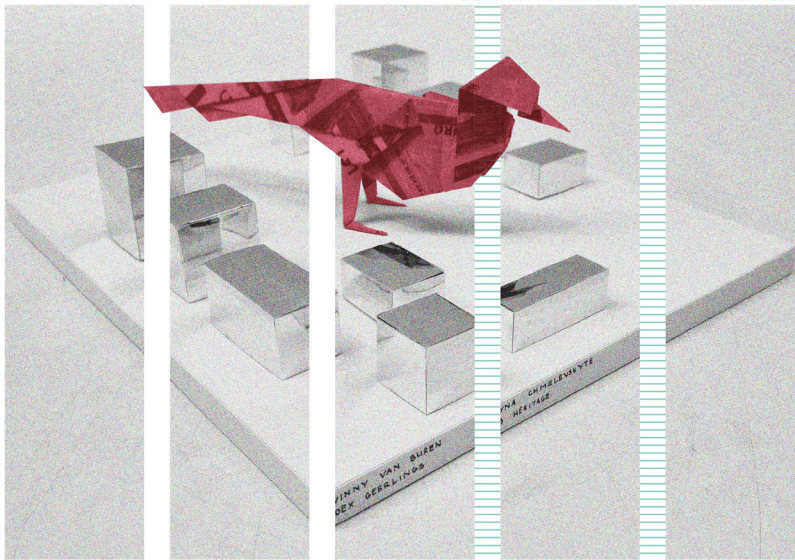


**Crafting a new narrative:
Consumerism and craftsmanship in post-war shopping mall**

Reflection

Adapting 20th Century Heritage



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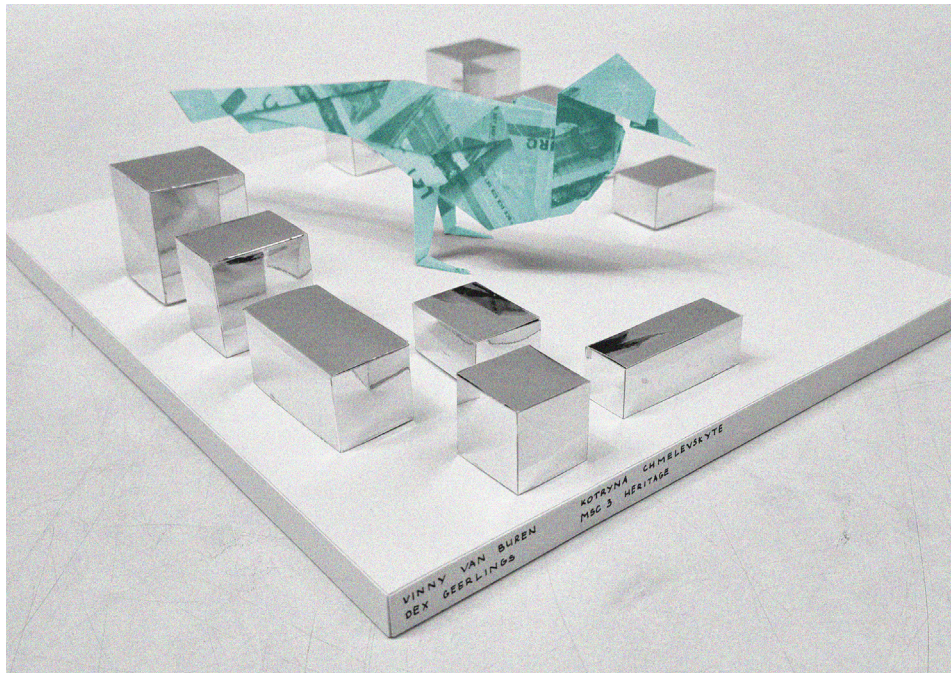


FIG.1 ESSENCE MODEL (OWN WORK, 2022)

We are all consumers. From the air we breathe to the food we eat; consumption is vital to us. Space too is consumed by our (non)mobile bodies as we require somewhere to live and make our life (Goodman, Goodman, Redclift, 2010). However, the issue of consumption arises when people are encouraged to develop false needs through the promotion and reinforcement of identity constructed by material artifacts (Jackson, 2009). Consumerist spaces are designed to encourage consumption and were continually reinvented and reshaped to keep up with the most subtle changes in society (Chung, Inaba, Koolhaas, 2001).

