

Cinemascape:

Standing over 35m high as a tower, the proposal is a confrontation with the Friche. It occupies the site in the north, with uninterrupted, sweeping views of the untamed grassy plains of the Friche that are emphasized by 1.5 storey-high ceilings for living rooms along the south-west façade. It stands as a statement, a new border for the Friche.

Post-P2:

Some of the themes raised in my research and P2 have slowly evolved over the course of the project. I had explored the term 'hyper-nature' which is the creating of exaggerated versions of constructed nature that therefore amplifies to intrinsic qualities of natural sites. Often sublime, unexpected elements of nature are inserted into the urban green, that are clearly out of place in terms of the city but of its place in terms of the region. After the P2, I had researched into the characteristic qualities of nature in the Brussels region that I could possibly recreate but found it hard to pinpoint as the surrounding area is mostly built up. Within Belgium, characteristic qualities of nature such as the staggering geological formations of Wallonia, or the sandy dunes along the coast were too far from the site to be relevant.

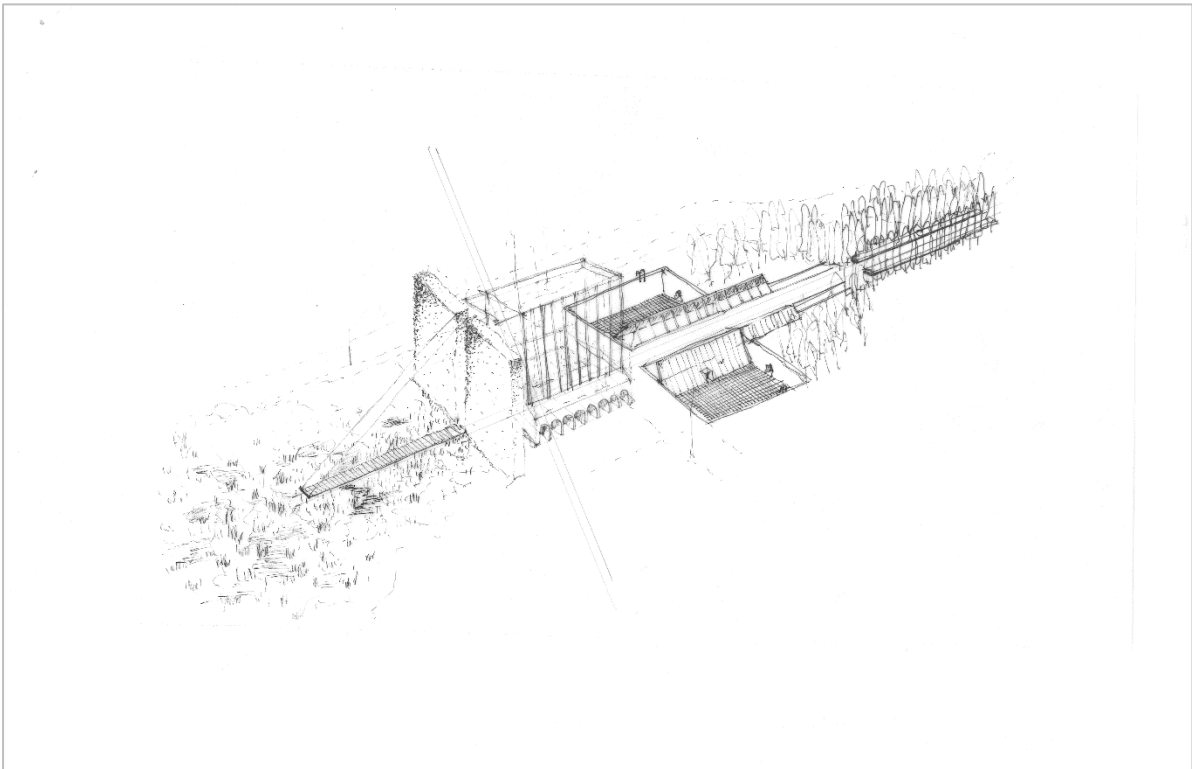
As a result, and as discussed as a potential in my P2 feedback, my P2 proposal (which was previously situated on the eastern edge of the site adjacent to one of the quiet cul-de-sacs) was moved to the other side of the train tracks so that the project was directly in the Friche, allowing visitors to be confronted and perhaps be even astonished and humbled by it.

