

Ikebana Gallery School // *craft in the city*

Refelction paper Urban Architecture

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Introduction

In the studio of urban architecture, the aim is to create meaningful and durable architecture, focusing on craft and craftsmanship which is necessary for its execution. However, the vocational schools in the Netherlands lack recognition and their role in society deteriorated over time. The design assignment for this studio is to design an education-related programme in a given urban context, in the form of 'the new craft school'.

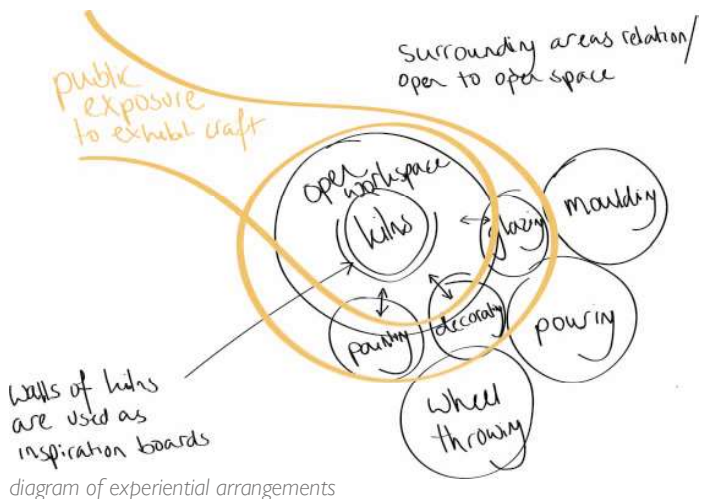
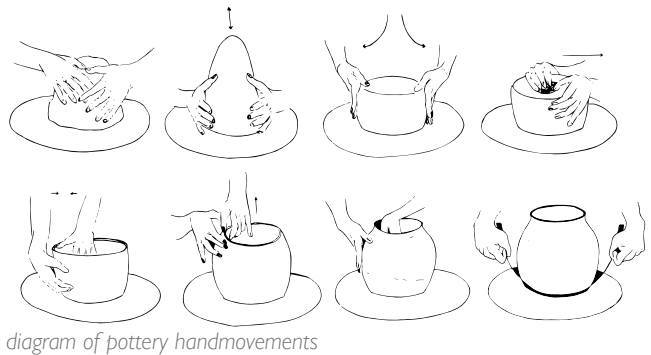
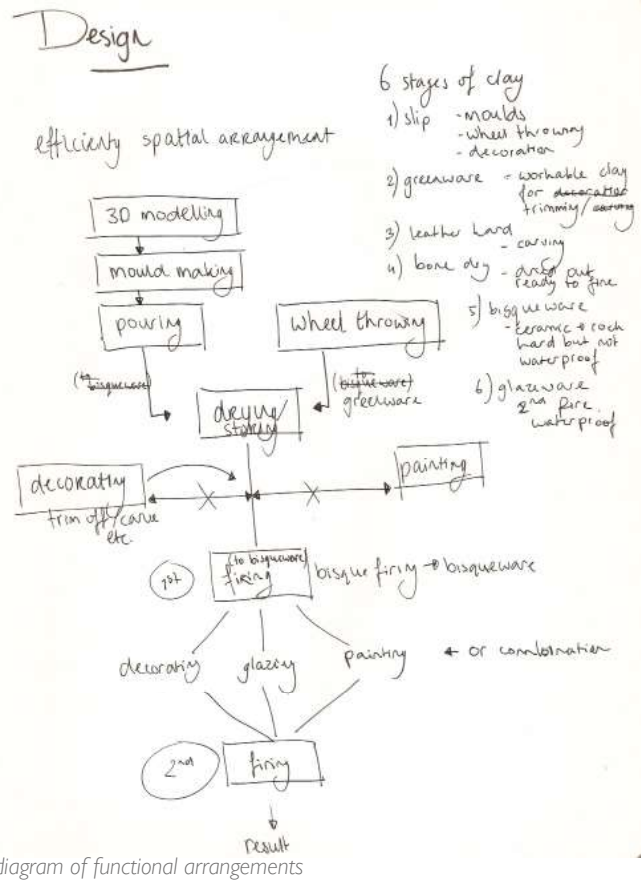
Goal definition

