

Fig 1. Analysis Public Program Tate Modern



Fig 2. Model image Tate Modern interior

## -P1

In the first phase of the research, a number of prescribed texts were collectively studied and discussed. We then positioned ourselves within the broader context of contemporary art through a series of written critical responses. Simultaneously, a frame of references was created by collectively studying a given set of existing museums of contemporary art. Through redrawing and reconstructing the spaces in model, these were analysed.

Although we quickly became aware of what a gallery space needs in terms of its technical performance, this knowledge mainly came to use later in the design phase. This exercise left us in first phase mainly thinking about some different ideas about the museum of contemporary art. Considering the 'anti-museum' an important theme during the year, precedents like MASP, New Museum, Centre Pompidou and Abteiberg were especially important. The New Museum seemed to have been through a similar process as M HKA in which a former anti-museum wanted a new museum building that could create a 'higher public profile'. In the case of Tate Modern the creation of a new institutional character which was created by Herzog de Meuron as a response to a survey held among British artists in which they expressed their wish for a space that was untouched by any architect.

In the second phase for P1, a design was made for an ensemble of artworks composed of a selection of works by an artist from the M HKA collection. As each student in the studio had a different, this allowed a joint introduction to the collection of the M HKA and thus the character of the museum. This exercise was a way to start thinking about how one creates a space to interact with contemporary art. Thus, before we had read the brief, we could, apart from all the complications that a large public museum carries, think what the relationship between the work, the space and the visitor could be. Here, I designed a sequence of three rooms for the work of Marianne Berenhaut, that seem to relate to the domestic but simultaneously keep a distance from the everyday.

After completing these exercises, I wrote a reflection in November asking a number of questions that have remained essential throughout the design process: 'Can the qualities of a former 'anti-museum' be established in a new internationally oriented museum? In the construction of a new Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art, it will be a great challenge to create the framework, in which artists were able to establish a direct engagement with the public that would extend beyond the traditional art context, from which the M HKA is originated.'



Fig 3. 1:50 model tests ensembles project



Fig 4. Model image ensembles project



Fig 5. House and studio Marianne Berenhaut

## P1-P2

Through the ensembles project, I came into contact with Marianne Berenhaut and was able to visit her at her home and studio in Brussels. On this occasion, I got the opportunity to hear her perspective on the competition for a new contemporary art museum in Antwerp. In doing so, she immediately expressed her doubts about the construction of a new building. Although we had been given a tour of the M HKA by its director Bart de Baere the week before, I could not give her an answer at the moment.

Therefore the moment we were handed a letter, I started looking for the reason with a critical eye and it seemed to be mainly about things like 'The creation of a new Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art (VMHK) offers the exceptional opportunity to further expand the museum as an institution and to better position it internationally'. And it became clear that the museum's newly envisaged location, in the middle of the park, was based on its 'iconic potential'. The brief also explicitly stated that the new museum should reflect M HKA's institutional character. During this phase, the institutional character of M HKA was further collectively investigated in which, through literature research, the history of M HKA was studied and positioned within the context of post-war art scene in western Europe and New York and, more specifically, Antwerp. In addition, through drawings, we studied a number of key spaces in plan to understand in what kind of places, an important part of M HKA's collection, was originally displayed. This took place often in specific found spaces such as former industrial spaces or in more domestic surroundings. The research of the history of the MHKA also revealed that the original museum originated from an initiative in which a group of artists squatted an old warehouse in Antwerp South in the 1980s. So this building forms an inherent part of this character as an anti-museum.

After concluding this part of the research, based on historical study of the institutional character, a critical reading of the letter and a response from a contemporary artist from the collection of MHKA, the decision could be made to keep the current museum and M HKA's wish for a new museum on the site of a to be demolished courthouse could be seriously questioned.

