

Project Review.

The preliminary interest of my Graduation project was how ideological palimpsests exhaust the urban fabric, its spaces and its dwellers. The first step in this inquiry was to establish using assemblage theory as an instrument in order to analyze, reassess and translate into architecture Soviet repressions. At this point a clear picture was formed of what the aim of the project is. The research aims to observe how spaces become traces. I am excluding some aspects of repression, not how ideologies become repressive, not the politics and historical precedence that led to this, nor is the work about a single entity, by this I mean the fate of a life. Not to say that any of these notions are less integral than the one that I am concentrating on, but I am trying to define and outline the aspect that occurs in between these stages. The space and its relation to the state's ideology and to its dweller. By doing this I believe that even though the subject is a particular scenario that occurred at a certain time and place, it is not unique to it, it can relate to repression throughout the world and help us approach them in order to find not only the victims, but the traces that they have led behind too. In result the research question is how we can use Assemblage theory to deconstruct this complex historical and ideological scenario in order to be able to reassess it, document it and achieve in depth positions that reflect not only upon the whole, but also every individual instance and how do we translate this into architecture.

The project is divided into three blocks, or to say correctly three milieus each one-off which allowed me to consistently document, translate and review my findings and reflections. The first milieu, being the research block, consisted of me analyzing Moscow as the place that was affected most of all by repressions. This mainly consisted of mappings that were aimed to establish the degrees of territorialization and coding within the city and its bodies. This process deconstructed the heterogeneity of the city and increased the scale of the study, permitting me to locate buildings (archipelagos) that were affected most of all. This action of parcellation is a reoccurring aspect within the whole project as it allowed me to approach the topic as a multiplicity where all the singularities correlate among themselves. The next step that I took was disassembling the epicenter of the repression within a body, in the case of Moscow it is The House on the Embankment. After reviewing its properties, principles and disciplines I was able to form my reflections. This was done based on the theoretical framework by using a table of content and expression, form and substance.

In result I created a movie that showcased the collection of bodies, their unfirming and in result the transformation of a space into a void.

In the next block, the intermediary milieu, I took all of my findings and approached them as directions that I am translating into dimensions. Here I began introducing typologies that can express the research and create the objective of the building. An institution for the building to become an educational platform, where people can gather and form a mnemonic coping mechanism in regards to repression. A cooperative, not as a single place or typology, but as a program that entangles and connects the different fragments of the complex, allowing all the spaces within the building to share similar notions, whereas the structure itself is an assemblage, the cooperative function intertwines the expositioning and the non-static elements within the whole. The museum as a space that can gather and expose information, creating a path and a narrative within the building. And last and theater, a typology that most of all embodies the motion of transformation of spaces.

In result the building is a place of non-exhaustion, housing multiple spaces and heterogeneities. It is not the building that holds spaces, but the spaces that form the complex.

The exterior and last milieu is the building itself. In my opinion it was correctly said by my tutor Jan van de Voort, when he said that my designing process was similar to embroidery. The way I approached the design stage was meticulously assembling elements and formed spaces and had a relation between themselves. From the beginning of this stage, I took it upon myself to rethink the typologies that I am using and what objects they consist of in order to have spaces that address certain aspects. Within the complex I operated by inserting path, communication and perspectives that could evoke feelings of metaposition, superimposition and juxtaposition, placing the viewer in different scenarios. A crucial part of the designing process in regard to the theory and the fact of the building being a dynamic and non-static structure, was the integration of transformative elements, that allows spaces to be changed and manipulated by the viewer/audience in order for them to become actors and curators of the spaces.

Relationship between research and design

In regard to the research and its translation to the design, my tutor Stavros Kousoulas encouraged me to continue forming, developing and establishing the core problem and interest of the project. With the help of the literature that he provided I was given a deeper understanding of assemblage theory, which allowed me to confidently use different terms and concepts that would help me to deconstruct an ideological repression. By using different terms and concepts I believe that I was able to form a reflection of a space being “exhausted” into a void and was able to express this by using different mediums: drawings, models, films and texts.

Furthermore, Mieke Vink helped me to translate the research into architecture by pushing me to always review and reassess the story that I am building and to attempt to shift into special qualities that would support the narrative. Special focus was placed upon small scale elements, determining their role within a space, for example what is a column, how is it positioned, what is its materiality in regard to the whole building, what are its individual qualities. I believe that a clear downside of my designing process was not being able to consistently and in the correct amount of time to produce section drawing and being stuck within the plan stage. The reason for this was me spending a large amount of time on the program, communications and paths within the building. Moreover, my building technology tutor Han van de Voort helped me to develop the nuances of the project, the role of light, of transforming elements and most importantly of how to structurally connect different elements of the building.

Studio and Topic Relation.

I initially applied for Explore Lab in order to pursue my interest in palimpsests where contexts, temporal tropes, simulacrum and complex entanglements have come together and have filled our existence with substance. By being able to individually structuralize the priorities of the topic, designing the hierarchy of the research and design, I was able to concentrate on assignments that would address specific issues. Even though the freedom provided within the studio and the aspect of individually leading your own project, separately from my peers, can be sometimes challenging, one of the best qualities of Explore Lab is this, despite the fact of having everyone having different topics, it was the discussions that students with different approaches have that were incredibly invigorating, hearing somebody's opinion on a topic that might slightly intertwine with theirs allows for new ideas to be formed.

Another challenge that I met whilst in this studio is not always seeing a clear outcome of the project, this pushed me to constantly look at the whole graduation project, accentuating its core points.

Wider framework.

I believe the process that I have presented within the project can be implemented in the architectural professional field, especially in scenarios that are connected with trauma and memory. Using the proposed theoretical framework allows to have an unbiased opinion and subjects that can be close to heart or on the other hand foreign.