

Laura Tijchon

# PROJECT JOURNAL

Interiors Buildings Cities  
Archiving Architecture

P1 through P5





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Interiors Buildings Cities  
Archiving Architecture

## COLOFON

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## ABOUT THE CHAIR

Quoted from the course manual;

### **Interiors Buildings Cities**

Interiors Buildings Cities is concerned with the history, culture and practice of architecture, addressing the ways and means by which it can contribute to the environments through which people experience the world and live well together in it. We understand the making of architecture as an inherently ethical and political act and believe in its agency, seeing it as a preeminent medium through which we can effect change and address the opportunities and challenges that are inherent within contemporary culture and society. Our teaching engages directly with these issues, concerning itself with the idea that architecture can help to construct the kind of society we wish to live in; one that is generous in its accommodation of diverse communities and which nurtures and takes pleasure in the natural environment we share with other living things.

Interiors Buildings Cities advocates a situated architecture, which is both of its time and cognisant of its place within a historical continuity. Projects address the complex legacy of modernity and more specifically twentieth-century modernism, repositioning it and seeking

to reintegrate it within the contemporary city. We take pleasure in the city as we find it, in its conditions, its impositions, its chaotic yet vital heterogeneity. At the same time, our projects focus on the need to redefine the terms upon which architecture is made, in response to the huge challenges facing our planet. Across our different courses we ask how this might be achieved at many scales, from local community to national institution; from room to city.

Interiors Buildings Cities engages architecture across all its scales, as the name suggests, and considers the relations between them as being intrinsic to it. Often conceived of an adjunct or an afterthought to the act of making architecture, our particular attention to the interior and notions of interiority instead conceive it as a central concern from which to develop our thoughts. We perceive both the domestic and the public interior as sites where representations and ideas of society are projected, where thoughts of our privacy, individuality and subjectivity are cultivated, and where notions of our place in society, and in the world, are inculcated. We are interested in seeing how individual and collective agency may be developed in these spaces, from which the building can be projected and ideas of city and society unfold.

Quoted from the course manual; edited for clarity

### **Palace**

The Palace of the Graduation studio reflects upon the history of the representative public buildings that have shaped our cities and societies. It acknowledges that this type has been constantly reinterpreted and reappropriated through time and circumstance, questioning its role and responsibilities and how it can engage with the contemporary city and its citizens. The inherent spatial complexity of the Palace, with its hierarchies, infrastructures and intricate sequences of rooms and spaces, is reinterpreted not as a physical expression of power and authority but rather as a representative framework for collective public life, where we come together as a public and might engage with one other as a diverse society.

These ambitions are outwardly expressed through its placement in the city and how its form, facades and interiors address social and urban conditions. With this as their theme, your Graduation projects will address contemporary public buildings and the institutions that occupy them as being integral to the life of the modern city. They offer opportunities to rethink known types in specific

circumstances across each scale, from interior to urban structure. The choice of project is often related to actual conditions and real clients, allowing them to be understood as an active research space with an address beyond academia.

### **Graduation Design Studio**

Palace is the overarching theme for the Interiors Buildings Cities graduation studio. Each year, the studio explores a different, complex institutional type, exploring its role in society, its responsibilities to the city and its citizens, and its representative form. The chosen project often refers to an actual, sometimes ongoing condition, working in relation to real conditions, needs, and people—whether clients or users.

The studio develops a single project over two semesters to arrive at a graduation design project. In the first semester, development is toward a mature and well-argued proposal that can be taken forward as a complete project, considering users, sites, contexts, cultural settings, histories, types, technology, and the environment in architectural design. Each of the projects within the studio will have its own set of concerns in relation to these subjects; each project is obliged to address these as central to its considerations.

## ABOUT THE STUDIO

## ABOUT THE BRIEF

The first ten weeks of the graduation studio deal with two briefs, respectively: Brief 1. Looking Carefully, and Brief 2. First Thoughts. Each of these briefs take up a period of five weeks, in which the students complete multiple assignments to get familiar with the studio and its tutors, the chosen Palace and similar projects.

The theme for this year's graduation studio is Archiving Architecture. Archiving information has long been a part of human culture. The saying knowledge is power has never been truer in a world where every interaction and every arrangement is based on information. A statement can only be true when it hails from a proper source. This introduces the problem of knowledge preservation and knowledge distribution; a problem archives all around the world seek to solve. There seems to be no one answer. Archiving can be done in various levels of technical demands, formality, secrecy and public engagement.

*"However, while they might contain facts, archives cannot be seen as fact. They are not innocent, they are never the complete truth. The question archives ask; the things they choose to keep or save; the matter of what is important and what isn't [...]"*  
- Brief 1. Looking Carefully

There is an ambiguity between the tasks an archive tries to complete. Storing documents and objects, keeping them safe from time, weather, destruction; but also researching the artifacts and sharing the discoveries with the world. Keeping an

archive demands security, policies for secrecy and rituals for preservation. Meanwhile the archive is interacting with the city, the public; trying to be attractive and interesting, proving its worth. All these paradoxes call for a complex architectural program; one that this graduation studio will tackle.

A real life example of the issue at hand can be found in Antwerp, at the VAI, the Flemish Architecture Institute. The brief describes their collection:

*"This intriguing body of material not only assembles the history of significant Flemish Architects from the past. It has been very proactive in considering the archive as a living, dynamic body of material, working with architects still in practice and thus also becoming representative of, and a force in, the transformation of Flemish architecture in recent decades; helping to create a culture which might be considered amongst the most exciting in the world."*  
- Brief 1. Looking Carefully

At the time of this project, the VAI is divided into two departments, each housed in a different location in the city of Antwerp. One is the actual archival depot, including restoration and digitalization rooms and a study space. The depot is located in the city center of Antwerp and has outgrown its boundaries entirely. The collection has grown too large and the spatial structure of the building isn't compatible with storage solutions and sensitive material. Furthermore, the work spaces for the employees are too dark and too cramped. (Hand-out by VAI)

The second part of the VAI can be found in cultural center De Singel, situated on the notoriously busy ring road of the city. Sharing an iconic modernistic building by Léon Stynen with a conservatory -amongst others- this section of the VAI is orientated more towards the public. Here, you'll find offices and an exhibition space. (Hand-out by VAI)

The VAI is in dire need of a new home. A previously held competition to locate the archive in an empty church failed. The graduation studio has now been appointed with the task of designing a (hypothetical) new archive within the monumental Singel. It should be equipped with all technical necessities to properly store different archival materials, offices that provide a pleasant work atmosphere for employees and rooms that present opportunities for public engagement. Most importantly, its architecture should be representative of the VAI's cultural message. (Brief 1. Looking Carefully)

The two briefs are accompanied by a matching assignment. The first brief Looking Carefully asks the students to study and build a photograph taken in a reference project; an (architecture) archive. Eight key reference projects have been selected, each with different architectural qualities and atmospheres. A large scale model, 1:25 or 1:33, is made to look just like the photograph, including identical looking materials, colours and lighting conditions.

While at the same time studying the contextual background of the project, the students build for

themselves a framework of knowledge, based on the reference projects. They familiarize themselves with different possible methods of designing an archive. The second brief First Thoughts is handed out only after the completion of the archive model, days before a collective study trip to Antwerp; fieldwork to research the location of De Singel and the city itself. It asks of the students to start brainstorming about how to engage the public with archival material. They will create a space to display and store archival material.

To make this exercise a bit more tactile, each of the students is assigned a small, curated amount of archival material from the VAI. A couple of different documents, objects or other material, all from the same architect. By researching the VAI, the material's architects and the material itself, the students begin to form thoughts on what and how to display. They are allowed to take a position in the sociopolitical responsibility of the VAI. With these choices considered, the students design an architectural space, including drawings and a large scale model.

*“The outcome should consider whether the archived pieces need to, or have the opportunity to say anything as an ensemble. Is there a narrative that underpins them which you would like to draw out?”*  
- Brief 2. First Thoughts

The model, accompanied by other visual means will be presented after the ten week period, in the P1 presentation. (Brief 2. First Thoughts)

## ABOUT THE JOURNAL

This first version of the Project Journal is based on all the notes (physical and digital), photos, drawings and models I made during the graduation project. To be able to draw conclusions from this material and evaluate it properly, I ordered it into three categories related to design and the design process: Process, Research and Design. Each category has its own colour. While there might be overlap between the categories -a certain drawing could certainly be part of both research and design, for example- the predominant category will be visible with a coloured tab in the corner of the page.

 for Process

 for Research

 for Design

The Process category will show the behind the scenes process that I go through. It will explain my thoughts and experiences, but also the choices made or the lessons learned. This category is

mostly meant for me as a designer to understand what my preferred way of working is and how I can manage my own instinct and design process better.

The Research category is about summarizing all the academic and empirical research that I do during the design process. At this faculty and in this studio, we focus on an integrated design process where research and design intertwine and synergize. Nevertheless, research needs to be documented in order to learn from it.

The Design category is the second part of these interacting categories. In this journal, it is used mostly to indicated draft or finished designs and the associated visualizations. The designs can be seen as a sub-conclusion of the research and design process.

As I prefer to use many different methods and materials when designing, this project journal will reflect this organized chaos. It will feature quick sketches, typed text, finished design drawings, process photographs and more.





## WEEK 1.1

02/09/24 - 06/09/24

**P** Week 1.1 was our introduction week to the graduation year. The week started off with a lecture on the Research Plan course, informing us about what a research plan is and why it is relevant. We talked about methodology and methods. We were also told that it is up to us to create a research plan that is fitting with the type of research and design we perform. I noticed the lecturer stressing the importance of spending enough time on the research plan, up to 14 hours per week. This caused me to start a logbook to check for myself if I did indeed optimized my working hours.

Just after this lecture, I already wrote down some first ideas and interests. I wondered about how objects can be leading architectural elements; how do they command a room and how do people react? Furthermore, I expressed interest in architecture that gives clues for movement and has a certain logicity in use and routing. These are themes I have tried to incorporate in my designs before.

**R** Based on the Methods of Analysis Repository we discussed in the lecture, I looked into some proposed research methods for field work. Not knowing what our field work -weeks later- would look like, I familiarized myself with some different methods. Some on-site analysis topics I found interesting were: Bordering-observational walks along edges (physical borders, legal borders, perceived borders, etc.) Characterising details - classification of

unique characteristics in historic sites Geotagging the urban landscape - data harvest through social media Re-activating minor matters of archival documents (can architectural archival information reveal social truths?) On thursday we had our first studio meeting, also an introduction. We received information on the course, the structure, the brief the tutors and more. We were divided into groups of three or four people, in which we were to make models of a reference project. I got assigned to the Archives Bordeaux Métropole, together with Romain and Casper. In the afternoon we had our first Research Seminar. Mark Pimlott gave us a lecture about the history of archives, which I found very interesting. This was followed by a guest lecture by Danielle Wilkins, who talked about the similarities between Thomas Jefferson and Sir John Soane, who both made their houses into big cabinets of curiosity.

**R** On friday, Casper, Romain and I also started our research into the Bordeaux City Archive. I reviewed two books on Robbrecht and Daem, the project's architects, from the library. We learned about reoccurring concepts in Robbrecht and Daem's work, like rhythm, colour and sculpted ceilings (Delbeke et al., 2010). Personally, I found the way Robbrecht describes colour in his projects as a fresh flow of wind intriguing. Robbrecht talks about how using juxtaposing colour in a design can stimulate. Furthermore, we found some information

on the Bordeaux archive and how it came into existence. We read that there is a clear separation in functions in the archive. The ground floor serves the public and the first floor serves the staff (Van Den Driessche, 2017). With some scrap materials and a printed floorplan,



Figure 1: first model draft

we started on a very premature version of the model, mostly to check how recreating the perspective in this space would work (figure 1 and 2). We realized quickly that different camera lenses would change the photograph strongly. We agreed that we should check our model often, by taking many test photos.

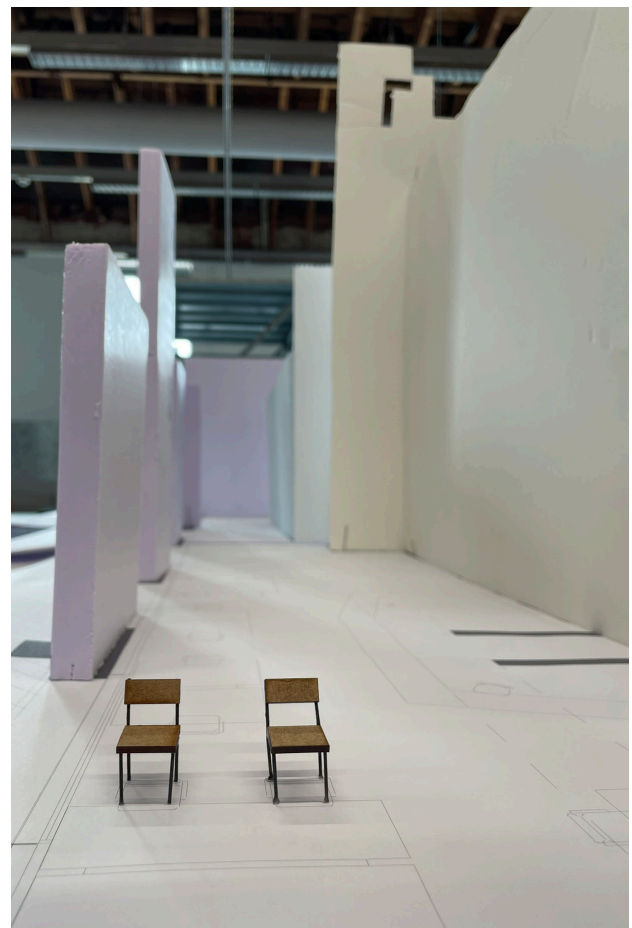


Figure 2: model picture version 1

## WEEK 1.2

09/09/24 - 13/09/24

**R** Week 1.2 started with the second lecture by the research plan course. Interestingly enough, they talked about the democracy of archival material and other primary sources. They told us to mind our prejudices and that of the material. There is more than one history. Furthermore, values change through time, buildings don't. Objects that weren't noteworthy 50 years ago, might be increasingly valuable now.

To prepare for the research seminar later that

week, we read John Harris' *Storehouses of Knowledge* [...]. This article discusses the history of architecture archives. What I took away most from this text is that only in the 20th century an interest in paper evidence started. Archives now often decide to preserve all paperwork; not just drawings, but correspondence, minutes of meetings, photographs, etc. as well.

We were also well underway with making the base for the scale model. The complex architecture

**P**

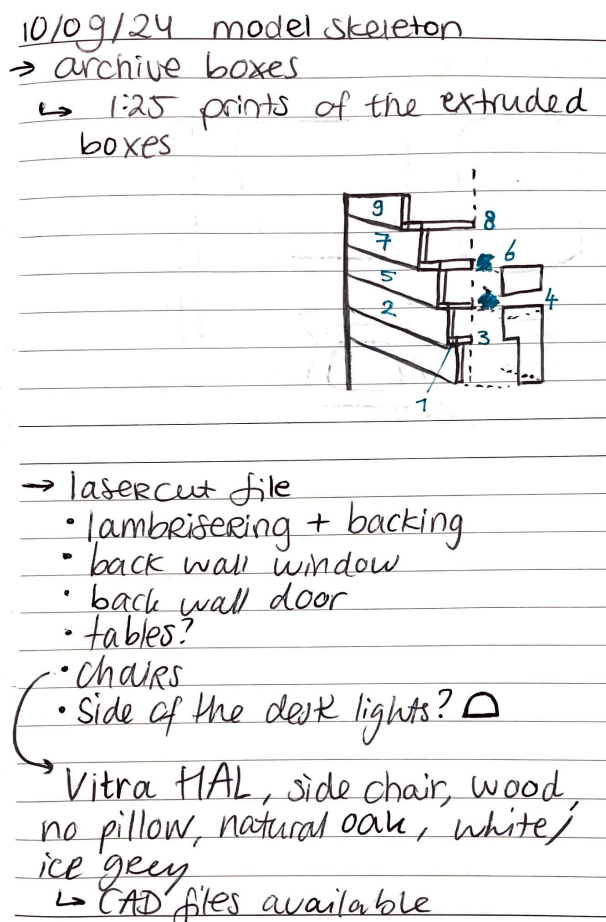


Figure 3: magasin system and lasercut notes



Figure 4: model picture version 2



of the Bordeaux City Archive, with its concrete magasins required a system to recreate (W 3 and 4). We also started preparing a lasercut file, in order to be prepared for the next week.

On thursday we received feedback on the model. Some general feedback for all groups was that we were allowed to choose where to draw the line with making details, the level of realism. We also got some tips on how to recreate artificial lighting in the model. Instead of using real LEDs, which

almost never have the right scale, you can create funnels in the model and shine lights through those. With making a model like this, you have to trick the camera; trick the viewer. They have to believe they see a material, an object, but it doesn't have to be a perfect rendering.

After hearing this feedback, we decided to paint as much of the material textures as possible, in order to create a clear language in the model. We tried some options for painting a concrete texture (figure 5).



Figure 5: concrete painting experiments

## WEEK 1.3

16/09/24 - 20/09/24

**P** One of the biggest challenges with making the model was the wooden lambrisering on the inside facade of the reading room. The real facade is made of thin wooden slats, painted in different colours on their sides. We decided that the lambrisering in the back wasn't worth recreating perfectly, because you aren't able to see the colours there. However, the first piece of the facade did need some more detail. Figuring out the system to recreate the lambrisering took some work (figure 6), and actually making the lambrisering also took some time (figure 7).

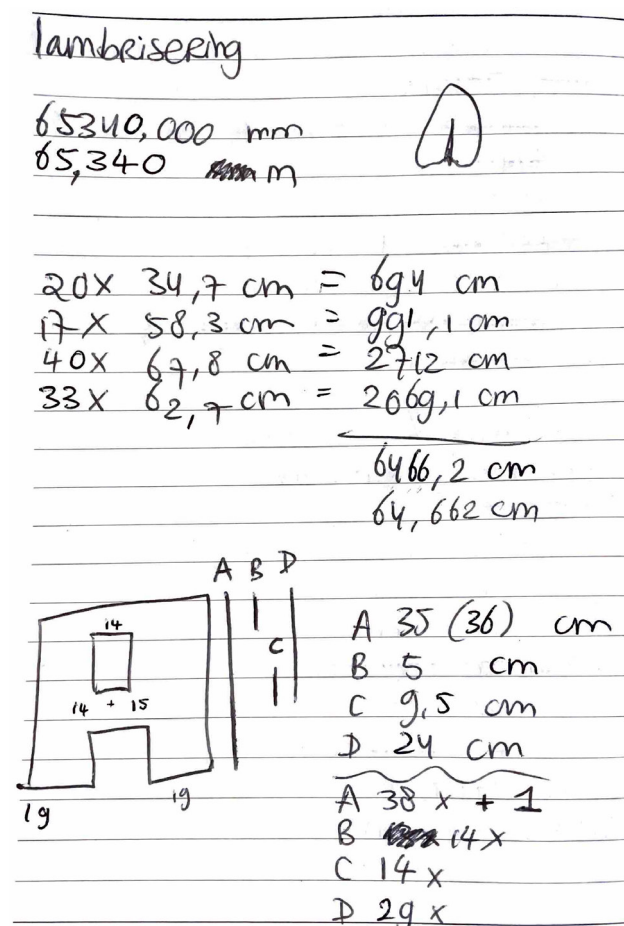


Figure 6: calculating the lambrisering

We used thin strips of balsa wood, which was cheap and soft enough to be cut into strips of 2 mm. Each of the strips was then cut to size, sanded, painted and glued to the background in the correct order. While this might not be the most efficient way to fabricate this panel, the end result ended up looking quite realistic. The way colour was used in the lambrisering is both important to the style of the architect and to the atmosphere of the space. Making the panel was useful to understand the changing atmosphere when walking through the space.

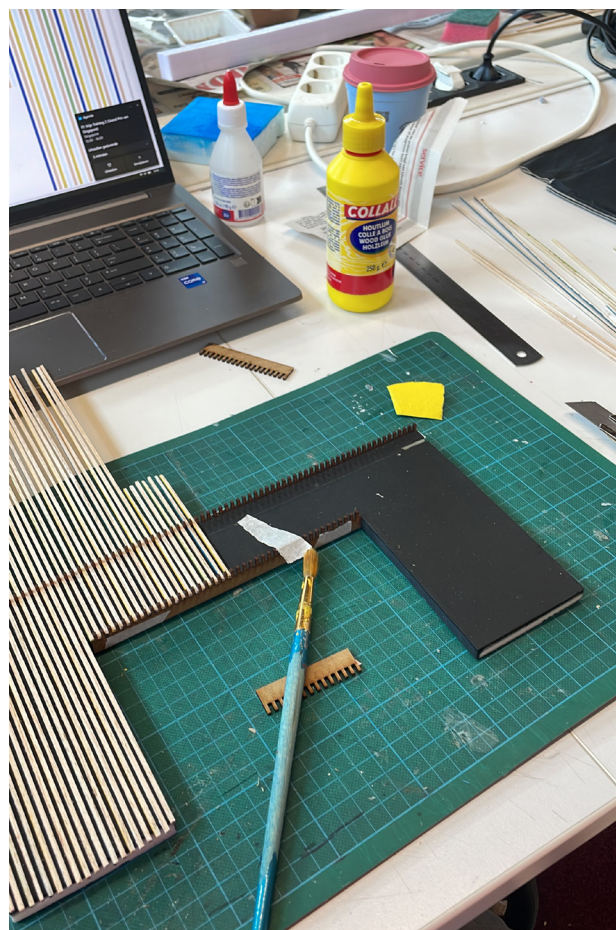


Figure 7: making the lambrisering



Meanwhile, we experimented with different types of material to creating the floor of the model, which in real life is a rich blue coloured carpet, also fitting with the architects reoccurring concepts (figure 8). To stick to the aforementioned model language, we eventually decided to stick to painting the texture.

**R** That week in the research seminar, we read and discussed Achille Mbembe's *The power of the archive and its limits*. It took a while before this text resonated with me, but making the model of the Bordeaux City Archive helped understanding

the text. Mbembe talks about the rituals and religiousness of an archive, about death. He also discusses the imaginary nature of an archive and how it isn't completely democratic. How a state can be threatened by the honesty of documents. In my limited experience with archives, I've never considered this position. I've always regarded archival material as facts. The Bordeaux City Archive, with its huge and imposing magasins is actually a good example of the might of knowledge. Connecting these dots helped my understand the choice of architecture for the Bordeaux archive.



Figure 8: model picture version 3

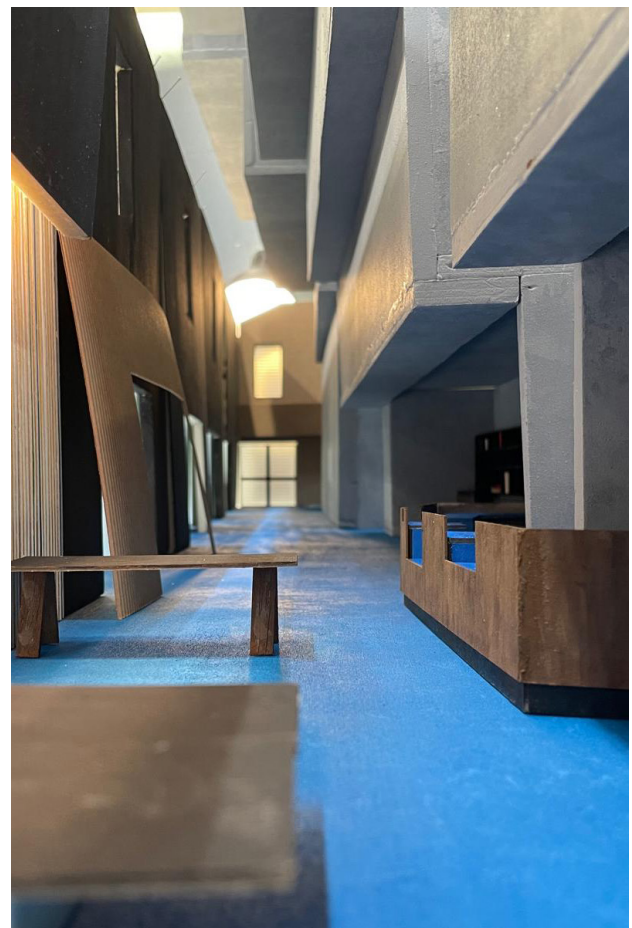


Figure 9: model picture version 4

## WEEK 1.4

23/09/24 - 27/09/24

P With the field trip to Antwerp coming up, week 1.4 was the week in which we had to finish the model, take pictures and edit them. This meant finishing up details and furniture, like adding the cabinets and books from figure 10. But also the chairs (which we had 3D printed), the lamps (which we made by hand, 14 pieces), and other details like an emergency exit sign, a clock and some desk clutter.



Figure 10: final details of the model

Transporting the model to the photo studio and reassembling the model there, was more work than we expected. All in all, it took an hour to transport it, just because it was so big (figure 11). We spend hours and hours afterwards to mimic the lighting conditions in the photo. We used many different spots, light temperatures and LED strips to experiment. We also used three different



Figure 11: transporting the model



camera lenses to try and get the perspective just right, but to no avail. Afterwards, we realized the picture was not only very heavily edited, but also taken with a double exposure technique, where the “inside” and “outside” were photographed in different photos. This resulted in a model image where the light-dark contrast was a lot higher than in the original. It also turned out

to be quite impossible to find the exact camera position the photographer had when snapping the shot, because photographing a model is just that different from photographing a real room. Our feedback on the final model image was mostly on topics we had already experimented with, like the perspective, the outside and the light. The final image can be seen in figure 12.



Figure 12: the final model image



## WEEK 1.5

30/09/24 - 04/10/24

**R** Week 1.5 was the week in which we visited Antwerp on a collective field trip.

On Tuesday we started the day with a city walk, visiting two architecture firms as well (figure 13). During the walk and the visits, we learned a lot about the architecture in Antwerp, as well as its socio-political situation. We learned that the architecture in Antwerp is a mix of historical styles, changing with every building. In the Netherlands, this is often differing between neighbourhoods instead.

On Wednesday, we visited the VAI, the Flemisch Architecture Institute. We talked to a few of its employees and had a tour through the archive. During the tour, the employees explained a lot

about how the VAI and the building they use work together, or how they don't. The structural lay-out of the archives is not compatible with the storage system they use. Furthermore, the size of the doors, hallways and elevators is too small, both for the employees and for the archival material: a couple of models don't fit. They also need more offices and different spaces for digitization, restoration and other practices. The employees handed us a hand-out with some more information on the functions and floor areas in the current depot and their wishes for the future.

On Wednesday afternoon, we were showed around De Singel, the building which houses some offices and the exhibition space the VAI uses. They

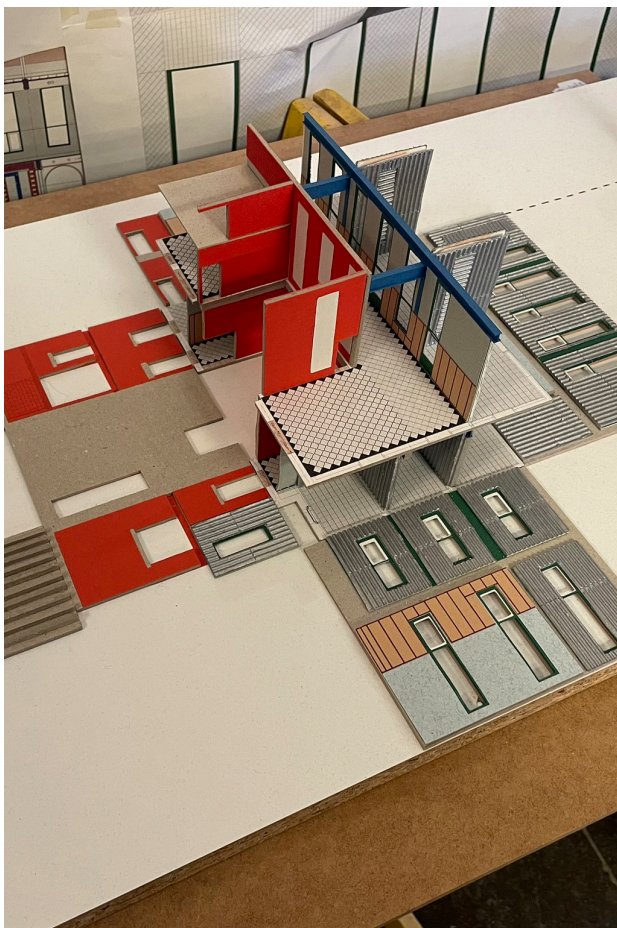


Figure 13: Eagles of Architecture model



Figure 14: evolution of De Singel on site



share the building with a conservatory, among others. De Singel is a monumental building designed by Léon Stynen and is located on the busy ring road of the city. The social visibility of the VAI is low, because their exhibitions are so far removed from every day city life.

De Singel itself is a labyrinth. Way finding is difficult, especially for people who have never been there before. There is no clear entrance to monitor people and guide them in the right direction. There is no garderobe to leave you personal belongings. They can only curate one exhibition every year, because there is only one space and many different parties using it. The accessibility for people with physical and visual limitations is less

than acceptable. All employees of the VAI seem to agree that a new plan for their archive is necessary. Furthermore, we were allowed a sneak peak into the VAI's new expo.

On Thursday, after a lunch lecture by former director of the VAI Sofie de Caigny about the nature of the VAI's archival material, we had the opportunity to research some of the VAI's material. In the week before, we each got assigned a Flemish architect. On Thursday, we had 45 minutes to quickly research some material by these architects. The contents of the material was not as important as the physical characteristics of the objects, as we were asked to curate an exhibition for this material for the upcoming P1 presentation.



Figure 15: the depot of the VAI



Figure 16: De Singel balconies

## WEEK 1.6

07/10/24 - 11/10/24

**P** In the next week, I started properly analyzing the architects and the material I saw. I got assigned to Bataille & ibens, a Flemish architect duo. They designed mostly interiors and produced furniture. The archival material I researched in the week before consisted of a scale model of a table, a couple of technical drawings on tracing paper, framed images of finished works and two thick binders full of manuals, colour samples, flyers, technical information and more (figure 17).

**D** The first ideas I had for creating an exhibition was based mostly on a Bataille & ibens architecture

style, combined with some contemporary additions in VAI style. I also expressed a desire to create a readable architecture language, understandable even for someone unfamiliar with architecture. Furthermore, I asked myself to be critical about the use of Bataille & ibens elements in my design; should I copy them? Imitate? Be influenced by?

I started a extensive research document, trying to answer all sorts of questions about Bataille & ibens, their firm and their way of working, but also what expo's I found inspiring and what concepts I wanted to use for this design.

**R**

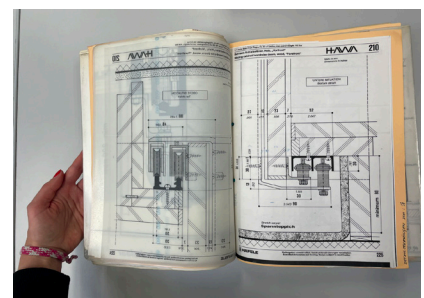
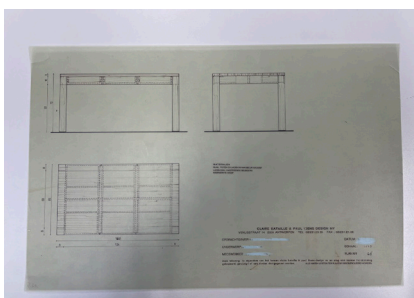
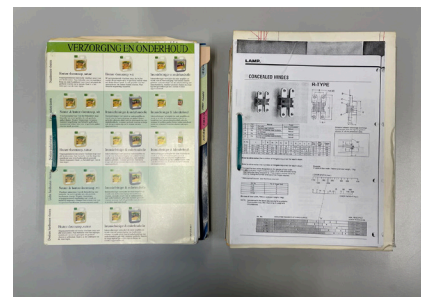
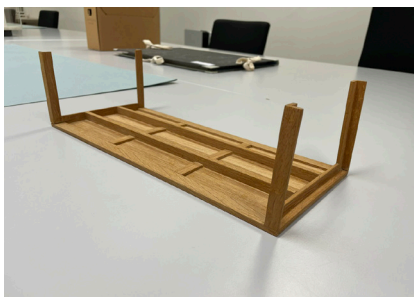


Figure 17: Bataille & ibens archival material from the VAI



**D** Of all the material I got to research in the archive, the two binders intrigued me the most. They showed a certain tangibility to an architect's design process that is not often seen. Mostly, we are shown perfect pictures of new, shiny buildings. I thought that the design process could make for an interesting exhibition topic. When proposing this, I received some feedback on how a table could be the center piece of this exhibition. In the week after, I started working around this idea, creating storylines that could be played out on the table, unspoken stories (figure 18). I worked from the idea

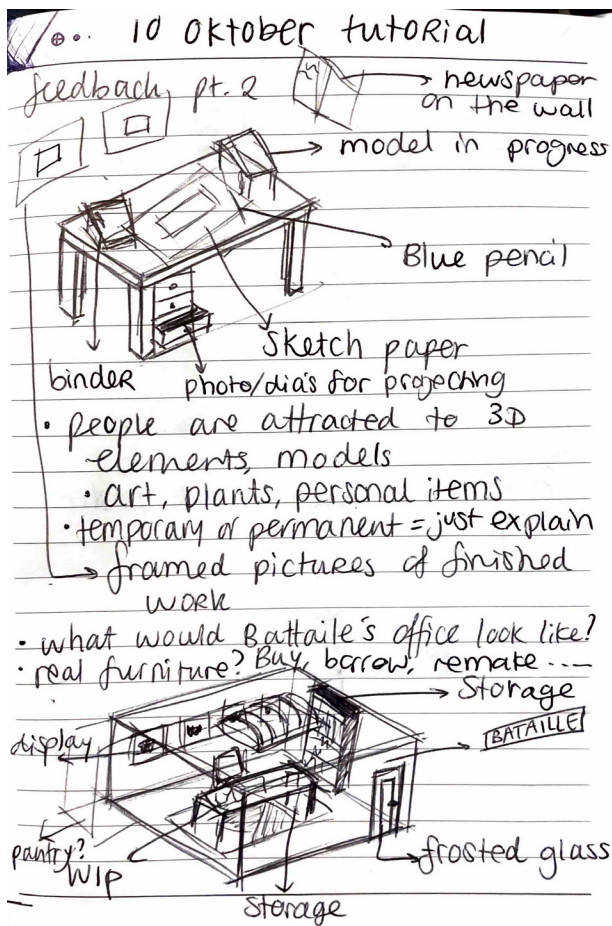


Figure 18: first design idea; the table

## WEEK 1.7

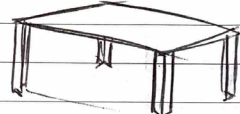
14/10/24 - 18/10/24


that people are subconsciously attracted to 3D objects. A visitor's eyes would go from a model, to the next object, to the next (figure 19).


There would be a total of three story lines, each with a few objects. The themes of the narratives would be: a way of designing, a way of realizing and a way of living. All objects would be placed on or around a central table. The visitor could then walk around the setting and try and figure out all the narratives and the importance of each object. The room in which the table stands, could be designed in a Bataille & ibens style, with white walls and a skylight.


concept: unspoken story


→ "people are attracted to 3D objects" → Create a narrative from there

1.  model on the table

2.  glue next to it

3.  Sketch paper drawing next to it (with annotations)

4.  blue pencil next to it

5.  mug (with logo partner) used as pencil holder


6.  mug with coffee as well.

