

THE BOUNDLESS MUSEUM

Intercultural exchanges across boundaries

Reflection

1. What is a museum?

In the 21st century, museums are not only storehouses of treasures but also records of reality that inspire people. In this day and age, museums are no longer encyclopedic but inspirational, provoking reflection on certain global issues. As a result, this project brings out the issue of immigration in Rotterdam and other countries, aiming to alleviate social and cultural segregation through promoting intercultural dialogues.

Compared to virtual tours available on the internet, physical museum is still important in terms of its direct connection with people, to let them interact physically with other people, artworks and the building itself. In an art museum, the relationship between objects and people can be enhanced by spatial design and arrangement. This project utilizes space and structure to exhibit art in an integrative way. The manifesto tells the initial idea of making the museum as a composition of interactive spaces (see fig.1).

Ways of museums to present global issues, such as what to be exhibited and how to exhibit, are sometimes controversial. While centralized museums are criticized for following a national and monotonous agenda by the public, it is also vital to rethink the role and position of a museum to balance between different interests. This project strives for a heterogeneous exhibition narrative that opens up diverse perspectives, underlining the museum's role as a common ground for intercultural exchanges.

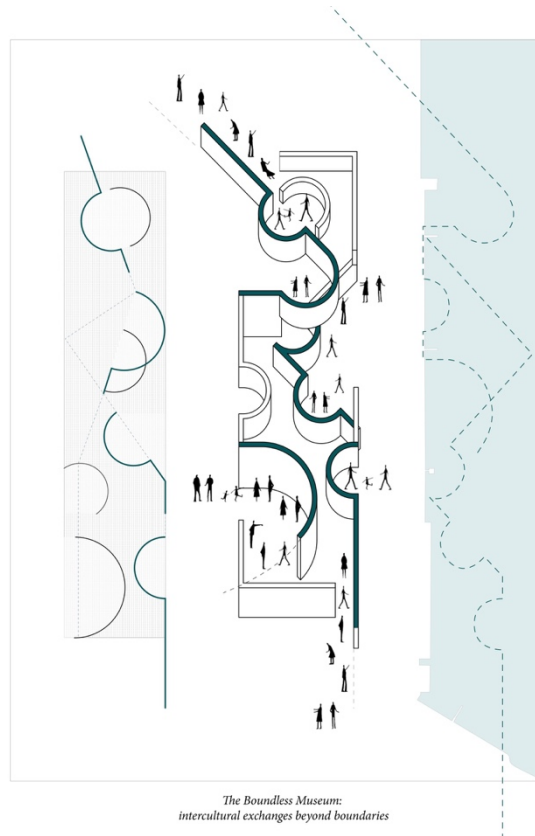


Fig.1 Manifesto (latest version)

2. What the relation between this specific studio topic and the design that you are making is (in other words: what is for you the 'New Museum' and how have the results of the group research been implemented in your design (in other words: what have you depicted from both theme / site research and case study triplets (as made by all groups) in your design?)

The graduation topic explores the social function of architecture in order to create intercultural dialogues. It aims to rediscover what an art museum can offer to the public, and how a city's social scene can be translated and reflected through architectural means. This matches with the purpose of this studio of designing culturally valuable civic spaces for communities, and rewiring the city through art and architecture.

Under the studio theme, the topic "Boundless Museum" was set. In contextual sense, it helps to restate the aim of this project to ease perceptive boundaries in the immigrant neighborhood caused by social and cultural discrepancies in Rotterdam. By facilitating understanding through artworks, the museum aims to provide multiple perspectives towards the issue of immigration. In architectural sense, it means to spatially and visually reconnect North and South Rotterdam. Through designing spaces in North-South and East-West oriented structural walls, a spatial journey of moving between clear and unclear borders is created, echoing to the theme of "boundless"(see fig. 2, 3 & 4). The route in the museum hopes to let visitors experience transformations architecturally, between endless and confined horizons and perceptions.

