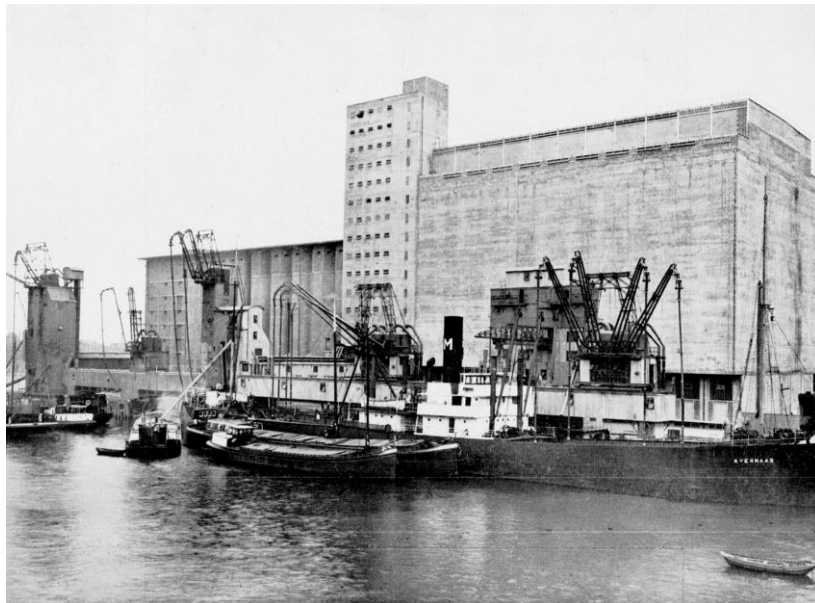


REFLECTION PAPER

The draft of this reflection paper was written after the P3 presentation. At this time the research and analysis done during the P1 and P2 period, had been translated into a first preliminary design. This paper reflects on the relationship between the research and the design. How did the research result in the guiding theme for my design. I will discuss the most important conclusions from the research and how they influenced my design. Besides that I will review some of the methods used during the process.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE THEME OF THE GRADUATION LAB AND THE CHOSEN CASE STUDY

The graduation studio *Heritage and Architecture* is concerned with preservation and renewal in existing architecture. The approach of the Heritage & Architecture section is development-oriented; in short: preservation through development. The focus of the studio lies on the translation of cultural historic and technological information into a design.



Maassilo, Bouwkundig weekblad Architectura (1931) nr.10

The Maassilo, a colossal building at the south quay of the Maas harbour was originally designed by *J.P. Stok* in 1910. The enormous monolith façades give the building an introvert character and makes the bypassing pedestrian wonder what happens inside. I selected the Maassilo as my graduation project, because I was intrigued by the scale of the building and I was curious to know how the building had functioned as a machine behind those closed walls.

The building has been extended in 1930 and 1951. After the Maassilo company moved to the *Botlek*, the building stopped working as a grain storage in 2003. The building was bought by *Ontwikkelingsbedrijf Rotterdam*, because of its prime location near the *Kop van Zuid*. However due to expensive demolition costs and the possibility of a monumental status, *ORB* changed its plans. The spaces in the Maassilo were rented out to different tenants. Currently the building has partly been redeveloped. The interventions done during the redevelopments did not always respect the old building and some of the beautiful characteristics have been destroyed. A coherent solution hasn't been found. The façade is very degraded and a new function with an integrated approach has to save the building from turning into dust. The main question is what to do with the structures of the silos which form 60 - 70% of the building.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND DESIGN

After inspecting the building volumes you quickly discover that the Maassilo complex forms an addition of different extensions with each their own characteristics. With the technical developments and changing demands, the Maassilo has changed multiple times. The two extensions, of *Brinkman* and *van der Vlugt* or *Postma* are well designed. However there are also a lot of quick and dirty interventions made as well. In the first half of the graduation studio I researched the development of the building to see which elements were thoroughly designed and which were not. This was very useful for the value assessment. Which elements are essential to tell the story of the old grain storage building and need to be preserved to maintain the identity of the building.

The transformer building is a good example of one of these elements which explains the development of the *Postma* extension.

The value grid was used as a tool to pinpoint the important aspects which define the identity of the Maassilo complex. The value assessment resulted in a framework of transformation which defined the level of restoration, preservation or conservation and formed a guide during the design.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE METHODOLOGICAL LINE OF APPROACH OF THE GRADUATION LAB AND THE USED METHOD

When walking through the building the user is not always able to orientate himself. During the second quarter I researched the methods of wayfinding in the Maassilo. In this research I located the places inside the building where the user felt lost. The user feels disoriented if he can't see any characteristic elements and doesn't know in which one of the three building parts he finds himself. With this part of the analysis I tried to grasp the mysterious/introvert atmosphere this building surrounds. This introvert character was something that should be preserved or even enhanced in the design.

What are the qualities of the building and how can these qualities be enhanced with your design? In case of the Maassilo, only the spaces on the ground floor and the attic are accessible for people. The silos in-between can't really be perceived. This is a great example of a quality which can be enhanced

by a intervention. Transforming the silos into usable spaces allows the people to experience these structures of the silos.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROJECT AND THE WIDER SOCIAL CONTEXT

In choosing the new program of the building I tried to relate the project to a social context. There is currently a trend of decentralizing services and a movement of bottom-up initiatives. We see an increase in freelancers, who can work anywhere. People move from the offices to public accessible places like Starbucks.

With the Maassilo, which already houses some start-ups, I wanted to provide a platform for this trend and offer a place for social gathering. The new function should provide a platform for start-ups and smaller companies. This social platform contains functions like public workplaces, workshop rooms, educational functions (tutoring), study places, access to multimedia, auditorium and conference rooms. At this point I felt that I needed one term to explain the project. What could combine all these different functions into a coherent whole? I came up with a library. This kind of program would reconnect the Maassilo with the public as well.

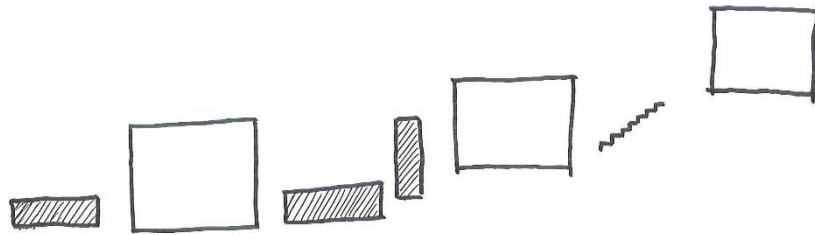
Due to technical innovations libraries have changed from the tablet storehouses to today's multi-functional media centres. From the silent sanctuary of books, like Kahn's Exeter Library to the new public urban spaces like Urban Mediaspace in Aarhus. Many library buildings are seeing their usage decline due the development of multimedia and online access to literature. This has led to a shift in the functional purpose of new libraries. Many are incorporating extra functions like cafes, art galleries and theatres in an attempt to get the public to reconnect with the library's civic purpose. The question at the moment is, will the library of the future contain any books at all. In my opinion yes. The library is a place for gaining knowledge and easy access to information, even if the collections are not consulted every day. Removing the books from the library would rob the library of its primary purpose.

GUIDING THEME

This brings us to the guiding theme of the project. How can we house a library, a treasure of knowledge, in the Maassilo, a massive introvert building. How can we exploit the characteristics of the Maassilo to fit the requirements of the library. The new interventions should not be forced into but guided by the existing building. The goal of the project is to bring the characteristics of the Maassilo and those of the Library together.

People love light, books don't. And therefore an archive is created in the dark centre of the silos. The dark silos which were originally used to store grain are now used to store books. In the structure surrounding the archive Rooms are carved out where the interaction between the book and the people takes place. A sequence of these spaces formed a mysterious/exciting route with contrasting

transitions. The smaller darker spaces form an introduction for the larger brighter spaces. In these carved out spaces, the user can really experience the structure of the former silos.



Sequence of spaces with contrasting transitions

From the start of the project I found it hard to get a feeling for the scale of the project. In the early stages of the design process, I decided to use the renderings from my 3D computer model as a tool of verification. By placing people and furniture in the spaces of my impressions I got a better sense of the scale of the spaces. The renderings also helped to see the way sunlight fell into the spaces. Of course it is just a computer generated sun and a physical model would be ideal. However, in the early stages of the process, the design changed so rapidly that it had already changed before my models were actually finished.

Another important turning point in my design process was the construction consult of Pim Peters. At this time I was struggling with the design of the floor plans and the sections. I was trying to design every little corner of the floor plan by giving it a purpose. However during the consult of Pim Peters I discovered that I had carved away way too much material. This had consequences for both the structural feasibility and the design. After that I removed two entire floors and was much more generous in preserving the structure of the silos.

CONCLUSION

While making my P3 presentation I discovered that I had many ideas which I presented as different guiding themes. Many of which were not directly related to the earlier research. With this paper I defined my main guiding theme as a result of the research phase: *Bringing the characteristics of the Maassilo (as defined by the value grid) and those of the library (a treasure of knowledge) together.* The research containing the value assessment and the framework of transformation helped to translate the cultural historic information into a design. Reflecting on these values during the design process creates a design that has a strong relationship to the original building.