

Reflection report P3

This document contains a reflection on my personal graduation project in relationship to the Heritage & Architecture studio it was conducted in and is put in a wider scope to look at its relevance.

The aim of the reflection is to get a better idea of the approach that I have taken in regard to the research and design steps that have come out of my graduation so far. Is there a clear approach visible? Did the approach work the way I wanted? Did it result in a design I am satisfied with?

To be able to answer these questions it is important that the design and the way it evolved is clearly explained whilst answering the 'HOW and the WHY' of the steps taken during this process. Asking these 'how and why' questions forces the student to reflect on the choices made.

This basic reflection on its own is not of any value if it is not put into the context of its surroundings, the studios design approach and the relation to the preliminary research.

This layer of context is provided in the form of a couple of questions like: How did I choose my methodology and how does it relate to the methodology of the studio?; What is the relationship between the preliminary research and the design?; And why have I chosen this building for my graduation project and how does it relate to the main theme of the studio

With this line of questioning this context is provided and the 'how and why' are also included in the questions.

To conclude with a paragraph in which I explain how the approach towards the final presentation will be.

Why have I chosen this building and how does it relate to the main theme of the studio?

For my graduation project I have chosen the Maassilo in Rotterdam as my study case. The studio (Heritage and Architecture – Rotterdam harbour studio) had provided eight different study cases. All heritage, all in their own way bearing a relation to the harbour of Rotterdam and all with an industrial background.

The process of choosing the Maassilo over others has partly been a process of elimination and partly of fascination.

Before looking at all the buildings I already decided that I did not want to work on a warehouse kind of building for my graduation project. I already had worked on projects like that and honestly wasn't that motivated to do another warehouse. So already a couple of study cases got eliminated. After visiting all the buildings, I eliminated another few buildings for several reasons and was left with three buildings that fascinated me. Of those three I chose the Maassilo over the others, after letting the decision rest for a couple of days. The decision was based on the complexity and size that were obvious from just looking at the building and the impression the building had left on me from earlier experiences with the site. Also in relation to the other buildings the Maassilo was located much closer to the city center which in my mind made the range of possible programs bigger.

The main theme of the studio is obvious. The guiding theme connecting all the buildings is their relationship with the Port of Rotterdam. The Maassilo is no exception to that theme. It was originally built as a grain-silo playing a small but crucial part in global trade in grain. By storing the grain in the Maassilo this seasonal product could be transhipped from ocean vessels to inland ships providing Europe with grain from the USA. This makes the process the Maassilo is part of much bigger than the Port of Rotterdam. They meet in the need for transshipment of goods which is one of the core businesses of the Port of Rotterdam. The Maassilo makes storage possible which in turn makes year-round trade and transshipment of grain possible.

How did I choose my methodology and how does it relate to the methodology of the studio?

My general approach to heritage is to focus on the user because to me the user is the most important element. A building is only heritage if it has cultural value. This cultural value is granted by the people (possible users). This makes their valuation of the building crucial.

The general approach of all Heritage & Architecture master studio's is *research by design and design by research*. With this approach research becomes a prominent part of the process that can be used as a starting point for the design (design by research), or can be used as the goal of the design (research by design).

I have chosen the approach of design by research, by first doing research about the building and its context and using this as a jump-off point for my design.

The research of course had to be based on a research question. I wanted this research question to be based on my general approach of heritage mainly focusing on the user. That is how I ended up with the narrative of the building as the main topic for the research.

Narrative in relation to architecture focuses more on the user, his experiences, the way the building is perceived by the users as well as the story behind the building rather than the vision of the architect and the way he designed the building to work and be perceived.

Reflecting on this approach I think I worked within the boundaries of the methodology of the studio by using the methodology of design by research. The direction taken within this research was based on my own vision on heritage. Making the way I chose my method based on the studio's methodology and the way I conducted my research (the how) based on my own fascination within heritage.

What is the relationship between the preliminary research and the design?

As stated in the last paragraph the relationship between the research and the design is that the research is done to be used as a starting point for the design. In working according to this methodology the design is based on the results of the research. Making the assumptions that the design is based on and the choices made during the design phase based on verifiable facts. This makes this approach a more scientific approach towards the design.

In my design a large number of choices made can be directly related to the preliminary research. The bridge I add to the building connecting Katendrecht to the Maassilo is based on future plans of the municipality of Rotterdam to already connecting these parts of the harbour.

The research was the deciding factor to see what kind of program was possible in my design. Again with the user in mind the location and its accessibility determine if certain programs are realistic or not. Based on the functions, public transport, car accessibility and relation to the city center, which all were researched, making a museum in the Maassilo turned out to be a realistic program for the design.

Also in the configuration of my program the research played a crucial role. During the research it became clear that the Maassilo was outside of the protection of the sea-dike making the location vulnerable to rising water levels and flooding. With my design housing art as a museum/art exhibition I could not have the exhibition part of the program on the ground floor or in the basement. A consideration that I would have never thought of if this looming problem would not have come up in during the research phase.

My approach towards the rest of this design project

Having been 'stuck' in the design phase for a while this reflection forces you to see the relationship that the design holds with the research that was done a couple of months back. In the way these things go the research has gradually lost it's a part role in decision making.

In answering the questions that have made up this reflection report the relation between the two is reinvigorated. Looking back the best choices made in the design phase were all based on the research. The design choices made in the last couple of weeks have not all been based on this research. To make sure that the choices that I make now and still have to make in the future strong choices they should be based on the research. So being keen on looking for solutions based on the research should be a priority for me. Recently made choices should be looked at again in relation to the research. In the decision making process for the rest of the project the same should apply. Solutions should be the of e reflection on the conclusions of the research.