Figure 19: unspoken stories on the table

## WEEK 1.8

21/10/24 - 25/10/24

**D** The main feedback points after week 1.6 were to try and situate the exhibition in space and time. How would real life interfere with the diarama presented on the table. Can the public interact with the objects, for example. It was suggested I could design from the idea of what this room might do. Furthermore, a clear design language would help me understand my design and help the public understand the exhibition.

Starting from a handful of concepts, I began detailling the design. It was important to me that

the visitor can choose their own route through the space, meandering and stopping at points they found interesting. I also wanted to create a clear narrative, understandable for anyone and everyone. To do this, I split up the exhibition space into three parts, divided by a threshold in the shape of a half-wall. This created three zones: information, exhibition and storage. The latter, because I realised I did not want to discard the more formal archival material; the pictures of the finished works. My next concern was how to let people know they were looking at archival material which

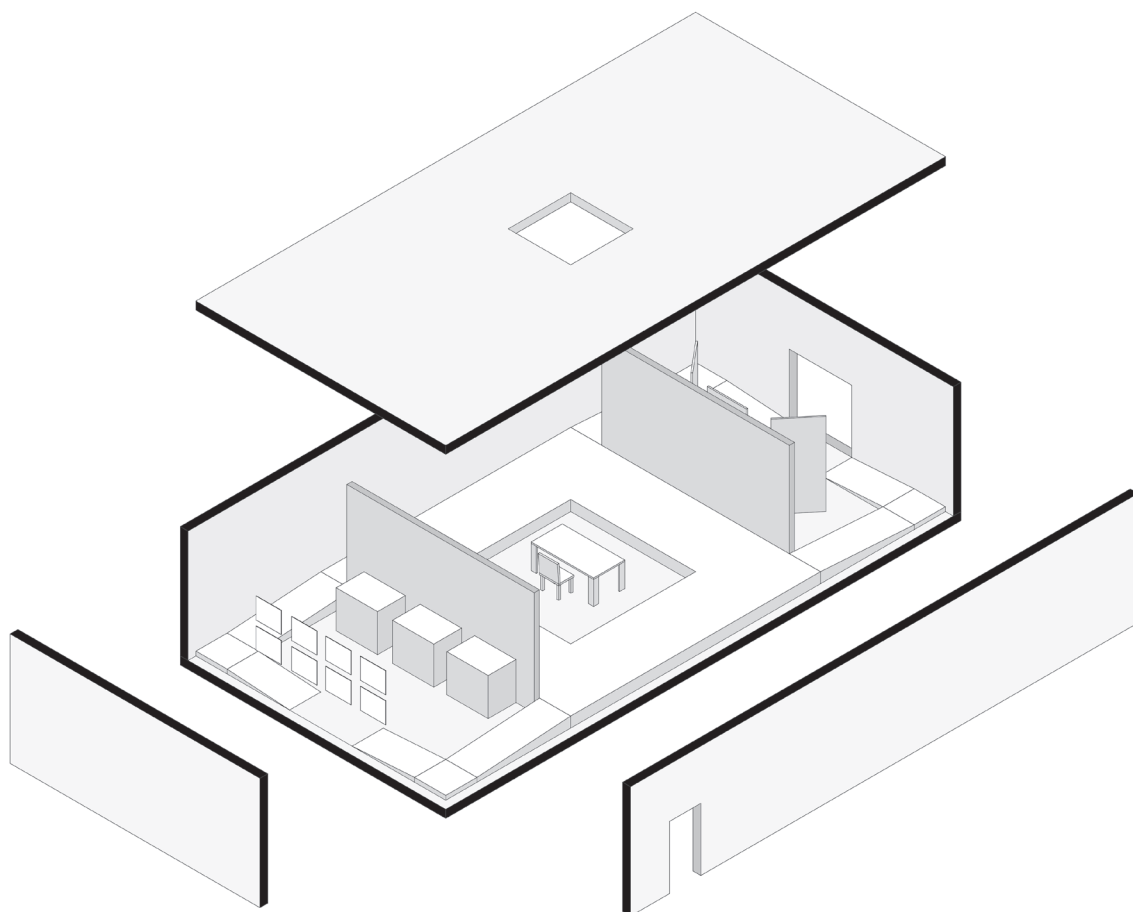


Figure 20: isometric drawing of new design

they were not allowed to touch. The solution I found was to design a height difference between the public and the table. Unfortunately, a height difference also requires ramps, for accessibility. This exhibition was too simple in contents and too extensive in architecture. I further developed my design by rethinking routing and zones. For this new variation, I developed a safe in a safe concept, where within a storage space in an archive a zone for exhibition is placed. This little room would be made of semi-transparent walls. I sketched multiple ways

to make a route with this idea. Coming from my previous prototype, I took the idea of two hallways, mirrored around the “safe” (image 23). This idea started with a square floorplan, but transforming into a rectangle. The safe would no longer be floating in the space, but flush to the back wall. Unfortunately, this idea also needed more updating. The original concept got lost in trying to add more and more. Architecturally, the space was still just that, a free floating space without any context. Furthermore, many of the design choices, like the double entrance, were hard to explain.

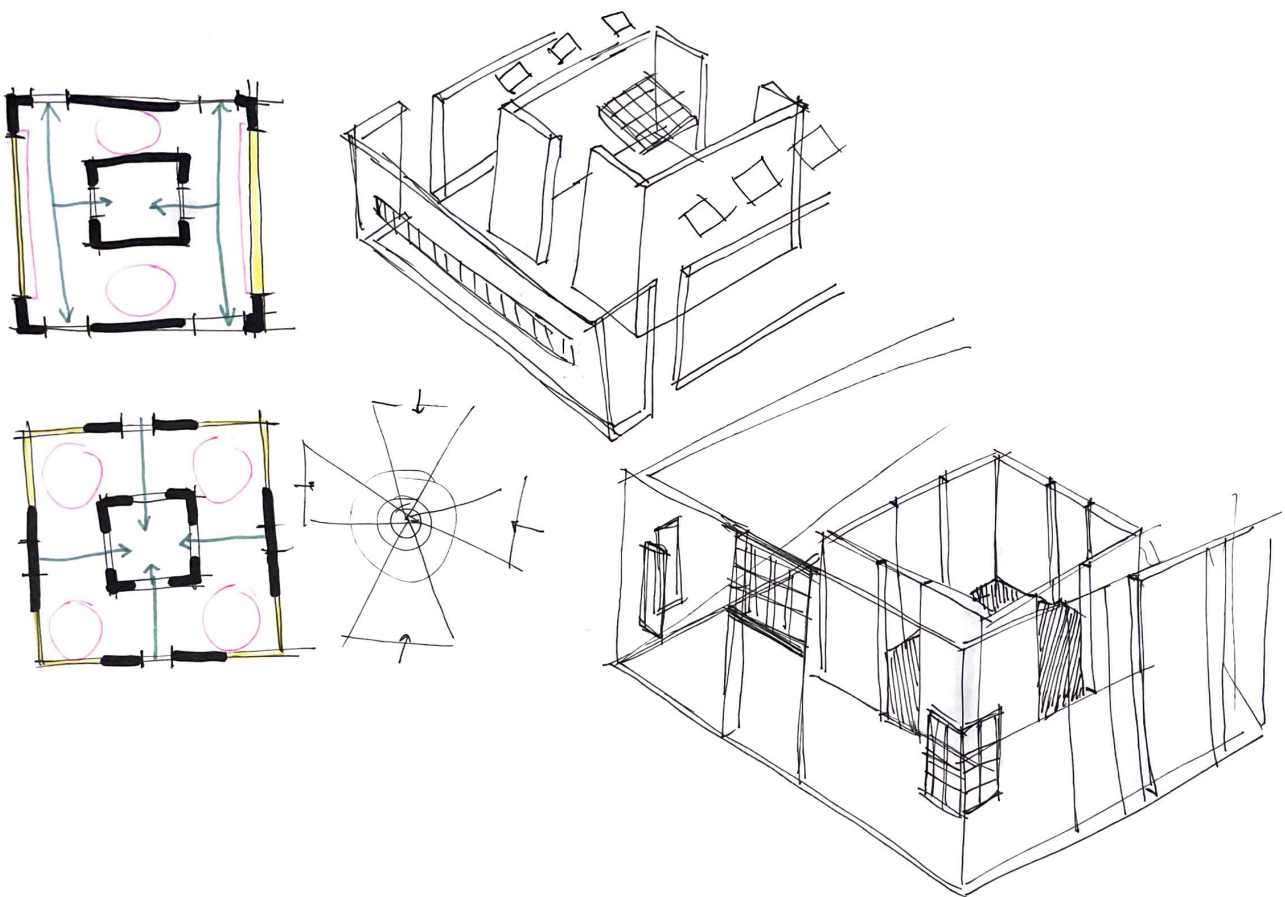


Figure 21: sketches for design prototype 3

## WEEK 1.9

28/10/24 - 01/11/24

**P** In week 1.9 a lot of attention went to updating the final research plan. Writing the personal statement for this document was eye opening for me, as I had to formally write a statement about what I learned and was planning to do for the remainder for this project. My personal statement follows here:

The Interiors Buildings Cities chair believes that research and design cannot be separated; that they provide each other with knowledge and considerations. If you want to analyse architecture across all scales -from interior to city,- you need to find a convincing way to study each scale. The Interiors Buildings Cities studios do this by making large scale models. In the past, I have never used a model as a means to understand an existing architectural object. It is partially because of my lack of practice that with this assignment, making a model while simultaneously theoretically researching a buildings context, was a difficult task.

The project we got assigned is the Bordeaux City Archive by Robbrecht and Daem. In the archive, Robbrecht and Daem use complex architectural references and seem to have an overarching concept of volumes and materiality that can only be understood when properly analysing the

project. Robbrecht and Daem want to create a religious experience, showing great respect to the mightiness of knowledge, hovering above your head like the sword of Damocles. After analysing the building, I was able to understand Robbrecht and Daem's position towards archive cultures. I can relate to their appreciation for protected knowledge, but came to the conclusion that I would have chosen a different design approach.

The canon researched by the whole studio did show us a certain relationship between the architecture and the culture of an archive institute. The formality of an institute could almost directly be linked to the architecture of its building. The Bordeaux City archive is a good example, as it's the only state archive in the canon. I needed to understand this interaction before I could relate to the distrust surrounding archives, as posed by Mbembe in his *The Power of the Archive and its Limits*. Only now do I realise that my experience with archival research was also limited by secrecy. It has made me start to doubt the validity of my research; might it have been influenced by the archivist? The archive seems to be a chaotic place, where archivists try to desperately hold on to the system they created. Any disturbances -like people wanting to examine material- are met with



a condescending: ‘only if you’re careful enough’.

To summarize, the correlation between culture and architecture is one I find interesting. As well as in the theoretical research, I noticed this when building the model. For example, after the model was built -reconstructed from precise architectural drawings- we struggled quite a bit to recreate the photograph itself. Something I took away from this was the underlying understanding that the discrepancy with this curated promotional material, was not an accident. That photo was taken and edited deliberately. Not only the architecture itself conveys a message of secrecy and religiousness, the photo does as well. This has me considering the influence of visual and promotional material when rendering a design.

Going into P2, I now know that when designing my own project, I’ll continue considering atmosphere, architecture and culture, and visual design material during the design process. Furthermore, I’ll keep asking myself critical questions about what kind of archive I want to create and how to present it to the world.

Other than this, I designed my fourth and final prototype for this P1 assignment. Working from

the idea of the soft wall, I designed a new type that was more based on my first idea than my last. A wall of furniture display would make for a soft threshold between the information zone; the “ante-chambre” and the expo/workshop space. It is important for me that archival material, especially furniture, can be seen from all sides, to be experienced like the 3D piece it is. I placed the room along a hallway, on the top corner of a building. The use of skylights highlight the furniture display and allows a passer-by to also enjoy the display.

The workshop spaced is based around the table. The scale model of the table that I researched in the VAI has gotten a prominent role. For this expo, I wanted to highlight this table and its life cycle. In the room you’ll find the technical sketches for the table, the scale model, images of the table in a real life interior, a recreated table for the visitor to touch and experience and the table in a futuristic rendering; as a armature that also shows of its gorgeous craftsmanship.

In and around the room, the visitor will also find subtle clues to Bataille & ibens. Not in the architecture, because designing in their style did not work for me, but in the objects. A photo portrait, some personal photos, a bottle of champagne.

## WEEK 1.10

04/11/24 - 08/11/24

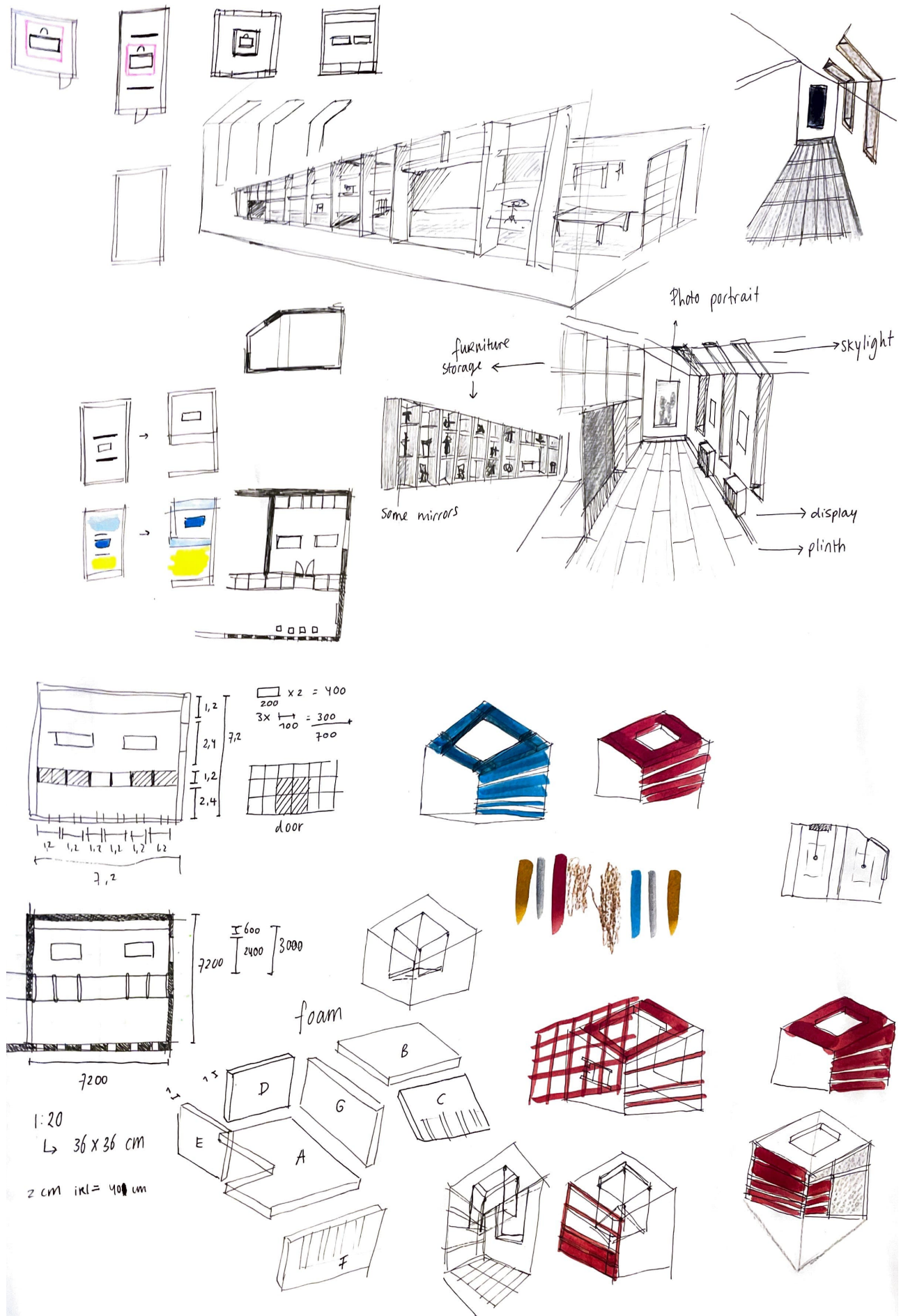


Figure 22: sketches for final design pt. 1

In week 1.10 I solely focused on making the model and drawings. These are some of the

sketches I used to experiment with different design possibilities. The 3D sketches helped especially.

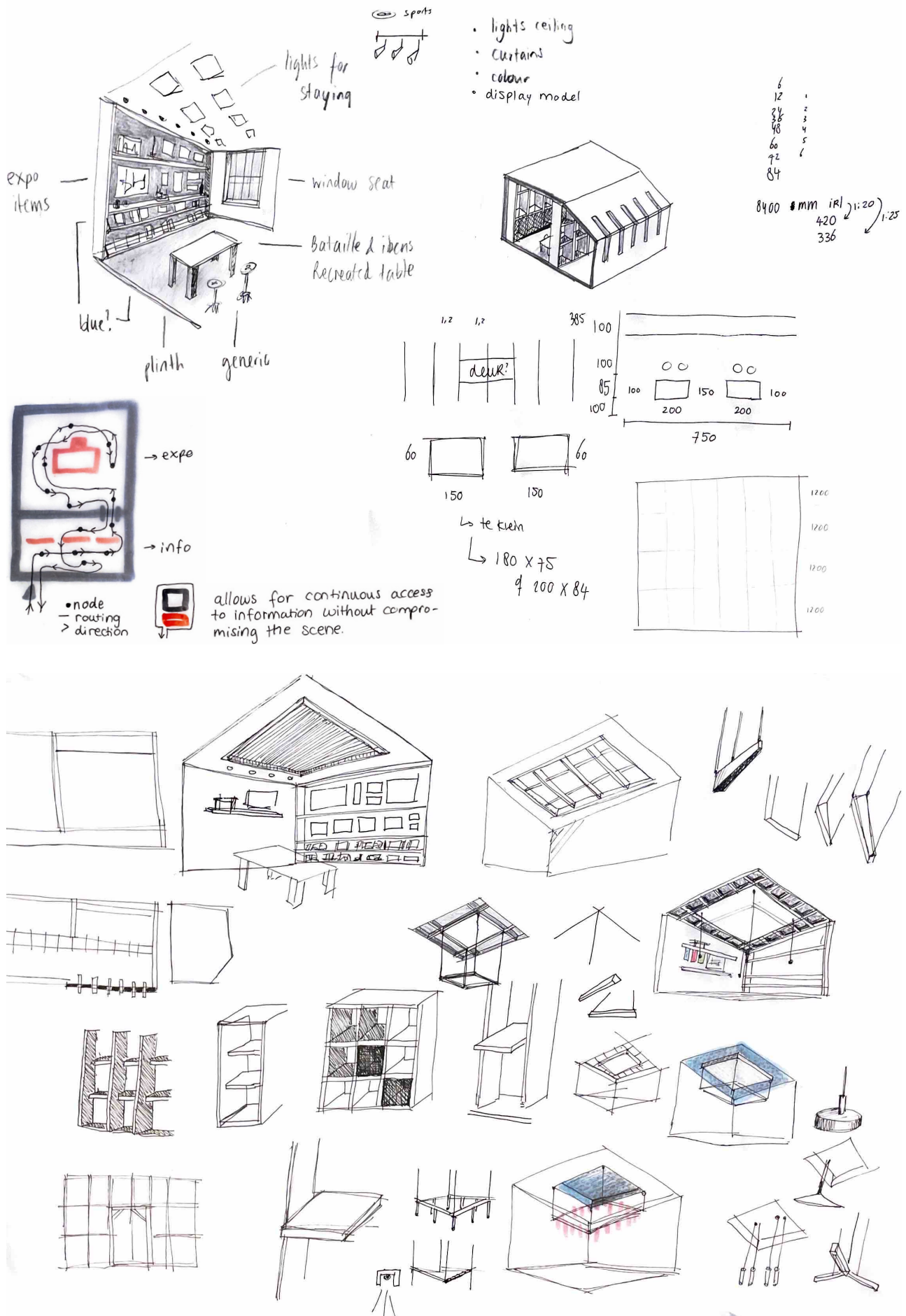


Figure 23: sketches for final design pt. 2

## RESULTS P1

Daniel's first observation during my P1 presentation was that he wanted to remove the wall in front of the workshop space. Not only did it block the view of the space behind, he also thought it arbitrary. He said it looked like a contractor just put that wall there after the architect made a design. Because of the way the shelves in the workshop room are designed, the room might not need an actual wall to indicate where it ends. Furthermore the tutors were interested if the workshop space was an actual wood working space, where there reproduced tables were actually being made.

The biggest feedback point was that the concept of the furniture displaying cabinet could be expanded. It now functions as a storage solution, display furniture, room divider and an entrance.

Even though I already adapted the architecture of the building to interact with this furniture piece, the tutors thought it could be more. The dramatic way the light falls through these rhythmmed windows was too distracting for them. The narrative with the table in its different phases, from designing to producing to using to recreating to future renderings; a.k.a. the use of the table as a light fixture, was something they found quite jolly. I did not receive any other feedback on the table narrative or the workshop space, which I find a pity, since a lot of work went into designing and building it.

After the P1 presentations, I updated some of my drawings; leaving the arbitrary wall to the archive out. The next few pages show these drawings and some edited model photographs.



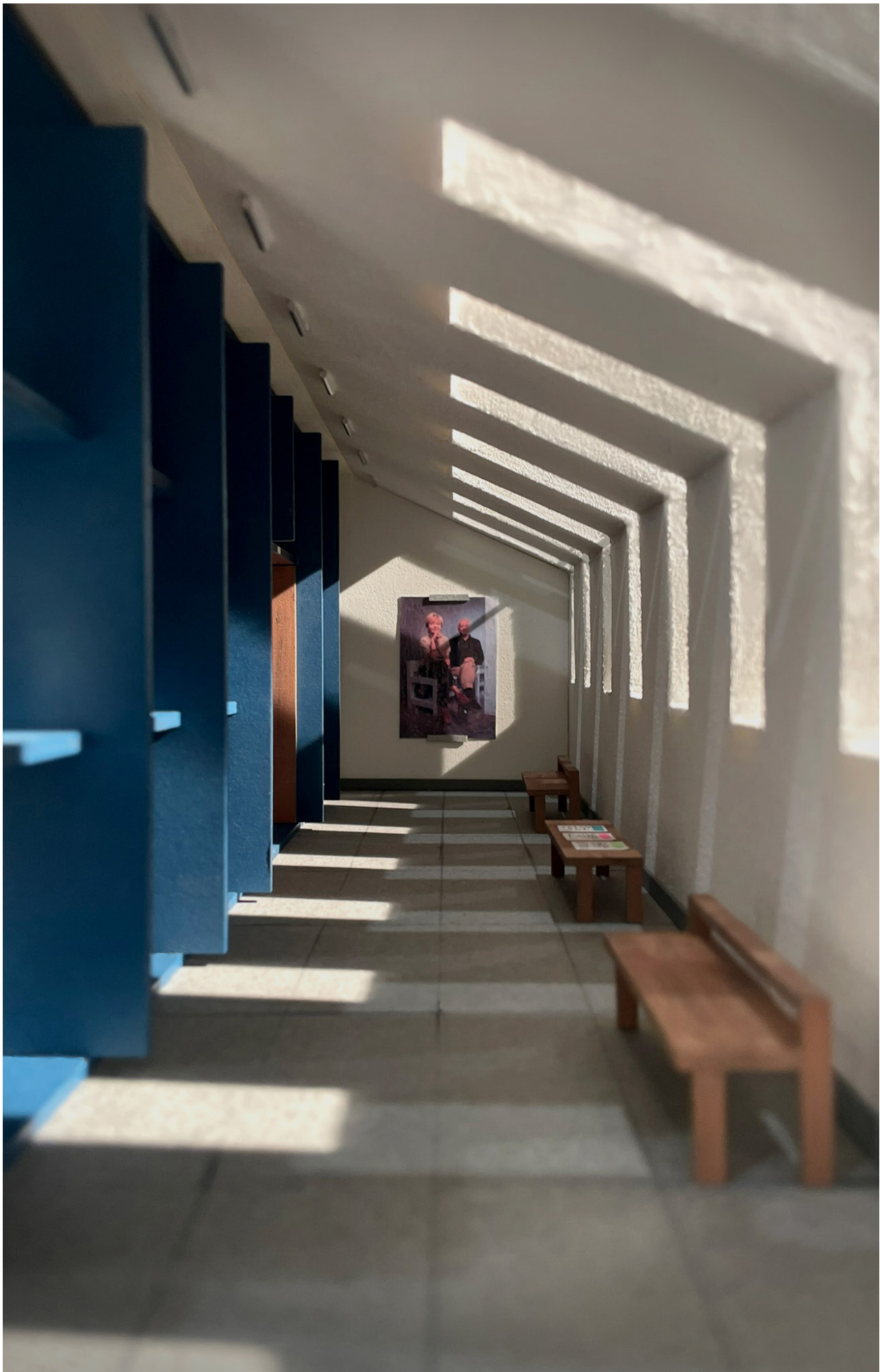


Figure 24: P1 model photograph; the hallway in the sun





Figure 25: P1 model photograph; the furniture

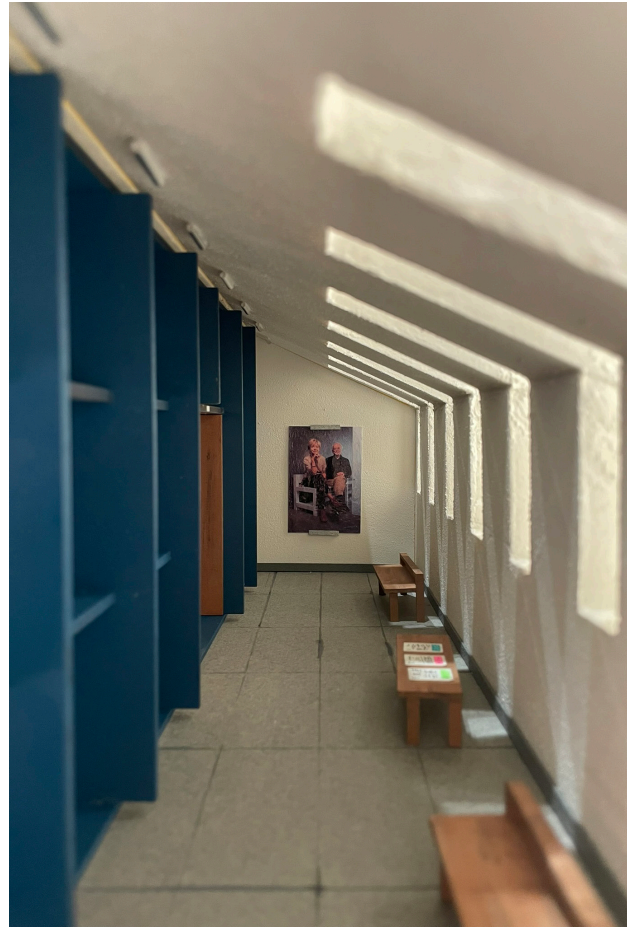


Figure 26: P1 model photograph; the hallway in daylight



Figure 27: P1 model photograph: the workshop pt. 1



Figure 28: the P1 set-up





Figure 29: P1 model photograph: the workshop pt. 2



Figure 30: P1 model photograph: the workshop pt. 3

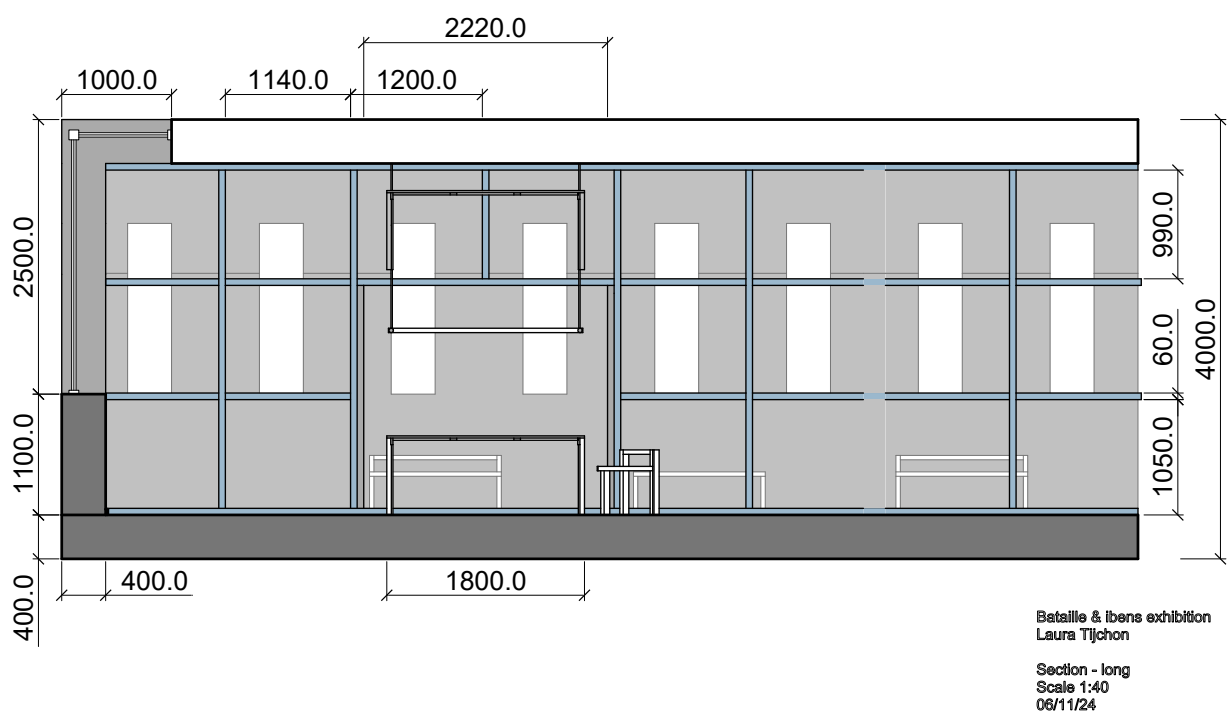
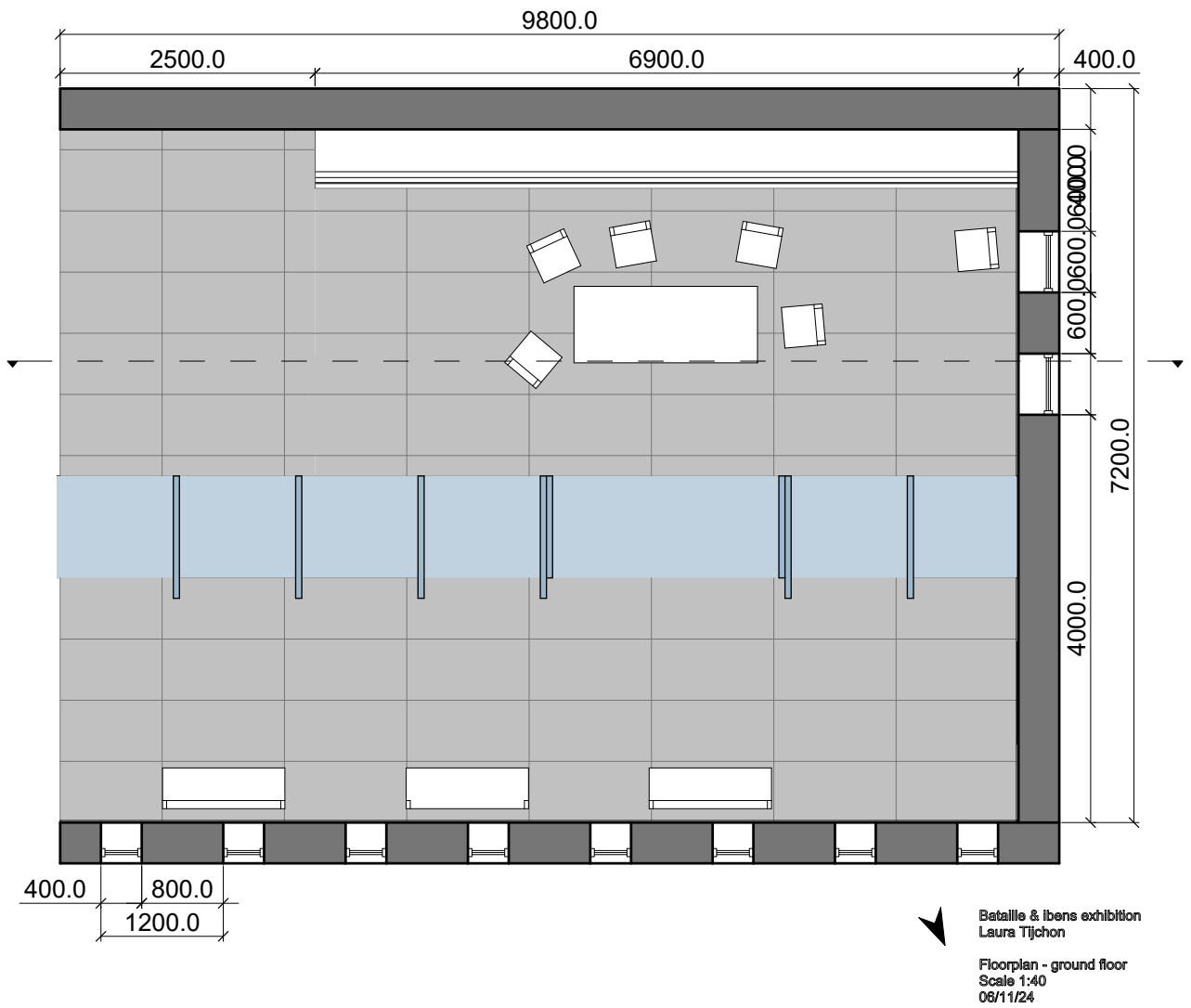


Figure 31: floorplan and section of the P1 design



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Laura Tijchon



# PROJECT JOURNAL

Interiors Buildings Cities  
Archiving Architecture

## COLOFON

Work by: Laura Tijchon

Student nr.: 5058899

Studio: Interiors Buildings Cities

P2 date: 30th of January, 2025

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## ABOUT THE CHAIR

Quoted from the course manual;

### **Interiors Buildings Cities**

Interiors Buildings Cities is concerned with the history, culture and practice of architecture, addressing the ways and means by which it can contribute to the environments through which people experience the world and live well together in it. We understand the making of architecture as an inherently ethical and political act and believe in its agency, seeing it as a preeminent medium through which we can effect change and address the opportunities and challenges that are inherent within contemporary culture and society. Our teaching engages directly with these issues, concerning itself with the idea that architecture can help to construct the kind of society we wish to live in; one that is generous in its accommodation of diverse communities and which nurtures and takes pleasure in the natural environment we share with other living things.

Interiors Buildings Cities advocates a situated architecture, which is both of its time and cognisant of its place within a historical continuity. Projects address the complex legacy of modernity and more specifically twentieth-century modernism, repositioning it and seeking

to reintegrate it within the contemporary city. We take pleasure in the city as we find it, in its conditions, its impositions, its chaotic yet vital heterogeneity. At the same time, our projects focus on the need to redefine the terms upon which architecture is made, in response to the huge challenges facing our planet. Across our different courses we ask how this might be achieved at many scales, from local community to national institution; from room to city.

Interiors Buildings Cities engages architecture across all its scales, as the name suggests, and considers the relations between them as being intrinsic to it. Often conceived of an adjunct or an afterthought to the act of making architecture, our particular attention to the interior and notions of interiority instead conceive it as a central concern from which to develop our thoughts. We perceive both the domestic and the public interior as sites where representations and ideas of society are projected, where thoughts of our privacy, individuality and subjectivity are cultivated, and where notions of our place in society, and in the world, are inculcated. We are interested in seeing how individual and collective agency may be developed in these spaces, from which the building can be projected and ideas of city and society unfold.

