Cultural Transformer

Reflection Report

AMS MID CITY

City Island

Dan Jing
4622626
Studio Mentors
Sven Jansse
Stephan Verkuijlen
Board of Examiners delegate
Ronald van Warmerdam

Introduction of the graduation project

Amsterdam, as one of the most popular cities of the world, casts the pivotal questions as the starting point of the AMS MID CITY studio which is that with the growth of inhabitants and tourists, what will the city looks like under all the following demand for new housing, infrastructure, energy networks, etc. In other words, what kind of city do we want in 2050? This topic provides a chance for us to rethink the lifestyle we are living in and possibilities to envision a reachable future in varies way. It can be seen even just from the title 'Amsterdam 2050' that doing project in complex studio involves not only design skills but also a sophisticated research supporting it. In order to on a project in 2050 is comprehending the context in 2050.By reaching that, what is currently happening and what are the trends need to be acquired and this is also what we worked on during MSc3- researching on every architectural pertinent aspect of Amsterdam. This part was done by the whole group in two phases- hard data collecting and soft data analyzing. Each one of us took an interesting topic to research on. My personal fascination starts in tourism issue which relates to the future of Amsterdam closely.
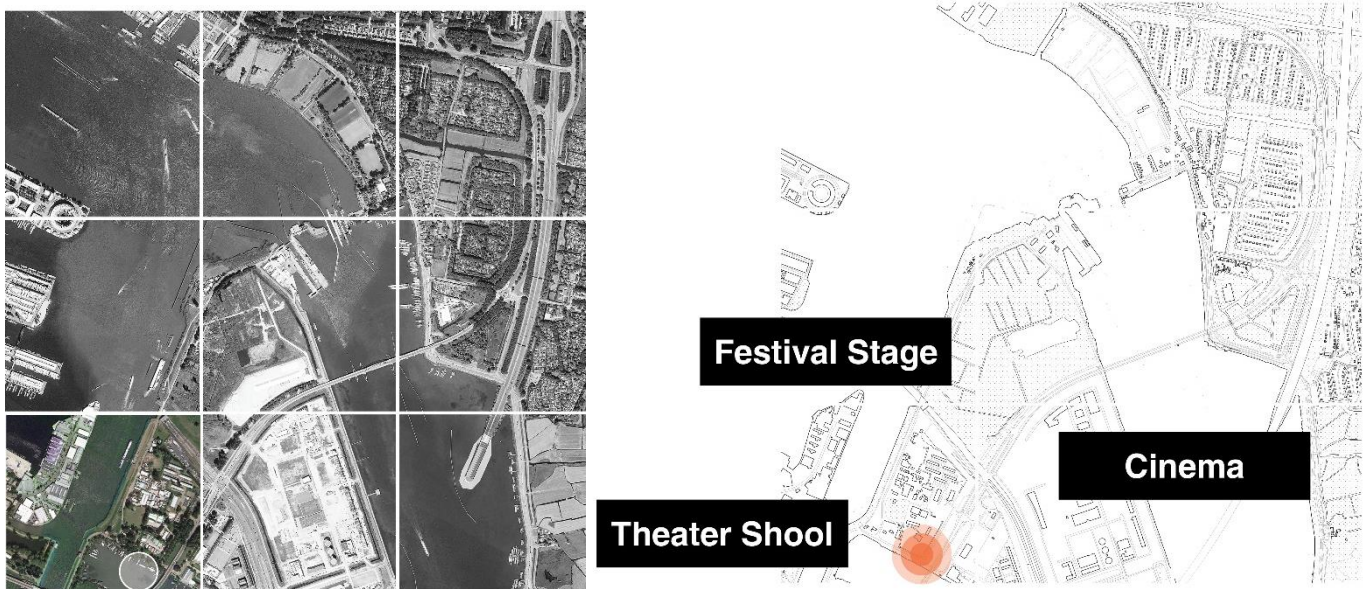

Figure 1. Location of project.

From Tourism to Festival

Amsterdam, as one of the most popular cities for tourist, attracts more than 18 million tourists from all over the world in 2016. The city is going through difficulties in absorbing all visitors, especially in its famous yet compact city center area. With the intention of dispersing its residents onto the Ring Zone area, Amsterdam is as well seeking new tourist attractions outside the center area. However, when the focus shift from a city scale into a 2.1*2.1km site scale (the Zeeburg island) the topic of tourism also need to become more specific. Therefore, combining with the state of the site, an interesting subtopic relates to tourism shows up- festival.

Zoom into the research area - Zeeburg island where owns a very specific aura that can be experienced immediately when people visit it and the experience of visiting the site intrigues me to take a further look at it. My thesis topic, in general, is about 'Convert a subtle intangible

atmosphere of a place into an attractive physical architecture'. Yet, in the research phase, the main issue is how to comprehend the site for creating a promising architectural foreground for next phase- design. Specifically, in order to preserve both tangible and intangible characteristics of the site and continue them somehow into forms of architecture, questions on 'What forms the unique atmosphere?' and 'How to read it in an architectural way?' need to be answered first. In reality, it can be seen that various festivals are held in the research area or once had been held on the Zeeburg island. However, most of the festivals have either been moved away from the site or deceased at all. Despite that, the site still owns a very special atmosphere formed by countercultural elements, for instances, graffiti and hippies vans, which could be suitable for holding artistic/entertaining events like festivals. After a series of research, the final idea of my project is to build a festival holding places with other functions to fill in the downtime period. In the end, the building works as a theater school and cinema during a normal work day and turns into festivals occasionally.

Applied approach and translate feedback into design

This procedure of research first and then design corresponds to the context of MSc3 Complex studio, which asks us to focus on the urban interventions and conduct research with parallel seminars, using methodologies as a typological study. The aim of the studio is to highlight interesting cases that examine different examples in order to understand how to turn the cities challenges into design opportunities for a city to grow.

In a very general level, architecture, considered as a humanities discipline, contributes widely in the range of research to knowledge. In order to keep architecture continually progressing, more research need be conducted into historical context using precedent; ideology behind buildings in the social and cultural role; and the theory of how human dwell and occupy space. By critically reflecting on the research methodology, we can keep refining the framework for perusing architectural studies appropriately.
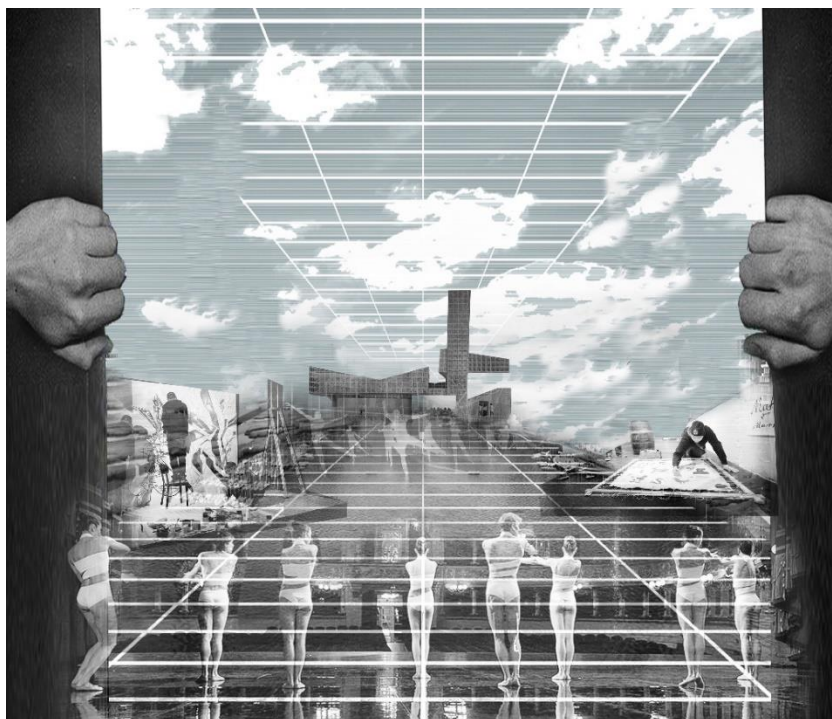
Specifically, I used typology and descriptions to keep refining my research as well as design. Descriptions help me set a design goal for my project. Making a storyline for the project is actually working as the bridge between research and design. It summarizes the outcomes of all research and gives direction of design. Such descriptive method could help conclude the research part as well as express all the work outcomes. Description, though is scribing objective things, it can be very subjective. Receiving feedbacks from others is extremely important in such way. It helps me adjust very subjective thoughts into a real convincing story. Not only speaking of the P2, but also many other informal presentations, feedbacks are important in the way how my personal ideas are critically received by others instead of only concerning on its expression. Several crucial turning points of my design during the whole process all happened after presentations. For example, one of them is when I was trying to find a way to build my project multi-functionally. The feedback came straightforward and helped reconstruct my thinking. As result the basic composition of the project changed radically at the first step. Many following feedbacks keep helping on refining my design in terms of the massing form and spatial quality. During design process, using precedents also offered a lot of inspiration. Precedents provides not only a historic context but also a trend which we could use as supporting reasons for own design. In my case, I used examples of movable architectures to show how such a building can work perfectly during different situation.

Another common way of refining my design is making collages. When making collages, the image of the final project becomes more and more explicit. During the design phase, making collages can help me thinking about the spatial quality as well as materialization. It is easy to test options in collages and after such experiments the most suitable choices could be determined.

Figure 2. Using collages to refine the design regards to spatial quality and material.

The whole design, process of course, involves much more research and design methods, I mentioned only the one that been critiqued mostly in terms of the amount of feedback. Translating feedback into work is actually a praxis process of doing experiments, taking advice and try to fit it into my own design context.

Relationship between graduation project and wider professional framework

If we take a step back and look at our graduation project systematically, it gives lot reflection on how to progress architecture as a discipline. It becomes more explicit when I refer to precedents of how other professions used the same approach to research and design also helps a lot. Take an example of how Steven Holl uses drawing to show his perception. He takes sensory perception as the core of the work of an architect as well as the departure point of the architectural design. Drawing on phenomenological study in space, time and material perceptions, he relates the architectural quality to experiences. He intended to *'explain the moment when you walk through a space when the texture when the light, when it all merges in to a single experience.* Same for Rem Koolhaas when he uses drawings to show his experience in Manhattan in perception of the urban condition, he adapted not only the role of an observer of the city, but also a ghostwriter‐ that is how he called himself.

Same as summarizing the precedents, when I started sorting applied approach and look back at them afterward the importance of relating our own work into the discipline raised. Regards to the context, working on Amsterdam 2050 though will not become the real urban plan of future Amsterdam, at least it will provide predicts and reasons for the city to work more radically on divers thoughts which might never appear before.