

LITERARY SPACE
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De wanden zijn
met boeken behangen

uitgelezen
hebben ze mij
hun ruggen toegekeerd

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LITERARY SPACE

This research plan will guide the interwoven relation of literature and architecture. Therefor a brief introduction to the construct of language is provided alongside the art of writing and spatial design. The term of literary space is introduced and leads the way to the main theme of the research.

LANGUAGE

We capture, translate and express our thoughts, feelings and desires through words. Our main manner of communicating with the outside world is through the medium of language. Language is a structural framework, consisting out of letters, vocabulary and grammatical guidelines. Technicality comes in when we create words by putting letters alongside each other, create sentences by the sequences of words and create stories as a collection of the sentences which convey a multitude of meanings. To take part in this linguistic framework, and communicate, one must learn, understand, and familiarize themselves with it. Overall language is taught while growing up, we become familiar with the sound and pace of the spoken words and start to echo. The repetition of letters and words over time broaden the knowledge, and instead of merely echoing, we can suddenly convey our own constructed meaning to the outside world. In the specificity and selection of the words, the sequence and its pace, and the meaning that lies beyond, we choose to express ourselves in a manner that is closely related to the social cultural situation we find ourselves in (Pérez-Gómez in Havik et al., 2016). Even more, language becomes more than a medium of communication, we not only use it to convey our word to the outside world, it also is the means in how we explain our perception, recall our memories, and express our trail of thought to ourselves. Hence, language is part of us, it is intimately entangled with the self and our identity as a person.

Writing is one of the manifestations in which the art of language is explored. Works of poetry and storytelling seek contemplation or guidance in the understanding of the valuable themes of life, like the meaning of death, or the euphoria of love and lost. Wim Cuyvers (in Maaksant & Grafe, 2009) describes the book as a physical occurrence where the author merely tries to capture his understanding or meaning of the world. The act of writing thereby profoundly becomes a desire to speak or to articulate, and on the other hand one to be heard. Writing therefor is a conscious and structured act of communicating, able to polish the ink on paper to its best proficiency. The writing illuminates of desire that the reader will solely read the enclosed meaning of the author. Even so the book is read uniquely by every reader, the story seized by the personal memories, fears and desires. The reading is captured by the imagination of the perceiver.

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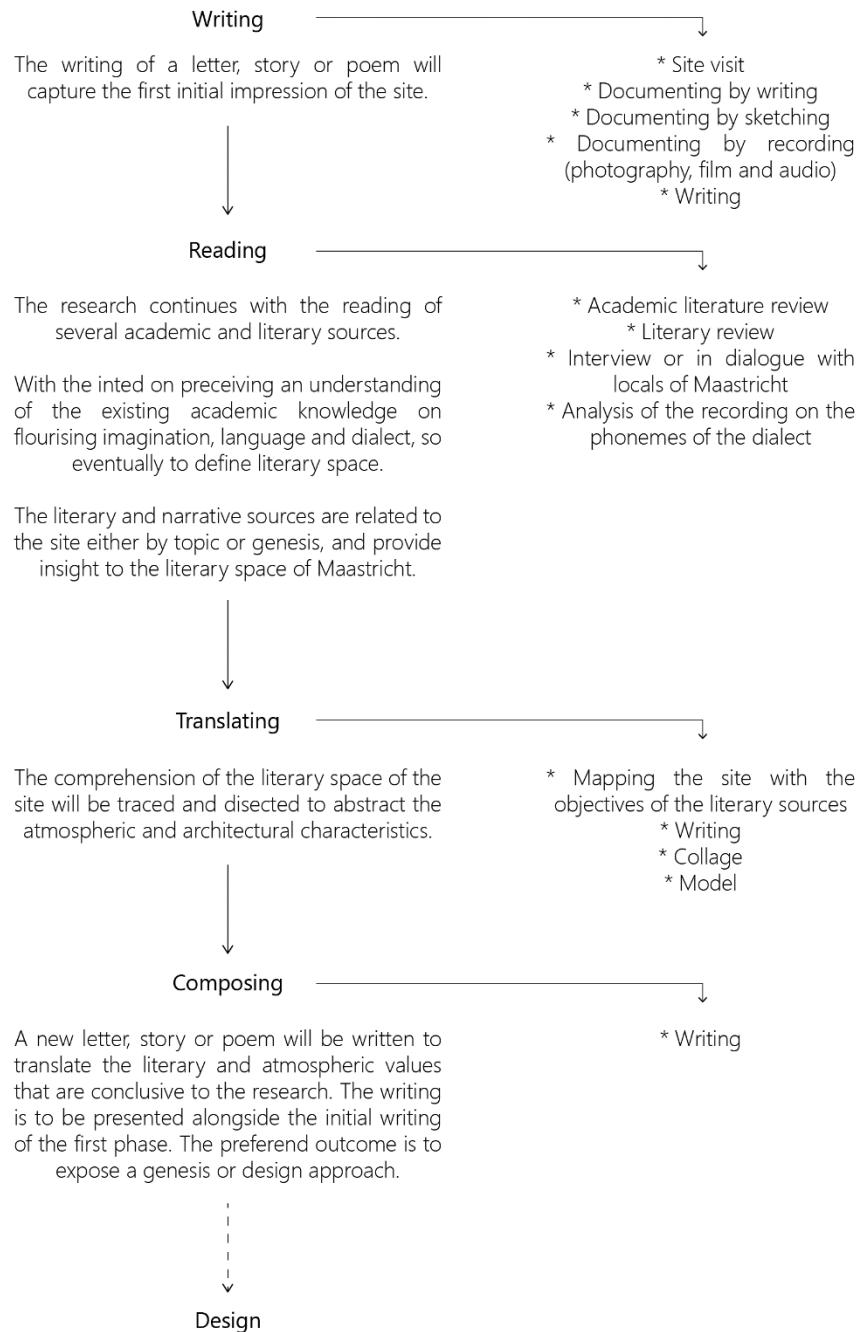
Literature and architecture seem to be various media of translating the imagination. One translates into language and the other into space, literature articulates where architecture seems to retreat in silence. What seems like the comparison between water and fire, when thought of more consciously, there are notable similarities, intersections, and entanglements of the two. Both literature and architecture are in the core rooted to the act of creation, the aim to convey a meaning which is merely translated into an aesthetic composition of components, either consistent out of words or materials. Then, architecture as such might take a more obvious place in literary storytelling, although architecture has gone as far as to attempt translating literature into spatial structures in the past (Maaksant & Grafe, 2009). Anyhow,

