PERSONAL INFORMATION

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STUDIO

MSA, RMIT, Amsterdam at Sea, mixed projects
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With the Tramremise proposal I aim to tackle the future educational and working environment changes. My goal is to principally transfer and redesign the Tramremise into an educational centre for selected universities situated in the Randstad. Next to this, a part of the Tramremise will also be designated for entrepreneurs, commuters or to serve as a regional office for bigger companies. A metropolitan creative educational working environment is provided in a central location in contrast to more over the existing commonly isolated university campuses. Simplified access and connection to diverse universities is offered in combination with a sub-working environment. An educational creative hub will be offered to students, young entrepreneurs and settled companies in the city of Amsterdam. A location will be offered for students to follow lectures through Collegerama. Collegerama entails digital live streaming of the lectures given in Delft. Next to a provided work and educational environment, a space is created where interaction between the students at the diverse locations such as the studios, restaurants/ café’s or just outside in the city of Amsterdam can take place. Furthermore possibilities of information exchange and collaboration between companies, freelancers and students all in one place is offered. Also an exhibition space will be realised to give the students or university a bigger platform in the city of Amsterdam, instead of their own “isolated” campus.

It fits right into the old industrial ring of Amsterdam, with the cultural hotspot, the creative industries, the sports and health centre, the Museum Square and then the technical and student centre of Amsterdam. Not only will this be for the bigger scale of Amsterdam, but also for the smaller scale of West and even the neighbourhood. Functions as a Food market will be introduced and space for urban farming will still exist for the neighbourhood. It needs to be a place where people can show their work to the rest of Amsterdam. This can be your work of study, presentation or works of art. I want to create a new area where people can come to interact with each other, a new knot in the middle of the city because of this old industrial ring.
The relationship between research and design

Research by Design

One of the most important things we are taught in the RMIT studio is to make firm analysis on all the scales in different periods of time. From urban to the direct context and even at detailed level we explore the existing building. All these scales are made on the existing situation, but also the most important part is the historical development of the building. At the end of the analyses when all scales and timelines are layered, a strong and reliable value assessment can be made to form the base of the framework where I can work with.

At the start of this project Amsterdam at sea, a research area was given that overlapped two districts of Amsterdam, the West and Westerpoort districts. Before analysing this whole area I need to ask myself a research question to form a framework. This was very difficult in the beginning because it was a large area and because no project was chosen yet, the questions became more superficial or objective even. During this project the questions you ask are always somehow already thought of, which makes it subjective or fake. But that’s the way research is done. You think you know the answer, but at the end this could be something completely different. Its just interesting to see the difference in questions asked at different scales, where the smaller scale is more focused and related on the program and or future use of the location/building. Even though the designing phase was not even close you already start to ask more specific questions that could influence your design phase later on. After I have chosen for the Tramremise as project the direction of the research more clear and easier. Although the tramremise was not within the research area the first analyse on urban scale where still usable in a way that I have found a relation. I have made a research of all the industrial buildings made during the same period and saw that all of these formal industrial buildings/areas are now build up by urban development, and almost all of them are successfully transformed into important cultural social public buildings in the city of Amsterdam. After making the value assessment on all scales an architectonic framework is established. In cooperation with the chosen program, that is slowly developed due to personal fascination and future development in technological opportunities. Besides the successfully transformed industrial sites in the rest of Amsterdam, the tramremise is a perfect location for an extra public knot in Amsterdam west. The program has changed during the process of design. Not because of the existing structure, but the more research I did on future developments and numbers of students “abroad” the more I became uncertain about the program. Research on universities of the future is difficult because there is nothing about that then writings. I have designed the program and sequence
of different functions through the experience of each space while following the existing structure of the Tramremise. At this point research by design was important for getting to know the scale and experience in every space. The human scale against that from the machine is best researched by making models and sections. The Tramremise was designed for one function only; the long high big halls were not made for the human scale. This balance between the human scale that needs to be put in and the scale of the machine.

to improve the quality of some parts in the building concessions are made, such as demolition of some halls to upgrade other halls. The new user has more regulations and the more has to transform so that it becomes a better experience.

At this point of the design phase it is crucial to change and interact with different scales and by making models and sections and small drawings at the same time you really get to understand the whole complex.
Amsterdam aan Zee’ is a graduation studio that focuses on the area between the old Amsterdam-Haarlem line. This covers amongst others the historical trading route the haarlemmertrekvaart, which is a canal that forms a direct connection between the two historical city gates of Haarlem and Amsterdam. The area intrigues due to the large variety in landscape, urbanization and functional program. Harbours in the south and recreational areas such as the Westergas Fabriek, today one of the most popular cultural hotspots of Amsterdam, succeed each other. From the very old industries, that where built in the time of the industrial revolution at the borders of the city, to the modern office buildings and dwellings of the 20th century. Railway and roads have absorbed the long historical canal that connected Amsterdam and Haarlem that have resulted in a physical barrier for the south.

The studio was based on the transformation of the brettenzone in Amsterdam-west. But as research was developing and the studio as well, which didn’t had strict rules or guidelines, I introduced two other projects: the Tramremise in Amsterdam old West and the Overhoeks Tower in Amsterdam North.

Finally I have choosen for the tramremise for my design project. A comparismment is difficult to make when looking at the high-density area of Amsterdam old West and the low density of the Brettenzone. Although transformation projects like the Westergas Factory was a good example for me to research. The tramremise is build up in a high-density neighbourhood, but still has a lot of ground that isn’t used yet. This kind of unused space is typical for banned industrial areas. An advantage of these buildings is that most of them are potentially very attractive for re-use due to their characteristic of spaciousness.
the relationship between the methodical line of approach of the studio and the method chosen by the student in this framework

How to deal with

As described earlier, it has been put forward that I have a great interest in old industrial buildings within the city. Not only the scale and architectural value of the buildings and/or complex, but the story they tell from the past. In this fast growing society the development of cities and changing technological and communicative development it is getting more difficult to see or feel the historical value from periods in the past. From my experience there is no better physical example than old (historic) buildings.

Next to paintings art and books there is no better example that can tell and/or visualise a story from the past then a building can. Of course these are related with each other and act parallel with the different movements and motives during time, but a building can show physically the daily life of the past. Every building that is build or has been built can be placed in certain groups, or typologies, according to its function. Some of these typologies, or functions are not in use anymore or do not exist anymore and therefore it tells a story from the past, which is a great value for the city’s appearance. Not only the appearance is of value, but also the story that can be told or seen by future generations is.

Moreover, I think this is even more important currently because of the individualization and globalization. These old structures are important to relate to in order to know and distinguish your city from other cities or country.

Cities and developers finally see the advantages and opportunities of banned industrial areas today and try to transform these areas into societal economical and creative public spaces, such as the westergas factory.

I think the opportunity lies in the fact that it has a prominent place within the urban structure of today and therefore it is ideal for public functions. Also, industrial landscapes occupy a huge amount of land. In today’s crowded inner cities, where modern individuals continue to get rid of public land for the sake of creating spaces of consumption, societies could use this potentially vacant land stock to recreate the communal, open-air areas that have been destroyed.

Besides that these industrial sites contain a potentially usable vacant building stock.

When making a value assessment we look at social, cultural, historical and structural values.

It is clear that this building has an historic “industrial” value because it is one of the last in its kind in the Netherlands. If there were more tram remises left in the Netherlands or Amsterdam, I could be more rigorous to improve or transform the building. Now the tram remise can almost be treated like a relic and thereby it has to be treated with
more care. For me this becomes more a relic when knowing what the function used to be, but it becomes less a relic when looking at the building itself. I look at it as an Architect, the expert, looking at the building from small detail to the bigger composition in the space. Then I can see the opportunities and weaknesses, but how to treat these weaknesses when dealing with a “relic”? It is clear that this is a difficult building for a new function.

Another part of the value assessment is not in the architectural part but more the story behind it. Today the story of the tram remise has almost vanished into the community, where normally a busy company was established and dozens of trams came and went, it is currently a quiet part of the city and more for community that uses this area for leisure and communal purposes, like urban farming and small food markets. Therefore it can be questioned what aspect is more important to keep. The community, that came up with a new function, or the historical use of this area?

