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01 COLLAGE OF TIME

How do you connect to-, and understand an inaccessible space? I would argue that, to a certain extent, this is an impossibility. Yet it was the dilemma we faced during our first site visit. Thus understanding it from an outside perspective is the task we took upon us. The factory remained an object for a while. Its layers, atmosphere and inner workings were left out of reach. This changed drastically after a second visit where we did get access to the Sappi paper mill. Suddenly the object became alive. The solid block fell apart into tangible pieces. Interiors, façades and materiality revealed itself. It turned out to be layered beyond its closed façades. Yet the inaccessibility remains, the gates closed behind us when we left.

There seems to be a disconnection between the self proclaimed “island” occupied by the paper mill and its surrounding city fabric. The water and fences along its perimeter give it qualities similar to those of a medieval fortes. Its drawbridge is only lowered for those few who belong in its production process. Over the years those numbers have declined, any previously existing social connection between city and factory has disappeared. However, Maastricht has a strong historical connection with its industry. And a certain quality can be found in the fact that the Sphinx quarter (through the presence of Sappi) has not entirely disconnected from its functional past. But the area is changing. Parts of it have been renewed, parts are completely built anew and future plans for other parts exist. What is the role of operational industry in all this? And should it have a role at all?

As is the case with its surroundings: the Sappi paper mill has formed a collage of time. Different colours, materials, tubes, beams openings and shapes collide into dynamic compositions. These compositions show a passage of time. Following an essay by Zaha Hadid (2009) this superimposing of multiple frozen moments in time (buildings and different layers of elements) show a movement. The Sappi paper mill reads as a sequence of scenes through history. Its convoluted built structure is a conglomeration of layers added over one hundred and seventy years.

Rather than tearing down the old and replacing it by something new. The existing structure has been expanded upon when necessary, adding extra floors, changing spaces and adding additional elements. It's way of expansion, according to the demand for paper production rates, has been organic and almost coincidental. New buildings for paper machines require additional storage- and operating spaces. And so the site has been filled up step by step. Through this expansion over time, many spaces have become (partially) obsolete. Its former uses are no longer relevant for the production process. The current production rate and numbers of exported produce are declining.

The site resembles a cityscape. Through its coincidental and organic growth it is recognizable, perhaps even successful as a small piece of make-believe urbanity. Contradictory this means it has perhaps succeeded less so as a functional and effective factory piece. The south-side of the factory is no longer in production. It is slowly becoming an urban void, hidden within a maze of built structures. Sappi fills them with trash and treasure, some rooms house office spaces, others store materials and several spaces have become tangible memory palaces of times past. Most spaces are not really used at all.

The way these places are currently put to use can be seen as Sappi gleaning itself in an inefficient way. Whilst these spaces are often not used to their maximum potential, they do get assigned some role or function. Arguably the sub-optimal use of this “leftover space” is disputable for a location taking up a large area in close vicinity to the city centre. There is definitely opportunity here. In what way can the existing qualities within the Sappi paper mill be put to better use?



Top to bottom: Factory elevations at the Fransensingel – Factory elevations at the Molgoot

02 CITY - FACTORY - COLLAGE

The paper mill can be described as a collage of built history. The idea of collage as theme and design/research tool fascinates me. It would allow for a new way of looking at the factory and its typology. It has the potential to reveal new information and lead to different conclusions by taking an associative approach to looking at the existing ingredients.

Cutting it down into steps means firstly dissecting and/or gleaning its elements, layers and places. Examples of these components could be different materials, floor plans of spaces, spatial configurations, buildings, shapes, border conditions and typologies.

Secondly these dissections/gleanings could be rearranged using the tool of collage; juxtaposing, superimposing and reconfiguring the gleanings. Through association, reflection upon these new configurations would allow itself for reinterpretation. What new connections can be made? What can be seen?

Then comes assemblage, how can newly found connections, new additions and the formerly gleaned elements be put together slowly moving towards architectural design.

This process would be used in an attempt to answer the following research question:
How are city and factory to be connected further through the lens and method of collage?