Quoted from the course manual; edited for clarity

### **Palace**

The Palace of the Graduation studio reflects upon the history of the representative public buildings that have shaped our cities and societies. It acknowledges that this type has been constantly reinterpreted and reappropriated through time and circumstance, questioning its role and responsibilities and how it can engage with the contemporary city and its citizens. The inherent spatial complexity of the Palace, with its hierarchies, infrastructures and intricate sequences of rooms and spaces, is reinterpreted not as a physical expression of power and authority but rather as a representative framework for collective public life, where we come together as a public and might engage with one other as a diverse society.

These ambitions are outwardly expressed through its placement in the city and how its form, facades and interiors address social and urban conditions. With this as their theme, your Graduation projects will address contemporary public buildings and the institutions that occupy them as being integral to the life of the modern city. They offer opportunities to rethink known types in specific

circumstances across each scale, from interior to urban structure. The choice of project is often related to actual conditions and real clients, allowing them to be understood as an active research space with an address beyond academia.

### **Graduation Design Studio**

Palace is the overarching theme for the Interiors Buildings Cities graduation studio. Each year, the studio explores a different, complex institutional type, exploring its role in society, its responsibilities to the city and its citizens, and its representative form. The chosen project often refers to an actual, sometimes ongoing condition, working in relation to real conditions, needs, and people—whether clients or users.

The studio develops a single project over two semesters to arrive at a graduation design project. In the first semester, development is toward a mature and well-argued proposal that can be taken forward as a complete project, considering users, sites, contexts, cultural settings, histories, types, technology, and the environment in architectural design. Each of the projects within the studio will have its own set of concerns in relation to these subjects; each project is obliged to address these as central to its considerations.

## ABOUT THE STUDIO

## ABOUT THE BRIEF

After finishing up the first two briefs with the P1 presentation, the second quarter of the year will be dedicated to the third brief. *Brief 3. Developing an Archive* is the introduction of the final graduation assignment, in which the students will design a new depot building for the Flanders Architecture Institute (VAi). The following text is an introduction of the theme of the studio and of the VAI;

The theme for this year's graduation studio is Archiving Architecture. Archiving information has long been a part of human culture. The saying *knowledge is power* has never been truer in a world where every interaction and every arrangement is based on information. A statement can only be true when it hails from a proper source. This introduces the problem of knowledge preservation and knowledge distribution; a problem archives all around the world seek to solve. There seems to be no one answer. Archiving can be done in various levels of technical demands, formality, secrecy and public engagement.

“However, while they might contain facts, archives cannot be seen as fact. They are not innocent, they are never the complete truth. The question archives ask; the things they choose to keep or save; the matter of what is important and what isn't [...]”  
- Brief 1. Looking Carefully

There is an ambiguity between the tasks an archive tries to complete. Storing documents and objects, keeping them safe from time, weather, destruction; but also researching the artifacts and sharing the discoveries with the world. Keeping an archive demands security, policies for secrecy and

rituals for preservation. Meanwhile the archive is interacting with the city, the public; trying to be attractive and interesting, proving its worth. All these paradoxes call for a complex architectural program; one that this graduation studio will tackle. A real life example of the issue at hand can be found in Antwerp, at the VAI, the Flemish Architecture Institute. The brief describes their collection:

“This intriguing body of material not only assembles the history of significant Flemish Architects from the past. It has been very proactive in considering the archive as a living, dynamic body of material, working with architects still in practice and thus also becoming representative of, and a force in, the transformation of Flemish architecture in recent decades; helping to create a culture which might be considered amongst the most exciting in the world.”  
- Brief 1. Looking Carefully

At the time of this project, the VAI is divided into two departments, each housed in a different location in the city of Antwerp. One is the actual archival depot, including restoration and digitalization rooms and a study space. The depot is located in the city center of Antwerp and has outgrown its boundaries entirely. The collection has grown too large and the spatial structure of the building isn't compatible with storage solutions and sensitive material. Furthermore, the work spaces for the employees are too dark and too cramped. (Hand-out by VAI)  
The second part of the VAI can be found in cultural center *De Singel*, situated on the notoriously busy ring road of the city. Sharing an iconic modernistic building by Léon Stynen with a conservatory



-amongst others- this section of the VAI is orientated more towards the public. Here, you'll find offices and an exhibition space. (Hand-out by VAI)

The VAI is in dire need of a new home. A previously held competition to locate the archive in an empty church failed. The graduation studio has now been appointed with the task of designing a (hypothetical) new archive within the monumental *Singel*. It should be equipped with all technical necessities to properly store different archival materials, offices that provide a pleasant work atmosphere for employees and rooms that present opportunities for public engagement. Most importantly, its architecture should be representative of the VAI's cultural message. (Brief 1. Looking Carefully)

In the previous two briefs, the goal was to familiarize the students with two main concepts: designing for preservation and display; and creating a body of reference projects to inspire and guide us. The new brief deconceptualizes the assignment even further. It introduces De Singel as the site of the project and asks the students to research and analyze that building and its context. The students will also have to develop their position towards the VAI's policy and methods of archiving. They are allowed the freedom to either continue with the current policy or completely reorganize the institute, as long as their organization corresponds with their architecture.

"The relation between the archive and the VAI's other activities is a developing one. It will be the task of this project to consider what

might be the role of the extensive historical material and technically defined conditions of the archive, as an integral component of the wider public mission of the organisation." - Brief 3. Developing an Archive

The starting point for the project is to build on the connections that already exist between the VAI, De Singel and De Singel's other residents. De Singel has a rich but chaotic history and its current lay-out could be perceived as mistreated and problematic. The changes made in VAI organization could revolutionize the use of De Singel; be a catalyst for other developments. For this to happen, there is not one correct architectural solution; every approach or focus point may cause different outcomes; with corresponding advantages and disadvantages.

"This breadth of starting point also offers a significant degree of flexibility in your approach. You may choose to extend De Singel, create a new structure that relates to it in some way, or perhaps work entirely within its existing body. An ambition might be to redefine its relationship with the city and its surroundings, while understanding its own identity and typology and enjoying its modernist sensibility." - Brief 3. Developing an Archive

We start the new period with researching the history, the context and the site of De Singel. We will end the quarter with our individual P2 presentations, in which we present a strategic proposal to solve the issues the brief highlights and organize the spatial requirements the VAI has expressed.

## ABOUT THE JOURNAL

This first version of the Project Journal is based on all the notes (physical and digital), photos, drawings and models I made during the graduation project. To be able to draw conclusions from this material and evaluate it properly, I ordered it into three categories related to design and the design process: Process, Research and Design. Each category has its own colour. While there might be overlap between the categories -a certain drawing could certainly be part of both research and design, for example- the predominant category will be visible with a coloured tab in the corner of the page.

 for Process

 for Research

 for Design

The Process category will show the behind the scenes process that I go through. It will explain my thoughts and experiences, but also the choices

made or the lessons learned. This category is mostly meant for me as a designer to understand what my preferred way of working is and how I can manage my own instinct and design process better. The Research category is about summarizing all the academic and empirical research that I do during the design process. At this faculty and in this studio, we focus on an integrated design process where research and design intertwine and synergize. Nevertheless, research needs to be documented in order to learn from it. The Design category is the second part of these interacting categories. In this journal, it is used mostly to indicated draft or finished designs and the associated visualizations. The designs can be seen as a sub-conclusion of the research and design process.

As I prefer to use many different methods and materials when designing, this project journal will reflect this organized chaos. It will feature quick sketches, typed text, finished design drawings, process photographs and more.



## WEEK 2.1

11/11/24 - 15/11/24

**P** Between the P1 presentation and the start of the new brief, our group had one week to reset, re-energize and reorganize. We were asked to start preparing the analysis of De Singel, the art campus in Antwerp which will serve as the base for our graduation assignment. In order to do that, we divided ourselves in four groups; the research group, the 3D model group, the site plan model group and the building model group. I chose the site plan group, because I like to start contextual research by looking at the urban fabric surrounding an object. I also think it is a nice in-between between historical research and building research. We, a mixed group of seven students, decided that

our site plan model should be finished within two weeks, because it can serve as a necessary tool to understand the development of De Singel and start thinking about design interventions. Interrupted only by a lecture by Mark Pimlott on display (for the minor Spaces of Display), our team worked to prepare and realize our scale 1:1250 site model. We chose this scale because it is big enough to show all urban blocks surrounding De Singel, but small enough to test possible design interventions.

On Thursday, we enjoyed a guided tour through the depot of the New Institute in Rotterdam. I had had this tour before, but it was still nice to look through the eye of an architect instead of a researcher.

**R**



Figure 1: preparing and testing for the model



Figure 2: the archiving system in HNI



## WEEK 2.2

18/11/24 - 22/11/24

**P** In week 2, our main focus was to finish the site model. Because the model had to be realized as soon as possible, we chose to simplify some of the building blocks and create them out of foam. Foam is easier to adapt and shape than wood. The base of the model, we made out of thick, honey comb cardboard, because it is sturdy and somehow simulates earth. The layers of road, pavement, streets and more, we had laser cut in grey cardboard, which we had to wait for, for some days.

The biggest issue was creating the canyon that is the highway, flowing right past De Singel. We ended up finding a solution by creating slopes from the top layer of the honey comb cardboard.

The week before we had received the new studio brief, number 3; Developing an Archive. We were asked to give voice to our initial ideas, our gut feeling and maybe start on some research or argumentation in favour of our proposals.

**R** When making the site model, I did some research on the new Winhov depot proposal and the green park that would come with it. Together with a conclusion from my P1 project, I decided that creating a new wing for the VAI, their own territory, with their own facade, entrance and relation to the urban context, might be worth testing. I think it is fascinating to look at De Singel as an urban block instead of an object.



Figure 3: draft version site model 1:1250



## WEEK 2.3

25/11/24 - 29/11/24

**R** After presenting our initial design proposals, we continued researching some specific topics; having to do with either De Singel itself or its context, for example; logistics within De Singel, the structure of the building, future urban plans and comparisons between art campuses or architecture archives. Personally, I've been looking more in depth into the Collectie Centrum Antwerpen, the depot for the city of Antwerp, which is being designed by Office Winhov at this time. These topics flowed from the discussions we had about our initial design ideas. There was some overlap in research people wanted or needed to do, so we decided to further develop some analysis diagrams and documents in smaller groups, while also continuing our design processes.

**D** As mentioned, I am imagining a new building wing for the VAI connected to De Singel. I started some concept sketches where I experimented

with openness and closedness of what would be the new volume of this wing. I had this idea of a stair-like volume with a closed façade on the bottom and a glass structure on top. The top areas of the steps would be able to drag some public exterior space inside and create different levels of privacy. The stairs would allow the smaller buildings of the city transition along the view line into the higher buildings along the outskirts of the city. However, this proposal is quite conceptual, and would create a landmark next to the already extensive Singel. This idea doesn't quite fit with what I think De Singel needs. When making a collage of references of public interiors that fascinate me, I realized I would prefer my building works inside out. To not create a landmark and then try to fit the VAI inside, but to design meaningful interior spaces and create a structure around that.

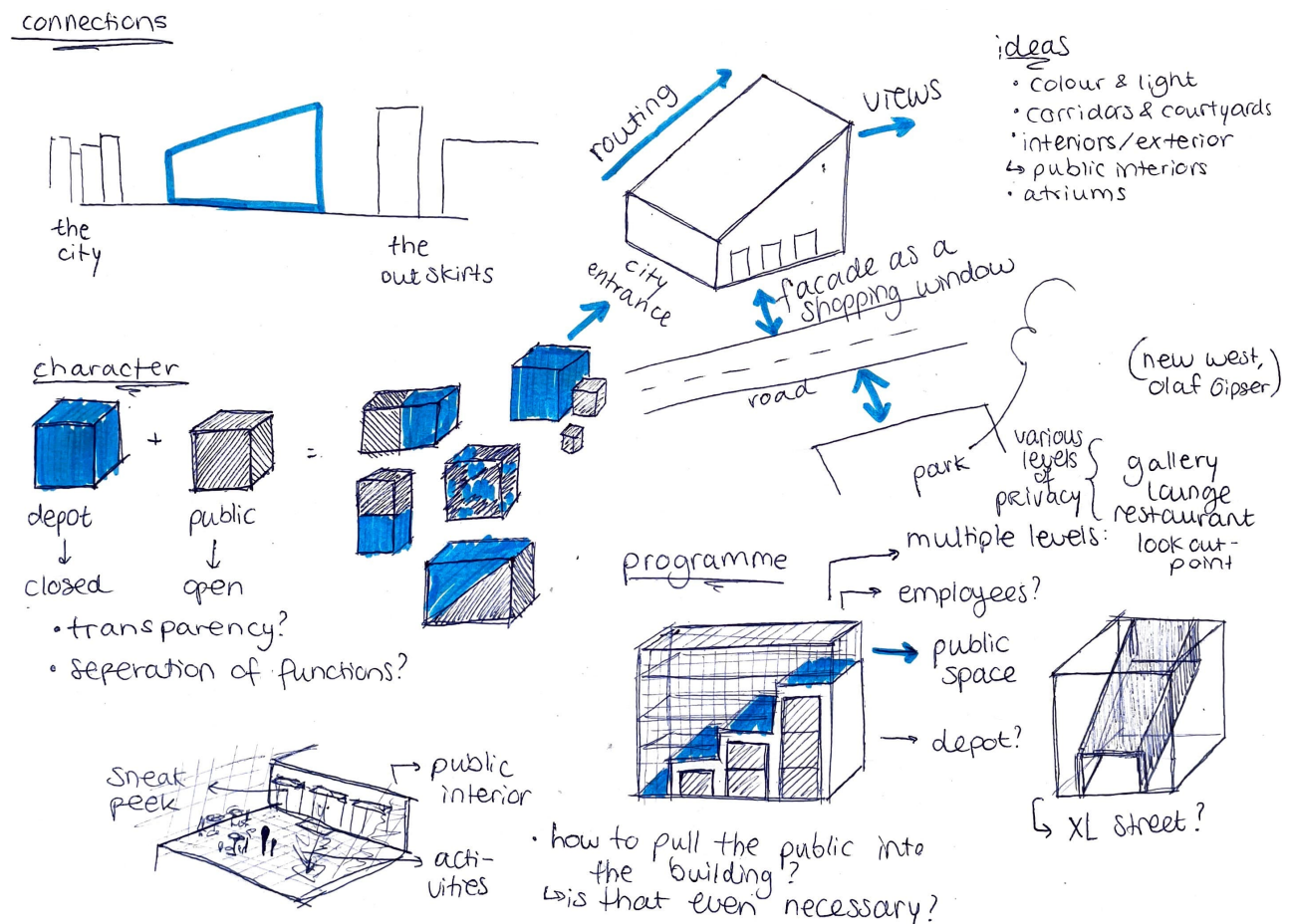


Figure 4: sketches for volume studies

## WEEK 2.4

02/12/24 - 06/12/24

**D** The goal for this week was to better situate my design options in the landscape around De Singel. This was part of the feedback I had received the week before, saying that I should try to de-conceptualize my idea and really situate an intervention in the real world. To actually draw my design like a real-life render, to simulate what a certain volume would do in the space and how to connect it to the real context, so it doesn't become a random mass floating in a space. I experimented with different ways to do this, starting with the tip I received in studio the week before; to draw over a Google Maps screenshot. This allows you to easily look from different angles, while maintaining a human perspective.

This was harder to do than expected, because Google Maps seems to distort the image a bit, to almost a fish eye like perspective. Furthermore,

the colour that I chose to show my building addition already insinuates a lot about materiality and colour of the design, even though I haven't really decided about those elements. I also tried big scale modeling to test the volumes of my intervention in urban context. Figure 6 shows a quick test model in the 1:1250 model. I like the way the volumes interact with the scale of the city. Volumes organized like this will create a dynamic experience of the building block. From afar, it will blend with its surroundings, but up close you experience the unity of the volume. Perhaps a contrasting colour or material for the facade (compared to the city and De Singel) will show the public that this building part is a newer addition and has a different function. My next steps will be to really make floorplans. They don't have to be definite, but they will help test the design limits and possibilities.



Figure 5a & 5b: sketches situating volumes



Figure 6: design option in the 1:1250 model

## WEEK 2.5

09/12/24 - 13/12/24

**P** In order to start making floorplans, I first needed to ask myself some critical, spatial questions regarding wants, needs and program. How to divide the program? Which parts have entrances? Which rooms need daylight or cannot have daylight? How to move from one space to another? Does a space need to be on the ground floor? I needed to formulate a logical answer to all of these questions while still keeping to the concepts I decided; as seen in figure 7. My two main urban goals were to connect the green park campus structure, over the swimming pool and De Singel to the CC Antwerpen.

Eventually, the most important spatial decisions were: three entrances; for the public, the employees

and the depot material. The public and employee spaces need daylight, the depot cannot have daylight. The public functions and material processing spaces are preferably located on the ground floor.

Furthermore, I chose a main circulation system which connects all employee spaces through the whole building. This long corridor, inspired by the corridors Léon Stynen purposefully designed in his original conservatoire building, function both as a logistical space and as a catalyst for social interaction. By making it spacious, both people and carts with depot material can easily move through the building. The functional rooms have been placed against the hallway to have a view onto the road and the park. They enclose a courtyard.

**D**

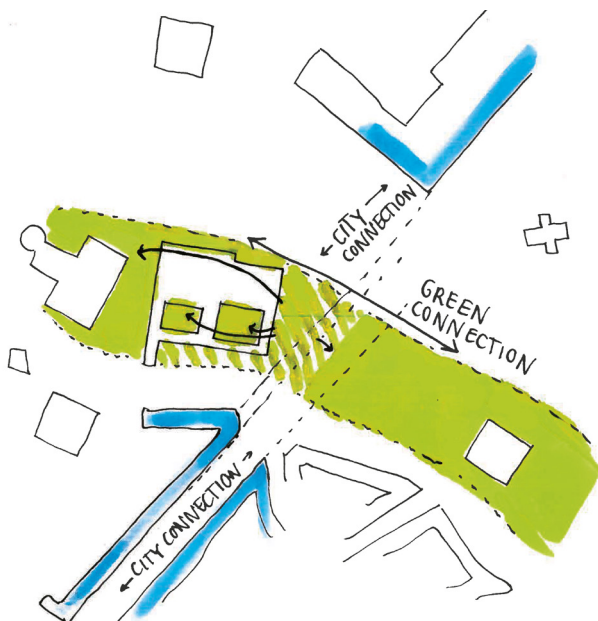


Figure 7: urban connection concept diagram

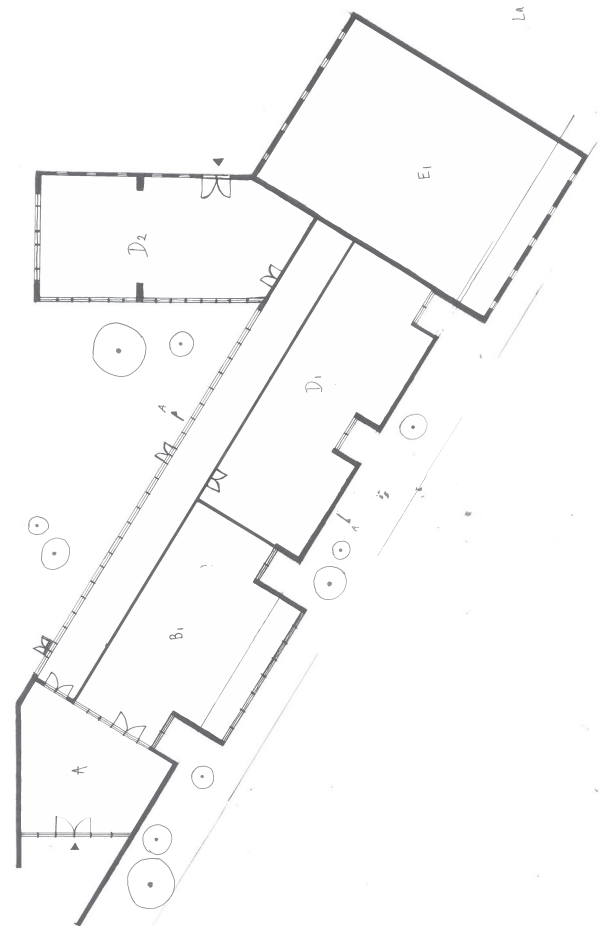


Figure 8: first draft floorplan ground floor



## WEEK 2.6

16/12/24 - 20/12/24

**R** To prepare for the (pre-)P2 presentation, we were asked to deliver a certain set of information and drawings as a group. As I had already done research into the CCA (the Collectie Centrum Antwerp (the new depot being developed by Office Winhov)), which turned out to be very relevant and inspiring for me, I chose to research a similar topic. We were asked to dig into the history of the site and how this had influenced Léon Stynen when designing his conservatoire. This turned out to be an eye-opening analysis.

De Singel used to be situated in an open landscape full of sandy hills and bodies of water. This landscape had a big influence on the way Stynen situated his building enclave. Unfortunately, the city of Antwerp

made a lot of decisions during the building phase of De Singel which completely changed the site.

**D** A new goal for my building could now be to partially restore the site to its original state, but this would be difficult. A better interpretation might be to reconnect De Singel to its surrounding landscape, but not in the way Stynen meant for that to happen. With the city of Antwerpen deciding on elaborate designs for the landscape and park structures surrounding the ring road of the city, it seems to me the better choice is to work together with these plans. Right now, De Singel is not really included in the green Culture Campus the city aims to achieve. Figures 10 show how I can make that happen.

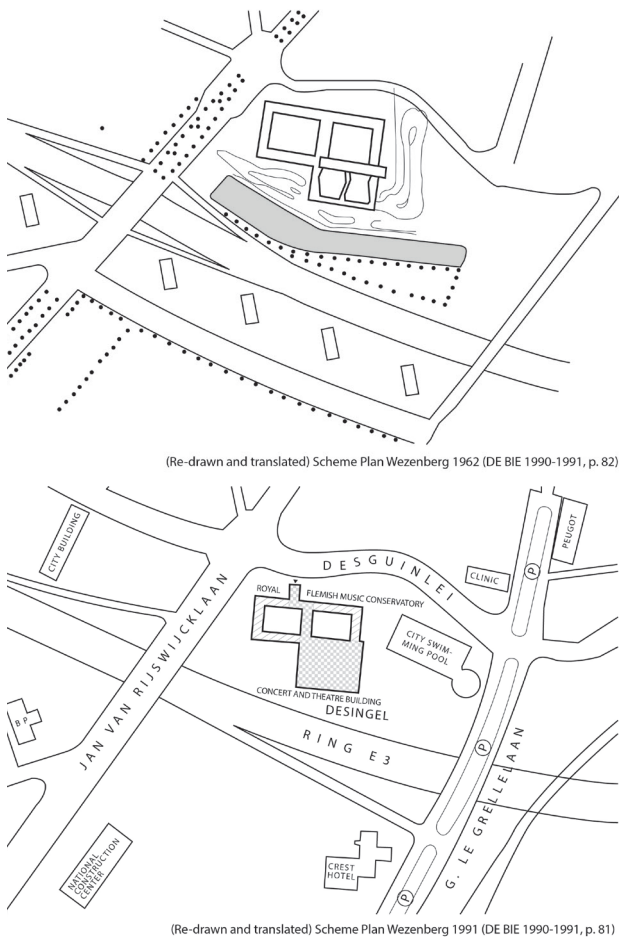


Figure 9a &amp; 9b: scheme plan Wezenberg



Figure 10a &amp; 10b: scheme plan urban design

## WEEK 2.7

06/01/25 - 10/01/25

**D** In the week after the Christmas break the P2 crits were scheduled. This is a midterm presentation in which would prepare us for the actual P2 presentation. We were asked to present a draft version of our design, which should convince of the chosen strategy to solve the research question. To prepare for this, I worked out my concepts and design strategy. I stuck with the idea of creating a new building wing for the VAI as an extension of De Singel and connecting De Singel with the urban concept Culture Campus.

The goal is to resituate De Singel in its urban context, to make it an extroverted building which synergizes with the other institutions within Culture Campus, like the CC Antwerpen. The new building wing allows the VAI to situate itself in the Culture Campus in a professional and efficient manner. The building part encloses a courtyard which will provide comfort and entertainment to the public and employees. My feedback was focused mostly on creating better designed landscaping, to let landscape and building work together.



Figure 11: P2 crits; Culture Campus urban diagram

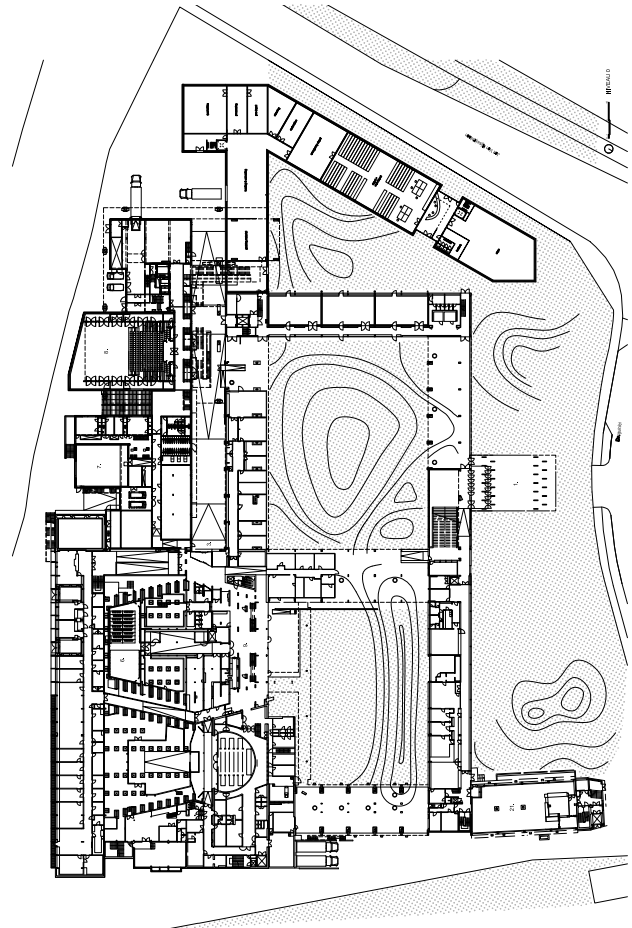


Figure 12: P2 crits; design floorplan ground floor



## WEEK 2.8

13/01/25 - 17/01/25

P With only two weeks to go until the P2 presentation, I set new goals for myself and for my design. Something important the tutors stressed on during the crits, is that your P2 does not have to be completely finished, realistic or perfect. It is a moment to test if your research is making enough progress. Even though I have plenty of new ideas and desires to change my design, making big decisions will have to wait until after the P2. In these two weeks, I will instead focus on optimizing the design proposal

I have now by making smaller adaptations, based on future ideas and previous feedback.

One of my most important feedback points was designing the landscape and letting it and the building work together. Furthermore, the current lay-out of the floorplan doesn't inspire to very interesting facades. By finding, sketching and thus understanding reference projects, I hoped to get inspired. Furthermore I researched how to incorporate water into my landscape and building.

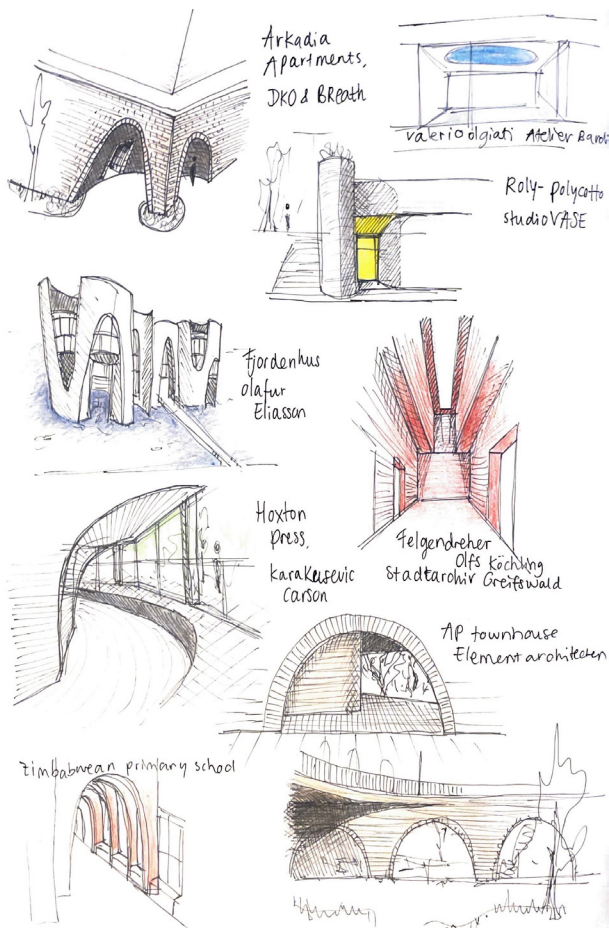


Figure 13: sketches of reference projects

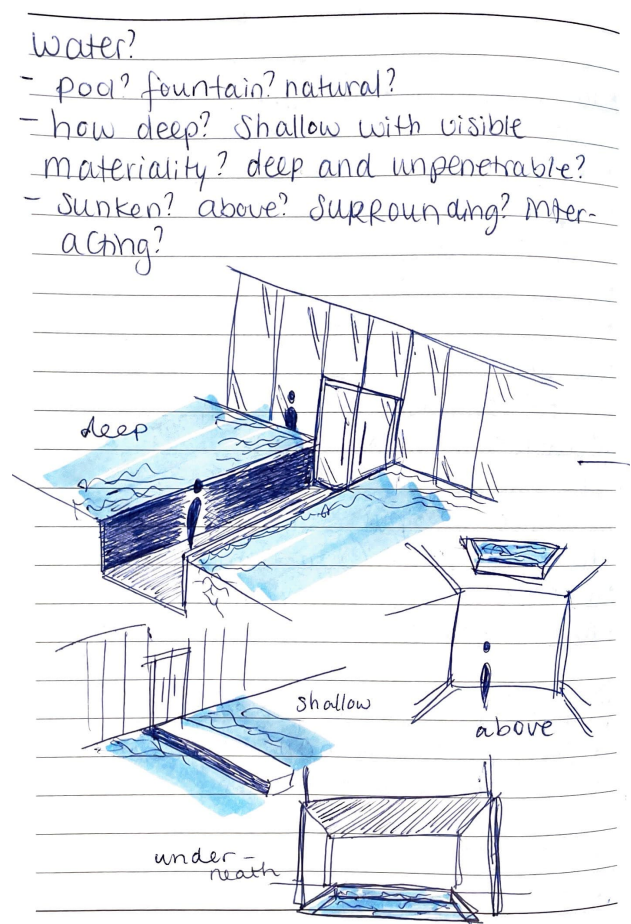


Figure 14: experimental sketches; incorporating water

## WEEK 2.9

20/01/25 - 24/01/25

**D** On Thursday we had the last opportunity to get feedback on our design interventions, so during the week I worked towards this moment. In my design I started exploring with water as both a landscape and an architectural experience. By making many sketches of how architecture and water could interact, I formed a design. I kept the volumes of previous design prototypes similar, but now orientated them around a shallow pond.

The pond has multiple goals, but one of the most important ones is recreating a similar contextual situation as the one that existed when Léon Stynen designed his original conservatory building. The pond he built back then has been adapted so many times that it became unrecognizable. I re-introduce the original lines of his pond, but design it in such a way that it synergizes with my intervention and creates experiences.

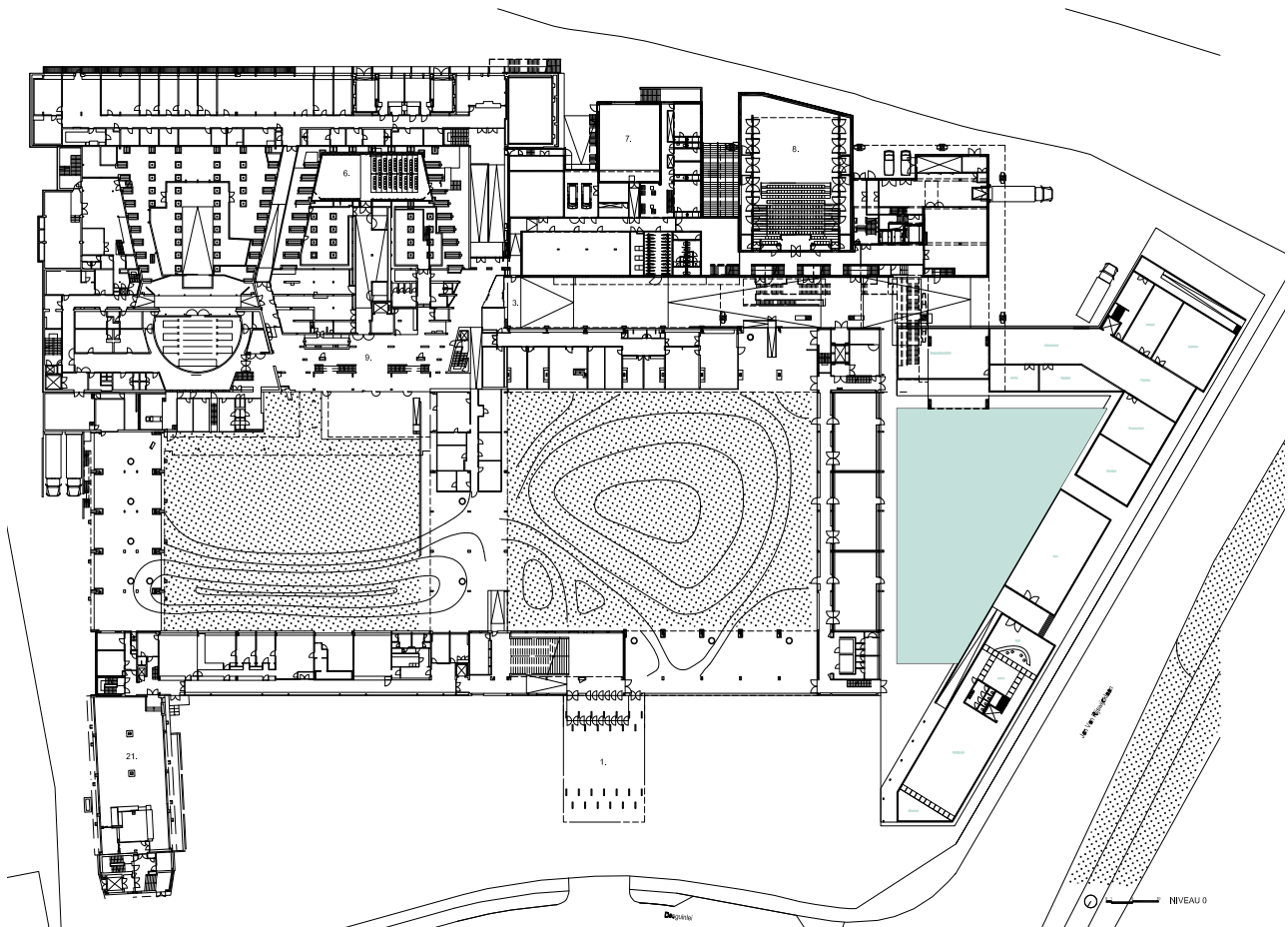


Figure 15: Pre-P2 proposal - Floorplan ground floor

## WEEK 2.10

27/01/25 - 31/01/25

**P** With the last few days before the P2 presentation, my focus was on making products that explain my design and support my narrative. The sketches that I did the week before became prominent players in deciding the precise measurements of my building. In my presentations, I always use (colourful) schematic diagrams to explain systems within my design. The diagram in figure 17 shows the ways functions are divided in different parts

of the building. Designing for the comfort of all different user groups was important for me. Employees, visitors and archival material will all have their own rooms and routes. A model was also essential to support my presentation. I chose to make my own, instead of sharing a model with the group, because I needed to be able to “dig” into the ground to make my pond and because I wanted to show more urban context.

