Graduation Plan
A new Academic Library

Culture, Identity and Sociability in the Inner City.
The University Library as a Public Retreat.
Christoph Grafe and Mark Pimlott.

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• **Product**

**Problem Statement**

The studios posed problem arose out of the question “Who owns the city centre?”. This question according to the studio’s introduction text seems to be ever more crucial since one sees large public institutions, small cultural and social spaces and social housing in the inner city gradually being supplanted by shopping and leisure areas and luxury apartments. The studios staff states that the city government should resist this tendency by supporting alternative initiatives that stimulate a more mixed use of this important area.

The university library is one of the last public institutions still present in the inner city. The threat of exile from the inner city is however more present than ever before. For this reason it was decided to do research on a new academic library in the inner city of Amsterdam. To try and find architectural examples of how public institutions, such as universities could have there own specific position in the city, instead of being pushed to the peripheral sites like for example the science park and AMC-campuses.

A university library enables the opportunity to create a building that is both public, but in a way also very private. The private act of studying takes place in a space where others are studying, a public space dedicated to concentration without distractions, but also to gathering and being conscious of others. That is the paradox where this project is about. It is about the university library as a public retreat.

The central question is how the academic library can transform its latent potential to become the defender of a public retreat in a commercialized public space, where one can study (private) in public?

**Goal**

The programme being a university library and study centre of almost 23,000 square metres needs to find a place in the city. Therefore, one of the first goals in this graduation project is to find an appropriate site for this big public programme that already by its sheer size transcends the scale of the Amsterdam context.

A place like the university library has an important role to play in the midst of the city, in the midst of student life. The proposal that will evolve out of this graduation project needs to consider this importance. Thereby, this graduation project has the intention to develop a place that works for the user as well as the citizen. In the course of this graduation project a new academic library in the midst of the city, where people can work, study, read, and think in public, will be built in our imagination. The final goal being a public retreat (or a public interior if you like) that is convincingly used and situated within culture.
• Process

Method description

The usage of the word “new” in the title: “A new Academic Library”, like any involving the word “new”, opens up an historical perspective. Therefore, the studios methods to design a new university library will focus on a close (historical) reading of both the existing location and the wider (historical) context. Context being: architectural traditions and cultures, precedents of libraries and institutional architecture, continuities and discontinuities in the architecture of the city of Amsterdam, and finally, a general careful study of architectural models and building typologies from various periods.

Specific research methods, which are going to be utilized in this graduation project, will be:


- The study of the Jussieu library competition and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France competition as an urban and architectural precedent. (Arch. Rem Koolhaas/OMA, Dominique Perrault, Alvaro Siza, James Stirling, Jaques Herzog & Pierre de Meuron, Toyo Ito, Jean Nouvel)

- The historical and typo-morphological analysis of the city and the several proposed sites of which three inner city sites (Binnengasthuis Area, Sarphatistraat, Frederiksplein) and one periphery site (Zuidas). In order to get to know the particularities of every location. To get to know how a new academic library can inform and enrich the site and vice versa, and to finally enable a choice for one of the proposed sites.

- A Research Seminar, related to the topics of the Studio and focusing on both the programme, the intended users and the specific location, led by Irene Cieraad (a cultural anthropologist)

These several research methods will subsequently inform the design for a new academic library. To be able to give an answer to the research question posed the graduation project is being developed around the notion of ‘research by design’. The design will get its shape in an intense design course with several design exercises focusing on urban questions, building mass, space and interiors, measure, materials, appearance, makeability and building technology.

Literature and general practical preference

A literature list too long to discuss in this graduation plan will be conducted to research and inform myself on how to design a proposal like this. One of the researches conducted for this graduation project is the research report I made for the architectural research seminar “public interior” led by Irene Cieraad. Central theme of this research was the individual study place in the academic library. By collecting user preferences in two existing UvA study centres we were able to get insights in the user preferences regarding 1. the study centres location in the city 2. The study place in relation to the study centres extra functions 3. The study place in relation to the space it is situated in 4. The physical properties of the study place itself. These carefully interpreted preferences can subsequently inform the design of the new academic library.
• Reflection

Relevance
This research by design shows a direction of thought for a new academic library in the inner city of Amsterdam. The final project is a scenario that reacts on contemporary culture. Architecture can be both a way to analyse the existing situation and a way to expose yet unknown worlds. Regarding this potential the projects relevance lies in the fact that it will not only be an architectural translation of current cultural and academic transformations taking place, but also an impetus to new and unexpected connections between city and building, between public and private, between student and citizen.
Time Planning

SPRING:
06/02/2012 Project start
27/02/2012 – 01/03/2012 Workshop Leeskabinet (MSc1/3)
13/04/2012 P1 Progress Review
Product: Position Paper
> A written statement (with sketches that relate to this text) on what your position is vis-à-vis the problem of the University Library as the programme and as the component of the life in Amsterdam. The text should focus on how you deal with the public collective and the private use and on how this set of buildings contributes to the city thereby creating strong strategies and thoughts on the (urban) setting.
19/04/2012 Deadline Urban Questions
26/04/2012 Final Presentations, Research Seminar, Irene Cieraad
03/05/2012 – 08/03/2012 Excursion Vienna
24/05/2012 Critics Day
24/05/2012 Final Deadline Report, Research Seminar, Irene Cieraad
29/06/2012 P2 Formal Assessment
30 minutes presentation/15 minutes questions and appraisal.
Product: A convincing preliminary design in drawings and models at a 1:200 scale.
- graduation plan, provisional research, provisional design.
- urban draft 1:1000 / 1:500
- programme of requirement
- draft design (plans, cross-cuts, facades) 1:200
> An idea on how a building can enrich and stage this part of the city. Statements and positions on place and city, on the programme and its organisation in our cultural context and its relation to the city.
All of them visible in the beginning of an architectural project.

SUMMER:
31/08/2012 09:00-12:00 Exam AR1A065 Delft Lectures on Architectural History

AUTUMN:
Mid fall 2012-2013 (educational week 8/9) P3 Progress Review
30 minutes presentation/15 minutes questions
Product: Content and progress plan of graduation project.
- plans, facades, cross-cuts, 1:200 / 1:100
- part of the building, plan and cross-cut 1:50
- façade fragment with hor. and vert. cross-cut 1: 20
- details 1:5
- models

End fall 2012-2013 P4 Formal Assessment (Go/No Go)
30 minutes presentation/15 minutes questions and appraisal.
Product: Graduation Project
- theoretic and thematic support of research and design + reflection on architectonic and social relevance
- situational drawing 1:5000 / 1:1000
- plan b.g. in situ 1:500
- plans, facades, cross-cuts 1:200 / 1:100
- part of the building, plan and drawings 1:50
- façade fragment with hor. and vert. cross-cut 1: 20
- details 1:5
- models

End fall 2012-2013 P5 Formal Assessment / Public Final presentation
Product: Idem as P4, but further developed and also made presentable for the ‘layman’.