

*Delft Reconnaissance* A Visual Survey of a Small City



MSc2 Still Lifes: Architecture & Photography 2017

Chair of Interiors Buildings Cities Department of Architecture TU Delft



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## *Still Lives*

This programme was created under the auspices of the Chair of Interiors Buildings Cities, within the Department of Architecture at TU Delft, in order to promote an understanding of the uses of photography as a critical tool in the development of an architectural proposition and in the communication of its intended and unintended consequences when it is realised. It has served to act both as support and counterpoint to the Chair's theme of *City as Archive*.

Photography could once (before its use as propaganda by political regimes and long before the image saturated public realm of our contemporary world) be said to offer "direct access to the real". Yet this access was always partial. Photography, by definition, excludes information - that which exists outside of the frame.

It is these weaknesses – its exclusivity, its partiality - allied with a rigorous understanding of composition that enable photography to interrogate the particular and general qualities of its subject matter and give the photograph a feeling or sense of intentionality. Emphasis and intentionality, combined with sensitivity are what give the photograph its capability to represent the spatial, material and atmospheric qualities of the subject depicted as well as its social and political consequences.

After studying the exemplary work of fifteen photographers pursuing the discipline as an independent practice, our students embarked on a visual survey of the city in which they study, a process that we have called *Delft Reconnaissance*. They were encouraged to look closely and with precision, at the world that surrounds them, from the centre of the city to its edges, from the infra-ordinary to the infrastructural.

The work was undertaken in many types of weather and at different times of day in order to understand the variety of emotional states that are created by



direct and diffuse light and the effects of moisture and air movement. They have employed a number of spatial registers determined by the focal length of the lens employed and their position in relation to the framed subject.

Issues such as pictorial space, the conflation of space and spatial depth were addressed, but students also discovered how to relate to the inhabitants of the city and gain a familiarity with the different landscape and townscape qualities that can be found in Delft, particularly in its hinterlands.

The project raised a number of issues pertinent to the practice of architecture: Where does one's personal sphere start and end? How should one relate and respond to given environmental, built and inhabited conditions? Where do the public and private realm meet and what are the conditions that speak about this ephemeral border? What distance is appropriate when observing? How do objects and spaces in the built environment relate to one another? How should a responsible architect react to found conditions?

Our students have developed a critical eye which we hope is made visible in this carefully made selection of images. We also hope that this course will in some way help them to enter and contribute to the profession as curious, confident and responsible practitioners.

David Grandorge and Sam de Vocht June 2017



## Credits

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