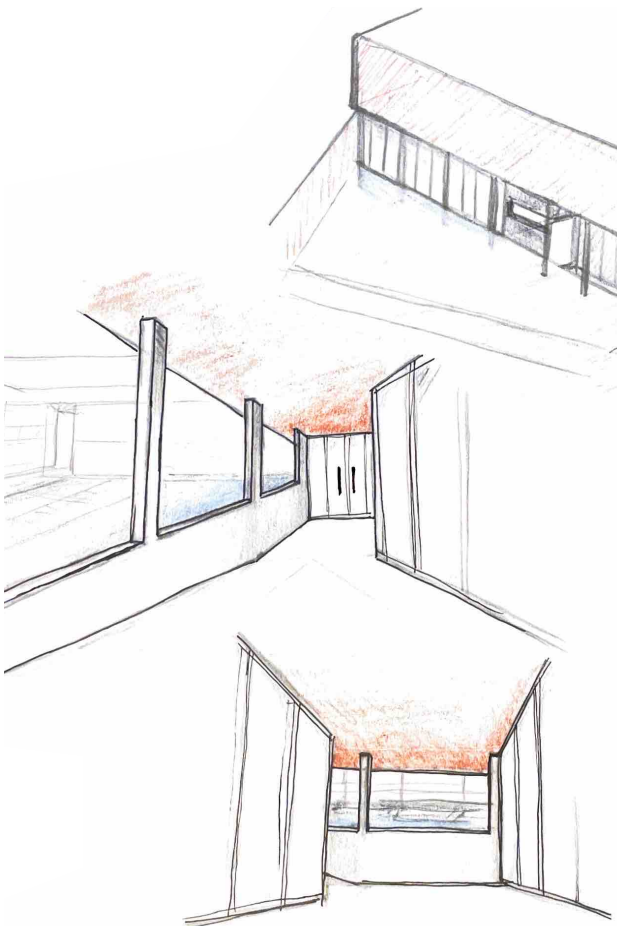
**D**

Figure 16: sketches important architectural moments

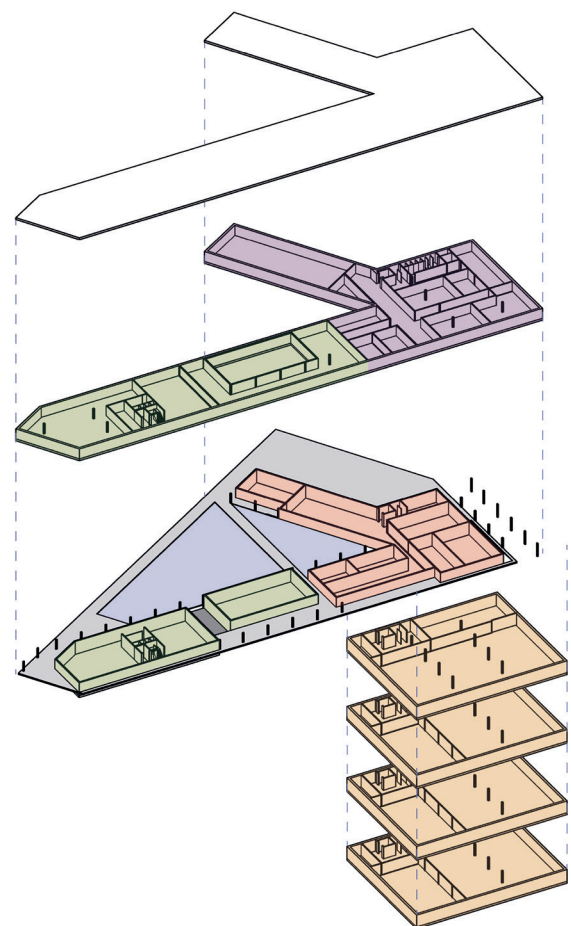


Figure 17: P2 design axonometric drawing with functions

## RESULTS P2

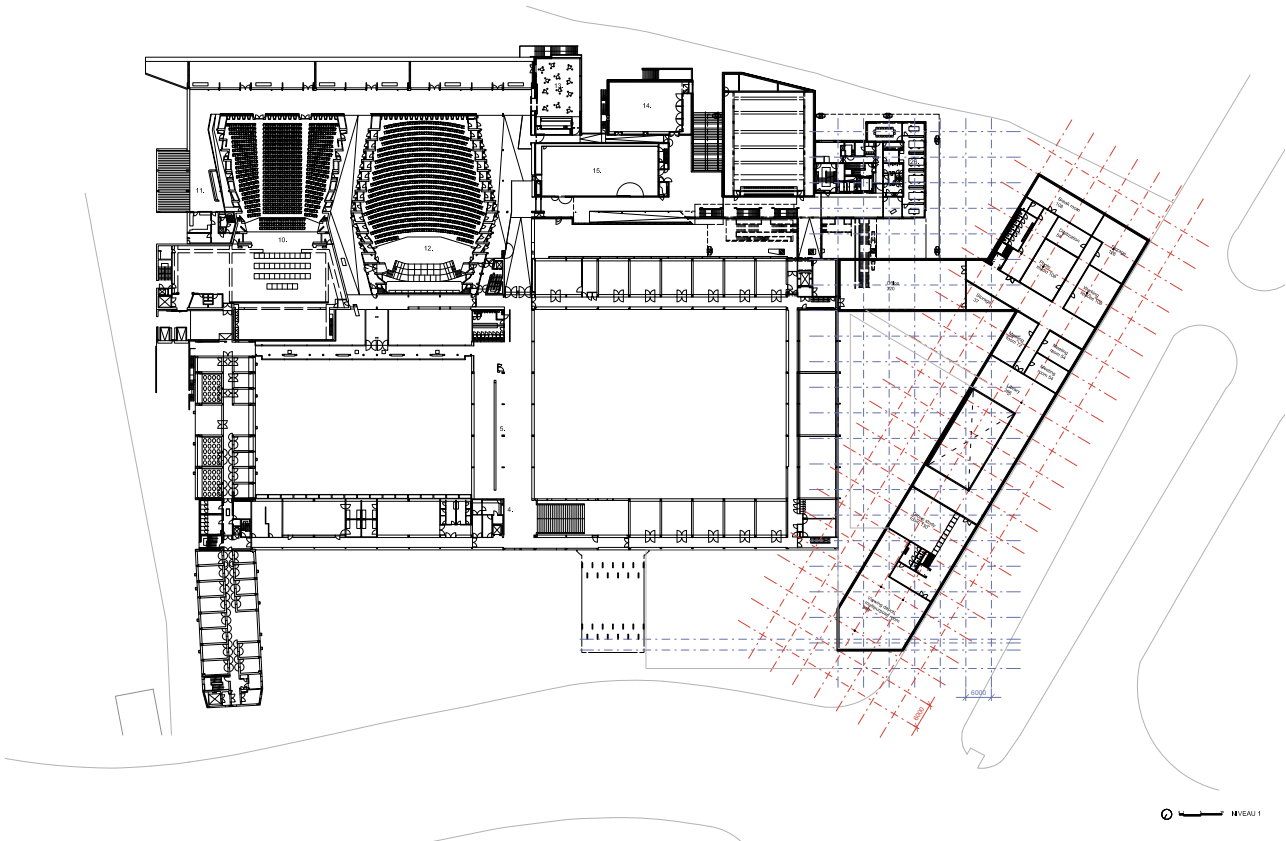


Figure 18: P2 Floorplan +1

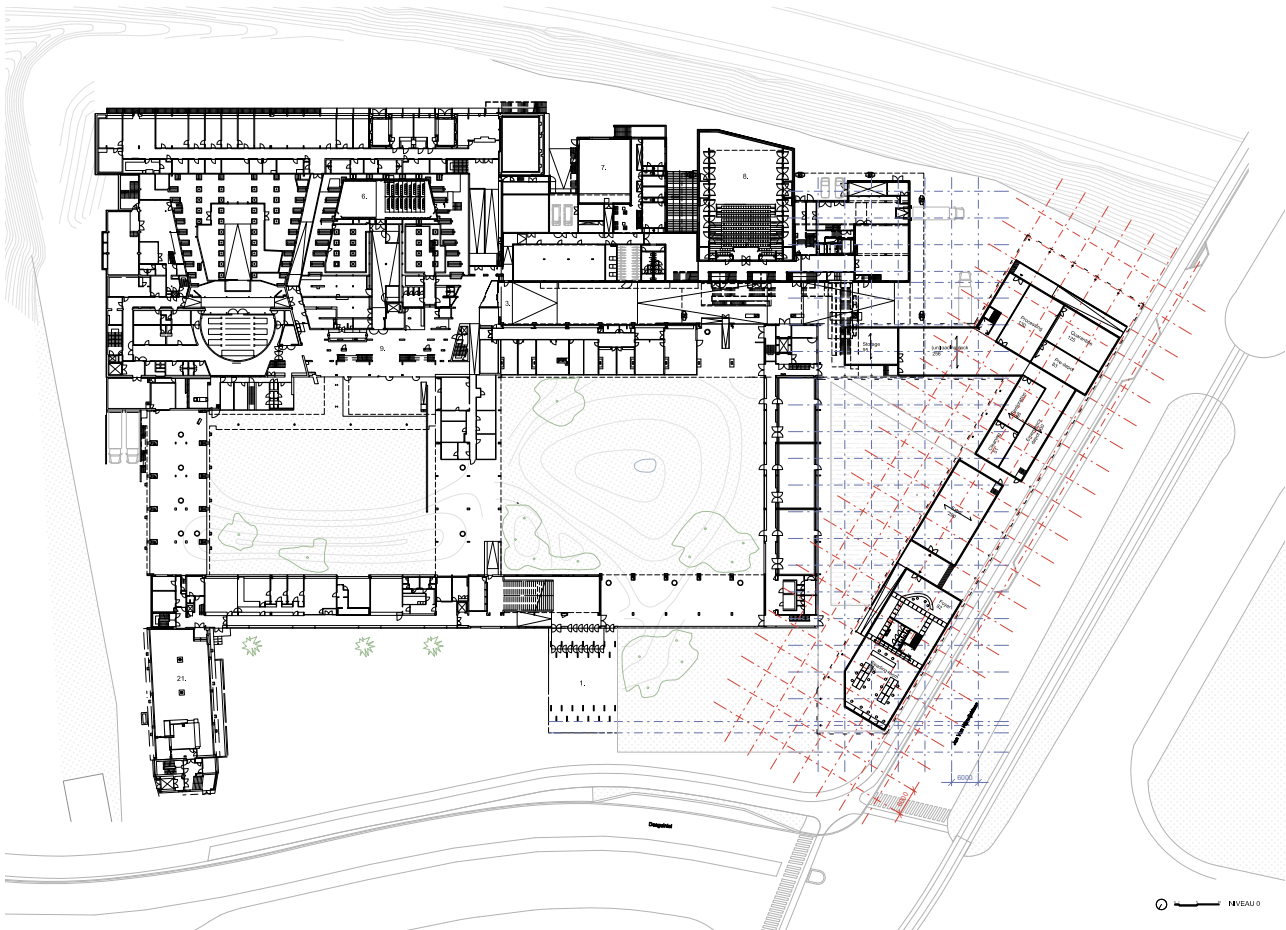


Figure 19: P2 Floorplan +0





Figure 20: P2 Floorplan -1

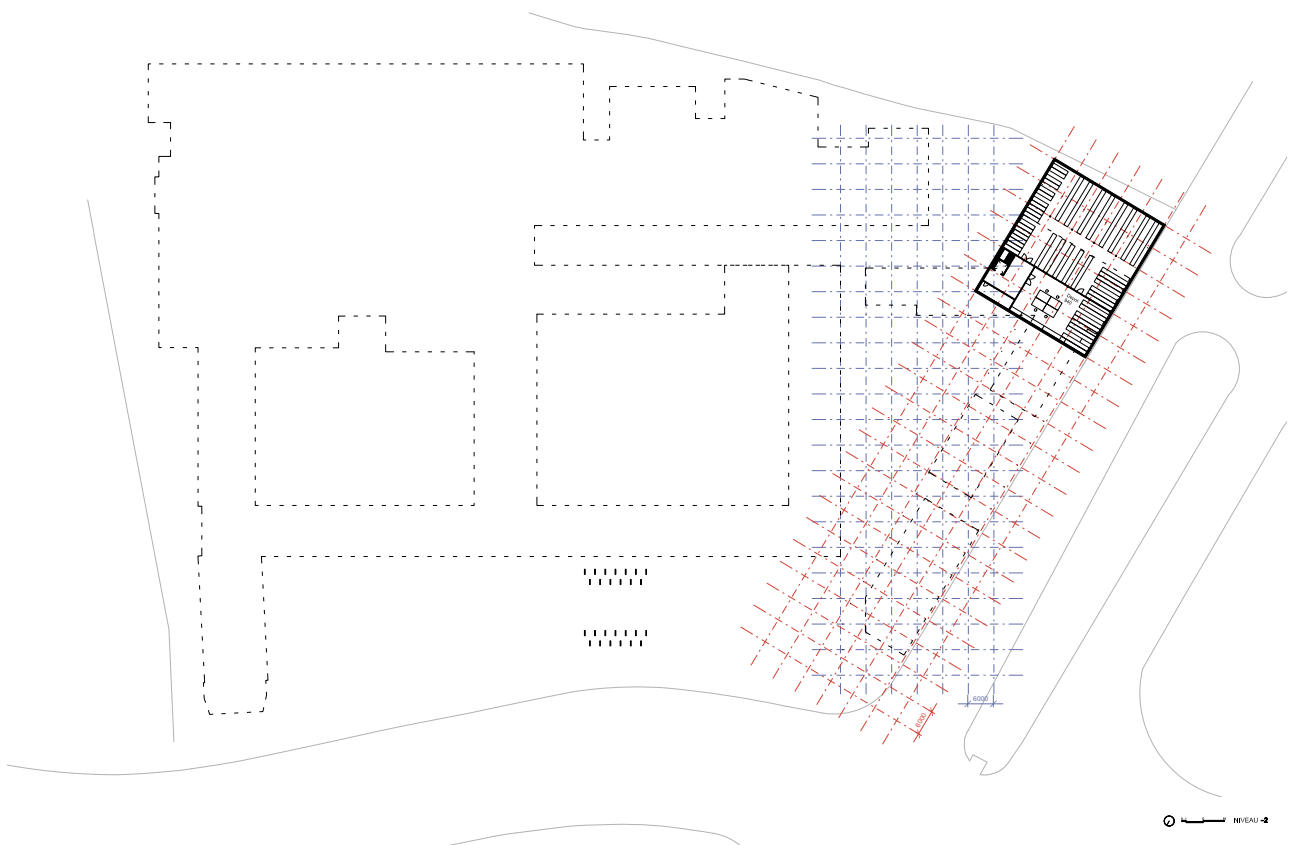


Figure 21: P2 Floorplan -2

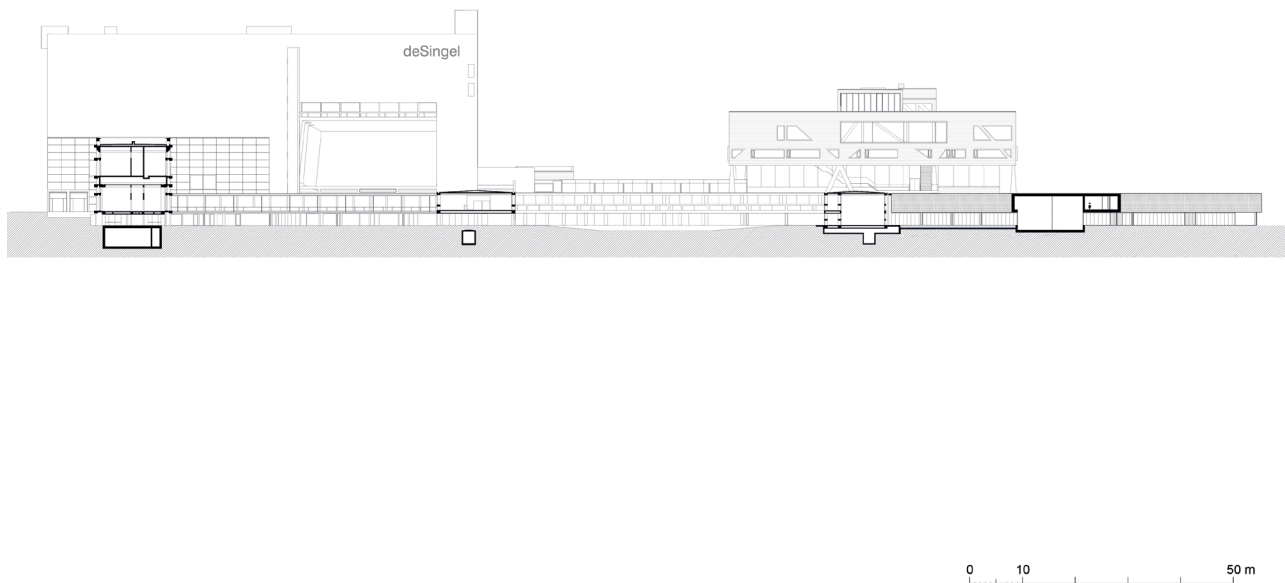


Figure 22: P2 section through De Singel + new VAI building

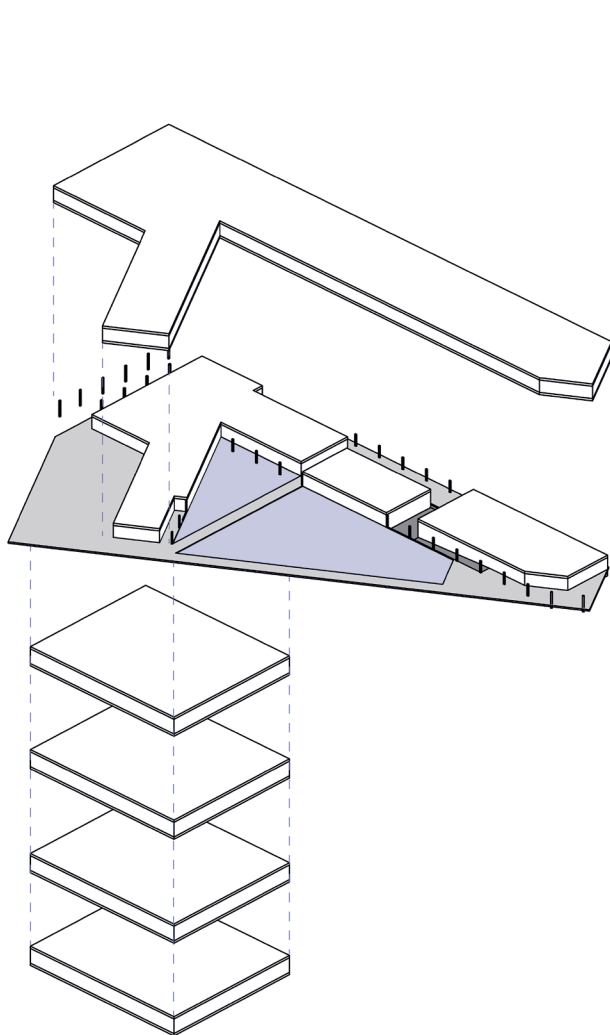


Figure 23: P2 axo volumes

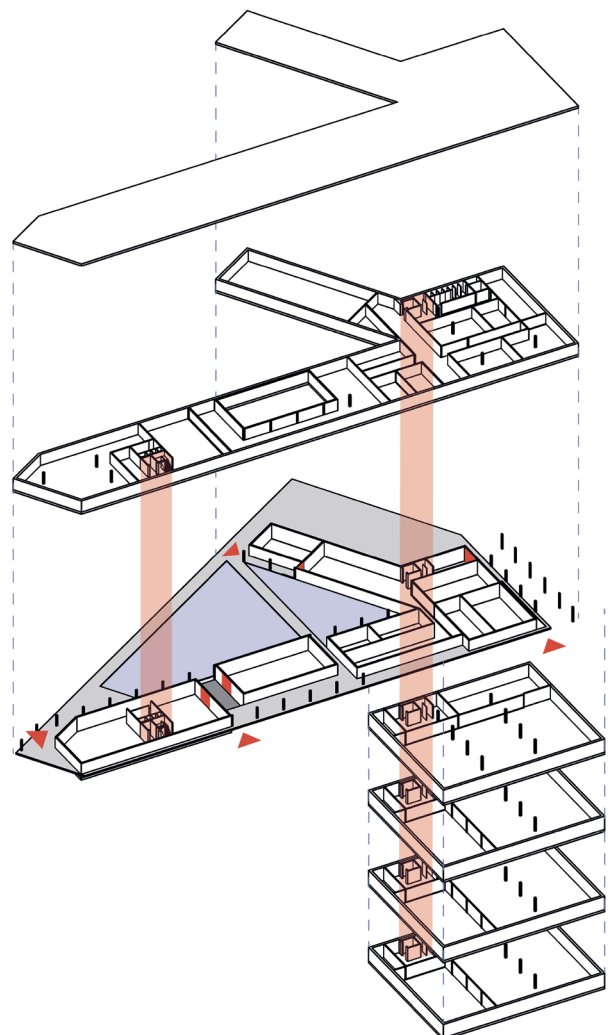


Figure 24: p2 axo circulation

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Laura Tijchon



# PROJECT JOURNAL

Interiors Buildings Cities  
Archiving Architecture

## COLOFON

Work by: Laura Tijchon  
Student nr.: 5058899  
Studio: Interiors Buildings Cities  
P3 date: 3rd of April, 2025

First mentor: Sam De Vocht  
Second mentor: Matthijs Klooster  
Third mentor: Amy Thomas  
& other IBC studio mentors

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## ABOUT THE CHAIR

Quoted from the course manual;

### **Interiors Buildings Cities**

Interiors Buildings Cities is concerned with the history, culture and practice of architecture, addressing the ways and means by which it can contribute to the environments through which people experience the world and live well together in it. We understand the making of architecture as an inherently ethical and political act and believe in its agency, seeing it as a preeminent medium through which we can effect change and address the opportunities and challenges that are inherent within contemporary culture and society. Our teaching engages directly with these issues, concerning itself with the idea that architecture can help to construct the kind of society we wish to live in; one that is generous in its accommodation of diverse communities and which nurtures and takes pleasure in the natural environment we share with other living things.

Interiors Buildings Cities advocates a situated architecture, which is both of its time and cognisant of its place within a historical continuity. Projects address the complex legacy of modernity and more specifically twentieth-century modernism, repositioning it and seeking

to reintegrate it within the contemporary city. We take pleasure in the city as we find it, in its conditions, its impositions, its chaotic yet vital heterogeneity. At the same time, our projects focus on the need to redefine the terms upon which architecture is made, in response to the huge challenges facing our planet. Across our different courses we ask how this might be achieved at many scales, from local community to national institution; from room to city.

Interiors Buildings Cities engages architecture across all its scales, as the name suggests, and considers the relations between them as being intrinsic to it. Often conceived of an adjunct or an afterthought to the act of making architecture, our particular attention to the interior and notions of interiority instead conceive it as a central concern from which to develop our thoughts. We perceive both the domestic and the public interior as sites where representations and ideas of society are projected, where thoughts of our privacy, individuality and subjectivity are cultivated, and where notions of our place in society, and in the world, are inculcated. We are interested in seeing how individual and collective agency may be developed in these spaces, from which the building can be projected and ideas of city and society unfold.



## ABOUT THE STUDIO

Quoted from the course manual; edited for clarity

### **Palace**

The Palace of the Graduation studio reflects upon the history of the representative public buildings that have shaped our cities and societies. It acknowledges that this type has been constantly reinterpreted and reappropriated through time and circumstance, questioning its role and responsibilities and how it can engage with the contemporary city and its citizens. The inherent spatial complexity of the Palace, with its hierarchies, infrastructures and intricate sequences of rooms and spaces, is reinterpreted not as a physical expression of power and authority but rather as a representative framework for collective public life, where we come together as a public and might engage with one other as a diverse society.

These ambitions are outwardly expressed through its placement in the city and how its form, facades and interiors address social and urban conditions. With this as their theme, your Graduation projects will address contemporary public buildings and the institutions that occupy them as being integral to the life of the modern city. They offer opportunities to rethink known types in specific

circumstances across each scale, from interior to urban structure. The choice of project is often related to actual conditions and real clients, allowing them to be understood as an active research space with an address beyond academia.

### **Graduation Design Studio**

Palace is the overarching theme for the Interiors Buildings Cities graduation studio. Each year, the studio explores a different, complex institutional type, exploring its role in society, its responsibilities to the city and its citizens, and its representative form. The chosen project often refers to an actual, sometimes ongoing condition, working in relation to real conditions, needs, and people—whether clients or users.

The studio develops a single project over two semesters to arrive at a graduation design project. In the first semester, development is toward a mature and well-argued proposal that can be taken forward as a complete project, considering users, sites, contexts, cultural settings, histories, types, technology, and the environment in architectural design. Each of the projects within the studio will have its own set of concerns in relation to these subjects; each project is obliged to address these as central to its considerations.

## ABOUT THE BRIEF

The second quarter of graduation year was rounded up by the P2 presentation. At this point of the year, students were expected to present a strategic proposal that solves the issues mentioned in the brief. This required a more or less finalized distribution of volumes and functions, a fitting floorplan and first choices about materiality and building details.

During the P2, the students presented their work thus far, visualizing their design with sketches, diagrams, technical drawings, renderings and models, whatever they needed to argument their choices. The design was judged on feasibility, plausibility, aesthetics, understandability and other similar topics. In conclusion, the student should be able to show that this design will be finished and of adequate quality by the time of the P4 presentation. The P2 presentation was the first moment where student and building technology mentor met. From this point on -should the student receive a GO for their P2- the student and BT mentor will be meeting regularly, in order to design the technical aspects of the proposal. The Building Technology manual describes five main topics: technical building design, load-bearing structures, climate control, facades and social considerations.

Before topics like these can be discussed and considered, choices about volumes, distribution of functions, floorplans and sections already need to be made -to a certain extent. With this graduation assignment, it is necessary to make an integrated design, meaning that all subtopics of architecture are considered as a part of an interdisciplinary whole.

The BT manual describes their aims as followed:

The student's final design, as presented orally and visually, must show that they have knowledge and understanding of:

- The interaction between an architectural concept and the building technology applied in its development
- Technical and physical considerations

Thus the student must present reasoned solutions and demonstrate skill in incorporating the technical building design effectively in the design process as a whole.

- Course guide of Technical Building Design 2025

Furthermore, the initial architectural concepts should not be lost in actualizing the building, but reinforced by the technical choices.

## ABOUT THE JOURNAL

The Project Journal is based on all the notes (physical and digital), photos, drawings and models I made during the graduation project. To be able to draw conclusions from this material and evaluate it properly, I ordered it into three categories related to design and the design process: Process, Research and Design. Each category has its own colour. While there might be overlap between the categories -a certain drawing could certainly be part of both research and design, for example- the predominant category will be visible with a coloured tab in the corner of the page.

-  for Process
-  for Research
-  for Design

The Process category will show the behind the scenes process that I go through. It will explain my thoughts and experiences, but also the choices made or the lessons learned. This category is mostly meant for me as a designer to understand what my preferred way of working is and how I can manage my own instinct and design process better.

The Research category is about summarizing all the academic and empirical research that I do during the design process. At this faculty and in this studio, we focus on an integrated design process where research and design intertwine and synergize. Nevertheless, research needs to be documented in order to learn from it. The Design category is the second part of these interacting categories. In this journal, it is used mostly to indicated draft or finished designs and the associated visualizations. The designs can be seen as a sub-conclusion of the research and design process.

As I prefer to use many different methods and materials when designing, this project journal will reflect this organized chaos. It will feature quick sketches, typed text, finished design drawings, process photographs and more.

The main appendix of the Project Journal consists of a separate folder in which I collect all my drawings, sketches and other paper material. Sketching is incredibly important in my design process, and with this project being about archiving, I'm making sure my real process of trial and error is properly documented.

## WEEK 3.1

10/02/25 - 14/02/25

**P** Week 3.1 was the first working week after the P2 presentation, meaning that a lot of evaluation and revising was in order. During my P2 presentation, my three mentors (design, building technology and research) were present and each of them wrote down questions regarding my design and their topic of expertise. These questions were later sent to me and formed the basis for my next steps. As week 3.1 was also the week in which I would have my first one-on-one meeting with my BT tutor, I

focused on preparing for this. During the P2, my BT tutor expressed seeing potential in designing my pond not just as an architectural intervention, but an ecological one. This could then also influence my choice for construction and façade materials. Since I didn't quite have any prior knowledge about these topics of ecology and biodiversity, this raised a lot of questions for me. My BT tutor and I discussed that my design could have a courtyard in which a mini ecosystem balances itself.

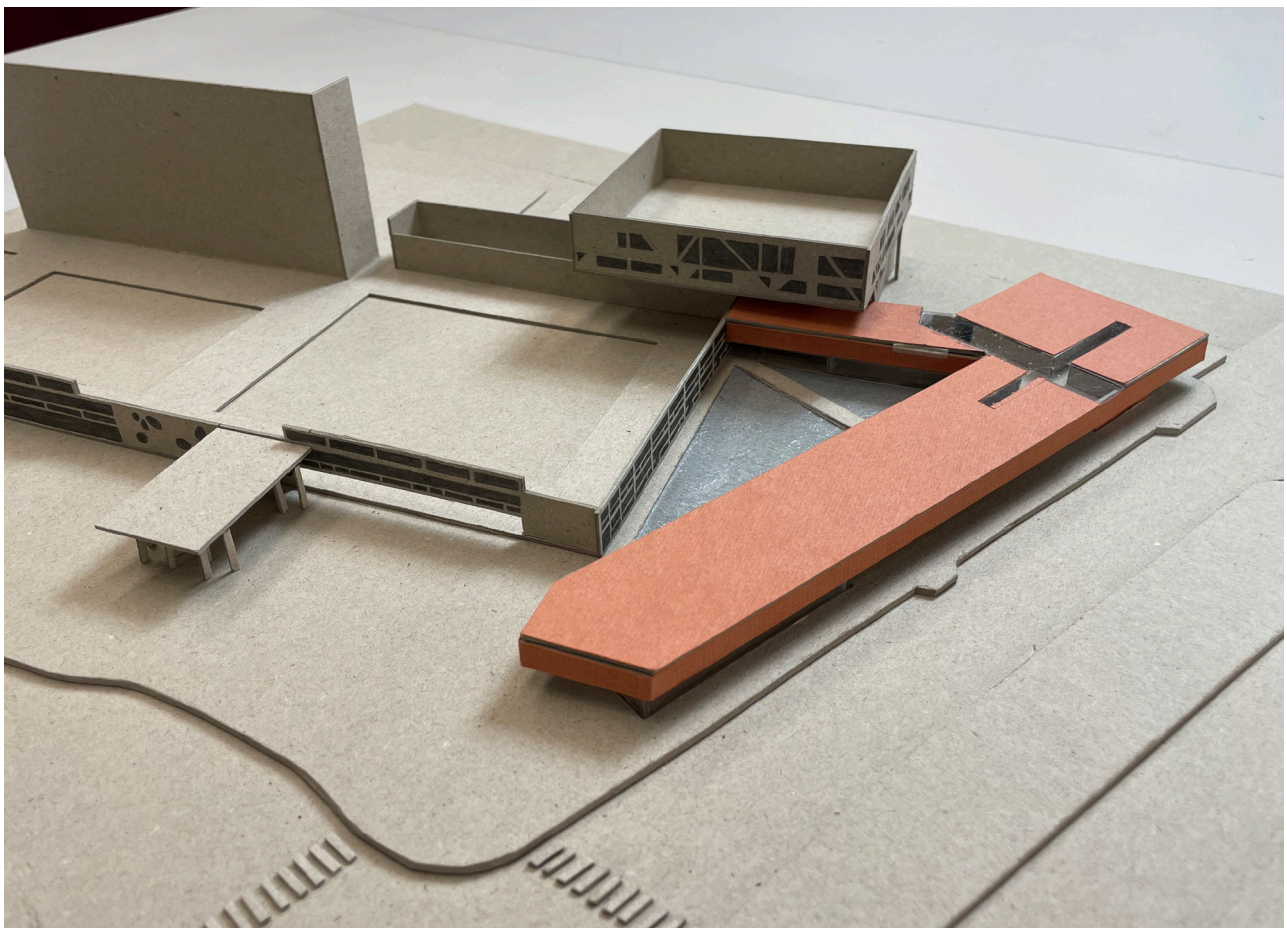


Figure 1: P2 model, 1:750



Upon deciding what my design could do for flora and fauna, I started researching what my design should do for flora and fauna. At first, combining biodiversity and archiving might not make much sense. So why does the VAI need to invest in nature inclusive design? How would this choice influence its social culture?

I read some books and articles about nature in the city, about water in architecture and about designing for biodiversity. I decided that my project

could be a catalyst within the larger landscape structure. I will assume the landscape of the Ring Park is designed to house many species, and so my intervention will simply have to fit into this plan. The water could provide a unique environment within the park attracting new species or simply providing for existing ones. This choice opened up many new questions about building materials, façades, connection to the park and De Singel and about the VAI's culture.



Figure 2a-c: references for aesthetics and materials

## WEEK 3.2

17/02/25 - 21/02/25

### 74 | NATURE-INCLUSIVE DESIGN

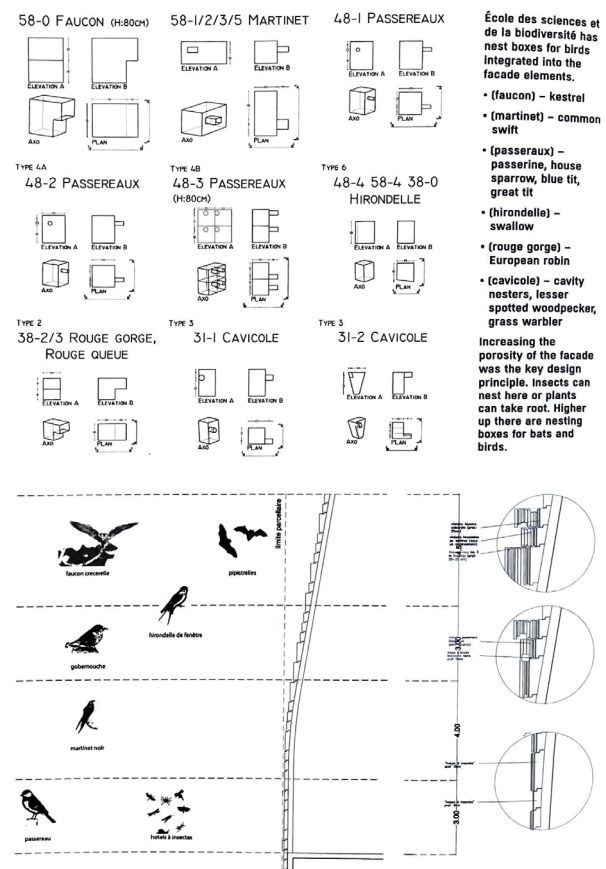


Figure 3: Building Urban Nature, page 74, bird boxes

## WEEK 3.3

24/02/25 - 28/02/25

**D** The P2 version of my design had a combined façade of glass on the ground floor and brick on the first floor. The choice for brick was intuitive, not so much deliberate yet. The new depot building of the city of Antwerp by Office Winhov will be made of brick, which corresponds with this mainly closed building. To link to this building and many other buildings in the city, I chose this for my design as well. I like the rigidity of a clean brick building, which would fit with the modern exterior of De Singel and the contrast with the glass curtain wall, which is light and transparent.

