

P4 Reflection
Interiors Buildings Cities
After the Party

Ecaterina Stefanescu

4630475

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r.e.stefanescu-1@student.tudelft.nl

Introduction

This document is part of my final thesis in which I reflect on my working process, products and planning during the MSc4 course. It is my final semester at the TU Delft in which my graduation project comes to an end.

After completing my MSc1 and MSc projects in the Chair of Interiors, I decided to pursue my graduation in the same studio, as I was interested in the research exercises and workshops that MSc3 offered. I was also familiar with the chair's methods of spatial exploration through model-making and the experimental approach to finding a site and formulating a brief by understanding what the city needs.

This document consists chapters in which I reflect on the graduation studio, multiple researches that were part of the studio, specific design methods used by myself and the overall relationship and its outcome of the research and its design.

Theme and Framework

From the beginning I was intrigued by the festive theme of the graduation studio - how to understand a city from the point of view of the festive – and the research into how local festive events can influence the development of a city, and their relevance in the globalized, commercialized world of today. Furthermore, the focus of this particular studio – what happens to a place after it has been marked architecturally by festive events – posed some very interesting questions. I was keen to explore this added element of time: before the building emerges, during its lifetime, and after it has vanished.

The year started with a workshop which was intended on familiarizing ourselves with the location – Maastricht – and the theme of the festive city. Furthermore, the aim was also to find points of interests through the various explorations, which we would further pursue into an architectural project. The exercises ranged from the study of a specific place that is the setting for a festive event in Maastricht through drawing (such as Vrijthof Square) to a wider research into festive events in the world, like the Carnival.

This series of exercises within the workshop ended up being quite disparate, as the theme of the festive proved to be very elusive. Nevertheless, I focused on two exercises that I found very useful in finding my themes, and which eventually fed into my final proposal: the Diorama and the Diptych (pictured). Through the first water I explore my fascination with the water elements of Maastricht, while the second one had a more obvious focus on “during the festive” and “after the party”.



Research Seminar

In order to understand better the theme of the festive, we focused our anthropological research on a specific aspect of the theme. Mine was public toilet and more specifically, temporary toilets during festive events in Maastricht. This research helped me find a programme for my site, although at time it ended up being a bit too broad and losing connection with my actual design project.

The research also looked into the site and its demographics to establish the potential users of my building. The location of my building is a quite neighbourhood to the south of the centre of Maastricht. Although the quarter is part of the academic campus, the area immediately surrounding my site is predominantly quiet residential, with some tourists strolling the medieval streets around, whilst the site itself sits on the Jeker River and is mostly unbuilt on, wedged between a medieval wall and an assortment of old houses.

These aspects led me to propose a bathhouse, a building made for relaxation, with the added function of providing public toilets to the city. The building was envisioned as a place where both residents and tourists can use.

Another important elements of the quarter is the Jeker River, which is canalized and covered for most of its course to the city centre. Through my research I found that residents have expressed their desire to make more use of the river as a public, leisure activity.

For this assignment I used mostly written research methods, but also utilized map making and photographs along with interviews.

