

## **P4 Reflection**

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Architecture of the Interiors, the healthy environment

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### **Introduction**

During this graduation year I've been researching the living environment for people with dementia these days, leading to a design for an improved idea of this environment. The chosen location, containing an existing building, is situated in the north of Amsterdam at the border of 'de Volewijck' and 'de Florapark'. A location between the urban fabric and a park. The existing building from 1932 is a children day-care. The experience of the interior and the relationship with the exterior is an important issue, where enclosed courtyard are playing an important role together with the green environment of the surrounding park.

The aim of this reflection is to look back at the design approach and take a closer look at the results of the research and design in the graduation phase in terms of product, process and planning. These four aspects will be discussed:

Aspect 1 The relationship between research and design

Aspect 2 The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject

Aspect 3 The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student

Aspect 4 The relationship between the project and the wider social context

### **The relationship between research and design**

A good research seems to be of great importance during this graduation project. The specific user groups, people with dementia, deal with a radical change of life. In most cases they are no longer capable of living by themselves and in further stages other symptoms will appear and a good living environment is of great importance to deal with these symptoms.

People with dementia often tend to walk a lot, most of the time with no goal. A closed environment could lead to stress and anxiety, with is often the case in traditional nursing homes.

In a specific research seminar part of the study program it was possible to do a research on the chosen patient group. During this research I was able to do multiple case-studies and interviews and by comparing the outcomes I was able to get perspective and draw conclusions. I focused on the importance of freedom for people with dementia and the impact of this phenomenon. Also the idea or feeling of freedom and not freedom itself can have positive influence on the living environment of a nursing home. These findings were necessary for me to develop my design. Especially in the beginning to set rules and boundaries and create a concept.

Next to this user related research, urban and architectural studies were necessary to create a design that interacts with the environment. This was a difficult aspect because of the specific user groups that deals with a more closed environment.

### **The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject**

The theme of the graduation lab is the healthy environment, a non-hospitalized design which integrates one or several courtyards with the idea of a nature as an element of well-being.

The life in most of the care building nowadays is not comparable with the life at home. Dementia is a not curable illness and when people with dementia go to a care centre this will become their new home.

I find it important that people with dementia in a nursing home can really say 'this is my home' and feel this way. A soothing and recognizable environment is of great importance.

The introduction of several courtyards makes this possible. The possibility of going inside, outside and inside again creates an open feeling and by doing this each household gets their own front door. This makes the nursing home actually a collection of houses. I introduced the theme 'hofje' to deal with these courtyards. This is a typical Dutch typology, whereby I think it can create a recognizable environment.

### **The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student**

In my view the methodology of the interiors accumulated on the architecture is to try to touch multiple scales at the same time. The inside-outside relationship is important and focusing on this aspect from the beginning on a small scale makes it possible to make decisions on bigger scales. This way of approach is for me a comfortable way of designing. In the past year there were some small assignments and workshops organized to help the students with dealing with these different scales. These assignments dealt with all kinds of media. The graduation studio of the healthy environment started with making a short movie of a care building, dealing with all kinds of themes as routing, expression etc. But also making models was a returning element of testing and designing. Also these different scales could be translated in these models. On a bigger scale the relation with the surrounding is important and a site model is necessary to see connections or maybe struggles. But on a smaller scale interior spaces and inside-outside relations can be studied more visually and potentials and treatments can be determined.

### **The relationship between the project and the wider social context**

The healthcare in the Netherlands is changing. More and more people are 'forced' to stay at home and the family is responsible for the elderly. When staying at home in your own living environment is possible it probably is for the best, but for people with dementia this is often not the case. Especially severe cases need professional support.

The amount of people with dementia is increasing exponentially. Moving forward from a traditional nursing home to a more domestic living environment can be of great importance in the future. A cluster of households instead of a traditional nursing home could provide the domestic environment to create a stimulating surrounding where people can support each other, they can live their daily routines, family can visit and help. The combination of these factors can make it possible for the people with dementia to live on their lives as normal as possible.