

Reflections

The present report reflects on the Graduation Project *Spaces of Collection*. It aims to evaluate the research and the design process and to describe the main choices that were made in the research as well as in the design, and to restate and argue their reasoning. The first paragraph relates the project and the individual subject chosen to the Graduation Studio Theme: Spaces of Collection. It briefly explains the motivation for the graduation studio and the project within this.

The second paragraph describes the design goals and the relationship between research and design. It discusses the choice for focusing on a deep understanding of the objects of the collections in order to be able to communicate their value to a wider public. It shows the different steps that were taken and explains the related arguments for these steps and their fallowed decisions.

The third paragraph shows the advantages of bringing the objects of the collection of the TU Delft back to the historical city centre and how the it is possible to make those objects the catalysts for new relationships between the University —the institution and its experts— and the City inhabitants. This allow reflections on the wider social context of the project and the way it sits in the dynamics of the city.

Spaces of Collection

The Graduation Studio *Spaces of Collection* invites to reflect on the connection between the spatial arrangement of objects and the layout of space, how they are relate and resonate with each other. In this sense, the definition of space of collection refers not only to exhibition spaces, archives or libraries —spaces where objects are collected— but also to and public rooms or clubs where the meaning of collection is broader since it refers to people and activities. During the first part of the Studio, I investigated the exhibition design in one of the most refine project of Carlo Scarpa, the Gypsoteca Canoviana. In the late 1950s, the Italian architect revolutionised the way of display artefacts, conceiving an exhibition as an aesthetic thoroughfare in which all element of visual culture and the built environment are channelled together. The whole building becomes an exhibition, and the multitude of consideration — structure, volumes, colour, light— are powerfully fused together. The present approach seems to collide with the heterogeneity and the quality of the objects of the University collections. Nevertheless, the projects tries to embedded the physical presence of the specimens in the design of the spaces. The specificity of the design in relation to the collection becomes clear in the Object Library where the core of the building is designed as a massive block where the material is carved out to provide space for the artefact.

Objects as food for thoughts

The starting point of the research on the University collections was the first visit to the depot of the TU Delft Library where a consistent part of these collections is stored. Here, objects gathered in a promiscuous way, are kept away from the everyday life of students and researchers. This situation clashes with the main purpose of University collections that is to support the teaching and the researches in different fields. This situation, though, is not an exception. In deed, it is part of a much bigger phenomenon which invests many of the most prestigious universities in Europe and finds its root in the evolution in the educational system and the technological development in

scientific research¹. The aim of the project is to establish a new institution in the city centre of Delft where the object of these collections will be the essential core. This new centre will become the catalyst for new researches, allowing these objects to be the subject of new narrative. Not only students and researchers but also the general public will be invited to take part in workshops and other sort of venues.

The relevance of the objects comes from the notion that objects are the means through which people experience the world. The *objecthood*², that is the condition of being an object, is the way people become aware of the space and time they are living in. In the particular case of the historical materialism, objects allows a direct involvement with the past. According to Walter Benjamin, *to bring about the consolidation of experience with history [...] is the task of historical materialism. It is directed towards a consciousness of the present which explodes in continuum of history*³. From this notion, the collections are not a useless cluster of objects whose purpose is unknown, on the contrary, they legitimise the current research inside the campus tracing back their origins.

Delft Cultural Institute

The project consists of three main buildings: the Exhibition Hall, the Object Library, the cafe. The forth hosts administration and offices for the newly established institution. Each of these buildings represents the Delft University of Technology in a different way. The Exhibition Hall can be considered as a showcase of the cutting edge researches carried in all the departments, the place where the University presents itself to the tourist and locals as one of the most prestigious university in Europe; the Object Library represents the past of the University, it legitimises its researches placing them in continuity with its long history; the cafe, holding the most public function, allows social gathering of different groups of users.

¹ Lourenço, Marta C. *Between two worlds: The distinct nature and contemporary significance of university museums and collections in Europe*. Diss. 2005.

² Fried, Michael. *Art and objecthood: essays and reviews*. University of Chicago Press, 1998.

³ Benjamin, Walter, and Knut Tarnowski. "Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian." *New German Critique* 5 (1975): 29.