POST-WAR SHOPPING MALLS AND CONSUMERISM

The post-war was a period of prolific economic growth and rapid urban change in Western Europe, including the Netherlands (Verlaan, 2017). The accumulated wealth increased the buying power of working-class people, and advanced marketing techniques created the demand for certain social statuses and identities expressed via consumption patterns (Lebow, 1955). This resulted in the development of modern malls, which is the focus of this year's Heritage & Architecture studio.

At the beginning of this studio, we had to make an essence model representing the meaning of the shopping mall (Fig. 1). I saw the shopping mall as a representation of consumerism.

Concerned with the negative side of consumerism and its representation via shopping malls, I decided to attempt to deconstruct consumerist space and understand what makes a shopping mall a consumerist space besides its main function. Believing that in the future society will move from self-centered materialism towards liberation from consumerism, described as post-consumerism in the literature [Soper, 2009; Blühdorn, 2017; Walker, 2010], I wanted to find the existing qualities of post-war shopping malls that could be adapted for this future. This attempt resulted in the following research question: How can Dutch post-war shopping malls be adapted for the post-consumer era without losing malls' heritage values?

Using the consumer value typology developed by Holbrook (1999), I first did a historical analysis of retail typology development to identify the patterns for the creation of consumerist space. Holbrook identified eight consumer value types: efficiency, excellence, status, esteem, play, aesthetics, ethics, and spirituality. For the research, however, I focused only on self-oriented values (Fig. 2) and their dimensions (extrinsic vs intrinsic; active vs reactive), as shopping is typically characterized as self-oriented activity (Kim, 2002).



FIG. 2 TYPOLOGY OF CONSUMER VALUES (HOLBROOK, 1999, P.12)