Once this step was taken, consideration could be given to how the existing museum could then expand. By evaluating the existing building, based on our visit to the museum, places could be identified where there was room to add the required m2 and what character defines the existing museum. In addition, as a first step, a potential volume was studied in relation to the context through 3d models. Then, in a 1:200 site model, the volume was tested. Once a desired volume was determined, 1:200 plans could be developed in which the programme was schematically divided and a circulation strategy devised. This is where the redrawn museums in P1 came in handy, in terms of comparing scales of the museums and amount of lifts, stairs, toilets and ducts etc. Whereas I tried to use the division of the volume to also find a place for circulation and technology, an important comment during my P2 was to use this division more efficiently.



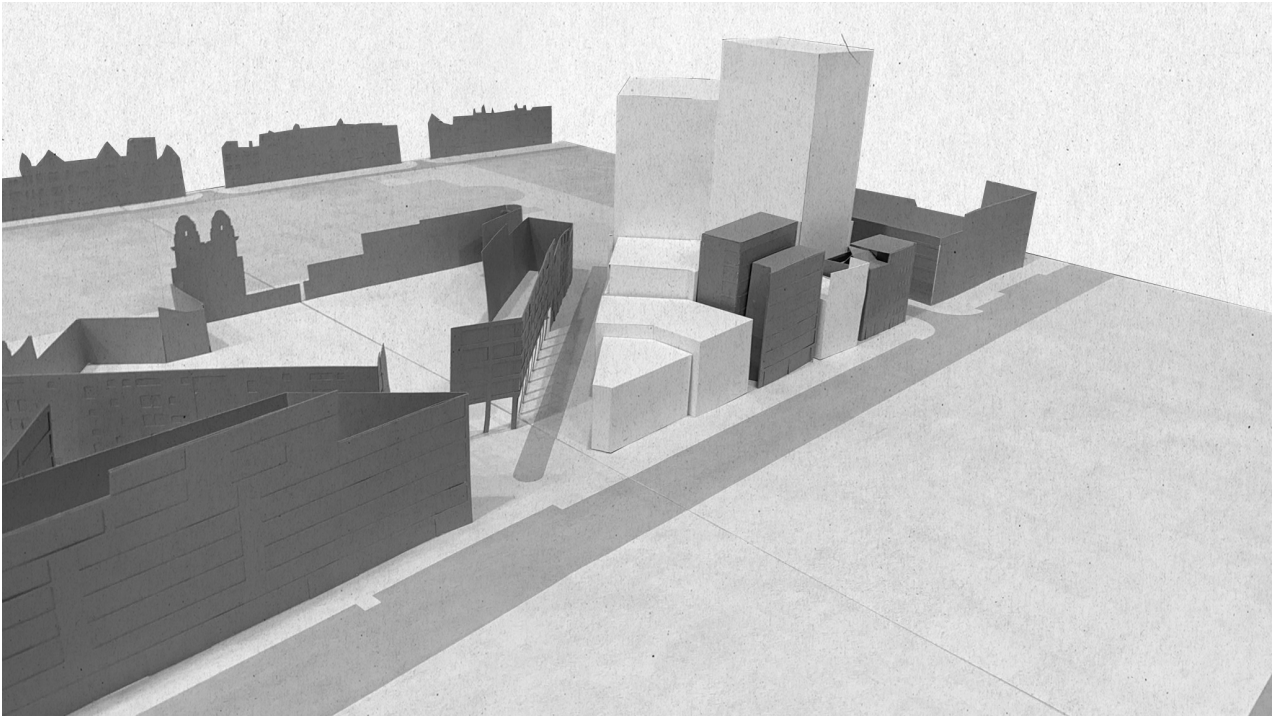


Fig 6. Volume in 1:200 site model

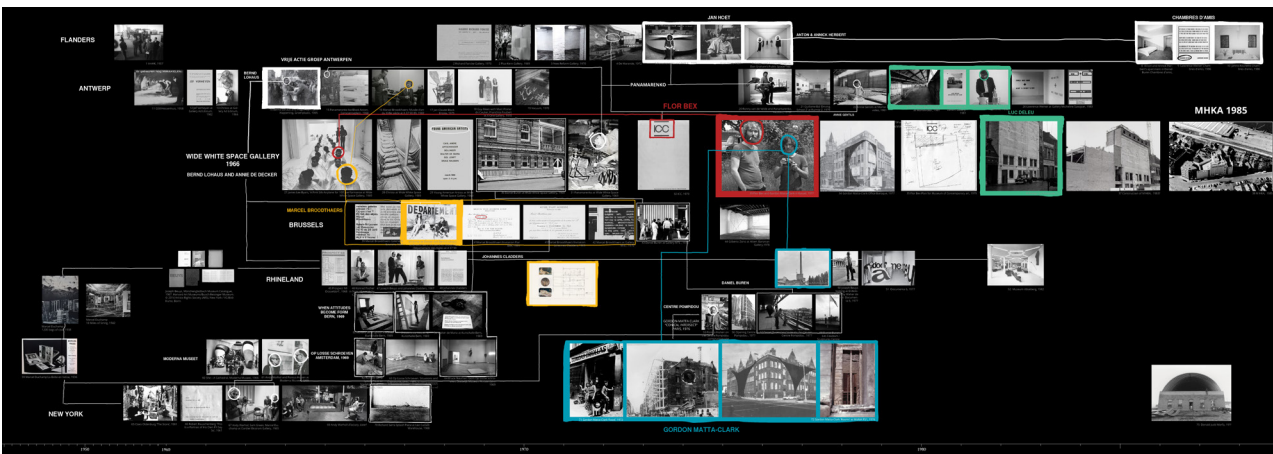


Fig 7. Analysis of M HKA's history and position within art ecology

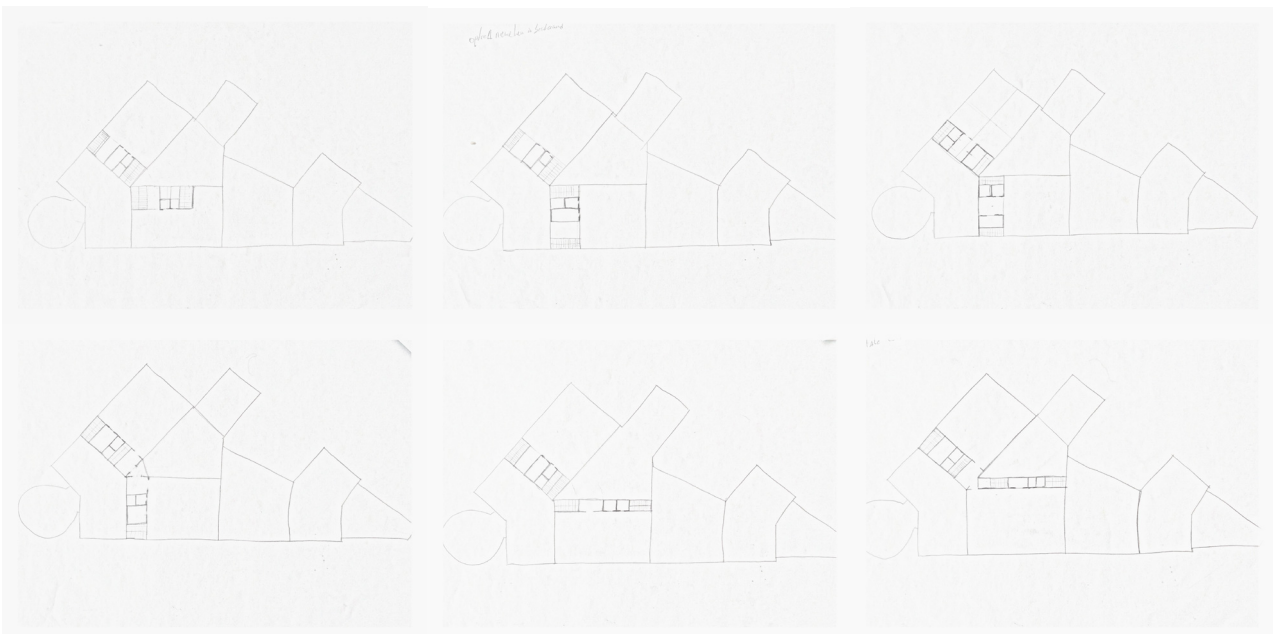


Fig 8. Different studies for circulation strategy

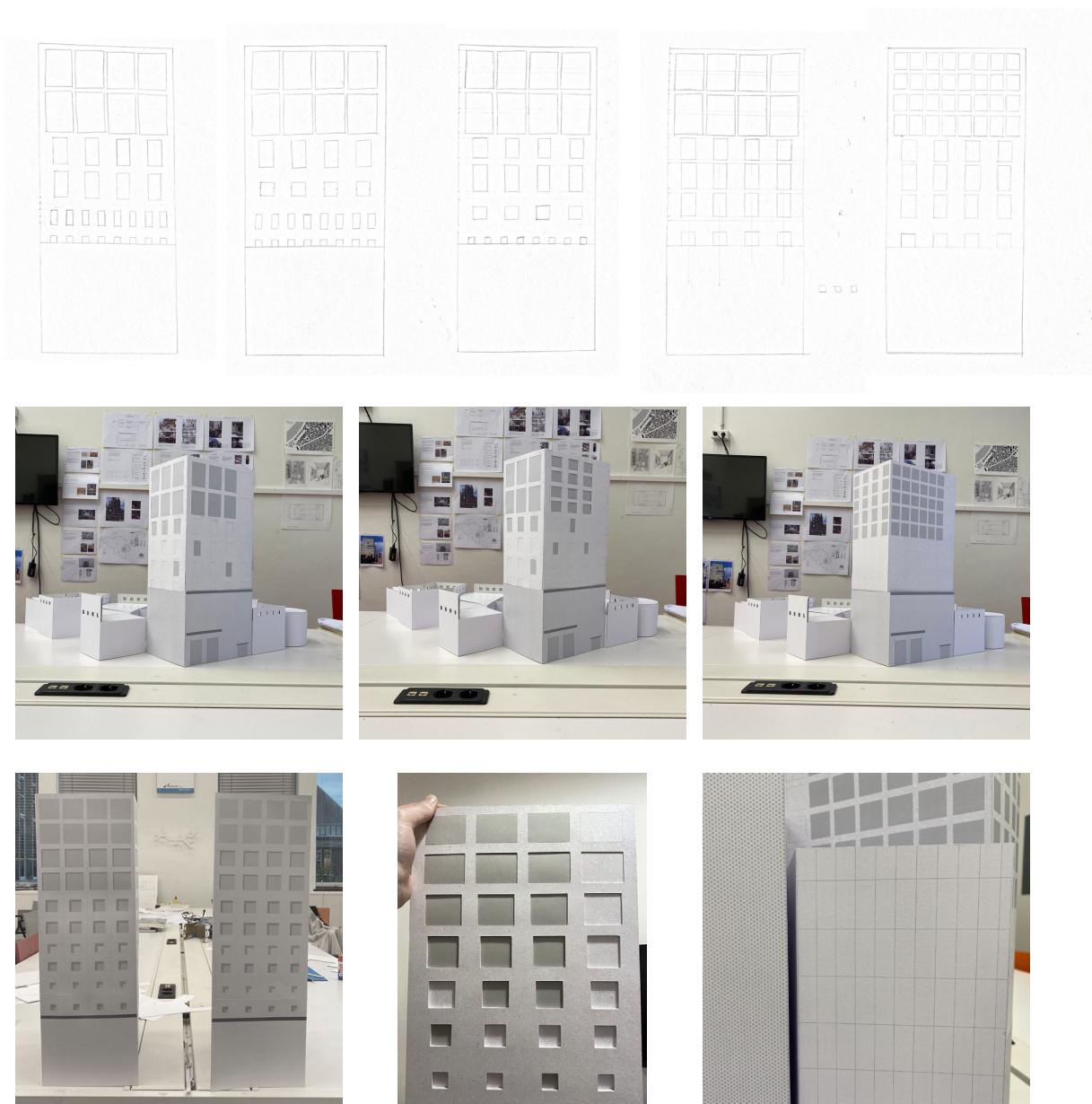


Fig 9. Facade studies

### P2-P3

To further define the form and façade of the building after P2, I decided I needed a 1:100 model. In particular, to test subtle differences in textures of materials - from a distance and up close. The 1:100 model was used to test facade variants. However, sometimes making a scale model took a long time, where it could have been more effective to test the facade only in drawing. During this phase the architect Tony Fretton visited our studio to talk about facades. Next to showing great facades he also talked about the process of designing facades in which the method of the testing was rather important. I tested many options for the facades, but afterwards it turned out that it is better to choose 1 variant already, before having a feedback session, and then you can always show other variants in the discussion with the tutor. Sometimes I had not spent enough time before the session to already make a critical choice myself, but came to the studio with a series of possibilities. While it's important to keep doubts about your own work, it does foster the feedback session if you personally dare to make a choice. At this stage, I started by designing the facade separately, independent of the floorplan. While this can be helpful in designing and thinking about what a façade should be, looking back, it had been detached from the interior of the building for too long. And it turned out that the moment I started looking at it from the interior, it actually resolved itself quickly. This also meant that the development of the plans had remained underexposed.

This was therefore a major critical point during my P3.

During this phase, the technical construction of the façade was also examined, not just the image. For a long time it was thought about the facade that it could be a concrete facade, but here the sustainability considerations became troublesome, in discussion with design tutor and BT tutor. The façade needed to be heavy and load-bearing but to make such a large building of solid concrete façade seemed a difficult choice, given the ecological impact of concrete. Then I switched to a façade consisting of solid CLT walls with concrete panels on top, to reduce quantity of concrete, but this did not feel like the right solution.



