The Architecture of Pleasure
A new recreational pier and wellness spa for Scheveningen

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Reflection Report
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Research

Goal
The goal of this graduation research addressed the current state of the seaside resort, a state of decline in many cases, with a specific perspective on seaside resorts in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands; Brighton, Clacton-on-Sea and Scheveningen. The research is dedicated to explore possible implementations in the seaside resort to overcome decline. Within the design task a new recreational pier has been created to answer to findings from research.

Today, seaside resorts struggle to meet the desired program of pleasure within their society. As a result, the architecture, like that of piers, is decaying. This decay befalls from seaside resorts unable to respond to continuously changing trends and fashions in leisure, stagnating incomes and high maintenance costs.

The aim of the research focussed on the evolution of leisure in Western society in the seaside resort since the beginning of the 1800s, by exploring leisure in society then, now and tomorrow in order to answer to the current state of Scheveningen as a resort and reactivate the context of leisure.

Research question
The main research question addressed both the developments in leisure in societies during the seaside resorts’ glorious times as well as today. With this research question tools, for producing catalyst powers within the specific urban context of the seaside are exposed.

How can a new recreational pier in the contemporary context gain similar or even stronger catalyst powers as former recreational piers?

Methodology
To explore the evolution of leisure in Western society in the seaside resort since the early 1800s, both a literature review and case studies were completed. The literature review focuses on the theoretical framework of the seaside resort as a place of retreat, the principle of pleasure, the architecture of pleasure and the sociological evolution of leisure. Further literature was assessed to gain information and evidence for case studies. Case studies are employed to learn from the evolution of leisure in seaside resorts and the influential factors of success and failure.

Reflection
The case studies proved to be useful to understand the factors involved in creating a place dedicated to leisure. The literary study, however, created a great perspective of the context and the essential subjects I was researching. What is the role of leisure within the social context? Or what did people go to the seaside for when seaside resorts first originated?

The seaside resort, today, seems to be a place of pleasure, where one visits to spend their money on midget golf and all-you-can-eat sushi. But the seaside firstly became a place for medicinal benefits and a place to admire the natural setting; A place of retrieving from everyday life. Today, the resort attempts to maintain this essence, through its commerce, but really has soaked up the atmosphere of the city and no longer maintains to be a place “away from everyday life”.

The most evident result was the fact that places of success, strongly characterise themselves as different. The seaside resort of Brighton, currently still successful, shows that the “uniqueness” of a place, strongly influences its success. Whilst most of its original architecture...
has remained, the architecture in unsuccessful resorts, such as Clacton-on-Sea and Scheveningen, have been renewed several times and never committed to originality. They have become places of everyday life.

Images: The following timelines show the program of pleasure at the seaside resorts of Brighton, Clacton-on-Sea, and Scheveningen. The duration of program at the seaside resort, the reason for introduction of failure of the program and the success of program are shown in relation to shifts and important events in history that have impacted the success, change or failure of the seaside resort. For larger images see research.
Design

Goal
The final design of my graduation is a new recreational pier for Scheveningen, The Hague. As the current pier is in a poor state and was closed in October of 2013, and the entire seaside resort of Scheveningen is slipping into a phase of decline, a new pier for Scheveningen can be a catalyst.

For Scheveningen it is important to have a pier. Not only because 23% of all visitors in Scheveningen visit the pier, but also because it forms a national landmark. In addition a majority of the citizens in The Hague indicate they don’t mind if the current pier designed by Hugh Maaskant were to be replaced by a completely new one, as long as there is a pier.

Relationship design & research
The main conclusions derived from the research have been implemented into the design strategy. Research mainly indicated the seaside resort is about creating a place other than the usual or everyday life; a place of retrieval and exclusivity.

Since Scheveningen has transformed from a place of retrieval in the 1900s into cityscape today, the new pier will be a place of retrieving from everyday life and interact with the natural setting of the sea. To refer to the heritage of the seaside resort, which was initially visited for medicinal and recreational bathing and offer and exclusive experience, the new pier will house a spa.

Within the broader context I believe this design can be an example of an architecture answering to desires and needs of all times by making a bold and exclusive statement. The design does not only bind itself to today, but also to tomorrow. Not by flexible plans, which may conform, but by being bold and being extremely exclusive in experience. It is the experience of the urban context and architectural form and space that allow for visitors to make memory and will result in them making intensively use of space in time.

Reflection
The aim for the design was to address the essence of the seaside resort and create a place of escape from everyday life. The entire design has dedicated itself to this notion. As an exclusive experience of the natural setting at the seaside and an exclusive spa, this design could boost the Scheveningen resort for the current visitors and new visitors.

This plan focusses on a long term existence through the creation of exclusivity, attempting to be less influenced by changing trends and fashions on free time activities. However, I believe it may take a larger urban undertaking to reactivate the entire seaside resort of Scheveningen. The design for the Scheveningen pier and used strategies as I suggest, may, however, serve as an example to design on an urban scale.

The broader context
Architecture must dedicate itself to the experience of its users, both exterior and interior. The new design supports this notion to its fullest. The goal to create a place away from everyday life through the creating of a new and exclusive experience has resulted in a design dedicated to a sense of otherworldliness.