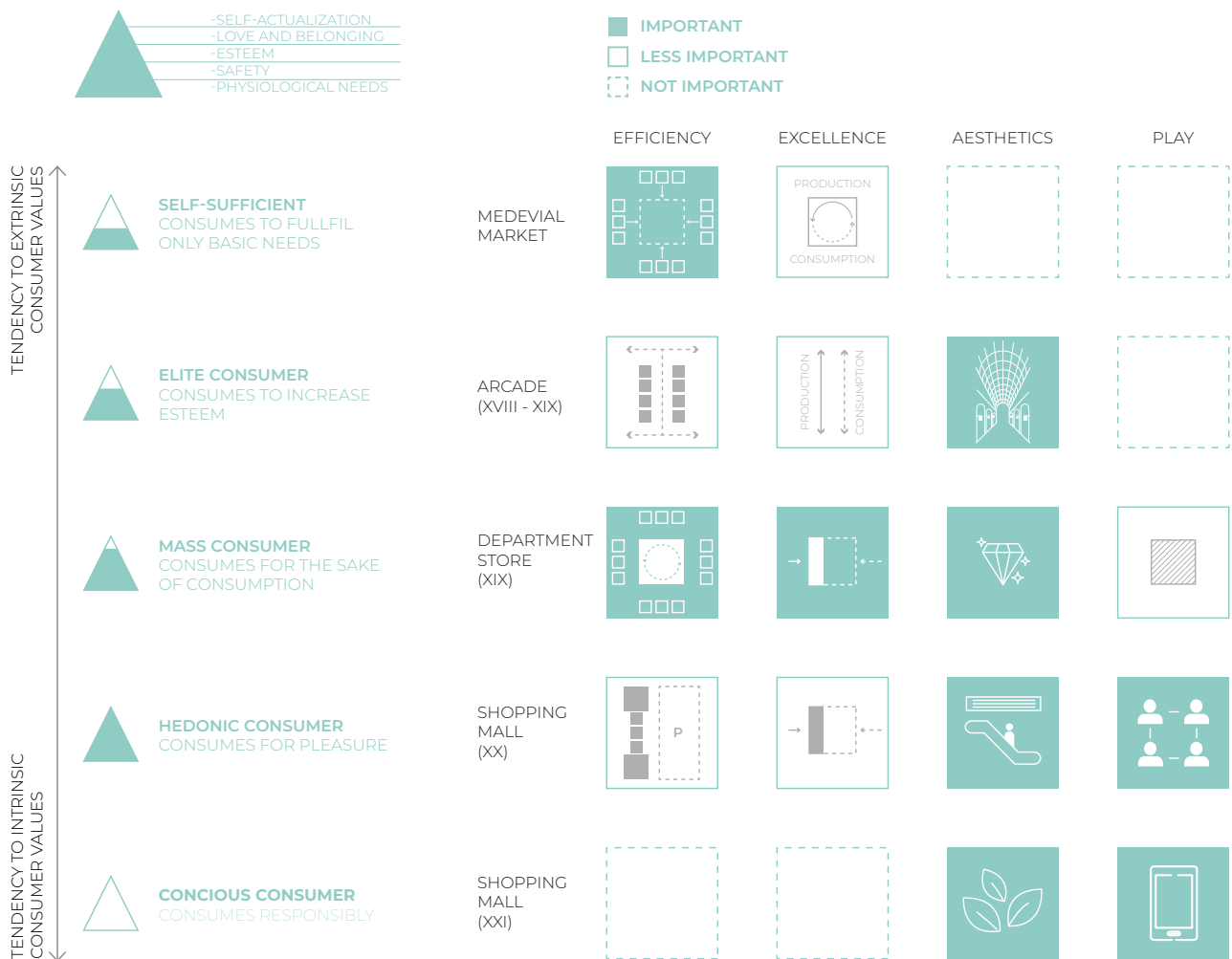
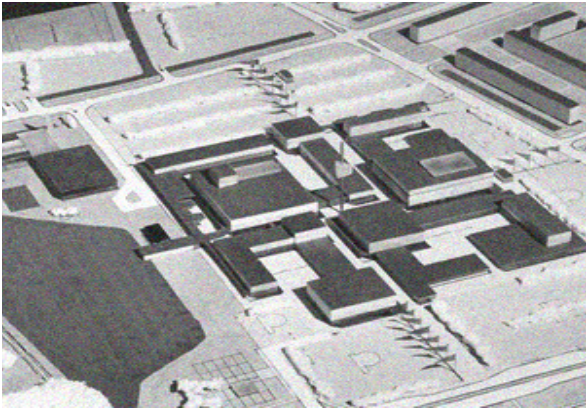


FIG. 3 MATRIX OF CONSUMER VALUES AND SHOPPING TYPOLOGY (OWN WORK, 2022)

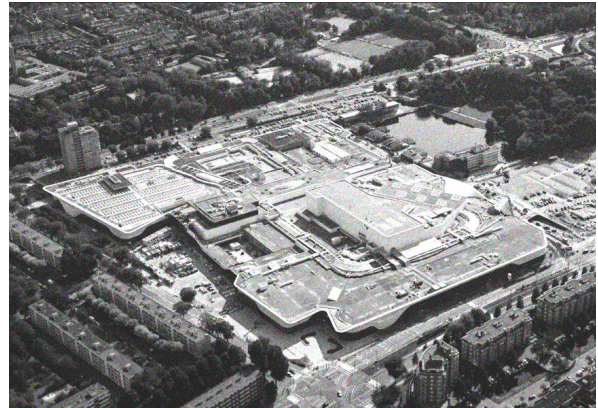
The historical analysis (Fig. 3) revealed the importance of aesthetic consumer value throughout the development of shopping typologies. Drawing on the hypothesis that consumer values are not fixed and are constantly changing, further in the research, I focused on the aesthetic values of post-war shopping malls and the aesthetic values of a contemporary shopping mall using the case study of Westfield Mall of The Netherlands (Fig. 4). The case study of the mall of The Netherlands revealed that consumerism as a global phenomenon causes architecture to become spectacular and seductive, but homogenous and disconnected from the local culture and history resulting in the destruction of historic buildings.

