

The Identity of the Holland-Coast

Reflection paper

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Graduation process

This project concludes my second graduation. Two years ago, I graduated in the field of Landscape architecture. I was overall very pleased with my research for that graduation project, but I had a lot of trouble with my design project, and the results left much to be desired. I had a lot of difficulty deciding between the master track of architecture and landscape, as both had my interest. Therefore, I decided to continue my studies after my first masters.

My research theme is the Dutch coast. I grew up along the Dutch Coast and throughout my landscape studies I learned more about it. In this research project I wanted to explore what building elements are characteristic for these places I love so much. For the graduation design I continued with my passion for this landscape by designing an ensemble of buildings that embody the typical elements of the Dutch coast.

Towards p1 I struggled trying to define my research enough to make it workable. I had a lot of ideas and had trouble discarding any. This led to my research project not going as smooth as I hoped. In the end the research remains less structured than I would like. I feel like the quality of my graduation research of my previous graduation tops this one. One of the reasons for this is the change in our workplace this year. Due to the pandemic, all education moved online from halfway to p1. Therefore, there was a lot less chatting with fellow students. A casual relaxing moment that contributes more strongly to the project than I previously imagined. While casually talking about our graduation project we constantly reframe and redefine the focus of our research and this helps tremendously in creating clarity and structure in the graduation process. In the end this led to a retake of the p2 presentation.

The lack of clarity in the research part of the project made the relation between the design and the research also less clear. I tried to abstract my research into applicable design tools that were no longer related to the programme of the buildings I analysed. This abstraction however, caused my tools to be more general and less site specific. During my P2 I presented the relation between my research and design as solely based on the use of traditional materials. Looking back, it is easy to see how strongly the positioning of my design relates to the villa's in the dune's typology. The scale of my buildings is based on the historic fishing villages that were located in the dunes. These smaller relations between the research and the design proved for me essential in ensuring that my design fit the site.

In my preferred design process, I work a lot with handmade models and maquettes to explore the spatial qualities of my ideas. This however is especially hard to convey through images. The extra layer of information that a model as design tool has when you can hold it and touch it and feel it and look at it from all sides feels lost when the model is reduced to pictures. The extra times that it takes to create the model compared a drawing is no longer worth it in this case.

After the P2 I created a 1:2000 scale model of my location that highlights the relation between my design location and village of Wijk aan Zee. After P2 I worked on a relief model of the location in 1:200 and created little mass studies to observe the scale of the buildings in relation to the landscape. As we for further into the design of the plan and the level of detail rose, I moved to mainly drawings as my tools at home did not compare to the facilities at the university, I was used to having fulltime at my disposal. For me this slowed the process down.

After the summer break the summer break, I felt like I was finally getting used to the online education. But as the tutoring themes moved from research related talk to more drawing and the sharing of spatial ideas felt once again very confronted with the limitations of this kind of contact. The tactile elements of architecture that are traditionally exchanged in little pen or marker sketches lost some of the quality when exchanged in wrinkle large bright coloured computer lines. I missed using multiple layers of tracing paper to explore different design possibilities in tutoring sessions. Furthermore, in order to ensure clear communication, it proved necessary to make computer drawings of my weekly sketches for the tutoring sessions. Seeing only one image at the time, the overview of the project was easily lost with tracing paper sketches.

In the end a week before the final presentation I got quite sad about the idea of graduating without models, so I set out to create some last-minute models with all the spare materials I had collected over the years of study. Although my presentation could be a whole lot shaper had I not, This move sparked a joy in me that earlier felt a little lost. I wonder how different my design and my graduation experience would have been had this taken place in any other year. Despite the difficulties caused by the adjustment to online education, I still feel more confident and prouder of my final design in this graduation project than in my last. I struggled a lot with the adjustments to online education but that taught me much, that will doubtlessly be relevant in professional settings in the coming time.