Also other aspects need to be thought of, such as the composition in the neighbourhood and the relation with the city of Amsterdam and/or The Netherlands.

All these aspects the architect needs to think of before making a design for a new function in this building, with some values more important than others.

Via these values I will approach the design more as a craftsman where I will deal with the historic value of the details such as the Polonceau trusses, the details in the facades in the in and outside of the building and the high doors at the entrances and inside of the Halls.

I want to transform the Tram remise, but still safeguard the story as a Tram remise, that guarantees the historical value and story of the place from then and now.

As a result I want to keep the monumental values of the Tram remise and where it is necessary adding improvements by realising modern extensions, as long as it relates or continues to the rhythm of the existing structure without making some kind of extreme contrast between the old and new. However also, when necessary, demolish low monumental parts to improve the quality of the design. A fusion of old and new, where the new is following the existing structure will be the final outcome.
the relationship between the project and the wider social context

Social relevance

With this shortly additionally what the societal, social and even scientific relevance are and will be in the future if this project would be realized. On a societal scale the amount of students could increase when this concept is realized, as a result the student is not stuck to the city where they study in. I can reflect this on my personal experience, when I chose another study because of the city. This can also help in attracting more technical studies, by having a department for the TuDelft for instance. Via the realization of this project, more people will see and get to experience the technical studies. This could lead to the result that the more often people are acquainted with the studies, the more they will turn interested in them. On top of this, this project is a direct answer to the shortage in study places in Amsterdam due to lack of libraries in the city. I believe that by realizing this concept the student is no longer educated in one field situated in their own faculty for five years, but with this project the student is offered a much larger and broader education because of the opportunity and possibility of more interaction and collaboration with other students from other universities.

The technological innovations have not been used in the educational system as they are used in the working environment. It can be questioned why one should attend the lectures when they can be followed from your laptop. Additionally, why should one go to meetings when there is the possibility of the medium Skype or another platform for facilitating face-to-face meetings online? It can be put forward that when something is needed for better communications or better collaboration the technique will follow and fill that gap. I also agree with the idea that physical interaction and working in groups is a good way to improve the workflow and team spirit, but this is still possible in other ways. This project will decrease the amount of travel time for students per week to university by 2/3. The fact remains that student are obligated to travel one or two times a week for assignments and consults, but the rest of the week the students can continue and complete their course work at the Tram remise, with access to the necessary resources. On the social scale this project is not only for the student or entrepreneurs. It also benefits the whole neighborhood and Amsterdam West. In the last 10 years this neighborhood has become safer, healthier and crime has decreased. More students are renting apartment in West because of the relative low renting rates. This public building will be a good injection for the neighborhood.
1. To what extent have you answered the research question of the thesis plan?

The research question was:
What influence will the Tramremise have on the educational environment for the Randstad and at the same time a catalyst for Amsterdam West?

I think that when the tramremise is transformed into an educational centre it will have an influence on the scale of the city. But I think that this will be influenced by the fact that the building has an public function with the public library and the extended foodmarket with shops and restaurants in the traversehal. When thinking about the main program itself, the idea of an educational centre for the randstad is something that can be very successful on its own, but does not depend on the tramremise as a building. Only the position within the city makes the tramremise a perfect project for this new university.

2. What sub questions - are still open, - have been answered in the design?

Subquestions where:
Will an educational centre for the universities, situated within the Randstad, have an effect on Amsterdam West, Amsterdam or even the Randstad?
Why the location Tramremise?
Which universities are affiliated with this new concept?

When brainstorming on this new kind of education in an already strict conventional educational system its very difficult to come out with an exact program, because there is nothing like this. Only university libraries are the closest to this program. Thereby I cannot really answer the last question.

3. What are still issues after graduation if you would work further at your design project?

It would be very nice if I could explain my plans to Stigt so that some designs can be integrated in their design. That would definitely be the program and research on future development in such programs.
4. Point out three decisions of your design process that were crucial. (maybe in sketches)

1. Accessibility / relation with the context

Because the Tram remise has been hidden due to historical growth of the city the accessibility is very bad. Before the adjacent cleaning office building was demolished it was even more hidden in this dense area.

