GRADUATION PLAN

Master of Science Architecture,
Urbanism & Building Sciences
TU Delft 2016-2017

PERSONAL INFORMATION

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STUDIO INFORMATION

Name & theme   Methods & Analysis: Positions in Practice - Bogota
Teachers   Klaske Havik & Jorge Mejia Hernandez

STUDIO ARGUMENTATION

For my final graduation project, I felt the necessity to develop research and design methods that could be applicable to any project, rather than solving a single design assignment. I very much enjoy the ‘generalist’ approach of the architect, knowing a little about a lot of things, opposed to the ‘specialist’ approach, knowing a lot about a little. So instead of becoming an expert on a single topic, I took the opportunity of graduating at the chair of Methods & Analysis, and develop a way of thinking, a set research and design methods, that I could apply to a multiplicity of design assignments, hence becoming a true generalist. In addition to this, the studio of Methods & Analysis enables me to develop my own position with regards to the unfamiliar context of Bogota, forcing me to question my own preconceptions about architecture and design in general. And lastly, Methods & Analysis represents for me the perfect balance between developing a - possibly vague and abstract - theoretical framework, while still maintaining focus on the real world and proposing answers to socially relevant issues.

GRADUATION PROJECT

Title    The Urban Retreat, Constructing a place of seclusion in the Latin American Metropolis
Location    Bogota, Colombia
PROBLEM STATEMENT & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Literary critic Andreas Huyssen suggested that our thinking and living temporality are undergoing a significant shift, as modernity has brought about a real compression of time and space. This suggested acceleration of the passage of time is most apparent in our contemporary metropolises, in which an ever-increasing percentage of the world’s population is currently residing. This hasty pace that is present in the urban environment is gravely suppressing contemplative practices such as acts of reflecting, reverie and imagining. Practices that require a slow state of mind of its practicer. To be able to escape this hasty pace of the city, slow down, and appropriately engage in contemplative practices, an architectural challenge arises. As Nietzsche already remarked in the late 19th century “One day, and probably soon, we need some recognition of what above all is lacking in our big cities; quiet and wide, expansive places for reflection [...] buildings and sites that would altogether provide expression to the sublimity of thoughtfulness and of stepping aside.” It is precisely this type of place that I feel compelled to construct.

To be able to facilitate the fundamental need of contemplative practices, I first need to get a better understanding of what its main condition is, what this notion of slowness is. Next, I will have to find out how one can achieve this state of slowness. Followed by a research on the role of the built environment in constructing this place of slowness.

After having found the answers to these questions, I can continue with further elaborating and constructing this place of slowness. A place where we can take walks in ourselves while we wander through its hallways and gardens. A place where we can escape the hasty pace of the every day. A place where we can simply slow down and engage in practices that the rushed city suppresses.

DESIGN OBJECTIVE

I intend to design a substantial sized public building, on a site on the edge of the historic city centre and the wooded mountain slopes. Within this building I want to construct a state of slowness, and thus offer an escape to the hasty city. Themes such as the courtyard, enclosing and opening up, and the inclusion of natural elements will be the main focus of my architectural endeavor.

METHOD

My research up until this point consisted mostly of reading literature, extracting it’s most relevant information, and applying this knowledge onto my topic. Up until now I haven’t found any piece of literature, architectural theory, or architectural project, that pursued the goal of creating slowness in a similar way as I intend to do. Therefore, the gathering of information was an arduous task, as simply very little has been written on the topic. By reading literature concerning the relation between architecture and time, for example, I eventually did find suitable and usable information. And because of the intangible nature of my subject, slowness, I haven’t conducted much architectural, urban or historical research on the context of Bogota, yet. And as my project intends to seclude itself from its hasty surroundings, spatially analyzing the context hasn’t yet been a top priority. Nevertheless, as my design progresses, I will have to conduct a thorough research of the site, as can be seen in the ‘time planning’ below. My greatest challenge for the coming semester will be to translate the acquired theoretical knowledge into an physical architectural project. Finding the appropriate method to do so will be essential for the success of my graduation project.
FRAME OF REFERENCE

Aben, R. & Wit, de S. - De Omsloten Tuin - (1998) Uitgeverij 010, Rotterdam
Hayssen, A. - Present pasts, the Politics of Memory - (2003) University Press, Stanford
Marti Aris, C. - Silencios Elocuentes - (1999) Universitat Politecnica de Catalunya
Speranza, P. - Time as a Medium - (2016) Architecture Timed - Architectural Design

Furthermore, I found great inspiration in the work of Peter Zumthor, especially with regards to his ability to create atmospheres and places of exception through intuitive and seemingly simple design measures.

REFLECTION

As I already have discussed above, the deliberate creation of Slowness with architectural means is, as far as I know, unprecedented within the architectural discourse. This makes the project quite ambitious, but at the same time really relevant on an academic level. It feels a bit uncomfortable to say that I’m conducting groundbreaking research, because I think I’m not. But I hope that my discoveries and findings can contribute to the greater discussion on the topic of facilitating contemplative practices and creating places of slowness.

Besides the academic relevance, I also believe that on a social level my project correlates to a greater ongoing movement. The movement of Slow Food, Mindfulness and meditation. Movements that strive for handling and acting deliberate, with the utmost attention, to try to gain a greater happiness from the mundane everyday activities, while at the same time attaining peace of mind and calmness. With other words, movements that dare to question the ‘fast’ character of modern day society. Against fast-food, speed-dating and spectacle news journalism. Against the 60-hour workweek, the daily rush-hour commute and the burn-out before thirty. Instead, these movements propagate for acting deliberate, living in the now, taking your time and simply enjoying the moment.

TIME PLANNING