

Graduation report

AR3AP100 Public Building Graduation Studio 2021-22
Music Marvel | Music & Popular Culture Re-Wired

MUSIC DISTRICT

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Mentors

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Reflection

When I first visited the site of the project, the Binckhorst in The Hague, I noticed the scatteredness of the place. Everything is disconnected and hardly to be reached by foot or bicycle. In fact, most functions are oriented to cars, trucks, and industrial machines. What is particularly interesting, however, is that there are a number of hidden activities. At first sight, the whole area appears to be designed exclusively for machines and fast crossing traffic. It is only upon closer inspection that the myriad of activities is revealed. Especially in the southern part, the Binckhaven, there are many creative places to discover, for example artists at work in their studios or the first indoor surf pool in Europe. Additionally, the square in front of the historical Caballero factory building, home to co-working spaces for creative firms, and the Dutch craft beer company Kompaan hold untapped potential as public meeting places. In my eyes, it is a shame that most people only see these places passing by on Binckhorstlaan and few take the time to explore Binckhorst.

At the moment, Binckhorst is in transformation: many places are being demolished and replaced with new, dazzling high-rise buildings. These buildings will house around 6000 new apartments in the southern Binckhorst alone in the near future. While I agree that it is necessary to build a dense residential neighbourhood to meet the high housing demand in the Hague, there should also be places for people to interact. In order to create an attractive and safe environment for these new residents, a place to gather and connect should be provided from an early stage on. Otherwise, there is a risk that they will be isolated in their homes, leading to loneliness, and an anonymous and boring neighbourhood.

The best way to activate life on the streets and in the neighbourhood is to connect with what is already there. That is why I am placing my Music Marvel at the site of the current concrete factory Dyckerhoff Basal. The factory is located at the Binckhaven, on the opposite canal side of the Caballero factory. It currently produces concrete in a mixing plant with three silos on the roof. These iconic silos can be seen from a distance when approaching on the Binckhorstlaan and are part of today's identity of the area. Therefore, I decided to keep this building as the foyer for the concert hall and attach the rest of the program to it.

Impressions of the Binckhaven



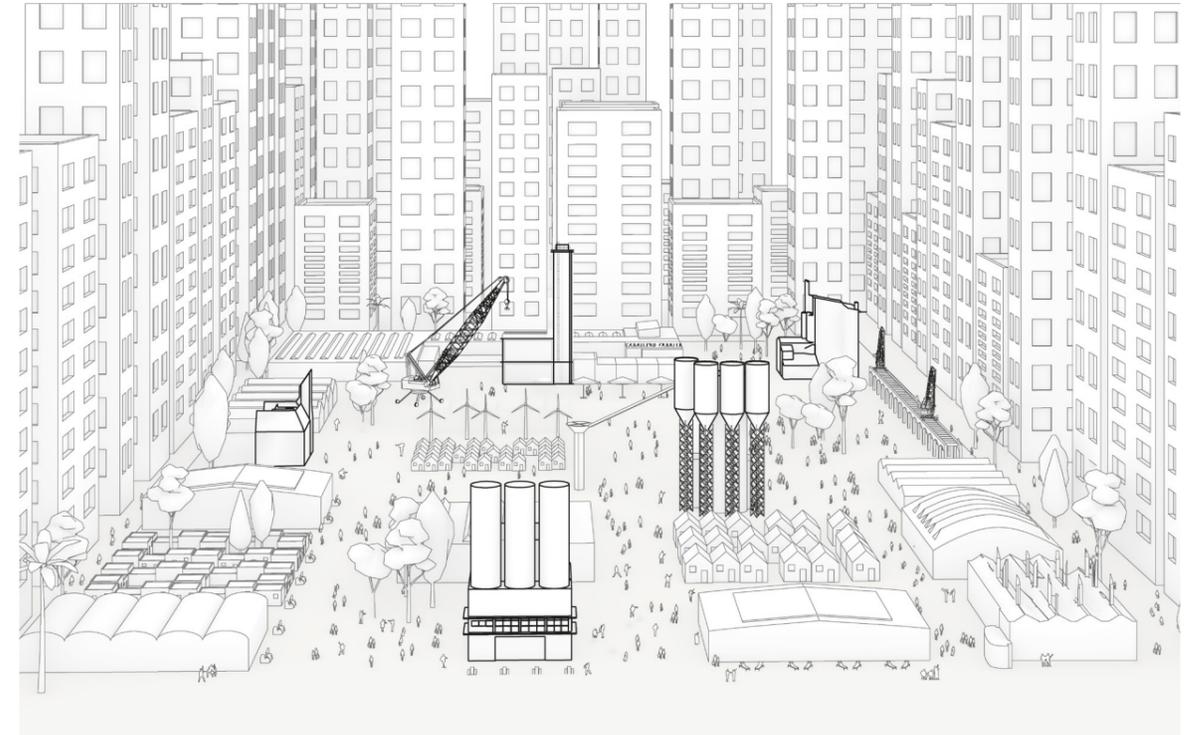
- 1 Party at Kompaan brewery - <https://www.mylifewithbeer.nl/kompaan-beer-bar-opent-en-deel-van-dutch-drafts/>
- 2 View on the concrete mixing plant from Binckhorstlaan - Lilli Kroher
- 3 Caballero factory with historical tower - <https://www.igg.nl/projecten/caballero-innovatie-fabriek/>

