

HUIZE KATWIJK

Beschut wonen voor
hulpbehoevende ouderen
en ouderen met dementie

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P5 reflection paper

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zuster,
ik vind u
charmant
ik zie dat u
het bestek
in de kast doet
en dat is goed
maar waar
moet ik
naartoe?

Kus me nog eens wakker.
Gerrit Molenaar en Bert Verhoeff

Ik moet naar huis
maar de deuren zijn gesloten.
Ik heb geen sleutel,
moet ik er harder tegen aan stoten?

Ik moet naar huis
maar ze zeggen dat ik hier woon.
Kom maar, u bent wat in de war.
Ik vraag: 'Waar is mijn zoon?'

Ik moet naar huis,
de lichten gaan al aan.
Kom maar, wij brengen u naar bed.
Ik kijk haar niet begrijpend aan.

Maar ik moet naar huis
en de deuren blijven dicht!
De zuster trekt mij tegen zich aan.
En ik? Ik kijk hoopvol naar haar gezicht.

U hoeft niet naar huis,
daar is alles al geregeld, ze weten ervan.
U slaapt vannacht bij ons.
Ik geloof haar... omdat ik niet anders kan.

Maar morgen?... moet ik naar huis.

Tineke Boer-Sander

In this reflection I will discuss the results of the research and design in my graduation phase, considering process, planning and product. I will explain if, and to what extent, my design approach was effective.

The subject of my graduation project is the transformation of the vacant office building ensemble 'Huize Katwijk' in The Hague. It is one of the many governmental buildings that remain ed vacant due to a large reorganisation process the government has initiated, striving for a more compact government. The building ensemble was originally built in 1927 as a Jesuit institute for Ca-tholic boys, and, due to the different needs of the users at the time, has underwent many changes since.

The project involves many design issues that need to be resolved, making it an interesting graduation project.



“Huize Katwijk”
Aquarel painting



Sketch model of new building (white)
connected to two wings of the existing building

STUDIO

RMIT studio is all about using and redeveloping vacant building stock, rather than building new. The theme of the Mixed Projects studio was the redevelopment of (soon to be) vacant governmental office buildings in The Hague. I chose to redevelop Raamweg 47, a former Jesuit institute and home for Catholic boys and priests, and after careful consideration decided to transform it to small-scale housing for the needy elderly and those suffering from dementia. It seems fitting to choose this specific target group as these people might really relate to a building originating from 1928, with architecture, material, detailing and interior they know from their own youth.

The studio values the viability of the design (ie. a substantiated choice for function or target group). The latter does not imply that personal preferences are deemed irrelevant. If, for example, you have always wished to design a spa, but did not get the possibility yet in one of the previous projects, your graduation project is the perfect opportunity. For me it was important to set an assignment in which I could focus on (positive) perception of space. Because many of my previous design projects had a cultural design brief, I really wanted to work on something very different for my final project. My preference inclined towards designing for housing and/or health care.

It is important to have a clear vision on how to redevelop an existing building, especially when you consider building something new next to it. Although the entire building ensemble was subject of my project, I have put my emphasis on the design of the new building part (designed specifically for the elderly suffering from dementia), and its connection to two wings of the existing building.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The question I set out to answer in this graduation project is the following: "How can I employ architectonic elements for a successful redevelopment of the building ensemble at Raamweg 47 and attain a meaningful and positive experience of various spaces?"

It is a considerable task to obtain a satisfying answer to this research question. Focussing on a single architectonic element, for example (day)light, might have lead to a more detailed

answer. However, I think it is above all the combination of various architectonic elements, that makes a space special and complete.

My goal for this project was to improve my understanding of the influence of architectonic elements on space perception, and to bring my theoretical knowledge of this subject into practice.

I find it difficult to determine exactly how far I have come in answering the research question. The question entails a lot and generally, a design is never quite finished. I did manage to answer all the sub questions, some more extensive than the other. Together they give some indication as to what extent the research question has been answered. Despite of being convinced that things can always be improved, I am quite satisfied with my answers to the following sub questions.

Context

- What is the value/use of the Atlantikwall and bunker for the city and the specific location?
- What are the new boundaries of the plot and how do the different open spaces relate to each other?

Building

- What are the needs and wishes of the target group concerning spatial qualities?
- How is the connection with nature and the transition inside-outside?
- How can I restructure the interior and the ensemble?

