GRADUATION PROJECT - STUDIO ‘HYBRID BUILDINGS FOR THE DUTCH CITY’

PROGRAMME
Wellness center with swimming pool and sports school

LOCATION
Spoordijk, Amsterdam / The Netherlands

INSTITUTE
Faculty of Architecture, Delft University of Technology

SUPERVISORS
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TIME FRAME
2004 - 2005
THE HYBRID CONDITION

The combination between architecture and the urban context formed the backbone of the design assignment for a ‘hybrid building’ at a location on the threshold between the historic and the modern city of Amsterdam.

‘Hybrid buildings are distinguishable from most building types because of the complex combination and intertwining of different functions, types of spaces and constructive systems. They open up the possibility of creating a network of new relationships and connections and by doing so they play on the culture of changing coalitions between a range of social functions and organizations. Hybrid buildings generate room for any unpredictable changes, the unplanned element and requirements.’

The conflict between contradicting function, development, consumption, needs and demands, is studied in depth from the urban scale down to the scale of the building, the design and, finally, its architectural detail.

A research by design on the typology of the ‘hybrid building’ in relation with the urban context (the center of Amsterdam) and ongoing transformations within the contemporary city (recent city extensions on the former harbour islands and in the IJ-lake), defined a precise location and functional programme for an individual architectural design.
The analysis of the urban context brought up the threshold as a leitmotif for the eventual architectural design. The presence of the train dike, elevated high above the surface, has an unmistakable influence on the diverge urban development on the two sides of the dike. Seen from street level the dike divides both sides and prevents every - even visual - connection. From the train - driving on an empty strip elevated above street level - the experience of the surrounding is unique; unknown and unseen parts of the city are revealed by the extraordinary perspective into the “heart” of the city.

The contradiction between the urban character of the two sides of the train dike at the chosen location, created the challenge to combine these characters into one (hybrid) design which addresses as well the emptiness and the extraordinary experience from the dike itself. The - for a dense city like Amsterdam - unusual presence of ‘emptiness’ is combined with a ditto scenery of the functional programme. A beauty and health centre with a swimming pool, sauna, beauty centre, sports school and various additional flexible spaces, avails the emptiness to stage the city as a vigorous background, there where the empty direct surrounding preserves the privacy of the undressed visitor within the building.

The framework for the design is formed by the dimensions (division and depth of the parcels) and character (usage of the split level entrance, light shafts and courtyards) of the historical Amsterdam building block. The contemporary interpretation of this historical typology of the building block and its surprising usage of the courtyards, is reflected in the spatial organization and appearance of the beauty and health centre. The absence of room -and space dividing elements between the various activities and treatments, stimulates the interaction between the various visitors. The transparent glass-facade excites the curiosity of the passer-by. The privacy of the visitors is safeguarded by an ingenious play with levels, illumination and acoustics in accordance with the functional usage of the various spaces. The spatial organization offers the visitors of the beauty and health centre the possibility to combine the various activities and treatments according to their own wishes.
LEVEL: 3.000
SCALE: 1:500

01 - TRAINSTATION
02 - CANAL
05 - GARDEN
06 - PARKING
07 - BOAT DOCK
08 - ENTRANCE
11 - ENTRANCE HALL
12 - INFORMATION / TICKETBOX
13 - CHANGING-CABINS
14 - CHANGING-ROOMS
15 - GARDEN
16 - SWIMMING POOL
17 - STEAMBATHS
18 - DELIVERY
01 - TRAIN DKE
02 - CANAL
03 - SLOW TRAFFIC ROUTE
04 - SQUARE
05 - GARDEN
06 - PARKING
07 - BOAT DOCK
10 - FLEXIBLE SPACE
11 - ENTRANCE HALL
12 - INFORMATION / TICKETBOX
13 - CHANGING-CABINS
15 - GARDEN / ATRIUM
17 - STEAMBATHS
19 - SAUNA
24 - FITNESS
25 - FLEXIBLE SPACE
27 - SQUASH
A clear routing plays, together with the hygienic circumstances and a convenient atmosphere, an important role to pleasure the visitors by their visit to the XBH Beauty & Health center. The absence of tedious thresholds, closed doors and enclosed spaces, strengthens the connection, both visual and physical, between the various spaces, visitors and activities. The spatial organisation of the building provides various levels of intimacy and atmosphere in correspondence with its programme and function.

The routing and organisation of the Beauty & Health center largely determine the pleasure of the visitors during the stay within the building. A healthy stay however is as well defined by the routing as prescribed to the visitor by the spatial organisation of the building and its various beauty and health programmes. A visit to, for example, the sauna is not necessarily good for the body. The sequence of the different acts; footbath - sauna - fresh air - shower and plunge bath, influences the effect of the treatment on the body and thus the health of the visitor. The absence of one element in this chain, or the omit of an act, could even have a negative effect on body and health. Therefore every single section within the XBH Beauty and Health center has been organised to guide the visitor ‘blindly’ through her or his treatment to achieve the maximum effect, both in terms of health and pleasure, on the body.