Activating the city

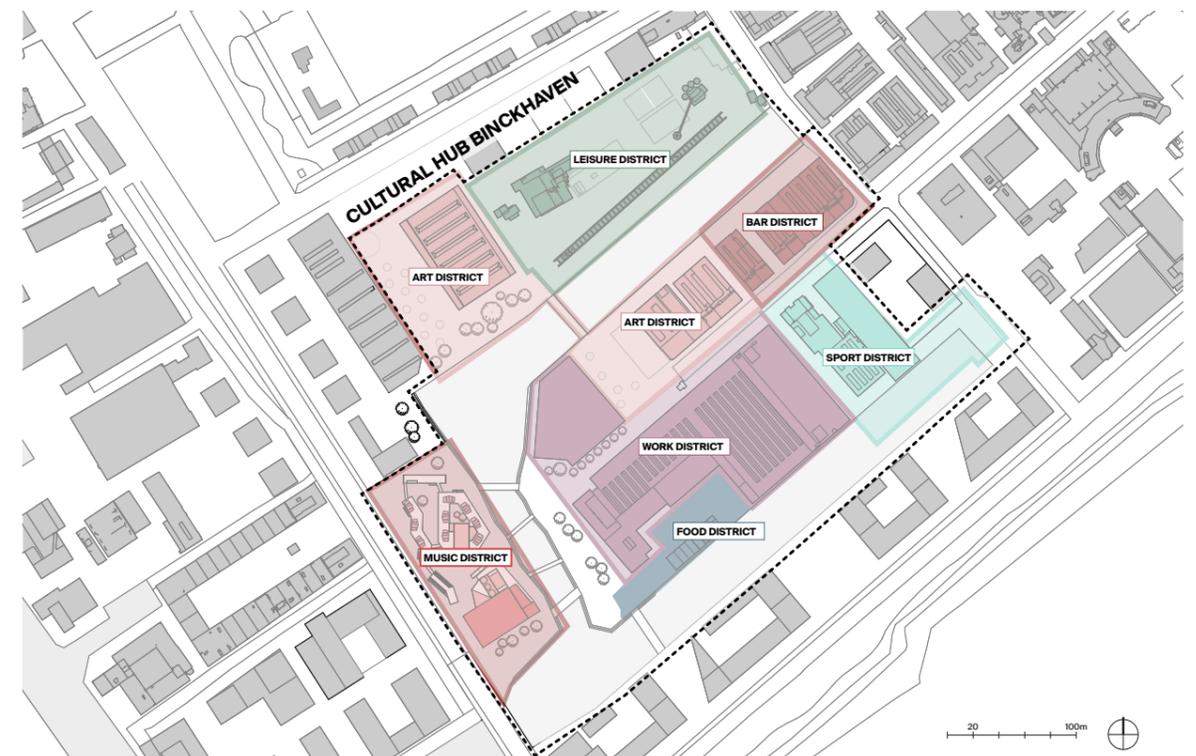
My idea of a “Music marvel“ is to create a place where people gather and connect over music, performing in front of neighbours and friends, and going to concerts together, leading to a lively community. For an active city, the spaces between the buildings are crucial to the quality of public life because they shape our behaviour. The more invitations there are to spend time in the public space, the more people will use them. As a first step to determine where people spend time in public spaces and how places need to be shaped to invite them to linger, I conducted several sketch studies. This led to a series of different atmospheres I wanted to generate in the spaces between my buildings.

