

GOOGLE CAMPUS

REFLECTION

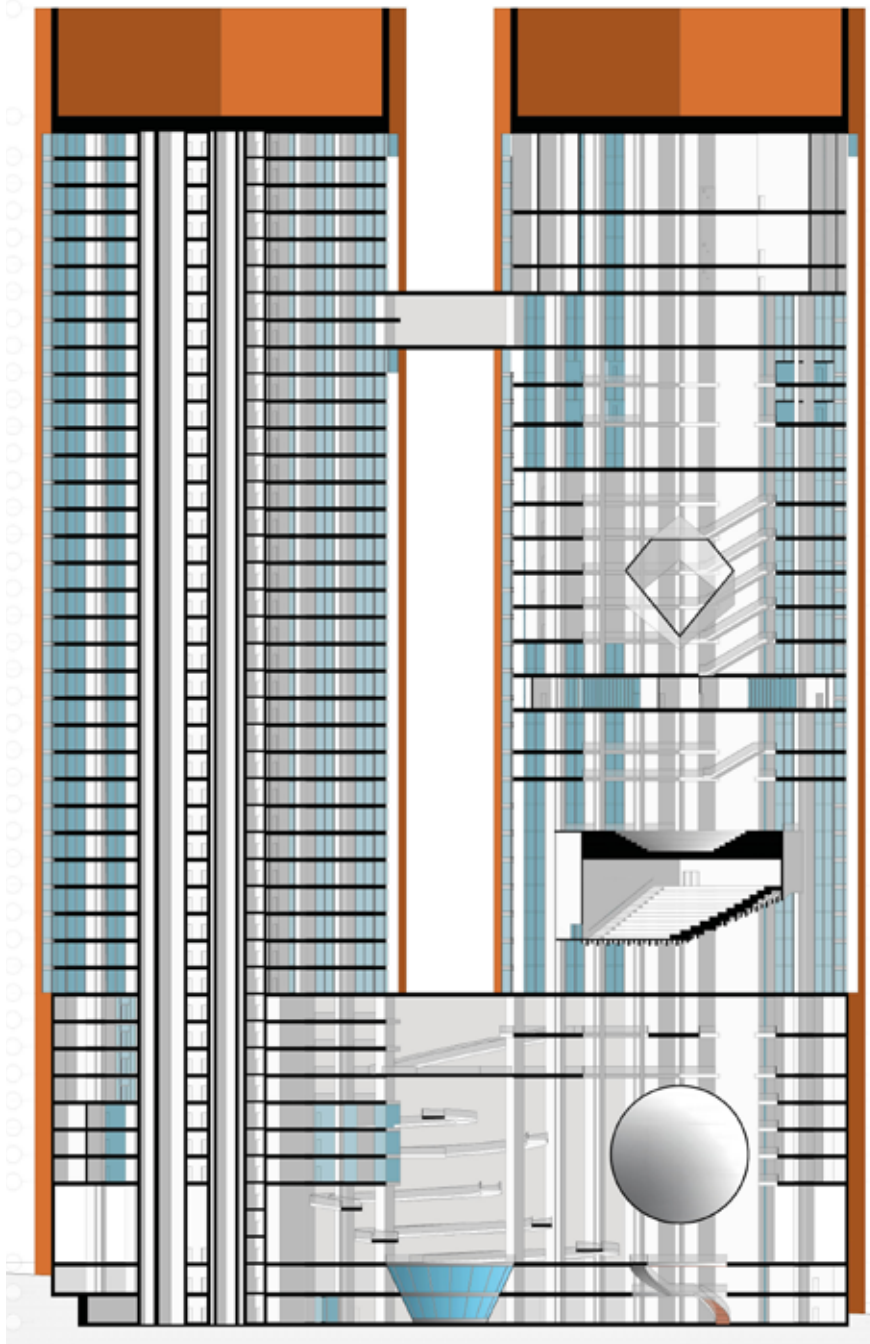
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Complex Projects
NY-Midtown
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Project Discription

Midtown Manhattan in New York City, the site of the Complex Projects graduation, evokes an image in everyone's mind: the skyline. This city profile is mostly defined by the supertall skyscrapers that poke out and shape it in a unique way, making it recognizable among the worlds other cities. These buildings are the result of different moments in time where a particular industry was booming, resulting in headquarters that were not only supposed to house the company's offices, but also show of how well business was going.

This led to starting point of my research, a search for which industry would be the next to make an addition to the Big apple's skyline. In light of the growth of the Tech sector in the past decade, it is most probable one of the multibillion dollar tech giants will build a new York headquarters, even though they are most famously situated in Silicon Valley, California.

The design that followed from this research tries to combine the established New York office tower with the California Campus lifestyle, resulting in a vertical campus. To get more grip on this task and a clearer direction to go in, Google was chosen as a fictional client to shape the requirements for the program and it's relations. Apart from being a New York headquarter, the building also serves as a 'flagship store', a billboard for the company in the world most watched city.

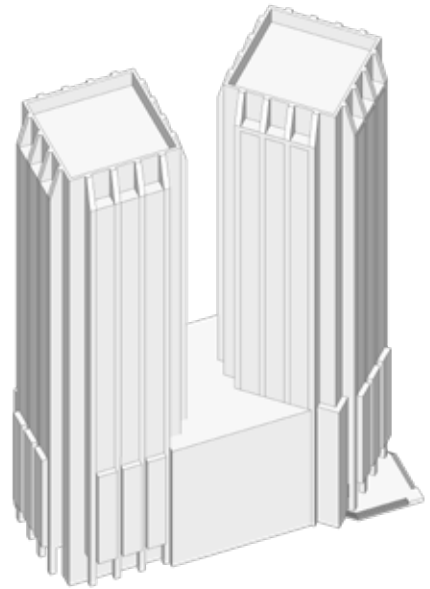
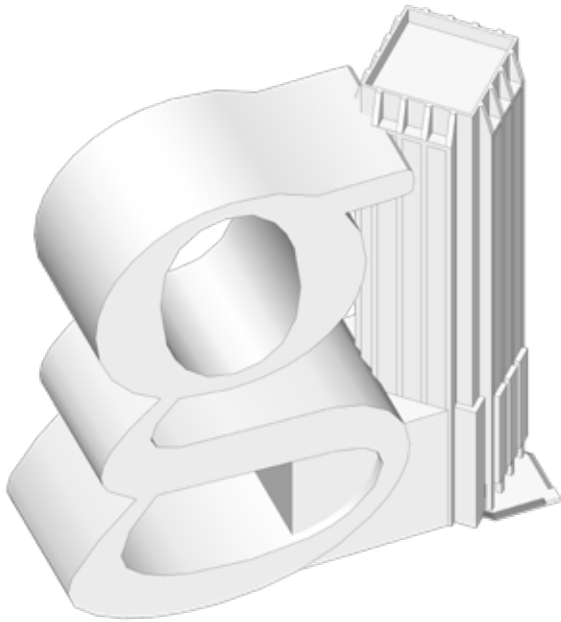
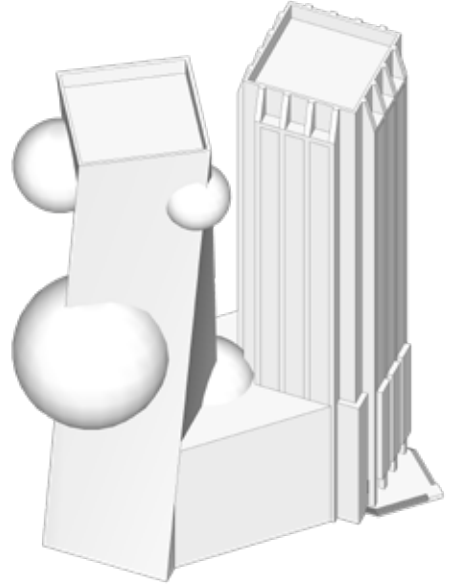
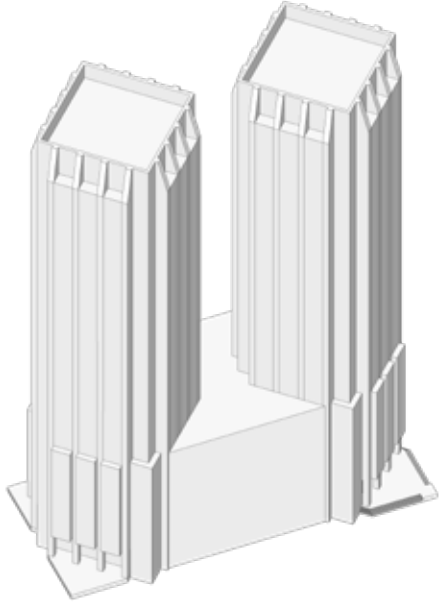


Aspect 1 the relationship between research and design.

