



ARMAMENTARIUM NO.8

REFLECTION - D.P.Landman - 1049518 - RMIT

INTRODUCTION

This reflection serves as a short explanation, which addresses the results of the design I made within the RMIT graduation studio. The product, process and planning will be positioned against the initially described workflow and will be subsequently discussed.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D.P. Landman', written diagonally across the page.

COLOFON

PERSONAL INFORMATION

D.P.Landman
1049518
Prins Hendrikkade 84a
3071 KE
Rotterdam
06 41 85 55 43
d.p.landman@student.tudelft.nl

STUDIO

RMIT – Armamentarium/Paardenmarkt
ir. N. Hermkens
dr. ir. W.J.Quist

TITLE

Armamentarium No.8

PRODUCT

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The project takes place within the framework of the RMIT Graduation Studio and is focussed on the location of the Armamentarium. The Armamentarium Complex is an ensemble of several buildings, which has its origins in 1602 when it was established as the main storage facility for military goods in the Netherlands. Over the course of the 17th century the complex expanded into its current known volume of built space, mainly because of functional demand during the 80-year war and the 17th century wars against England. After the Netherlands became a monarchy in 1813, there became a decline in the military needs for the country and with the impending industrialisation that would follow the Armamentarium Complex began to lose its purpose. In the second half of the 20th century the ensemble of buildings was transformed into a museum about the Royal Dutch Army by means of conserving the existing structure and adding small elements the new function required. The museum has been rehoused elsewhere since the summer of 2013 and the complex of buildings now lies empty, waiting for a new purpose within the city of Delft. During the course of this project the TU Delft started temporarily using parts of the complex as presentation rooms. This hasn't changed the strategy of my design and the starting point has remained the same; that of an empty complex of buildings, waiting for a new purpose within the city of Delft.

The main research question that has driven this work is:

How can the ensemble of the Armamentarium, in unison with the peninsula it is situated on, be transformed in order to become an integral part of the historic inner city of Delft again?



GOAL

The intention of the graduation project is to formulate a realistic transformational proposal for the Armamentarium Complex to safeguard this remarkable ensemble for the future. In order to do so the research and design has been focussed on determining and preserving the inherent characteristics that are of intrinsic value to the ensemble. Additionally specific focus has been within the research on a new urban strategy and a fitting new program. This has been done from two perspectives: the perspective of the city of Delft and its requirements, and the perspective of the ensemble of buildings; what can be offered or taken from a specific program that suits the

ensemble best. In my opinion these elements are of vital importance when it comes to formulating a transformational proposal for a complex of buildings like this. The proposal should function on different scales in order for it to be appealing to more than just one group of future users. The role of the complex within the inner city has to be re-established to make it useable once again, on the scale of the neighbourhood and the city, but also on the potentially larger national or international scale. The combination of unique Dutch heritage, partnered with a diverse program, which caters to the different scales, should accomplish this.

PROCESS

METHOD DESCRIPTION

In order to attempt to answer the research question, the process has been divided into different sections with corresponding research and design approaches.

Following the previously described framework, the research has started with a cultural-historical analysis, which has been done in order to provide a base of knowledge with regards to the political and social relevance of the urbanisation of the Armamentarium Complex. The urban scales have been researched in more depth by a morphological analysis. Based on the importance of taxonomy and classification, the episteme of morphology, the study of shape, has provided further understanding of the physical urban setting of the complex within its urban structure. By looking at the morphology of the different elements that make up the direct urban surroundings, a form of classification could be introduced by means of typological elements that are related to volume and function. The centralised location of the Armamentarium Complex within its urban setting could be determined, classified and characterised.

Additionally typological research has been conducted in order to gain understanding of the unity of the ensemble of buildings within the greater ensemble of the inner city of Delft. The episteme of typology is a tool that can be used to determine and provide insight into the main characteristics of the different elements of the Armamentarium Complex. Whereas a 'model' provides an example in the form of a direct copy, a 'type' provides a set of essential characteristics that form the essence of the object. By understanding the essence it has been possible to classify intrinsic characteristics, which in my opinion are one of the basic needs for an academic transformational proposal.

REFLECTION

The 17th century was the most significant era in the history of the Dutch Republic and later the monarchy that is called The Netherlands. The great rise of the Dutch trading tradition was centralised around the Dutch East-India Company and one of their seats of power was opposite the Armamentarium Complex in Delft with an adjacent storage facility, which today is part of the complex.

