

Reflection of graduation studio

The perspectives of contemporary architects on society are very different from those of a century ago. When the rise of modernist architecture, the functionality, and temporariness of architecture widely accepted and practiced has now mainly been replaced by the pursue of multifunctional and sustainable purposes. At the same time, architecture is facing the challenge of another social reality, that is, the continuous growth of the cultural diversity of contemporary society. During the beginning of the graduation studio site research, my colleague and I found out that in The Hague, there are more than half of the population are foreign immigrants. This fact shows us how divers the city culture of the Hague is and indicates that a cultural divers' public spaces is an actual need of the city.

For the past many centuries, architecture has been an expression of the values and traditions of mainstream culture, race, religion, and even company cultures within society. In the context of multiculturalism, most international cities contain various cultural architectures to celebrate different cultural activities. The city, when viewed as a whole, became a vast cultural collage. However, the attributes of architecture as the expression of mainstream values and culture are still preserved. Most buildings are still devoted to one or one type of cultural activity. Is there a possibility that the building itself becomes a cultural collage?

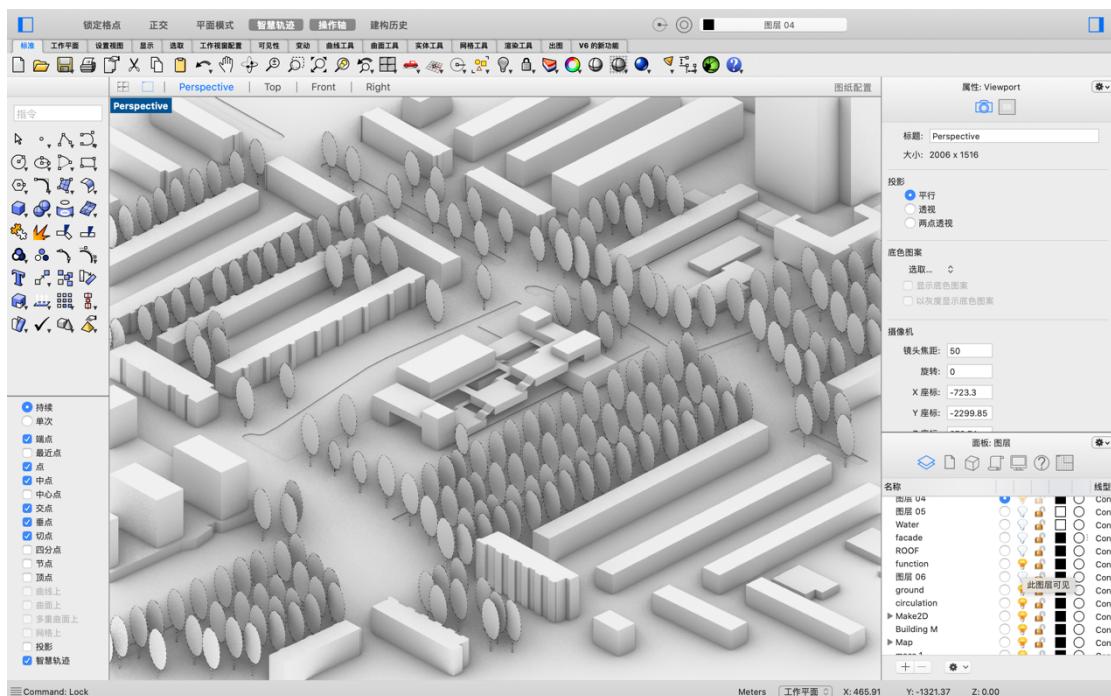
During further research, the city culture of the urban life is mainly divided into two sorts, namely high culture and low culture. However, during the study moved forward, I realized that these two collections of culture cannot cover the whole topic of the graduation studio. The multiplicity of my Public Condenser is the co-existing of different cultures that welcoming people with all ages and social background. To achieve this goal, the daily life culture also needs to be introduced into the Public Condenser. With all three cultural aspects contained, the Public Condenser is welcoming people with different cultural preferences, different purposes and different ages.

In order to achieve forming cultural collage, the graduation design with the theme of "Public Condenser" was regarded as a carrier and used to explore the design method of multicultural collage architecture. The design method of using architecture as a cultural collage intuitively expresses the large-scale spatial quality through small-scale space, that is, compressing the characteristics of the city as a cultural collage into the architecture. To achieve this, a kind of reverse thinking provides a possible solution, that is, designing a building that expresses a collective cultural memory, rather than a building that targets a specific culture. High and low culture will be both contained in this building at the same time, forming a multicultural collage with each other as the background, providing users with different cultural services with different

backgrounds.

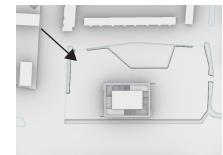
At the same time, architecture should not be used as the background of human society, but as an actor which could interact with other human actors, in the performance of cultural memory. Memory is a performance. By its very nature, performance rejects conclusions, just as it rejects definitions, boundaries, and limits that are very useful for traditional academic writing and academic structure. Ambiguous spatial classification is therefore essential. Through changing spatial experiences and activities, visitors become cultural participants. Together with the Public Condenser, they became performers of cultural memory.

In the beginning of the design stage, the Public Condenser was located in the center of the park. In this position, all four façades will be seen as collages, and cultural activities are divided into small boxes that located at different area in the building. Using this method, the Public Building achieved to have many characteristics of FUN PALACE, that the building is part of the park as it is part of public realm in the area. The culture activities boxes act not only as closed boxes of certain activities. Their roofs are at the same time stages of the cultural performance.



However, the first approach is a kind of a utopia method. The central position of the Public Condenser took away the special quality of the park as a

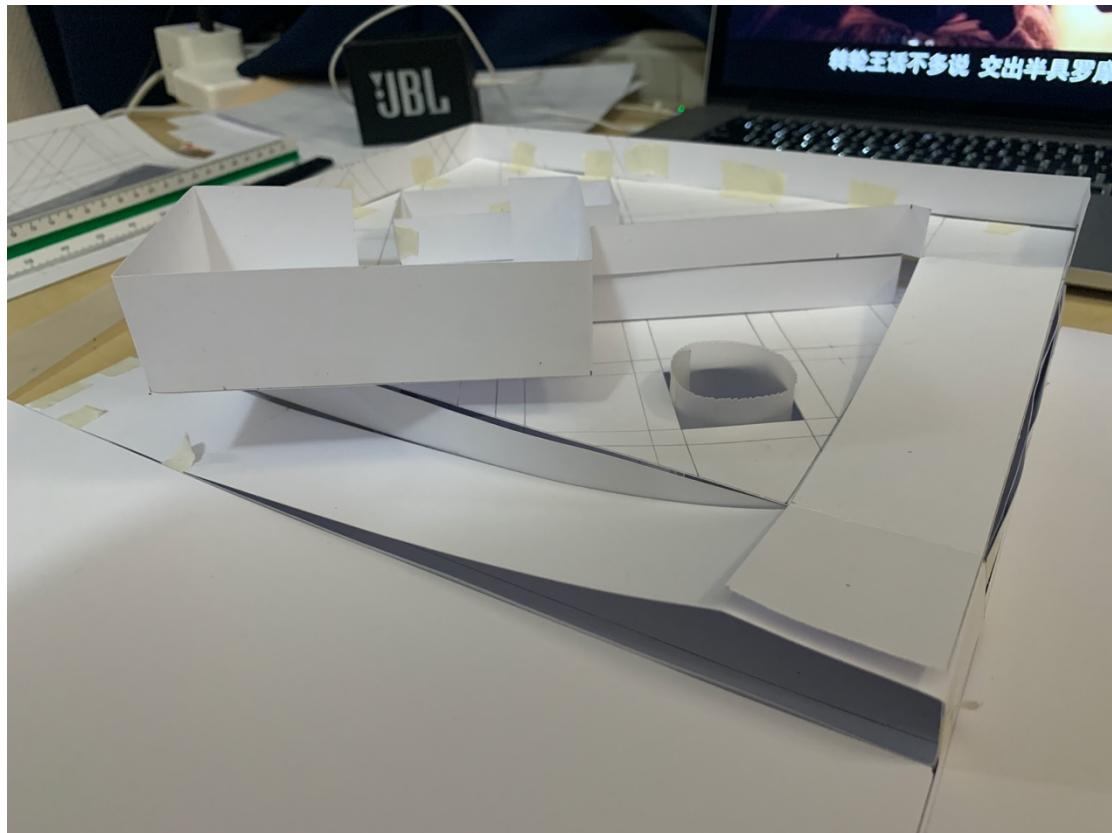
relaxing green area. And the fragmented cultural boxes might create more doubt than actual cultural performance. To solve the problems above, Public Condenser is moved to the corner of the park, through which gives back the role of the park. The internal organization of the Public Condenser is also changed. The landscape characteristic of the interior space quality has been kept during the cultural clusters are created to replace the fragmented boxes.