The land art projects which I had explored in my research provided great insight into exaggerated constructions of nature and how sequential journeys and vantage points influence their designs. However, I struggled during the earlier design stages of the project when I used them for reference for massing design. Many other references I looked into were of a similar vein with striking outspoken forms, and often landscape projects or if not, garden pavilions or single-family houses. This proved difficult to translate into my own project, as I had established my project to be a multi-story housing block with a community cinema below. Furthermore, I had wanted to limit the disturbance to the site since I was building directly on the Friche. Earlier in the concept design stage, I had considered having all the cinema halls underground, with only small parts of the volumes emerging above the soil. However, this idea was abandoned as it would require vast amounts of excavation on the Friche, which is a site with already significantly lower topography due to levelling out as a marshalling yard many decades ago. In the end, the proposed design massing perhaps lacks the dramatic and monumental forms of the land art projects I had been researching but is in line with the master plan proposal as a rectangular slab block perpendicular to the sloping edges of the site.

Proceeding into Research:

From the P2 graduation plan, I discussed how exploration of the site's qualities and nature can be explored through developing speculative and fictional scenarios. I looked into drawings and projects of stage set designer/ architect Hans Dieter Schaal as recommended and looked into his work especially from "Wege Und Wegraeume" ("Paths and Passages"). He explores in almost endless experimental drawings, different surreal pathways surrounded by a synthesis of natural settings and man-made structures.

From there, this became my Research, where I created my own drawings that speculate on spatial experiences and journeys for my project. They were done instinctively, with elements recognizable of the Friche occasionally interjected, such as the train tracks and sloped terrain surrounding the edges of the site. They tie in architectural themes I have been addressing such as augmented nature and hyper-nature, immersive experiences, emphasis on journey to create a theatrical staging of spaces and allowed me to speculate on the relationship between my proposed building and the Friche. These drawings also served as an opportunity to guide my design and formulate possible spatial arrangement of programs and circulation.



Addressing P2 Research Questions and Design Assignment:

Looking back at the graduation plan, I think I have quite successfully addressed the research questions and issues of the design assignment. The overarching design idea involved was that “the project should distil and augment the sense of the nature and unique qualities of La Friche.” How can Nature “be exaggerated, juxtaposed, or even distorted in architecture” and how can the intrinsic qualities of the Friche be reinforced and amplified?