When trying to explain what the profession of architecture entails, I often find myself describing it as a practice that exists on the overlapping part of the Venn diagram between art and technology. This dyad creates an interesting case for the type of research needed to perform the act of designing a building. Art is primarily based on inspiration, a cross contamination between precedents and original ideas, whereas technology is based on scientific research and its results, that can often be tested empirically. In architecture both of these research forms have validity for different reasons and serve a variety of purposes throughout the design process.

The point of departure in the case of this project was a personal fascination concerning a change currently taking place in Manhattan. By gathering hard and soft data (facts and figures vs speculations) the topic of business was researched. The direct result of this were the topics of big player architecture and a growing concentrated tech hub. Combining these two directly led to the main research question : 'How can a big tech program spanning a vast area be adapted in a dense urban area?'. It served as evidence that thriving industries build iconic buildings in Midtown and formed a framework to support the speculation that the tech industry is most probable to be next.

In the MSc 4, the goal of the design was to test a case to be able to answer the research question. This means the design itself was not only the result of research, but also an integral part of it. Besides this, for the act of designing the more artistic way of conducting research is most used. By looking for precedents, both in a general way by looking at buildings with similar programs and more specifically by looking at parts of details, a series of iterations are made to test the viability of the combination of a design style with the proposed program. The results of this further develop the design and are continuously repeated until the final design is reached. This result is then reflected upon and serves as the main subject of the thesis research and provides the basis to answer the main research question.



Aspect 2 the relationship between the graduation topic, the studio topic, the master track and program.

'New York Midtown - Graduation studio Complex Projects investigates settlements around the world and within areas that are ambiguous in their development and embedded in the process of change.'¹ This clearly describes the studio's ambition and has therefore been a leading factor in the Graduation project. By forcing the students to conduct the hard and soft data research, which was graded seminar product, focussed on a personal fascination the studio introduced change within each project in a way that motivates the student to fully dive in. Since the personal fascination is the basis for the research, the student automatically becomes more motivated and interested in the topic.

As was the case in this project. The combination a personal fascination of progressive technologies and the thriving tech sector in Midtown seamlessly intertwine the studio and project topics. In relation the Architecture track, both complex projects and this graduation project use a combination of the speculative research by design and a more technical process of conducting research. Being part of a technical university, the faculty of architecture has a unique position in that it is not a purely technical profession, but nonetheless has immense benefits by the technical research methods.



Aspect 3 Elaboration on research method and approach chosen in relation to the graduation studio methodical line of inquiry.

