Personal information

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Studio  
Theme: Theme of personal fascination

Teachers: coordinator Robert Nottrot

Argumentation:

Initially, a fascination for those elements of life that are not often seen as beautiful, combined with the wish to design a medium-sized building that has both a public and a private nature led me to propose the design of a hospice as my graduation project. Based on the preliminary literature survey of medical literature regarding end-of-life care, I noticed the importance of spiritual well-being as a factor of quality of life in recent palliative care literature as well as the reported difficulties of palliative care professionals in engaging with this topic.

A theme that I had long been interested in and had written about for previous courses was the picturesque movement of the 18th century. I was struck by the similarities in themes associated with the 18th century picturesque and themes mentioned in medical literature regarding spirituality. My hypothesis was that picturesque principles could give new tools for hospices in dealing with spirituality through architectural means. I wanted to move away from a general overview of picturesque themes associated with spirituality and instead focus on a specific design, which in my view fits better with the emphasis on subjectivity in both the 18th century picturesque movement and present day conceptions of spirituality.

The design I choose shows some of the important themes of spirituality and the picturesque in an exemplary manner and is regarded as the “apotheosis of picturesque interior” by David Watkin. It also is the life work, home and personal museum of Sir John Soane, one of Britain’s most famous 18th century architects. By studying what is now called the John Soane Museum, its picturesque strategies and its relation to the life and spirituality of John Soane, I aim to extract ways of engaging with the highly subjective field of spiritual well-being in Palliative.

The reuse of existing buildings and structures is widely regarded as the main challenge for architects the next decades and most hospices in the Netherlands were created by reusing buildings originally designed for a different purpose. Furthermore, two of the most prominent themes in both spirituality and the picturesque movement are time and history. Because it is both relevant and interesting to work with an existing structure for my hospice design, I chose to do so.
Theme: Design of a Hospice that support quality of life and especially spiritual well-being, using the transcedent and picturesque strategies of the John Soane Museum.

Teachers: Robert Nottrot, Saskia de Wit, building technology mentor to be appointed

Title
Supporting quality of life and spiritual well-being in Hospice care; learning from the transcendent strategies of the John Soane House-Museum

Product

Problem Statement
The aim of palliative care in a hospice setting is to provide the best possible quality of life for dying patients and their families. It is clear for palliative care professionals that spiritual well-being is an essential part of quality of life, but they still find it hard to engage with this side of their work. In the medical literature I examined architecture is not mentioned at all as supporting quality of life.

Research questions

Initial medical literature survey: What are the important elements of quality of life in a hospice setting? How important is spiritual well-being in this? How is spiritual well-being theorized and what are the important elements of spiritual well-being?

Case studies of four hospices combined with interviews with caregivers: How do existing hospices support quality of life through the combination of the care process and its architecture? How is care in the hospices related to their architecture? Is spiritual well-being seen as important to quality of life by caregivers? Does the hospice architecture support the processes that are seen as important for spiritual well-being by caregivers?

Initial medical literature survey + 4 case studies: Does the hospice architecture of the case studies support the important aspects of quality of life and spiritual well-being as defined in medical literature? What can be learned from the hospices and what could be done differently?

The John Soane Museum: How is the design a reflection of the 18th century picturesque theory? How does the 18th century picturesque theory relate to spirituality and specifically to the notion of transcendence? How are these picturesque transcendent strategies employed in the design of the house museum and how does this reflect the designer John Soane.

The transcendent strategies: How can the most prominent 18th century picturesque and transcendent strategies from the John Soane museum be translated to a contemporary hospice setting?
The design: How can the contemporary transcendent strategies, extracted from the John Soane Museum, be incorporated in the design for a hospice to support well-being as an important aspect of quality of life? How can that design reuse an existing building? How can the existing building support the transcendent strategies?

Process

Goal

I aim to extract a set of strategies for dealing with spirituality in hospice care from John Soane’s design for his house museum and apply them to the design for a hospice in the Netherlands. The final product will thus be a set of design principles that show how one might engage spirituality, illustrated by a set of models and drawings and applied to one site-specific hospice design reusing an existing building.

Method description

Part 1

Initial medical literature survey: The discourse on quality of life and spiritual well-being in a palliative care setting have been studied using a selection of research available through scientific journals. The list of sources can be found in the literature list.

Case studies of four hospices combined with interviews with caregivers: The case studies consist of a site visit including photographs, combined with an interview with a relevant caregiver at each hospice. Building plans of each hospice are included in each case study. Combining what was reported by caregivers with that which can be distilled from the building plans and personal observations during the site visits, the case studies demonstrate how the hospice designs influence quality of life and specifically spiritual well-being.

Initial medical literature survey + 4 case studies: Comparing the medical literature survey to the hospice case studies in the form of a small essay.

Part 2

The John Soane Museum: The transcendent strategies of the John Soane Museum will be researched using a number of different sources. A general understanding of the term transcendence that goes beyond what can be found in medical literature will be studied at the Koninklijke Bibliotheek through a number of publications (see literature list). The transcendent strategies of the John Soane museum will partly be distilled from a literature survey that was done in the context of an architectural history paper on the picturesque elements of the John Soane Museum. Next to this existing research a site visit to the John Soane Museum has been made, which will be used to add a personal interpretation of the design and further literature which was only accessible at the Museum.
The transcendent strategies: The 18th century transcendent strategies from the John Soane Museum will be translated to a number of models and drawings that translate the concepts to a contemporary situation. Every strategy should result in one model or one set of drawings, showcasing the architectural principle on the actual site on which the new hospital will be designed.

The design: A number of possible locations for the hospice were selected in an early stage of the process using a list of buildings that are vacant at the moment by the Dutch municipality of Utrecht. The program of the design will be based on the 4 case studies of existing hospices and the conclusions regarding the support of quality of life and spiritual well-being of these case studies. The program will be used to select the final location for the design.

Later in the process the contemporary transcendental strategies distilled from the John Soane Museum through models and drawings will be used to instill a spiritual dimension in the design and inspire ways of reusing the preexisting building on its location.

Reflection

Relevance
Hospice care is a booming form of palliative care with the number of hospices rapidly expanding. Spiritual well-being is regarded as important but is not reflected in hospice designs nowadays. Caregivers also express difficulties in engaging with patient’s spirituality. The transcendental strategies of the John Soane Museum might give new insight into the ways in which hospices can engage with the transcendental dimension of life.

In medical literature much has been written on quality of life in palliative care and in lesser extent on spiritual well-being. However, designerly research on the incorporation of spiritual well-being in hospice architecture does not exist to my knowledge. The 18th century picturesque movement, which has gained increasing attention among architects in the last years, might enliven the way in which we look at spirituality. Taking one exemplary design from this movement, grants the possibility to take an in depth look at its strategies and maker. The relevant scientific question in this light is: Can the in depth study of one picturesque design, through designerly investigation give tools to deal with spirituality in a hospice setting today?
Time Planning

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Literature

Medical literature regarding palliative care, hospice care, quality of life and spirituality


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**Literature regarding the John Soane Museum and its picturesque and transcendent strategies**


Gilpin, W. (1808). *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape: With a Poem on Landscape Painting. To These are Now Added, Two Essays Giving an Account of the Principles and Mode in which the Author Executed His Own Drawings* (Vol. 8): T. Cadell and W. Davies.