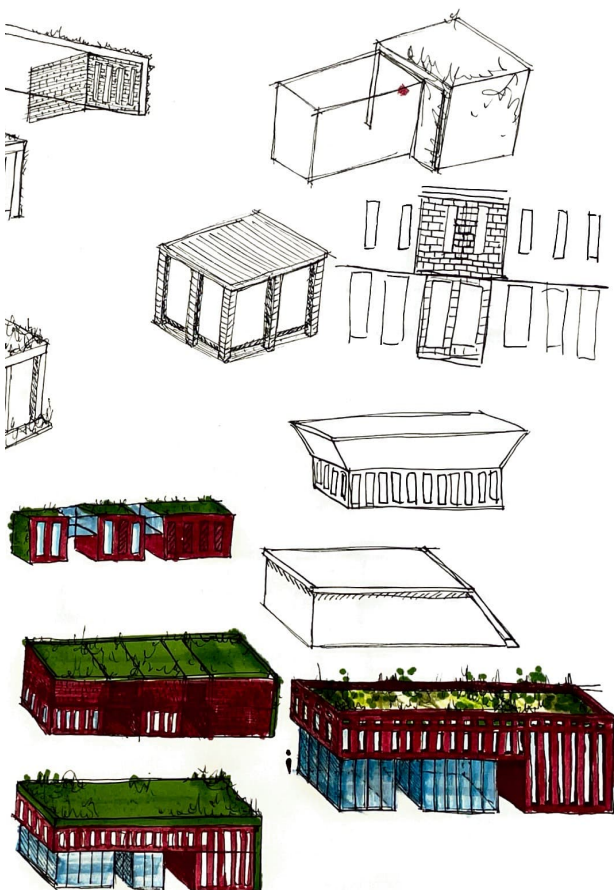


Figure 4: sketches facade aesthetics and volumes

Brick is however not a very sustainable building material, so I would want to combine it with CLT, which would make up the loadbearing structure. In this scenario, the brick would become just a decor, which doesn't make for a good argument. I also had other aesthetical and ecological aspirations which might be difficult to achieve with brick.

During week 2.3, I sketched a lot of experimental drawings, which were helpful. Furthermore, I was advised to also use working models as a design medium.

**P**

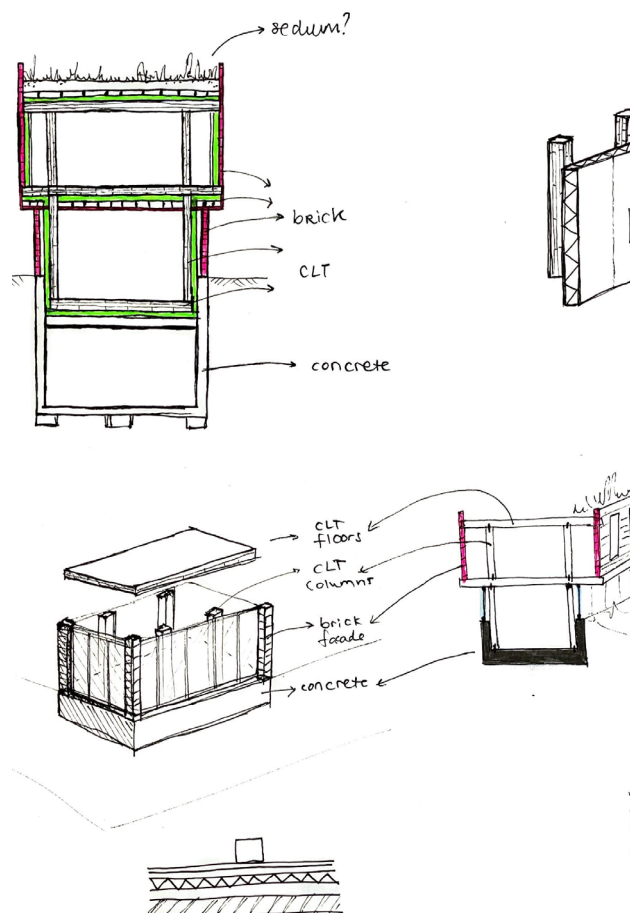


Figure 5: sketches structure and materials



D Together with my BT tutor, I came to the conclusion that my preference for using a brick façade was not so much to do with brick as a construction material, but instead with brick as a representation. Brick is widely used in Flanders and has been a main construction material for ages. It communicates privacy, longevity and locality, all notions I aim to achieve. But in order to accomplish these goals, the brick doesn't have to be new. At this time, there isn't a certain color or pattern I'm trying to create. Moreover, collecting used bricks (and maybe even other construction materials)



Figure 6a & 6b: references gabion wall facades

## WEEK 3.4

03/03/25 - 07/03/25

from around Flanders to represent Flemish architecture, makes for a much stronger argument.

One way to showcase used material, without having to clean every single brick, is by using gabion boxes. These wire boxes can store any type of material and make it possible to combine materials. While they aren't used much (yet) in architecture, it is not unheard of. Using them to clad my building will come with some difficulties, but my goal is to make them work and even establish them as a new way to handle second-hand materials.

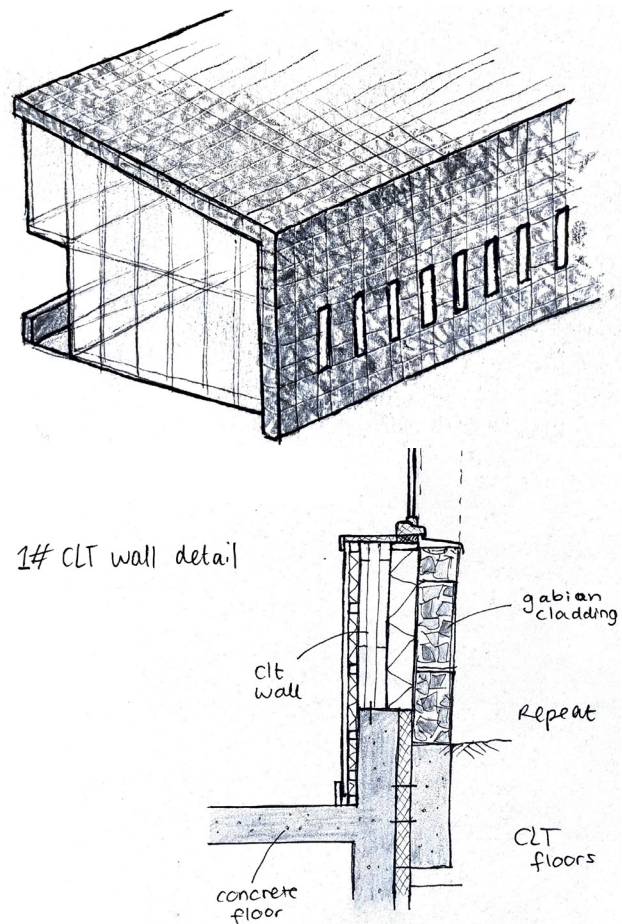


Figure 7a & 7b: sketches gabion facade system and render

## WEEK 3.5

10/03/25 - 14/03/25

**P** Trying to work out how all these different building materials would be working together was a complicated task. At this point, the combination of materials was based on where a certain material would perform best and not on an overall concept. This made it hard to envision where certain materials would go and how they would meet each other.

**D** I had a vision about creating a big, sloped canopy under which glass volumes would be located. This relates back to the sloped roof of my P1 project, but also to my P2 prototype with stacked, almost pavilion like, volumes. This would create two contrasting facades, one heavy, closed and stony

(gabion) and one light and transparent (curtain wall). These facades would represent the functions behind them, showing that an architecture institute has both private and public responsibilities.

Following up on my feedback from week 3.3, this week I tried to use multiple media to experiment with designing and test the results. I started on a computer model, set in the actual urban context, which gave me a lot of information on visual aesthetics. Furthermore, some physical sketch models in foam and cardboard helped me test construction types and communicate my ideas to the tutors.

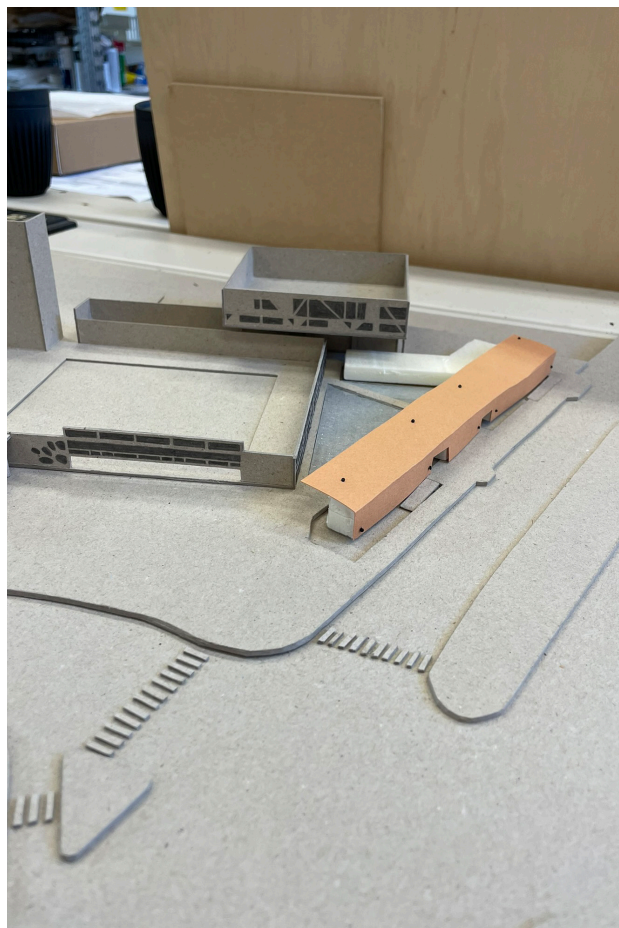


Figure 8: foam sketch model in P2 urban model, 1:500

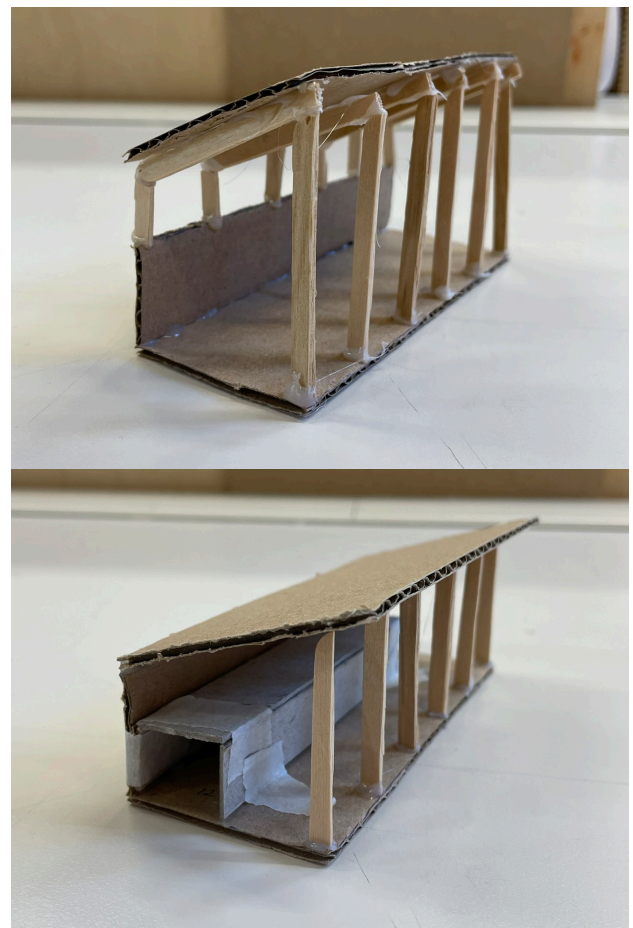


Figure 9a & 9b: cardboard sketch models, 1:100



## WEEK 3.6

17/03/25 - 21/03/25

**P** In week 3.6, I put my focus on realizing mostly conceptual ideas. Trying to incorporate all my previous thoughts, sketches and experiments, I drew up floorplans, sections and a digital model. Digital models take a lot of time to make, but do really help envision interior spaces and façade fragments.

For the P3 presentation, we are expected to build a physical model of a representative fragment of your design. The decision for the corner of the reading room, located on De Singel's entrance square, facing the city, was made fairly easily. In this corner, two façades come together, as well as the sloping roof. It faces the city in a transparent way;

the reading room is looking out over the square.

**D** I want the floorplans, the layout of the different functions, to be in accordance with the façades. It should feel like the organization of the room is always leading the user towards a certain place or a certain view. I'm working on jumps in the façade that indicate entrance areas and differences in materialization to visualize character of the rooms. In the meantime, I'm figuring out how all these changes in cladding change the load bearing structure, that in turn changes the floorplan again. The integrated way of designing makes for a slow process.

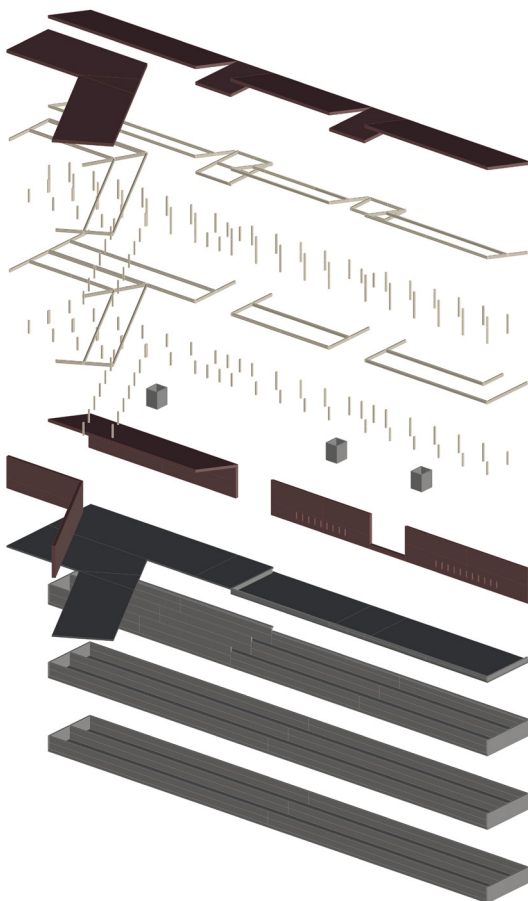


Figure 10: exploded axonometric of construction system

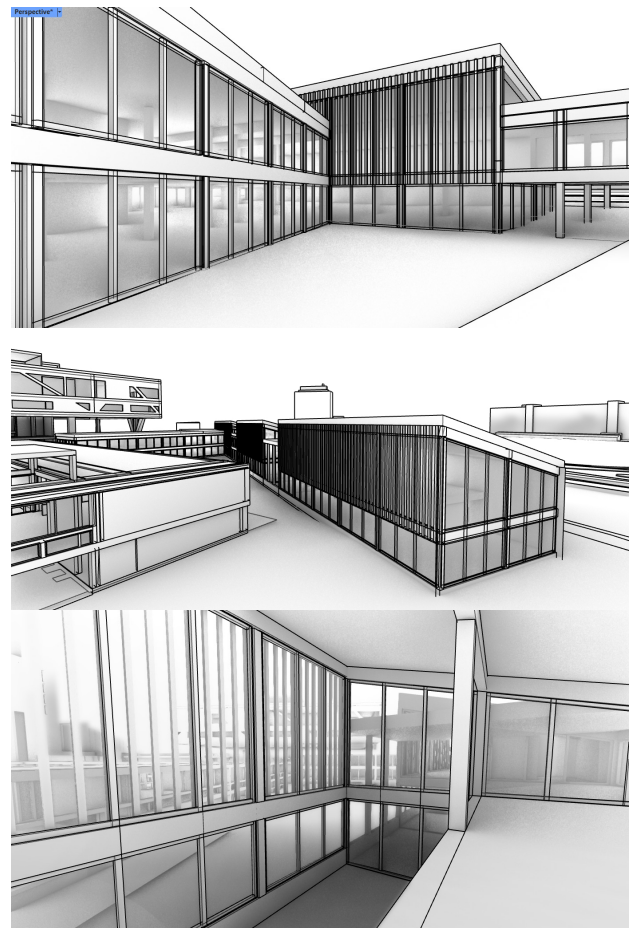


Figure 11a-c: pen renderings of exterior and interior

## WEEK 3.7

24/03/25 - 28/03/25

**P** Closing in on the P3 presentation, week 3.7 was all about models. Behind the screen, the process of designing always continues, but in order to present a coherent story, choices need to be made. The goal of the P3 is to present a finished fragment of your building, communicated with a 1:33 model. This scale requires quite specific and well considered choices about how and where elements attach, materials, colors and finishes. The fragment would show some of these design choices and allow a glimpse into real life human interaction as well.

The visual outcome of the model results directly from the choices made in the Building Technology drawings, like the 1:20 fragment

and sections. So while preparing for the model, I simultaneously worked on (for now) finished versions of these drawings. I've always felt like building and construction details have never been my strong suit, even though I recognize their potential to create cleverly detailed buildings. I thus spent a lot of time improving my construction details and testing their implications.

Furthermore, we were asked to finalize our communal 1:200 model of De Singel as a group. I spent some time on assembling the laser cut building parts of De Singel. This made me realize how little I actually interact with De Singel with my own design and how I might want to change that.



Figure 12: facade fragment; material impression

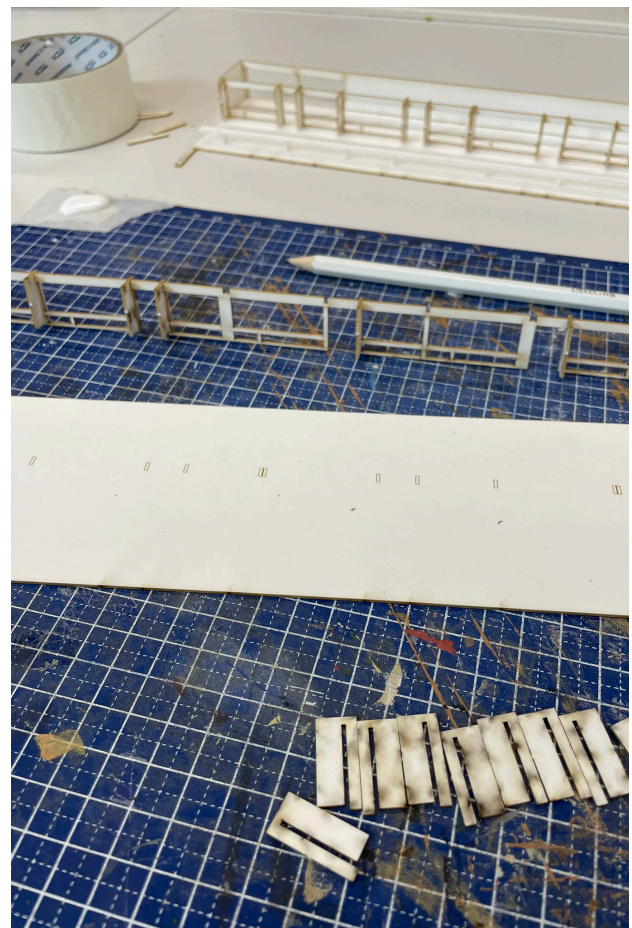


Figure 13: working on the communal 1:200 model



## WEEK 3.8

31/03/25 - 04/04/25

**P** Already having started the week before, in these last few days before the P3 presentation, I could continue working on my fragment model. When preparing for it, I recognized that I have a preferred way of making models, that I hadn't really realized before. All around me, I saw my group members build up their models out of laser cut surfaces and then spray painting it, visually turning MDF into any other material of their choice. This often presents difficulties, because of the precision laser cutting requires. For me, it feels almost unnatural to make a fragment model from only one material and to only make hollow boxes instead of real volumes. Instead, I chose a more literal way of making my fragment. Because I use timber trusses

in my design, I wanted to make this construction myself. I glued, sawed, sanded and again glued the trusses, which gave me a real feeling of construction order, weaknesses of the material, and of how to attach all construction elements. Concrete I made from foam, which is moldable in a somehow similar way (and also because using actual concrete would not be possible for this model).

**R** I did have the frames for my windows and façade cladding laser cut, because those required a certain precision and were quite delicate. I however, only cut the frames, which allowed me to experiment with different “fillings” on the back, be it wood, glass or something completely else.



Figure 14: working on the 1:33 fragment model



Figure 15: fragment model with finished facade

## RESULTS P3

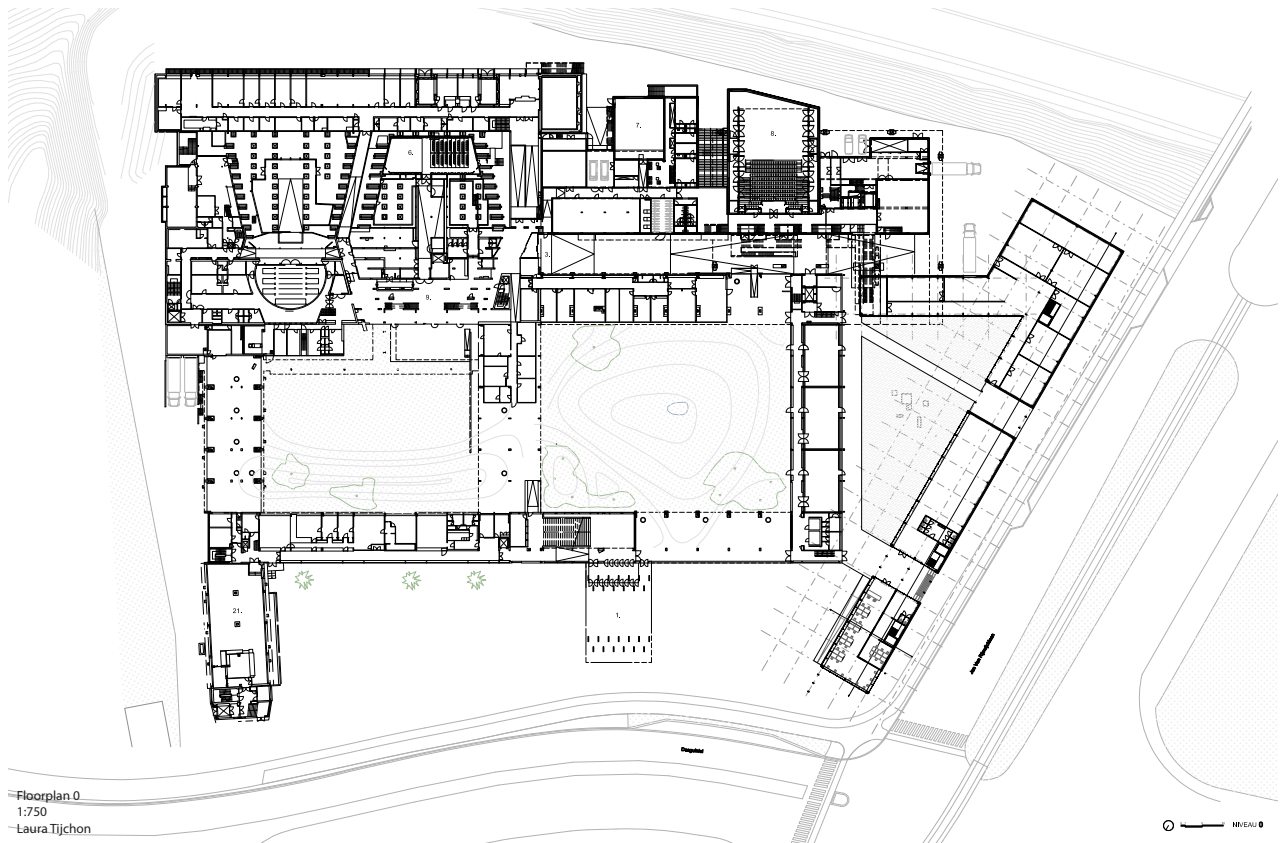


Figure 16: P3 Floorplan +0

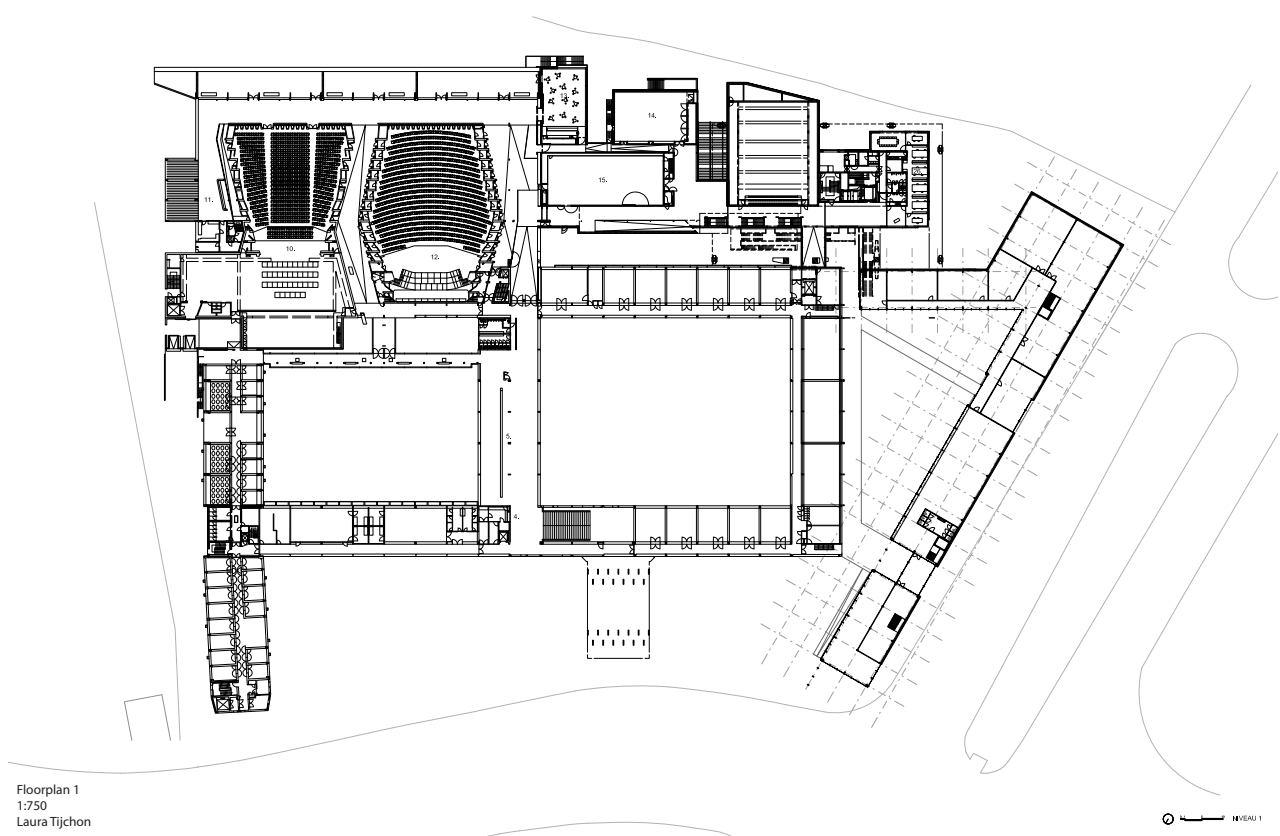


Figure 17: P3 Floorplan +1



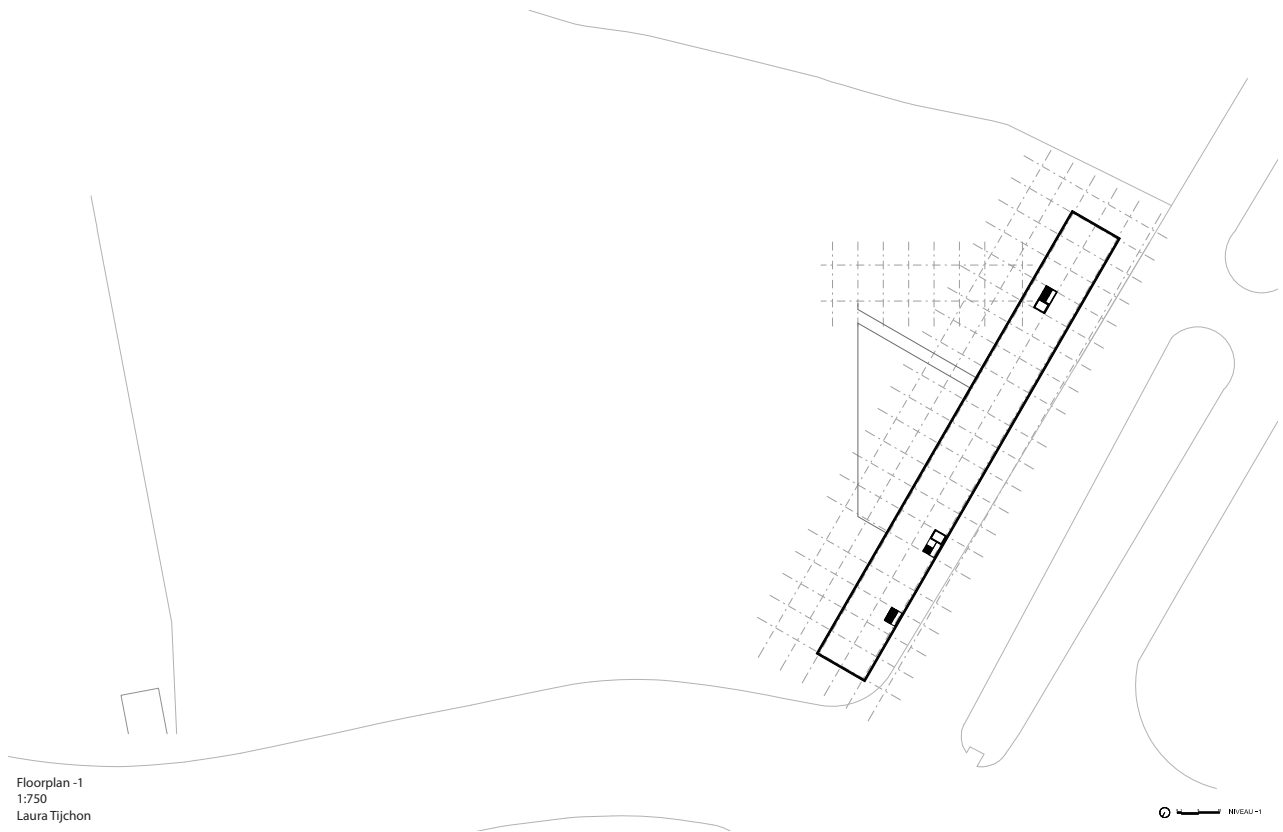
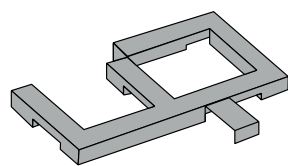
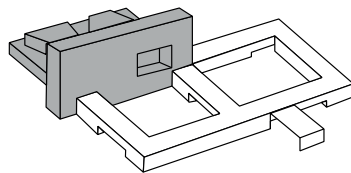


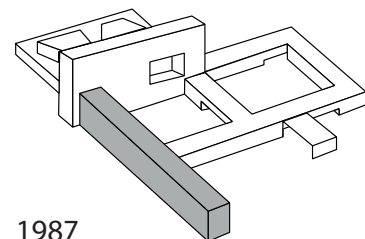
Figure 18: P3 Floorplan -1



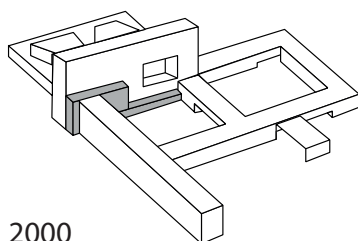
1968



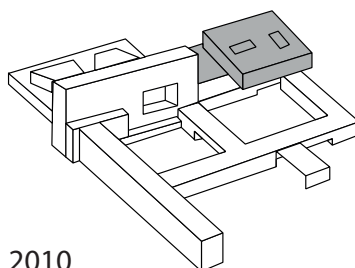
1980



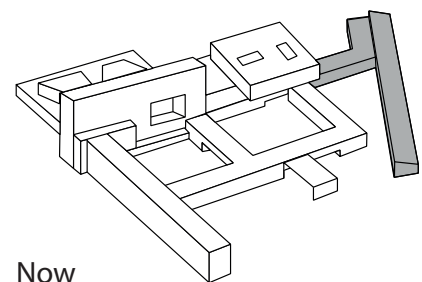
1987



2000



2010



Now

Figure 19: diagram De Singel extensions



Facade fragment  
1:33  
Laura Tijchon

Figure 20: P3 1:33 facade fragment

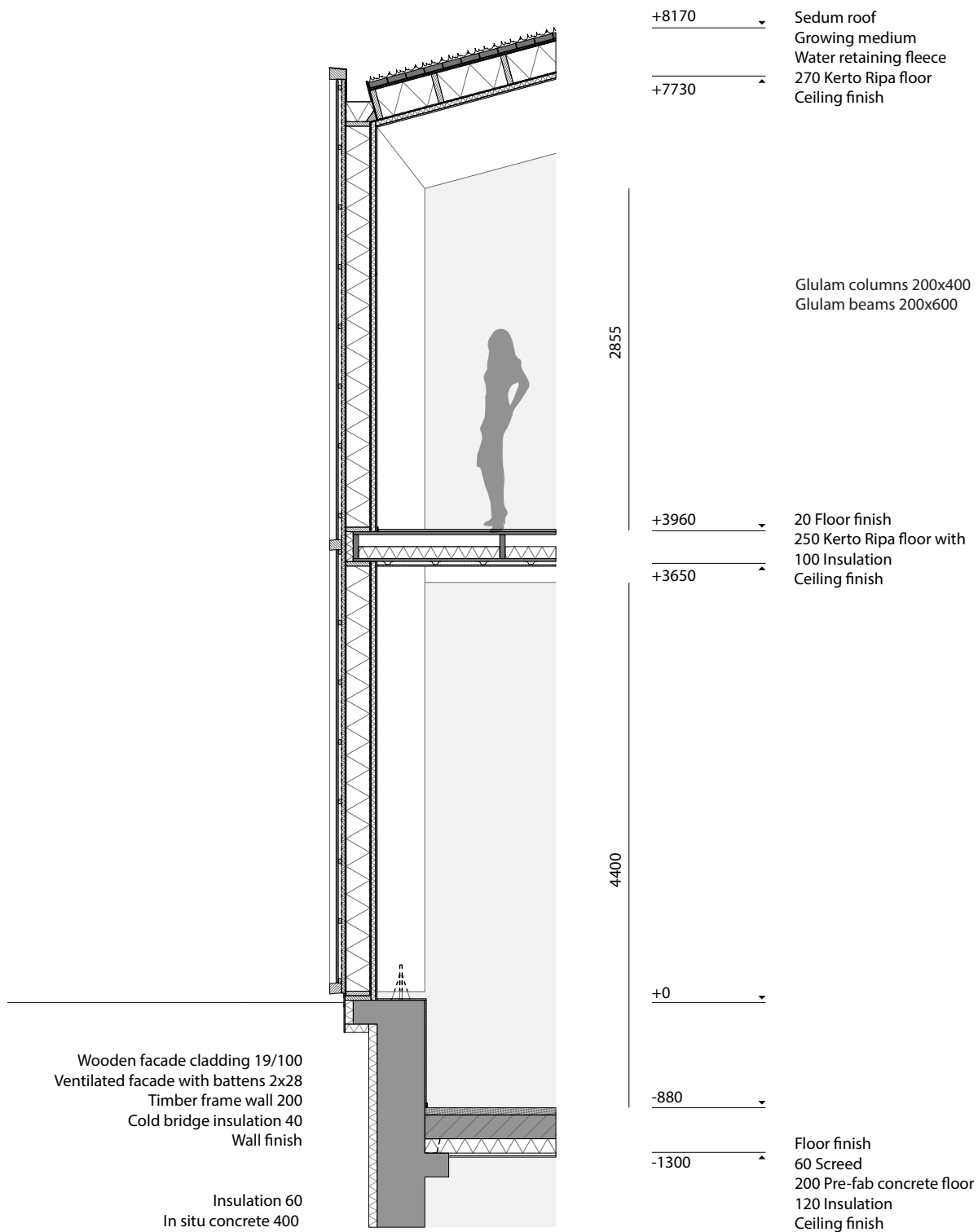


Figure 21: P3 1:33 facade section





Figure 22: P3 fragment model 1:33, pt. 1



Figure 23: P3 fragment model 1:33, pt. 2

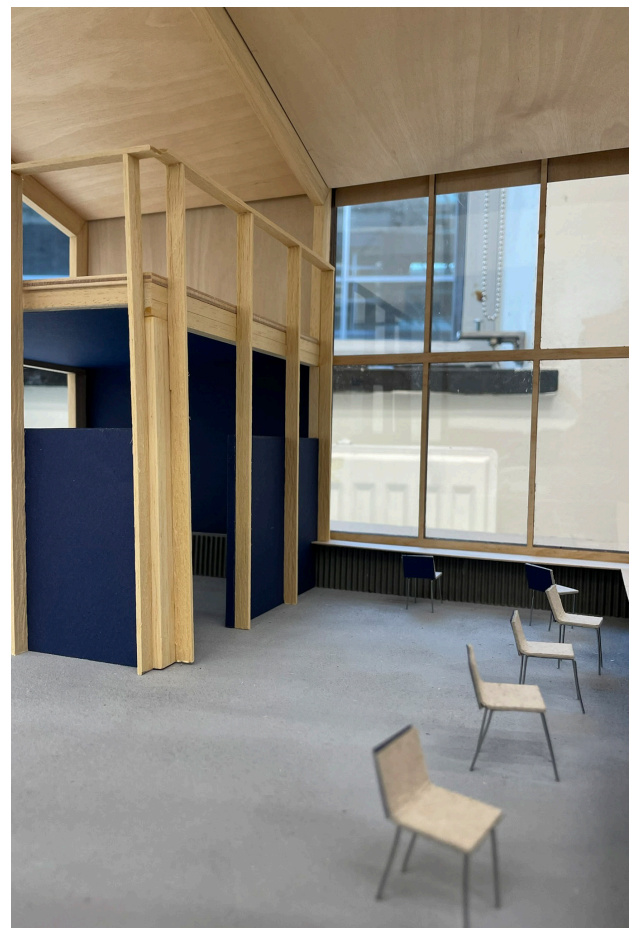


Figure 24: P3 fragment model 1:33, pt. 3



**Manuals**

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**Figures**

2a Casa de la contemplación by Bonnin Full House Architecture. Photography: Jorge Succar.

2b Sports and Convention Center at Jacobs University Bremen by Dietrich Architekten + Ingenieure & Max Dudler. Photography: Stefan Müller.

2c Figueras Polo Stables by Estudio Ramos. Photography: Daniela McAdden, Matias Lix Klett and Celeste Najt.

6a Museum of the Second World War by Studio Architektoniczne Kwadrat. Photography: unknown.

6b Dominus Winery by Herzog & De Meuron. Photography: Dominus Estate

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Laura Tijchon

# PROJECT JOURNAL

Interiors Buildings Cities  
Archiving Architecture

## COLOFON

Work by: [Laura Tijchon](#)  
Student nr.: [5058899](#)  
Studio: [Interiors Buildings Cities](#)  
P4 date: [23rd of May, 2025](#)

First mentor: [Sam De Vocht](#)  
Second mentor: [Matthijs Klooster](#)  
Third mentor: [Amy Thomas](#)  
& other IBC studio mentors



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## ABOUT THE CHAIR

Quoted from the course manual;

### **Interiors Buildings Cities**

Interiors Buildings Cities is concerned with the history, culture and practice of architecture, addressing the ways and means by which it can contribute to the environments through which people experience the world and live well together in it. We understand the making of architecture as an inherently ethical and political act and believe in its agency, seeing it as a preeminent medium through which we can effect change and address the opportunities and challenges that are inherent within contemporary culture and society. Our teaching engages directly with these issues, concerning itself with the idea that architecture can help to construct the kind of society we wish to live in; one that is generous in its accommodation of diverse communities and which nurtures and takes pleasure in the natural environment we share with other living things.

Interiors Buildings Cities advocates a situated architecture, which is both of its time and cognisant of its place within a historical continuity. Projects address the complex legacy of modernity and more specifically twentieth-century modernism, repositioning it and seeking

to reintegrate it within the contemporary city. We take pleasure in the city as we find it, in its conditions, its impositions, its chaotic yet vital heterogeneity. At the same time, our projects focus on the need to redefine the terms upon which architecture is made, in response to the huge challenges facing our planet. Across our different courses we ask how this might be achieved at many scales, from local community to national institution; from room to city.

Interiors Buildings Cities engages architecture across all its scales, as the name suggests, and considers the relations between them as being intrinsic to it. Often conceived of an adjunct or an afterthought to the act of making architecture, our particular attention to the interior and notions of interiority instead conceive it as a central concern from which to develop our thoughts. We perceive both the domestic and the public interior as sites where representations and ideas of society are projected, where thoughts of our privacy, individuality and subjectivity are cultivated, and where notions of our place in society, and in the world, are inculcated. We are interested in seeing how individual and collective agency may be developed in these spaces, from which the building can be projected and ideas of city and society unfold.

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### **Palace**

The Palace of the Graduation studio reflects upon the history of the representative public buildings that have shaped our cities and societies. It acknowledges that this type has been constantly reinterpreted and reappropriated through time and circumstance, questioning its role and responsibilities and how it can engage with the contemporary city and its citizens. The inherent spatial complexity of the Palace, with its hierarchies, infrastructures and intricate sequences of rooms and spaces, is reinterpreted not as a physical expression of power and authority but rather as a representative framework for collective public life, where we come together as a public and might engage with one other as a diverse society.

These ambitions are outwardly expressed through its placement in the city and how its form, facades and interiors address social and urban conditions. With this as their theme, your Graduation projects will address contemporary public buildings and the institutions that occupy them as being integral to the life of the modern city. They offer opportunities to rethink known types in specific

circumstances across each scale, from interior to urban structure. The choice of project is often related to actual conditions and real clients, allowing them to be understood as an active research space with an address beyond academia.

### **Graduation Design Studio**

Palace is the overarching theme for the Interiors Buildings Cities graduation studio. Each year, the studio explores a different, complex institutional type, exploring its role in society, its responsibilities to the city and its citizens, and its representative form. The chosen project often refers to an actual, sometimes ongoing condition, working in relation to real conditions, needs, and people—whether clients or users.

The studio develops a single project over two semesters to arrive at a graduation design project. In the first semester, development is toward a mature and well-argued proposal that can be taken forward as a complete project, considering users, sites, contexts, cultural settings, histories, types, technology, and the environment in architectural design. Each of the projects within the studio will have its own set of concerns in relation to these subjects; each project is obliged to address these as central to its considerations.

## ABOUT THE STUDIO

## ABOUT THE BRIEF

The second quarter of graduation year was rounded up by the P2 presentation. At this point of the year, students were expected to present a strategic proposal that solves the issues mentioned in the brief. This required a more or less finalized distribution of volumes and functions, a fitting floorplan and first choices about materiality and building details.

During the P2, the students presented their work thus far, visualizing their design with sketches, diagrams, technical drawings, renderings and models, whatever they needed to argument their choices. The design was judged on feasibility, plausibility, aesthetics, understandability and other similar topics. In conclusion, the student should be able to show that this design will be finished and of adequate quality by the time of the P4 presentation. The P2 presentation was the first moment where student and building technology mentor met. From this point on -should the student receive a GO for their P2- the student and BT mentor will be meeting regularly, in order to design the technical aspects of the proposal. The Building Technology manual describes five main topics: technical building design, load-bearing structures, climate control, facades and social considerations.

Before topics like these can be discussed and considered, choices about volumes, distribution of functions, floorplans and sections already need to be made -to a certain extent. With this graduation assignment, it is necessary to make an integrated design, meaning that all subtopics of architecture are considered as a part of an interdisciplinary whole.

The BT manual describes their aims as followed:

The student's final design, as presented orally and visually, must show that they have knowledge and understanding of:

- The interaction between an architectural concept and the building technology applied in its development
- Technical and physical considerations

Thus the student must present reasoned solutions and demonstrate skill in incorporating the technical building design effectively in the design process as a whole.

- Course guide of Technical Building Design 2025

Furthermore, the initial architectural concepts should not be lost in actualizing the building, but reinforced by the technical choices.

## ABOUT THE JOURNAL

The Project Journal is based on all the notes (physical and digital), photos, drawings and models I made during the graduation project. To be able to draw conclusions from this material and evaluate it properly, I ordered it into three categories related to design and the design process: Process, Research and Design. Each category has its own colour. While there might be overlap between the categories -a certain drawing could certainly be part of both research and design, for example- the predominant category will be visible with a coloured tab in the corner of the page.

-  for Process
-  for Research
-  for Design

The Process category will show the behind the scenes process that I go through. It will explain my thoughts and experiences, but also the choices made or the lessons learned. This category is mostly meant for me as a designer to understand what my preferred way of working is and how I can manage my own instinct and design process better.

The Research category is about summarizing all the academic and empirical research that I do during the design process. At this faculty and in this studio, we focus on an integrated design process where research and design intertwine and synergize. Nevertheless, research needs to be documented in order to learn from it. The Design category is the second part of these interacting categories. In this journal, it is used mostly to indicated draft or finished designs and the associated visualizations. The designs can be seen as a sub-conclusion of the research and design process.

As I prefer to use many different methods and materials when designing, this project journal will reflect this organized chaos. It will feature quick sketches, typed text, finished design drawings, process photographs and more.

The main appendix of the Project Journal consists of a separate folder in which I collect all my drawings, sketches and other paper material. Sketching is incredibly important in my design process, and with this project being about archiving, I'm making sure my real process of trial and error is properly documented.



## WEEK 4.1

07/04/25 - 11/04/25

**P** Week 4.1 was the week right after the P3 presentation. Me and many of my fellow students needed some time off to evaluate and to work on our personal health. A bit later in the week, I began organizing for the new period. I started on the new chapter of my project journal, I evaluated my feedback from the P3 presentation and I worked out a planning for the weeks until the P4 presentation.

Something I really struggled with during this week was having to make a more and more detailed

design, but at the same time still working on more conceptual ideas. For most of us, the feedback from the P3 was to do with context, volume, routing, etc.; the bigger concepts and systems. Further on in a design process, where we are now, I often lose sight of the bigger picture because of how much time is spent on details. To get back on track and again take control of my design, I worked out a large mind map. It is based on all previous research documents, feedback, project journals, presentation narratives and other research. The map will help shape my narrative and products for the P4.

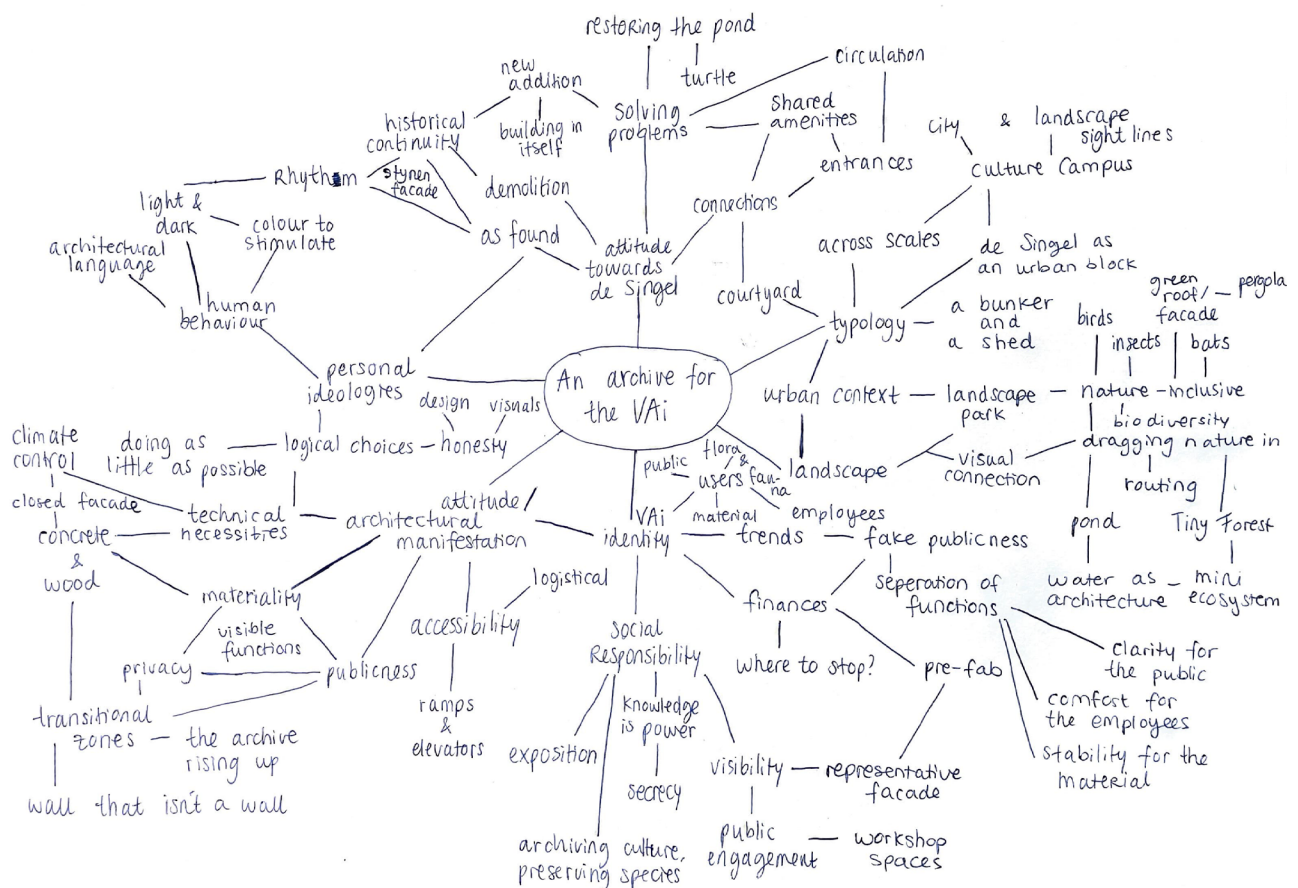


Figure 1: an archive for the VAI, mind map

## WEEK 4.2

14/04/25 - 17/04/25

**P** Fortunately, the mind map of week 4.1 allowed me to efficiently divide my time and efforts into chapters. In week 4.2 I made a time schedule until the P4. The graduation manual and studio brief provided me with a global list of products needed for the P4. I decided that any decision I make will be based on the concepts and narrative of the mind map. Furthermore, any product I make will have to be either final or easily adaptable to be final. I don't want to waste any more time making products just for the tutorials, only to have to completely redo them later on, like I have done in the past.

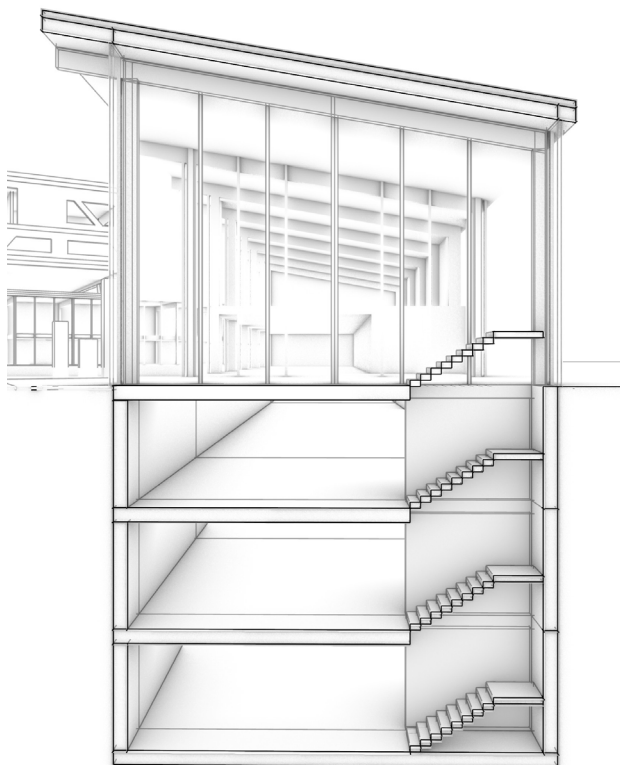


Figure 2: section through the 3D CAD model

**D** For this week, I focused on the exterior of my building, on making some definite choices about material and rhythm, so I would be able to work with this the week after. In my P3, I was already playing with the combination of concrete and wood, both in construction and cladding. I was advised to experiment a bit more with how these materials could interact. It doesn't have to be black and white, a straight line at the height of ground level. So I indeed made some changes to construction and cladding and tried to visualize this in a 3D model and with a collage render.



Figure 3: collage render showing exterior and cladding

## WEEK 4.3

22/04/25 - 25/04/25

**P** This week I prepared for three tutoring sessions. Last week, I worked on exterior and façade. Of course, this is never really finished, but I got stuck and decided it was time to move on to interior and try to integrate the two. After many alterations of the floorplans since the P2, I found a plan that seems to work quite well, strategic and systematic. With some help from Daniel, I will work on defining them even more. And more importantly, understand them. The tutors often tell me that sometimes the architecture wants to be something and you have to let it. I am finally starting to

understand that.

After the building technology tutoring on Friday, me and some colleague students went to Mark Pimlott's final lecture and goodbye party. Mark's lecture about looking carefully and representation was inspired, as always. But what stuck with me most was seeing the emotion in a goodbye like this. It made me really see that my tutors are just people with a job, hoping to have some fun with it. I can only hope to have the same, these coming few weeks. The end of an era as well.

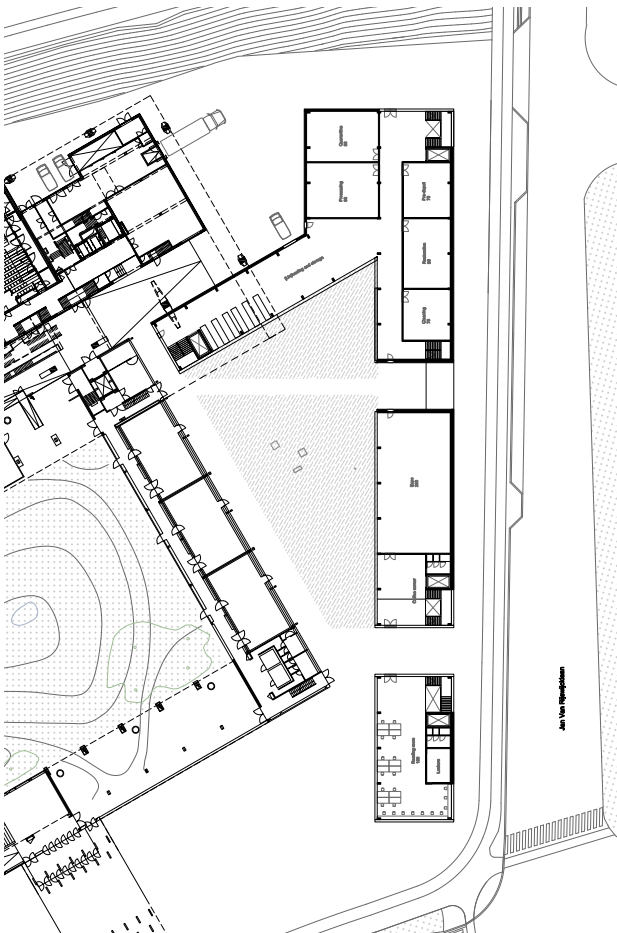


Figure 4: floorplan ground floor, 24/04

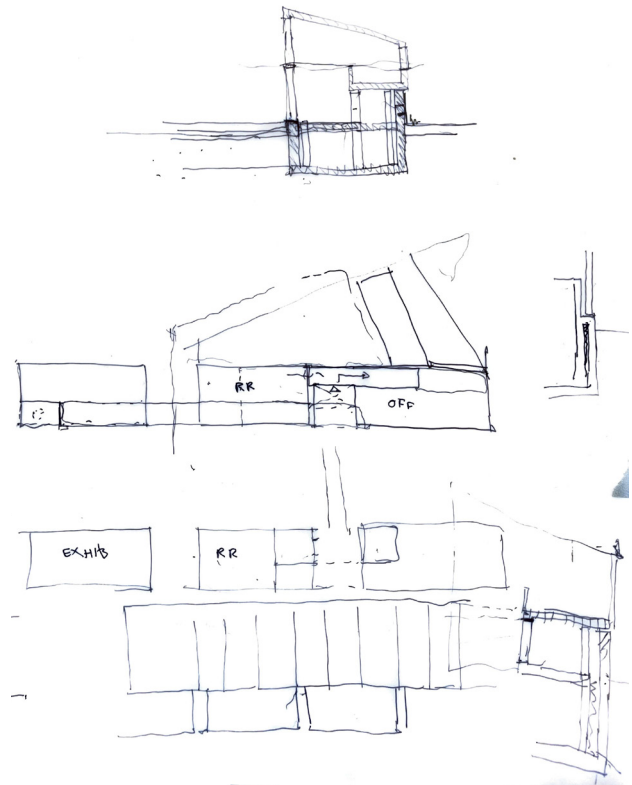


Figure 5: Daniel's sketches on my floorplan

## WEEK 4.4

28/04/25 - 02/05/25

**P** As planned, this week was spent making more technical drawings about building technology, climate design and construction. Even though I have already been designing this building for months and making decisions about materials and construction for weeks, actually researching, combining and drawing technical details takes a lot of time. Especially with a high-demand building like this, where many climate installations are necessary.

**D** Because I'm designing a relatively low building that is long and narrow, I have always had an

large basement underneath my "public attic". The basement houses the actual depot and thus calls for specific construction materials, like concrete. Trying to remain as nature-inclusive and sustainable as possible, the use of pre-cast concrete façade elements was chosen over in-situ concrete. This technique is less common and requires more intricate detailing.

Drawing a detailed 1:20 helped me to make many choices about look, feel and atmosphere, but also to understand how my building works. The difference really is in the details.

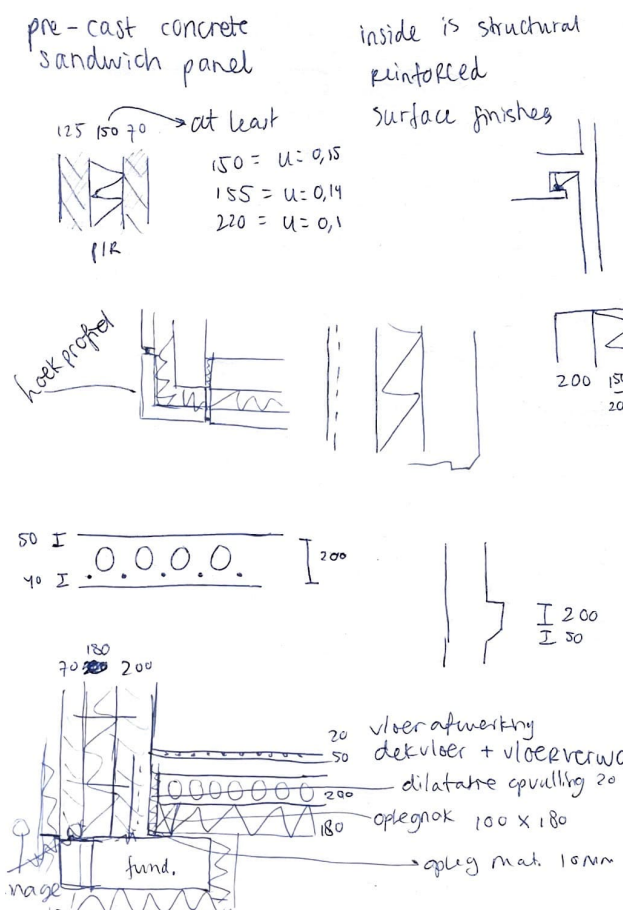


Figure 6: sketching the foundation detail

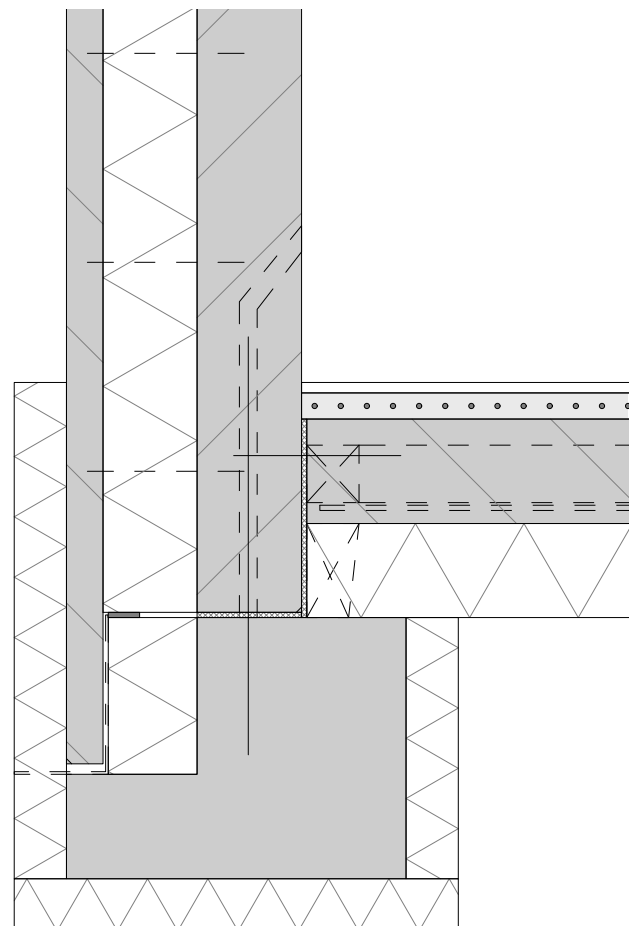


Figure 7: digital version of the foundation detail



## WEEK 4.5

06/05/25 - 09/05/25

**P** This week, four important meetings were happening. On Wednesday and Friday, we would have clinic sessions with a climate design expert and a construction expert, who would answer our main questions about their respective topics. All throughout my process, I've worked with sustainability and nature-inclusivity, keeping in mind the main principles of passive building design. However, an archive depot needs many technical installations for air, light and temperature conditions, that can't be achieved and regulated with natural solutions. These installations have very

specific advantages, disadvantages, dimensions and other rules, which need to be considered. And just like Building Technology, choices about these installations will influence the overall building design.

It is important to me to design a building that would actually work, so this week I put effort into integrating climate interventions into my design. Even going so far as to re-arrange my floorplans to properly fit ventilation shafts and units. The axo below shows how active and passive interventions work together.

**R**

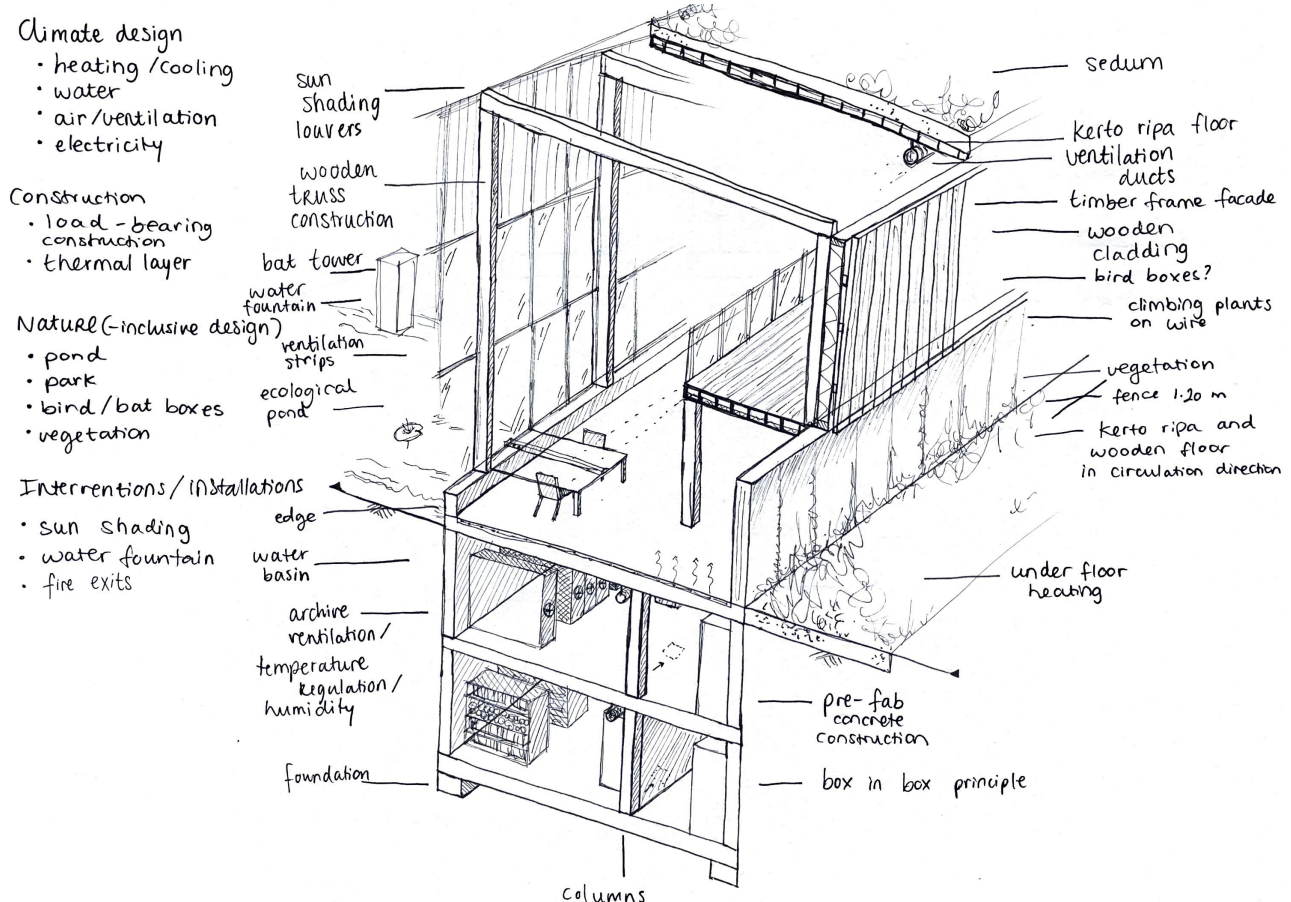


Figure 8: exploded axonometric to show design, climate & sustainability interventions and construction

## WEEK 4.6

12/05/25 - 16/05/25

**P** To make sure my upcoming presentation and corresponding visuals would be cohesive, I already worked on making a draft narrative for the P4. A technique I used and loved for the P2 presentation, was to record myself talking, after looking at my drawings, my project journal and my (written) aspirations. When I did this for the P2, I talked for twice as long as allowed, so afterwards I was able to refine the text and scrap unnecessary parts. This week, I once again recorded myself talking, going through my narrative like it could be an actual presentation. I talked for about an hour, but

also realized there were many topics that I couldn't yet properly explain. With some critical feedback, I could also realize where my design might still be lacking. I'd of course prefer to know this now, so I can still improve where possible, or at least be aware of possible questions at the P4 presentation.

In last weeks project journal feedback session with Susanne, we concluded that I often fail to clearly mention reflections and learning moments, though I do have them. It's a bit short notice now, but I would want to add this to my project journal for P5.



