GRADUATION
PLAN
MSC 3/4
Dieke Luursema
Personal Information

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Why did I chose this studio?
This studio offers a lot of freedom and possibilities to the students. This also gives you a large responsibility on your own graduation project which I really like. The way technology is used in relation to architecture is something that striked me and matches the way I look at designing.

Title

Experiencing live music through architecture: A study on temporary architecture for pop-music festivals.
The subject chosen for this graduation project combines two personal fascinations. It started with a fascination for music and sound. To combine sound and architecture into one, you need acoustics. However, music is more than just sound. It is about atmosphere and appeals to all senses.

As a kid I was always busy with music. Singing with my mother, dancing with my sister and signing in theatre and pop bands. I was always fascinated in how music can trigger emotions and more senses than just the ears. The experience of music is more than notes, sounds and instruments. It is an emotional experience that can move people, transform feelings and create social coherence. Live performance of music can therefore never be fully captured.

Another fascination is that of the making of architecture. By designing architecture to the last joint it becomes real. This way of designing architecture seems more free than other types of architecture because of multiple reasons. It is also a very good way of trying out new ideas in a quick way, therefore this can be very innovative.

An opportunity for making architecture and my fascination for music, is available on festival sites. Therefore, the subject of this graduation project is the design of a temporary and innovative performance place for pop music at Lowlands festival.
Graduation project

Relevance
In a world where a lot of music, theatre shows and other cultural performances can be found online for free, live performance becomes more important for artists. The number of outdoor festivals in the Netherlands has grown tremendously during the last ten years. Over fifty percent of these events is a music festival, from which eighty percent focus on pop music. Nonetheless, there has not been a lot of research on the designing of a performance place for such a festival. This research can help designers to create a performance place that fits the needs of visitors and performers.

Problem statement
The tents that are used at most pop music festivals at the moment do not provide good acoustics. This can cause the sound pressure level to be very high in some places which can cause hearing damage.

Some people use earplugs to protect their ears from damaging. A lot of extra amplifiers and speakers are installed to fill the whole area with sound but it is very difficult to create good quality sound throughout the entire audience. The technology of sound systems of today and recording music has improved so much that the quality of playing music at home or on your phone with a good head set is better than the quality in some performance places.

Niels Peeters, from Mojo, one of the largest live music organisations in the Netherlands, explains that the choice of a tent for a festival is mainly based on financial reasons. Creating a new tent would create a big step in festival culture. Sound is, however, not the only problem in these tents. What makes a festival worth visiting is the overall experience of the performance. The current tents are not designed to add to the user experience.

Objective
The objective of this graduation project is to design a temporary performance space for festivals which contributes to the total experience of the performance. The research will be used to find tools for architects to design a performance place for a pop music festival. This starts with good acoustic qualities for the performance, but there are more aspects that can attribute to this like lighting, the relation between musician and audience, comfort and more.

Experience of the user is often seen as a way to define what the user is seeking and paying for. A research by Michael Morgan showed that the user experience of a folk festival, and of other leisure activities in

1 PRS for Music (2016)
2 Infographic (2015)
3 Adelman-Larsen (2014)
4 Peeters & Van Eerdenburg (2016)
general, can’t be measured by a simple list. It consists of multiple interconnected elements. All these attributes add up to the overall experience of the visitor.\textsuperscript{5} In short, the goal is to make people start saying “I am going to experience a band live” in stead of “I am going to see a band live”.

**Context**

For this project a context which gives a lot of freedom is needed. Also it should suit the temporary character of the project. However, designing something without a fixed context can be very challenging. Therefore a specific festival of focus is chosen. This can work as a test location. Using an existing festival, there will be a frame of reference in the sense of: type of visitors, type of music, size/capacity and atmosphere.

A number of festivals were tested using a list of requirements like: outdoor, personal experience, multiple days, in The Netherlands etc.

The festival that is most suitable is ‘a Camp-flight to Lowlands Paradise’, or Lowlands in short. Lowlands is one of the largest pop music festivals in The Netherlands. Therefore, it can function as an example for other festivals in and outside of the Netherlands. Besides pop music it also hosts some theatre performances, comedy, art and film. The festival is held in the third weekend of August every year in Biddinghuizen. Approximately 50,000 people visit the festival each year.

**Overall design question**

How can a temporary performance place for 2000-3000 people be designed that contributes to the experience of the audience at a live pop music performance at Lowlands festival?

**Thematic research question**

The main question that will be answered in this research is: **What aspects of a performance place contribute to the experience of the performance at a pop music festival?**

To answer this question, a further specification of the question is needed. For whom is this festival performance place? At a festival there are many users and target groups. To get a grip on these groups, three sub-questions are formulated below:

- What creates a good performance place at a pop-music festival for the visitor?
- What creates a good performance place at a pop-music festival for the musician?
- What creates a good performance place at a pop-music festival for the sound engineer?

These three groups are seen as most important user groups in relation to the problem statement (sound and user experience).

\textsuperscript{5} Morgan (2006)
Methodologies

The main method used for this graduation project is a toolbox. This contains elements that can help contribute to the experience of live performance. The base for this toolbox is formed with the research.

For the research, interviews are used to find what the three different user groups (visitor, musician and sound engineer) wish for in a (temporary) performance place. These interviews are analysed using literature studies. This has led to four main goals that make a performance place better:

- **Carefree:** for the artist and sound engineer this means being able to focus on their main task and relaxing. This makes the performance better. For the audience not having to worry about anything means they can enjoy the performance to the fullest without distraction.

- **Participation:** if the audience is involved in the concert they will remember it better. Also artists like to feel connected to the audience, it creates a better performance. This category contains three sub categories: interaction with performer, sight-lines and intimacy.

- **Sound quality:** Acoustics and positioning PA can contribute directly to how the audience and artist experience the music and makes the performance better.

- **Uniqueness:** This is a very important category, because it is mentioned by many interviewees. However, there are less tangible elements that connect to this category. A reason for this is that uniqueness is achieved by doing something different than expected. Therefore the element of ‘surprise’ is added to this category. Uniqueness is influenced by the other categories as well.

For the design, reference projects will be analysed to add tools to the toolbox. Furthermore, some materials tests will be done to test acoustic qualities of materials.

After some first designs are made, these designs can be tested on their acoustic qualities using computer simulation like Acoustic-CAD.

In the scheme below a visualisation of these methods is given. These methods do not work separately, but together can help me in designing a new temporary performance place for Lowlands.
Planning

Below a sketch for a planning is shown. As this illustrates, all of the methods will be used simultaneously. This means that the design process consists of multiple scale levels that are tackled at the same time. Material tests in a scale 1:1 or smaller scale (1:5 / 1:20). Form-finding happens simultaneously but on a very large scale (1:500 / 1:200). This creates an iterative process.

The toolbox is the main guide through the design process and creates the link between research and design. However, for the design more is needed like a requirement list of safety measures, stability, crowd control. This, together with a more thorough analysis of the location will be done just before and after the P2 presentation.

Literature

On the next page a list of literature references is found. Besides these references, interviews are done with experts to gain knowledge on the subjects for the design.


