

REFLECTION REPORT ARCHITECTURE

Personal information:

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Studio:

Studio: Interiors Buildings Cities
Mentors: D.J.Rosbottom (design mentor)
M.Parravicini (building technology mentor)
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Title:

A passage between banks and the public — the banking community in a donut economy

Introduction:

The graduation project of Interior building Cities focuses on the renovation of national bank of Belgium. The current bank building is the result of a massive reconstruction project that transformed and rescaled this piece of city into an imposing, yet ultimately alienating urban environment. Due to the relocation of some of its functions and the restructuring of the bank, the National Bank decided to redefine itself. Beyond providing the bank with workspace offices, it is envisaged as a more open, permeable environment. My project focuses on a passage through the bank and to redefine the boundaries between bank and public. The reflection will touch upon the research and methods used in the graduation studio.

Research:

Research is divided into three parts. Group research, site research and individual research.

In the first phase of the studio, the research tutors gave us a selection of two pieces of literature or book excerpts related to the office or banking and finance each week. The reading was followed by a group sharing of the week's texts and ideas, and a seminar to help us further understand the texts. We then present what we have read and thought on a wall in a collage in the studio, where our individual views are exchanged and integrated.

At the same time, in the first phase, we also worked in groups to study and analyse a classic office building and its typical office space, and to restore a 1:10 model from photographs. In this phase, we gained a more realistic knowledge of office space through redraw and remodel of the office building. studio was divided into eight groups with a total of eight cases, and through the collation of everyone's research results, we also gained a deeper understanding of the history of the development of office space and the change of typology. Some of these cases were taken from the seminar literature, so the two research sections echoed each other. This phase helped us to build up a basic knowledge of office space.

In the second phase, we visited Brussels together and visited the National Bank of Belgium and its museum under the guidance of bank staff. Prior to this we worked in three groups, a model group, a drawing group and a research group. The model team researched the city and the site and completed a 1:500 model of the city and a 1:200 model of the site. The research team researched Brussels and the National Bank of Belgium, compiled a booklet and planned the itinerary for the site visit. In the course of the site visit, the bank staff explained the current functional flow of the bank building and gave us some ideas and comments on the renovation. At this stage we got to know Brussels and the National Bank of Belgium better and gradually started to get inspiration and ideas for our design.

The third phase of Research is the individual research, where everyone starts to develop their own concepts and initial design ideas. research tutors give different research directions and references according to each individual's direction. The project journal is a story line of the entire design process. In the project journal, I have a reflection on the design process and on the references and literature. This phase is an integration phase, linking what we have learnt, thought and done over the two semesters into a narrative.

Method:

My research question concerns the public interior; the National Bank of Belgium desired a permeable environment, and the public interior is an excellent way to blur the boundary between the bank and the public.

Research question:

What kind of public interiors promote interaction between the bank and the public and are adapted to the urban environment

Theoretical Research

- 1, The origins and development of the public interior
- 2, Public interiors in Brussels
- 3, Case studies
- 4, Connections between bank and public

Empirical Research

- 1, Mapping
- 2, City walking tour
- 3, Site Documentation (Bank typologies)

Over the course of its history, the National Bank of Belgium has evolved into an inward-looking mega-building. This is a result of its need for security as an institutional building, and therefore the stereotype that it is difficult to approach. So what kind of interventions could change the situation? I first studied some of the existing crowded public interior spaces in Brussels, the arcade street, the bozar, etc., analysing their position in the city and their connection to their surroundings in the urban environment, and further investigating whether banks also have the potential to do so. This is then deepened into a design approach in relation to the literature and case studies.

Relationship between Research and Design:

At the beginning of the first semester, the tutors encouraged us to create our own project logs to record the research process, design process, design reflections and feedback from our tutors during the year. The project journal has been very helpful in integrating my research and design. My design was revised twice after P2, but the themes were all related to public interiors, so although my design direction changed, it was always on the same story line as the research. Whenever I find it difficult to continue with a design, I go back and do more research, which brings me new ideas and inspiration. Research sometimes brings me not only new thoughts about design, but it also makes me realise if I am going in the wrong direction and if I need to rethink my approach or even the content of my design. In my projects, it's a constant switch between design and research, and sometimes it can be frustrating when the two are in conflict, but that's part of the job of an architect.

As the content of the project journal accumulated, we were able to keep reviewing our previous researches and better help our tutors understand our journey so that they could provide more accurate help, and it was also very rewarding to look at what we had done and thought over the two semesters. I am grateful for the existence of the project journal, which brings together research, design, me and my tutors in such a small book.

Relationship between the project and social context:

After p2 the chairs introduced the concept of Intelligence ruin. Architecture does not pass in time; time passes in architecture. And the National Bank of Belgium is a prime example of this. With social processes and the development of the banking sector, the National Bank of Belgium has gradually grown from a single office to its current status of occupying an entire city block. However, because of economic restructuring and various social factors, the bank no longer needs so much office space. At the same time, it wanted a more public-friendly environment, so it began to pursue changes. And the National Bank of Belgium is a prime example of this. With social processes and the development of the banking sector, the National Bank of Belgium has gradually grown from a single office to its current status of occupying an entire city block. However, because of economic restructuring and various social factors, the bank no longer needs so much office space. At the same time, it wanted a more public-friendly environment, so it began to pursue change; it wanted to move from being an institution that maintained stability to one that was an agent of change. This is reflected at the architectural level in how the surplus space is used and how it relates to the bank. How would it have to adapt to new needs if change occurred again? This is not just a question for the Belgian National Bank, but a question for society. What do we do with a building or space when it no longer fits into its current context? Will it be demolished and rebuilt or renovated? For sustainability, we would choose renovation, then 50 years after the renovation, 70 years after the renovation, does it change again with new adaptations and do we have a strategy to adapt before it needs to make adjustments so that the design can stand the test of time.

My project attempts to open up dull interior spaces, without defining in detail its functional properties, which will be able to adapt over time. In the event that, years later, the bank further reduces its space requirements and does not even need a physical space, then these spaces can also be used flexibly.