Unfortunately, the design went into a dead end. During the time between P2 and P3, communication between tutors and I became really difficult. The feedbacks of the project were becoming more negative at each time. As Paul once said, the Public Condenser now looks like a modernist institutional library, rather than a public relaxing space with bottom up design approach. I was stuck in trying to using cultural elements as a collage material. The sports hall is the largest space in the building, together with skateboarding park, they are dominating the spaces of the building. As a result, other programmes became add-ups. Cultural boxes are floating around the big empty spaces reserved for basketball court and skateboarding park. In some way, all the functions became background of the idea of cultural collage. It might end up as a collage that is readable but not accessible. The Condenser in this approach, turn out into a sculpture. It rejects people rather than welcome visiting. It requires contemplation rather than interaction.

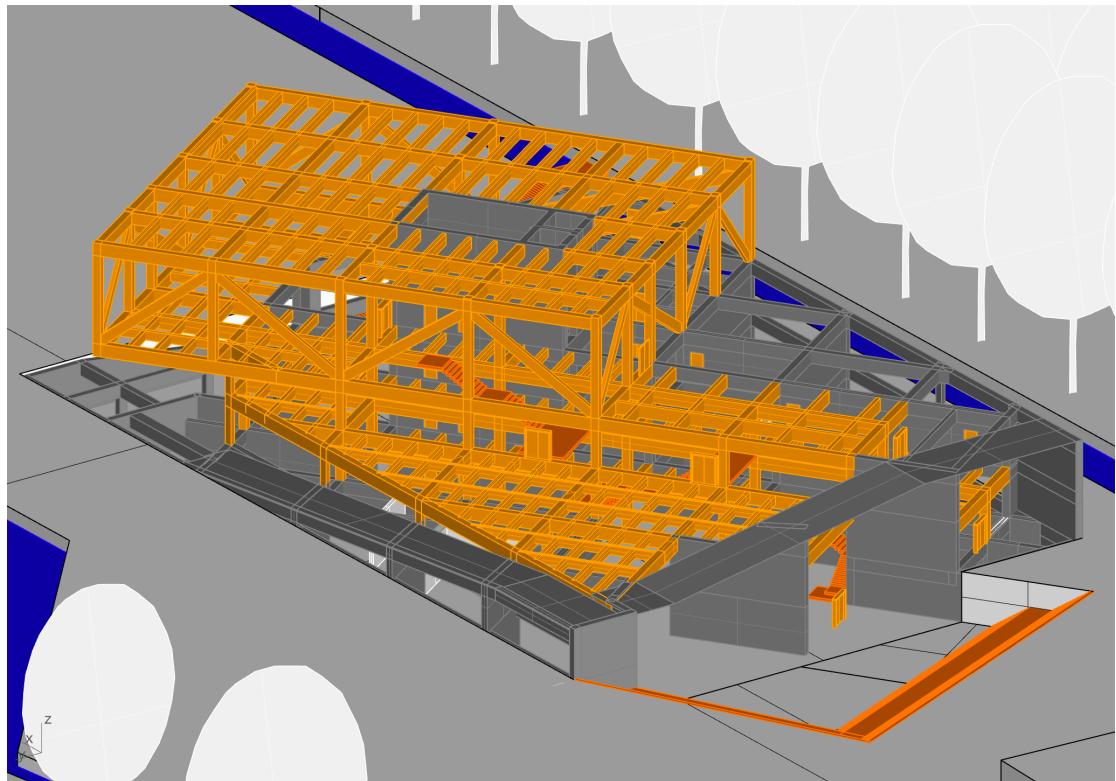
To get back on track to the topic of Public Consider and Multiplicity, the project was totally changed after P3. Many new approaches are used and new case