The most difficult part was to put all these puzzle pieces together and to create a cohesive design from my thoughts, offering a variety of atmospheres and an array of options suitable for daily dispositions and different user groups. By sketching and writing down my ideas in bullet points, I worked out how the atmospheres could be achieved architecturally. I changed my original title "Music village" to "Music district" to emphasize that my building ensemble is a part of something larger, the Cultural Hub Binckhaven, for which it is the catalyst. Still, the village atmosphere is retained in parts of the building and seen as a tool to create a certain image. The complex now combines a set of different urban moods, such as a lively street, a recreational waterside boulevard, a calm inner courtyard, and a plaza for outdoor events and gathering.

Instead of encouraging people to quickly traverse the area on straight axes, the idea is to invite them to linger and explore. There are roads available for bicycles and pedestrians that quickly want to pass by the music district to the rest of the cultural hub, and slower walkways for people who want to wander around and discover. My mentors helped me to find strategies to apply my urban concept in the design. In order to translate my ideas into an architecture, Paul suggested the book, "The Art of Building Cities: City Building According to Its Artistic Fundamentals" by Camillo Sitte from 1889. Here the author describes how squares were shaped in ancient and medieval times and what dimensions, shapes and axes are



4 Manifesto - Connecting to the existing architecture and activating life on the streets.

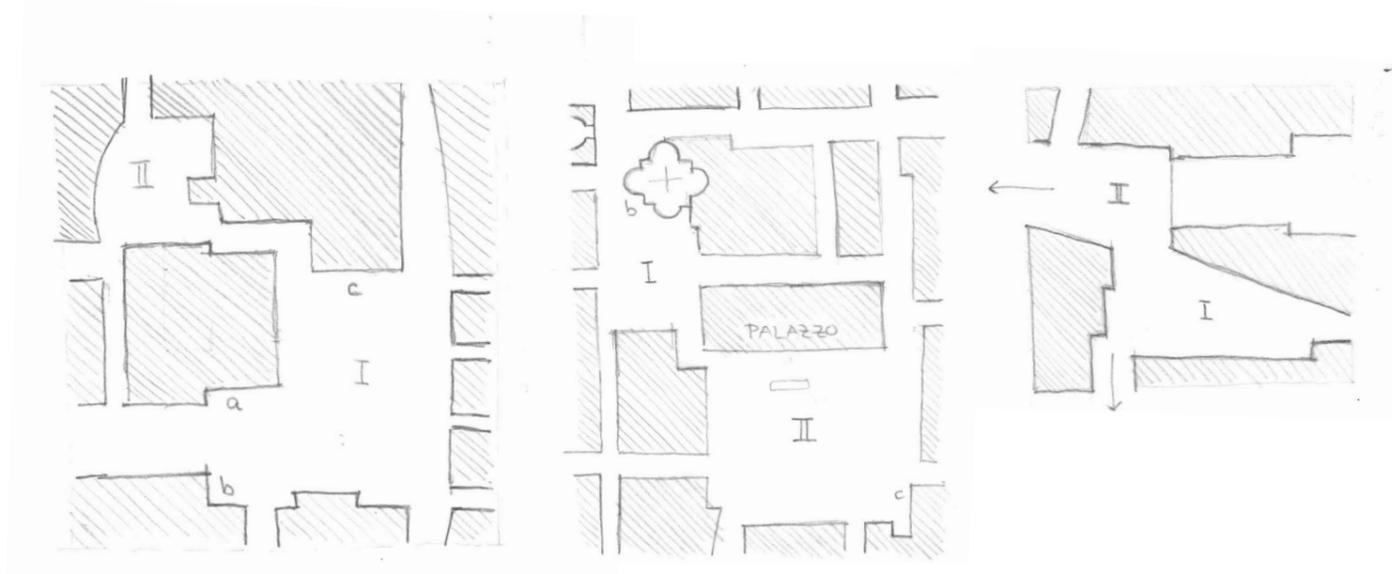


4 Cultural hub Binckhaven and its various districts for social activities.

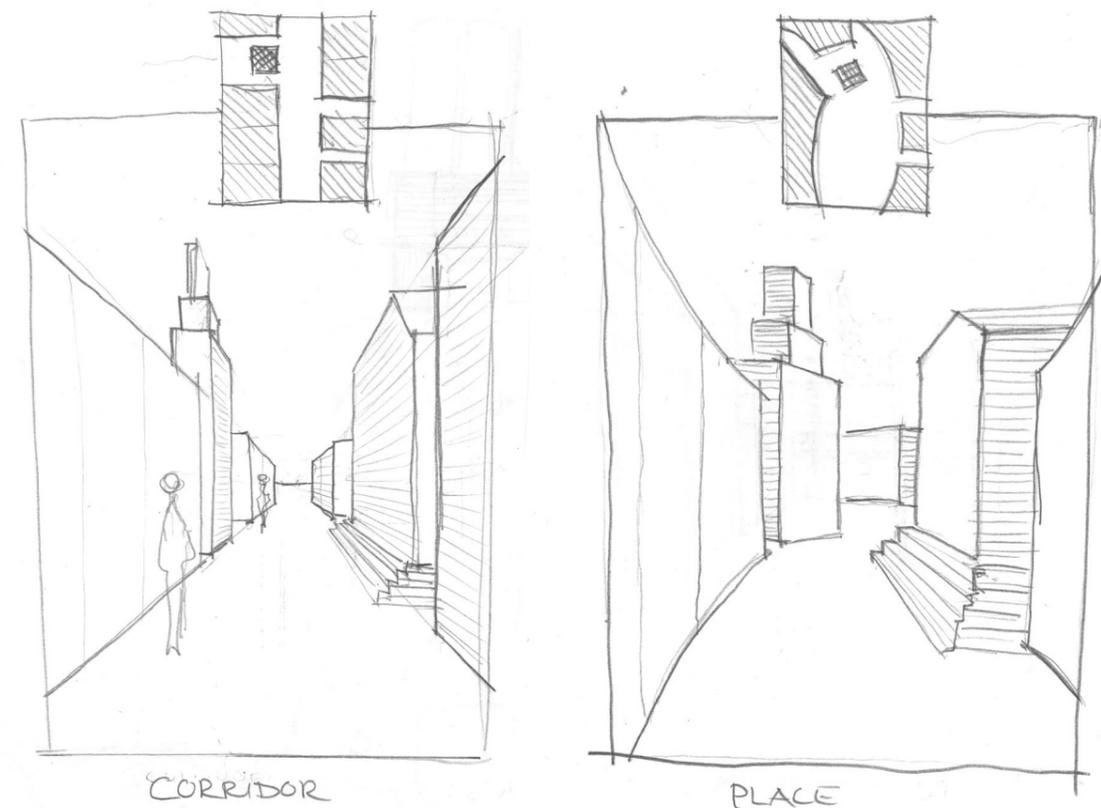
defining for a functioning urban square. Studying the drawings and copying some of them helped me understand how cities are shaped. Applying the principles from the book helped to concretize my ideas for the conceptual massing.

