



REFLECTION REPORT JORIS KORBEE

1. Strategy

In the beginning of the graduation project, I quickly began to understand that the building was not only very large, but also very complex. Therefore I tried to work as structuralized as possible. To understand the existing building and the (possible) interventions, I worked in a big model, showing the interior and the exterior. In the beginning of the project I used a big model to show an overview of the project and the organisation, in a later phase other models were used to show more exactly the interior of a space with materialisations or the layout of a space. In this strategy I worked from the large scale (1:500, 1:100) to the more detailed scale (1:50, 1:33, 1:20).

schedule

My global schedule was to have the framework of the building, the intervention, the logistics, and organisation, clear after the first semester. After the P2 presentation I zoomed in on the different spaces and elaborated on climate and construction issues. At my P4 my planning was to have all the design decisions made together with all the technical drawings and a draft of all the products (artist impressions, diagrams etc.) so that in the time between the P4 and P5 I can concentrate on impressions, my story and final models.

2. Ambition

Public space

During the concept workshop in the first period of the project, It was already clear to me that not only the interior spaces, but also the public space around the building were important in this design assignment. The present public space around the building has great potential but is not very qualitative. The first ambition that I have is to design / transform the building, not only for the users in the building but also for the people around the building.

The relationship between in- and outside, and the transitions space between this, is important to achieve this. The present building has many blind facades and is very introverted. My ambition is to change the building to a more extrovert building with a visual relationship between people in, and outside the building.

Interior

The present building is not only very introverted but has also a very low floor to floor height. Furthermore, the layout of the building is full of small rooms and corridors. There is no direct relationship with the outside of the building. My ambition for the interior is to create spatial and qualitative spaces where proportions and dimensions on the one hand, and light on the other play an important role.

According to the ambition document the whole building has to be designed with the principles of the New Way of Working, which means that all the office floors use the flex working concept. I think the building is too large for this idea. A suitable solution has to be found not only about the organisation of the office floors, but also how the user can identify the spaces and personalise.

Personal

The last ambition is about how I place myself as an designer in the design assignment. I think it is a challenge to work with an exciting building and it is too easy to demolish too much of the existing building. In addition to this, I think that the current building has some qualities and even some beauty. Therefore I see this assignment more as an intervention on an existing building than to just

strip the whole building down and clad it with a new modern wrapping or demolish big parts of the building so that the whole identity of the building change.

3. Reflection

Process

After the P1 workshop I understood how important the public space around the building was and how the building could play an important role in the improvement of this public space. The results of the research workshop (with I did together with Mark Biemans) showed the opportunities for this improvements.

The outcome of the workshop was the idea to remove a building slab at the canal side of the building, which creates an open space in de city. It is a square that forms the beginning of the Turfmarkt street and at the same time a plaza for the building. This idea was the starting point of my individual project. The impact of the new open space was not only visible ON the urban scale but also ON the building scale. Not only created the new square a guideline for the organisation of the building (the program is clustered around the square), but it also improved the wayfinding in the higher office floors (at almost every spot in the office floors you can see the square of the open space).

In the first weeks of the project I got a better understanding of the square, the transition space between in- and outside, and the organisation in the lower part of the building. After the square, the lobby is the second space you see when entering the building and is therefore very important. The lobby space is as a courtyard inside the building and almost an internal repetition of the square.

Until the P2 presentation I investigated the possibilities, organisation and especially the spaciousness of the lower part of the building. Hereby I took in account the exciting structure of the slabs of the higher office floors. The result at the P2 presentation was a logistic and conceptual plan where the quality of the spaces was ensured. Some difficult aspects to solve were the transition spaces and the transparency of the building on public level.

After the P2 presentation there were some questions about the character of the space, the materialisation of spaces, the appearance on the urban scale, and the facades of the lower part of the building. This subjects formed a good start for the next semester. In the period between the P2 and P4 the building got more detailed and I made progress in integrating the climate and construction. I tried to work hard on the uncertainties I had about the character of the spaces and materialisation. I noticed that I was quit insecure in this area and it took some time to choose the right materialization. Hereby I tried (and challenged myself) to look further than the commonly used materials as concrete and steel. My opinion is that I partly succeeded in this (for example with the use of copper bio-based-carpet and cork) but it still could be improved. Also the details of the interior (something I had never done before properly) there is still an improvement to be made, but it was also a very educational experience.

The fourth floor is in my design the connecting level between the lower and the higher levels. Because of the enormous size of this floor I had some difficulties organizing and designing the space. I wanted to prevent that the space was to open and noisy, or that the space was divided in different small rooms. In my ambition the space should feel like one space, but should also provide parts where an employee could withdraw and has some privacy. Two elements helped me to find a solution. First I developed the story of how this level is used by an employee. The little insight I received when visiting some of the ministries and information from civil servants helped with this story. Secondly, I imagined the floor as a landscape. The investigation and 1:1 model by RAAAF (*the end of sitting*), and sketches and models on scale 1:500, 1:100, 1:50 and 1:20 I made, helped me to create an office landscape on this floor with open spaces, closed off spaces and private spaces. In

the end, the office landscape is still quite conceptual but the result is consistent with my idea and ambition.



Figure 1 Images of a study model for the 4th floor

Research

From the research on the New Way of Working (NWW), I found out that this could only work if an office has a formal but also an informal working and meeting space. In addition to this, the personalisation of the workspace in the NWW is a big problem because of the clean desk policy. This research gave some handles and guidelines for designing the higher floors which have an informal meeting and working space and places to personalize.

The workshop research I did in the first quarter showed that the surroundings of the building have a low quality (crowded roads (cars, trams and bike everywhere), no defined areas where to sit, walk or bike, and a messy street pavement) but that the surroundings also has great potential (a much used and wide pedestrian street, canals, and new buildings). This potential of the urban surroundings was feed with the investigation about the Seagram plaza and other small urban spaces by William H. Whyte and studies about public spaces in private times, by Vito Acconci.



Figure 2: Results of the research workshop in the first quarter

4. Conclusion

My design task was to transform an important building in the middle the crowded city centre of The Hague, into a building which is not only very qualitative from the inside but also improves the direct public surroundings. This resulted into a transparent building with a wide open square in front of it. Difficult for me was the huge scale of the building and the complexity. Even in this report, I found it hard to narrow down to the most important or difficult aspects and problems I had during the project. I did not talk about how I treated the ground floor (with the pattern tiles), how I dealt with the hanging constructions in the higher levels or how the new climate system connect to the exciting one. These points are just few of the many other elements which I carefully thought out and designed. The largest issues I had was the character of the spaces, materialisation, and the details of the interior. In the end I am very satisfied with the result.

Joris Korbee.