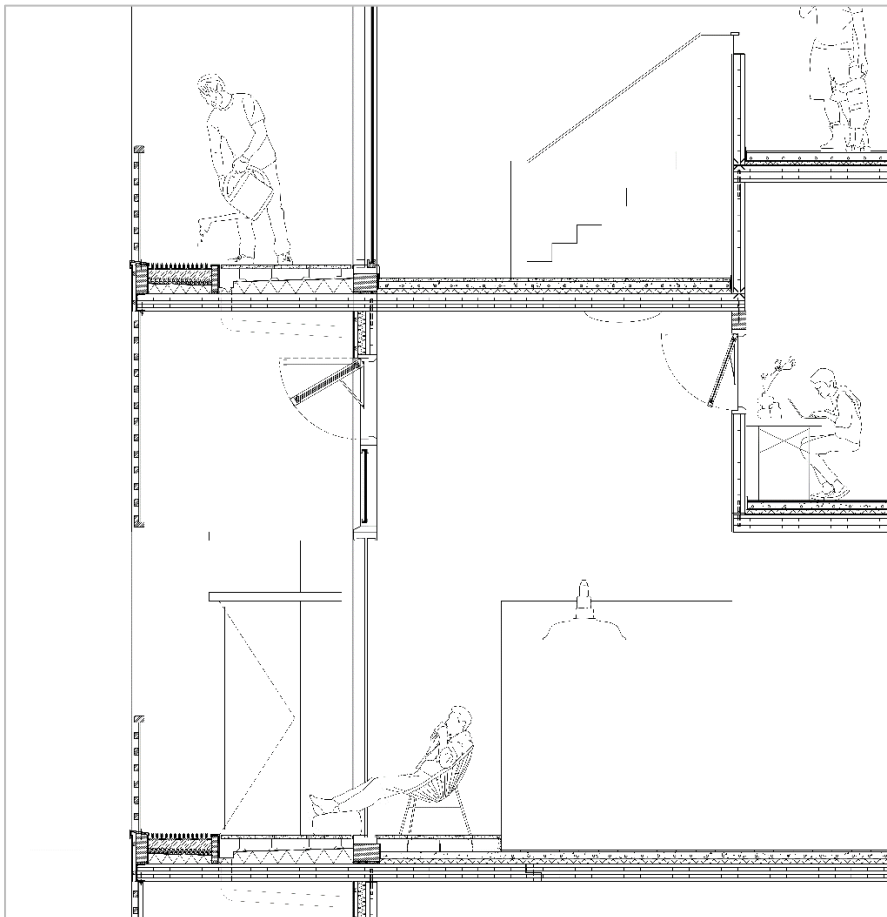
This exaggerating of nature in the housing design is perhaps best expressed in the design of the principal façade. Facing south-west directly towards the Friche, the grandeur of the view is emphasized in the apartment units with 1.5 story high living rooms. To provide views, the façade is predominantly glazed to also allow maximum daylight and solar heat gains in the winter. It is also composed of a combination of balconies and winter gardens that have a generous 2.2m depth. They are lined with planters that are flush with the terrace floor, and collectively form a green ‘veil’ between the Friche and the building.

Multiple apartment units offers both a winter garden and balcony, providing juxtaposing climatic conditions and varying qualities of stay and activities for different seasons. In the winter, the glazed sliding elements of the winter garden can be closed, trapping the warm air from the solar gain of the

low-angle sun to create a cosy environment. It also serves as an insulating buffer to the rest of the apartment. In contrast, the adjacent terrace area faces the full forces of the south-west winds. The grey granite tile flooring provides thermal mass to help absorb, store, and release heat. This granite flooring partially extends indoor into the living room before it steps down into the parquet flooring.

In the warmer months, the glass sliding doors can be opened and the terrace can be 'expanded' with the extension of the granite flooring indoors. This larger space allows for more flexibility in use, while also encouraging residents to open the façade regardless of sun or rain. To avoid glare and summertime over-heating, the wooden horizontal louvers for the balustrades also suspend partway down, and as a result, creates a blurring of the single and 1.5 storey levels of the façade from afar. The embedded planter also 'sets back' the terrace area, and excess water from gardening and a water mist system helps cooling on hot summer days.

