteit van Amsterdam (1927) Van Athenaeum tot Universiteit. Geschiedenis van het Athenaeum Illustre in de negentiende eeuw (Amsterdam) University of Amsterdam
\(^3\) Pevsner, N. (1976) A History of Building Types (London) Thames and Hudson Ltd. p.91-110
Planning

7th of February: start graduation project, work for P1:

> group research into typology, precedents, city and sites
> participating in workshop project “Msc2 in one week”
> group excursions (Antwerp, Vienna)
> theoretical/anthropological research into city, academic places, sites, history and library use
> writing and oral stating of position paper

13th of April: P1 presentation, work for P2:

> analysis of location, program and precedents
> urban research (1:1000) in drawing, model and sketch
> building experimentation (1:500) in drawing, model and sketch
> development of several models, debating potentials
> investigation of organization, movement through spaces (horizontal, vertical)
> implementation of programmatic elements required and added
> making first drawings (plans, sections, facades) and modeling 1:200
> preparations towards P2, graduation plan

29th of June: P2 presentation, work for P3:

> rework proposal on all levels 1:200 by given and personal critique
> designing of entree(s) and sequence of spaces
> start designing interior and several study places
> analyzing and designing facades (1:100)
> investigation of construction, facades and building physics
> investigation of sustainable potentials

P3 presentation (date unknown), work for P4:

> reworking of whole design (plan, section, facade, model) 1:100
> reworking interior, study places
> full integration and design of construction, installation and building physics (1:20, 1:5)
> architectural and technical detailing
> preparations towards P4, graduation plan

P4 presentation (date unknown), work for P5:

> reworking of whole architectural and technical design on all levels
> preparations towards P5

P5 presentation (date unknown).