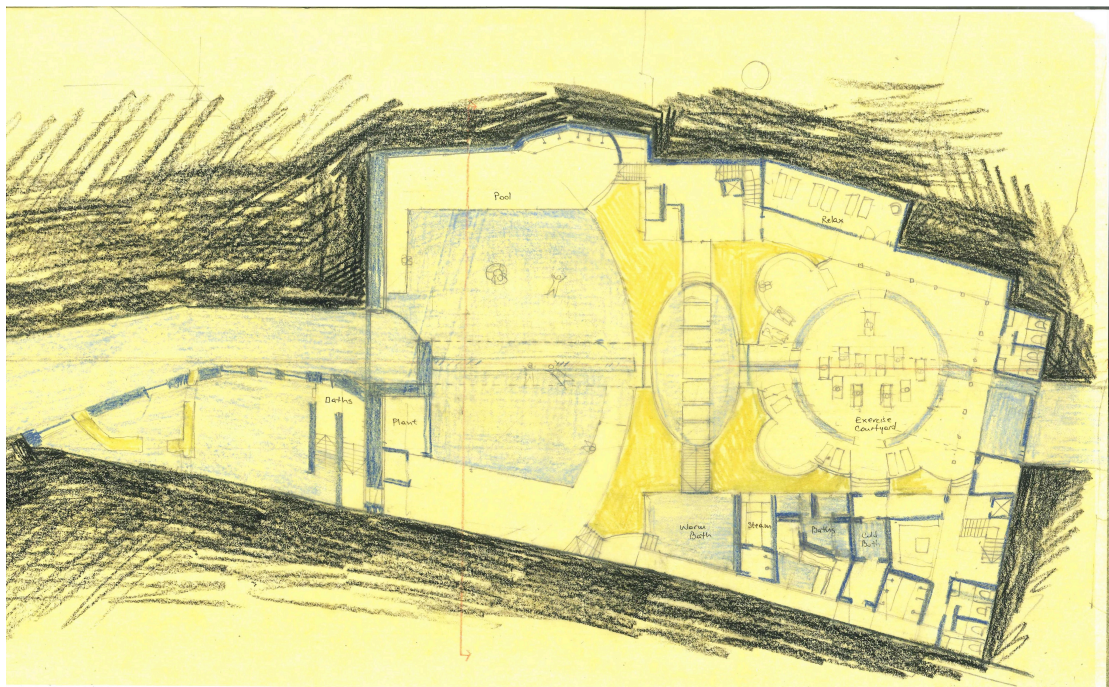
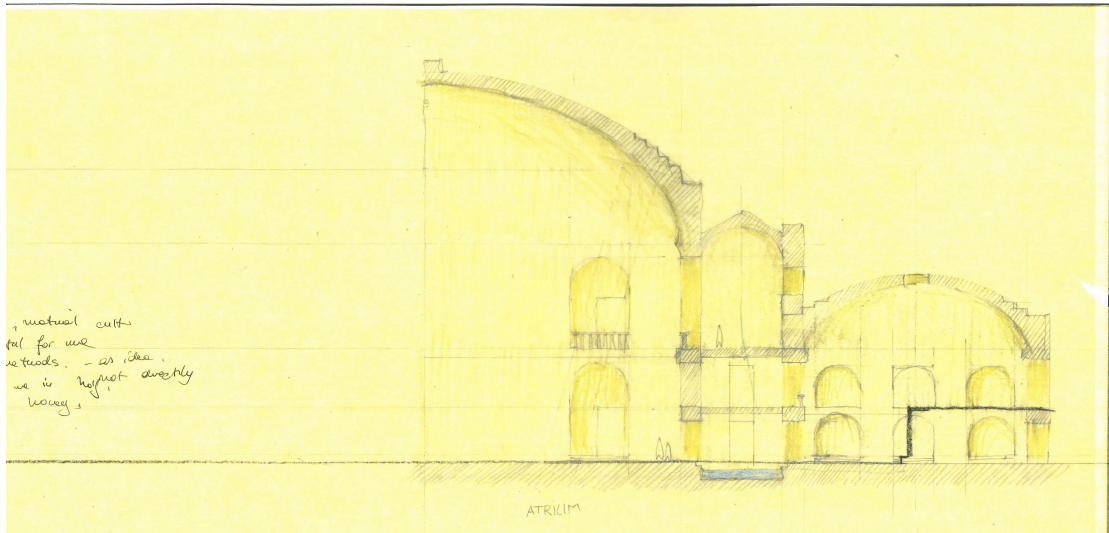
Methods and Process

Following a field trip to Rome and the Baths of Diocletian, my research during and after P2 centred on Roman baths and the ritual of bathing in ancient times. After studying various written sources on this subject and visiting the Roman Thermae ruins in Heerlen, I mainly focused on hand drawing and hand tracing as the main design method for designing. Playing with the theme of authenticity and ruins, I created and developed an imaginary bathhouse in the quarter, which fragmented and disappeared, except for the remnants on my site. I looked at a number of roman baths and, using the examples as an architectural pattern book.

I continued using this method of hand drawing, tracing, and colour coding drawings in designing the fake ruins and my architectural response to them. However, looking back at my process I think I ended up spending too much time on this method; so the moment I started making sketch models, the complicated shape and spaces of my building started to emerge. Using these two methods in the later stages I slowly resolved the challenges posed by the fake ruins, river and site geometry.

Another helpful tool was making a paper fold model of the context at 1:200. This helped me to understand the site better and find ways to connect my building with the neighbouring houses and academic buildings.

Looking back at this design process, it is clear that these physical models and hand drawings were not visual representation tools, and helped me only to understand my context and architectural themes design the bathhouse, and make decisions. I do wish, however, that I taken more time on visual representation and creating nice images and diagrams that explain my concept to others.



One of the most helpful exercises was the making of a 1:20 fragment of my building and using it to create a stop-motion video of the use and atmosphere of the bathhouse. After a couple of months of concentrating on plans and models at 1:100 scale, zooming in on one key space was extremely useful in finding an architectural resolve to my main challenges: the connection between the fake ruin and the new, and the relationship between the river and the pools. The system of layering (between building fabrics and water) was then applied to the rest of the building and really quickened the decision making process, also regarding the relationship with the medieval wall on the south of the site.



Conclusion

Reflecting on my research and design process helps me understand what my strongest points were and the most helpful exercises, but also what were the things I did that were not so useful. Because of the complex nature of my project, at many times through the process I found it hard to make decisions, and felt like I was losing the grip of what my building is. Changing my method of design, however, and the scale I was working at, was extremely helpful. The 1:20 model, as well as the 1:20 axo drawings showing both the interior materialization and the technical aspects of my building helped move forward with my design.

Although difficult and frustrating at times, in the end I can look back at a very interesting and most definitely instructive design process, and a project and theoretical thesis that I can be proud of.