Transformation

- How can I emphasize potential or latent qualities of the existing building?
- How can I continue the past in service of the future?
- How can the old and the new exist next to each other, connecting to each other, and complementing both identities?
- How can I embed imperfections, ambiguities or paradoxes in the design?

All these questions concern the existing building, its history, and its connection to the new 'addition'. I have attempted to design a new building that is equally as important as the existing building, (could maybe even complement?), associates with it and connects with it in both the physical and visual sense of the word. The purpose was to create a clear and calm composition of the old and new building volumes together.

One of the questions above concerned the needs and wishes of the target group. I have read quite a lot about dementia and still I found it to be impossible to really, fully understand what it must be like to live with dementia. I can only imagine what it must feel like, to be confused, disoriented, bewildered, puzzled, scared perhaps because you don't always understand what is happening anymore. From all the reading I have done I managed to extract spatial qualities that are desirable or even essential to create a good (better?) environment for elderly people suffering from dementia. Trying to understand how these people feel and how the illness develops helped a lot in determining the design principles and spatial qualities of their homes. However, I think in order to be able to answer this sub-question in more detail I will need to conduct more (field) research, focussing specifically on the effects of materials, light intensity and colour on elderly with dementia.

There were a few sub-questions that I did answer, however not to the extent that I would have liked.

- How can I design various spaces with different architectonic qualities?
- How can I make subtle use of architectonic elements next to a larger 'over-all' theme?
- How can I create spaces that leave possibilities for personal interpretation of space?

I realise though, that all these questions have to do with the very fundamentals of architectural design and subjectivity: the employment of architectural elements and perception of space. Although my understanding of these elements and of space perception has improved, I believe that true understanding evolves from experience which I hope to gain in forthcoming years.

RESEARCH AND DESIGN

In this section I will explain in what way the research I have done has influenced the resulting design.

- Study the building's drawings in order to understand the structure and spaces:

From my research I learned that there is a need for clear changes in the structure to ultimately improve the organization. Based on my investigation I cleaned up the internal organisation, implemented vertical relations, improved the relation between

inside and outside, and adapted the facades correspondingly.

- Determine the wishes, needs and desired spatial qualities for the frail elderly:

The knowledge I gathered made me decide to use the existing building to situate the apartments of the elderly. and in the design of possible arrangements of grouphomes and the individual apartments.

- Learn about dementia and other housing projects:

I designed several arrangements for group homes and the resident's individual spaces. This resulted in the decision to create apartments rather than rooms, each connected through an outdoor walk-way leading to the common room and kitchen. Studying other housing projects helped to get starting points for the design: clarity, clear routing, views, wall openings, connection with outside, et cetera.

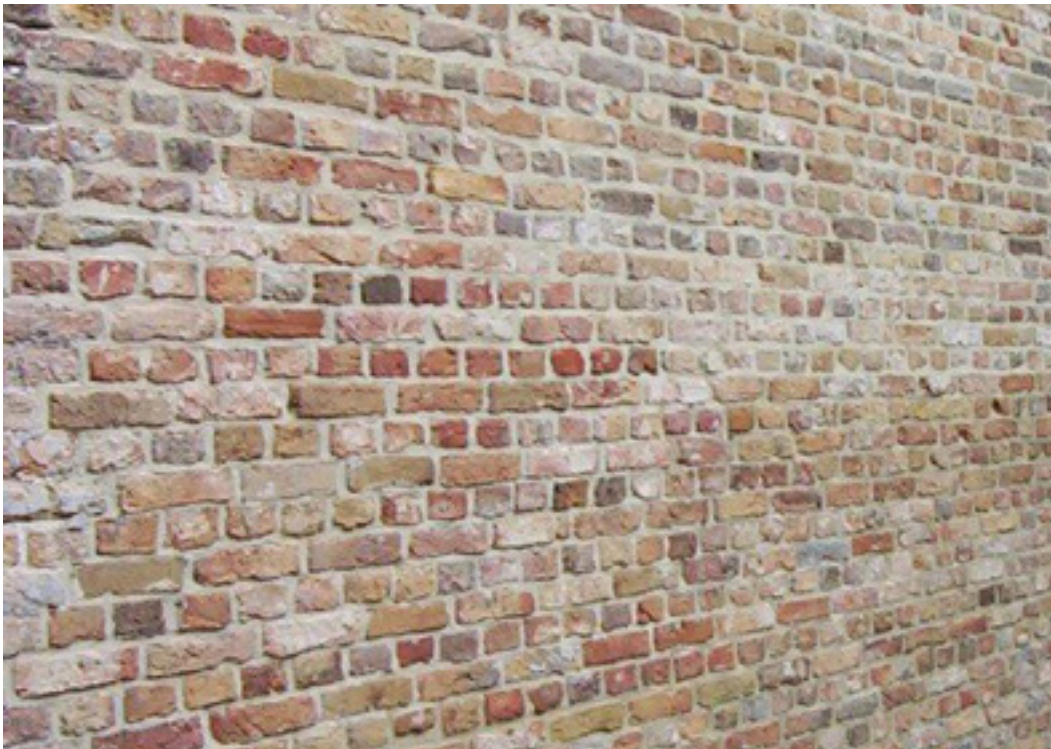
- Study The Hague to determine what kind of place the building plot should be:

Raamweg 47 is located a twenty minutes walk outside the city centre, on the crossroads of a canal, large road and cross-over. From my sequential research of The Hague I concluded that what makes the city so interesting are the rapidly successive changes in places and accompanying types of atmospheres. By being more or less detached from its environment, surrounded by water and of different typology, the building plot deviates from its immediate surroundings and the neighbouring districts Benoordenhout and Archipelbuurt. I decided that it should stay this way and hence be a distinguished kind of place/space, making/keeping it one of these places that make The Hague particularly interesting. However, in order for people to experience this place, the plot should become accessible again and be connected to the surrounding routes. There will be several footpaths across the plot and the entrance is relocated to attain better access.

Huize Katwijk will provide a meeting point for the neighbourhood. One wing of the building will house several public functions (e.g. restaurant, daytime activities, small shop) that are meant for the residents of Huize Katwijk as well as for the neighbours. The district has a high percentage of elderly people in comparison to other parts of the city, approximately a quarter of the inhabitants is 65 years or older. Huize Katwijk provides a place in the vicinity of their old home for those who can not live by themselves any longer.



Vide and new walk-way to the residences on the first floor.



Re-use old bricks from demolished buildings.

- Work out the history of the building and development of the complex:

Many changes were made to the building complex to adapt it to new functions. When specific functions (eg. a chapel) disappeared, any variation in the facade was altered/standardized, conform (still) existing parts of the building. Due to lack of space, several building parts were altered or added over time. After careful evaluation of the quality of these separate building parts and its suitability for the intended purpose, I was able to determine whether a building volume should be kept or demolished. It also allowed me to decide whether I would have to add new parts.

- Dive into the history of the city during WWII:

The history of The Hague during WWII provided some perspective on how to handle the remaining structures of the line of defence at Raamweg 47: the bunker and a 50 meter long wall/remainder of the former Atlantikwall. More remains of the line of defence (mostly bunkers) can be found in the neighbourhood. In order to fully display these reminders of the position of The Hague in that time, the building volume that was added on top of the bunker should be broken down. Together with the Atlantikwall, the bunker at Raamweg 47 will remain a storyteller or reminder of what has been.

METHODS

In RMIT studio the design process starts with an analysis on different scale levels: urban, architectural and technical. The analyses lead to conclusions and result in a value assessment, from which starting points for the design can be derived.

My approach to design is to start with what already exists; what is already there and what are the qualities or identities of the place and the spaces? I highly value context and prefer to work carefully within that framework. I like to work on several design issues at the same time, next to each other, because it allows me to relate them to one another and to other scale levels. I like to explore various possibilities by means of hand architectural drawings, perspectives and fabrication of study models. Sometimes I can lose myself in details, because they are just as important to me as the bigger picture. As a result, I tend to forget about time and other design issues I need to work on. The result is a fairly constant struggle against time while trying to stay on schedule.

I don't like to take decisions when no option feels right yet and since I am not easily satisfied with my own work, sometimes this attitude obstructs progress. An additional reason to experience difficulties in making choices is that the theme I set for a design is usually rather vague. It is often based on a sketch that portrays a certain idea, or a desire to create a certain atmosphere. Obviously this is not a very concrete point of departure. It often happens that a design just does not seem not right to me yet. Only when everything finally comes together things start to feel right, and all earlier choices make sense and can be substantiated in retrospect. Despite that it can be extraordinarily frustrating, I do believe that a constant friction between ideas is a necessary part of a design process to get to the right solution.

