Reflection

Architecture of interior graduation studio

Rotterdam_Healthcare Group

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My graduation project starts from the research of several issues: dementia study, “hofje” study, site study, related case study.

1) Dementia

To study the brain disease of dementia, I have read several books and plenty of articles that analyze the disease itself and also the relationship between dementia and architecture. I have visited several dementia care facilities in the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland. After the dementia study, my understandings of dementia has been achieved. People suffering from dementia is in no difference from normal persons in essence. The same as normal people, communication is needed, which can be achieved from communal activities with others. Social value is required, which can be gained from labour or work. Emotional solicitude is very important, which can be provided by family and friends with love and care. Leisure is also indispensable, which can be obtained from nature and art. Therefore, communal space for activities is very important for dementia community; therapeutic green space such as agriculture courtyard for easy labour and leisure is required; living in the original context and adjacent to their families and friends is needed.

However, there are also many differences that makes the living environment for dementia sufferers different from normal living community. Because of the problems with language, disorientation (including easily getting lost), not managing self care, and behavioural issues, dementia sufferers are always “locked” from the outside in case they get lost and could not find their way back. Hence, providing safe and self-sufficient inner world is vital. The dementia care center “Hogewek” is a very
good example from self-sufficient, because it contains multiple function that can fulfill the need from living, eating, shopping, to activating, music and so on.

Moreover, the inside world should not isolated from the outside. It should not be a world like the movie the Truman Show that makes the people live inside can not be aware of the outside. Otherwise the moment dementia sufferers go outside their living community, it is hard for them to
get use to the normal live of others. In this way, a dementia community locates in the city should provide transition space from the very private living environment to the semi-private living space, to the semi-public space and to the public space. So the residents living inside the community do not have to bear the sudden change from their home to the outside.

In my project, there are several transition space between the very private domain to the very public domain. These transition space are given different identities. The “urban living room” locates in the southwest corner of the project provide dementia sufferers a meeting area with different people - other citizens, people live in the social housing in the upper floor and so on.
2) **Hofje - Dutch typical living small community.**

My understanding of Hofje was achieved from several readings, lectures and excursions to different hofjes in Amsterdam, Haarlem, Utrecht, Delft. Through the typology study, I gained knowledge of the scale, proportion of hofjes and the bodily feeling inside these hofjes in different scales.

In my project, I carefully integrated the concept of hofje in the private domain of my scheme, and provided dementia sufferers therapeutic green space for collective live with fully privacy.

One of the example of Hofje I like so much is the Burgerweeshuis in Amsterdam. “The Burgerweeshuis is located in the medieval centre of Amsterdam at the site of the former St. Luciën-monastery. From an urban perspective, its most peculiar characteristic is the way it is incorporated within the urban tissue. The complex possessed no outer facade, instead, it’s core was surrounded by houses, some of which belonged to the orphanage. ” In the Burgerweeshuis, nowadays the core is Amsterdam city museum and an urban passage for art works. In my project, I translate the core into a music hall in the middle, as for music is a very good way for therapy.

Spatially, it is used as a bridge and also a division to the two parts of senior housing and dementia living in different levels (ground floor and first floor). So it provide a special space for people gather and having activities, also a landmark for dementia sufferers to find their way back easier.

3) **Site study**

In the site study, I started from the waterfront study.

This study has explore the use of waterfront space and the factors of the negativity in space. By observing people while they are in the waterfront space, the reasons to make it negative have been described and documented. There are several reasons to make this area unsuitable to stop over:

- In order to increase the quality on site and the areas nearby, several intervention can have been implemented.
- _Rearrange the vehicle routes on site, and_
make it more efficient in limited area.
/ Integrate street parkings into parking garage, to set some pedestrian routes car free.
/ Increase the quality of car free waterfront space and make it as an urban leisure space where people can feel safe, relax and happiness.
/ Be aware of the importance of the continuity of space in high quality, a single spot can only keep itself well, but not strong enough to have better influence to other areas.
/ Combinations of units with multiple function will contribute to make people stay longer.
/ Increase the quality of living environment inside the buildings nearby.

Other study on site help decide how much intervention should be. For example, the waterfront part was fully demolished because it is bad living quality and also the main reason to negative waterfront space. Some part was party intervened, and some part leaves untouched. Some other study such as typology study help search more possibility in the courtyard space, and sunshine analysis help clarify which building influence the quality of the site very much and so on. I also use the method of interior study by model makings, to get to know the real atmosphere of the interior space.

In the process of design, each step has a back up of research to support it, to make it as a integral and completed complex. And due to the rigorous study and thinking, the preliminary result has shown its outcome of increase the whole quality not only inside the project itself, but also the outside in the bigger urban scale.
References: