

THE FESTIVE CITY

Facilitating a festive community in Maastricht

Reflection

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INTRODUCTION

In this reflection I will look back on my graduation project. By reflecting on the research process, the wider context of the design project and the relationship with the graduation studio I will get insight in my way of work and what my position is in the architectural context.

STUDIO THEME AND PROJECT TOPIC

The chair of Interiors Buildings Cities has a coherent theme throughout the master projects, which this year was 'The Festive City'. For the graduation studio the focus is on the Urban Institution; its representative, spatial, social and political roles and its impact on the life and form of the city at each scale, from the interior outwards. The ambition of the studio 'After the party' was to examine the way of transforming public spaces and buildings by using the potential of the festive. The aim is to find out how qualities of the festive that are relevant and the representation in daily life can be used to design buildings that can enhance a city.

The project brief was to design a festive building in Maastricht, with a program and location that followed our research and interest. During the first semester it became clear that the festive qualities of daily life were of interest to me. My design addresses the social aspect of daily life, how different people in a community get to meet each other and how the community as a whole, and in a larger context the city, can benefit of these festive social qualities.

RESEARCH METHOD

In the Interiors Buildings Cities studio, the research method is very much learning through making. Since the start of my graduation period I looked at various aspects of the festive theme and Maastricht. By drawing scenes of festive movies, making models of precedent buildings and drawing aspects of festive life during Carnival in Maastricht. By drawing and making models as a research, the scale, spatial qualities and details of a building are learned in a very precise way (Fig 1). The conclusions that are then drawn can be transferred to the design process. Through these research assignments I could find out what my view was on the festive theme, and what direction my architectural design would go. What I found was that dynamic spaces, intimate spaces and social inclusiveness and Maastricht as a student city were my main focus points. From this I started researching a way to design a community centre that brings these aspects together.



Fig 1 Research model of Palazzo Pitti

RESEARCH AND DESIGN

Throughout the Architecture master programme, there is a culture of researching through design. In the Interiors Buildings Cities studio in particular the making of models to research design aspects is applied.

With this project, we had to find the best location for our fascination in programme and festive architecture ambition. When I had chosen my first location, it was through the process of trying different volumes that I found I needed a different site. With my final site, my design research was focussed on volume and architectural typology. Through different design drawings I concluded that the site needed some air, and therefore I created a courtyard building, which is broken up in three different volumes. I tried researching the architectural language in drawings, but by making a model I found the right expression for my project (Fig 2).

Halfway through the second semester there was a workshop focused on interior design, which is one of the best examples of research through designing. Not sure yet how my building was going to look like yet, I made a detailed model of a significant space I wanted in my building (Fig 3). The outcome of this exercise would be implemented in my final design.



Fig 2 Model



Fig 3 Workshop Scenography

LARGER CONTEXT

My graduation project aims to bring people together and create a stronger community. During my research I tried to find good precedents, which were hard to find as the mix of people in my project is very diverse. This project could be a very interesting research on how social aspects of life can be enhanced and be translated in architecture.

LOOKING FORWARD

Even though this has been a year of hard work, I really enjoyed the process of finding out my design by making models, even when they're not directly related to the design. I think working through different scales, (like making a 1:20 model when your design isn't in that state yet) is a challenge, but when done with care it can give great insights in qualities and possibilities of your design.

What I have also learned in this project is that I am interested in the social aspect of architecture, creating spaces and buildings with a social purpose. This is something I would like to implement in my further architectural career.