studies are found. With suggestions from Paul, Nathalie and Gilbert, I abounded the computer design method. Instead, paper model and hand drawings were introduced into the design method. The actual architectural design is totally changed. The biggest changes of the design method are the attitude towards to building and the environment. The previous approach put the Public Condenser in the focus point of the whole project. At the same time, the “collage” idea is put into the center position of the design position. The new approach thus in some aspect can be concluded as “withdraw”. The withdraw of the positioning of the building itself, and the withdraw of the fixed idea of collage. In the new proposal, Public Condenser is not the center part of the park, rather as a visual and functional background of the park. It now takes place alongside the edge which is near the main road. At the same time, the programmes now share equal importance. The “collage” idea in the new Public Condenser is more an abstract expression of multicultural city life, rather the physical culture boxes collage.



For the first proposal, one of the critical feedbacks I received from all three tutors is that there is too much air inside the building. The reason why we had this problem is that the design approach is a big container with floating boxes. The giant shell thus is not a suitable way for a Public Condenser. In the new design, some qualities of landscape architecture are added into the design. At the first weeks of the new approach was developed, the internal circulation and external circulation is isolated. After several tutorials, I rethink about the

inside and the outside of the condenser. Nathalie and Paul suggest that the playful interaction between in and out, the combination of stairs, ramp and elevator system can not only make the circulation better, but also the inaction between programmes easier and more understandable. As the result of the redesign circulation system, a void is created. The void not only make the building layout more understandable, but also brings in the more lights and better climate solution.



In the aspect of building technology, Gilbert provides a lot of help. With his help and guidance, I decided to use the hybrid structure of concrete and timber. This approach is not only for sustainable goal, it also helps to create different atmosphere for various programmes. Timber for relaxing and concrete for focus. In the first draft of new proposal, there is a serious structural problem. The cantilever part on the top floor where bears the basketball court would collapse. To solve the structural problem, basketball court has to be turned into an indoor sports hall. However, after treating the top cantilever floor as a bigger box, it not only solves the structural problem but also brings better proportion to the building.



Architecture was used by people as a physical expression of mainstream values a century ago. On this basis, historical buildings such as pyramids, palaces, etc. were built. Modernist architects a hundred years ago put the building's functionality at the center of focus. Form follows function is the famous saying of that era. However, this graduation project is a fusion of two values. The public condenser I designed is an architectural expression of multicultural value, it is the epitome of urban life. Here, people can see art, popular culture and daily life, it is a collage of multiculturalism. But at the same time, as a community public building with a bottom-up design method, its functionality must be considered at the same time. This is also the biggest difficulty I have encountered. I once limited myself to the expression of values, and ignored practicality. So, after P3, I come up with a new proposal.

Abandoning the way of looking at the design of the building from an overhead angle, I put myself in the building again and designed it as a user. As I mentioned in the previous survey, most urban buildings are restricted by typology. And the design I made tried to break through the imprisonment of typology by accommodating multiple cultures. However, how to combine the rich and diverse functions in an interesting and orderly manner in a building is a challenge. Designing from the user's perspective provides great help. The floor on which the function is placed is considered by the age of the user, and the specific location of the function in the floor is considered by the user's usage scenario. By combining value expression, pragmatism and bottom-up design methods, I tried to provide Morgenstond with a multi-cultural coexisting public living space where people of different ages, incomes and social backgrounds can communicate with each other.