In my design, the squares are conceptualized as interior spaces without a roof, with the outer skin forming the walls and being critical to the sense of space. This correlates with my definition of the term "multiplicity". For me, architecture is not only about enveloping rooms in a built structure but also about integrating the space around them as an integral part of the design. Therefore, the building is not monofunctional as a concert venue but serves as a public meeting space with multiple shared spaces indoors and outdoors. There are places to make your own music, learn how to play an instrument and exchange ideas in a bar or on the public squares. This will lead to a future proof activation of the neighbourhood and a resilient community. In addition to a sustainable urban design, the entire structure of the building is made of timber. This minimizes carbon emissions during construction and creates a healthy and eco-friendly urban environment. Its haptic, visual, and acoustic characteristics make wood a perfect material to achieve a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

The Music District is located at the entrance the Binckhaven. By building bridges over to the other canal side, the existing activities there will become accessible for pedestrians and bicycles. Combined with new functions, and several other cultural districts, the music district will form the "Cultural Hub Binckhaven". Music is an effective catalyst for the transition of the Binckhorst from an industrial area to an attractive new neighbourhood because music events attract a lot of people. On their way to the concert or searching for things to do afterwards, concertgoers will discover the other things going on nearby the venue. The Danish urban planner Jan Gehl describes this process of activation as an upward-turning spiral: "Something happens because something happens because..." (Gehl, 2010).