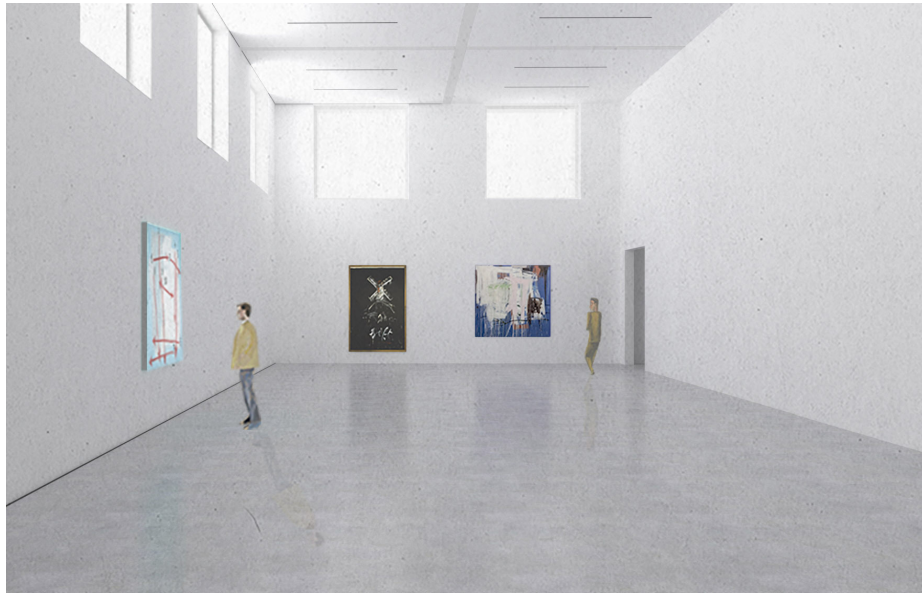


Fig. 10 Study for gallery interior F1

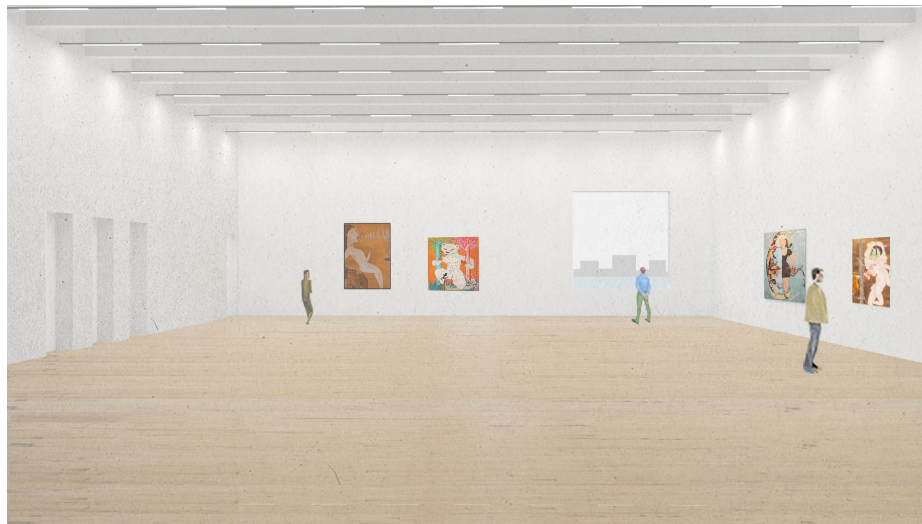


Fig. 11 Study for gallery interior F4

### P3-P4

After the P3, I left the facades alone for a moment and focused more on the interior of the building. Before P3, I started to study the circulation more specifically and ground it more in the plan, by looking at other examples of pochet space. But I needed to be more specific about its relationship with the interior spaces that surrounded this circulation spaces. So I studied what the character of the exhibition spaces could be like, through options in floor plan and cuts, in which I started to draw in people and artworks. Drawing in the plans further helped to understand the scale of the spaces and the movement through the building. In addition, in 3D models and collages, I began to study the character of the galleries and the forum space on the ground floor. Although mainly for the design of the galleries, I noticed that only collage lacked the effect of light, and so I combined this with a 3D model where the light could be rendered. For defining the forum space, I mainly continued working with the 10p100 model. Then also using a combination of rendered light and collage to test a sequence of shots. But where P1 maquette photos clearly convey an intended material character, the collages still lack that. Clearly, between the P4 and P5 periods, the interior character needs to be further specified through large scale models.

## Overall reflection

Towards the end of the project, one can reflect on why we are doing this project in the first place. We have known since the beginning that this project will never be built. Knowing this, makes this project substantially different, than if we had actually entered the competition to eventually build it, even though we use the real brief of the project. So since we know that the project will never be constructed one can ask, what is the real value of this academic project? Looking back, the project can be seen as a 'tool' for a conversation or critique. During this project we have been able to talk to a collection of people, outside of university, about their concerns in relation to a real project. We have been able to talk to people from museums we visited (De Pont), the director of M HKA Bart de Baere, Gallerists in Antwerp that we visited, the artist Marianne Berenhaut, and through email I have even been able to speak to the wife of the founder of MHKA Flor Bex and show them our research. And subsequently through them I got in touch with archivist of M HKA Bart Cornel, who helped me to extend the research. So the fact that we use a real brief but are in an academic context has ensured that we can discuss challenges concerning the representation of contemporary art.

In addition, the project can be seen as seen way to critique M HKA's demands and its current position towards their own museum and its role within the city and the broader art context. Hopefully, by seeing this project, next to rethink the consequences of a new building in terms of sustainability (ecological and social) , they will reflect on their own wishes for their expansion in relation to their own character and collection. However, it is important that this critique is translated into an architecture that actually could be built. Because to make a compelling argument for rethinking the construction of a new building on a different site, the project should be convincing in showing the possible strength of the expression of the museum, its interior character, the different ways of use of the building and how this is all translated into a certain material presence.