Today many historic properties sit unused whilst transformation strategies for these entities are very valuable for the city centres they are positioned in. Not merely economically, but also very much socially. In the case of the Armamentarium Complex we are dealing with a unique state monument, which has been in active use for the past 400 years and has transformed itself several times during this period. The social conditions have changed over time and have led to a complex of buildings that has been isolated from the city centre, literally. As it is the case with many historic properties within existing structures it is mainly a remnant of the past, which is very interesting from a cultural historical perspective, but doesn't do a lot for the city from a social and economical perspective. Following the theme of this RMIT studio, where we are dealing with existing structures and transforming them accordingly, I feel that a new development strategy is necessary which addresses these social conditions and following on from this the economic potential. For this to be successful the intervention has to operate on different levels; from the scale of the neighbourhood and city to a national/international scale of the country.

PRODUCT

Within the project the search for a good answer to the main research question has started with the initial search for a new urban strategy and fitting program. From this a transformation strategy has been formulated for the ensemble with sensitivity to the intrinsic values of the separate elements that make up the ensemble. These intrinsic values are very important because they represent one of the main unique selling points of the complex and should be treated with restraint. Dealing with existing structures doesn't mean you should see the object as a ruin upon which you can enforce your vision, but it has to be a balance between what is there and what it can become. I think that the combination of preservation with transformation is fitting, not just for this assignment but also in general, because it refers to a sense of history that is appealing for future users. When contrasted with something new a dialog appears and a reflective stance can be taken towards the intervention. This enhances the experience of use and serves as a meaningful layer within the overall project.

The cultural-historical analysis and the morphological studies have been a valuable starting point and have gained insight in more than merely the bricks and mortar of the complex. The social implications of the structure within the city showed to have always been of vital importance and they unfortunately have been lost to a certain degree during the last decade. Discovering the current flow of people through the city and revealing the blind spots around the Armamentarium have resulted in a new urban strategy, where the peninsula is reconnected with the inner city through an elaboration on the canon of Delft inner city bridges. The peninsula also becomes a place on the route of the touristic infrastructure, which uses the iconic water structure of the city. By taking the peninsula as a starting point for the new urban strategy it functions on the level of the complex and its location whilst being part of a larger strategy for the city. This means the urban intervention can function even if elements from the larger strategy would fall through. The role of the peninsula in the larger framework is important and would function best when executed as a total package, but this is not an imperative requirement.

A new program has been formulated that caters to the needs of the city and to the unique characteristics the ensemble can offer to the program, in the form of a new cultural program called the TU EXPO. This new exposition function positions the TU Delft and its unique collections and

research within the current offer of cultural functions in the historic inner city of Delft. A continuously changing exhibition showcases what the TU has to offer and can offer in the future, together with the complex it is housed it encapsulates the core values of the Delft Council; history and technique. In addition to this there is a partnership with Delft Design and T.O.P. which emphasises these values in the form of a shop and free public exhibition. The program is enriched with a flexible program for meetings, workshops and presentations that can be used by the TU, but can also be economically exploited. Furthermore there is a separate floor with study spaces for students. A grand café, coffeebar and office complete the program and provide a direct connection between the complex and the public space. The new program is diverse and coherent at the same time. The smaller scale public functions on the ground floor provide the needs of the neighbourhood, while the main function of the EXPO appeals to the scale of the city on one hand and the international character of the TU on the other hand. The flexible program can function on its own if necessary and can be economically independent on the scale of the region. Together this new program aims for activity within the complex 24/7 in order to transform this part of the city into a worthy vibrant addition. As mentioned in the problem statement the TU has actually moved into part of the complex during this design process, which in my mind shows the potential of a potentially great future partnership.

The morphological studies, together with typological understanding have provided a value assessment that captures the inherent characteristics of the ensemble and its individual elements. One of the unique qualities in the history of the complex is the fact that it has been built and transformed during seven different phases. In the past it has been used as utilitarian storage buildings, which provided the complex with a functional unity. The renewed connection to the urban tissue in combination with the increasing public and social character of the new program has led to a re-evaluation of the connections between the separate parts of the ensemble. With this re-evaluation the strategy is to enable the complex to function as a whole entity again, without losing the inherent and intrinsic values of the individual elements, as stated in the value assessment. It is imperative though for a large main function (in this case the EXPO) to connect and carry the additional program so the complex functions not only physically but also programmatically as a whole entity again.

The complex is re-evaluated into several different elements, according to the newly defined program. On the ground floor the direct connection with the newly articulated urban space is made. In addition to the new clearly marked entrance for the TU EXPO, which is the main element of the program, the other public accessible parts of the program are situated. This provides a defined connection between the different elements of the complex and the public space they serve and are served by.