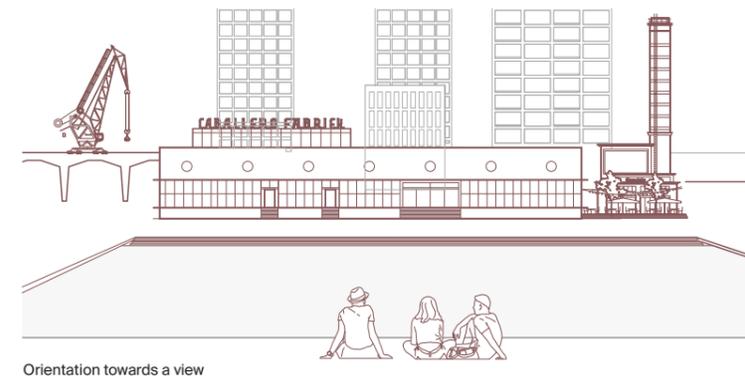
5 Shapes of urban squares as in the work of Camillo Sitte



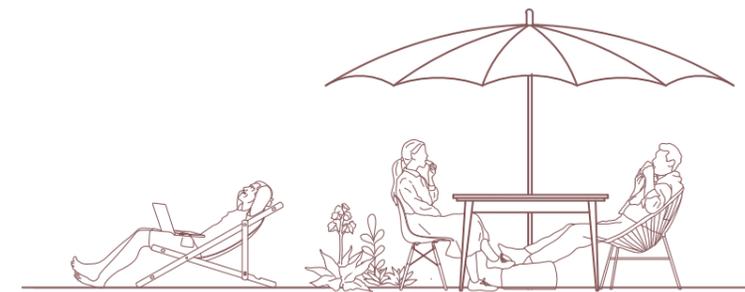
6 The influence of the shape on the perspectival view of a square.

Through my research, I discovered three factors important for urban places where people spend time:

- 1. Orientation towards a view:** The view of an interesting building, such as the Caballero factory, makes the space in front of it an attractive place to linger. Moreover, the view of the water invites people to sit down, meet, and exchange ideas. Therefore, I designed the waterfront that faces the Caballero factory with wooden steps as an inviting place to sit. Additionally, the façade of the foyer is aligned parallel to the Caballero factory to establish a visual connection between the two buildings.
- 2. Exposure to sun:** in a rather cold central European climate like the Netherlands, a day with sunshine encourages people to stay outdoors and enjoy the comfort of solar heat. A sufficient amount of sun exposure is important for our well-being and is known to instantly improve our mood. On a beautiful summer evening, people will stay where they can enjoy the last rays of the sun. However, on a hot day we will choose a place protected from the heat. Therefore, through the orientation of the facades and greenery, I create different scenarios for a pleasant urban microclimate at different times of the year. Moreover, there are also indoor public meeting spaces for days with bad weather.
- 3. Social interaction:** There is an old Danish saying that goes, "People go where people are." (Gehl, 2010) People are generally attracted by existing activity. Thus, an already lively place will attract more people to join spontaneously. The right proportions of places are important for this: a small crowd in a huge square is unlikely to create a feeling of liveliness, while the same number of people in a smaller place can create a vibrant atmosphere. Many people enjoy observing public life and interact in unplanned encounters. This is stimulated by integrated urban furniture and active ground floor zones where inside and outside communicate with each other.



Orientation towards a view



Exposure to sun



Social interaction

By combining all these results, I eventually arrived at my design, a building complex with stimulating interstitial spaces. By connecting to an existing building, I preserve the current industrial character of today's Binckhorst, but create a completely new identity, with an orientation to human scale instead of machines. This is unique to Binckhorst and could be applied elsewhere to realize liveable neighbourhoods in former industrial areas. Underdeveloped areas like Binckhorst can be found in many European cities, often close to the train station in central locations, which have been abandoned and neglected during other city development projects. With the right mix of uses, these areas have great potential to become lively and active centres for the city's residents. However, a good balance between open and active public space and the quantity of users is key for its success. My research presents strategies to successfully achieve these goals by introducing music as a medium for forming identity and culture. The identified factors can be used for designing a music building that activates community and public life in a sustainable way, also applicable in a wider scientific context. As a result, it will be possible to counteract anonymity in a densely populated area, strengthen a new neighbourhood, and provide spaces for everyone.

References

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Gehl, J. (2010). Cities for people. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Sitte, C. (1983). Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen. Darmstadt: fotokop.



7 Impressions of the Music District.