To design 'the new craft school', two questions pop up; is the revaluation of local craft possible and what will this new craft school look like, considering its public role in the given context. To answer these questions, I researched the question "how can a building create, promote and communicate the cultures of crafts and specific networks of people, places and knowledge? What is its public role and how can it become 'didactic architecture? The goal of Ikebana Gallery School is to provide an education-related programme that is based on the craft of ceramics, which is of historical value for the city of Delft, where the project is located. This school building will strengthen the public realm by creating a public passage where the craft of ceramics are created, exhibited and taught to the public. The education programme is based on the philosophy of embodied knowledge and experiential education, which results in a specific arrangement of the school programme.

Craft school assemble

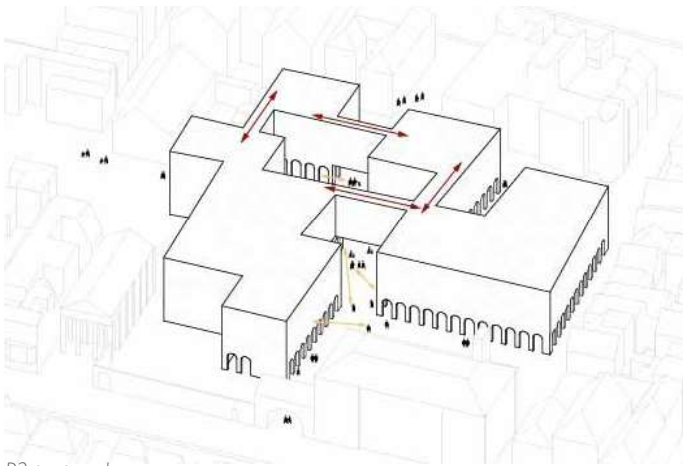
This specific arrangement of the school programme comes from different research methods, for example, a studio visit and an online meeting with the dean of the ceramic school. Along with literature studies, praxeological and phenomenological studies and explorational research and drawings. In general, my methodology and therefore my approach is quite sensorial, which brought me as an architect into uncertain paths. As I wrote in my position paper, there is no wrong or right approach to conduct research or to embark an assignment, as long as one is open and honest about the process and framework of the research. However, the sensorial and experienced side of researching a site is still underexposed, among others because there is no direct associated aesthetic.

I faced the challenge of translating my research into a physical design and started with a diagram that shows the different spaces and how they are related to each other and should react to their surroundings. Along with the conducted research, this was the start of the craft school assemble, what I consider to be an experiential education environment.



Translation to form

The preliminary design presented at the P2 presentation still sums up the main aspects of the current design. It enhances the public realm while creating an inspirational, experiential education environment. The upgrade of the public realm translates into a public route and public space on the ground floor level, where one can find the execution of the craft education. This visible didactic element of the school is interspersed with (semi) public functions such as a craft shop and a café. The first floor is the school environment for the students. The first form derives from the current urban tissue, following building and sightlines of its surrounding, seeking for public paths I want to foster. The public route and spaces provoke curiosity by people wandering around the city centre, which is a major theme in my design. The concept diagram shows arches in the façade, in the first intention to create an open façade which seeks for interaction in different ways, but what slowly became the major stumbling block.

