

Reflection

Antwerp City Room

Sports Center of University of Antwerp

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Intervention of Intimate City

The Intimate City is the theme for the studio of Interiors, Buildings, Cities and the task for the graduation studio is design a city room in Antwerp. The students need to find their own site in the city and choose the suitable program. The theme is described in the studio manual, “the Intimate City, as the writer Georges Perec explores, a place one might have intimate knowledge, and in which one would feel able to be at home, where spaces offer possibilities of interiority and subjectivity, and in so doing also produce a kind of freedom within the individual, who in both turned inward and given an appearance in public simultaneously.”

Antwerp is a port city with a long history and dense urban context. The University of Antwerp has a long history in the city, from the Rijkshandelshogeschool and the Sint-Ignatius Handelshogeschool founded in Antwerp at 1852, to the UFSIA, RUCA, and UIA merged into the University of Antwerp at 2003. Its special development process, making the university campus scattered in the city, merging with the urban context.

However, in addition to the historic buildings, the University of Antwerp also has some buildings built in the 70s. These buildings are no longer suitable for today's urban situation. In the center area of Antwerp, urban upgrade is very difficult, but necessary. These 70s buildings cannot meet the social and leisure needs of college students, and the sports facilities of the Antwerp are single and rare.

The relationship between the city and university is very attractive to me and I assume the urban situation of the university area needs to be upgraded. Therefore, I choose my site in the University of Antwerp. Demolish the basketball hall and café which built in 70s with an

inappropriate urban gesture, and design a new sports complex for the university including the swimming pool, basketball hall, gym and café. I assume the swimming pool as the city room which provide the sense of intimate for the students.

Research and Design

The research has three part. The first part is to define what is the intimate city and study what is quality of the intimate city room. The second part is to study the urban morphology of Antwerp. The third part is to study the precedents of courtyard, swimming pool and café in Europe city.

The studio start with the excursion to Paris and Milan. In there, we visited the local city room and observed the human behavior within the space. There are many public spaces in the city, but only a part of them loved by people and become intimate city room for the citizen. It may be because of its history, or because of its comfortable space, or because of its essential functions. Observing human behavior in different public spaces and summarizing the characteristics of these spaces is an important part of my research. Through the observation and analysis, I found out the key elements and qualities which shape the intimate city room. Such as the sense of enclosure, the sunlight and free choice of personal behavior. And I use some of the elements and qualities in my design later.

Moreover, I research the urban morphology of Antwerp and compare it to the other Europe city. The urban context in Antwerp is very dense. The buildings on both sides of the street are arranged as tightly as teeth. Through the study of the urban development of my site, I found that more and more buildings fill in the site and make city can hardly breathe. Therefore I came

up with the scheme that rearrange the volume and make the courtyard back to site again.

The program of my design including the courtyard, swimming pool and café. They have a long history and specific character in Europe. Therefore, it is very important for me to study the history, development, typology and precedents of them. For example, I study the swimming pool in Europe from 1930s. I found that the swimming pool in France with individual locker rooms is old-fashioned but extremely beautiful. Since In my design, there is not enough space for both the locker room and swimming pool to be on the ground floor. I assume these beautiful swimming pools in France as my most important precedents and apply this typology in my design.

Method

My method include the observation of the existing city room, study of the precedents and modelling.

Observation plays a important role during the excursion to Paris and Milan. Feeling the space and study the relationship between space and human behavior. Analysis them and apply suitable part in my own design.

As I mentioned in the second part. The courtyard, swimming pool and café has a long history in Europe. Study the precedents of them is very important to me. Since I never design a courtyard or a swimming pool before, study the precedents can help me to learn what is the key elements to define the spatial quality and provide the inspirations to my own design.

Testing the spatial quality and structural stability through modelling is also a main method I use in my design. Through the model with different scale and material is a good way to study the spatial experience and the influence of my design to the city.

Relevance and Potential

Antwerp as a Europe city with a long history and specific urban context, the urban upgrade is necessary but has to be careful. My site is located in the historic center of Antwerp, the practice of my design is relevance to the Antwerp and other city in the similar situation. Meanwhile, the theme of the graduation studio is the city rooms, which is a important part of the city. Explore its quality, function and experience is significant to the development of urban public space. Moreover, the studio of Interiors, Buildings, Cities always focus on the fundamental question of architecture, such as the urban context, spatial quality and architectural detail. Which is crucial for the development of today's architecture, and could be applied in wider social context.