

REFLECTION

This reflection has as main goal to give a short substantiated explanation to account for the results of the research and design in the graduation phase of the Heritage & Design studio. The aim of this reflection is to obtain a better understanding of 'how' and 'why' and will contain an answer to the question of how and why the approach did or did not work, and to what extent.

The relationship between research and design

From the start of the studio an important part was to define a research question. In the introduction of my research report I quoted a Danish poet: "Art is solving problems that cannot be formulated before they have been solved. The shaping of the question is part of the answer." (Ching - p.IX) This let me realise that the research could be a substantial part of the design; something that could give me guidelines and help me to come to a solid concept. For this reason I have deliberately chosen a research topic that allowed me to examine the how and the why of architecture of form, space and order; not accidentally also the title of the book of F.D.K Ching which provided a proper base for my research.

The writing of the research report helped me indeed to discover and explain the qualities of the architectural set-up of what was there or what was lost in time. It helped me to understand of what I was drawing at the same time. In my experience it was a constant going back and forth between drawing and experimenting and reading and research. The topic of my research did, however, not tell me how to implement a very real and clear program for a library at this site. Maybe it could have done if the studio wasn't heritage, where the new has very strict measurements to fit in. In the beginning of the second half of the studio the focus shifted to the analysis and research of existing libraries and its users. By doing this I obtained a better understanding of the way a library works. The most libraries that I visited where built for this purpose though and on top of this I saw that the setup was mainly vertically (instead of horizontally as will be the case in the existing Binnengasthuis buildings). The most important question for this studio came to being: does the existing and the new program fit together?

The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject chosen within this framework

The theme of the Heritage & Design studio is 'tolerance for change'. Does the existing and the new chosen function fit together? Or in other words: what is the tolerance of change to give the existing a new function? Two main events had a great influence.

The first one was the visiting of the new University library in the inner city of Utrecht 'De Drift'. The library is a complex of several older buildings that have been transformed to one bigger whole. Here I experienced the quality of a new library within the old and a certain tolerance for change. So far I had been focussed on solely maintaining what was there and try to deal with that fact with fitting in a new function. At 'De Drift' I noticed that a library needs its own specific space, but that it is also okay to give this space. Changing the old creates

something new, even for the part that maintains. The quality of the old can be shown beautifully by creating something new.

The second event was the realisation that the existing floors will not hold the weight of the desired amount of books that need to be placed in the new library. I could no longer simply maintain the existing and hope for the best to solve the difficult programmatic puzzle within. I had to change the existing no matter what.

This all, however, should not undermine the qualities and the positive values the existing have. I noticed at a certain point that my focus shifted completely to what needed to be added instead of underlining the present qualities of the site. The balance between new and old and with that, the relation between them was threatened. The design involves a great deal of intervening in the existing situation. Demolition, changing directions, alternating the existing *and* the interventions all had the goal of directing the eye again towards the values of the built history. This balance is as much of a part of my design as the interventions itself.

The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen in this framework

The concept for my design became a symbiosis. To be able to place and store a great lot of information (mainly books) I needed a great lot of space that the existing building does not have in the way it is. A strong grid was placed in the centre of the building wings that splits the building entirely from the inside. The grid forms its own construction to hold the great desired amount of books. The grid also forms a totally new language of form in the existing. At the same time, however, the grid forms a structure on which the old finds stability there the chosen rhythm is based on the rhythm of the old. The two form a symbiosis where the one cannot survive without the other. The old provides a context and a place for the new. The new provides a reason and a way to maintain the old. Finding the right rhythm, placement and measurements was a great deal of experimenting on different scale levels in mainly making drawings and models.

From the start I purposely did not work too much with the computer, but developed my concept by making drawings and models. In several other projects I had experienced that this way of working proved for me to be the most inspiring but also the most effective. During tutoring especially, the models could be used perfectly to show my progress but also pinpoint the parts that needed attention. Working on the computer desires an absolute precision from the smallest point up. Crafting and creating models always shows the bigger context of the importance of the smallest point. The context does also constantly show the importance of the collaboration between the design, cultural value and technology. It has been said at several moments in time that there needs to be a certain balance in the triangle of design, cultural value and technology. The one can have a dominance over the others, but finding the right balance should be important. Designing by making models let this come naturally I experienced, as you are almost always working with the three at the same time.