architecture can appear in a multitude in storytelling, either as a vast presence as for example in *The Discovery of Heaven* by Harry Mulish, or as an unapparent position as it merely allows the story to unfold like in *The Solitude of Thomas Cave* by Georgina Harding. The presence of spatial and architectural elements in the writing is solely a decision on what conveys the desired word of the writer. The interwoven relation of the characters and their surroundings demands the descriptive detail in which spaces and places are told. Therefor the spatial experience of the reader is buried in the sequences of words.

The intimate reading of space within literature puts the perception of architecture in a new light. Writers and poets might highlight other aspects of our surroundings, spaces, and places, while at the same time allowing their readers to travel through time and space. A value that is missing in the representation of architecture nowadays where various media of visualization take the lead. While the drawing has historically always been a prominent means of communication for the architect, today's renderings, television and social media leave little room for the imagination of the individual. While in writing there is a presence of time, history and place, and atmosphere (Havik, 2019). The poetic description captures specific moments and occurrences in time, translating the interwoven relation of language and space. The intimate interaction of experiencing space through the eyes of another, to relate and emphasize with something that is not our own, is uniquely characterizing for the relation between writer and reader. The *literary space* is however captured and restricted by the imagination of the reader. The author constructs the structure of the imaginary space, which becomes further decorated with our own personal knowledge and experience.

The theme '*Glaneur, Glaneuses*' of our studio is recognizable in the concept of the literary space. The space that is captured in the words of the writer is to be gleaned, either as a whole, stripped or distorted, and to be made our own. In other words, we are talking about accustoming the imagination in a spatial manner. In relation to the site of the studio, the literary space of Maastricht will offer a new insight in the reading and understanding of the city, and our site of the Sphinx district. The reading, experiencing, and perceiving of Maastricht through the eyes of another allows a more intimate insight of the site, while seeking to grasp the entangled layers of atmosphere and space. Therefor the research will *investigate the spatial values of the site through the lens of literary space*. To study the literary space in regard to the site, there needs to be an understanding of the composure of individual and collective meaning: who is telling the story, and who is reading it? Furthermore, a broader understanding on imagination and its flourishing, as well as the antiquity and development of language and the *Mestreechs* dialect, would serve to define literary space and to place the research in the current body of knowledge. By exploring the site through writing and reading, the distinctive values of the site will appear to the surface which can be abstracted and analyzed by their spatial qualities like composition, structure, materiality, and texture. Therefore, the research borders between the two realms of imagination and the existing, translating the imaginative to the tangible. The captured atmospheric values, unique to space and time, will serve as the genesis or the guiding approach for the succeeding architectural design proposal.

Literary Space



Scheme 1 *Methodology of Literary Space* (right column includes the explanatory methods)

METHODOLOGY

The literary space of Maastricht and the site will mainly be researched by narrative and phenomenological approaches. Therefore, a multitude of methods are selected which are complementary to the several phases introduced to structure the conduct of the research, as illustrated in scheme 1. The structure is linear, where the closure objective of the phase will serve as the take off for the succeeding phase. While previous experience has thought that research often does not make such linear progression in practice, some of the phases will either offer changes for simultaneous performance or reflection. However, first and foremost, the methodology of the research will focus and explore the relation between linguistic and architectural research methods.