In this project I have worked on becoming more positive about my work and having more fun in designing. Although I experienced ups and downs, I feel like I have taken a leap forward in this matter.

Some of the reference projects I visited (eg. Hogewey in Weesp) provided leading elements in the design. The organisation of the different open spaces in the design was inspired by images of courtyards. Yet more choices (eg. materialism, entrance of daylight, composition of spaces) were inspired by various architects, including (but not limited to) Eduardo Souto de Moura, Gerrit Th. Rietveld, Alvar Aalto, Alvaro Siza and David Chipperfield.

DECISIONS

Three mayor decisions in my design process were crucial for the final design. Firstly, I chose to open up the plot to its context and improve the accessibility. I relocated the entrance to the plot and connected the plot to surrounding routes in de area. Secondly, I chose to demolish all non original building parts (except for the WWII bunker), add a new building volume to house the people with dementia and add an extension to one of the existent wings. Thirdly, I chose to design for a target group with many needs and wishes. This naturally lead to many necessary (sometimes very practical) design decisions, such as the change in organisation and the need to improve the clarity of the routes through the building.

POSITION PAPER

The content of my position paper is certainly relevant for this project. In this paper I explained my interests in architecture, my position within the redevelopment-field and the design methods I prefer to use in my projects. My work/designs show that I am interested in space perception and atmospheres. However, in this design I feel I have not been able to integrate details that make spaces complete (such as designing the interior, detailed materialisation), at least not to the extent that I like.

LOOKING BACK

If I were to give myself advice, in retrospect, concerning the design of an existent building, I would say find the strengths/ characteristics (or identity) of the building and try to emphasize these in your design. I would add that a clear structure is important and that changes may be necessary to ensure it is well embedded in the context. Also I would advise myself to visit the building multiple times and draw on site.

In order to transform an existing building to housing for elderly in need of care and elderly with dementia, it is important to find out if the context is suitable for this function. In this case, for example, the nearest shopping area is far from nearby. This results in changes in the program of requirements, for example adding a small shop for daily groceries. Also, you have to consider how people live, and anticipate (future) changes in health care provision. To me, visiting building with a similar function and talking to the residents and employees was very helpful.

If I reconsider my choice for this function in Huize Katwijk, I think that perhaps there may be more suitable functions for the building. I am confident though that my current choice is a viable choice as well.

As for what I have learned from the process, there are many things. What I will certainly keep doing in the future is draw by hand, fabricate study models and consider not one but many different options. Drawing or building elements on a large scale was very helpful to study the designed spaces, make decisions, discover new problems or find inspiration.

I found it to be really helpful to try and design something I really like, without any restrictions and/or conditions and assess in a

later stage if and perhaps how it would fit in the design of the entire building. By suspending (my own) judgement/reserving criticism for a later stage I was able to explore possible solutions I might otherwise have rejected beforehand (being overly critical of my own work). Discussing ideas and designs with fellow students was very helpful to get inspired or just take your mind of your own project for a while. It sounds contradictory, but I found that sometimes not thinking about a problem actually helped solving it. Also I learned to have more fun in designing and, perhaps most importantly, to trust my own instincts again.

TOWARDS P5

I have set the bar quite high for this project as I had the ambition to work out many elements of the design. As I explained before, I have subjected the whole building ensemble to investigation, but decided to put my emphasis on the new building part and its connection with the existing building.

I am quite satisfied with the building composition, the organisation and the way the new part functions. Also, the connections with the existing building are aligned with my vision and other interventions in the building (complex). I am not sure if I managed to create the 'homey' and small scale atmosphere that I aimed for? Among other things I think this might be due to the final size of complex.

Working towards P5, there were some design issues I wanted to take another look at. Examples are the extension to one of the existing building wings and the entrance of light in the attics of the existing building. In the end however, I chose to spend my time on the following:

- depicting my design by drawing perspectives (to show materialisation and texture of the interior and exterior)
- the design of the various outdoor spaces;
- building several models, in order to show/prove that the spaces work;
- draw perspectives to show materialisation and texture of the interior and exterior.



Hand drawn floor plan ground floor
New building and two old wings