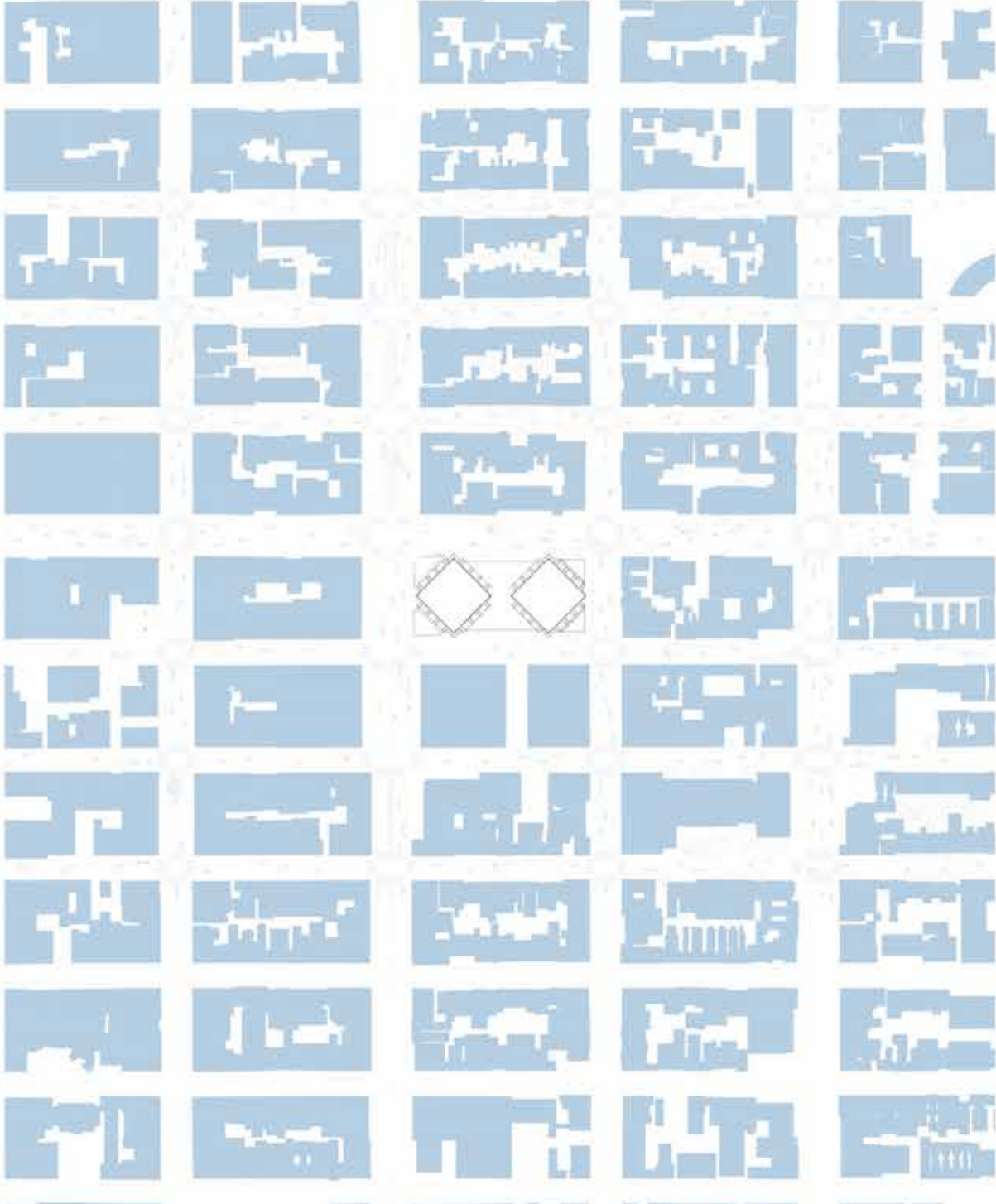
The chair's main method of research is, as mentioned before, research by design. The whole design process conducted in the MSc 4 serves to answer the research question that was the result of the MSc 3 research. In that sense, the design is a result of a full semester of research so could be categorized as a design by research, so in a sense one could classify the whole graduation as research by design by research. Besides that the design decisions are also informed by precedent research, so research for design is also involved, But in my opinion the main method used is research by design.

This project, in line with the studio's goal, zooms in and out through different scales. By making design decisions on those different scales, the result is a building that works within its context, immediate surroundings but also functions as a single entity. This was done by taking an aspect of the design, like form, functional relations, material, etc. and making a series of studies, both in 2d and 3d, to test a particular part of the assignment. In this way, all decisions can be justified on multiple levels, which adds to the credibility of the end result.

As designing is not an exact science, it is difficult to place it in the broader academic scientific sense. Parts of the research, for instance the hard data and certain design precedents, serve the role of facts to base arguments on, but in the end a big part of the research and design are speculative and subjective. Often in the faculty of architecture teachers during tutoring mention that a hundred architects will make a hundred different designs which proves that there is no empiric answer to a question like the one this project is based on. I merely shows a possibility. It does however serve relevance in the broader academic field, since the methods used do make every decision justifiable and therefor comparable with other research of similar topic.

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Roofplan



Aspect 4/5 Elaboration on the relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional and scientific framework, touching upon the transferability of the project results.

Cities in the world are still growing and expanding, and especially in cities like New York, where expansion is severely limited, the demand for big multifunctional buildings rises. Therefore a vertical campus, a function known for housing a wide variety of amenities, holds a lot of relevance in the current professional field. And as discussed above, the scientific relevance is not per se as an empirical addition, but more as a case study with one of many possible outcomes, and more importantly why this outcome might happen.

More interesting in the case of a big tech headquarters are the ethical issues that came up. During research, and especially the MSc 3 course research methods, a wide variety of possible ways to conduct research came by. By following the studio's program in relation to my own project, a lot of precedent research was conducted. But when comparing solutions implemented the age-old dilemma in architecture revealed itself. How similar can your design be without it copying it? Can a design be plagiarised? And since during the course of studying architecture a large amount of projects were studied and analysed, so is something I design an original idea or cryptomnesia?

On the other hand during the design of specifically a Google headquarters the dilemma between professional and personal morals came up. Even though Google's company motto 'don't be evil' is meant to ensure that nothing the company does is to harm the privacy of the public, a lot of speculation leads to the fact that they are probably storing and sharing our personal data. Personally I believe as an architect you are not in the position to question the morals of your client, but as a person you can. In that sense, if you take the job, it's none of your concern, but if you personally feel it immoral and want the company to act more ethical, then don't design their building.

