Last september I came up with a proposal for my graduation project in which two fascinations were combined. Firstly my passion for pieces of architecture integrated in picturesque landscapes. Secondly a durable stay for humankind on planet Earth. I set the goal to make a redesign or a design for an addition to the giant windturbines in order for them to become a welcome addition to the Dutch landscape instead of a degradation. A research followed, a research firstly on picturesque landscapes. I dived into Picturesque paintings from the seventeenth century, the cinematic english landscape gardens, english theatre design, Dutch landscape painters and I extracted design rules for experience based landscapes.

I researched the influence of weather and time on architecture and how these can connect the architecture to the landscape.

For my design task this research meant that I was going to design a small scale windturbine with integrated secundair functions, in a small scale picturesque Dutch landscape, with materials that interact visibly with weather and time.

After P2 I soon found out that small scale and wind energy do not go hand in hand, besides I already felt for some months that sustainability has way more interesting and more important fields than green energy production. Through the winter months I read the books ‘Sapiens’ and ‘Homo Deus’ both written by Yuval Noah Harari. These books give a magnificent perspective on what homo sapiens have been doing on this planet the past three million years and how our behavior changed in the last 400 years. It opened my eyes that sustainability is not only about transforming our lifestyle in the same lifestyle but then sustainable. It is about seeing our expectations and ‘needs’ of our daily life in a long term perspective. This brought me to a new goal for my picturesque design project, it was not about green energy anymore but about showing people that we can let loose the standards we are used to, that we can live more sober and this way even feel better. My building would encourage a more sober but more beautiful way of living by being connected to the rhythms of day and night, the seasons and the passage of a lifetime.

This combination of the beauty of landscapes and sober living/being content, formed a link to the story of the Garden of Eden, the Paradise from which humanity was banned because of their greed and never being satisfied.

I combined these aspects in my project named ‘Parkstad’s Return to Eden’, my design in this concept is called ‘The School for Contentment’.

The main themes of my project became: Weather, Time, Fleeting, The sublime, landscape architecture, sensory experience, sober living and contentment.

My project has changed form a lot since the start in September but the themes of landscape architecture, the sublime, the picturesque, sensory experience and a durable stay on earth have been there from the beginning. In the current stage of The School of Contentment these aspects are however way more subtile and deeply integrated in the concept (compared to my former idea of windturbines). For me, this is what makes my proces extremely interesting; to start off with an idea, to find out that it was based on a few themes that I have always been passioned about. To dive as deep as you can in these subjects and to end with a project in which these themes are deepened out and much more subtile integrated in as wel function, program story and architecture.
To put my graduation project in the broader context of my development as an architect the last seven years I think the freedom that the studio of Architectural Engineering provides the student with, has been the most valuable condition to orientate and place myself within the broad field of architecture. In my opinion, the Faculty of Architecture does in general leave barely space for the development of the students own fascinations and passion and has one overall vision in which smooth and clean conceptual architecture is the norm. The picturesque, the painterly, the passage of time, the imperfection and the sublime are ingredients of the architecture that I have always felt attracted to most, and were always in contradiction with the faculty's idea's. This year the studio and my tutors gave me the freedom to explore these themes and to find out that they definitely deserve their place in the field. Therefore I found out that the architecture that I love is definitely part of the world of architecture, which gives me hope that I can work on these themes in the future.