The medieval centre of Rotterdam got reconstructed in a modernistic fashion after the bombing during WWII. This resulted in a city centre that to this day has abundant space for traffic, distinctly separate areas for working, living and shopping. The ‘public’ spaces left are often empty and because of their size afford mostly big temporary events (markets, festivals, parcours, parades etc.).

This project then has as its aim to provide for some more intimate public spaces. It seeks to do this while at the same time tackling challenges of connecting in the public space. It uses ‘play’ as a method to create a common ground for activating and using the public space and truly make use of the ‘publicness’ of this space as much as possible.

In this regard the ‘public’ is considered as: the connection to ‘otherness’. The potentials of play to create public connections then lie in these characteristics of play: inclusive and non-judgmental, temporary and all-emersive.

A site within the new city was chosen that has little existing value and that is on the edge of separate functions to be able to create a successful revitalisation project of this public space. The site concerns the streets and empty blocks in the “Westewagenstraat” and “Westewagenhoven”. These blocks are amply due to insufficient quality for the functions of housing and office as they were build in 1952. By changing the function to a public one that has less demands about constant comfort, the structure that is essentially still in good state can be used for a longer time. Also the interventions on these blocks could cross over to the empty shopping mall that is adjacent to this street as well.
empty shopping mall

Site: 5 empty blocks

Main shopping street

shops - appartments

factory

square

houses
Interviews with multiple people about their memories in the public spaces of the area that was changed after WWII, led me to become aware of all the different ways of perception, activities and values of these public spaces. Of particular interest to me was the fact all participants possessed a form of imagination. This made me to design a game with their memories and some external scenes that could induce an imagination play that could be part of a design process.

Playing the design game with a few people led to a set of imaginative stories that could take place on the site, in and around the blocks.

These stories were translated to physical materials and spaces that interconnect in a way to create an exploration of the ‘other’ in different blocks along the lines of one sensory experience (1 sense per block was the guiding theme).
Soundcone

Desert concert hall

Whomb (in cave of rebirth)

Musical fireslide (connects to cave of rebirth and other floors)

Sculpural whispering wall

Openable glass roof to regulate excessive temperatures

Hooks to hang anything (coats, temporary shading, theatre attributes)

Added floor to redistribute the weight of the sand finish layer

Woolen patterned covering redistributes the sound and light of the city in a dampened way

Pidgeonhouse

Between two mat polymer sheets

Woolen patterned covering redistributes the sound and light of the city in a dampened way

Sound made down in the hanging basket exits the cone in the desert like a distant radio.

Parts of the cone are not covered with loam and mosaic to let little sound penetrate the middle floors

Rod to climb in, basket doorframe that lets out sound, door once closed is a carpet covered seat also

Spotlight fittings in overlapping rim: wooden plint with fittings for the woven cone verticals.

Hanging willow/rebar basket covered with loam paint/relief/sculptures on outside and recycled mosaic (mostly mirror on top and coloured downwards) filled with epoxy layer on the inside to reflect sound and direct it upwards; to reflect daylight downwards towards hanging basket.

SOUND INTERVENTIONS
Musical fire slide

Attributes of theatre facade

Exit soundcone

DESERT CONCERT HALL
Soundcone exiting in desert concert hall. The materialisation is the effect of a mud throwing event that has taken place.

Sculptural whispering wall on middle floors. The materialisation is the result of a sculptural public workshop. The deep figures with openings that transmit sound form a dramatic experience for audience.

Hanging basket covered with loam paintings. A result of a public workshop as well. With all loam interventions the exteriors can be adapted (demolished/rebuild/covered) as much as desired. Like this every period of time an new group of people gets the chance to express itself in these public workshops.
Pyramid of Stars
Can be climbed in and be seated in the right angle to do some stargazing.
The inside is painted in a public workshop and highlights at night with a second painting in fluorescent paint to provide for the minimal visual guides not disrupting the light of the stars.
Block with Visual Interventions

Hall of sky performances

- Glassroof, slanting towards this edge with ventilation openings there
- Rails on beam for show lighting. Also contains pulleys to pull up the performance wall- and floor elements
- Retractable temporary floor elements. 5 cm compressed woodfiber sandwich panel. If needed covered with a rubber dance floor
- Retractable walls that carry the temporary performance floor. 5 cm metal honeycomb sheets
- Closing floor piece is carried in via door
- Weight on rod keeps door open and gives a hint to look up to where this is hanging from; subsequently the viewer sees something is opened and is inclined to walk up the next floor and investigate.
- Retractable walls attached to sticking out rebars to form the mesh of a fence. Top handle of fence is covered with transparent polymer tape with integrated led lighting
- Hall of sky performances block with constructive piramid shape out of fiber reinforced concrete, hanging on existing beam structure.
- Wooden retractable door, retractable robe balustrade of door and counterweight that keeps door on place while open
- Rails on beam for show lighting. Also contains pulleys to pull up the performance wall- and floor elements
- Glassroof, slanting towards this edge with ventilation openings there
The appearance of the piramid of stars....
Intrigue by shape, lighting and colours, as well as by rod/people sticking out of the bottom of the shape.

Coming closer reveals the exterior materialisation of this shape:
Concrete with relief inlays in the mold that are made in public workshops. In the concrete, pigment can be added to obtain coloureffects as well.
The appearance of the performance hall... Robe with weight hanging mid-air gives a clue to look up and discover the view of an opened door.