The first phase *Writing* will be serving as introduction to the site of the Sphinx district and Maastricht. A written object, which could take the form of a letter, story or poem, will capture the first impression of the site. Prior and required for this written statement, a site visit will give the chance to explore through the own perception. Through several manners of documenting initial feelings, responses and questions on site can be later called upon when writing. The letter, story or poem of this phase *Writing* will be kept, put away and recalled upon in a later stage of the research.

In the following phase *Reading* a focus is cast upon the literature review of different objectives. Initially, academic research will be consulted to gather a better understanding of the expansion of imagination and creativity. Similarly, the value and development of language will be researched where more profound attention for the dialect of Maastricht will be given to unravel the antiquity, verbalizing and cultural traces. The gathered knowledge on imagination and language will enable a decisive definition of literary space and will place the research within the existing body of knowledge. Besides academic sources, literary writings will be consulted to investigate the literary space of the site. Therefor the literature is to be related either by topic or genesis to the site. While retrieving a feeling for place and space, the purpose of this element is to celebrate different literary voices. It is important to recognize that the written story, like the perception of the percipient, are both subjective as the result of their own individual experiences and imagination. The literary writings, in opposite to the reading of academic literature, are supported to be read in dialogue with natives to *Mestreechs* in order to blur the linguistic barrier. Thereby the third component to this phase is introduced, the phonemes of the spoken dialect. A brief analysis will be conducted on the sound, rhythm and speed of the spoken to gain a better understanding of the spoken characteristics of the dialect. Overall, the phase of *Reading* aims to define literary space and to relate it back to the spatial composition of the site by linguistic, descriptive and literary values.

In the subsequent *Translating* phase, the comprehension of the literary space of the site and its values will be analyzed and abstracted to its phenomenological and architectural characteristics. The first method would be to detect the literary values in their physical and spatial phenomena by mapping them, thereby creating an understanding of space, place and time. Examples could be the tracing of an individual flows of humans or nature, like a daily route or the seasonal transformation of a tree. Furthermore, phenomenological characteristics identified at the site could be captured in the making of writing, collages or models, references are to be found to appendix A. These physical creations should rather convey the nuance of the phenomena, like the tangible and spatial features of composition, light or materiality, while also preserving their characteristic to spark the imagination, hence the references are of such abstract nature. In this phase the narrative and phenomenological approaches of researching the literary space are translated to tangible atmospheric and architectural characteristics of the place.

The final phase of *Composing* is created to reflect, compile and rephrase. The findings of literary space and the architectural identity of place are capture in a writing once more. This writing object is of the same nature as the first phase and will compose a compiling and concluding word of the research. The writings, the initial impression and the concluding word, are to be presented alongside each other to reveal the atmospheric and literary identity of the place. The literary reading of space and its translation to more tangible characteristics might not only introduce a new perspective to the sense of the site, but might also provide imaginative and spatial elements for the architectural design. Hence the ambition of the research is to acquire an initial genesis or approach for the succeeding architectural design proposal.

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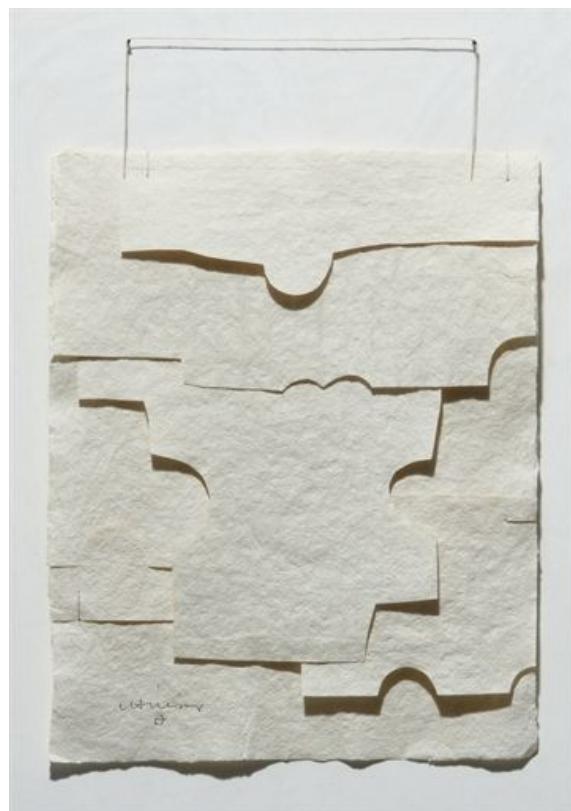
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A selection of poetry of the collection of Huub Clerkx

APPENDIX A



Reference *Model of Apartment Building in Lausanne* by PRS Architects (casted model in either concrete or plaster)



Reference *Gravitación* by Eduardo Chillida (paper, parchment or textile collage)