Figure 9: facade fragment and section

## RESULTS P4

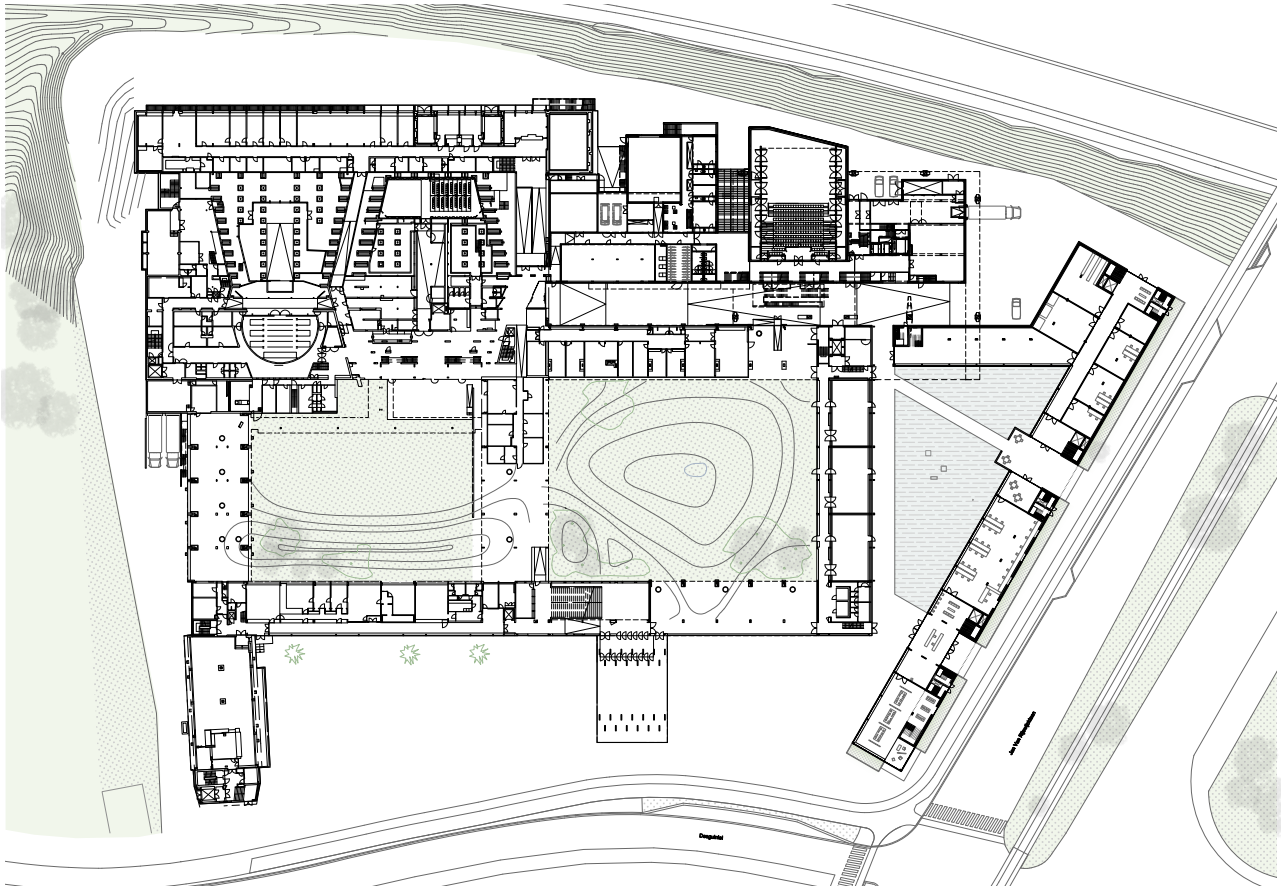


Figure 10: site plan with ground floor

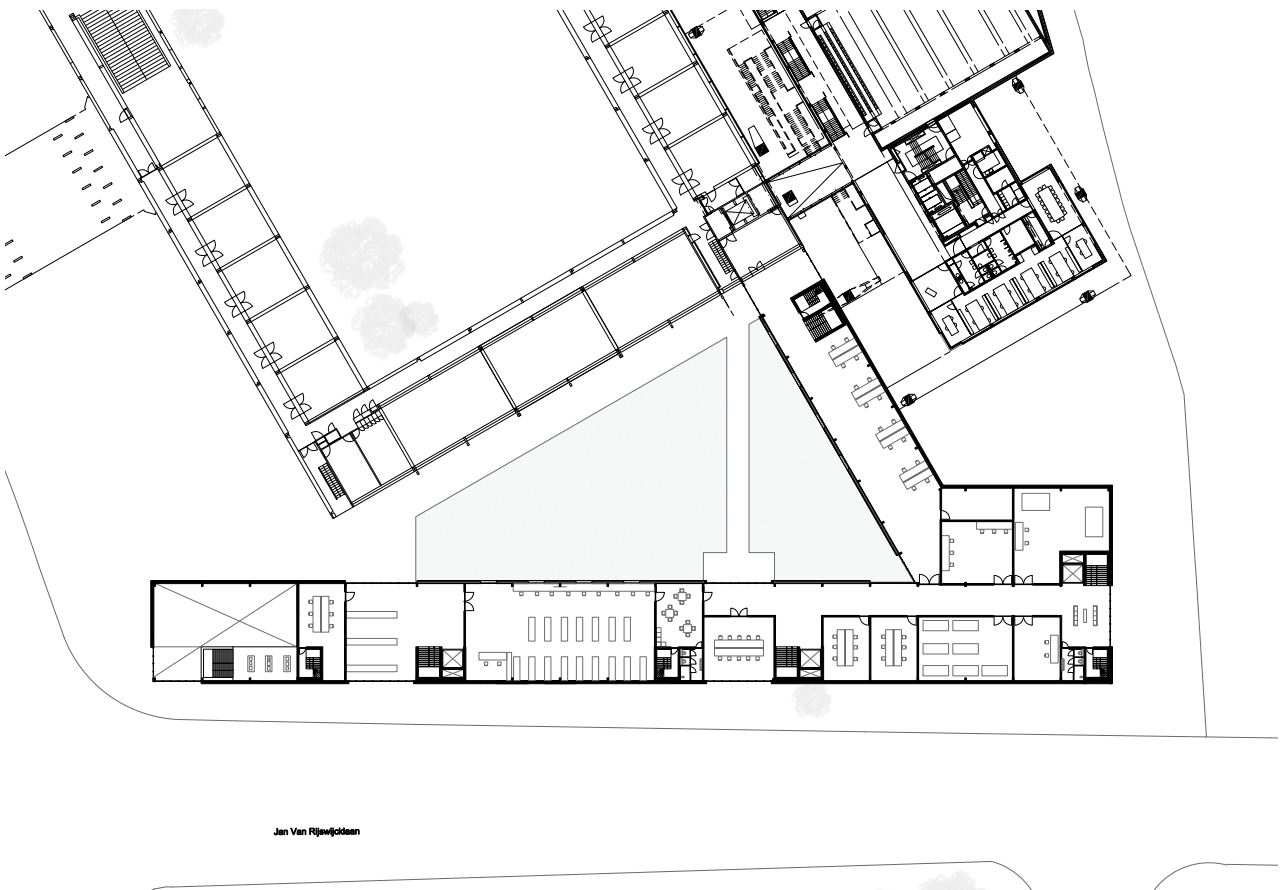


Figure 11: floorplan first floor



Figure 12: facade fragment with horizontal and vertical section



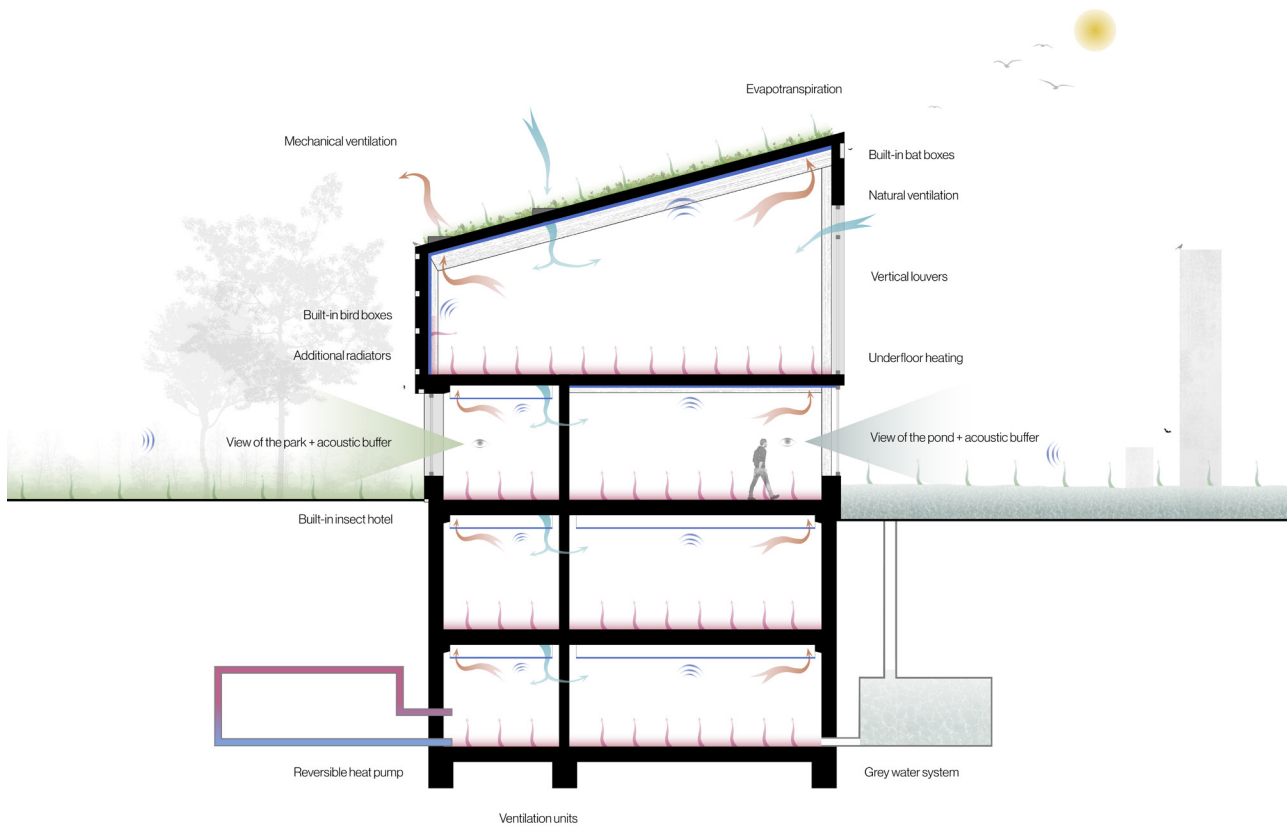


Figure 13: climate section with passive and active interventions

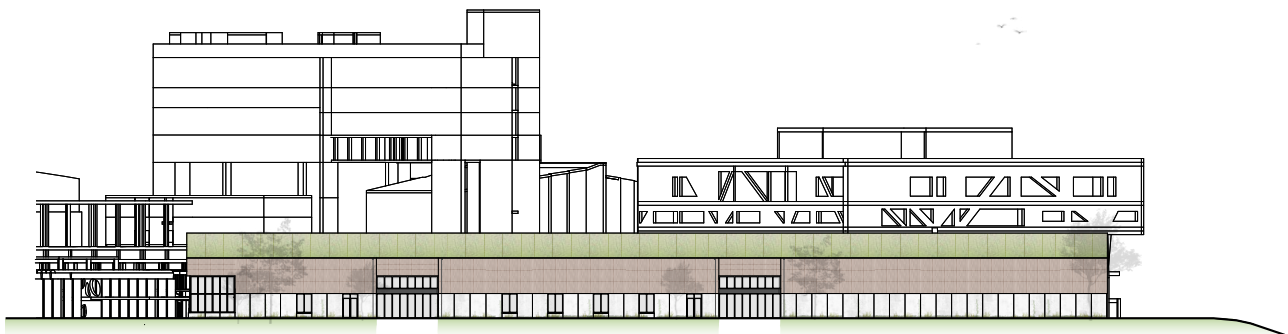


Figure 14: west elevation

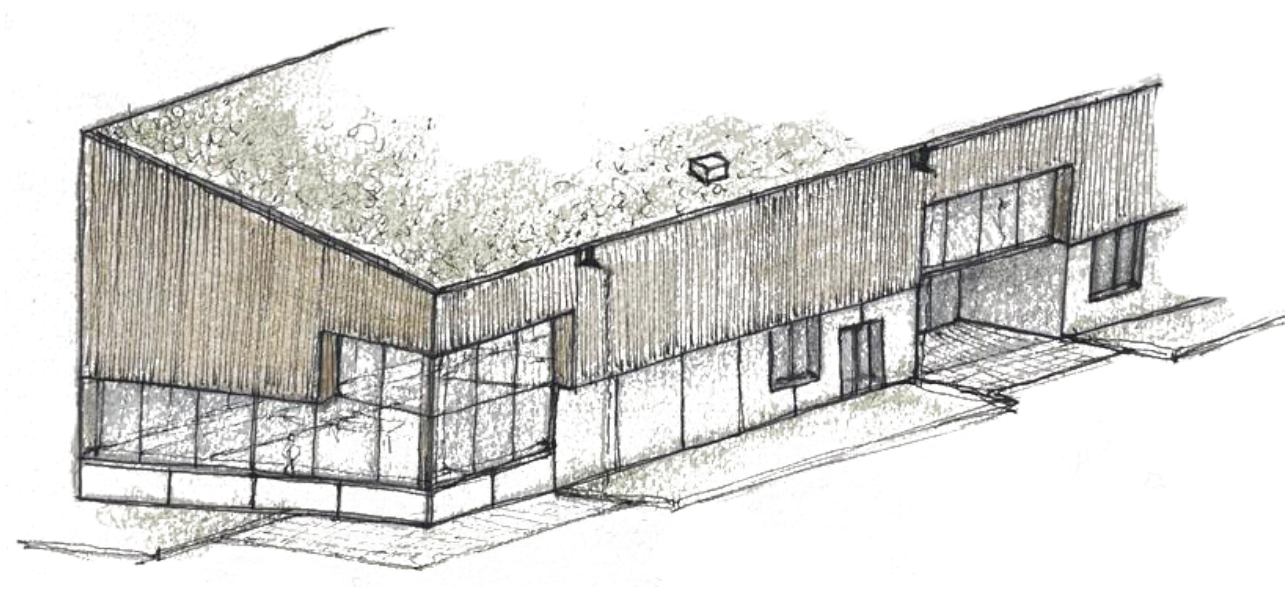


Figure 15: impression of the urban corner

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Laura Tijchon



# PROJECT JOURNAL

Interiors Buildings Cities  
Archiving Architecture



## COLOFON

Work by: Laura Tijchon  
Student nr.: 5058899  
Studio: Interiors Buildings Cities  
P5 date: 18th of June, 2025

First mentor: Sam De Vocht  
Second mentor: Matthijs Klooster  
Third mentor: Amy Thomas  
& other IBC studio mentors

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## ABOUT THE STUDIO



## ABOUT THE JOURNAL

The Project Journal is based on all the notes, photo, drawings and models; physical and digital, I made during the graduation project. It is a research file in itself, that helps analyse process and products and draw conclusions from them.

The first four parts of the project journal, P1 through P4 followed the project week by week. Every week was summarized in a small text and one to two images. The text was highlighted with three colours for three categories: process, research and design. However, for this last project journal, taking place in the three weeks between my P4 and P5 presentation, a format like that is incompatible. No longer will I make alterations, only additions. More important in this final phase is presentation

and optimization. And so, this final project journal will serve as a conclusion to all the former ones. It will conclude both the project and the process and form a base for a presentation narrative that takes into account research and process. To be precise; in this project journal you will find conclusions and reflections to each of the phases of this project, P1 through P4, as well as other important moments.

The appendix of this journal will once again exist of a separate folder in which I collect all my drawings, sketches and other paper material. Sketching is incredibly important in my design process, and with this project being about archiving, I'm making sure my real process of trial and error is properly documented.



# PRECEDENT STUDIES

week 1.1 - week 1.4

## **brief: Looking Carefully**

The theme for this year's graduation studio is Archiving Architecture. Archiving information has long been a part of human culture. The saying knowledge is power has never been truer in a world where every interaction and every arrangement is based on information. A statement can only be true when it hails from a proper source. This introduces the problem of knowledge preservation and knowledge distribution; a problem archives all around the world seek to solve. There seems to be no one answer. Archiving can be done in various levels of technical demands, formality, secrecy and public engagement.

“However, while they might contain facts, archives cannot be seen as fact. They are not innocent, they are never the complete truth. The question archives ask; the things they choose to keep or save; the matter of what is important and what isn't [...]”  
- Brief 1. Looking Carefully

There is an ambiguity between the tasks an archive tries to complete. Storing documents and objects, keeping them safe from time, weather, destruction; but also researching the artifacts and sharing the discoveries with the world. Keeping an

archive demands security, policies for secrecy and rituals for preservation. Meanwhile the archive is interacting with the city, the public; trying to be attractive and interesting, proving its worth. All these paradoxes call for a complex architectural program; one that this graduation studio will tackle.

To prepare for the design assignment, the students were asked to first get familiar with the typology of an architecture archive. By analysing reference projects by well-known architects, they could find some insight into how archiving can be done and has been done in the Western world. The outcome of this analysis is threefold: a written research document, a set of drawings and a large scale model. This model should be made to re-create an identical image of a photo taken of the real life building. With this assignment, the students will learn about their reference project, about visual representation and about model making. By discussing these projects and relevant literature with their fellow students, knowledge is shared and each student can shape their own opinion. My group analyzed the Bordeaux City Archive by Robbrecht and Daem architecten.

**results: model of the Bordeaux City Archive**

Figure 1: Bordeaux City Archive by Filip Dujardin



Figure 2: Laura Tijchon, Romain Touron, Casper van Tilburg



### reflection: personal statement research plan

As part of the research plan, which was a collective document, we were asked to write a personal statement about what we learned and were planning to do for the remainder for this project. My personal statement follows here:

The Interiors Buildings Cities chair believes that research and design cannot be separated; that they provide each other with knowledge and considerations. If you want to analyse architecture across all scales -from interior to city,- you need to find a convincing way to study each scale. The Interiors Buildings Cities studios do this by making large scale models.

In the past, I have never used a model as a means to understand an existing architectural object. It is partially because of my lack of practice that with this assignment, making a model while simultaneously theoretically researching a buildings context, was a difficult task.

The project we got assigned is the Bordeaux City Archive by Robbrecht and Daem. In the archive, Robbrecht and Daem use complex architectural references and seem to have an overarching concept

of volumes and materiality that can only be understood when properly analysing the project. Robbrecht and Daem want to create a religious experience, showing great respect to the mightiness of knowledge, hovering above your head like the sword of Damocles. After analysing the building, I was able to understand Robbrecht and Daem's position towards archive cultures. I can relate to their appreciation for protected knowledge, but came to the conclusion that I would have chosen a different design approach.

The canon researched by the whole studio did show us a certain relationship between the architecture and the culture of an archive institute. The formality of an institute could almost directly be linked to the architecture of its building. The Bordeaux City archive is a good example, as it's the only state archive in the canon. I needed to understand this interaction before I could relate to the distrust surrounding archives, as posed by Mbembe in his *The Power of the Archive and its Limits*. Only now do I realise that my experience with archival research was also limited by secrecy. It has made me start to doubt the validity of my

research; might it have been influenced by the archivist? The archive seems to be a chaotic place, where archivists try to desperately hold on to the system they created. Any disturbances -like people wanting to examine material- are met with a condescending: 'only if you're careful enough'.

To summarize, the correlation between culture and architecture is one I find interesting. As well as in the theoretical research, I noticed this when building the model. For example, after the model was built -reconstructed from precise architectural drawings- we struggled quite a bit to recreate the photograph itself. Something I took away from this was the underlying understanding that the discrepancy with this curated promotional material, was not an accident. That photo was taken and edited deliberately. Not only the architecture itself conveys a message of secrecy and religiousness, the photo does as well. This has me considering the influence of visual and promotional material when rendering a design.

Going into P2, I now know that when designing my own project, I'll continue considering atmosphere,

architecture and culture, and visual design material during the design process. Furthermore, I'll keep asking myself critical questions about what kind of archive I want to create and how to present it to the world.

Although it is not yet posed in a research question, the precedent study and the personal statement did make me consider the relation between the internal, social culture of an institute and the architecture that represents it. The dichotomy of public and private in the Bordeaux City Archive is very strong and contrasting, and thus palpable in the architecture. Of course, this archive is a formal city archive and not an architecture archive, as we are working with. Does this make a difference? Maybe it could.

Working with representative colours, volumes and materials to communicate function is part of my personal architecture ideology. Robbrecht and Daem also describe a clear idea about how architecture can communicate. Consciously or unconsciously, this example will be having an influence on my process.

# P1: ARCHIVAL ENSEMBLES

week 1.5 - 1.10

## brief: First Thoughts; Archival Ensembles

This year, the graduation studio is collaborating with the Flanders Architecture institute, the VAI. This government-funded institute is located in Antwerp. It is responsible for collecting, processing, storing and sharing the archives of Flemish architects of the previous century. The brief describes their collection:

“This intriguing body of material not only assembles the history of significant Flemish Architects from the past. It has been very proactive in considering the archive as a living, dynamic body of material, working with architects still in practice and thus also becoming representative of, and a force in, the transformation of Flemish architecture in recent decades; helping to create a culture which might be considered amongst the most exciting in the world.”

### - Brief 1. Looking Carefully

At the time of this project, the VAI is divided into two departments, each housed in a different location in the city of Antwerp. One is the actual archival depot, including restoration and digitalization rooms and a study space. The depot is located in the city center of Antwerp and has outgrown its boundaries entirely. The collection has grown too large and the spatial structure of the building isn't compatible with storage solutions and sensitive material. Furthermore, the work spaces for the employees are too dark and too cramped.

The second part of the VAI can be found in cultural center De Singel, situated on the notoriously busy ring road of the city. Sharing an iconic modernistic building by Léon Stynen with a conservatory -amongst others- this section of the VAI is orientated more towards the public. Here, you'll find offices and an exhibition space.

The VAI is in dire need of a new home. A previously held competition to locate the archive in an empty church failed. The graduation studio has now been appointed with the task of designing a (hypothetical) new archive within the monumental Singel. It should be equipped with all technical necessities to properly store different

archival materials, offices that provide a pleasant work atmosphere for employees and rooms that present opportunities for public engagement. Most importantly, its architecture should be representative of the VAI's cultural message.

The second brief *First Thoughts* asks of the students to start brainstorming about how to engage the public with archival material. They will create a space to display and store archival material. To make this exercise a bit more tactile, each of the students is assigned a small, curated amount of archival material from the VAI. A couple of different documents, objects or other material, all from the same architect. By researching the VAI, the material's architects and the material itself, the students begin to form thoughts on what and how to display. They are allowed to take a position in the sociopolitical responsibility of the VAI.

With these choices considered, the students design an architectural space, including drawings and a large scale model.

“The outcome should consider whether the archived pieces need to, or have the opportunity to say anything as an ensemble. Is there a narrative that underpins them which you would like to draw out?”

### - Brief 2. First Thoughts

The archival material I was allowed to analyse, was taken from the archive of architecture duo Claire Bataille & Paul ibens. The architects were active in the second half of the last century, focusing their work mostly on interior architecture and furniture design. The material I received was of varying mediums: sketches, photographs, a model and two binders. As objects each was fascinating, but most inspiring was the ensemble they became together. It clearly showed some insight into how Bataille & ibens went about designing. This led me to create a space where the story of furniture would be communicated; from designing, to producing, to using, to re-imagining. Furthermore, I created an architectural wall which can store and display furniture. The key topics of this design were displaying, organizing, communicating with colour and architectural process. A large-scale model was made to visualize the design.

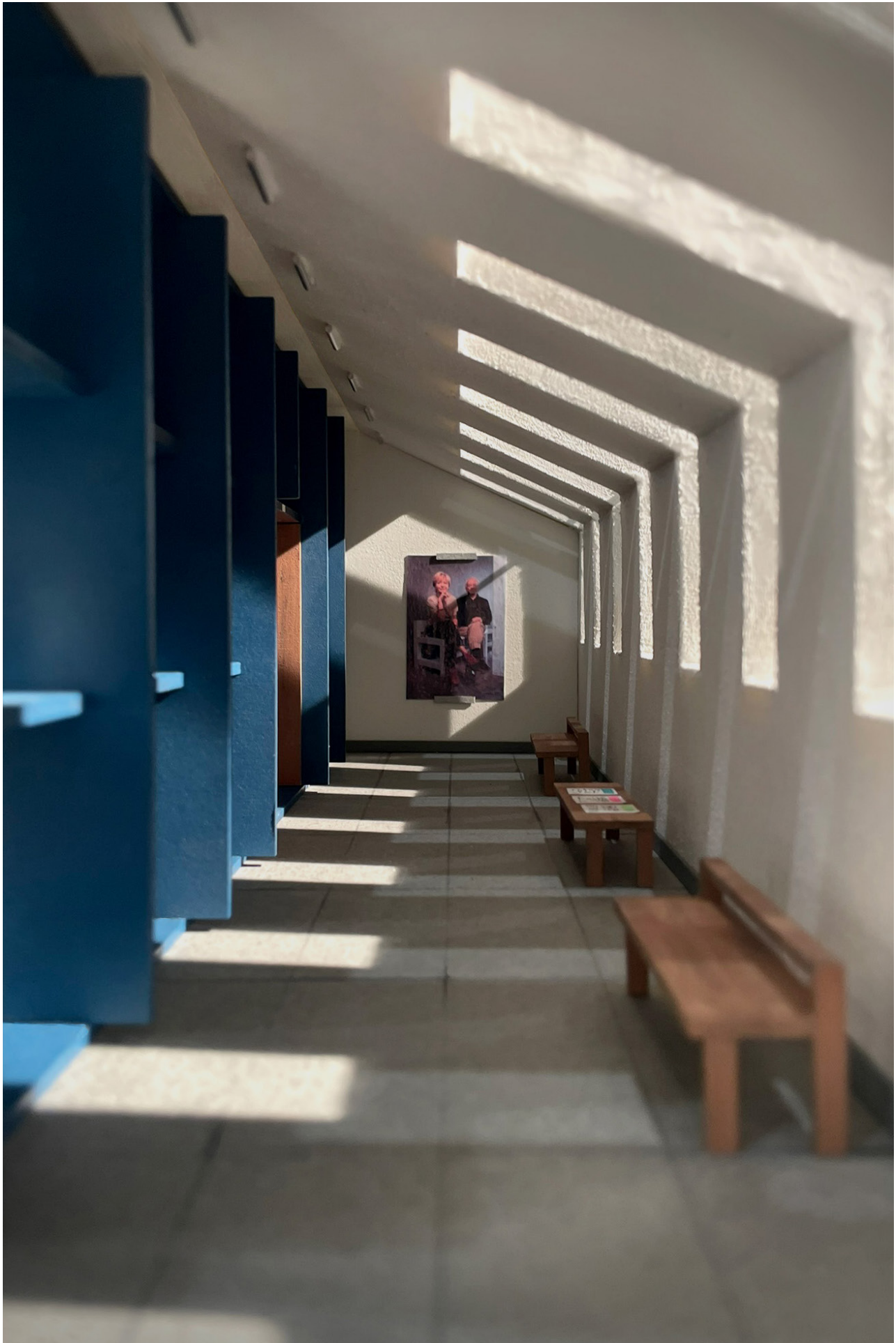
**results: P1 presentation products**

Figure 3: P1 model; *a wall that isn't a wall*



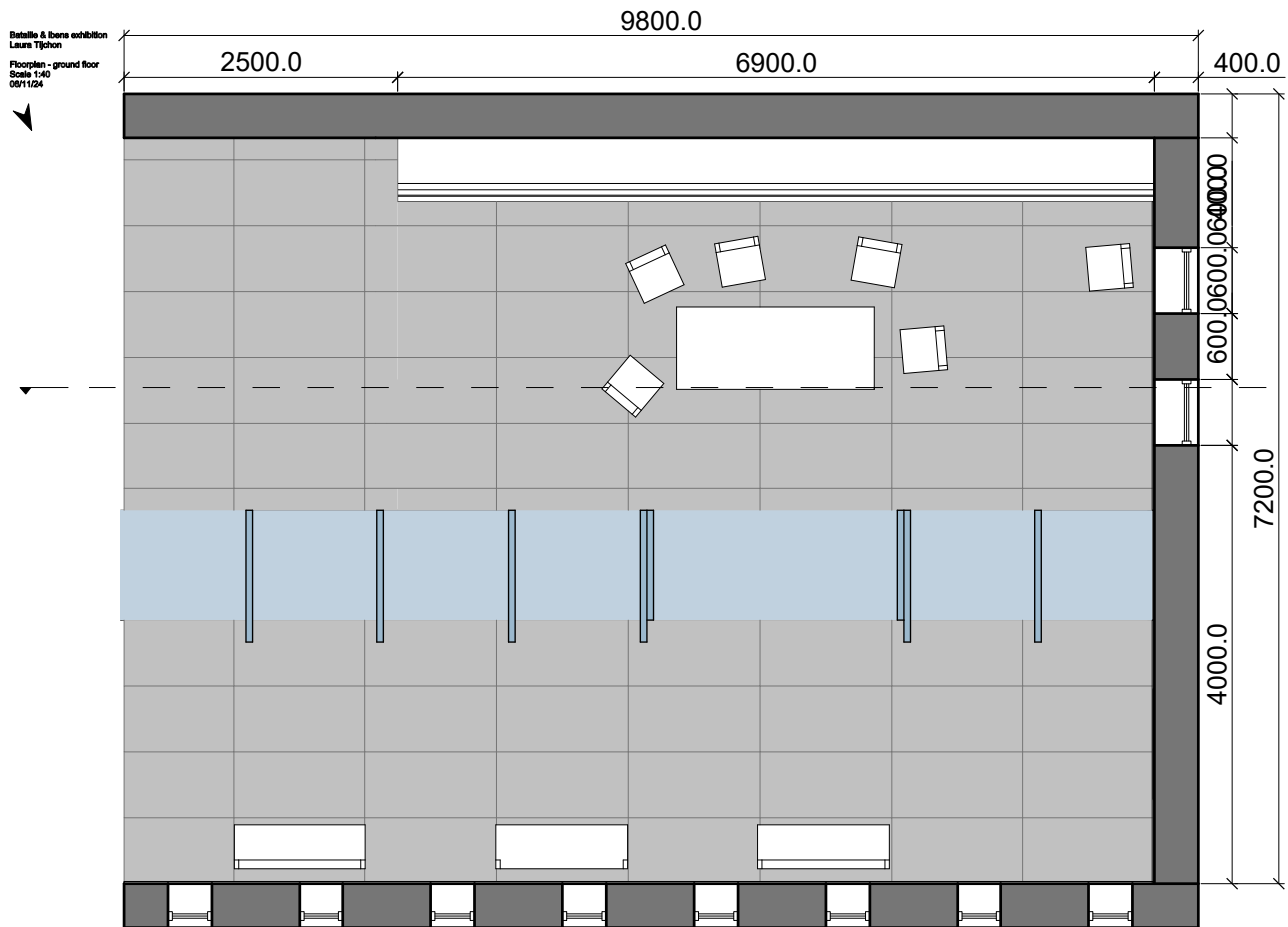


Figure 4: floorplan 1:40



Figure 5: P1 model; the process of a table

### **reflection: feedback on the P1 presentation**

The feedback I received at my P1 presentation was mostly positive. Though not a perfect rendering of architectural thinking, the design showed potential. Daniel's first observation during my P1 presentation was that he wanted to remove the wall in front of the workshop space. Not only did it block the view of the space behind, he also thought it arbitrary. He said it looked like a contractor just put that wall there after the architect made a design. Because of the way the shelves in the workshop room are designed, the room might not need an actual wall to indicate where it ends. Furthermore the tutors were interested if the workshop space was an actual wood working space, where the reproduced tables were actually being made.

The biggest feedback point was that the concept of the furniture displaying cabinet could be expanded. It now functions as a storage solution, display furniture, room divider and an entrance. Even though I already adapted the architecture of the building to interact with this furniture piece, the tutors thought it could be more. The dramatic way the light falls through these rhythmical windows was too distracting for them.

The narrative with the table in its different phases, from designing to producing to using to recreating to future renderings; a.k.a. the use of the table as a light fixture, was something they found quite jolly. I did not receive any other feedback on the table narrative or the workshop space, which I find a pity, since a lot of work went into designing and building it. After the P1 presentations, I updated some of my drawings; leaving the arbitrary wall to the archive out. Over all, I felt like the feedback was mostly guiding me towards making bigger architectural statements, instead of thinking out every small detail.

As the P1 was an internal presentation moment, I also listened to the presentations and feedback of my fellow students. This design exercise was mostly meant to experiment with display and storage without the requirements and limitations an actual building or an actual archive has. This means that your own P1 design could form a base to the graduation assignment, but it does not have to. Furthermore, the projects by our colleague students could also inspire to new thinking about these topics. In my case, the P1 proposal by my colleague Dilek ended up in my final design.

# SITE VISIT

week 1.5

## Antwerp: the VAI's depot and DeSingel

In week 1.5, after having just finished the assignment on the precedent studies, the whole group of students and tutors visited Antwerp on a site visit. In just three days, we had the chance to get an introduction of the city, its residents, DeSingel and the Flanders Architecture institute. With so many first impressions, I find it difficult to realize the situations and problems I encounter. But now, months later, I can easily say these encounters have had specific influences on my process and design.

On the first day of our trip, we went on a city tour through Antwerp, also visiting two architecture firms. Though these firms were welcoming and inspiring, what stayed with me most was a small lecture we received on the use of cars in Antwerp. Apparently, it is very common for employees to receive a firm car. Furthermore -as we also experienced firsthand- the city is not adapted to the use of bicycles, making it very unsafe for those who try. These and other things lead to Antwerp's famous traffic jams. We were told it can take hours to enter or leave the city in rush hours. Unfortunately, this has a large influence on our design assignment as well, as DeSingel is located on Antwerp's ring road, next to a road that gives access to it.

In the afternoon walk through DeSingel's surroundings, I was fascinated by the diversity of Antwerp's neighborhoods. DeSingel is adjacent to office complexes, fancy residential one family houses, an indoor swimming pool, the large Antwerp expo building and a park. We learned that the park was planned to undergo a transformation into a proper landscape park, with the current building being replaced by a new city archive. The research I later did into these developments became a large part of my conceptual design.

On the second day, we visited both locations of the VAI, starting with their depot in the city center. We had a talk with some of their archivists and went on a short tour through the depot. The employees were very clearly struggling with some issues regarding their current building, which I'm glad they shared with us. These talks, and a hand-out I later received, communicated clearly that their working spaces are too small and too

dark, their archive depot has a structure that is incompatible with smart storage solutions and that their building logistics are inefficient, making it so that some archival material can't be moved or stored. Their location in the city center is hard to find and quite far away from DeSingel.

DeSingel, which we visited that afternoon, has a positive image as a lively art campus. We were taken on a guided tour, that was very helpful in understanding its history and its current use. Unfortunately, a guided tour was necessary, as the building is so large and complex, that it is impossible not to get lost. This also seems to be the issue for many visitors of DeSingel, especially since the offices and exhibition space the VAI utilizes are tucked away deep inside the building. Essentially, both locations the VAI is housed in struggle with logistical problems and issues with visibility and efficiency. This was a clear reason for me to decide on making an extension to DeSingel, made specifically for the VAI. A building which allows them to properly and professionally perform their tasks and fulfil their responsibilities of preserving and sharing knowledge. The VAI expressed their goal of being pro-active in reaching out to the public, which I feel should be accompanied by a recognizable and representative building, perpetuated next to DeSingel.

The last day in Antwerp was meant as part of the P1 presentation, as we had the opportunity to analyze curated ensembles of archival material in the VAI's reading room. A conclusion of my research into these pieces was the same as a conclusion to the visit of the depot; furniture design is a large but unexplored part of architecture. The work of Bataille & ibens -who I researched- was mostly focused on furniture design and the VAI stores some of their pieces as well as many by other architects. Most furniture is designed to be durable, usable and can handle daylight, sunlight, touch and changing climate conditions. These pieces are still treated like any other archival piece however, which I find a shame.

For my P1 design, I created a furniture piece to store, organize and display archival furniture pieces, while being a useful part of architecture in itself.



**results: model of the Bordeaux City Archive**

Figure 6: inside the VAI's depot

Figure 7: the VAI's expo *Dogma: Stadsvilla*

Figure 8: Léon Stynen's pond on the west side of DeSingel



## SITE VISIT

week 1.8

### Depot of museum Boijmans Van Beuningen

On October 31st, we enjoyed a guided tour through the Boijmans van Beuningen museum depot in Rotterdam. The depot, famous for its reflecting, plant pot shaped building, stores the art collection owned by the Boijmans van Beuningen museum that is located next to it. The depot is supposedly the first fully public art depot in the world.

In about eighteen depot rooms, objects are organized by sort, material and size, as these are the factors that determine the climate conditions the objects require. On our guided tour through the building, we learned about rules and regulations like these.

Our tour started in the unloading dock. As the depot is large and receives deliveries daily, the space has an internal truck loading dock, so the art objects never have to be exposed to the outside. We learned that stable temperature and humidity conditions are the most vital requirement for proper storing. Even though conditions differ per material type, stability is crucial. Printed photographs require a cold temperature, for example, and they are thus stored together.

We were allowed a visit to the hanging art depot. The depots are located on the edge of the building, which makes them curved spaces, following the façade. A custom storage system was developed for this depot box; large rails montaged to the ceiling, from which fence-like panels hold up the art. While these panels were designed to move -so they could be pulled out and viewed- it turned out the art was too sensitive to the vibrations the moving caused. We stayed in this depot for only a few minutes, as the ventilation system was not made to provide for people.

Custom solutions like this, meant to make a public building for a closed and private typology, is costly.

Building the depot cost around 90 million euros. The entry fee reflects this. Unfortunately, not much of the building is actually public. We were allowed into a depot box, but normal visitors are not. The other depot boxes can only be viewed through a window for a couple of seconds at a time, before the light turns off again.

Like the depot boxes, the ateliers also have large windows, allowing a look inside. The building has ateliers with different functions and are actually being used by employees. We were told the employees don't mind being watched by visitors, but still many of them had turned their desks and backs towards the windows. In my opinion, the employees looked like monkeys in a circus.

My experience in the Boijmans van Beuningen depot was disappointing and it made me question the trend of publicness and transparency we see in public architecture. This example is an obvious case and has indeed received considerable criticism. However, the museum and archive typologies are still being challenged, with the Victoria and Albert East Storehouse in London opening 31 May 2025.

“As well as providing a purpose-built home for over 250,000 objects, 350,000 library books and 1,000 archives from the V&A's collections, Storehouse is a new kind of museum experience. It gives you a chance to see behind the scenes of a working museum, explore why and how objects get collected by museums, find out how they are cared for, and uncover the stories they tell about us and our world.”

- V&A East Storehouse

After this visit, I decided my proposal could be a reaction against this publicness trend in architecture.





Figure 9: hanging art depot at the Boijmans van Beuningen museum depot



Figure 10: paper atelier at the Boijmans van Beuningen museum depot



## SITE VISIT

week 2.1

### Het Nieuwe Instituut

Two weeks after our tour through the Boijmans van Beuningen museum depot, we visited The New Institute (HNI), located next to the Boijmans depot in Rotterdam. The HNI is an architecture archive that preserves the archives of famous or influential Dutch architects. The HNI is the largest architecture archive of the Netherlands, and so they have the freedom and the necessity to only store noteworthy archives, which they hand pick.