1969 - 2019



HAAGS GEMEENTEARCHIEF, 1964

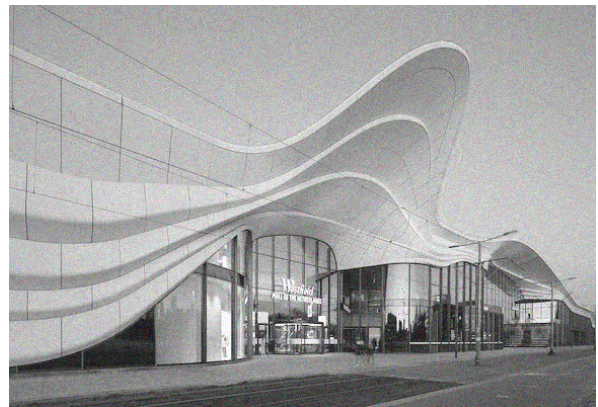
2019 - CURRENT



MVSA, 2019



HAAGS GEMEENTEARCHIEF, 1972



MBX, 2019

FIG. 4 PHOTO COMPARISON OF WESTFIELD MALL BEFORE AND AFTER INTERVENTION

POST-WAR SHOPPING MALLS AND CRAFTSMANSHIP

The research made me raise a moral question of the radical adaption of a post-war shopping mall to contemporary consumerist aesthetics can be considered a durable and future-proof design choice, as the analysis of shopping typology development revealed the tendency of consumer values to constantly change. This resulted in my design choice to celebrate the post-war aesthetic values of Westermarkt shopping mall in Tilburg, which had to be refined through value assessments.

The research also helped me in understanding the importance of the social values of shopping malls, as throughout history shopping places have been an important ground for meetings. Therefore, I decided to strengthen the civic character of a shopping mall in my design, while also creating a shopping place, which would shake the consumer out of the cult of purchase, increase the public's awareness of social and ecological issues of consumerism, and encourage them to look for alternative ways to fulfill basic needs.

As the goal of the research was to deconstruct consumerist space, combining research and design I developed a list of principles of consumerist space architecture (Fig. 5)

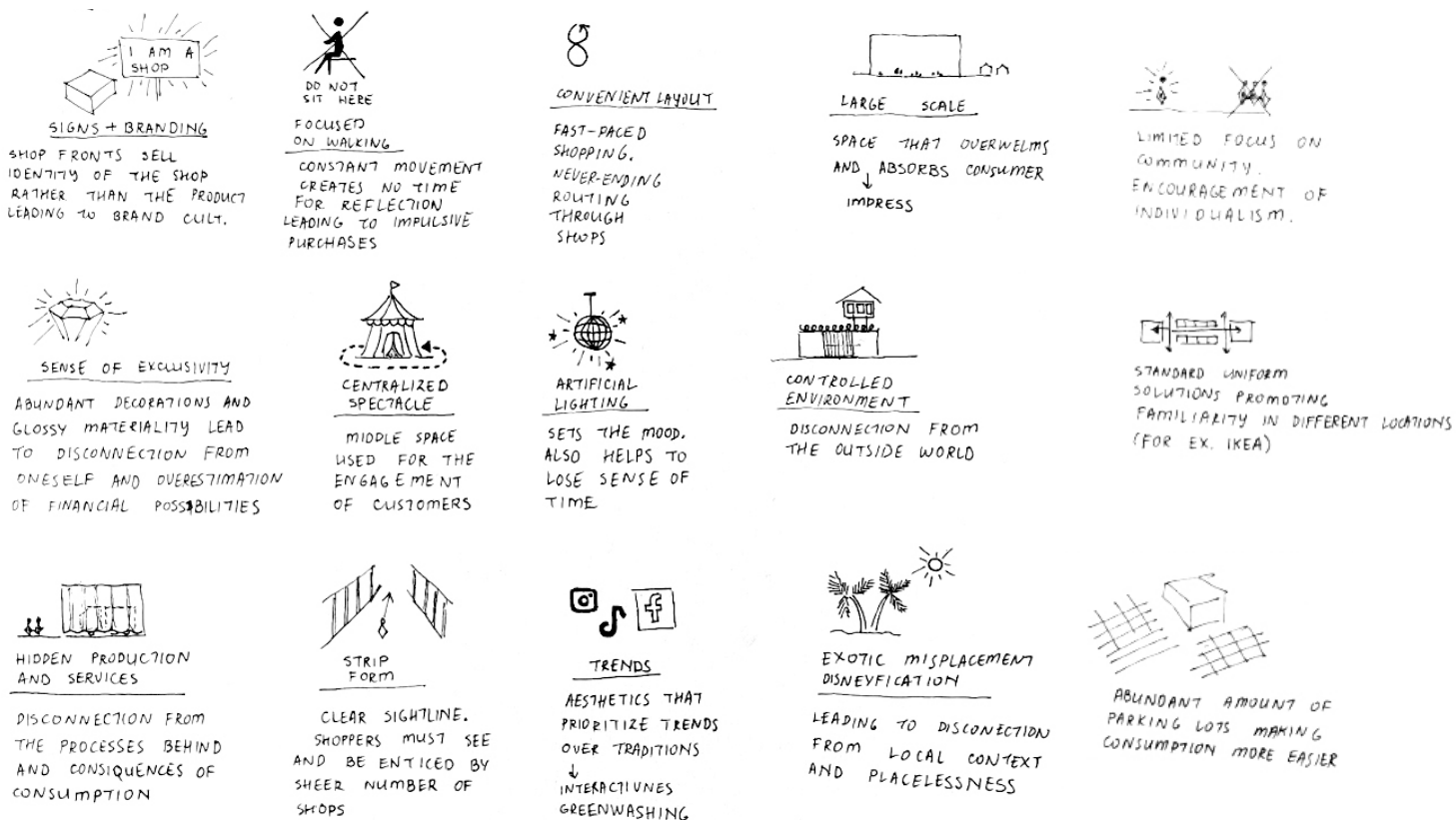


FIG. 5 CONSUMERIST PRINCIPLES (OWN WORK, 2023)

Contradicting these principles, I identified the main non-consumerist qualities of a post-war shopping mall (Fig. 6) that I wanted to keep or strengthen with my intervention.

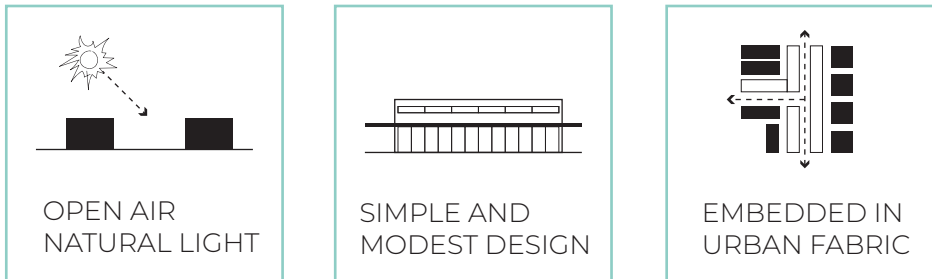


FIG. 6 MAIN NON-CONSUMERIST QUALITIES OF POST-WAR MALL (OWN WORK, 2023)

As an alternative to consumerism, I decided to promote craftsmanship in the design of the future shopping mall. The display of craftsmanship was also an aspect of medieval retail design, which did not promote over-consumption. I propose to move from consumption to creation meaning that architecture instead of encouraging consumption has to inspire creativity.

