

THE ART OF AGEING

REFLECTION DOCUMENT - P4

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Explore Lab 22

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“The reality and reliability of the human world rests primarily on the fact that we are surrounded by things more permanent than the activity by which they were produced”

I would like to start my introduction of this reflection with this quote from Hannah Arendt's book *The Human Condition* (1958). There she speaks about the importance of the permanence of our surroundings. This contrasts with my own approach, the art of ageing together with the process of changing and ending. That is confusing because I believe that Arendt is correct with her view on the influence of the built environment on human society. The permanency of architecture nowadays is blocking the reality and reliability of the human world. How can we solve this dilemma?

The reason for starting with this quote comes from my previous research project that I did in Chicago. That research was about the elevated loop structure in the middle of downtown Chicago, a raised public transport line finished in 1897. This large iron structure contrasted so sharply with its environment that it raised questions for me. Why was it still there? I realised that this structure brought much identity and reliability to the city and so that is why I used this quote to support my findings. But at the same time I realised that this left over structure was not that powerful when its context remained the same. It was the change that caught my interest.

This fascination for change was what I wanted to develop in further research. In architecture people often speak about decay when change through time is happening. Decay is a negative term, it represents regression, a retrogressive movement. Instead of decay I picked the term ageing, which is neutral and represents time as well as a subject. It also lies close to ourselves and the process includes an ending. With this given fact I started my research and coined my title *The Art of Ageing*. Since ageing is also an art in itself.

METHODOLOGY

I needed a wider understanding of this complex theme, so I made different phases of my research. I describe them as: explore, made and conclude phase.

The explore phase started with the investigation of the necessity of ageing in general and in architecture by using my personal view as a tool. With this personal view I started to explore my fascination for change and made a database of several sources. These selected sources were chosen because they caught my interest in several ways. It could be anything, from newspaper articles to interesting images that I found in daily life. I commented them and explained the relationship with ageing and architecture and sorted them in themes.

Be inspired by these themes I made a couple of short films, objects and a manuscript to study these themes deeper and place them in a different perspective. The main themes can be described as: nowadays resistance for ageing, change and finite, The importance for history and traces, the need for slow change and the acceptance of death.

The conclude phase is my design and the way I will present it. It is also a moment of reflection that it is been written and designed in a temporary way. It will vanish someday

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND DESIGN

During my research I discovered guidelines for my design. The way of how to deal with time, change, history and death in an architectural design. The importance of the visible time in my design, thus visible change, was obvious for my theme. But I could not came up with a function for a long time. I needed a place that could create awareness and make the message of the design stronger in a way. I figured out that the program of a cemetery is working perfectly in this theme. A place in our daily life where we are most confronted with the ending of life and memory of what was there once. Later on I decided that the focus of my design is not only death but also life itself. So the ceremony building is not only for funerals but also for life celebrations as weddings and small concerts. I find this important because life will leads us to death but the changes in between make the life.

My research is the argumentation for my design decisions and the need for this kind of designs in our building environment. The conclude manifest represents the design in a way, it is a message that will vanish by time. I see my design as the conclusion of my research. A design where time, seasons, history of place and mortality are visible. Not the time from the clock but the time of our lives.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WIDER SOCIAL CONTEXT

First of all the goal of my research and design is to create awareness around the circle of life. I believe that if we as society accept change, ageing and death we can handle life better. There is a form of predictability that we need to deal with unpredictable changes. If we know buildings will vanish and die and it is visible for us, we can rely on that fact. Instead of demolishing buildings in one day.

The second point is about the site I chose, the former terrain of the Calvé factory in Delft. Al lot of these old factory terrains stay empty in the Netherlands. I wanted to explore the design possibilities of these kind of sites to investigate the possibilities of abandoned terrains and its history.