

## **P4 reflection**

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**Title of the graduation project:** Rethinking Roosenberg

## ***Introduction***

Today, the Roosenberg abbey, a timeless and iconic building designed by Dom Hans van der Laan in the city of Waasmunster (Belgium), is no longer used as a monastery. This graduation project focuses on giving this building a future as a care facility for people with young dementia.

For the last couple of months I have been researching and rethinking the work and theories of Van der Laan in relation to contemporary care and living environments, the notion of 'home', the landscape and contemporary architecture.

Within this project the main research questions were:

*How to extend the Roosenberg abbey into a healthcare facility, for people with young dementia, who require intensive care?*

*What does it mean to feel at home? What factors does it depend on? And is this different for people with dementia?*

The aim of my design is to propose a living environment in which people with dementia can lead a normal life, without feeling locked up. The experience of the interior and the natural surroundings plays an important role in this.

## ***The relationship between research and design***

Within the design studio research and design were carried out simultaneously. The design process was supported by research on different themes. Which I will shortly discuss in the following paragraph.

The first theme deals with the behaviour and the needs of people with dementia. This research was supported by an additional seminar, tutored by anthropologist Leeke Reinders. It consisted of a literature study on dementia, the notion of home, developments in health care facilities and a field research. The field research was carried out by means of participatory observation in a small scale care home for people with dementia: De Herbergier in Delft. This field research proved to be very fruitful, as I experienced the daily life in a care home first hand. One of my main conclusions was that people with dementia are all very different from each other. Dementia causes a variety of symptoms. Meaning that people with dementia have varying needs and wishes, just like people without dementia. I believe that people with dementia should be regarded as normal residents, before being patients. This notion has influenced the design in great extend, as I tried to design a collection of homes, each with a individual character.

During the design proces another theme developed, that of the typology of the (care) villa. Several examples of traditional and modern villas were analysed, such as Rusthuis de Blauwvoet of J.B. van Loghem, the Krefeld Villa's of Mies van der Rohe and the Villa's of Adolf Loos, giving insight in the way these typologies could be used or reinterpreted in the context of the care home. This helped me to design a care home as domestic and as less institutional as possible.

***The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject chosen by the student within this framework***

The main objective of the graduation lab was to rethink Van der Laan's architecture in relation to its natural surrounding, present concepts, needs and uses and design a healthcare facility within, next to and inspired by the existing building.

I chose to design the care homes as a conglomeration of houses within the walls of the plot. Six small scale residential villa's are enclosing a collective courtyard on the east side of the abbey. The one next to the other. The same but different. They refer to the monastery of Van der Laan. With large windows facing the forest. The outdoor space is taken with patios and courtyards. A protected entity of open spaces.

***The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student in this framework***

The chair of Interiors Buildings Cities focusses on designing throughout multiple scales and on the experience of the interior. As an initial exercise an interior model of an imaginary space was made, to investigate the meeting of a wall, a floor and a ceiling in its material sense. Another initial exercise was to design an assisted living home on the plot of the Jan de Jong huis in Schaijk. Through these exercises I became more sensitive to the experience and readability of the construction, its proportions, materials, color and the inside-out suggestions. By making interior models early on in the design proces I learned that all scales are related and decisions on one scale have a substantial impact on the other scales.

***The relationship between the project and the wider social context***

The Netherlands currently has more than 260.000 people with dementia. Due to demographic changes this number will grow explosively in the future: in 2040, more than half a million people will suffer with dementia. People with dementia often live at home as long as possible. Due to the aging of the population, government policy and the shortage in health care facilities, the indication to qualify for a nursing home has aggravated considerably. This way, their stay in a nursing home will generally be shorter, but the care will be more intensive. Because dementia is characterised by disorientation, loss of identity and feelings of displacement, encouraging the feeling of home is of great significance for this group. The past 40 years visons on nursing home care changed dramatically. From a hospital for chronically ill patients, in architecture based on the hospital model, the nursing home developed into an institution that pays close attention to living next to caring. Here the emphasis lies on domesticity and affiliation to the normal life. These developments prove the need to give people with dementia a home and especially a home feeling.