Since Tilburg is known for its textile industry, I included workshops, education, recycling, and repair spaces focused on textiles in the program of the shopping mall. This choice of the program supports Tilburg's identity and creates a space for meaningful exchange for the community, which is the aspect lacking in the design of consumerist spaces. Furthermore, the facility for textile recycling and repairs tackles the social and ecological problems of fast fashion. Textile in the project is used not only for the program but also spatially (as interior partitions and exterior skin), further strengthening the building's relationship to the local Tilburg's identity.

ACADEMIC , SOCIETAL VALUE AND ETHICAL DILEMMAS

Through the design process and discussions with my mentors, I attempted to find the limit of consumption that would still satisfy the basic needs of people but not exceed the ecological ceiling of the Earth. I was constantly asked to evaluate the consequences of my design choices in a local context which made me realize the responsibility we carry as designers. However, the critical question here is how much influence an architect can have on people's choice to over-consume. Since architecture is just an object it can not completely change the behavior of people, but we as designers can choose our position in the discourse of consumerism and introduce new qualities in the design of a shopping mall.

The whole process within the frames of the studio was an attempt to find a balance between consumerism and heritage, considering that the paradox of shopping centers as consumerist spaces is that even if they are monolithically present on the landscape, their identity is not fixed or permanent (Morris, 1999). Shopping malls rarely live longer than ten years without some sort of refurbishment or major renovation, often leading to a change in their image – increasingly attracting potential consumers (Woodward, 2009). This can result in the destruction of historic buildings and the creation of sterile, homogenized environments that lack diversity and character. Even if most post-war malls are not currently considered heritage buildings, this might change soon, meaning that we as designers working with existing shopping malls have a responsibility in preserving its main values and qualities for the future.

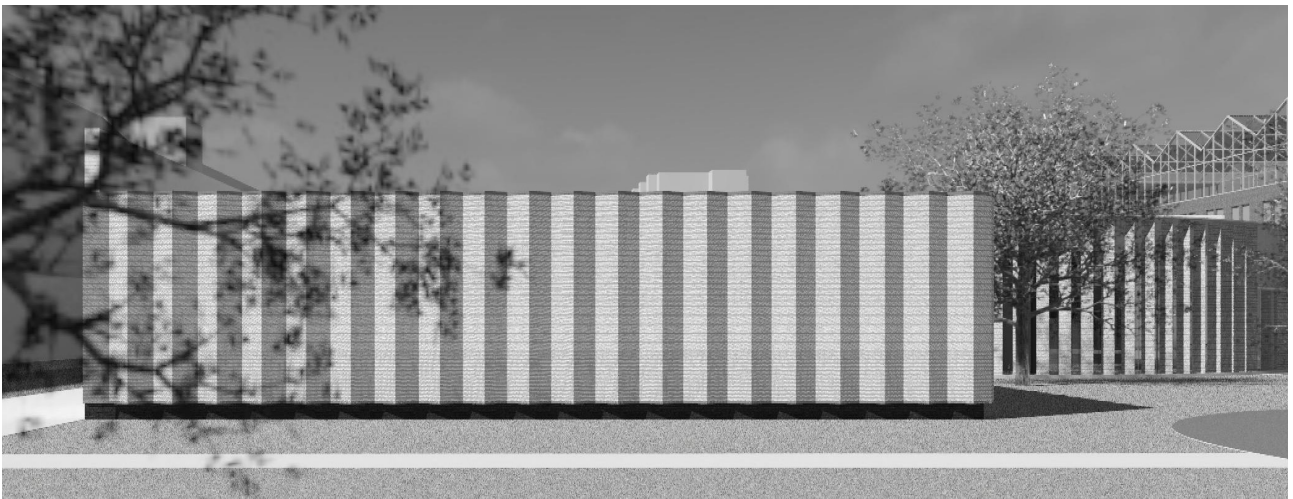
The goal of my research and design was to find a way to adapt a post-war shopping mall for a post-consumerist future to prevent its possible demolition or radical changes, leading to the loss of possible heritage values. From a wider perspective, my proposal to strengthen the shopping mall's relation to the local context and community can be seen as one of the strategies to deal with post-war shopping malls.

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BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER