P5 Reflection Paper

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Heritage and Architecture Studio : Rotterdam Harbour

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Verisimilitude

As though I awakened on a summer gale

Filled with airy voices whispering voraciously

Blustering swiftly underneath the dangling sail

Thy shallow waves leaving the hull in agony

Morning was humming

And we sailed against the current effortlessly

As if it drew us in, like the soaring sounds of singing sirens

Once more into the odorous fog of morning labors

As the river paved our serpent path

And from the meadows rose a beast

The salt glaring on its freckled skin

Which curtain out the day with scars and wounds

Of days forgotten past / Where time lingers

Under no veneer who dare to aspire

Bare and naked on the quay

And weathered with an houndstooth cloth,

And a metal claw leaps in the edges of the steeply bank with a shivering sound

While gulls are circling, chanting Orphean-like above its crown

Lauding choruses over this harvesting town

I never had behold such magnificent sight

That usurped the morning light and swallowed it whole

While blooming fairly right

The dusty light burning bright

Pounding endlessly on its Nemean skin

And in its shade,

Like ants, or bees or wasps

Soothing her eternal sleep

And breathing her breath and glancing her views

The grain-sized dockworkers were feeding their queen

While her dormant visage smiled never to be seen

She roars sick with famine

That echoes through her lungs

In the depths of her core

Dance those small kernels for love and for song

And as she grew, far beyond the reach of the sun

With tides of grain and the ashes of the earth

That gave her heart to all who she birth

She bore those children that outgrew her

Feeding under the breath of the river always to be near

And the day will come that the son of my son

Sees her rise that will obscure the light of the sun

Her mysteries forgone, as well as her lust

But there will be a time when rise,

Oh rise she must

Marcus de Moes (2020)

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Project Description:

"Heritage and Architecture" positions itself in a broader context of preserving and adapting our cultural heritage. It embodies the past, present and future more than any other field of architecture. In social and political tendencies it forms a valid claim of dealing with an important issue as identity loss, since the vast amount of obsolete buildings form the bedrock of its character. It prevents the city from becoming too generic.

   Particularly within the graduation studio "Harbour Heritage", based in Rotterdam, it deals with the pressing issue of climate change in a city that is expanding rapidly and is inherently linked to the river that gave birth to it. The harbour that drifted from the city center towards the coast has created opportunities for the re-use of former industrial buildings, now vacant and prone to land clearance. This graduation studio opposes the idea of a *tabula rasa* and strives toward revaluating our cultural heritage by making re-use of these buildings, hence strengthening their unique identity.

Research Question (Studio):

What is the tolerance for change of these cultural historically important buildings and contexts in the former harbour area of Rotterdam? What is their meaning individually and as components of a collection of industrial built heritage buildings in the context and planned urban development?

Research Question (Author):

How can you re-design the Maassilo into a public space that incorporates both the human scale as the urban scale?

Aspect 01: The relationship between research and design.

From the analysis I formed my design question that created the substructure of my graduation project; *How can you re-design the Maassilo into a public space that incorporates both the human scale as the urban scale?* This question formed a bridge between the two counterparts. The most striking relation that I encountered in my design was the iterative nature of the process. The project divided into three main categories, architecture, building technology and cultural values, claimed to have a multidisciplinary nature. In my design process and tutor meetings I encountered this multiple times. For instance the issue of manufacturability played a large role in the design and was incorporated too late in the process. The design should be balanced in its design approach, to accommodate the multiple design aspects in its design solution.

Aspect 02: The relationship between the theme of the graduation project, the case study and the chosen master track (AR).

Identity loss is an important discourse in the field of architecture.[1] In cities where rapid expansion is occurrent there is the possibility of severing the connection with their roots. Cities can become too generic. Who's to say if there is a difference in experiencing a city as Frankfurt or Rotterdam in 2100.

Heritage positions itself in the broader context of architecture as a field that mediates between the old and the new. Buildings such as the Maassilo form a perfect example within this tendency. Since Rotterdam South is developing more rapidly every year, it generates questions on how to deal with these remnants of the past. Especially in a harbour city as Rotterdam, that has evolved enormously over the last 100 years and has moved to the outskirts of the city. The industry abandoned docks now reside on trending locations in the city. The graduation studio's research question, *What is the tolerance for change of these cultural historically important buildings and contexts in the former harbour area of Rotterdam? What is their meaning individually and as components of a collection of industrial built heritage buildings in the context and planned urban development?*, is inherently linked to the issue of identity loss. The new design has to deal with re-use, re-evaluation and re-appreciation in order to succeed.

By creating a narrative I formed a unique identity that related to the buildings history and its future position within the architectural skyline of Rotterdam that incorporated all these tendencies. I will expand on this methodology in the next chapter.
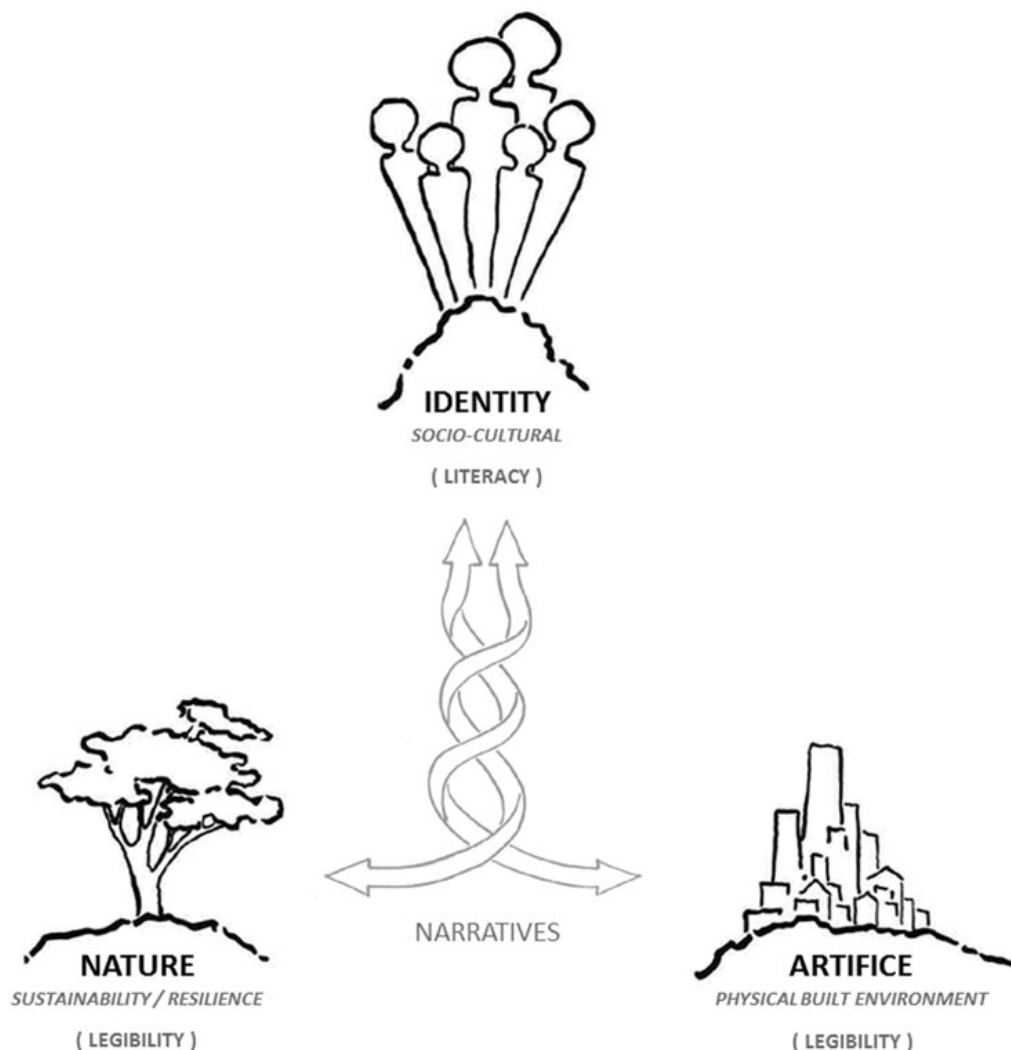
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[1] Herrle, P. & Wegerhoff, E., Architecture and Identity, Global Book Marketing, London ,2008, p11.

Aspect 03: The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation studio and the method chosen by the student in this framework.

The Heritage & Architecture graduation studio is primarily focused on cultural values. These values researched by the student provide an objective and subjective overview on the building's strong suits. It looks beyond the conventional way of analyses since it positions itself in a social, professional and scientific framework. This formed the incentive of my design method by creating a narrative based on the site visit, my experiences with the building, the research and the cultural value assessment.

Since identity is one of the underlaying themes of this studio, it was suitable to incorporate a narrative in the design process. According to Filep, narratives help us contextualize between nature, identity and artifice (see figure below). It provides us with a sequential framework where the project is coherent, offers perspective and structure within the design process.[2] In other words it makes the project associable and relatable. As well for the public as for the author of the project.

IDENTITY
SOCIO-CULTURAL
(LITERACY)

NARRATIVES

NATURE
SUSTAINABILITY / RESILIENCE
(LEGIBILITY)

ARTIFICE
PHYSICAL BUILT ENVIRONMENT
(LEGIBILITY)

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[2] Filep, C.V., Thompson-Fawcett, M., & Rae, M., Building Narratives. Built Narratives. Journal Of Urban Design, 19(3), p298

In retrospection of applying the narrative to the design process, I found it very useful, especially how much structure it offered in decision making. By comparing my building to a beast that was stranded on the quay, I could easily reflect on its history with its future intervention in mind. As the new narrative unfolded, the project evolved along side it. One conclusion from the analysis was the complexity of the building. The density of its volume made it hard to comprehend. The narrative offered a compartmentalized design solution. It is this structuring of the narrative that guides the design process. According to K. Lus Arana, our buildings often become a living thing. It bends and breaths and roars. This characterization tells what the building is and what it isn't.[3]

As I proceeded the design process I tried to explore the means of expressing this characterization in a more unconventional way of representation within the field of architecture. Literary description can be a tool to express these emotions and unique character traits. Writers have the capabilities to observe and describe the spaces which they experience. In literary works architecture is often the décor of the narrative, but it can also work backwards, where the narrative becomes the décor of architecture.[4] By writing a poem (see page two) based on the narrative I created a new world evolving around the existing building. As mentioned above I envisioned the building as a large creature, resting on the bare concrete quay. For example, as the beast grew over the years, feeding of the large quantities of grain, the grain silo also expanded in size. It is this thin line between fiction and reality that gives substance to the design and credibility in its public acceptance.

