

REFLECTION P4

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Explore Lab
Msc Architecture

Tutors: Wing Yung, Matthijs Klooster, Leeke Reinders
Examinator: David Peck

I started my graduation with the desire to design a reconstruction for the Notre Dame of Paris. I oppose the public assumption saying that a new/contemporary design for the Notre Dame would be insensitive to the cultural and historic values that the building represents. The way to meet those values, is the rebuild the Notre Dame as it was before the fire, the assumption says. In my research I state that heritage is subject to a constant changing interpretation of people. During a big intervention like this reconstruction, we should ask ourselves: "how do we interpret the Notre Dame?". The research proposes a method on reinterpreting architectural heritage. It is rather focussed on the association that people have with the building than the established knowledge. The research question was as follows:
How can mapping of architecture as intangible domain help to interpret architectural heritage?

I visually mapped the associations around the Notre Dame as assembly on seven in-depth open-ended interviews in which interviews drew their associations.

The most important question my tutors posed, was I should position myself as architect in a very sensitive discussion where a consensus does hardly exist. A full consensus for an intervention was not the goal. The interviewees defined contradictions and the borders of the realm in which I, as an architect, should position myself in. The design part was therefore about creative ways in which spatial interventions can leave out extremities and find a middle ground. A second dimension was added to the Notre Dame, a roof that is included in the visit. The two dimensions and the play between them respond to the contradictions that came out of the research.

In Explore Lab, you create your own project and you choice your own teachers. Leeke Reinders, who has an anthropologist background supervised my research. Wing Yung and Matthijs Klooster, both linked to the Form study chair supervised my design process. I think the projects shows very well how multidisciplinary, open-ended, qualitative and contextual research led to a very straight forward, expressive, elaborated concrete design. Intangible notions are translated into very concrete spatial interventions.

This project taught me a lot about drawing methods. The method of mapping the associations was based on several other examples of 'soft mapping' or 'thick descriptions'. I learned how drawing can be storytelling and include both narratives and spatial characteristics. The latter is effectively very important for an architect I think. In our professions we make, influence, base ourselves upon human life. Buildings and spaces are being lived and we tell each other our experiences by telling story's. Combining the both makes a humanistic architect, which I am.

The research and design on the other hand contributed to the debate around the preservation of architectural heritage and discussions about authentic reconstruction after decay or destruction, in the case of the Notre Dame in particular but also in other examples of emblematic monuments.