

## Final Reflection P4

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Light touches, but is untouchable itself. While being airy and ethereal, light is grounded in architecture: it plays a fundamental role in the experience of touching and tender spaces. However, catching light in terms of contrast, light diagrams and simulations models doesn't reach the complexity of light, the moment when light touches us. Truly understanding daylight is a matter of grasping light in its subtle, fleeting, ephemeral experiential reality. Therefore this project is a search for sensitivity to light, in particular Dutch coastal light. It does so by asking the question:

- *How is light a material?*

In my research I had different entries to research the materialization of light. Firstly, using philosophy. Words and thoughts approached the many potentialities of light, and gave a layered thinking of light. Secondly, using artistic references, which fed the associative thinking process on the topic of light. Thirdly, by making photos of light and form experiments at the Dutch coast, through which I experienced the light myself. It gave a better understanding in light's situatedness, by making its many variables explicit. First of all, because the source of light has a direction, our orientation towards it depends on time and location. Additionally, because the light affects or is affected by the material it travels through or towards. Lastly, because perception of light is influenced by the orientation and the senses of the eye of the observer.

The research showed how the method of artistic research is valuable to research light as a volatile material. Overly describing how light is situated, kills light's vibrancy. It is within the associative, the intuitive, and the imaginative where light has space to move. The method of artistic research, including the act of experiencing light, gave space to both processes to be able to materialize light: making light explicit and leaving light implicit. Not only the architect is helped with such an approach to research light. Everyone interested in the subtleness of light, including landscape architects and urbanists, could be helped by the method of artistic research in order to research light as a volatile material. It creates more sensitivity to light, such that it can be used as a building material to make moments which touch us.

The architectural design project functioned as the fourth entry into the search for sensitivity to Dutch light, this time through the eyes of the architect specifically. The design project added two questions to the topic of light:

- *What is the light of the place?*
- *How can I use light to see the place?*

The research I had conducted influenced my design process in numerous ways. For instance, my sensitivity towards light which I had obtained through the artistic research, I could use when working with light. Additionally, one of the pillars of my design was based on a conclusion from research. I had found that light is able to both make people turn inwards, towards their own internal world, and outwards, towards the external world. The changing between those processes is admirable because it creates a sensitivity for what is outside, while at the same time it addresses imagination for potential

change of reality. Light makes people see. Therefore, I worked with light to make experiences of introversion and extraversion.

Also, the research was the base for my choice of location, Vluchthaven at Neeltje Jans, a peripheral place which radiates light and where big natural forces interfere with huge human interventions. The design project addressed how light could be used to bring the periphery in focus, and thereby create an awareness of our surrounding.

Additionally, the research had shown me that through experimenting, making, and experiencing light, I became more conscious about light. Light has the potential to make me see more. The design program was based on this. Visitors experience the light at the place, to see the place even better.

The artistic research method has been valuable for me in the creation of the flow of ideas. Making the light experiments and searching for artistic references, came quite naturally to me and I could continue doing it endlessly. The conceptual side of the design project has benefited from the artistic research. It was more difficult to canalize the richness of ideas, and to transfer it to a concrete design project. Discussing the project and receiving feedback from other people, including my tutors, did help to navigate.

The process of designing had a similar character to the artistic research. Namely, I had to accept a level of uncertainty in the process, which was both scary and valuable. It allowed a flow of thinking in associations which gave rise to new experiments, models, drawings. They housed information which wasn't foreseen. By accepting unpredictability, progress was made in the sharpening of the design concept and the shape of the design.

When I look back at my process I have two questions which could help me in future processes to converge:

- *What could help to not get overwhelmed by ideas?*
- *How do I validate design choices most efficiently?*

And as a concluding question:

- *How can I develop my newly acquired insights into light as a volatile material, the value of artistic research and the act of experience, in my future work as an architect?*