The institute focuses on the architectural process, on preserving the way an architect works, not on what they made. Their policy towards different objects and materials proves this as well. On our guided tour, we were told many CD's never even get opened, because there no longer is a safe way to look at its contents without damaging the disk. The researchers don't even try, which sparked some controversy in our group of students.

The New Institute has a large, linear depot building, equipped with a more expensive storage system than the VAI currently uses; the mobile compactor system. This allows for efficient use of space, especially in long depot spaces. On the east side of the depot building, the archival material enters with a lift. All material will first be put in a quarantine space for six weeks, after which it is analyzed and stored. The depot is organized according to object size. Similar to the Boijmans depot, the size and required conditions are more important than keeping the complete archive of one architect together.

A large part of the available depot area is destined for architecture models. The institute stores many models, with varying scales. These are not always available to analyze in the reading room.

The New Institute, similar to the Flanders Architecture institute, houses multiple public functions in their building too. This part of the building is separate to the depot, connected only by a bridge for the employees. Downstairs, with an entrance to the museum square, the HNI maintains a café, a book shop and an exhibition space. The reading room is upstairs, closest to the depot entrance. The reading room is integrated with a library and is free to use as long as the institute is opened, without needing a reservation. In the middle of the reading room sits a desk for employees, with an overview over the room and the library. Behind this desk there is a small open space with can be used for temporary exhibitions. The New Institute resembles the VAI more closely than the Boijmans depot did. It is a more classic archive, with a larger separation between public and private functions. Other than the VAI, the HNI clearly expresses their policy of preserving process rather than products, which I personally criticize. I don't see the use of using money, space and energy to properly preserve all this material, just for the sake of preserving. While I do believe an architects process is of vital importance to learn from architecture, analyzing and understanding the products used in this process are what makes us understand.



Figure 11: mobile compactor system for archive storage



Figure 12: reading room and library at the HNI



## P2

week 2.1 - 2.10

### brief: Developing an Archive

After finishing up the first two briefs with the P1 presentation, the second quarter of the year will be dedicated to the third brief. *Brief 3. Developing an Archive* is the introduction of the final graduation assignment, in which the students will design a new depot building for the Flanders Architecture Institute (VAi).

The VAI is in dire need of a new home. A previously held competition to locate the archive in an empty church failed. The graduation studio has now been appointed with the task of designing a (hypothetical) new archive within the monumental *Singel*. It should be equipped with all technical necessities to properly store different archival materials, offices that provide a pleasant work atmosphere for employees and rooms that present opportunities for public engagement. Most importantly, its architecture should be representative of the VAI's cultural message.

In the previous two briefs, the goal was to familiarize the students with two main concepts: designing for preservation and display; and creating a body of reference projects to inspire and guide us. The new brief deconceptualizes the assignment even further. It introduces De Singel as the site of the project and asks the students to research and analyze that building and its context. The students will also have to develop their position towards the VAI's policy and methods of archiving. They are allowed the freedom to either continue with the current policy or completely reorganize the institute, as long as their organization corresponds with their architecture.

“The relation between the archive and the VAI's other activities is a developing one. It will be the

task of this project to consider what might be the role of the extensive historical material and technically defined conditions of the archive, as an integral component of the wider public mission of the organisation.”

#### - Brief 3. Developing an Archive

The starting point for the project is to build on the connections that already exist between the VAI, De Singel and De Singel's other residents. De Singel has a rich but chaotic history and its current lay-out could be perceived as mistreated and problematic. The changes made in VAI organization could revolutionize the use of De Singel; be a catalyst for other developments. For this to happen, there is not one correct architectural solution; every approach or focus point may cause different outcomes; with corresponding advantages and disadvantages.

“This breadth of starting point also offers a significant degree of flexibility in your approach. You may choose to extend De Singel, create a new structure that relates to it in some way, or perhaps work entirely within its existing body. An ambition might be to redefine its relationship with the city and its surroundings, while understanding its own identity and typology and enjoying its modernist sensibility.”

#### - Brief 3. Developing an Archive

We start the new period with researching the history, the context and the site of De Singel. We will end the quarter with our individual P2 presentations, in which we present a strategic proposal to solve the issues the brief highlights and organize the spatial requirements the VAI has expressed.

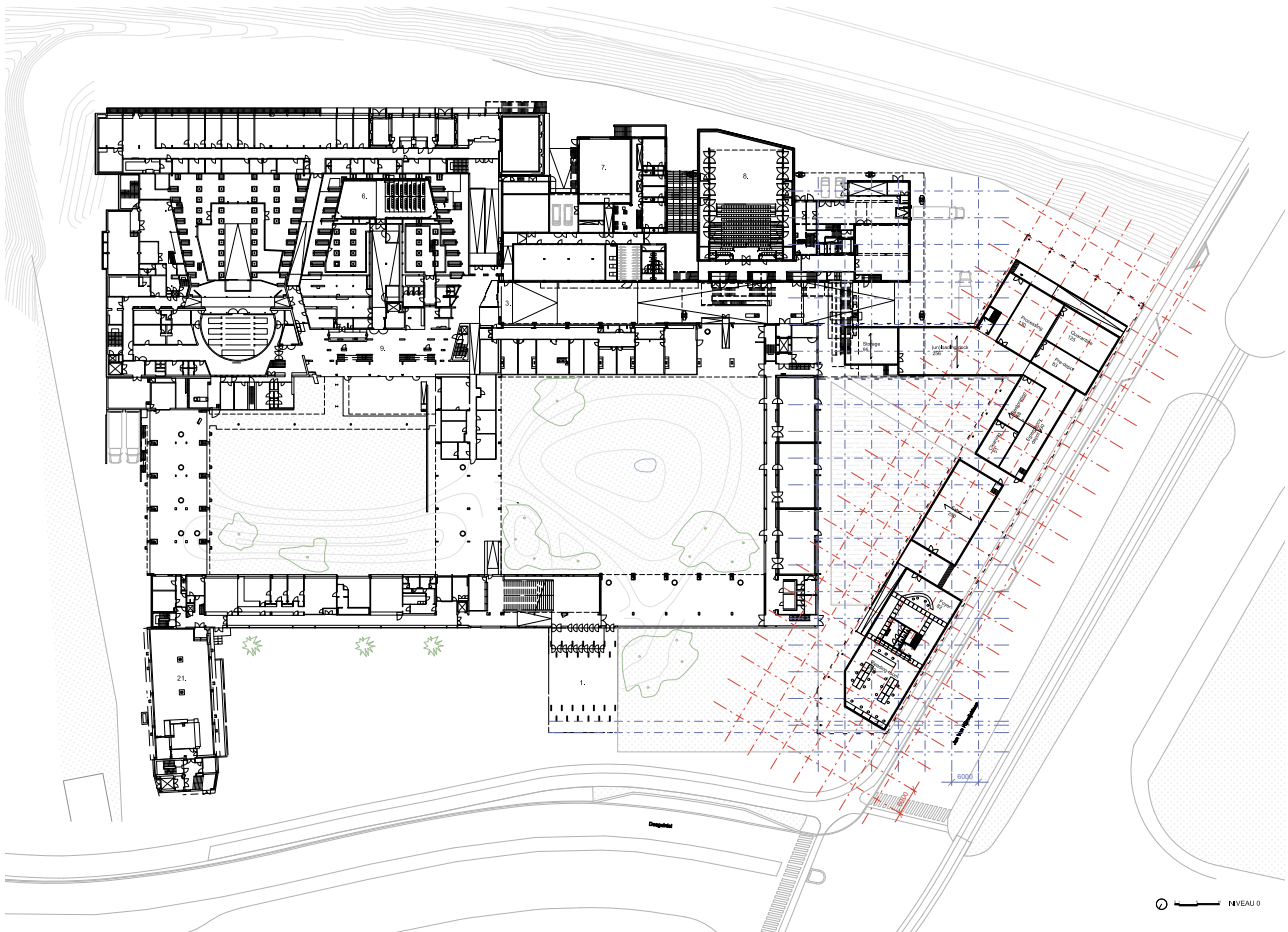
**results: P2 presentation products**

Figure 13: ground floor plan of the P2 design

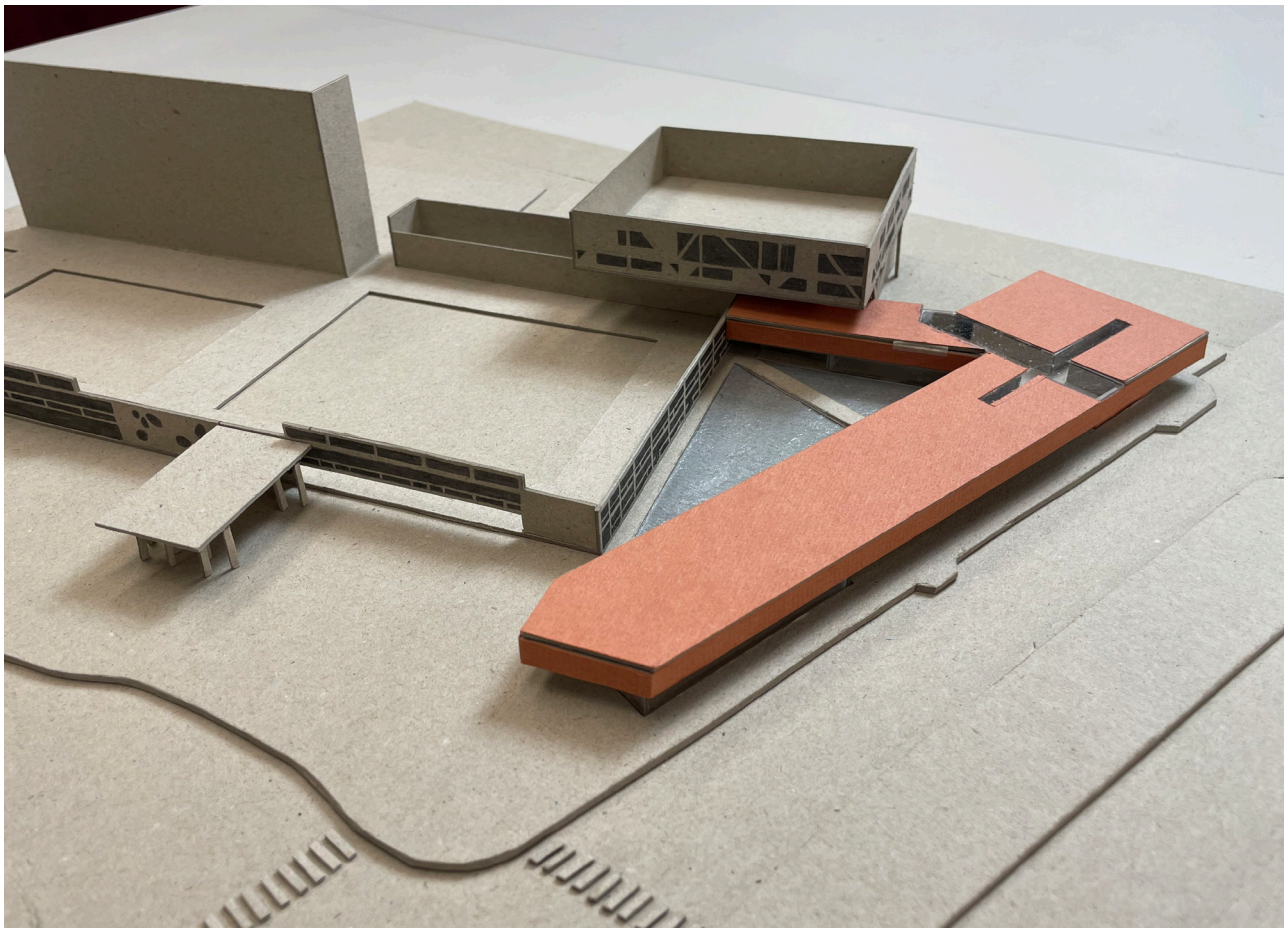


Figure 14: 1:500 model of the P2 design, addition in red

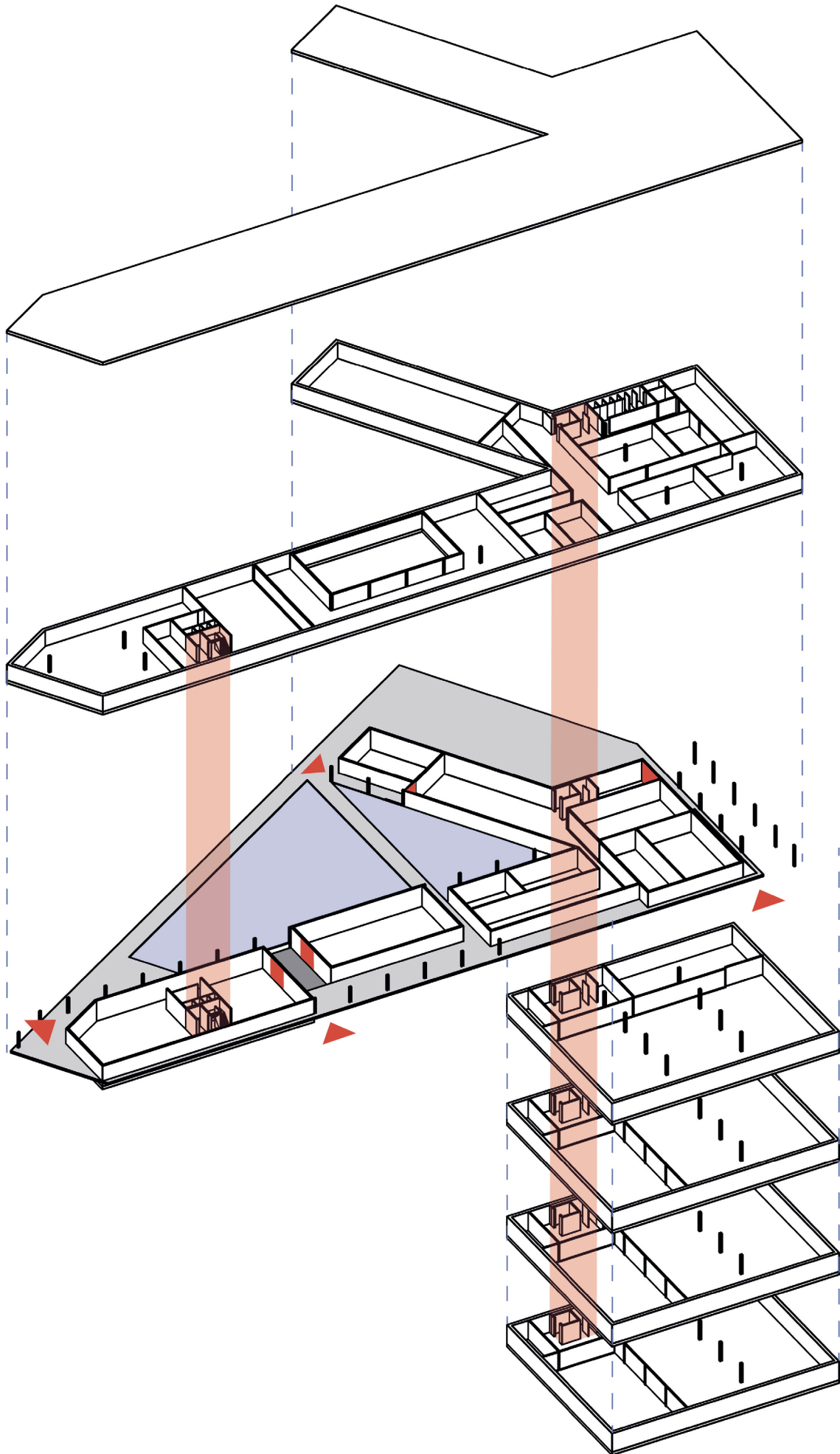


Figure 15: axonometric drawing of access and circulation



## reflection: post P2 abstract

In archive buildings, many functions, materials and groups of people come together. They have very different needs, which require very different architectural solutions. This is also the case for our assignment, for our client; the VAI, the Flemish Architecture Institute. Wanting to be located on the huge and saturated plot of art campus De Singel, the VAI needs to be flexible and adaptable with their wants and needs, while still providing optimal conditions for material, employees and visitors. My fascination lies with how these groups can come together in one place and still each have pleasant interactions with each other, the archive building and De Singel. My research question is thus as follows:

*How to create a new home for the VAI and the material they are responsible for, which provides optimal storing facilities and comfortable working spaces, while still being inviting to the public?*

The new building should house three thousand square meters of archive depot, as well as multiple public functions, offices and ateliers; all with proper climate circumstances.

The role of the VAI, being a government-funded institute, is to pro-actively inform the public about architectural practices. Its building, as a result, should be inviting to the public and even attractive to passer-by. The archive might even have to compete or synergize with other cultural attractions. Especially with the location of De Singel, right in the middle of multiple other cultural functions; such as a city archive, an expo and a conservatory.

My goal is to perpetuate the VAI as an essential part of the Culture Campus; the area housing all beforementioned attractions. Finding an identity for the VAI that can be shown in its architecture and then combining that identity with De Singel is key in my project. This way, all buildings on the Culture Campus can synergize.

They will be physically and visually connected as well, by nature. The landscape park starting from "Pomppark Zuid" will be dragged over the plot of De Singel. The VAI will be housed in a new building wing in the middle of these two parts of the landscape, interacting with both De Singel and the

city archive. The building wing will enclose a new courtyard, which will create a unique space within the landscape. It will be different in materiality and function, making it a useful addition to flora and fauna; a pond. In the extensive history of De Singel, this area has always had a pond, but with this project it will be restored and improved. The pond will interact with the architecture so that people can experience both architecture and water in new ways. The pond, which in the past has never had a distinct function, will now have two: display (reflection, experiencing architecture and space for exposition) and ecology (biodiversity, space for flora and fauna, connecting parts of the landscape).

The volume is made of three pavilions on the ground floor, connected by a full storey on the first floor. Each of the pavilions has a different function, corresponding with a level of publicness. We see a gradient from most public on DeSingel's front square - to most private at the logistical side.

The original façade of De Singel will inspire the contrasting materials and rhythmic volumes of the new façade. The materiality has been chosen specifically to create certain experiences. The curtain wall of the ground floor allows the public to penetrate the building and move into the courtyard, as well as being introduced to the public functions on the ground floor. The brick of the first floor will reference the city archive and give possibilities for including biodiversity measures. The mostly closed brick façade will correspond with the more private functions on the first floor. The experience of entering the public functions on the ground floor is important and well-designed. It is a moment in the architecture where people are deliberately guided along a path and along certain views, both of the archive (referencing my P1 project) and the courtyard.

Going into the P3, my first considerations are based on the P2 feedback. I will be cleaning up the floorplans, making sure they are compatible with the chosen construction techniques. I will be researching material choices, especially in combination with biodiversity and sustainability requirements and goals. I will also be contemplating how all these choices can or should influence the social culture of the VAI.



## P3

week 3.1 - 3.8

### **brief: building technology**

The second quarter of graduation year was rounded up by the P2 presentation. At this point of the year, students were expected to present a strategic proposal that solves the issues mentioned in the brief. This required a more or less finalized distribution of volumes and functions, a fitting floorplan and first choices about materiality and building details.

During the P2, the students presented their work thus far, visualizing their design with sketches, diagrams, technical drawings, renderings and models, whatever they needed to argue their choices. The design was judged on feasibility, plausibility, aesthetics, understandability and other similar topics. In conclusion, the student should be able to show that this design will be finished and of adequate quality by the time of the P4 presentation. The P2 presentation was the first moment where student and building technology mentor met. From this point on -should the student receive a GO for their P2- the student and BT mentor will be meeting regularly, in order to design the technical aspects of the proposal. The Building Technology manual describes five main topics: technical building design, load-bearing structures, climate control, facades and social considerations.

Before topics like these can be discussed and considered, choices about volumes, distribution of functions, floorplans and sections already need to be made -to a certain extent. With this graduation assignment, it is necessary to make an integrated design, meaning that all subtopics of architecture are considered as a part of an interdisciplinary whole.

The BT manual describes their aims as followed:

The student's final design, as presented orally and visually, must show that they have knowledge and understanding of:

- The interaction between an architectural concept and the building technology applied in its development
- Technical and physical considerations

Thus the student must present reasoned solutions and demonstrate skill in incorporating the technical building design effectively in the design process as a whole.

- Course guide of Technical Building Design 2025

Furthermore, the initial architectural concepts should not be lost in actualizing the building, but reinforced by the technical choices.

## results: P3 presentation products



Figure 16: facade fragment and vertical section, 1:33 (rescaled)



Figure 17: P3 fragment model 1:33, the reading room

### reflection: feedback on the P3 presentation

Most of the P3 feedback was given by Daniel. He wrote some text for each of us.

“It’s quite an elegant plan. The section with the suppressed ground floor is interesting, but not entirely convincing in its relationship to the other elements of the building at the moment. The form of the roof could reverse – with the tall single storey element framing the Stynen façade and the higher part of the monopitch holding the two storeys. The 50/50 ratio in the plan feels awkward. Perhaps you can tighten the core up to give a better proportion to the public space. This could then feel like part of the landscape – a topography against the absolute horizontality of the water. You can change the level along the linear edge. The shed is the lightweight roof of a big building below ground. What is the presence of that building in terms of the public urban experience? Could it form a plinth? Could the servant element of the public shed be materially part of the building below?”

In a small discussion after my presentation we talked about materiality, representation and visibility. We considered that maybe the moment at the top of the floorplan is the climax, the lowest or highest point to which the building leads. The

building effectively is a big shed that holds the landscape, the space inside could be part of the landscape. Maybe the change in topography will allow the archive at the back side to peek out from the ground. The archive is the actual building, and the concrete box is where all the embodied energy is. On top is a shed. Should the real building be underneath a presence above ground? A plinth? Not an effect but a presence. An iceberg. Of the two floors, the bottom one could have more weight, be made of a heavier material as well. The top floor façade is lighter, higher. This is not a 50/50 ratio in façade, as this looks awkward, according to Daniel.

Furthermore, as a group we evaluated the P3 presentations. Our main point seemed to be the nature of the feedback being much more conceptual than we were expecting. For the P3 we each made a fragment model, scale 1:33, already showing a lot of detail of the interior spaces. However, the feedback we each got, mostly had to do with building volume, materiality and spatial planning. Many of us were confused about this, as we were expecting feedback on a smaller scale. We were assured that spatial planning on building scale is never finished and should always be open to revisions.



## P4

week 4.1 - 4.6

### **brief: A Difficult Whole**

Brief 4: A Difficult Whole, was presented before the P3 presentation, but was guiding for me during the period after the P3 as well. Working towards P4, with so much experience, feedback, considerations already had, it is easy to get lost in the details of a design. The Interiors Buildings Cities studio requires us to think through all scales, consider all aspects of a well-integrated design. The challenge is to find a balance between what architecture wants you to do and what building technology wants. A building made with proper climate installations, but should they be visible? Enough toilets for all expected visitors, but does it really matter how big they are?

The brief is introduced with a quote by Venturi;

“An architecture...able to admit the paradox of the whole fragment: the building which is a whole at one level and a fragment of a greater whole at another level...It is the difficult unity through inclusion rather than the easy unity through exclusion.”

-Robert Venturi, *The Obligation Toward the Difficult Whole*, in: *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*

Confronted with the messy realities of the contemporary city, engaged in fragments of the past and addressing the uncertainties and challenges of the future, the thoughts of the American architect Robert Venturi on the possibilities of the difficult whole, written half a century ago, continue to have resonance. Beyond the, sometimes failing, formalities manifested in the work of Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown, it might represent the possibility of a negotiative architecture: one that looks outwards with a welcoming gesture, which enjoys what it finds; which searches for wholeness, rather than unity; which is open and political and has agency.

### -Brief 4: A Difficult Whole

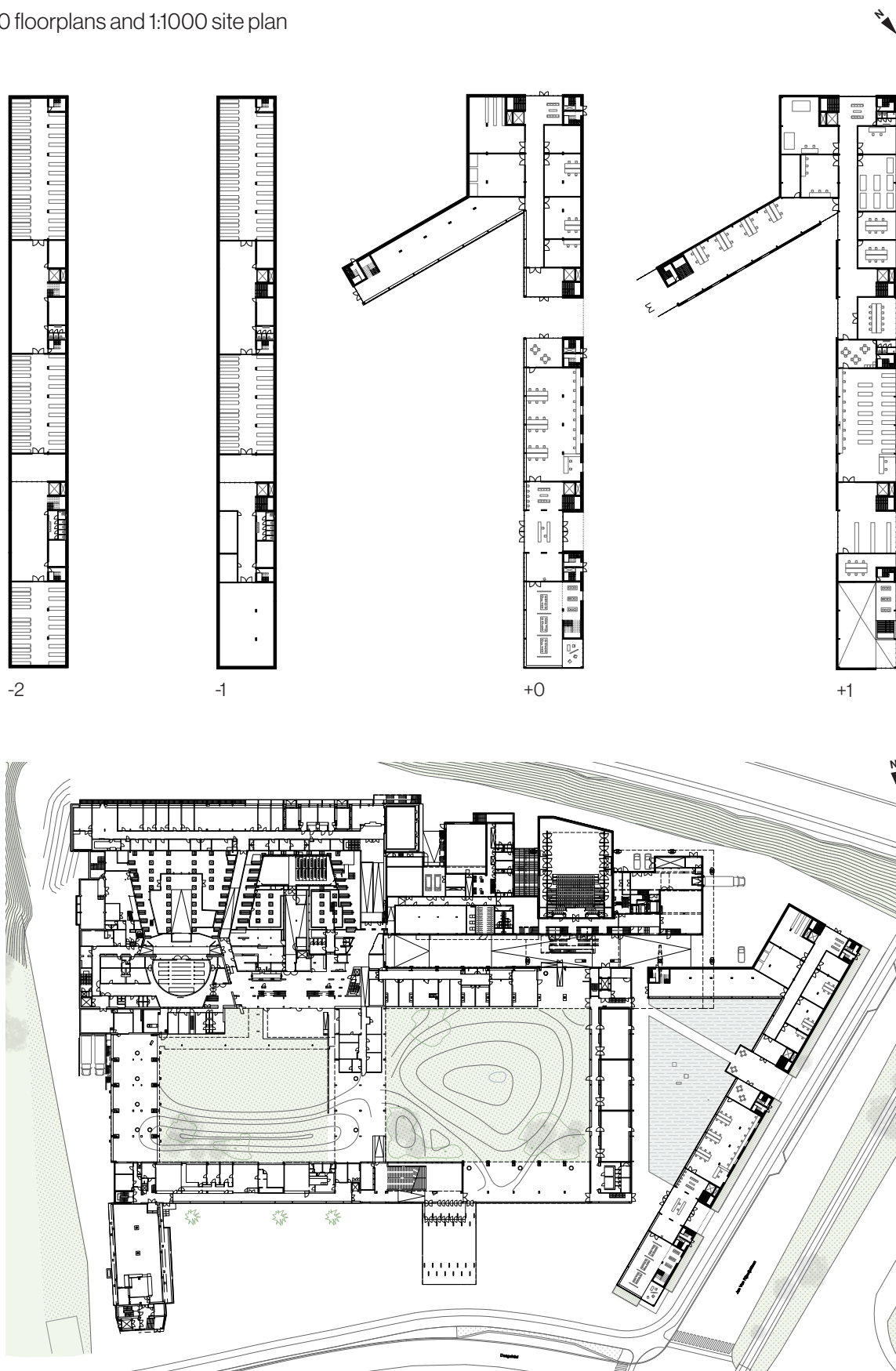
In my project, testing the boundary between architecture and building technology is important. In previous projects, the two were always separate topics, even within an integrated design.

For this last graduation project, my challenge was to use one to enhance the other. To remember that the key to successful architecture lies in the integration of smart and beautiful detailing.

## results: P4 presentation products

### The Living Archive

1:400 floorplans and 1:1000 site plan

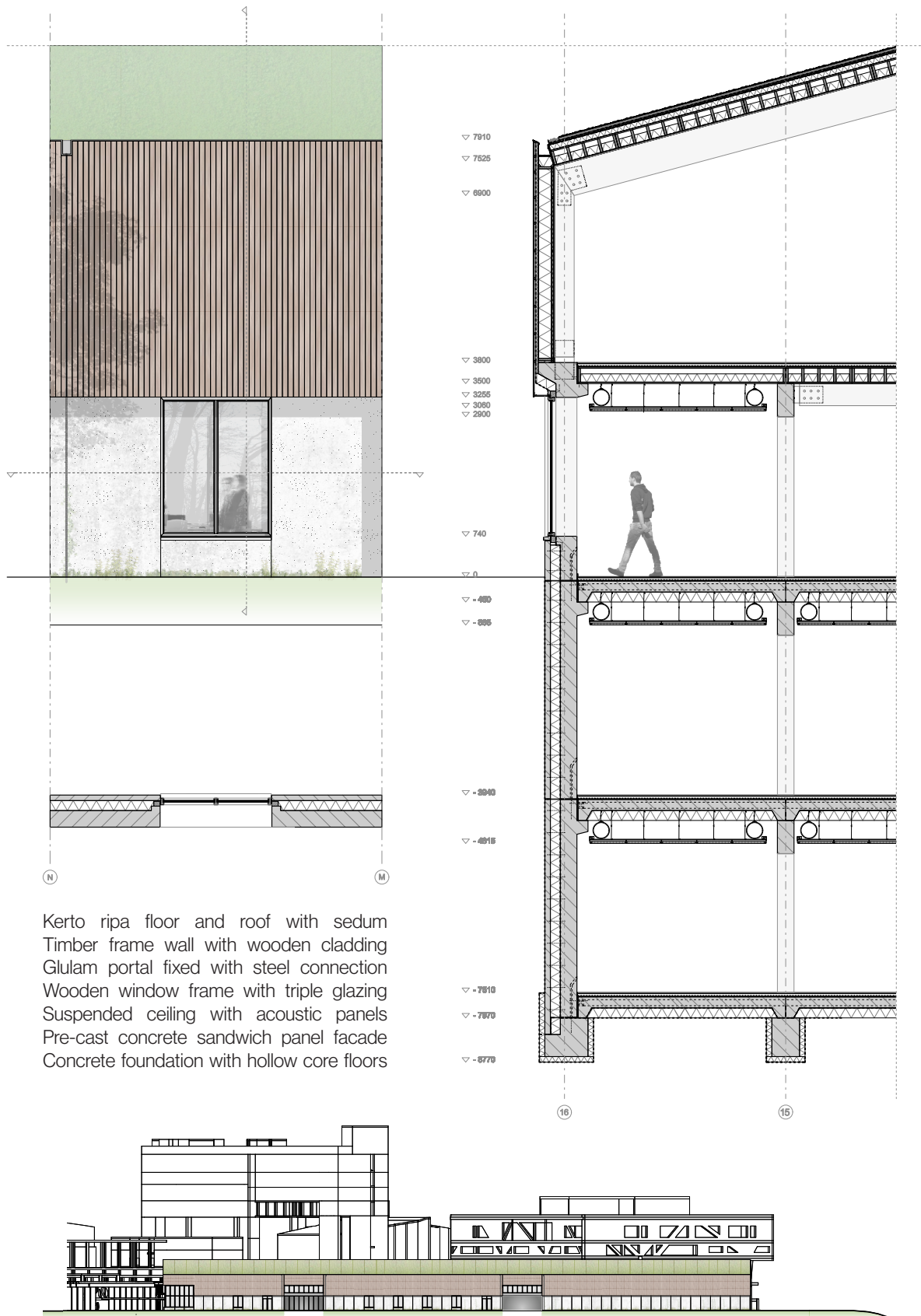


Laura Tijchon · 5058899 · 23-05-25 · The Living Archive

Figure 18: poster P4 presentation; plans

## The Living Archive

1:33 facade fragment with horizontal and vertical section and 1:400 west facade elevation



Laura Tijchon · 5058899 · 23-05-25 · The Living Archive

Figure 19: poster P4 presentation; facade

**reflection: feedback on the P4 presentation**

Although I passed the P4 with a GO, the feedback I received after the presentation was more critical than expected. My design is clear and was brought in a well-told story. Even though nothing was wrong, some parts were lacking. The architecture was not highlighted enough and kept the tutors wanting more. The floorplans alone were not enough to convince of spatial quality. The model 1:200 scale model unfortunately also didn't communicate any new information, as it was just cardboard. Matthijs told me: "Your design is so colourful, it is a shame your model is grey." That stuck with me.

Although I do really understand the feedback, I mostly felt frustrated with the communication

and the timing. As mentioned in the P3 reflection, I was confused by the nature of that feedback to, as we were working towards detailed interior design, but received feedback on spatial planning. In the weeks after, I thus focused on plans, facades, materiality; building scale. To now hear I should have been focusing on a smaller scale, felt like a miscommunication. I would have loved to hear weeks earlier that my interior design should be further developed. And since the small scale integrated design is one of my favourite parts of architecture, I feel sad that I will have to develop this part in just three weeks, before the final P5 presentation.

Nevertheless, I will try, with the limited time, feedback and resources I have.



# P5

week 5.1 - 5.3

**results: update 1:200 model**



Figure 20: 1:200 model, view from entrance square





Figure 21: 1:200 model, view from road



Figure 22: 1:200 model, view from path through pond





Figure 23: 1:200 model, view of the pond and facades

### **reflection: word of thanks**

As I'm writing this, before even giving my final presentation, I'm unsure of how the future will unfold. I find it difficult to write a reflection on a project that has taken almost a year of my life; from choosing my studio to finishing the last drawing. I knew, when choosing the Interiors Buildings Cities studio, my year would be challenging. The IBC graduation studio is known for critical thinking and learning a new way of working. With not much experience in model making or interior design, I knew this would be a challenge for me as well. Fortunately, as I had hoped, the year was not a conclusion of my whole studies, but rather a continuation of learning to become a designer. I'm very much aware that my choices aren't perfect, my process is a little messy and that my design is never finished. But if there's something I learned this year, it's reflecting. Where in the past I have made nice designs, with some solid concepts behind it, I often got lost in what I was actually doing. The IBC mentors asked us to be aware of our choices, our impact, our proposals. "How can you not know the dimensions of your building?", Daniel asked us indignantly.

I learned that it's okay to not know sometimes, as long as you are aware that you don't know. I learned to back up my statements with proper research. To not just bluff my way through a presentation, but practice. Trice. To experiment strategically, work towards where you need to go. To let the architecture speak for itself and allow it to become an actual object. To do the most by doing the least.

Keeping a project journal has been one of the most challenging aspects of graduation, but also the most influential. I thrive in organized chaos,

so at first I was not sure how to bring all different mediums of design together. But, with trial and error, I figured out a way. The project journal allowed me to reflect on myself, to keep track of my thoughts, experiments and experiences. But, having to write a bit about each week, it also called for the discipline to work each week; each day.

Doing a year-long project mostly by yourself is not something I would like to do again. I like using my creativity and would like to continue designing from here on, but preferably not alone. Sitting next to someone, looking at drawings, models, taking a pen and making adjustments, sparring about what a design could be. That's what I want. I missed that this year, even though I tried to connect with my colleague-students. We organized feedback sessions to learn from each other and to help each other. I am so grateful that we were struggling together, learning from each other's doubts and becoming better friends because of it.

I want to thank Dilek, Daan and Iris. Sam and Thirza. All Interiors Buildings Cities graduation students. You experiencing this with me, is what I will always remember.

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Thank you to my parents, my sister, Danique, Tejon, Wouter, Joëlle, Emma and Jasmijn. Even during a graduation year, personal life doesn't stop. You were there to laugh with me and to cry with me, both of which we did. I am grateful.