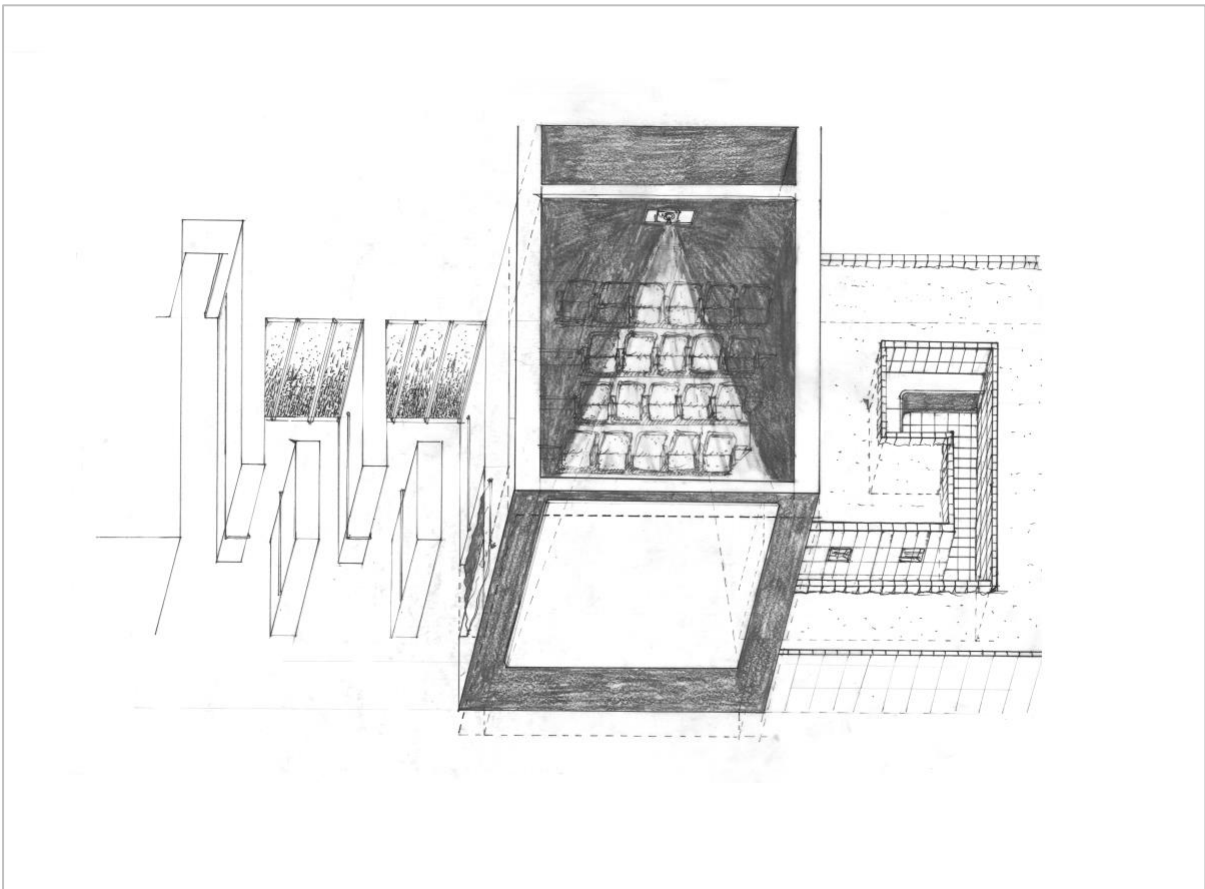
Here, Nature (in the form of sunlight, wind, water, temperature, seasons, flora, etc.) is augmented at a detail level. The elements are also juxtaposed and arranged as a sequence of sensations.



A different approach to augmenting nature and the unique qualities of the Friche can be seen through the cinema design at the plinth of the building. As introduced in the P2 I wanted to explore the journey of going to the cinema. I saw the journey of going to the cinema itself, as a very fixed linear progression with the potential of separate cinema halls having their own separate routes.

From the lobby, the cinema halls provide orientation: one faces the foot of the slope, another is accessed through a zig-zagging corridor, the third accessed next to the courtyard. Entrances and exits of the cinema hall are through different doors and at levels, creating an opportunity for

choreographed sequences of spaces and atmospheres. For two of the cinema halls beneath the housing block, audiences exit after a film to 'arrive at the Friche' in a sunken courtyard, as the final climax of the journey. The level change puts their field of vision in line with the tall grass, forming a new relationship between the landscape (ground plane) and the body. In turn, it strives to make people more aware of the beauty and 'unspoilt' nature of the Friche. These design strategies draw from the land art projects earlier in the research, where I visited and documented with photos and drawings. For those case studies, emphasis is put on the experiential journey. There is tension between nature and artifice, between belonging and being out of place, and between the intimate and immense.

**Next steps:**

Looking ahead at the final part of the graduation studio, I plan to bring together my research with my project through creating drawings based on my own design, in a similar fashion to the ones done previously speculating fictional journeys through the natural and the man-made. This would illustrate more abstract and exaggerated versions of components of my design and can be done at various scales from the urban, to the architectural, and then to the detail. I have already begun this.

In addition, there is opportunity for more detailed designs in at least one other portion of my project, to emphasize particularly the materiality and how the spaces will be used, as so far, I have primarily focused the design details at the principal south-west facade of the housing.