Aspect 04: The relationship between the project and the wider social, professional and scientific framework.

The rapid expansion of cities like Rotterdam has brought forth a discourse on how to deal with cultural heritage. Do we respect the past, or should it be demolished for new structures that match the aspirations of our sprawling metropoles? Unfortunately there is no consensus, but this creates the opportunity for architects and other specialties of the built environment to state their case on the re-evaluation of this cultural heritage. As mentioned before, identity loss is one of the main contributors in this discourse, since it deals with the juxtaposition of transformation or tabula rasa. What is the role of the contemporary architect in this discussion?

It goes without saying that within the graduation studio of Heritage and Architecture there is a preferred position towards conservation, adaptive re-use, or reconstruction.[5] Unfortunately there are two sides of the same coin within the approach of the studio. As the cultural value assessment forms the bedrock of this studio it has to deal with objectivity and subjectivity at the same time. Especially the latter reflects the personal opinion of the author of the project.

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[3] Lus Arana, K., 2013. Narrative Mas Context Issue 20, Chicago p19
[4] Havik, Klaske. „Acts of Symbiosis: A literary Analysis of the Work of Rogelio Salmona and Alvar Aalto." Montreal Architectual Review, 2017: p42- 60.
[5] Kuipers, Marieke, en Wessel De Jonge. Designing from Heritage: Strategies for Conservation and Conversion. Delft: TU Delft: Heritage & Architecture, 2017, p86.

Two authors can have colliding positions towards the same project while both stating valid cases in their heritage position.

Another trending topic of discussion, especially within the heritage studio, is climate change. Since this discussion touches every field of specialty, not only the built environment, it is critically for designers to take a valuable position regarding this issue. Inherent within the heritage position of architects is the *re-* addition in their approaches. *Re-* originates directly from Latin, meaning again, anew, once more.[6] This is inextricably linked to climate change issues such as our finite resources and our overconsumption of energy.

To expand on this issue specifically regarding this graduation studio, we have to deal with rising sea levels, as a result of climate change. All three case studies within the graduation studio deal with their outer dyke position along the former harbour docks. Their contribution towards the professional and scientific framework is valuable since the repositioning of the harbour, leading to vacant industrial buildings, is an issue that occurs in many global metropoles.

Lastly in regard to the city of Rotterdam and the Netherlands this case study provides them with a claim that the Maassilo is a building of tremendous value and deserves to be rewarded with a monumental status. It symbolizes the great rise of the Rotterdam harbour that became, for a semi-century the largest harbour in the world.

Aspect 05: Ethical issues and dilemmas

One of the most pressing dilemmas was the structuring of the process. Research had shown the enormous complexity of the building, on multiple aspects. To tackle this complexity the project needed a structural approach in both its analysis as its design. In the analysis (P1 report) we tried to compare the building to the human anatomy. We dissected it into the body, its organs, its vessels, its skin and its skeleton. This approach made it comprehendible in comparison to our own human body. The way it operates. The way we make use of it.

Subsequently it led to a similar approach in the design process. The narrative picked up its vividness, its appearance of being alive, its verisimilitude. However the design solutions deemed not solvable by only addressing the narrative, while in some occasions the narrative was sufficient enough. In search for a new and structured design process, I created a series (3) of toolsets. These toolsets offer the designer the space and structure to explore different designs. The combination offered multiple perspectives that together formed a coherent story and design.

1. The performance heptagram, a useful tool in museum designs, created by Dorus Hoebink, approached the design from an organizational perspective.
2. The warm-up and cool-down space theory, which I altercated by adding an intermediate space for contemplation, offered an approach from a experience perspective (see figure next page).

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[6] https://www.etymonline.com/word/re-).

3. The sequences of usage, approached the design from the perspective of the different users and their sequence of spaces along their path.

However the project had another level of complexity, namely the multitude of design specialties, respectively architecture, building technique and cultural values. This opted for an integrated design solution where the design process should be parallel in stead of in series. In reflection to this process I encountered the problems of a design in series, where I was too focused on a specific solution without consulting the multiple design specialties. Especially building technique generated a lot of problems in the design since these installations are set spaces or objects. The design should be balanced in its approach. Every facet should participate in its development in order to generate the design solution.

Warm-Up Spaces:	Cool-Down Spaces:	Intermediate Spaces:
Café	Museum Store	Atrium
Cloakroom	Café	Escalators
Restroom	Restaurant	Pause Spaces
Ticket/Info Counter	Cloakroom	
Atrium	Restroom	
	Atrium	