This means looking for the potential of collage as an operative tool. And implementing it as a means to glean input from the existing context: *How does collage work as a design/research tool? What can be gleaned from the Sappi site and surroundings?* It implicates restoring or creating a connection between industry and city: *How do we make the inaccessible accessible and (re)connect the factory site and its surrounding city fabric?*

COLLAGE TOWARDS ASSEMBLAGE

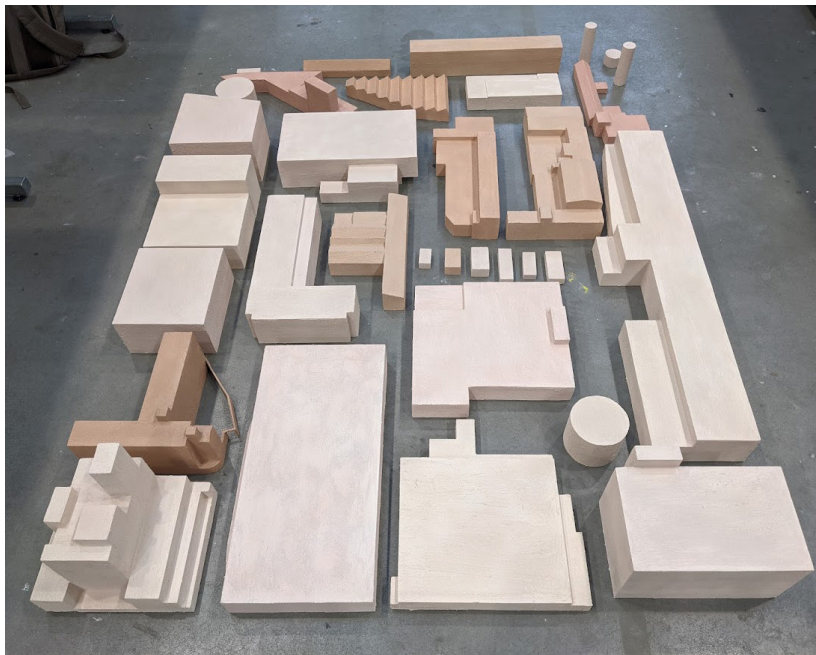
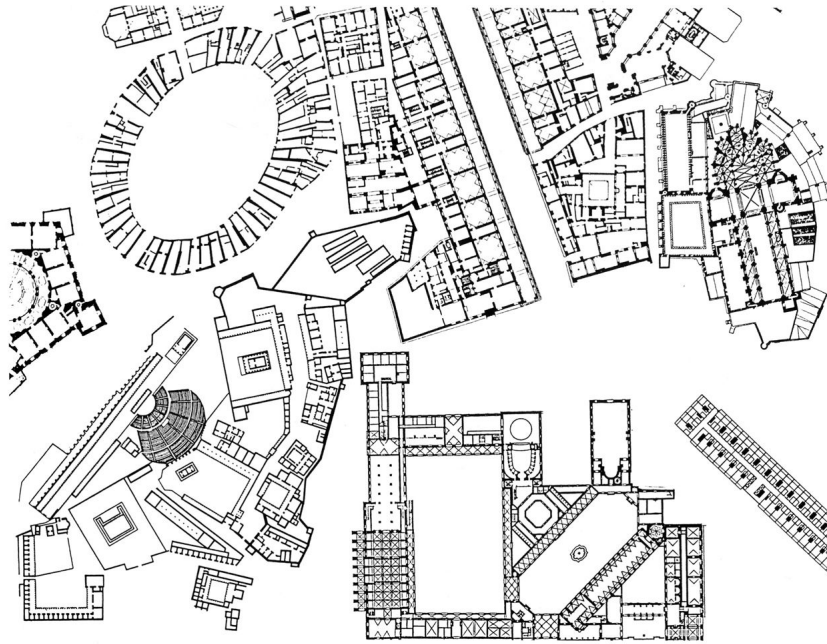
The purpose and potential of collage is underlined by the undermentioned quote from Juhani Pallasmaa (shields, 2014, ix). Combining the gleaned fragments of both the site and the factory and disconnecting them from their current role, putting them into new ones can open up all sorts of possibilities, inspiration and new information. This should evolve into design steps that give new interpretation to the site without losing a strong connection to it.

