

## **P5 Reflection**

P5 Presentation: January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
Room B, 13.45-15.00

## **Studio**

Name/theme	Interiors, Buildings, Cities, The Urban Institution
Tutors	Mechthild Stuhlmacher; main mentor Philippe Viérin Tom Thys Mauro Parravicini; building technology
Title	Campus Roosenberg
Location	Waasmunster, Belgium

## **Posed problem**

The Roosenberg Abbey in the Flanders village of Waasmunster needs to get a new function. The abbey was initially founded in 1237 and has a strong emphasis on Marian and Franciscan spirituality. The building is designed by Dom Hans van der Laan, who used to be a monk himself. Van der Laan had a clear theory on how architecture is an intermediary between man and nature. He materialized this from the biggest scale until the smallest details of a building, which is best exemplified by the plastic number.

The new owner of the building is the Catholic University of Leuven (KU Leuven), who envisions a campus on the site (Campus Roosenberg). The campus that the KU Leuven envisions should be a study and congresscenter focused on the domain of reflection and should be a breeding ground for new education forms. The goal of the design proposal is to design a study- and congresscenter that pays respect to the existing abbey. This starts with an analysis of the existing abbey and van der Laan's theory. Secondly the program needs to be defined for the study- and congresscenter. Lastly both need to be translated into a scheme that is a balance between both.

This has led to the following research question:

Which architectural scheme fits a study- and congresscenter best, given the strong character of the existing architecture and surrounding site?

With three sub-themes on an architectural scale:

- Organization (scale, border public/private domain, position on site)
- Program (enabling both a study and a congress center)
- Formal measures (material, dimensions, form)

## **Reflection relationship between research and design**

Throughout the studio, the relationship between research and design have played an important role in defining the design. First of all, designing something next to a van der Laan building requires a research into his theory on architecture and, subsequently, a clear own position on his theory. Secondly, building on the domain of a former abbey while leaving the abbey intact, calls for a better understanding of monastic life and its rituals. For this purpose, accompanying courses were offered alongside the studio. This accompanying course focused on a specific subject that is important for your design, in my case the rituals taking place both in abbeys and in university buildings. Tracking these rituals and its consequences led to interesting results on how the layout of certain spaces should be in order to accommodate for certain rituals.

Another factor that required a certain amount of research was the brief provided by the KU Leuven, more specifically a research into the characteristics of a study- and congresscenter. This led me to analyzing the activities taking place in both a study- and a congresscenter, and analyzing the processes taking place during these events. In my case this led to the division of functions between the existing abbey and the new part, as well as to form an important reason to oppose van der Laan's theory for the organization of my building. Along the way smaller researches have been conducted on a regular basis into construction techniques, relevant

references and climate design.

### **Reflection theme graduation lab**

The graduation project had two different themes. The first being van der Laan's architecture, the second being the requirements of a study- and congresscenter for the KU Leuven. My design draws inspiration on the architecture of van der Laan in certain ways, while it also opposes his architecture if other elements of the design brief require that.

The organization of the building is the most important element which is an opposition of van der Laan's architecture. His belief of the organization of a building is namely founded on the requirements for abbeys with its long hallways and subsequent long distance between rooms. A modern study- and congresscenter needs rooms which cater for flexible spaces and interaction between its users, so calls for rooms in closer connection to each other. Therefore, in opposition to the requirements of an abbey, it was my belief that his theory was not relevant in the case of a study- and congresscenter.

### **Reflection relationship between project and wider social context**

Since education is always in development, new architectural schemes need to be developed to keep up with these constantly changing requirements. Secondly the conversion of an old abbey into a university building calls for a specific treatment, especially in the case of a building by Hans van der Laan. What makes the research furthermore interesting is the specific location in the forest surrounding Waasmunster, which isn't the typical location for a university campus. This might have special consequences for the chosen scheme and program and may not find any correspondence in existing university buildings. The combination of these elements, in combination with a strong positioning vis-à-vis the architecture of Hans van der Laan makes this a research with importance within current architectural developments.