

theatre of the city

P4 Reflection

Artem Alexandrov

ExploreLab 36 | 2023 - 2024
Main tutor | Roel van de Pas
Research tutor | Aleksandar Staničić
BT tutor | Rufus van den Ban

1. The relationship between your graduation topic, the studio topic, and the master programme.

The setup of ExploreLab allows us to take our passion for a subject and turn it into a project. Here, my interest in theatre as a social and urban phenomenon met with my ideas on the preservation of historic buildings.

I worked on approaching the projects from both angles; social – activating an otherwise quiet and partly forgotten area of the old city, and heritage – repurposing a ruin of a listed building in a way that can serve as an example for interventions elsewhere in the city, full of similar ruinous buildings.

2. The relationship between the research and design.

The setup of ExploreLab allows us to take our passion for a subject and turn it into a project. Here, my interest in theatre as a social and urban phenomenon met with my ideas on the preservation of historic buildings.

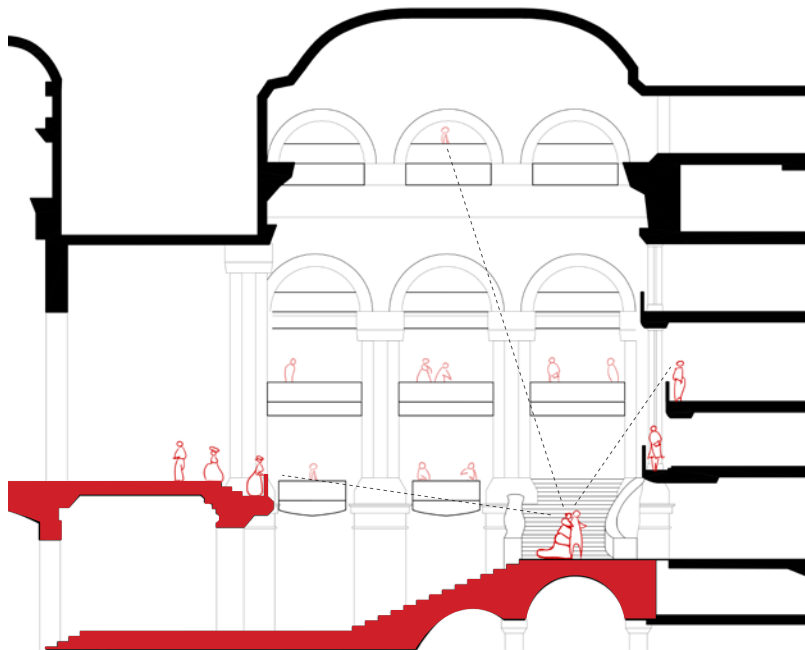
I worked on approaching the projects from both angles; social – activating an otherwise quiet and partly forgotten area of the old city, and heritage – repurposing a ruin of a listed building in a way that can serve as an example for interventions elsewhere in the city, full of similar ruinous buildings.

3. How do you assess the value of your way of working (your approach, your used methods, used methodology)?

It took me a long time to finalise the form of my research paper, partly because of selecting both literature study and analytical drawings as methods of inquiry, but also because of the larger-than-necessary scope of research I took at the beginning. However, when I realised that I could present my findings, scattered in many centuries and typologies, as case studies of a city-theatre relationship they all shared, I managed to quickly distil

the principles they utilised. I believe that combining a thorough literature study with drawings allowed me not only to reach these conclusions but also to present the findings to the reader in a more digestible manner. For next time, I would attempt to narrow the scope further and define the way to use graphic aids earlier in the process.

As for the design, I chose to heavily utilise model-making from early on to help me with planning my intervention within the ruin. Although a very time-consuming process, I believe that it helped me find spatial relationships and create richer experiences than I would otherwise. Leaving my research conclusions relatively open-ended, with just a few design principles, allowed me to have looser connections between the design and the research and thus use my findings as guidelines and not as limitations.



Example of an analytical drawing.
Opera Garnier - the staircase as a
stage of the hall.

4. How do you assess the academic and societal value, scope and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?

As I researched the city of Rostov for my analysis, I realised the lack of public effort towards preserving the historic architectures. Thus, I made the point of this project to not only provide a possible solution to a problematic site but also create a social strategy for how this may be done. With a focus on publicity, I planned the project in stages, each of which would involve the citizens of Rostov in occupying the ruinous space back into the historic domain. I believe that research with this lens towards heritage use and social engagement has not been done before for the regional Russian South, and provides valuable insights.

5. How do you assess the value of the transferability of your project results?

The combination of methods of theatrical engagement with the repurposing of a historic building aimed to increase Rostov's citizens' awareness of the state of the local heritage. In addition, this project is set in the context of many other potential heritage interventions within the city. As such, it can serve as a guideline to other repurpose-and-activate efforts all around the city centre. My methods of working with the existing architectures, in scales from large down to detail, aimed to be site-specific, but also generalisable to the typology of other monumental buildings from the end of the XIX - the beginning of the XX centuries era. I present my design as a possible solution to the specific site, but also as a case study for other sites to utilise.

6. How do you see the future of the project beyond the academic realm?

During what I initially considered site research, I stumbled upon the trend of monumental buildings being planned for demolition in the historic centre of Rostov. Then, I carried out what I believe has never been done in architecture research for this region - I cross-referenced the list of registered monuments of the Rostov-on-Don area with the most recent list of buildings up for demolition due to their physical condition. This rendered many dozens of results. This finding not only gave me grounds for my project proposal as a case study but also a way to continue it beyond the design.

At the moment, I am working on an interactive map of these historic buildings and their conditions, to be shared publically online. I would like to make this as my contribution to increasing the Rostov public awareness of the state of the local architectural heritage.

Listed buildings and their condition, on a map.





Model studies

