Graduation Plan - Armamentarium

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2. Studio
Theme: RMIT mixed projects Delft

Tutors:
Architecture: Lidy Meijers
Technology: Frank Koopman
Position paper: Iwert Bernakiewicz

Argumentation of choice of studio
The choice for my graduation at the department of RMIT has to do with a couple of reasons. Most important is that working with existing buildings is something that I enjoy very much. The stories and secrets that can be revealed in a building such as the Armamentarium tell a lot about the history of the city and can meanwhile be a beautiful inspiration for the reuse of such a building. The opportunity to work with such an old, unique building (1602) was another reason for me to choose the Armamentarium. I like the Armamentarium because of its diversity and size. The building is located in a dense and historical context where an intervention needs to be done very carefully. It is especially interesting for me to, after doing projects in Rotterdam, The Hague, Marseille etc. pass by the building every day. The difference of the real building on the one hand and working with drawings and models on the other hand will hopefully be very interesting and instructive for me.

Title of graduation project:
*The Armamentarium as a landmark for advanced metropolitan solutions*
3. Product

Problem statement
The former military warehouse and museum, the Armamentarium in Delft, is becoming vacant in 2014. The building is significant in Delft for multiple reasons. The Armamentarium was built in 1602 and was since then altered and expanded many times. This means that the building complex shows some of the most important social, cultural/historical currents of Delft. Besides that, it emphasizes the importance of the water and Delft as a national military city. The object itself is unique because it is a warehouse in the center of the city, which means that it had to be both functional and representative. These characteristics need to adapt the new function, a center for the AMS (advanced metropolitan solutions) institute. This mixed research/education institute has to be better accessible for the public, and also internally better connected to optimize the mutual transfer of knowledge.

The main problem in this assignment is how the Armamentarium and the new function can collaborate and create a new vivid and appropriate part of the city. Below are some sub questions which specify the problem a bit more.

Sub research questions:
- How can the isolated nature of the building and its location be utilized for the new semi-public function.
- Which stories and/or historical happenings are most important for the public image/memory of this building, and how can these be incorporated in the new design?
- How can the different buildings of the Armamentarium complex work together in order to achieve a whole in which all buildings retain their own identity?
- In what way can the Armamentarium become a new landmark and inspiring environment to boost the advanced metropolitan solutions?

Goal
The final goal of this project is, besides delivering a well elaborated plan for the Armamentarium, to further develop my own approach in designing and working with (existing) buildings. Over the last 5 years my approach has become more specific to my own preferences, but I can still focus more into a particular direction. Especially since starting my Master, I started looking at the fundamental ideas that are behind certain design approaches. Because I always try to understand the full (as far as possible) implications of the choices I make, I hope I can further utilize this theoretical study within my graduation. Part of this is also my position within the RMIT spectrum.

I think the graduation project is the last step in the process towards working in an architectural practice. Therefore in this project, more than in previous projects, I will try to be as concrete as possible, and base my interventions on real information to make this project as realistic as possible. However, the final solution should also be one that might challenge or evoke new creative ideas of re-using such a big building complex. For instance, the function that is chosen for the Armamentarium (AMS institute) and the interventions needed will not only be a result of purely pragmatic requirements, but also of inspiring, creative and unconventional solutions. This will hopefully lead to a design that is both realistic and pushing at the same time.
4. Process

Method description
The research in this project will be done by both using literature and case studies. Both methods will always be chosen in clear relation with the Armamentarium. The list of literature started with the analyses and the position paper, and will be supplemented during the whole process. The case studies that are going to be used will mainly be examples in renovation. Although the architectural themes used in my project can be traced back in every building, it is especially interesting to see how they are executed within existing buildings. Because the Armamentarium is a very typical building, both in its location and typology, other transformed warehouses will be an important part of the case studies. Besides this, the works of Carlo Scarpa, Peter Zumthor and other architects who use a clear conversation and layering of old and new, will be studied too.

In this project, even more than in others, I will try not only to concentrate on the steps that are to be made right away, but also to look further and think already about what the next steps can be. This means that in the analysis there will already be an idea or feeling about the function, and during the masterplan there will already be some ideas about the design directions. My belief is that designing is not a step by step process, but is always moving back and forth between research and design. Besides that, inspiration for design solutions can come from everything, so that means that your mind should always be aware and open for it. Although the schedule in chapter 6 looks very rigid, there will always be an interchange between the different aspects; the schedule only shows where the main focus is on in each period. It also means that already during the analysis, a position will be taken towards the building, and even first design proposals will be made. This makes it possible to steer the analysis into a certain direction that relates to the succeeding design. This approach might not be entirely objective, but I think that in architecture, enthusiasm about a (semi) subjective position, and a clear idea where this might lead to is more important than a fully objective analysis. Of course architecture is also a scientific practice, so taking a position early in the process should be done very carefully and should be open to change.

Literature and general practical preference
The lectures of Research Methods about different approaches in the architectural profession have set my enthusiasm about the phenomenological approach. Although very broad, this approach corresponds to my personal ideas about the critique on many modern buildings. I am therefore very interested in the works of architects like Peter Zumthor and Carlo Scarpa, who also try to enhance in more poetic ways. This project will be the first in which I will (consciously) use this approach, so I look with special attention to these projects and try to use these ideas/approaches in my own project.

Literature:
- Neveu, Marc J. Slow Time: Reading the Work of Scarpa. 2010 (internet)
- Rossi, Aldo. The architecture of the city. MIT Press
- Lynch, Kevin. The image of the city. MIT Press. 1960
- Cullen, Gordon. The concise townscape. Elsevier. 201
- Norberg-Schulz, C. Genius loci; towards a phenomenology of architecture. Academy. 1980
5. Reflection

Relevance
Maybe the most frequently heard forecast within the architectural practice is that renovation will become (or already is) the most important assignment in the coming years. It is very common as an architectural practice to specialize in restoration/renovation these days, and therefore as a student important to adjust to this market. But besides this very obvious relevance, there are some other aspects that make the RMIT department highly significant.

First, when designing a new or existing building, an architectural assignment (almost) never starts from a tabula rasa. Existing structures, demolished buildings, cultural/historical values etc. always force an architect to take the context into account. I dislike architecture that is generic and could be standing everywhere. Good architecture for me always engages with its situation. At the RMIT department the focus is always on the context.

Besides that, with the rising importance of renovation it is not only a question of how to renovate, but also about when not to renovate, i.e. when to demolish or do nothing. The goal of RMIT is not to preserve for the sake of preserving, but to look critically at the existing stock and make a deliberate balance. The Armamentarium, due to its additions and alterations, is a building where not only renovation, but also (partly) demolition can be an option.
6. Time planning

- Design
  - Research
    - Preliminary research
  - Definition of requirements
  - Elaboration
    - Concept design
    - Development of design
    - Final design
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