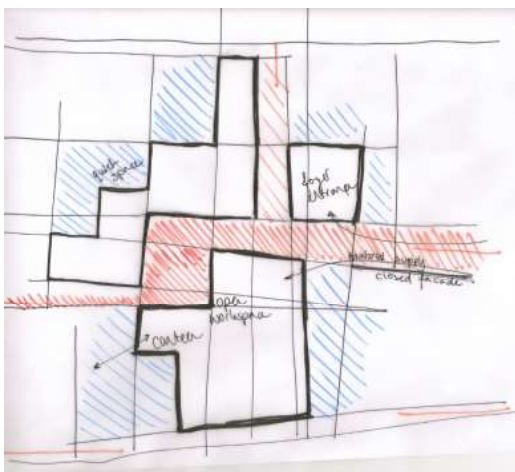


P2 proposal

Arch, arch, arch

The first proposed arches in my façade resembled the history of the city and the craft, along with their power of imposing. To my opinion, this was needed in the building, and why I could not leave them in the beginning. Niels Groeneveld was a guest for a few weeks and he showed me the work of Donna van Milligen Bielke. Her design for 'de Binnenrotte' but mostly 'The kunstwerf' in Rotterdam, intrigued me. How she interprets the public space and introduces routes through an urban fabric. So came the thought of not just arches in the façade, but walls of arches or arched gates that guides or provide one access to the inner courtyard, the public space. Niels advised me to seek the tectonics of my building, keeping her work in mind.

Simultaneously, while the spatial design made little steps, the structural concept made headway. The different volumes on the ground floor level that are connected on the first floor did not provide an underlay for an obvious structure. As mentioned before, the first form derived from the surrounding urban tissue, that for several reasons do not share any building line. At one moment, Ger mentioned that the scheme of my volumes looked somewhat like a spine. A spine with an overlapping structural line, connecting most of the volumes with some exceptions. He mentioned several times throughout the whole graduation to look for the common, focus on the common first and thereafter the exception. Up till now, I still feel like every part of my project is the exception, but probably that is common. Nevertheless, the spine provided the starting point of the structure development, with ideas about trussed beams, under spanned truss, regular and curved rafters.



scheme building lines surrounding urban tissue

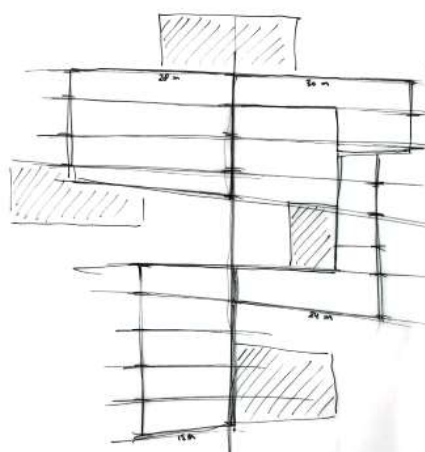


diagram of constructural spine

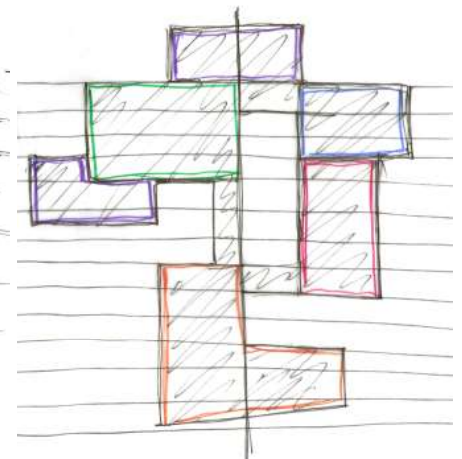


diagram of spine and different volumes

Due to its complexity, the plot has no clear backsides, which is challenging. Besides, the separate volumes I created on the ground floor, connecting them on the first floor gave me so many different facades, that I started to group them. I grouped and 'labelled' them in different categories, educational, functional and transitional spaces, open and closed façades. I started sketching the facades, to find more unity in their tectonic. I held on to the idea of brick arches on the ground floor, which melts into the urban tissue of the historical city centre of Delft. But on the upper floor, I was seeking lightness.

With the P3 ahead of me, I was forced to make some decisions. Mechthild mentioned the Wildernesse Restaurant from Morris and Company several times and plenty of other references showed me the different uses of arches. Arches became my load-bearing structure, different radius characterizing different uses, like a small arch for circulation space, similar to a hallway. In this stage, the arched moved from the flat façade towards the interiors, framing the different spaces of the experiential education environment.