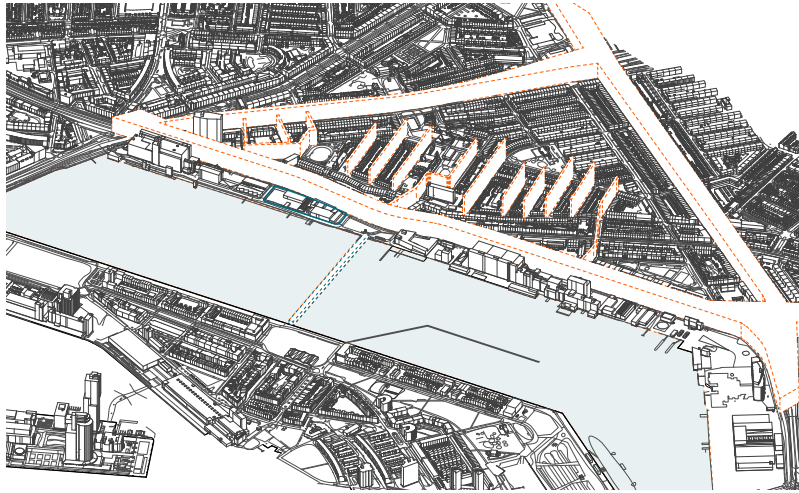


Fig. 2 Existing boundary between North and South Rotterdam

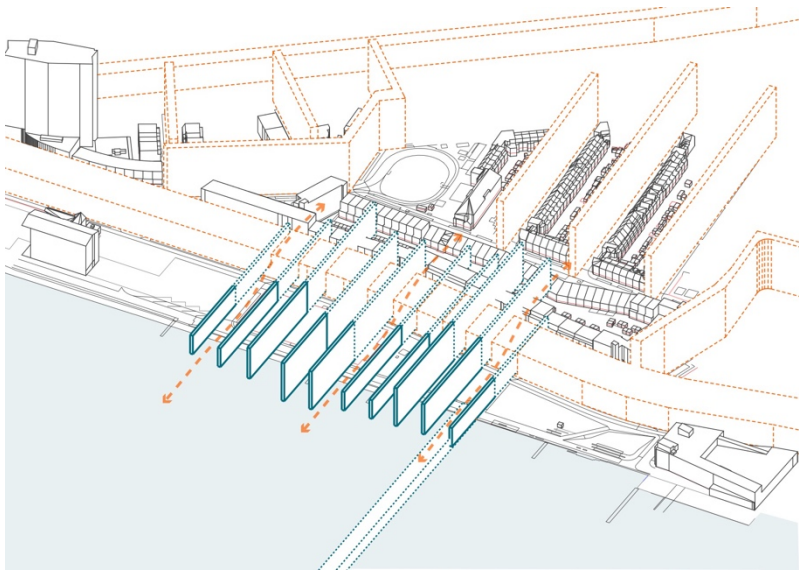


Fig. 3 North-south oriented walls breaking across the boundary

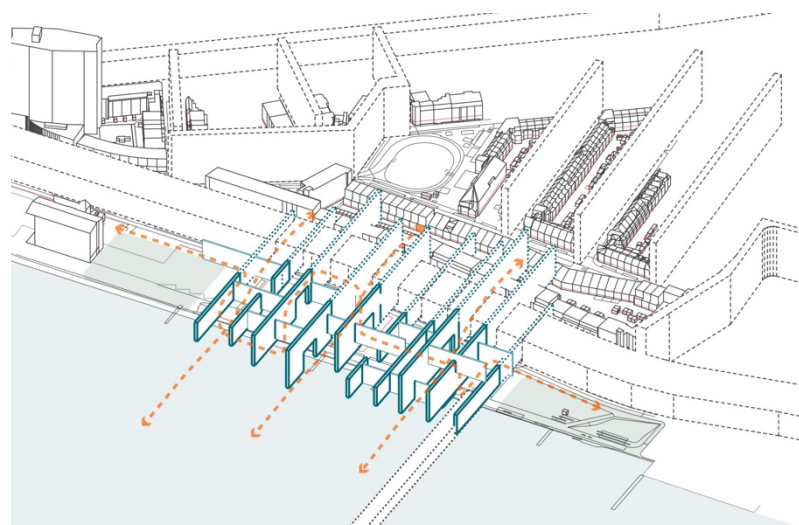


Fig. 4 East-west oriented walls directing movement across the museum

The group research has provided fundamental understanding of history of migration in Rotterdam, and particularly, the existing urban and social problem in Tarwewijk with large proportion of immigrants (see fig. 5). The case study triplets have offered us a chance to look through a range of museums in different contexts efficiently. By comparing different cases in certain aspects and presenting them visually in a coherent model, basic understanding on museums, such as scales, routing and ways to exhibit, is fostered.

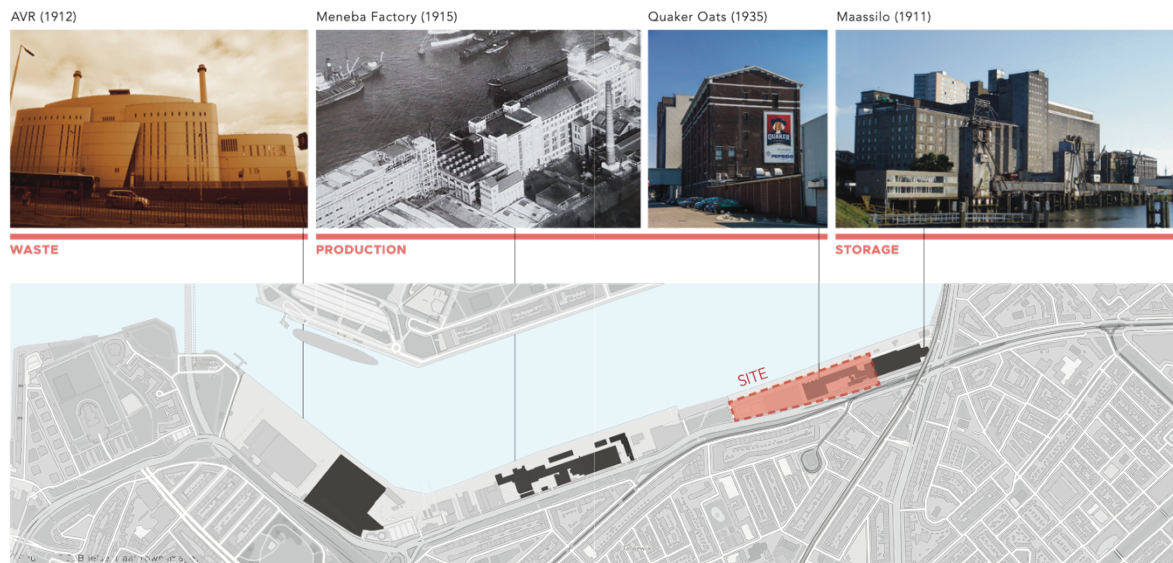


Fig. 5 Grain-based Economy in Tarwewijk, retrieved from “Power” Research, Public Building Studio 2020

3. *What your concept of Multiplicity is in your advanced, integrated design.*

The project responds to the concept of Multiplicity in terms of being multifunctional and resilient.

First, programs are diversified and spaces are designed to allow a range of activities to happen. Having a simple building form and regular structure, the spaces in the building are flexible to be used in different ways. It also favors a coherent use of structure, building method and materials. Depending on the area needed, programs are easily arranged in different portions between the vertical slabs (see fig. 6).

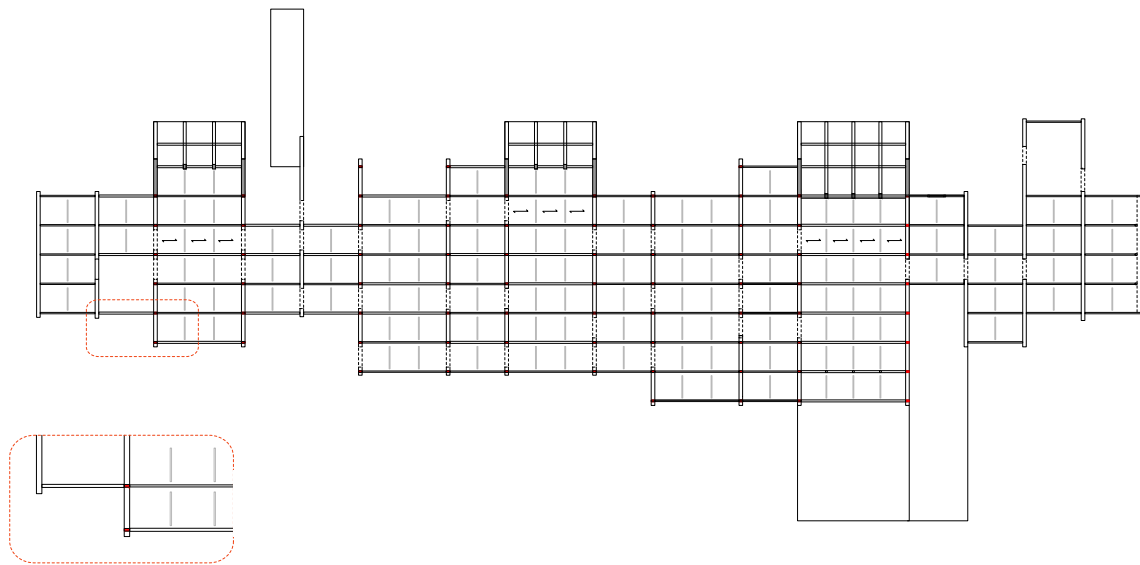


Fig. 6 Structural Plan (GF)

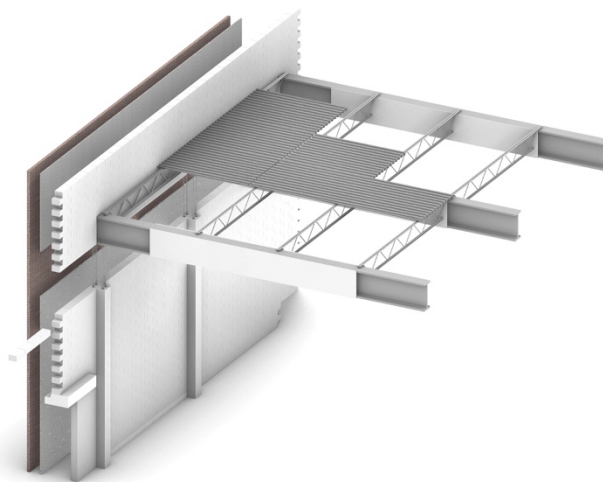


Fig. 7 Structural Composition

Second, different indoor climate are achieved with the variations in structural components. To match with different themes of exhibition along the route and create variations in perception, the use of different roof systems between the same wall system allows different lighting conditions. Among the four exhibition halls, two of the exhibition halls with themes of “Arrival” and “Return” are naturally-lit and framing the view towards Maashaven. On the other hand, two of them with themes of “Departure” and “Escape” are mainly artificially-lit. The roof and walls are covered by translucent metal mesh, directly visitors to focus on the indoor exhibits. Headroom of the two types of halls also differs between the structural walls.



Fig. 8 Hall 2 & 4 (Naturally-lit and outward looking)

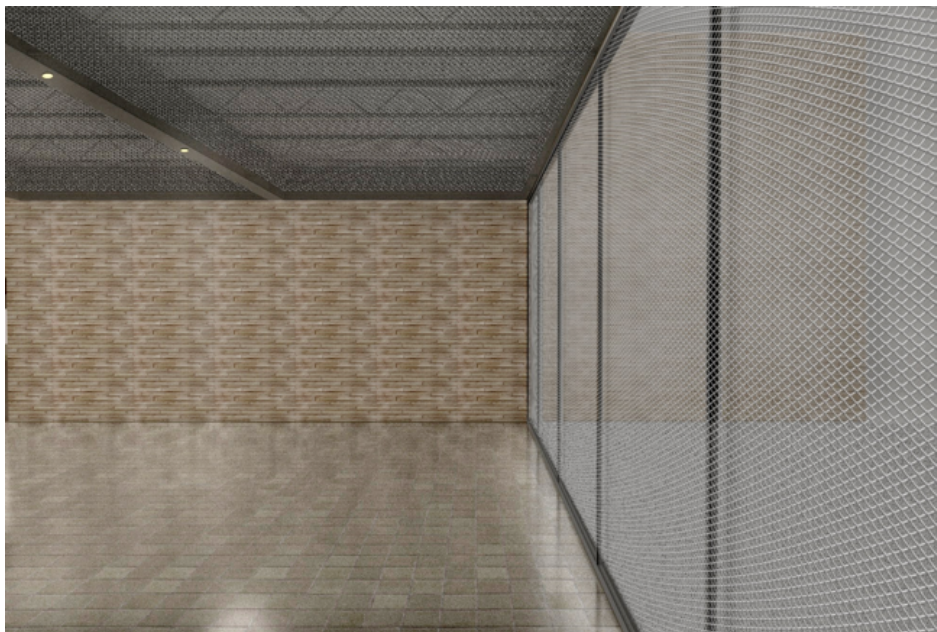


Fig. 9 Hall 1 & 3 (Artificially-lit and inward looking)

Third, the building system is resilient and economic. The use of AAC blockwork system allows easy and fast installation. Additional insulation is not necessary since it has been insulated. A range of advantages, such as having good thermal mass, strong fire resistance, sound insulation, etc. enhances the performance of the building and saves energy. Having an estimated lifespan of almost 100 years, the structure can be sustained and reused within a long period of time. For other energy saving measures, see fig. 10.