The individual values of the main parts of the complex are characterised by imposing wood structures in the form of two rows of standvinken, onderslagbalken and moerbalken, which emphasise the carre-structure of these buildings. The hard lines give the buildings structure and a raw honesty with regards to the original use of the complex. With the intervention a more neutral and accessible language of architecture is projected within the structure, with a clear architecture and materialisation that is seeking contrast with the existing structure. Different spaces within the complex are coherently bound together by the introduction of a new neutral floor slab. The slab is emphasised by allowing space in between this new structure and the existing, where this space is subtly lit to mark this. The introduction of the new intervention within the existing structure is taken very literally and shown that way by means of contrast in shape, atmosphere and materialisation. Originally I tried a more subtle approach that wasn't successful. The overpowering presence of the complex asked for a more imposing intervention that leaves no uncertainty between what is new and what is existing. Of course this is only one end of the spectrum of the intervention; on the other end there is the careful preservation of the existing structure by

restoring the original woodwork and brickwork, the use of monumental glazing in combination with hidden mechanical ventilation and insulation of the ground floor and roof section.

On the first floor the exhibition is housed and here all the separate elements of the Armamentarium complex are physically connected. This is achieved by the introduction of the new neutral floor slab, in combination with a series of connecting breakthroughs that are designed within a family of architectural interventions. A new free flowing sequence of spaces through the ensemble is created, where the confrontation between the new and the existing is not only clearly defined by its articulation, but also adds to the comprehension of the original ensemble and its position within the city.

The second floor of the 1692 part of the complex houses the flexible program for meetings, workshops and presentations and is served by the office part of the program, which is situated in the VOC building that later became part of the ensemble. The same themes within the intervention continue not only here, but also on the 2nd top floor that houses the study spaces. On this floor the inner part of the roof structure is opened up to create a light but secluded space within the complex, whilst at the same time not affecting the outer shell of the monument that is visible within the city.

The different parts of the program, divided over the separate floors are vertically connected by a new atrium space, for which the inner courtyard of the 1692 building is transformed. This new circulation space is defined by treating the existing brick walls with a lime plaster and white lime paint. This creates a light and airy new core of the complex with a soft reflection of light due to the specific materialisation. A new grid roof with its own structure ends this space and is modelled on the different elements of furnishing that are present within the atrium.

PROCESS & PLANNING

The process that I have followed during this project has gone slightly different than I initially planned. The strategy of morphological and typological research, in combination with the cultural-historical background of the object, has provided me with a clear value assessment. This value assessment should have been the base for the rest of the project. Unfortunately this wasn't initially the case. Between P2 and P3 I tried to develop the project with one big gesture. Based on the typology of the gate as a connective element throughout the entire ensemble I chased the solution of an internal street as the main intervention. Because the program of the RMIT studio is very organised with clear moments of feedback it became apparent that while the rest of the design was slowly growing, the main concept was not correct. The week before the P3 presentation this penny dropped and I had to re-assess what I was doing and wanted to achieve.

From that moment on I reflected on my P2 and research report and went back to the value assessment and used this as the base as it should have been all along. The urban strategy made more sense and could be elaborated on. Based on the existing plans by West 8 for parts of the Spoorzone development, I already quickly zoomed in on the peninsula where the ensemble is situated on. Not only the urban strategy but also the program needed more input, so this was subsequently developed and enriched in order to provide the program previously discussed.

The goal of enabling the complex to function as a whole entity again, without losing the inherent and intrinsic values of the individual elements has been a process of moulding a re-assessing. This has felt slightly chaotic at times whilst also strangely pleasant. From an architectural perspective I tried to challenge myself by taking a different approach than I was previously used to. I tried to be guided by the existing situation and from an analytical episteme shape the parts of the program as well functionally as architecturally. This meant zooming in on different parts of the design and zooming out to put everything in perspective several times during the process. By slowly moulding

and re-assessing the design this way this has proved to be a very worthy exercise during which I feel I have learned a lot from the people involved.

Retrospectively it has taken me more time than I intended to reach this point and I found it difficult at times to get a clear grip on the assignment. Designing different parts of the program and then positioning them again within the larger framework has proved to be a new and slightly chaotic experience whilst at the same time a very valuable process from which I take a lot with me for the next project I will do. In the end I feel got to grips with the entire program and provided a realistic transformational proposal, which has always been my intention.