Simplicity in complexity

By now, I should have had a more elaborate design, but the cohesion between my concept, the structural design and the arches was far from near. I was trying to find coherency between the load-bearing structure, the use of space, the inner courtyard. Between informal and formal spaces, interior and exterior transitions, open and closed facades. Trying to make sense of the structure of the building while taking an environmental position, keeping in mind my concept and how deeply I want to hold on to this exceptional school design. Mechthild mentioned that I am trying to combine different typologies and that is not working out so far yet. I had to find the simplicity in complexity, that is where I started looking into Dom Hans van der Laan and decided to get rid of the arched (for now). Mechthild referred again to the monastery typology, that diving into this typology could give me a more narrowed-down vision.

I learned that, throughout my process, the major characteristic that defines my new craft school are the experience of the public visitor, the spatial arrangement of the school environment and the inner courtyard. I brought in to begin the modern monastery. However, a little too late for the specified P4 presentation in December, my design finally made sense and I could continue elaborating on it. The spatial and building technology design are both making big steps forward. Throughout my process and search, I have been making decisions and considerations, so this was a really enjoyable situation to be in as a designer.

In my first fictional section of the experiential education environment, I had drawn a school garden. I noticed during my research that a lot of ceramist gain inspiration from nature. That is why I wanted to include a Japanese garden where one can come to peace and find inspiration. I probably should have visited this garden myself more often, to find peace while designing. However, I want to include nature in my project, not merely a green roof, I want to design the rainwater drainage because this is also part of the job of an architect. Besides, instead of eliminating them to the 'backsides' of my building, they empty into the inner courtyard, this is the heart of this building where all aspect comes together. During tutoring, Ger reasoned this in its finest while asking: "what is clay without water"? He also inspired me to build more nature inclusive. This results in a graduation project that is built for a craft that is based on natural materials, built with natural materials, includes natural elements and inhabitants following my concept for the new craft school.

Follow my steps

As mentioned before, throughout the process I had been making decisions and considerations already. Mechthild told me from the very beginning to start drawing. However, I did not, immediately. I have the most creative moments in my head, where I wander around the unfinished parts of my design and try to make decisions and considerations. These are not just based on what is already on a paper, but incorporate



references of use or arches

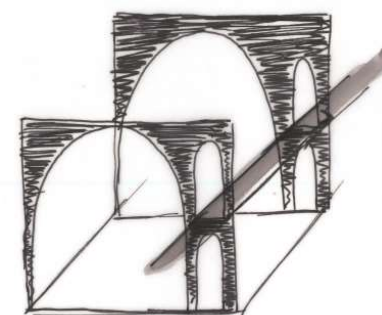


diagram concept of arches P3

so many other aspects. Earlier thought in the research I reconsider, references I have seen on ArchDaily or Pinterest, even the smallest details can feed my mind. I also tend to keep my options open since I do not want to narrow them down too quickly, and I sure do not want to settle for the first thing that 'works'. I have a critical view, especially on my work, which keeps me from showing work that is 'unfinished' and subsequently from making progress. Reflecting on my designing process and ways of communicating, I can imagine that it was hard sometimes for my tutors to follow my steps. In my graduation plan, I mentioned that the school building will relate to the architecture master track since it highly values the materialization and detailing of the building to create a valuable design. With this knowledge, I will be able to design from entity to detail and from detail to entity. I want to emphasize, that the immediate experience of the whole is the entity, for example, the courtyard in my project. But later, one can distinguish all the details that are part of it, all the small little details that make this entity a whole. As long as one is not willing to give up the details, the entity will be rewarding.

Conclusion

The Ikebana gallery school positions itself in a dense urban context with a secure connection to its didactic elements and the reappraisal of the chosen craft. It is a multi-faced project which sheds light on education, residents and parties to re-direct the urban context. My interventions for the Gasthuisplaats allow me the opportunity to communicate my view for a contemporary school building in the historic city centre of Delft while improving the public realm. Its future outcome will show the different faces and considerations of the design, which shows my skill as a beginning architect to design a contemporary building while revaluating crafts and craftsmanship and valuating its historical context. The awareness of detail and material will be highly relevant for a professional career, which enables me to create meaningful architecture in the future. Thank you to Mechthild, Ger and Leeke, who taught me a lot during this graduation studio. However, there is still plenty to learn but my appreciation towards craft and craftsmanship increased enormously and I hope that my graduation project can contribute this to the wider public.