Juhani Pallasmaa

“Collage combines pictorial motifs and fragments from disconnected origins into a new synthetic entity which casts new roles and meanings to the parts. It suggests new narratives, dialogues, juxtapositions and temporal durations. Its elements lead double-lives; the collaged ingredients are suspended between their ordinary essences and the new roles assigned to them by the poetic ensemble.”

A strong connection to site and place arises by implementing the existing parts and atmospheres. They embed the “new” into a strong historic, and site aware, foundation. No total design of the area is possible or necessary, the accumulation of its varying smaller parts make up the atmosphere of the place. Using the varying data as input for a more intuitive approach that focusses on small patches adding to the atmosphere of a larger area is in line with my understanding from Colin Rowe’s *Collage city* (1978). Both gleaning that what is already there, implemented into the new, as well as working with the existing quality and program.

In reassembly collage becomes both a research and design tool. The examples on the right show different stages or treatments of the process. *City of Composite presence* (fig. 1) shows a literal collage city, shaped by rearranging and combining floor plans of classical buildings. The Belgian 2021 Venice Biennale piece: *Composite Presence* takes a similar approach by building a cityscape using newly built Belgian architecture. Both result in surprising new combinations. The bottom right image consists of the building blocks that make up the current Sappi paper mill. The different blocks and identities make up a piece of urban fabric that is perhaps interchangeable, if not re-arrangeable on site. At least in design/play elements can be taken out, closely observed an perhaps ‘not’ put back in their original place.



Top to bottom: David Griffin and Hans Kolhoff, City of Composite presence (fig. 1) - VAI & Bovenbouw Architectuur, Composite Presence (fig. 2) - Composite elements of the Sappi site model

THE COLLAGE AND THE GLANEUR

The glaneur/glaneuse gathers these found elements that exist on site. They form the “raw materials” that influence or shape the collage of newly formed design. In a reiterated process of disassembling, collage, assemblage, re-assemblage the glaneur collects and reconnects information, ideas and objects.

The factory area is slowly losing its functionality, an abundance of its built structure has visibly endured time and use. Yet it contains qualities nonetheless. It ties in to the history of Maastricht as an industrial city. History can also be found embedded in the built structures: the former cloister walls are contained within the foundations of the white building on the south side, the Fransensingel is a remnant of the old city walls, monumental value can be found in the power plant and several other buildings on the waterfront. Architectural qualities can be found in most interior spaces. By size, materiality and lighting conditions they have unique characters. Gleaning also means taking these existing qualities into consideration. Can they be preserved or built upon? Through the lens of the collage this could mean several things. The existing foundations/structures could serve as inspiration, elements could be gleaned both literally and figuratively. Otherwise they might end up being part of newly formed collages within the area.

RESEARCH METHOD

Researching the factory up to the P1 presentations has revealed much practical information regarding its inner workings and historical development. We have attempted to make the layers of time tangible and readable. The building blocks that make up the factory fabric allow themselves for arranging and rearranging into new configurations. This research combined with the information and methods provided by the other research groups is a solid base to start unravelling the place from a new perspective.

I would like to understand the uses of collage and assemblage through a theoretical lens. Using the book of Jennifer Shields (2014) concerning ‘Architecture and Collage.’ Shields looks at the methodologies used for collage within the architectural field and their application in architectural projects from a practice related point of view. Colin Rowe’s (1978) Collage city and composite presence (VAI, 2021) take a look at the urban scale using the method or concept of collage.

After having taken both the site and theory concerning collage into consideration I would like to start experimenting with making my own collages as research and design experiments. This can be done in multi media drawings, by working with images, plans and writing. As reference I’m currently looking at the works of designers using the collage as a tool within their process such as OFFICE or Christo. Next to that I’m looking for works that interpret place and city such as Writing place. They have an associative way of observing and translating information. Others focus on the factory typology (TRANS, OMA). These serve as different examples of interpreting and looking at the potential gleanings of Factory and Site, as well as realized projects relating to a factory and heritage based typology.

Factory & Site = Layers:
Through time
Through form/shape
Through material
Through use



Collage



Dissect/Glean:
Elements/Layers/Place

Collage:

- Juxtapose
- Superimpose
- Reconfigure

Association:

- Reflect
- Reinterpret
- Which connections
- What do I see

Assemblage:

- Gleaned elements
- New additions
- Found connections

Design

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04 IMAGES

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