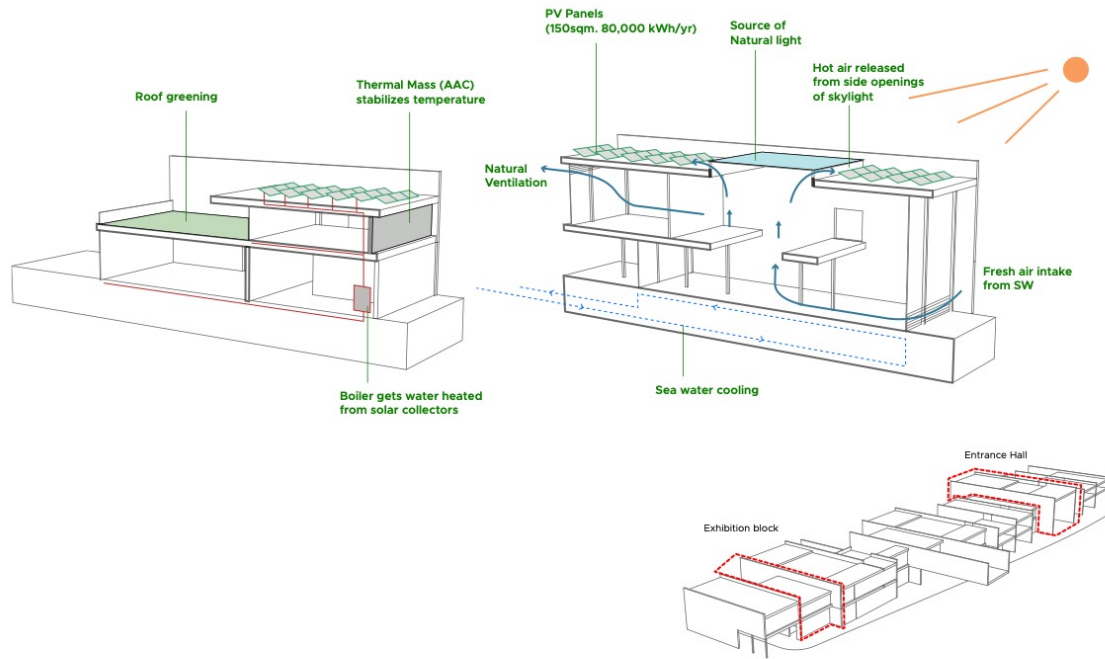


Fig. 10 Energy saving measures in the design

4. The relationship between research and design

Based on immigrants' experience on migration and acculturation, the research introduces how migration practices and cultural integration process contribute to the production of art and culture. The research is divided into three chapters, each connects the theme of immigration and its influence in the city. First, historical background of immigration and its relationship to the multicultural character of Rotterdam will be discussed. Second, spatial transformations that immigrants have brought to the neighborhood will be explored. Third, artworks and cultural scenes related to immigrants experience will be studied. These three chapters point to historical, architectural and artistic perspectives of immigration, which provide directions of how the museum can be designed and what to be exhibited.

5. Elaboration on research method and approach chosen by the student in relation to the graduation studio methodical line of inquiry, reflecting thereby upon the scientific relevance of the work.

The research is conducted quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative approach mainly addresses population diversity and discrepancies between immigrants and non-immigrants in Rotterdam. It includes statistics on the population in Rotterdam, such as differences in income, education background and household sizes. The qualitative approach develops on the base of quantitative results, further analyzing how non-locals live with and react to these discrepancies and boundaries. The experience of immigrants is explored in terms of how art and culture are preserved or transformed in the process of acculturation. The current artistic and cultural scenes in relation to immigrants in Rotterdam are be studied in local examples. The main sources are primary and secondary materials. The former includes site photos, observations and archival materials; the latter includes statistical reports, books and articles. However, this research had a number of limitations, such as impossibility to access physical archive and conducting interviews in South Rotterdam and limited scope of discussion on the topic of immigration, which relates to complex historical background.

6. Elaboration on the relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional and scientific framework, touching upon the transferability of the project results.

This project strives to contribute in a larger discourse by stimulating reflections about existing social divides because of inherent differences of human, such as races, languages and religions. Traditional binary oppositions and homogenization have suppressed the voices of those who are considered being “different”, strangling cultural and artistic diversity. Through bringing up the topic of “The Boundless Museum”, the project aims to underline the possibility of co-existence and cultural heterogeneity across traditional contexts.