To improve the accessibility the first decision was to open up the building block at the “ten Cate street” so that the open air market could be extend into the building. This will not only physically open the building but also the building will serve as public space right away.

To improve the accessibility even further I’ve demolished one part of Hall three that connects the Traverseerhall with the Bellamy square. So the building is now accessible at the North side of the building and thereby a better relation with the square and the Tram remise is established.

2. Human scale

As told the Tramremise is a functional building designed for one purpose only; to store and repair trams for the city of Amsterdam. Now that a new function is introduced the scale of the building is not yet suitable for the human scale. What is the human scale? What defines this scale?

Firstly the routing is only designed for the trams so a extra connection is needed to improve the circulation. Also will this new inner connection will improve the flexibility of the building and thereby a function can be fit in.

All the spaces are very large and long in this building; it’s not the height of every hall that makes this difficult but also the length.

3. Routing

The routing is a result of points 1 and 2 and will make the building more flexible and usable for other functions. The inner courtyard and the new street is now part of the public space. This space divides the building into two parts, the east and west part. Because the function is divided by this new public street an elevated street is introduced to connect the function without disturbing the public route.

The educational function is separated by this route but connected on a higher level, the students can choose to walk through the public route on ground floor level, or without disturb at the bridge.
5. What architectural theory of RMIT or what approach of a reference project was leading for elements in the design?

The trip to Berlin gave me the last push into the last stage in my design process. Especially the Akademie der Kunst at the Linden Stasse was a good example of a levelled design with interaction between both. Later in the research by design phase I've visited the university library in Utrecht that is a nice example of transforming existing buildings for a new function. The main intervention was the routing that needed to connect all the different building parts.

7. What is your method of designing, tackling design issues? (For instance rational)

During my study in Delft I discovered that the way I study is by Design by research, which slowly changes into Research by Design. First I will get to know the typology of certain programs or functions that I want to use for my final design. I will focus very on the existing information and will implement these in my design later. Along this designing phase the program and design are becoming more specific and difficult questions need to be answered depending on the phase of the design. These can be answered by research to these same kind of problems. At this point I've switched from Design by research to Research by Design. But in every designing process feedback is needed and redesigns are need to be made at certain points during the design phase. But that is for the designing part of the plan. The other part which is very important to have and I know that is not my strongest points, is planning and making sure that I have enough time for all the stages in the design. But before you know it already three weeks before the deadline and you won't have enough time for redesigning or extra research. At a certain point the design phase has to stop and you need time to make it presentable. But I know that when the next semester starts there is no time for doing nothing because you think there is enough time for the rest. This part of design by research is the most important and needs to consume most of your time. That is one other thing I have learned in Sydney, we did a intense research of 3 months without thinking or drawing a design. Everything and every bit of research done during that period, was translated into a design in 2,5 weeks time.
8. What method of the design development of your graduation project is specific for you? (position/attitude/design approach)

Via these values I will approach the design more as a craftsman where I will deal with the historic value of the details such as the Polonceau trusses, the details in the facades in the in and outside of the building and the high doors at the entrances and inside of the Halls. I want to transform the Tram remise, but still safeguard the story as a Tram remises that guarantees the historical value and story of the place from then and now.
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9. What is your way of designing that you can or will use in future design processes?

I think that the most important part is when design by research switches to research by design. In this phase a lot of drawings, sketches, diagrams and sections are made, but the most important tool is making small sketch models to understand the space and scale of the project. Making models puts everything back in the right perspective and instead of making drawings of one particular space or room you can understand the bigger picture better.
I think this is the most valuable part of designing and “getting to know” the building.
But I think you have to be careful with 3d modelling on the computer. Of course this will help making nice renderings at the end, but it will only slow you down with the designing process. The same counts for drawings in Auto cad instead of sketches. Don’t think that making everything digital will make it easier. Try to wait for as long you can and when it’s all figured out on sketch and models, it won’t take long to digitalise it all.