

– volume –

democratizing the arts

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How democratizing the arts provides us a better future.

The project Democratizing the Arts is an attempt to remove the thresholds for encounters with art and society. In this essay I will explain why, in which context, and how. The object of these study is the Quadrangular building in Tilburg, designed by Jo Coenen.

WHY

Art and society

Music has always been an important element in human society throughout the history of the world. In the book of Genesis, three grandsons of Cain were described: Jabal, the father of all those who lived in tents and raised livestock. His brother Jubal, the father of all who played stringed instruments and pipes. They had a half-brother named Tubal-Cain, who forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron. This indicates that the three main elements in (early) civilization were farming, music and technology.

That music formed one of these three elements is because the core need of us as human beings is to not just be alive, but to live, to enjoy, to be well. In his book 'Meditations on Technics', Spanish philosopher Ortega Y Gasset made this clear by asking very fundamental questions such as: why do we protect ourselves from the cold? Why do we feed ourselves? Why do we drink? We dress and feed ourselves because we want to live. Life is the basic necessity from which everything else is derived. He refers to anthropological studies showing that instruments useful for physical survival go hand in hand with seemingly superfluous musical instruments. Even fire, the mother of all inventions, was from the beginning used not only for heating but also for intoxication. Also, it is unclear whether the bow was first used for music or for hunting. The conclusion is that the human need encompasses both the useful and the superfluous and that the boundary is not clear: "Well-being and not being is the basic human need".

Many other, more recent, studies show that art and culture are profitable for a society. Not only are people who are culturally active happier and more empathetic; a city with a lively cultural life

is also more attractive and beneficial for the region's economy. This is why democratic administrations invest money in art and culture.

The encounter with art

With his art Dutch composer Merlijn Twaalfhoven, who travels to many conflict areas all over the world where he creates music together with the people who live there, he tries to bring a sense of togetherness and forgiveness to these places. Although he often doesn't know if and how his music could help people in certain circumstances, he realized throughout the years that his art provided distraction, hope and fraternization in these situations. Art stimulates the imagination, which allows you to look ahead of the circumstances and catch a glimpse of what could be. This experience brought Twaalfhoven to the conclusion in his book that having an artistic mindset, evoked by music or art in general, is a very powerful tool that is needed for everyone to overcome the challenges of our time.

The encounter with the other

The Jewish German-American philosopher Hannah Arendt wrote in her book The Human Condition that our existence has three elementary conditions: labor, work and acting. Labor has to do with the condition of life itself: satisfying our natural needs and keeping the body healthy and energetic. Working is our practice of creating the world. By working we transform the biological earth into a livable world for human beings. We do this by creating order and by creating tangible things such as houses, cities, artworks, furniture, as well as intangible structures: institutions that make communal living possible. Working also creates the conditions for the third human condition: action. Action includes both action and speech; it is what happens between people without the intervention of things. Action always takes place in the public realm; work and labor can be realized in solitude, but action

requires the existing of others. By acting and speaking, we appear to the other. It's all about seeing and being seen, hearing and being heard. Therefore, a space in which one can meet, see and hear, be



Merlijn Twaalfhoven (1976)
prefers to perform outside of
the concert halls.



Hannah Arendt (1906-1975)

seen and be heard, is required. Following Arendt, it is with acting and speaking that the differences between people become clear. Nobody talks the same, nobody acts the same. The public space is therefore a fundamental space of difference for Arendt: only there will the differences come to light. It is also thanks to the distinctness that acting is needed. If we were all exactly the same, no politics would be needed. Through acting and speaking, the human being appears to one another and shows who he is instead of what he is. Distinctness then becomes uniqueness. According to Arendt this appearing to one another is the core of democracy. In short: to cultivate the world around us we need to encounter each other and vice versa.

CONTEXT

Political context – strategies to involve more people into the public funded arts.

Studies have proven that only 40% of the people living in the Netherlands consume public funded art. Therefore the Raad voor Cultuur has advised the Dutch government on how this number can be increased. They described three strategies:

1. To lower practical thresholds. Practical thresholds can be: a lack of money, a lack of time (when cultural events are often at night, we continually exclude people that aren't able to come in the evening for example), bad accessibility, a lack of information or a lack of motivation.
2. To enlarge the cultural wealth. This can be done by means of education, context programming, or through content marketing and communication
3. To stretch the definition of cultural wealth. By expanding and broadening our definition of art, alongside the funded proffer we get a richer cultural landscape that will attract other groups of people besides the usual art consumers.

The project democratizing the arts is a translation of these strategies into spatial qualities.

History of the place – cultural treasury of Tilburg

The area of the project is called the cultural treasury of Tilburg, All buildings that are important for the life in the city are concentrated here. There has been a church since at least the 15th century, the existing church was built in 1829. In 1849 the palace of King Willem 2nd and the city hall were built next to church and this became the centre of Tilburg, an agglomeration of small villages. After WWII Jos. Bedaux designed the court house and Bijvoet & Holt designed the theater, both built in the 1960s. In 1971 the old town hall got demolished to make room for the cityring. In 1972 the cityring was created together with the sculptural fountain of Joop Beljon in front of the palace, which was then already in use as a town hall.

In 1987 Jo Coenen got the commission to design the development of the area. The goal was to connect the areas on both sides of the cityring, and to improve the public squares. Jo Coenen connected the squares through a sequence of open spaces, of which one is the garden of the art cluster but also at the back of the courthouse and in between the new apartment blocks. Coenen tried to bring back the human scale to the big squares by placing pergolas that accentuated the spot, as a place for social encounter. This renewing-development, which contains the Quadrangular building as well, was finished with the completion of the Factorium, a music school by Atelier Pro, in 2010.

Future of the place – Stadsforum

The providing of more stage buildings after WWII resulted in the translocation of art performances from the public realm into closed off buildings. Additionally, there was a strong increase of the amount of cars in our inner cities during the second half of the previous century. These two developments have led to the impoverishment of the public space. Recently, ZUS designed a plan to reverse these developments of the site the project is located on. The plan is called 'Stadsforum' and consists of cutting off through traffic, greening the area and providing space for cultural events. When the definitive design was proposed to the city council in April 2021 its title was: "A square for and by all Tilburgers." So it carries the promise to be really democratic. The project democratizing the arts can be seen as a reaction to this development.

The Quadrangular building

In 1993 Jo Coenen received the admission to design an art school and a concert hall in Tilburg. The art cluster consists of different buildings composed together around a former monastery garden: the Muzentuin. The project democratizing the arts is focused on the Quadrangular building, which contains the concert hall including its foyer, wardrobe and backstage areas, and the welcoming area, the canteen and some classrooms of the art academy.

In the current situation, the different users of the building are strictly separated from each other. The building has a specific architecture that carries characteristics of modern and post-modern movements. Modern features I distinguish: a separation of functions, no front or rear but designed towards all sides, main construction consist of a concrete skeleton, and the building is partly elevated from the street level. It's clear that Coenen has used Le Corbusier as a huge inspiration for this building. Also the stair tower in the patio reminds strongly of forms Le Corbusier introduced. Postmodernism I recognize in the references to musical instruments in the form and material of the building parts. Also the copying of Corbusian forms I account to be postmodernism. The building is a collage of different finishing materials on the facade: we see corrugated steel, wood, natural stone, ceramic stones, stucco, curtain walls, this was commonly done in the 1990s.

Jo Coenen called the building a Chinese puzzle in which every cubic meter is used, there was no other way to fit all those functions in. What I see is a building with many corridor spaces and a building that determines the routing and the activities of the users: In this way, the building manipulates the user.

The outside spaces were intended to be a stage for social interaction. This currently dysfunctions as annoying music is being played to avoid people from loitering there.

The concert hall is elevated from the street level and the spaces for social interaction are limited.

The hidden entry isn't welcoming and only people with a ticket for a concert will enter.

The music room is designed asymmetrical and is admired due to its acoustics. The floor of the

room is slightly sloped to provide good sightlines also for people in the back. There are 3 circular balconies with a playful curved form. All the walls are painted white, which provides a mystical atmosphere together with the light artwork made by Peter Struycken; blue, green, and red fluorescent lights together provide white light. One can say this is the most colourful concert hall in the Netherlands.

HOW

A continuation of the existing

An important starting point for this project is to see the existing building as competent and to preserve it as much as possible. This is out of respect for both the energy and raw materials that are locked up in the current building, as well as for the architectural appearance, which has now acquired a place in Tilburg's collective memory.

Instead of removing spaces and materials, these are added, although this stays limited to the existing outer boundaries of the building. Existing building components are only demolished where it is a real necessity.

User freedom

By covering the patio it is possible to break open the entire building and connect all kinds of spaces and functions. Where the existing structure was characterized by strict separation of users and a lot of corridor space, the central atrium offers the visitors freedom of movement, as one can choose how he or she moves through the building. The extended opening hours and the lockers, that replace the traditional cloakroom, allow visitors to come and go whenever they like.



The music room with the art work of Peter Struycken.

Thresholdlessness

In order to increase the accessibility of the building, the foyer is translocated to street level, as an extension of stadsforum. It will function as the foyer for the music room, the canteen of the art school and as an indoor square, open for everybody. All at the same time.

The boundary between the foyer inside and the city forum outside is made as minimal as possible. By lowering the ground floor, there is no longer a step and by continuing the paving material from the outside to the inside, creating an almost completely open facade, all further obstacles between the city forum and the foyer space have been removed.

Thanks to ramps and elevators all areas in the building are accessible to people who are confined to a wheelchair.

The foyer space continues on the first floor, here created in a circulation that includes the existing foyer, which overlooks the stadsforum. The entire area is accessible to the public and rooms along this route can be added to or closed off from this space by folding walls, depending on what the use dictates.

Versatile use of the building

The Quadrangular building becomes a stage building for every Tilburger. In the main concert hall Theaters Tilburg will still be programming classical music concerts, besides that also other parties and individuals should be able to use this venue.

The double height classroom in the basement will be used as an underground stage for non-classical music. Thanks to a box-in-box construction it is possible to overlap concerts in both stages.

The other classrooms of the conservatory in the basement can be used in the evening and weekends as rehearsal rooms for local bands or as classrooms for music lessons given by graduates.

The spaces can be rented out and all users can meet each other in the City-foyer, which is open every day from the early morning until hours after midnight.

All spaces are flexible in use. Only the bar and the stages are fixed, all other furniture is movable, the spaces can always adapt to the needs of the current day. Whether it is a political manifestation or an art exhibition everything is possible.

A social space

An important aspect of democratizing the arts is the space for individuals to meet each other, to appear to each other. A bar/reception area has been placed centrally in the foyer space, which acts as a magnet for social interaction. Large and small seating areas and workplaces have been set up throughout the building to sit down with a cup of coffee, a sandwich, or a good conversation, or to work or study together. Because various music halls, an academy and a public square are connected to this space, different social groups will mingle together. A conscious decision has therefore been made to keep the bar central so that everyone can meet in the foyer area.

Conclusion

By removing the literal and figurative barriers the building becomes more accessible, the flexible use and the connection with the academy lends itself perfectly to context programming around the concerts to enlarge the cultural wealth. By implementing space for non-classical music, and other (art) manifestations, the definition of cultural wealth is stretched.

Where the old building manipulated the user through mandatory traffic routes, closed doors and limited opening hours, the new building is flexible in use and visitors can move freely through the building. Consisting of one central meeting space adjacent to a public square, with quiet seating areas at its periphery, the space is not only ideal for an encounter with the arts, but also for meeting each other.

research

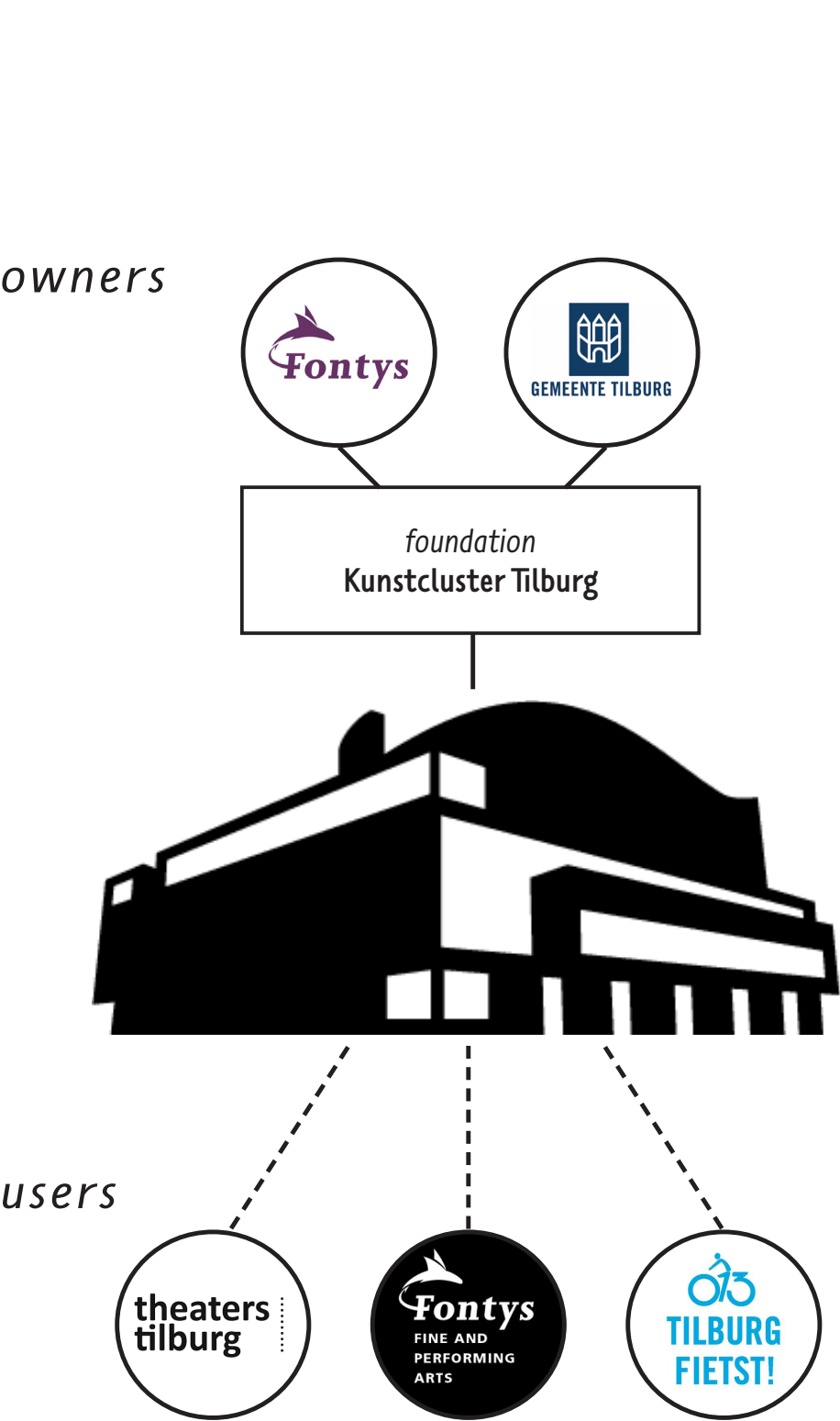
the Quadrangular building

General

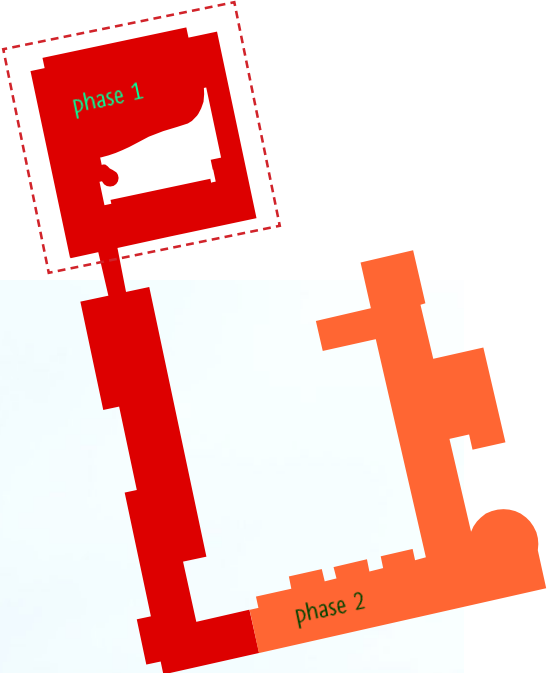
The Concert hall in Tilburg is part of the Quadrangular building. This building was developed in the 1990's as a part of the art cluster. Jo Coenen is the architect of this development; he also made a master plan for the whole district. The first phase of the art cluster, of which the Quadrangular building is a part, was finished in 1996 (so this year the building will turn 25). Gerrit Brokx, mayor of Tilburg in those days, wanted the city to have its own concert hall. It was a prestige project

of him, but the budget was small. The music room had to be perfect, and it really is, but to stay within the tight budget, backstage spaces and the foyer space have been designed too small. The building is owned by a joint venture of the municipality and Fontys Hogescholen. The user of the Concertzaal is Theaters Tilburg, who also is the user of the adjacent Theater, which is designed by Bijvoet and Holt and built in the early 1960's.

owners

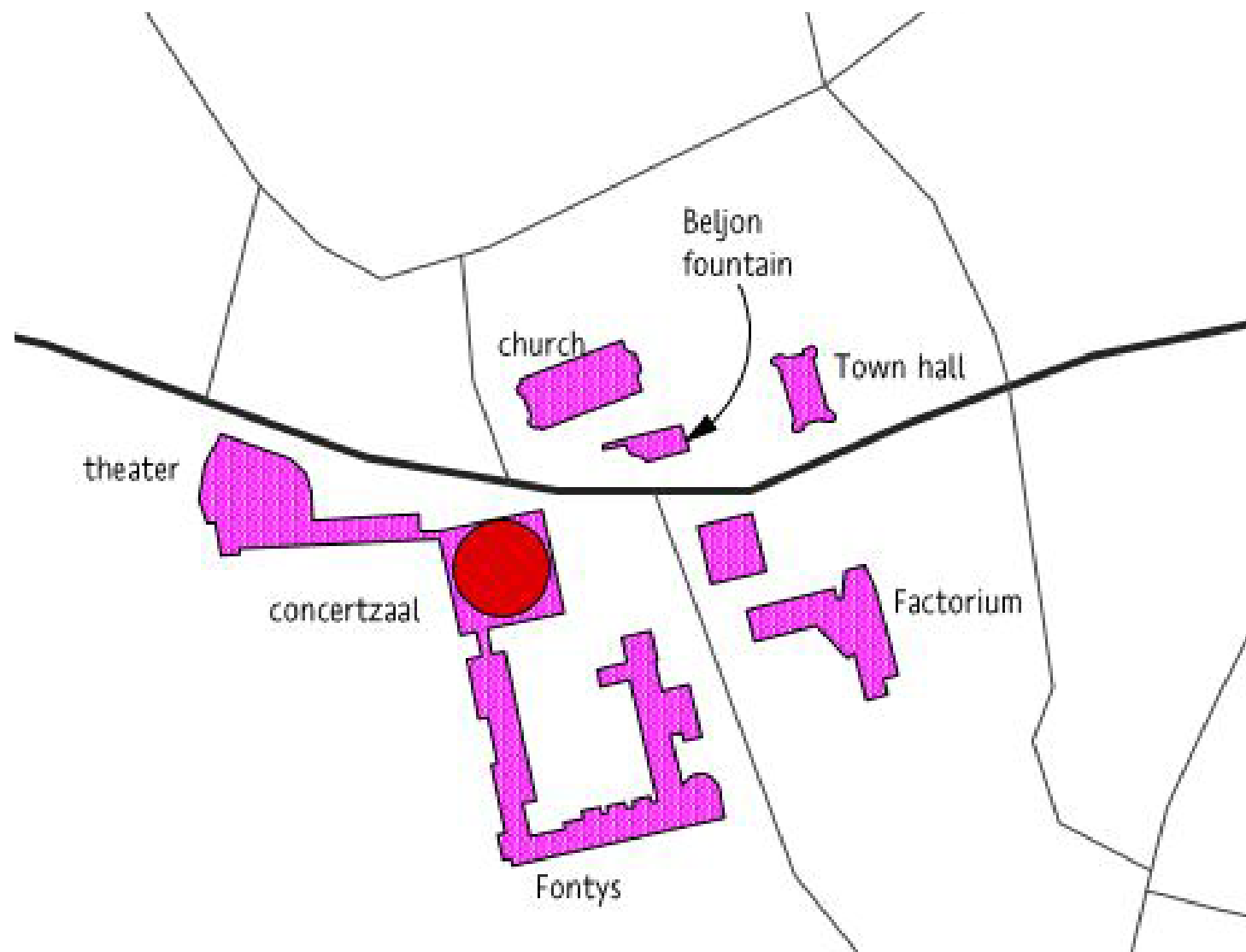


plan of the art cluster with the Quadrangular building >



the quadrangular building seen from the Schouwburggring

Urban context

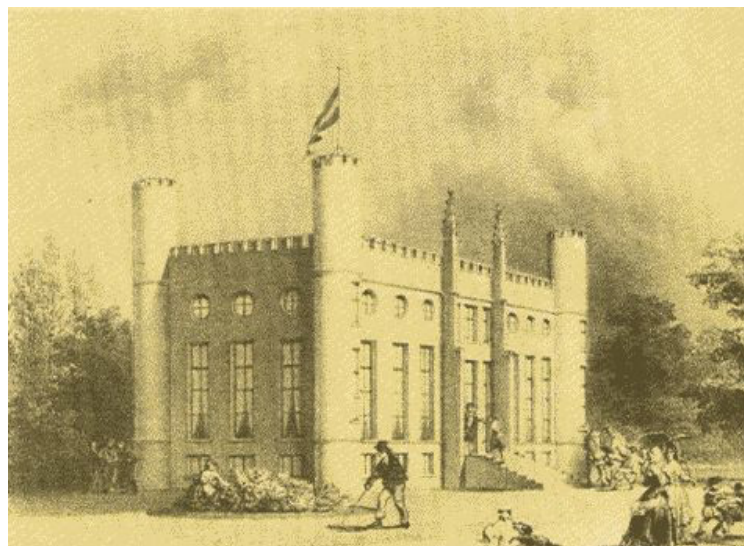


History of the area

Tilburg is an agglomeration of small villages that grew along the connecting streets into a city. In the middle of the 19th century, King Willem II commissioned the building of a palace next to the church that was built in 1827. In 1949 King Willem II died, just three weeks before the completion of his palace in Tilburg. In the same year the city hall was opened just across the street, on the exact spot where the Quadrangular building stands now. In 1863 Tilburg became connected to the railway network and in the 1920's the Wilhelmina canal was created. This offered the city of Tilburg a momentum of growth. Nowadays, the city is bigger than ever and inhabits over 220.000 people. The population is expected to grow to over 250.000 inhabitants in 2037. After the war in the 1960's, the Theater by Bijvoet & Holt and the Court house by Jos. Bedaux were built. In 1971 the city hall was demolished to make room for the city-ring. In 1987 Coenen received the assignment to make a development plan for the area. That also contained the commission to design the art cluster. In 2010, one of the last buildings of the development plan by Coenen was opened: the factotum, a building for amateur arts, designed by atelier Pro.

interconnectedness

In the contextualism of Aldo Rossi - of which Jo Coenen was a follower - a building or an urban adjustment always takes place in a context, and Rossi believed that this context is more important than the architecture: cities should grow organically over time, existing buildings and cities are carriers of the collective memory of the population and therefore have to be respected. This was a strong rejection of the modernist idea that architecture wasn't related to the historic and cultural context. Coenen tries to create coherence, harmony and cohesion between the building and the city, so that the building becomes part of the city and vice versa.



The palace, commissioned by King Willem 2nd.



The church (left) and the old city hall on the spot the Quadrangular building is built.

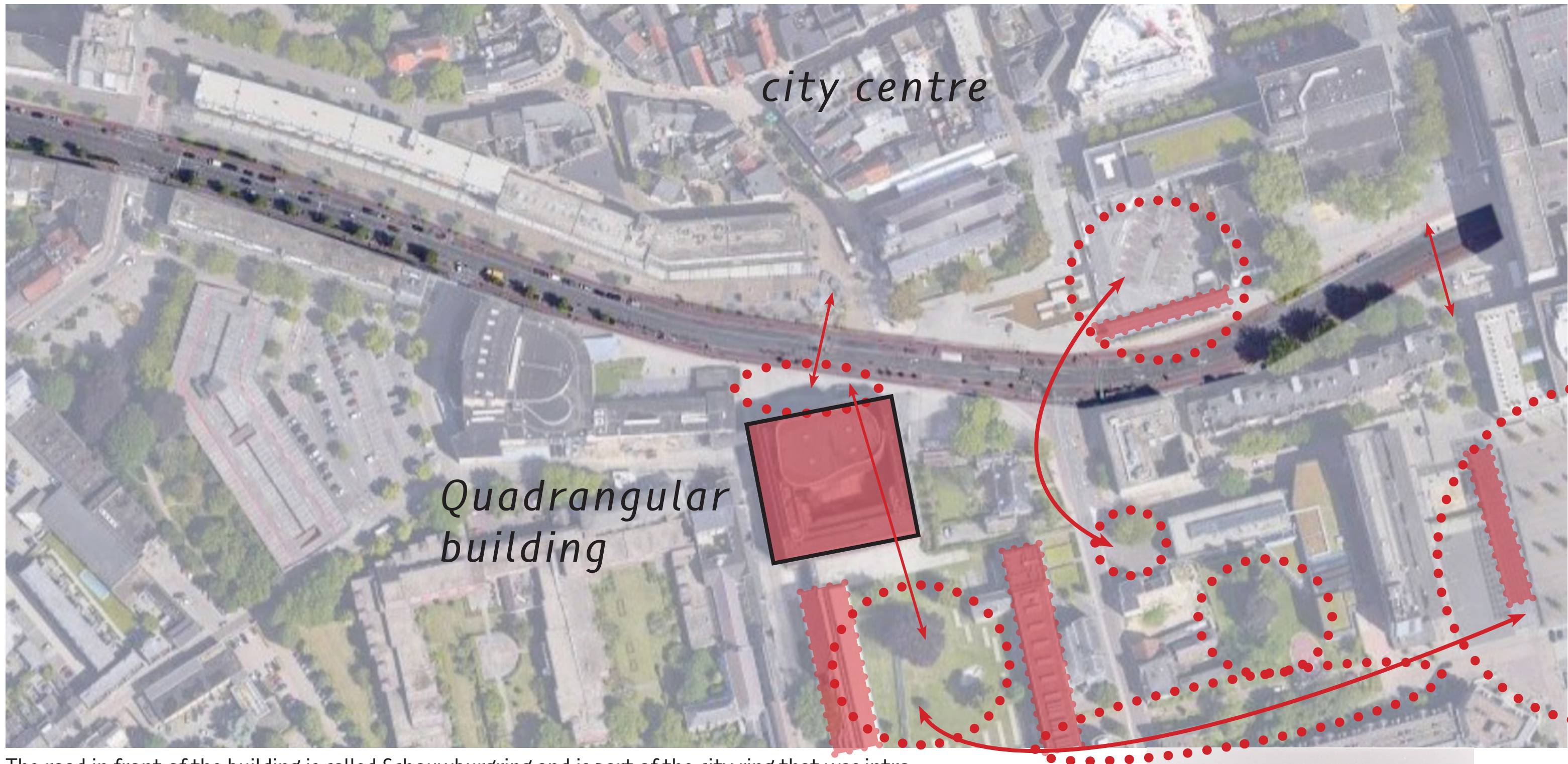


The Theater by Bijvoet & Holt.



The court house by Jos. Bedaux.

Schouwburgring - and city planning Jo Coenen



The road in front of the building is called Schouwburgring and is part of the city ring that was introduced in the 1970's. In the past decade, the city ring became a one way street.

The Schouwburgring can be seen as the first threshold of the Quadrangular building: a continuous stream of cars cuts off the quadrangular building from the city center.

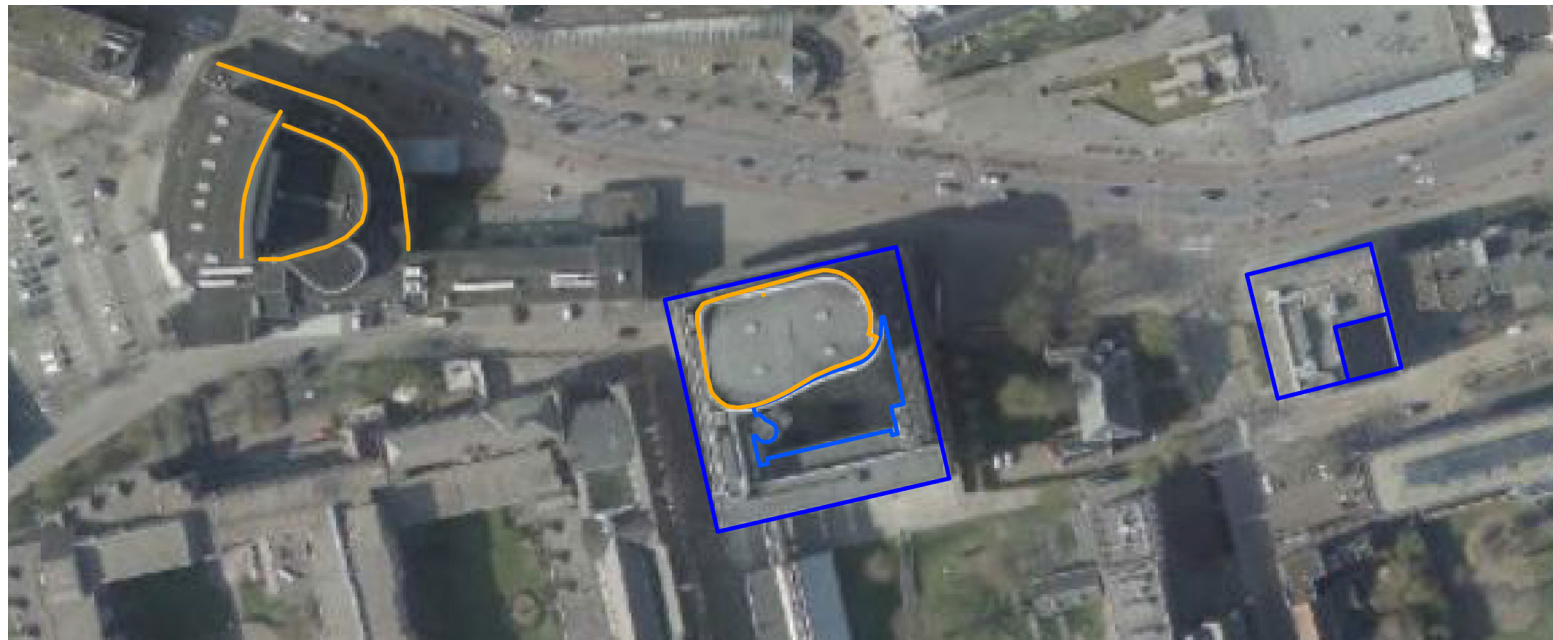
In red you see the alterations Jo Coenen made with his design for the area: on the big squares he put pergolas to bring in the human scale, and with a sequence of open green spaces he connected the squares on both sides of the Schouwburgring.



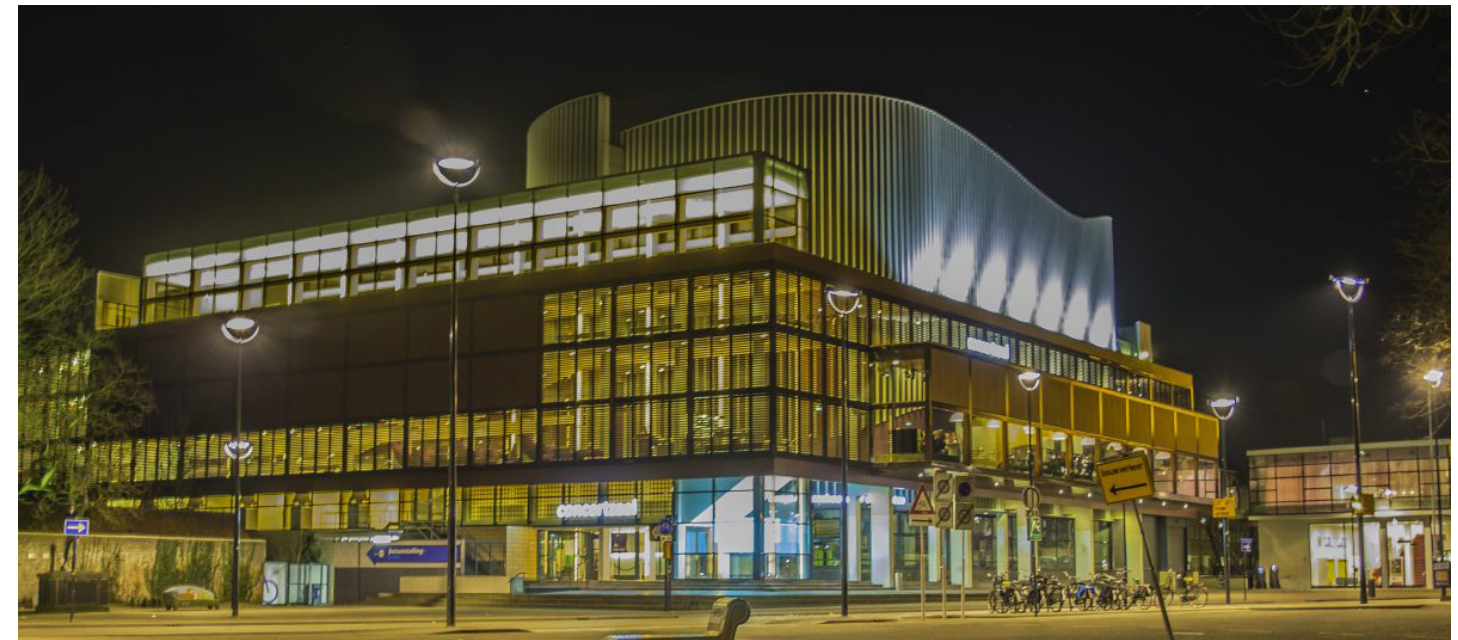
Architecture

The quadrangular building lies in between the Theater of Bijvoet & Holt and the former court house designed by Jos. Bedaux. The building has similarities with both those buildings. From the courthouse the quadrangular form with the patio is adopted and from the Theater the sculptural rounded form of the concert hall is adopted. Coenen himself said about this: “On the outside, the hall is identifiable as a seemingly free form, enclosed in the box-like structure. The projecting vertical profile on the outside of the hall – a feature often used by Alvar Aalto – provides the volume with an extra finesse in a similar way to the brickwork of the neighboring theatre.”

Although I couldn't find any references from the architect leading to Le Corbusier, the similarities are so clear that it must have been his inspiration for this building. The building is elevated with columns, it has very long walking paths (promenade architecturale), it is omni-directional, it has framed facades with horizontal articulation, and some parts go out of the grid structure and have a free organic form, such as the main staircase and the music hall. The complex of the art cluster are two buildings connected with bridges and arranged around a green space, just like Le Corbusier made it at Sainte-Marie de La Tourette.



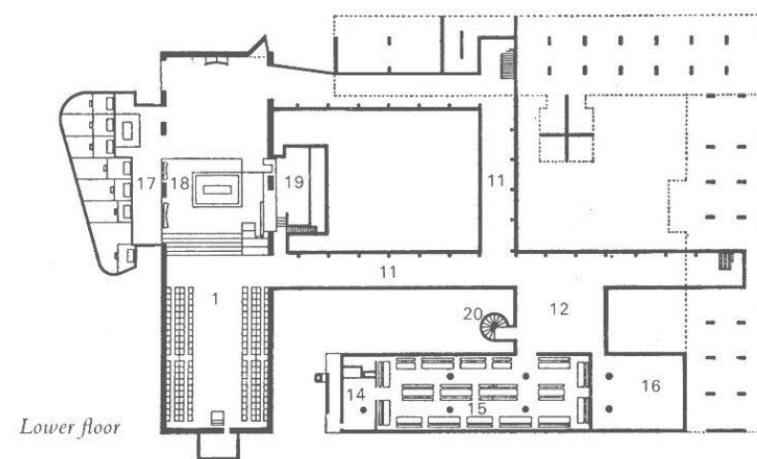
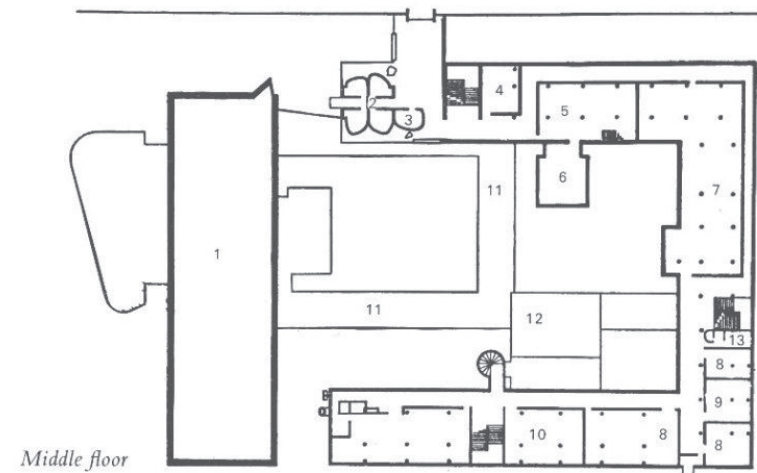
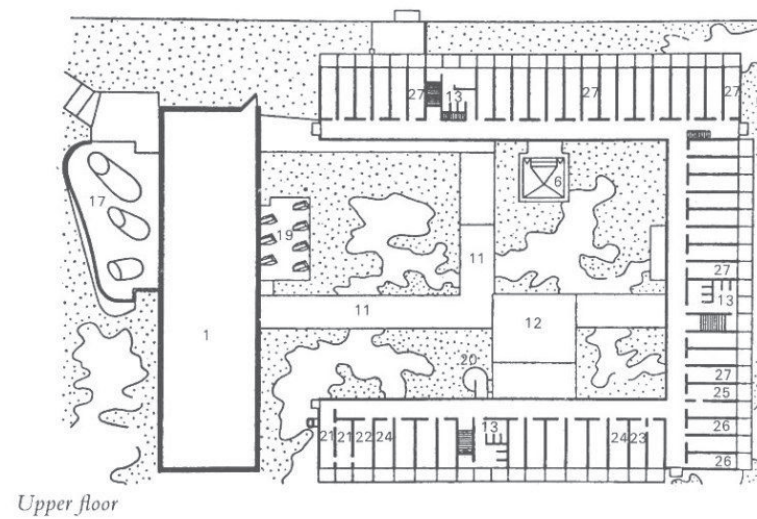
the free form (the body of a cello?) winks to the neighboring theatre on the left, the box-like form with a patio to the Bedaux building on the right.



villa Savoye: by Le Corbusier (1929)

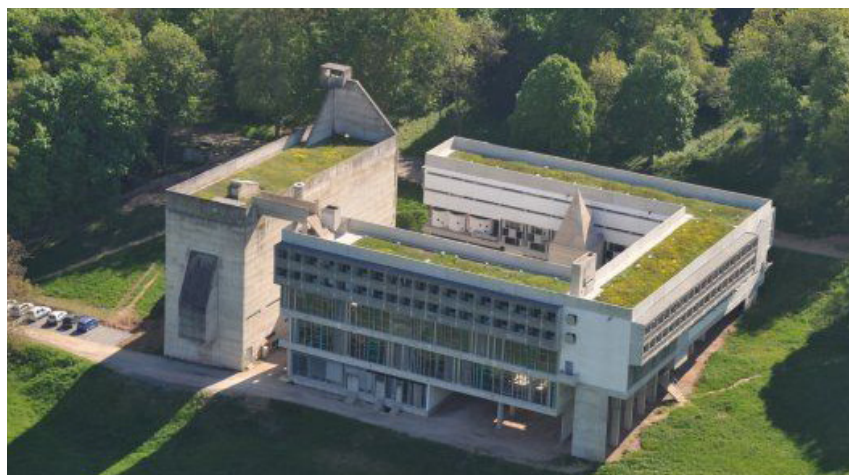
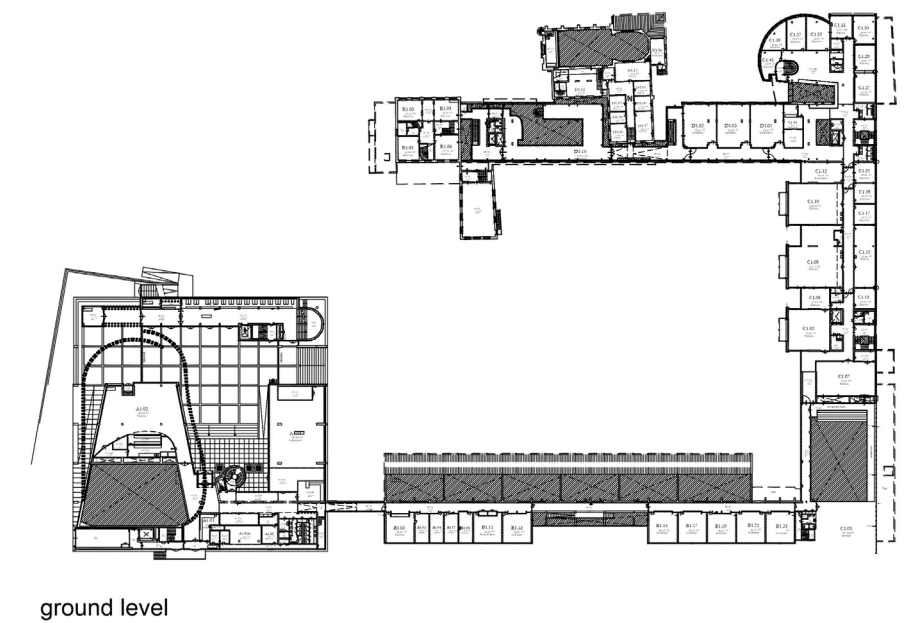
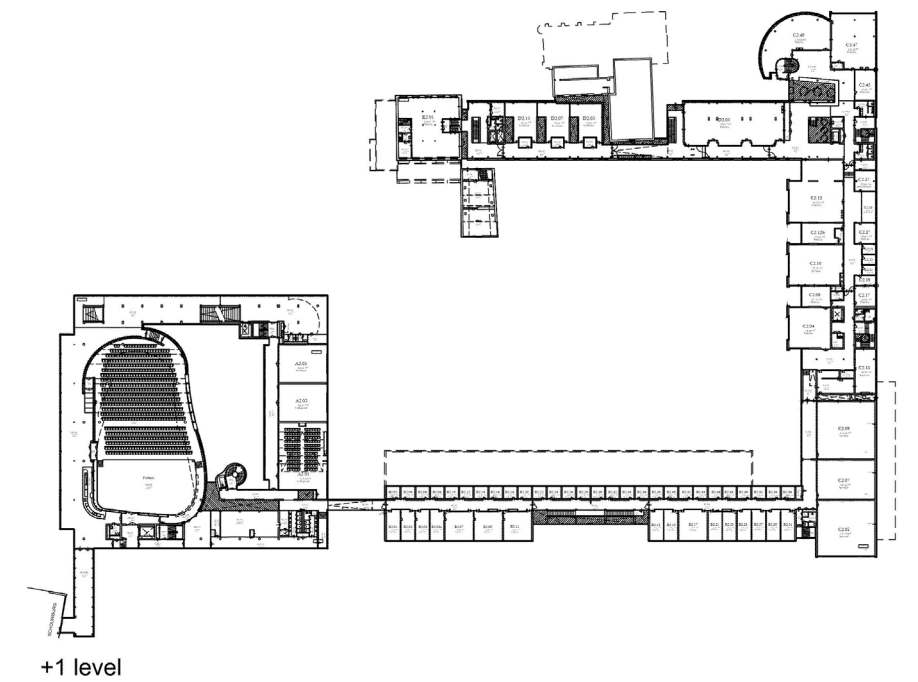


Concertzaal of Jo Coenen (1996) *similar forms*



Sainte-Marie de La Tourette of Le Corbusier (left and above) and the art cluster of Jo Coenen (right and below):

Although the context is opposite (green vs inner city) the similarities are strong. Both consist of a cluster of buildings around a green space connected with bridges. De La Tourette is built as a cloister. Did you know that the art cluster was built on the spot where once was a cloister? The chapel from the 19th century is a left-over of that period. Looking at the birdviews, a striking difference is that the roofs of Le Corbusier are green as well.



Exterior materialization

The Quadrangular building consists of several interlocked and stacked volumes that remain clearly distinct because of their materialization.

The music room is clad with vertical aluminum slats and hangs as free formed volume (that relates to the sound box of a cello) in the wooden quadrangle. The wooden Quadrangular is a grid structure with closed, open or semi-open fillings.

The plinth underneath the wooden quadrangle is clad with Saffron yellow ceramic tiles. These tiles also form a fine-meshed grid. The plinth inside the quadrangular volume is clad with Belgian natural stone.

The semi-closed facades above the wooden quadrangle are clad with corrugated steel plates with windows in an evenly rhythm. The facade in the patio opposite to the music room is also clad with those steel plates.

The closed facades, being only around the staircases and the wall between the *Rafter* and the stairs to the *Muzentuin*, are finished with white stucco.

The open facades in between consist of a curtain wall with dark gray, aluminum profiles in a strict grid. Some of these glass fillings are opaque, most are transparent.

Its omni-directionality, the strong rational applying of grids and the industrial materials make the building the modernistic icon, as mentioned before. It is nice as a whole, but in my opinion it is a bit cold and it misses the festive-like warm atmosphere of an inviting public building for the arts.



The stacked volumes can be clearly distinguished due to their variation in colors and material. The design is a collage of modern and postmodern architectural ideas and materials.

Interior materialization

The interior materials are a continuation of the cold materials used on the exterior.

The emergency exit and the wall between the backstage area and the circulation area of the academy are made of glass bricks.

There is a difference in finishing level between the spaces of the art academy and the spaces of the concert hall.

The floors are finished with linoleum in the educational spaces, and with carpet in the spaces of the concert hall. The ceilings are finished with stucco. Unless in *the Rafter*, the canteen and at the top floor of the circulation wing of the concert hall, where suspended ceiling systems are used to hide away the installations. The aluminum slats of the facade of the music room are continued in the interior.



The Foyer of the Concert hall, with carpet on the floor and stucco on the ceilings. The installations are worked away in a removable, spanned cloth.
© Jostijn Ligtvoet

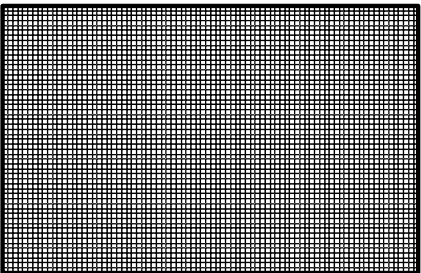
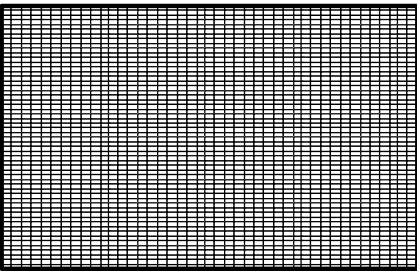
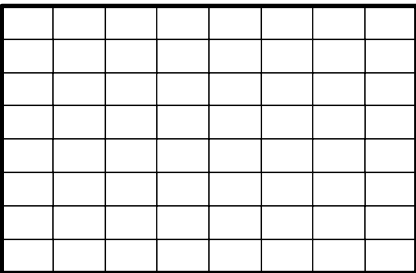
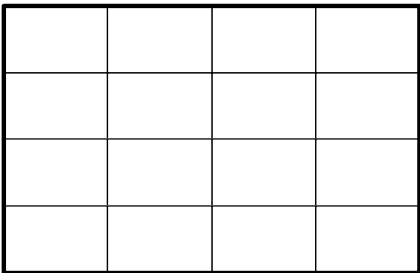
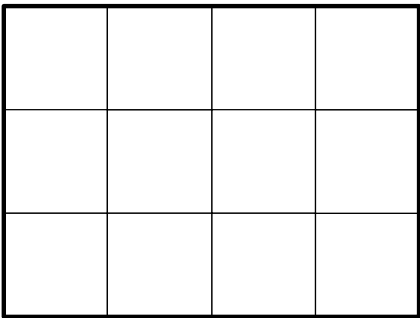
Grids

Like for example Louis Kahn on the Yale art center, Jo Coenen applied a lot of grids in the design. Most of the grids are horizontal with a ratio around 2:3.



The British art center in Yale designed by Louis Kahn (1901-1974) in 1970's

construction	concrete	4,2 x 4,2 / 8,4 x 8,4 m
quadrangle	wood	4,2 x 2,7 m
curtain walls:	aluminum + glass	2,1 x 1,35 m
plinth outside:	ceramic tiles :	0,4 x 0,1875 m
glass bricks (interior)	translucent glass	0,2 x 0,2 m



Music room

To me, the music room is the most special place in the Quadrangular building. The room has a capacity of 800 chairs and is completely white on the inside. At the ceiling there is an artwork of the artist Peter Struycken that consists of colored TL-lights (red, green and yellow) that provide white light together. The room is therefore called the most colorful concert hall of the country. It was also the first concert hall in the Netherlands with a window in the music room; something that has been repeated often ever since then. However, the window is mostly screened off during concerts, because it directly faces the opposite classrooms and therefore would be too distracting.



the colorful interior of the music room © Jostijn Ligtoet

Acoustics conclusion

The music room is built according to the shoe box typology and has a volume of 12.000 m³. To get the intended scattering of noise, there are some curves in the balconies. This was designed with the help of a 1:16 scale model. It's hard to find any hard conclusions about the acoustics, but most people I talked to are full of praise about the acoustics of this room. Acoustics are of importance for classical music, because you cannot manipulate classical music like you can manipulate electronically amplified music. Acoustics are leading in the design of a concert hall for classical music.

Acoustic ins and outs

One of the most important drivers for the form-giving of performance buildings are the acoustic qualities of a space. For the acoustic qualities two things are important: the measurement of the space and the materialization of the hall. Very important is the size of a space; if a space is too big, people in the back won't hear the music and if the space is too small, it will sound like a bathroom. A rule of thumb is that you need 10 cubic meter for every listener. The *Concertgebouw* in Amsterdam, which obtained world fame for its acoustics, has a capacity of 2000 listeners and measures almost 20.000 cubic meter.

Next to the size of a space, the form of the space is also important. The best proven form for classical music is the so-called *shoe box typology*: a rectangular space with a rather high ceiling. This works so well because the sound of an orchestra, in contrary to the sound of a theater performer, is transmitting in all directions. Most of what we hear is the sound that is reflected from the material that encloses the space we are in. Because our ears are at the sides of our heads we experience a spaciousness in the sound that reflects from the walls. If we hear the sound that is reflected from the ceiling better (faster and louder), this spaciousness in the sound gets lost.

For what classical music is concerned, the music sounds best when the orchestra sounds as one (in contrast to for example jazz music, where you want to hear each instrument separately). Therefore, a longer reverberation time is needed for classical music, because then the space begins to function as a mixing-box.

The amount of sound that is reflected is also determined by the hardness of the material being used. The softer the material is, the more sound is getting absorbed. The degree of absorption and reflection provides the reverberation time. The American physicist Wallace Clement Sabine created the formula of Sabine in 1922, which since then is being used to calculate the reverberation time using the size of the room and the hardness of used materials. For classical music the ideal reverberation time is somewhere around 2 seconds. Hollow spaces behind surfaces should be avoided because they act as a sound box, which will distort the sound.

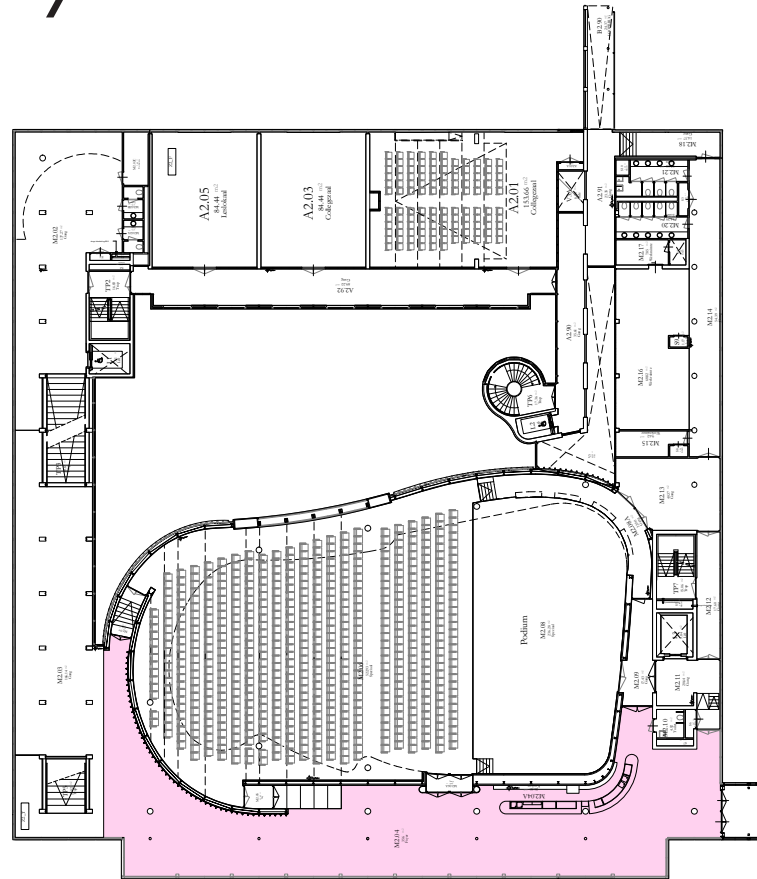
Sightlines are also important; we hear a piccolo player better if we can see him. This is because how we hear the music is a personal experience which cannot be an exact science.

Outside spaces



The outside spaces of the building aren't inviting. The entry is small and hidden at the side. All around the building there is mostly dark colored stone. Places to sit are only found in the patio, so the place is not inviting to stay any longer than needed and only functions as a passage. Coenen himself said about it: "The space around the building is a place for musical movements". In reality this doesn't succeed, unless he meant the annoying music that is played here to avoid people from loitering.

Foyer



The Foyer is the stage for the public. People not only come to stage buildings for the encounter with the art, but also to encounter each other. It is a place of seeing and being seen. For the theater, it is a place to earn more money from the visitors by selling them food and drinks. In the 18th century the arts were only a side business: people came to the theaters for the social interactions around it.

The Foyer in the Quadrangular building is very small. When 800 people have to get out of the music room into the foyer during the break of a concert or afterwards, there is no way they can all pass through to the bar. So most people leave the building directly after a concert, which is a missed chance.



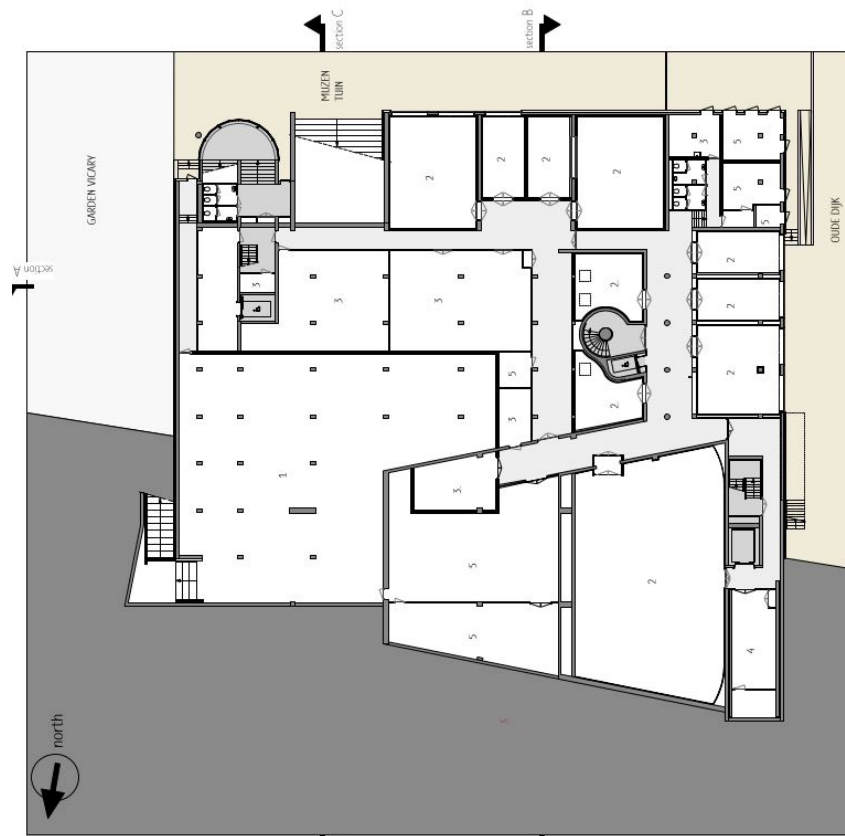
Comparing the square meters foyer Theaters Tilburg per person:

Schouwburgzaal:	880 people, 1096 m ² foyer	= 1,25 m ²
Studiozaal:	250 people, 454 m ²	= 1,82 m ²
Concertzaal	800 people , 356 m ²	= 0,45 m ²

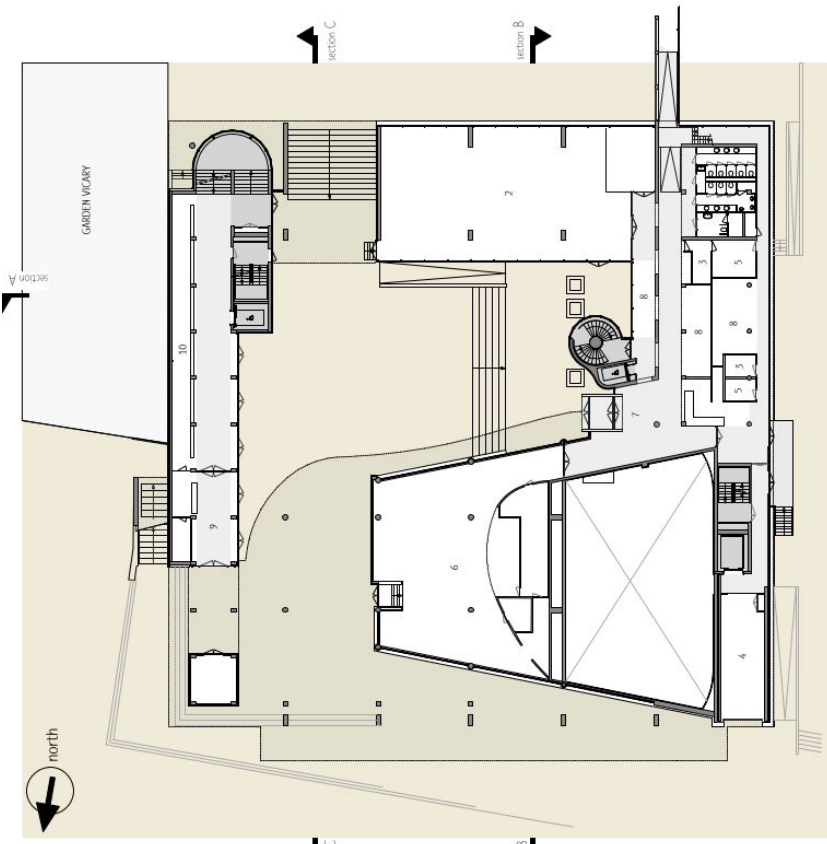


The foyer does provide a nice view over the Schouwburggring.

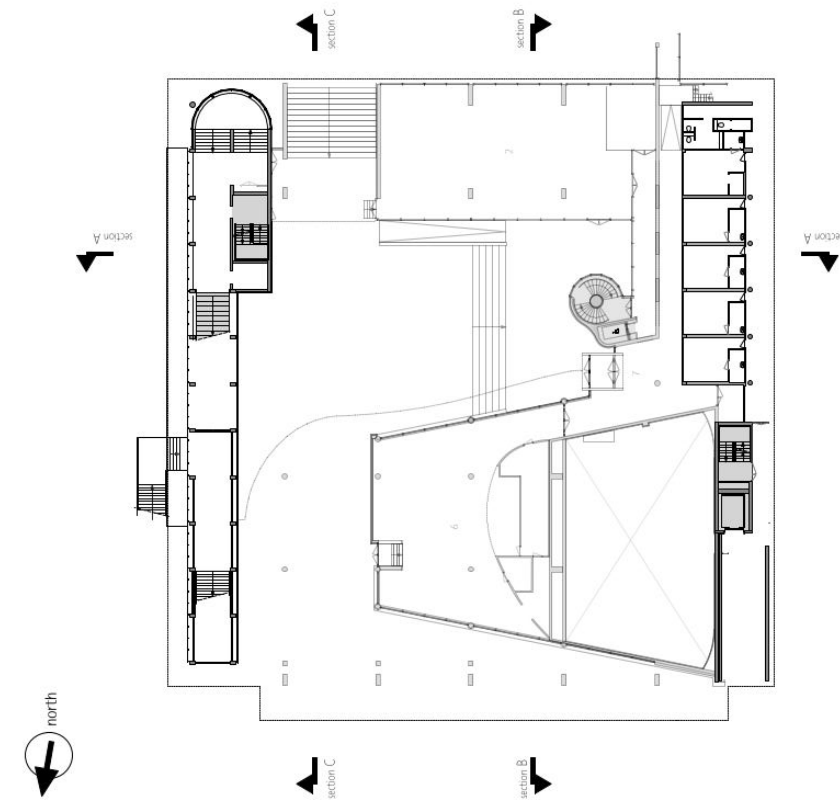
Floor plans



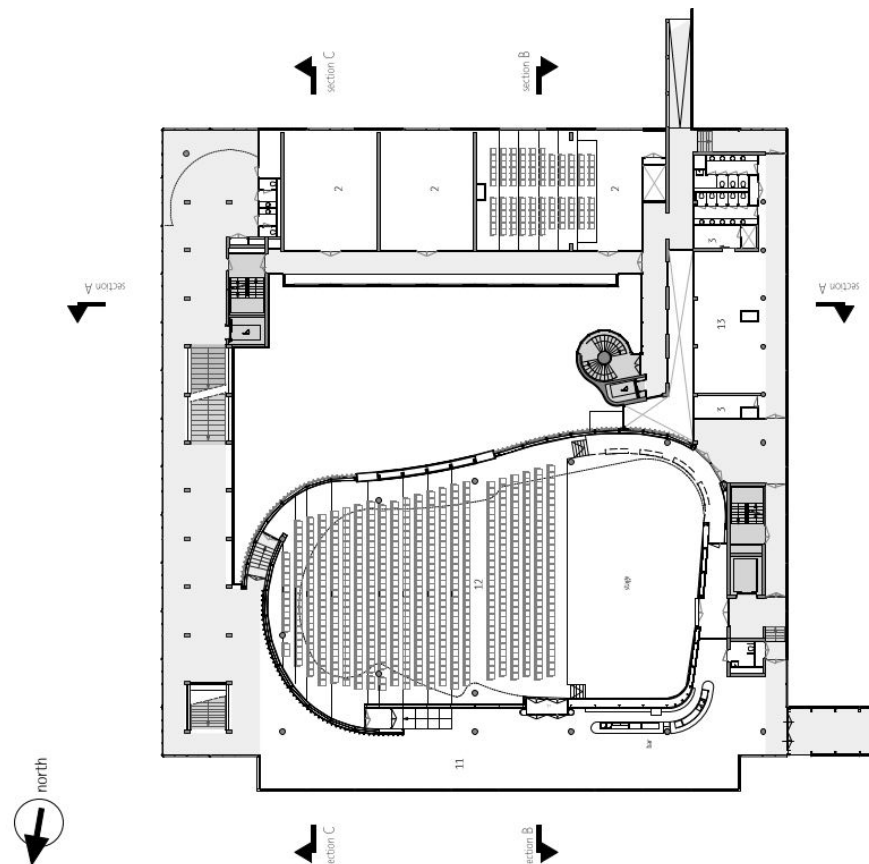
level -1
[basement]



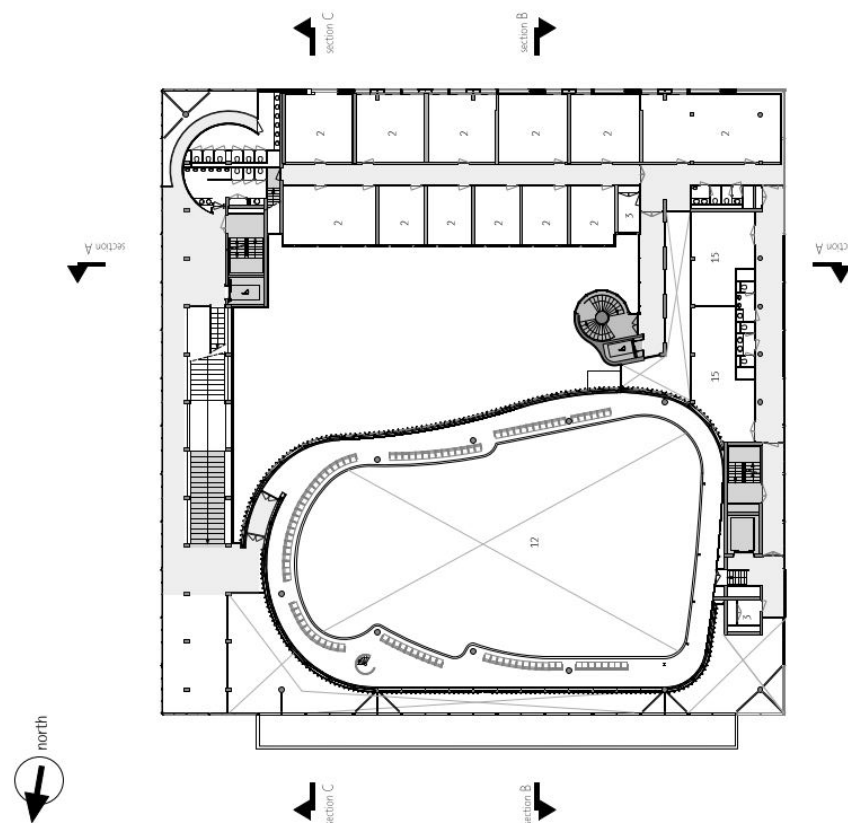
level 0
[street level]



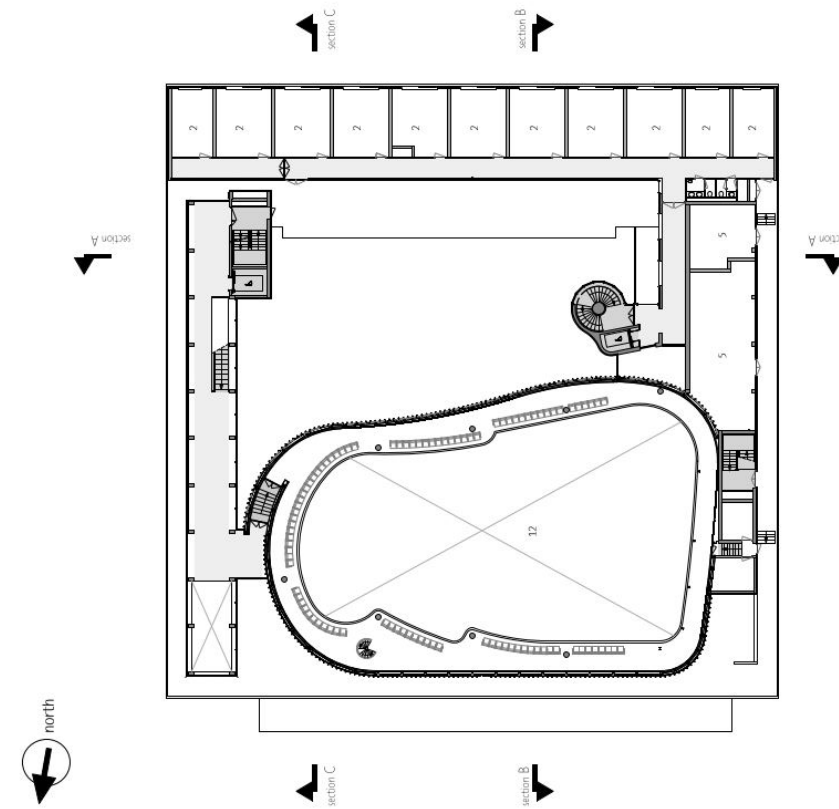
level +0,5
[in between]



level +1
[music room]



level +2
[1st balcony]



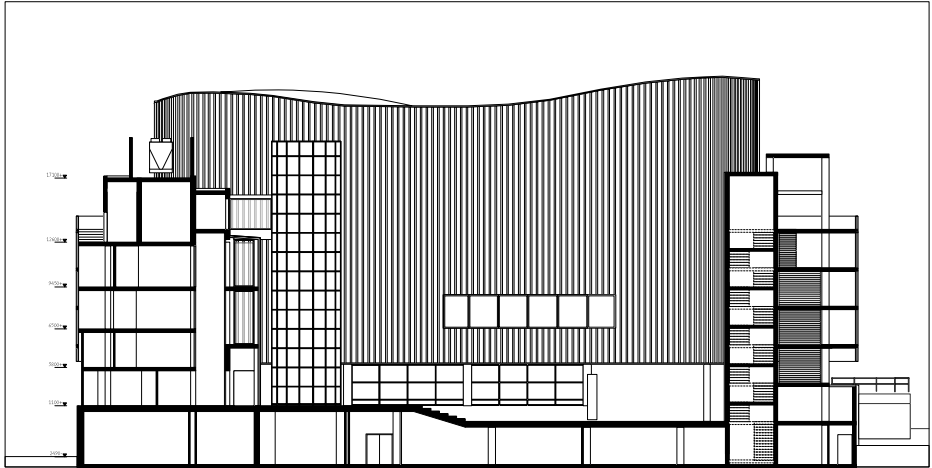
level +3
[2nd balcony]

LEGENDA

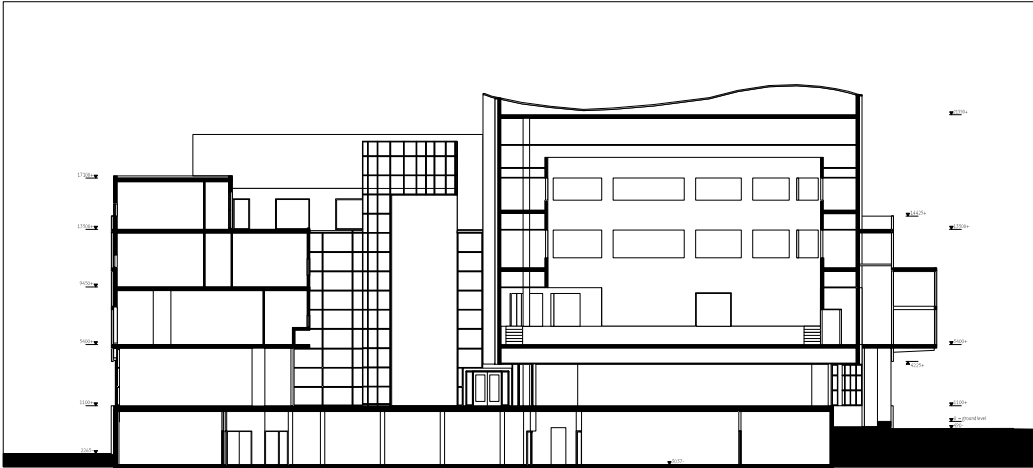
- 1 bike storage
- 2 class room
- 3 storage / closet
- 4 loading dock
- 5 installation room
- 6 canteen Fontys
- 7 entry zone Fontys
- 8 study area
- 9 entry concertzaal
- 10 wardrobe
- 11 foyer
- 12 music room
- 13 artist foyer
- 14 bridge to Schouwburg
- 15 dressing room

- horizontal traffic space
- vertical traffic space

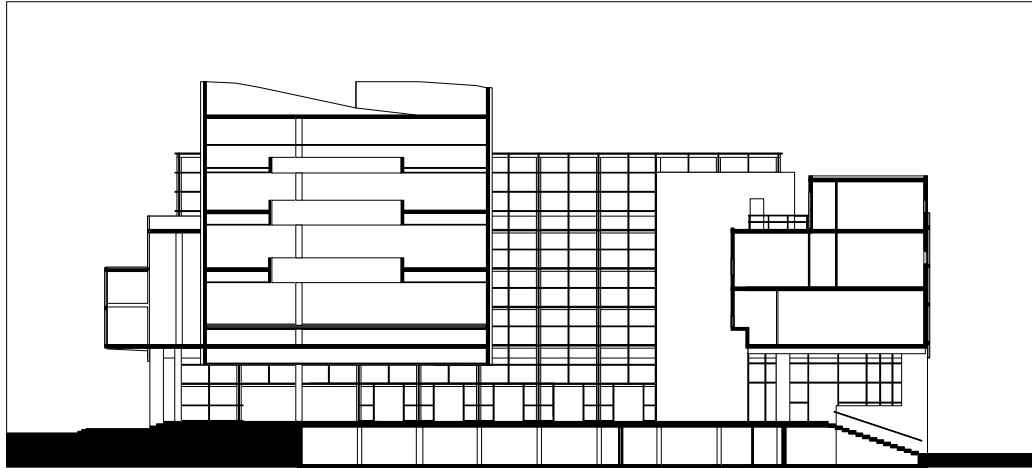
Sections & facades



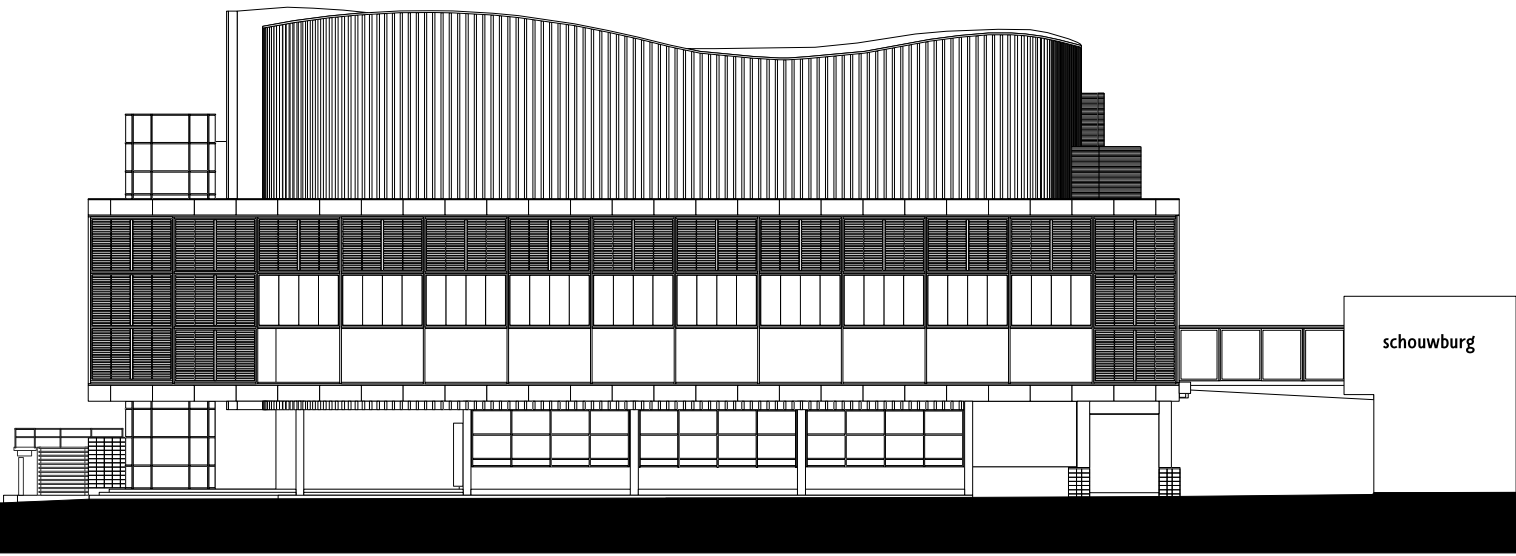
section A



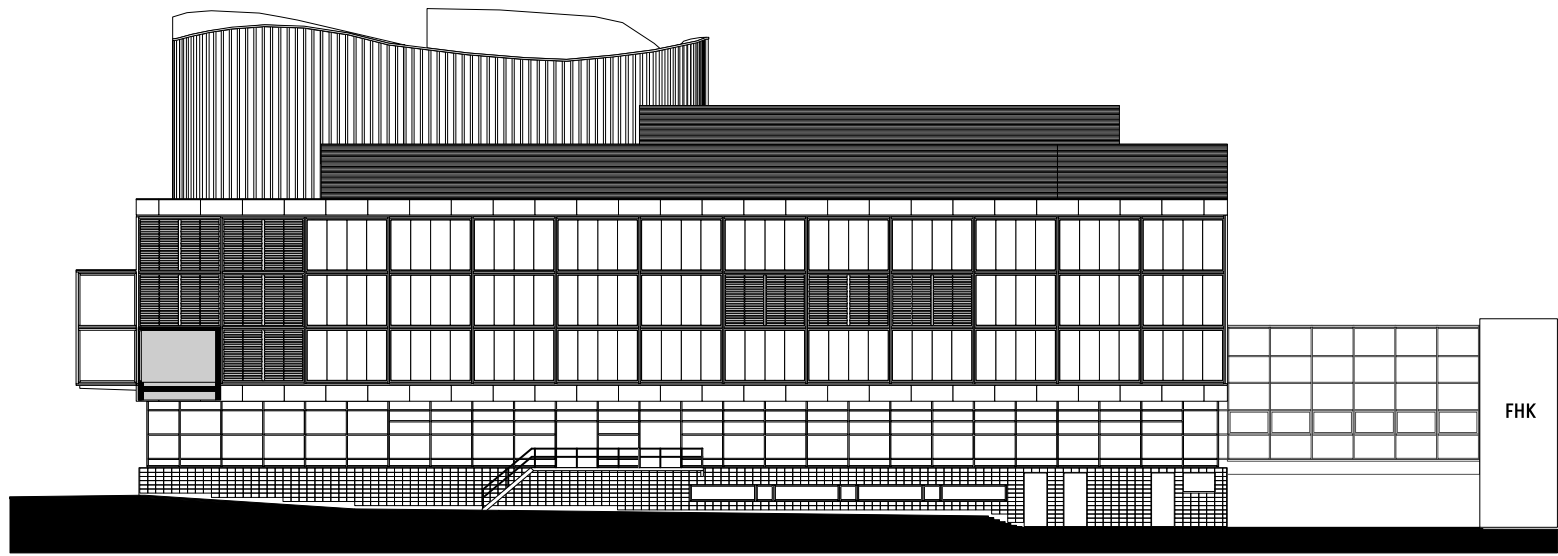
section B



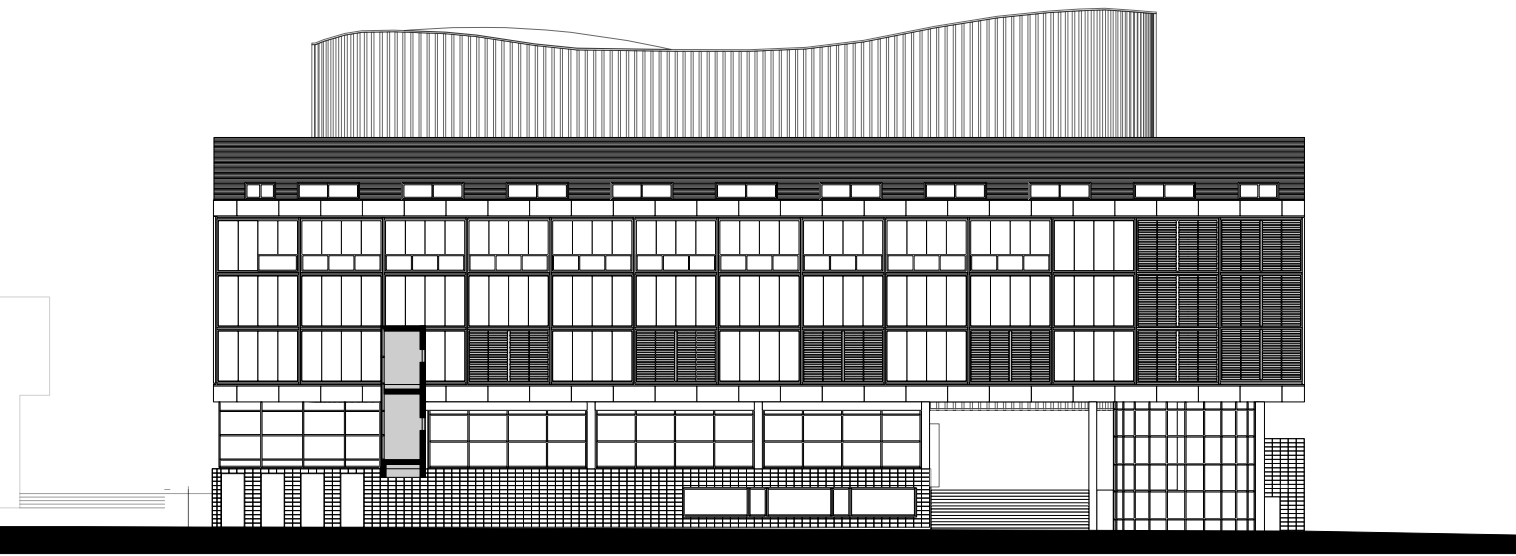
section C



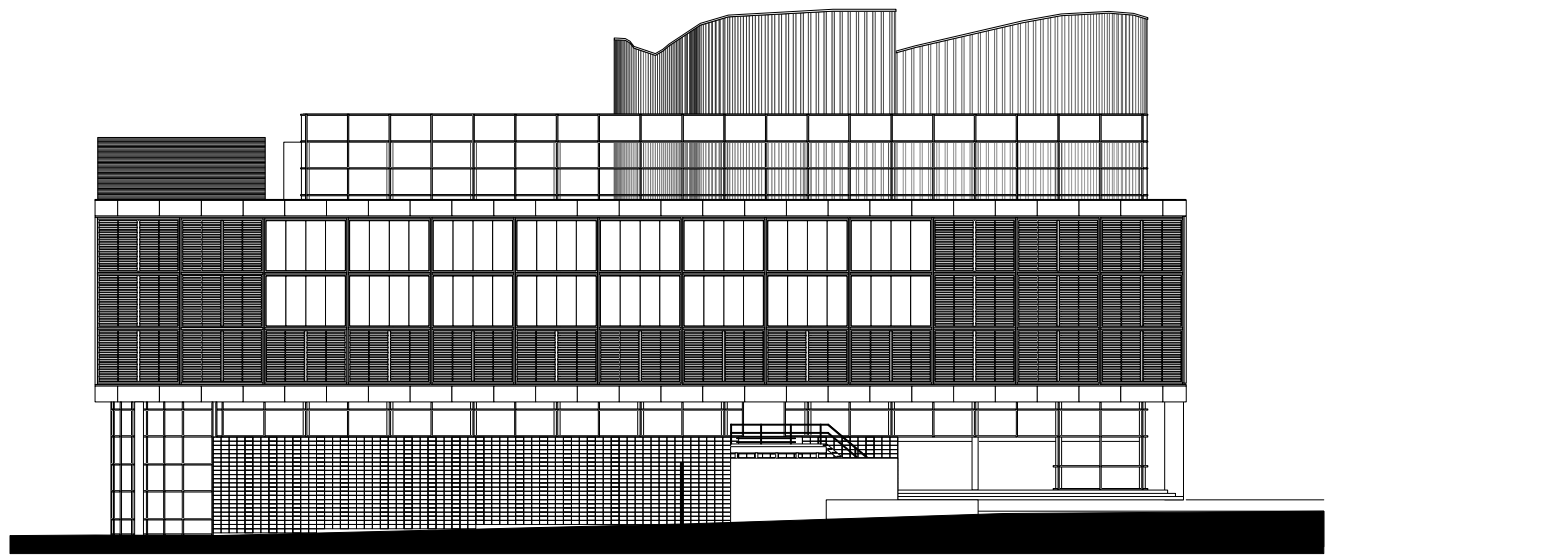
South facade



West facade



North facade



East facade

A high-angle, wide shot of a large audience seated in a modern theater. The audience is densely packed in the foreground and middle ground, filling the lower two-thirds of the frame. The theater's architecture features curved, light-colored walls and a dark, curved balcony on the right side, also filled with people. The stage at the far end is brightly lit with warm, golden light, contrasting with the dimmer audience area. The word "stakeholders" is overlaid in white text at the bottom left.

stakeholders

Theaters Tilburg

Theaters Tilburg is the current user of the concert hall in the Quadrangular building. The neighboring theater also belongs to them.

They therefore have 3 stages to program art events: the *Schouwburg* with 880 seats, the *Concertzaal* with 800 seats and the *Studio* underneath it with a capacity of 250. They also dunned the restaurant in the Theater until it was closed in September 2020 due to the corona crisis.

Public fundings

Theaters Tilburg is hugely subsidized by the municipality of Tilburg. They receive almost 5 million euro of funding per year, although they give almost 1,7 million back to the municipality as a renting fee for the buildings.

The income for ticket sales is a bit more than 50% of the subsidy. Calculations show that every €20,- of tickets sold come along with over €35,- of subsidy from the municipality.

They also get some income from catering and a little bit from sponsoring.

Events per year and guests per event

The number of events in the *Concertzaal* was until 2019 almost 100 events per year. The number of people attending was increasing.

Looking at the capacity of the room, being 800 people, there is still a lot of space for a bigger audience.



Schouwburg (890 seats) + Studio (250 seats)



entry + ticket desk, restaurant



Concertzaal (800 seats)

“We want to elevate art. And that is best done in a designated place. In the 1970’s the adage was that theaters should mainly be the living room of the city, with coffee houses and macrame clubs. These theaters hae now mostly been replaced. This theater is relevant because of the arts; artistic quality must be leading”

ROB VAN STEEN – director theaters Tilburg

On this point I don’t agree with the director. Not the artistic quality but the (positive) effect the art has on peoples lives should be leading. More important than how good someone can recite Shakespeare is how his text engages the listener.

number of events and guests Concertzaal per year

year	concerts	guests	average guest per concert
2016	93	28.748	309
2017	85	29.100	342
2018	101	30.373	301
2019	92	32.798	357

exploitation 2019 Theaters Tilburg

income		expenses	
subsidy	4.822.000	staff	3.300.000
tickets	2.745.000	programm	2.768.000
catering	1.221.000	rent	1.633.000
sponsorships	100.000	exploitation	662.000
other	924.000	catering	376.000
		marketing	319.000
		sponsorships	58.000
		financial	322.000
		general	322.000
		other	251.000
total	9.812.000	total	10.011.000
result	-199.000		

a ticket of €20,00 comes along with € 35,13 subsidy from the municipality of Tilburg

Other Stakeholders

STAKEHOLDER - municipality

Wants to strengthen the cultural life of Tilburg:

- strategies:
 1. Strengthen the basic infrastructure (theater, music venue)
 2. Create a good climate for culture makers (musicians, artist, etc.)
 3. Involve more people with the cultural life, specially younger people.



STAKEHOLDER - Fontys school of fine and performing arts

The art academy has studies in all directions of art. There is the Rock academy, which obtains the spaces in the basement of the Quadrangular building. There also is the conservatory, the academy of dance, the academy of theater, the academy of fine arts, and there are a few interdisciplinary studies. There is an impresario for graduates, but this does not function very well.

Rotterdam-based office ZUS designed the *Stadsforum* just in front of the Quadrangular building. The thorough traffic will be cut off, so the continuous stream of cars that pass the Quadrangular building in the current situation will be gone. Only the public transport buses and local traffic will drive by in the future, slowly. The *Stadsforum* will be hosting the weekly market, but will also offer space for momentary events like the *Kermis* or an open air concert. The space around the Beljon fountain will be the designated place for those events and gatherings.

The space will also become much greener. New trees and vegetation will be planted in several green chambers. It will be a place for pedestrians and bikers, a square that enables encounters, relaxation and events.



Some stills from a presentation video of the *Stadsforum* made by ZUS



art & culture policy

The canonized arts vs. popular culture

< 40%

of the people in the Netherlands identify themselves as consumerists (active or passive) of the canonized arts.

> 90%

of the people in the Netherlands identify themselves as consumerists (active or passive) of any cultural activity.

Many studies show that being culturally active is a blessing for the individual and for society. This means that it is important for the government to introduce as many people as possible to the arts. The funding and infrastructure of art and culture in the Netherlands is still mainly focusing on the canonized arts, while the percentage of people that consume canonized arts is less than half of

all the people that are consumers of any cultural activities (canonized or popular). There also is a great imbalance of social backgrounds of the consumers of canonized arts: research shows that the visitors of canonized arts are mainly well-educated, white, city-dwellers, and the big majority is female.

further reading: Van Eijk, K. + Bisschop Boele, E. (2018) *Van de canon en de mug: een inventarisatie van inzichten rondom de culturele niet-bezoeker*, Erasmus university Rotterdam

<picture on the previous page © Noël van Hooft:

May 2020: Cultural institutions are protesting against the proposed cuts on art & culture by the new provincial government.

Lowering the threshold

The *Raad voor Cultuur* describes three strategies to generate a bigger and more diverse art public:

- 1) To lower practical thresholds for participation
- 2) To enlarge the cultural wealth (through education, context programming, content marketing and communication)
- 3) To stretch the definition of cultural wealth (by expanding and broadening our definition of art, alongside the funded proffer)

Practical thresholds can be: a lack of money, a lack of time (when cultural events are often at night, we continually exclude people that aren't able to come in the evening for example), bad accessibility, a lack of information or a lack of motivation.

further reading: Raad voor cultuur (2019) *Cultuur dichtbij, dicht bij cultuur*, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2019/04/12/cultuur-dichtbij-dicht-bij-cultuur>

An example of context programming is to organize an exposition or lecture about the era Mozart was living in when there is a concert taking place with someone performing Mozart.

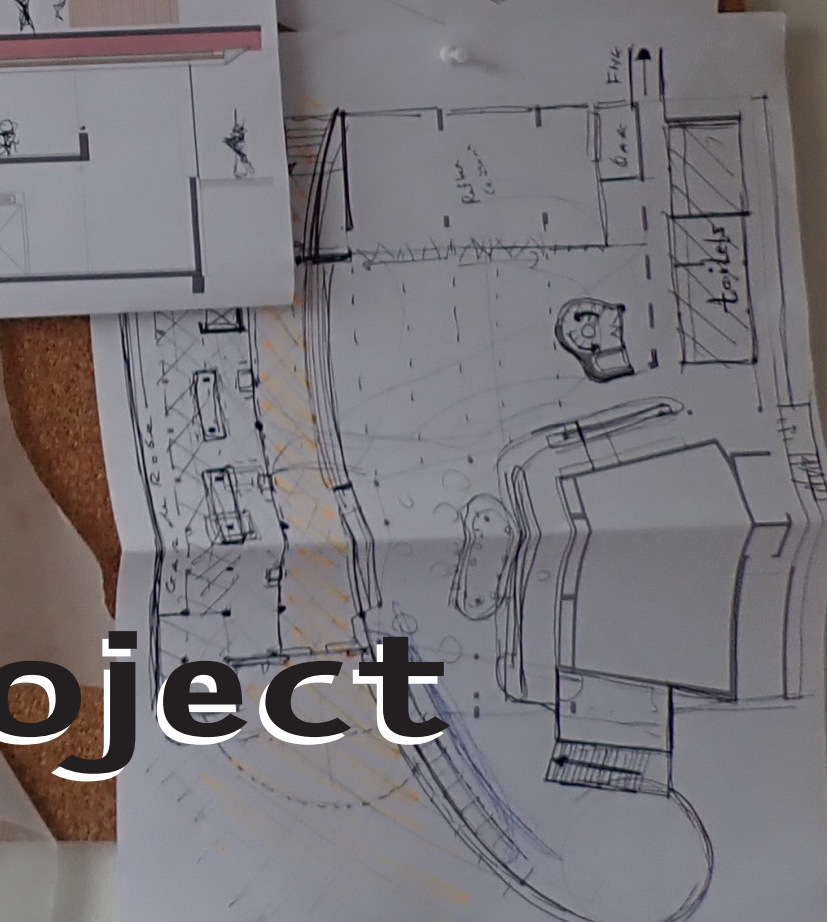
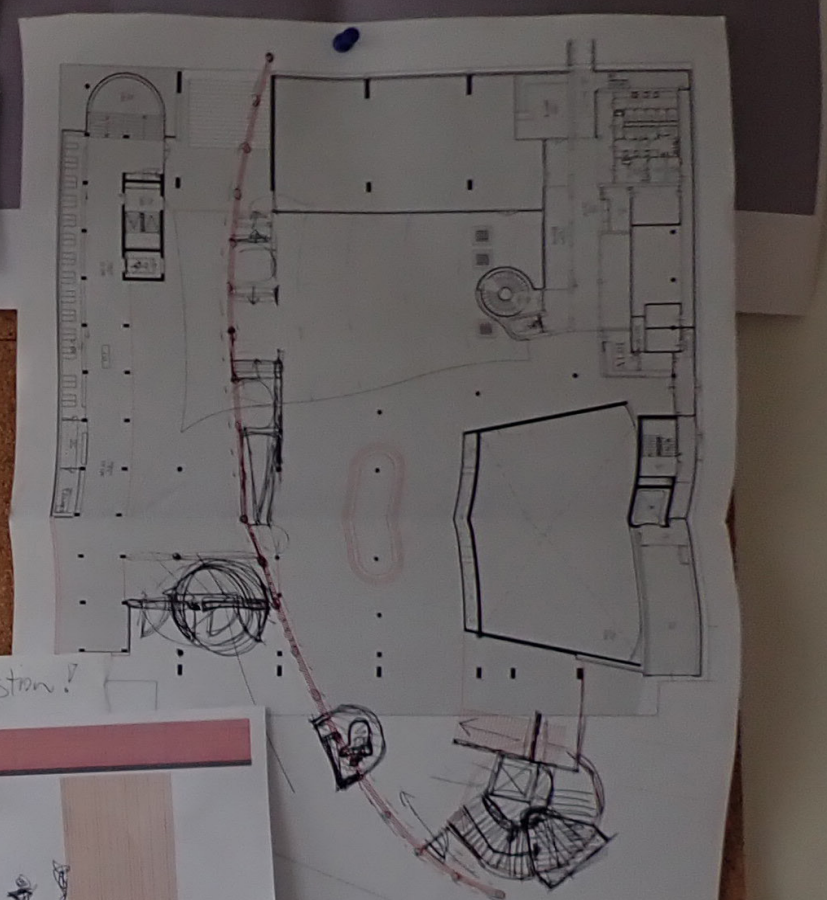
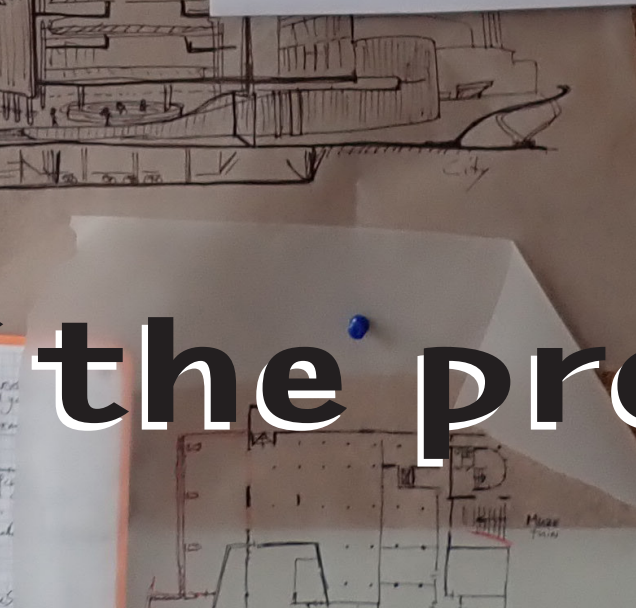
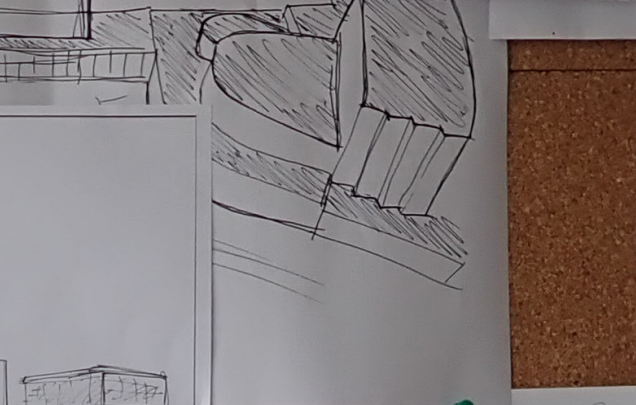
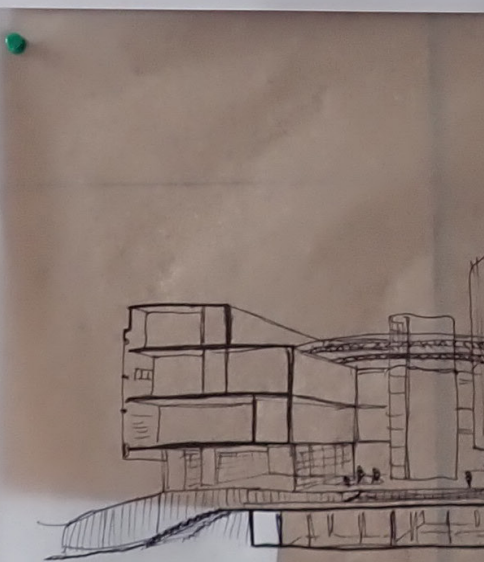
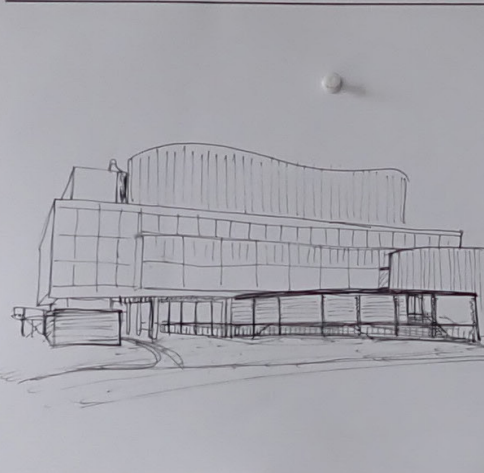
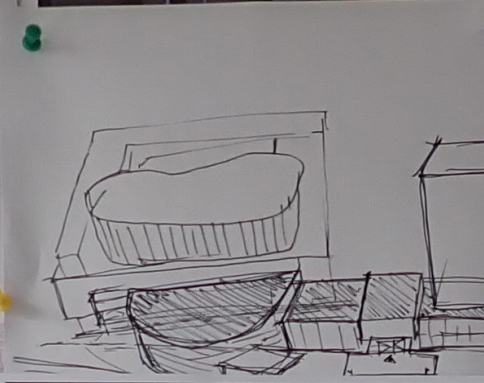
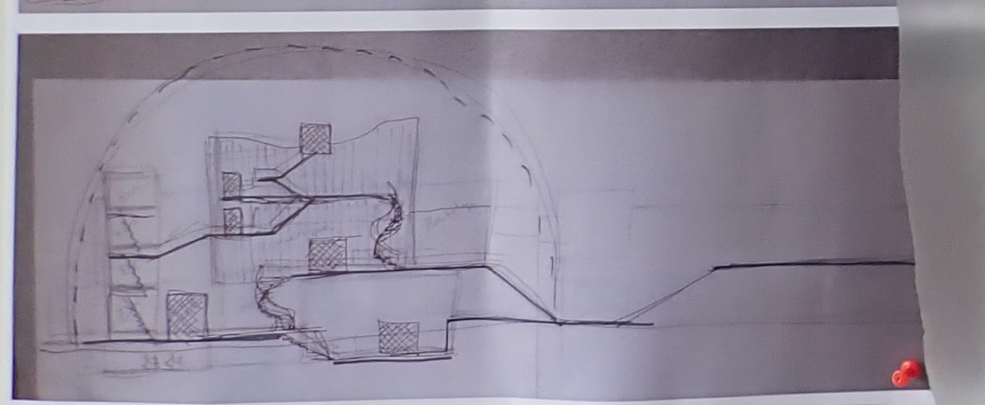
Who decides which arts are valuable and deserve funding and which don't? Right now, the canonized arts in particular are publicly funded, but we see that they only attract a small part of the population. Appreciating the canon requires some practice in looking, listening and understanding. Education could play a role here. But the real encounter with music, being touched by art, is not only reserved for the canonized arts. While mainly outside the canonized arts so many relevant things are happening. Including this in the culture policy could attract many new groups of people and stimulate Cross-connections between all kinds of cultural disciplines.



< The Japanese post-rock band MONO performing together with the Jo Quail quartet at the Tilburg' heavy-music festival Roadburn in 2019.

In 2020 Roadburn was one of the first popular music festivals who gets money from the BIS. (basisinfrastructuur subsidie)

logbook



The odyssey of the project

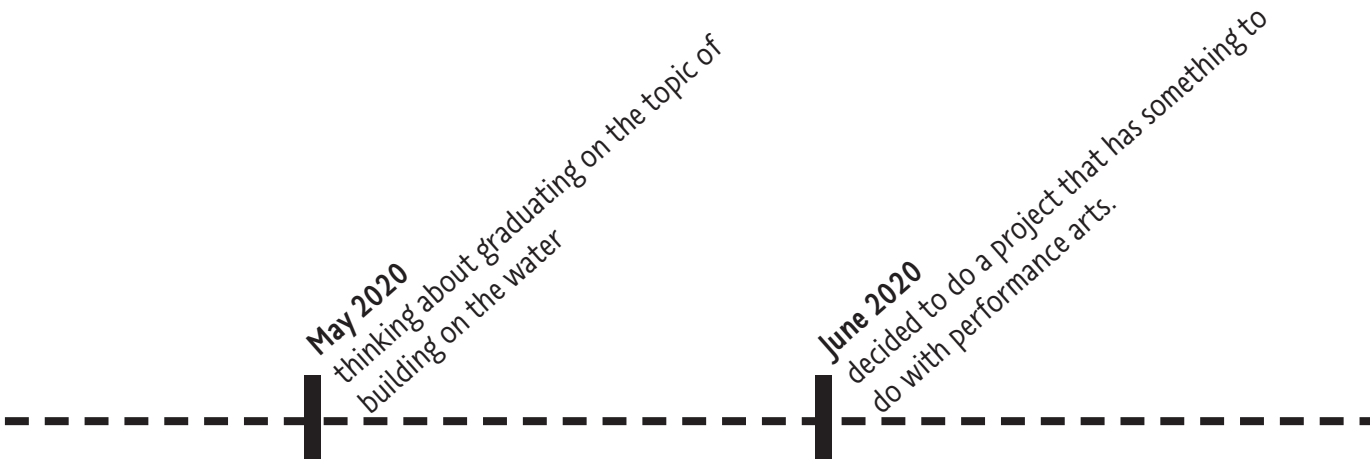
Searching for a subject

The search for a subject for my graduating project was a real challenge for me. Realizing the challenges of our time and the future, the first idea that came up was architecture on water. Shortage of land, and sea level rise are real issues these days, what makes architecture on water most likely a hot topic for the coming decades. Thinking of this subject however made me realise that I don't have much personal affection with the topic, which made it hard to make the ideas more concrete. I decided to let go of this subject and to search for a topic that lies more close to in my own field of interest:

CONCLUSION : WHEN YOU ARE WORKING ON A PROJECT FOR A WHOLE YEAR, YOU BETTER PICK A SUBJECT THAT AFFECTS YOU.

What subject does affect me then? Personally I do appreciate the performing arts a lot, especially music. I think this is a very important part of our culture; to communicate and express our thoughts and emotions, to connect people and of course to enjoy. As a cultural-active citizen of Tilburg I don't fully understand why politicians so often want to cut on the public fundings of arts, were they seem-ingly don't mind investing much more money in other things. Looking around at cultural events I noticed that only an elitist group of the society is attending to this happenings. I thought that maybe this is why the public fundings of arts is questioned so often. Arts are seemingly only for a small group of people while I believe that art is good, not to say needed, in everybody's life.

QUESTION : HOW CAN ARTS DEVELOP TO BE RELEVANT FOR EVERYBODY AND WHAT IS THE ROLE OF ARCHITECTURE HERE?

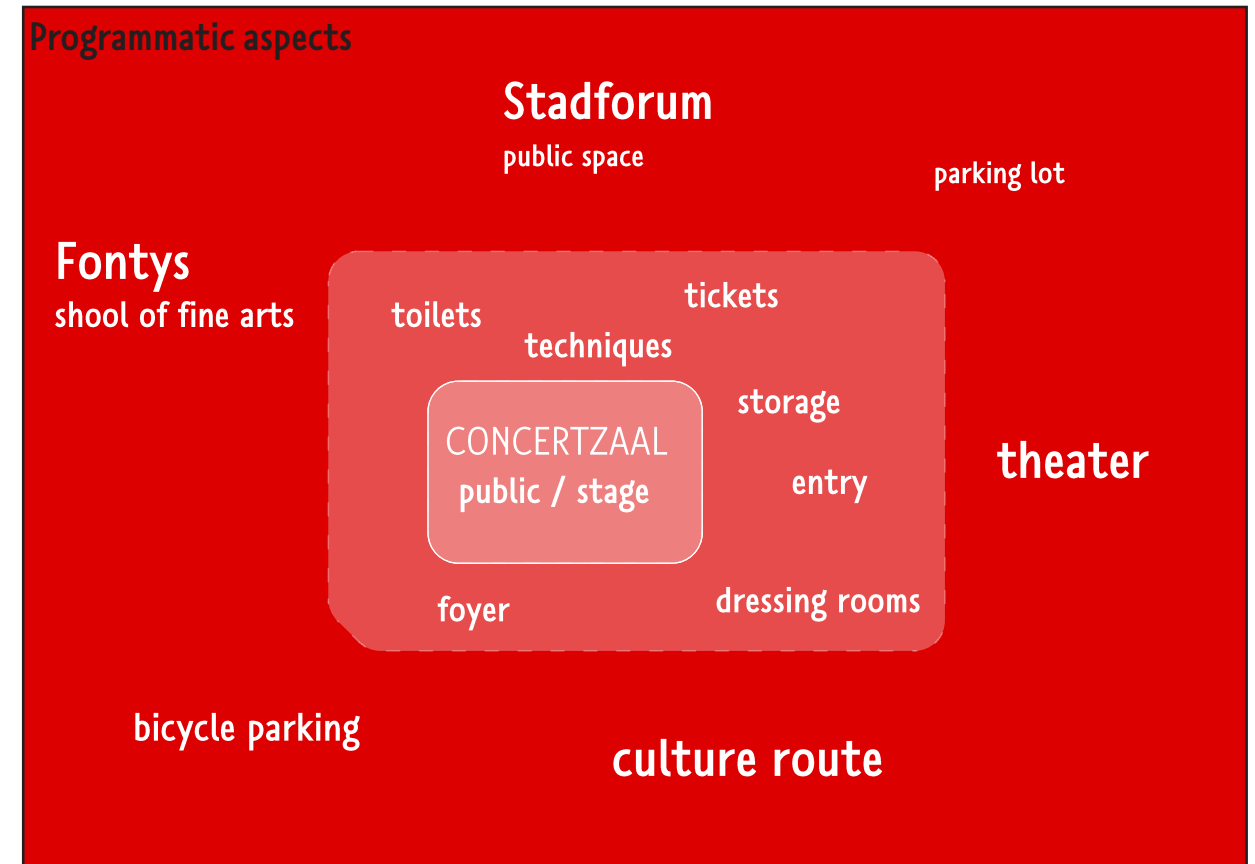


Project specifications

In the summer of 2020 I made the decision to focus on performing arts during my graduation project. Through my network I contacted some people to talk about the role of architecture in performing arts, which resulted in two interviews. After these conversations I decided to take Concertzaal Tilburg as a case study to see how architecture could make the performing arts more accessible to everyone. I investigated the specifications of the project. I did a site survey investigated the building and the challenges it would offer. In October 2020 I presented the project specifications on the academy.



site survey of the project



Who are the stake holders?



Theaters Tilburg
as user of the building



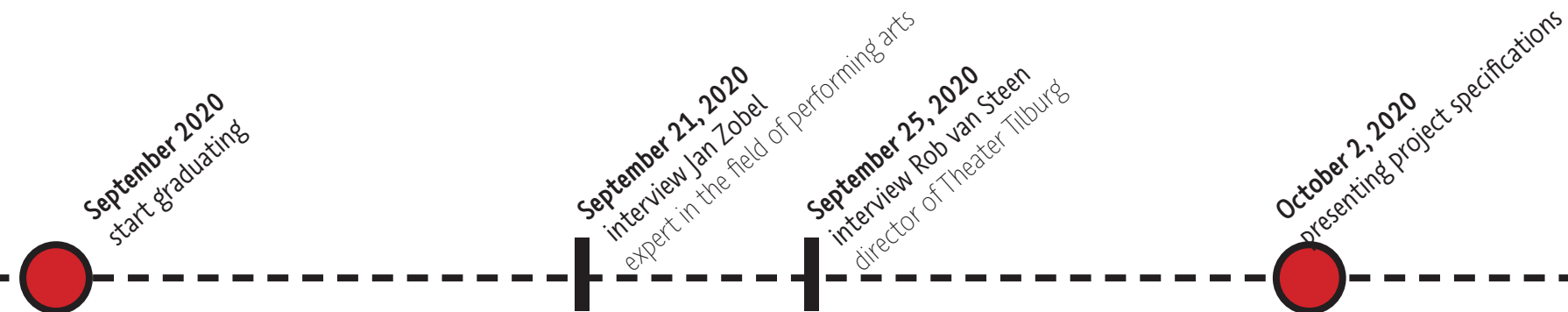
Municipality
as patron and provider of the
local cultural proffer



Fontys school of fine
and performing arts
as neighbor in the art
cluster, also having many
musical courses



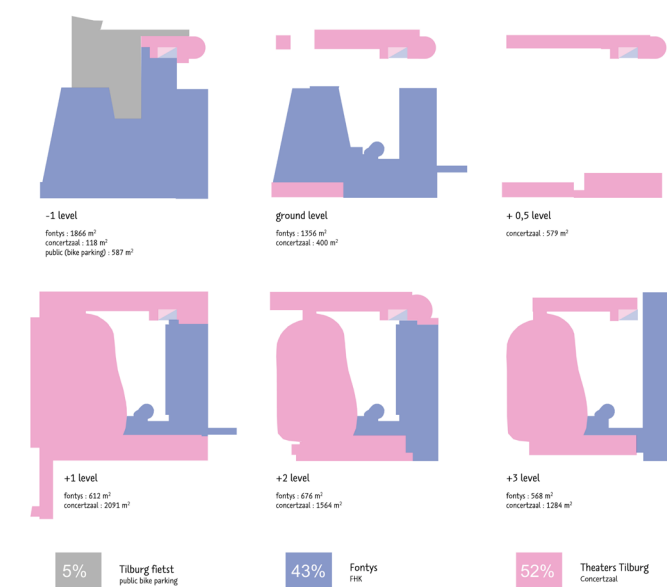
the public



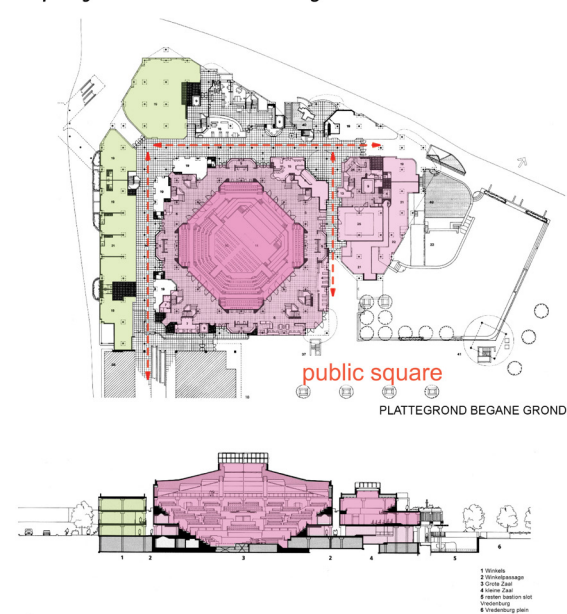
Research

In October I spent more time researching the site and building, I looked at reference projects and learned more about acoustics. I presented the results in a video on November 06 2020, although at this point I felt like research had just started. At this point I wasn't quite sure yet where the project would bring me. Though the book, Theaters van de Toekomst [theaters of the future] that I have read in September gave me some good input to continue: the book contained a text written by Dragan Klaic, who described 4 conditions for successful (future) theaters.

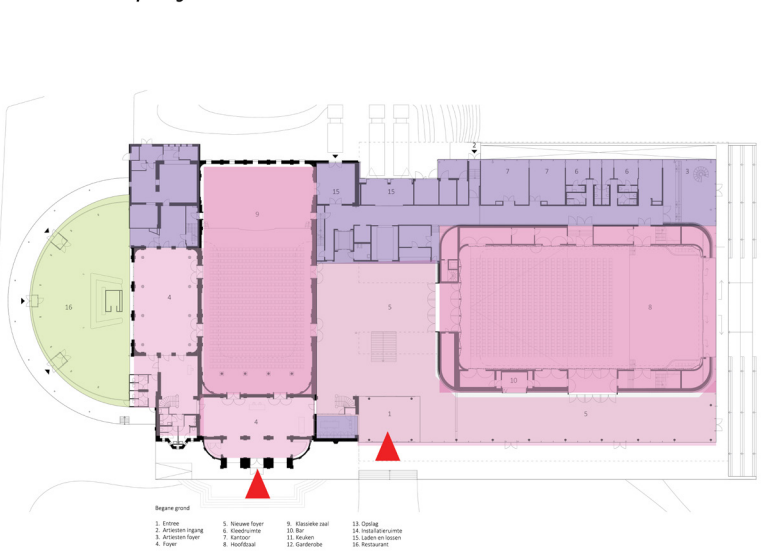
THE BUILDING - users & space



Reference project - Vredenburg

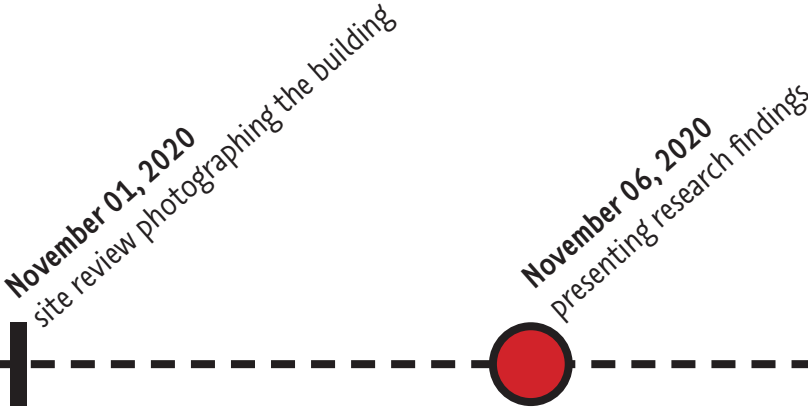


Reference project - Musis Sacrum



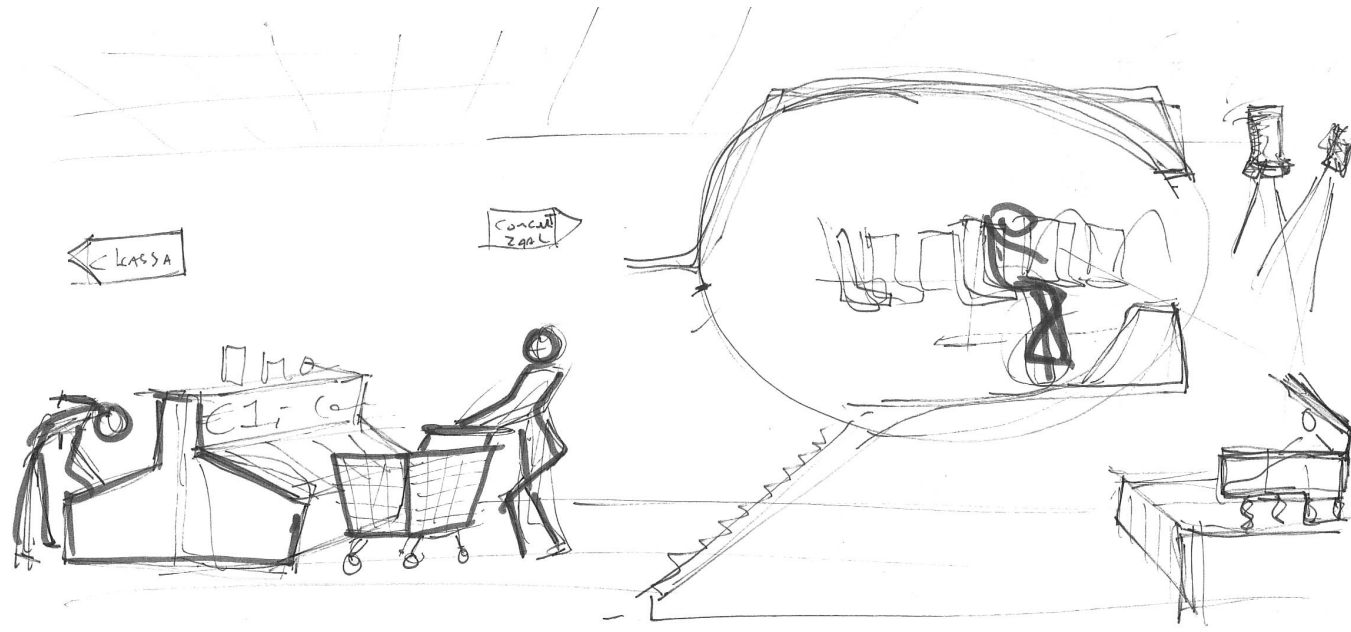
THEORY - Dragan Klaic

- A public building has a future when....:
- a multitude of functions are operational and programmed all day long
 - ... the building becomes firmly embedded in its urban environment through its location, shape, structure, associated functions and facilities
 - the flexibility of the public space is increased
 - ... the building is an inspiring and challenging place for the artist



Searching for a strategy

In November I continued interviewing experts. I got the chance to talk with Herman Hertzberger, who is an architect I respect for his works. He talked about the designs he has made for music venues and theaters. One thing he said was the key for continuing my project: “There is always a tension between elite arts and democratizing forces.” The word democratizing was steering the future of my project so much that I named my project Democratizing the arts, I felt this is what I wanted to achieve with this project: democratizing the arts without taking away the circumstances for high quality performances.



To generate some more thinking about what democratizing means and what architectural consequences could be, I drew a sketch where a supermarket [probably the most democratic place] is combined with a concert hall.

I also spoke with two people who are working for Theaters Tilburg. They told me about the use of the Concertzaal and what practical things they miss. They complained a lot about the shortage of storage and backstage spaces. How they don't have enough dressing rooms for a symphony orchestra and that they have to store the grand piano on the stage. Later on in the conversation I raised the idea to create one entry for both buildings, they told me that this was a long cherished wish of Theaters Tilburg.

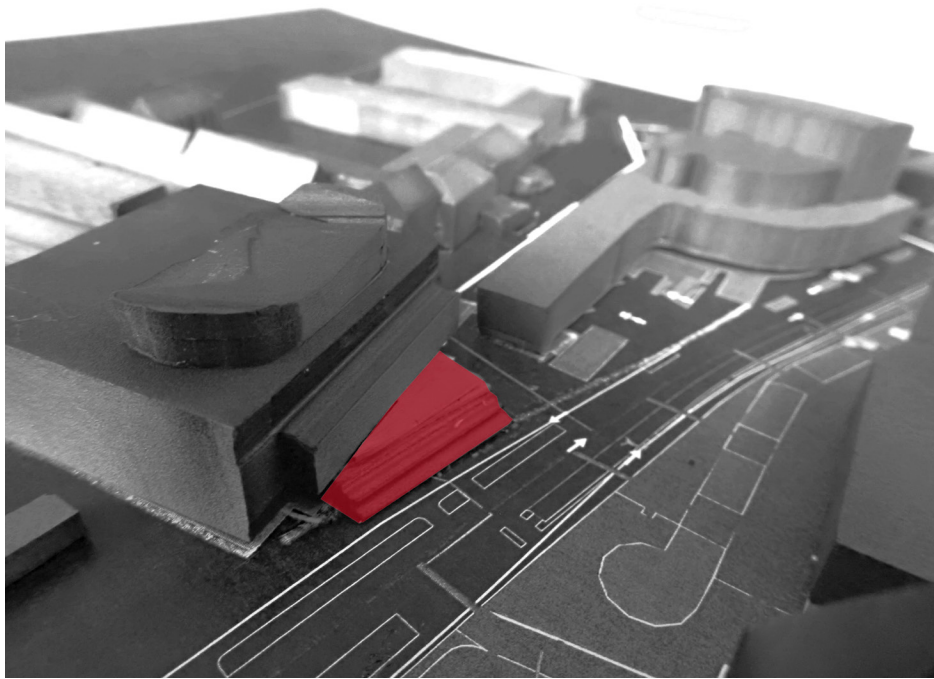
Musician Rogier Telderman, made some time in his agenda to talk with me about how he, as a musician, wants to make the arts more accessible. He wants to make art together with the people of the city. The Concertzaal must be a place of experiment and adventures together with the public. For example that the Concertzaal additionally can be used for debate, or happenings that civilians can organize themselves.

November 12, 2020
interview Herman Hertzberger
Architect of Vredenburg and
Tivoli-Vredenburg in Utrecht

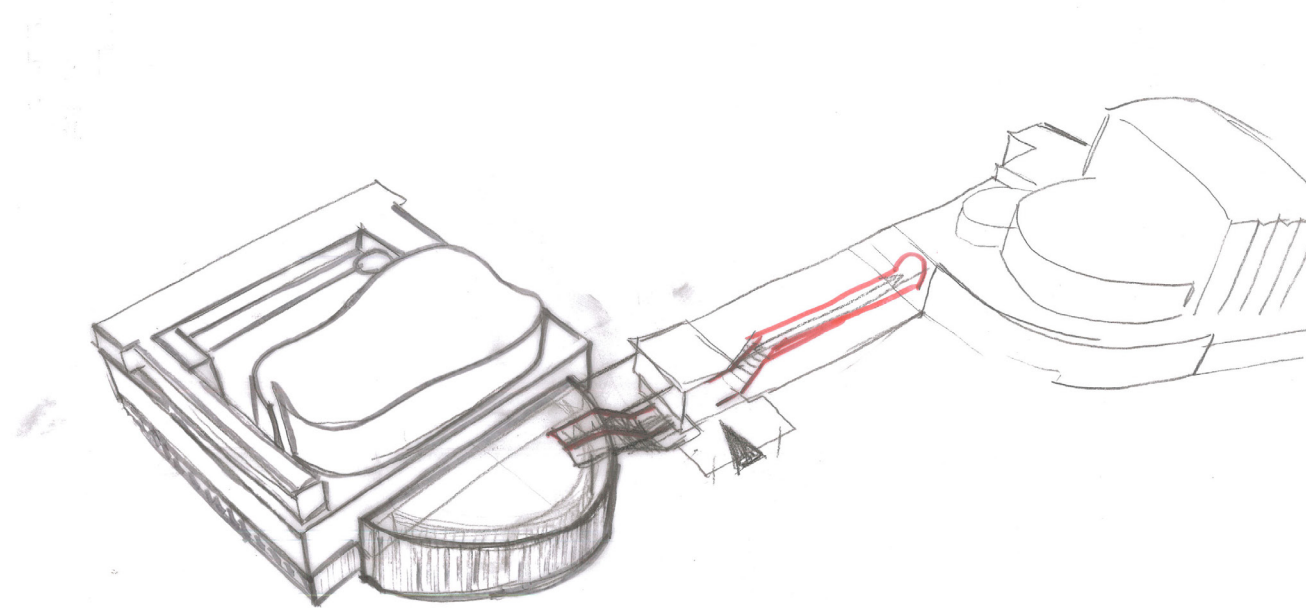
November 23, 2020
interview Rogier Telderman
Composer/pianist

Concept designs

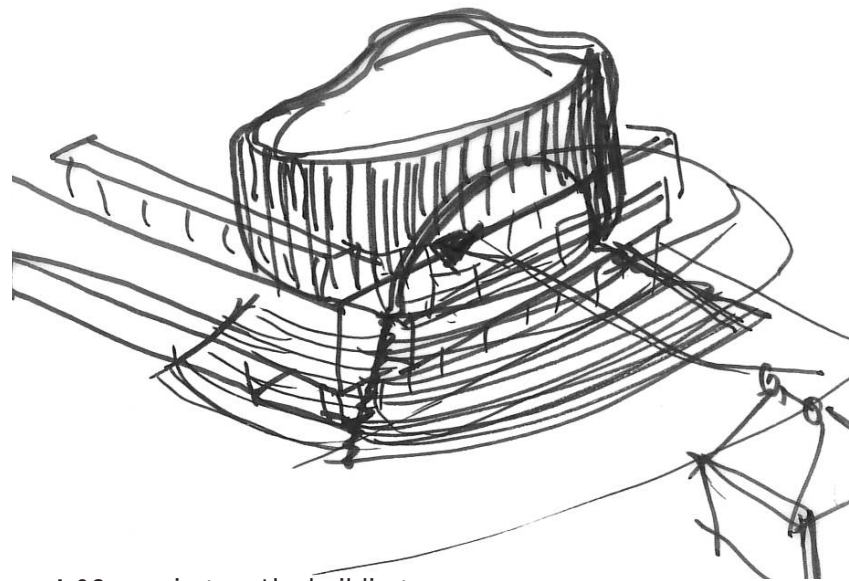
I had to come up with at least 3 different concepts as a design strategy in December. I challenged myself to think radical. I made 4 concepts, but they weren't elaborated or analyzed in a meaningful way yet. I wanted to lower the threshold for people to visit the c. One strategy was to make a direct connection from the Stadsforum to the Concertzaal. A second strategy was to open up the Concertzaal by removing elements of the existing building. The third concept was to keep the building of Coenen as it was and put a new entry building next to it where the additional program could be placed. A fourth was to connect the Quadrangular building with the neighboring theater.



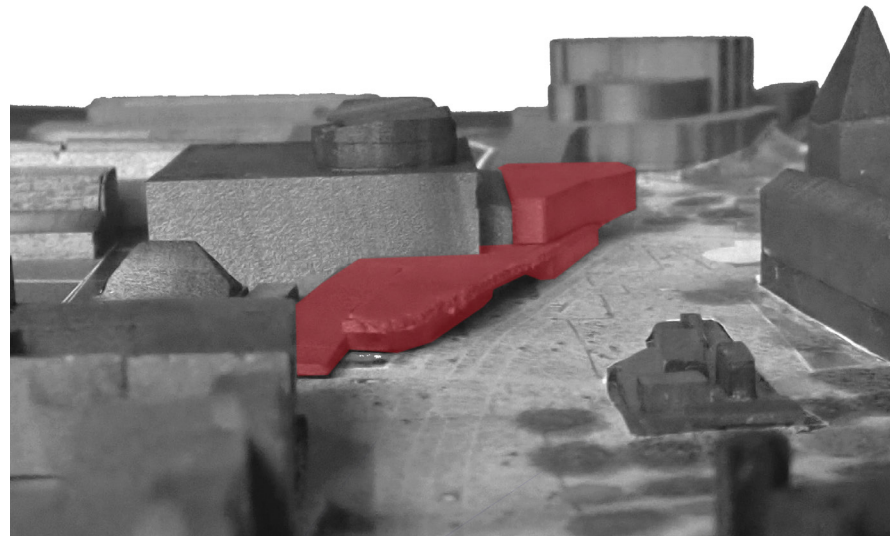
Concept 01 direct connection with street level



Concept 04 one entry for both buildings



Concept 02 opening-up the building



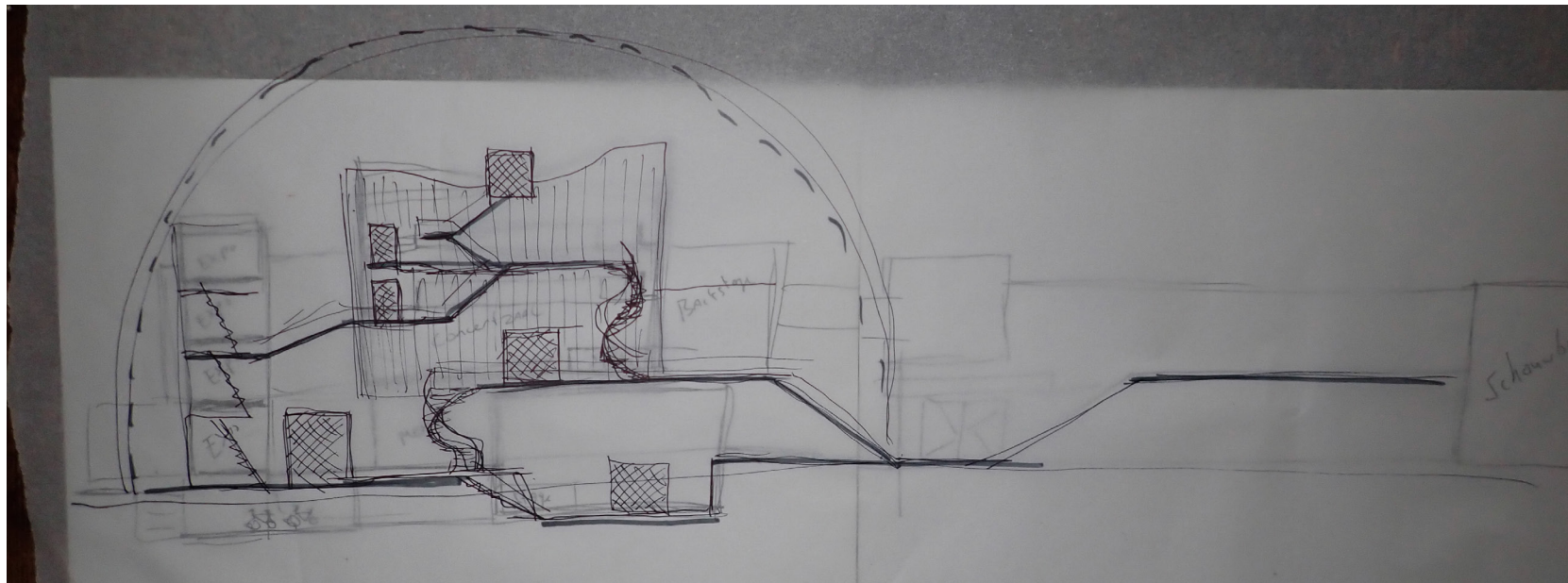
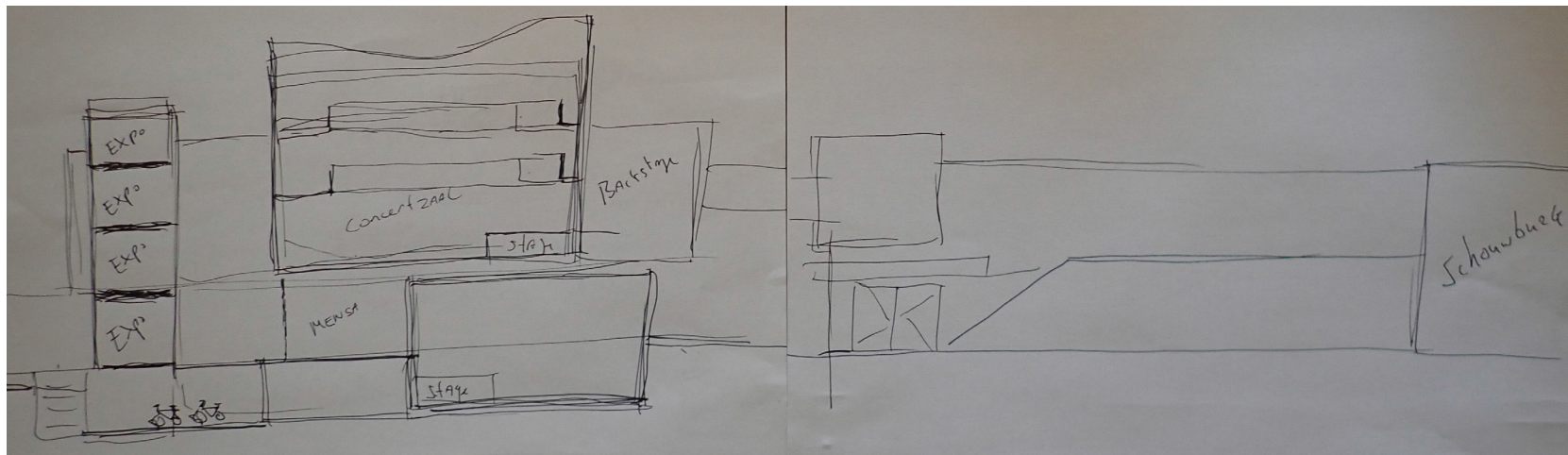
Concept 03 a new entry building

December 11, 2020
Presenting concept designs

QUESTION : COULD THESE 4 CONCEPTS MERGE INTO ONE?

Still searching for a strategy (I)

QUESTION : COULD THESE 4 CONCEPTS MERGE INTO ONE?



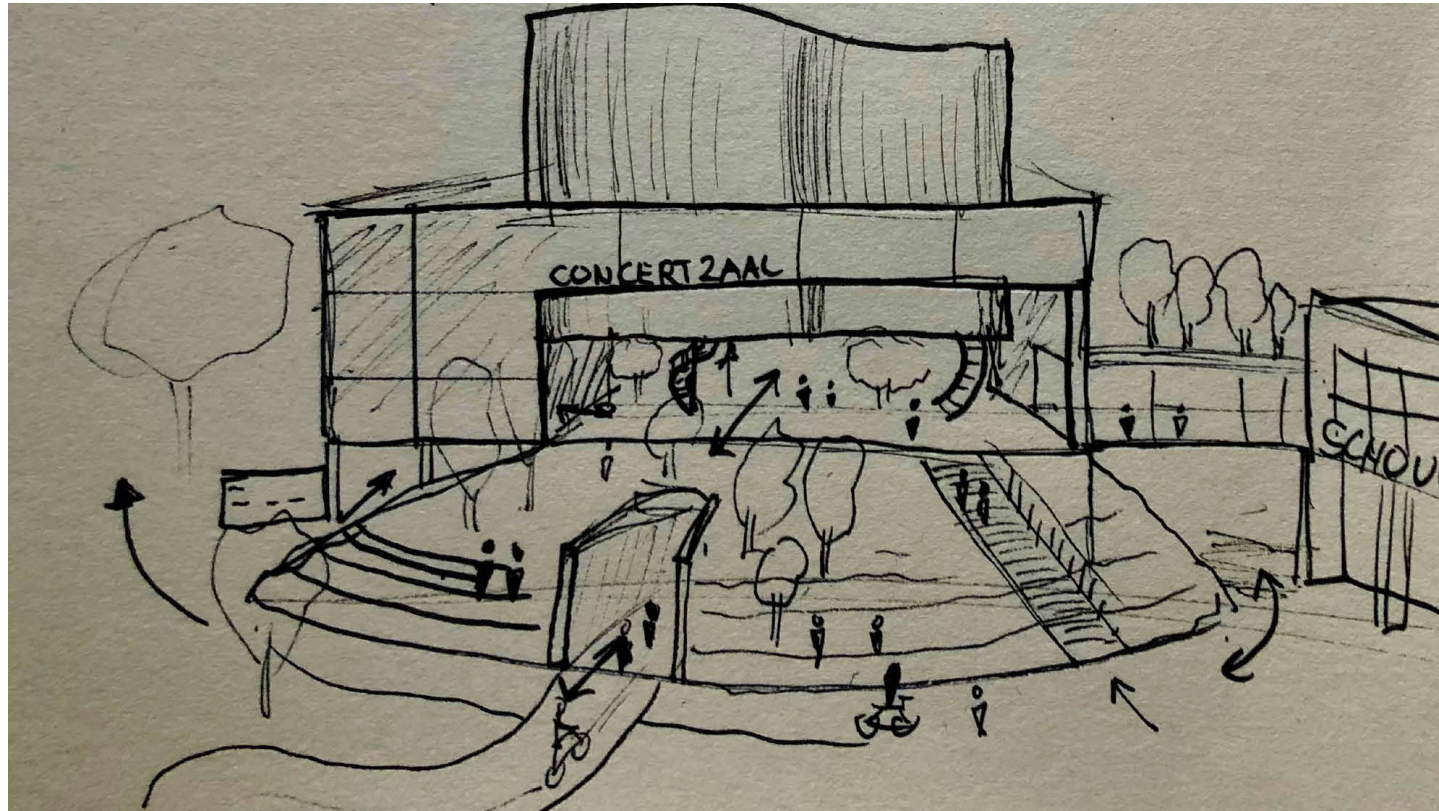
A criticism I received on the concept of the new entrance building was that it seemed as if I wanted to lure people to the arts with drinks and snacks, this was very superficial as a concept to make art accessible. In response to this, I made this sketch. The new entrance building not only had to attract people with drinks and snacks, but also had to be a connecting element between the art school, the concert hall, the neighbouring theater and the Stadsforum. It would function as an interface.

QUESTION : TO WHAT LEVEL DO I RESPECT THE BUILDING OF COENEN AND DO I WANT TO PRESERVE IT?

December 2020
start preliminary design

January 2021
winters school

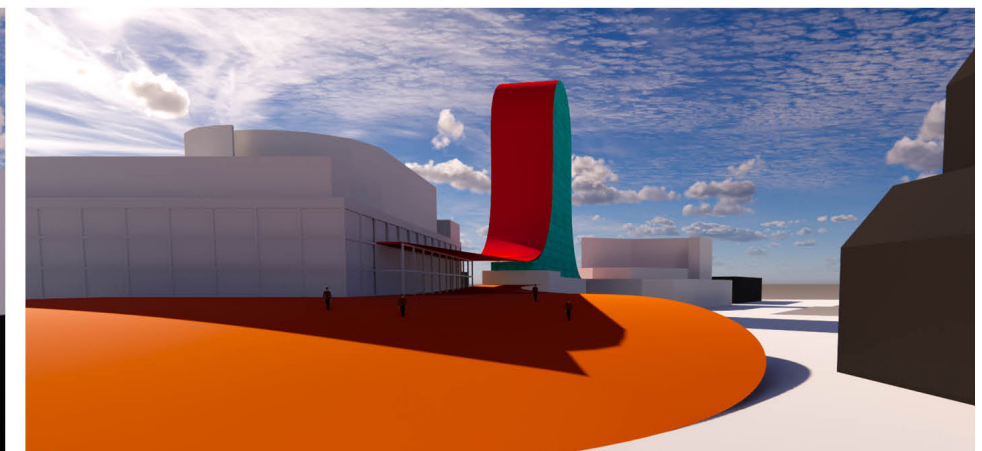
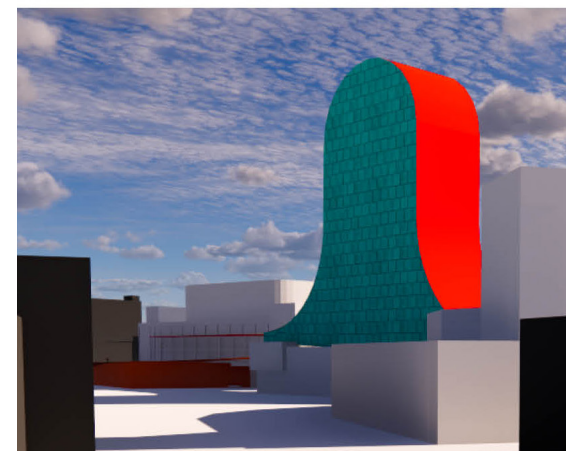
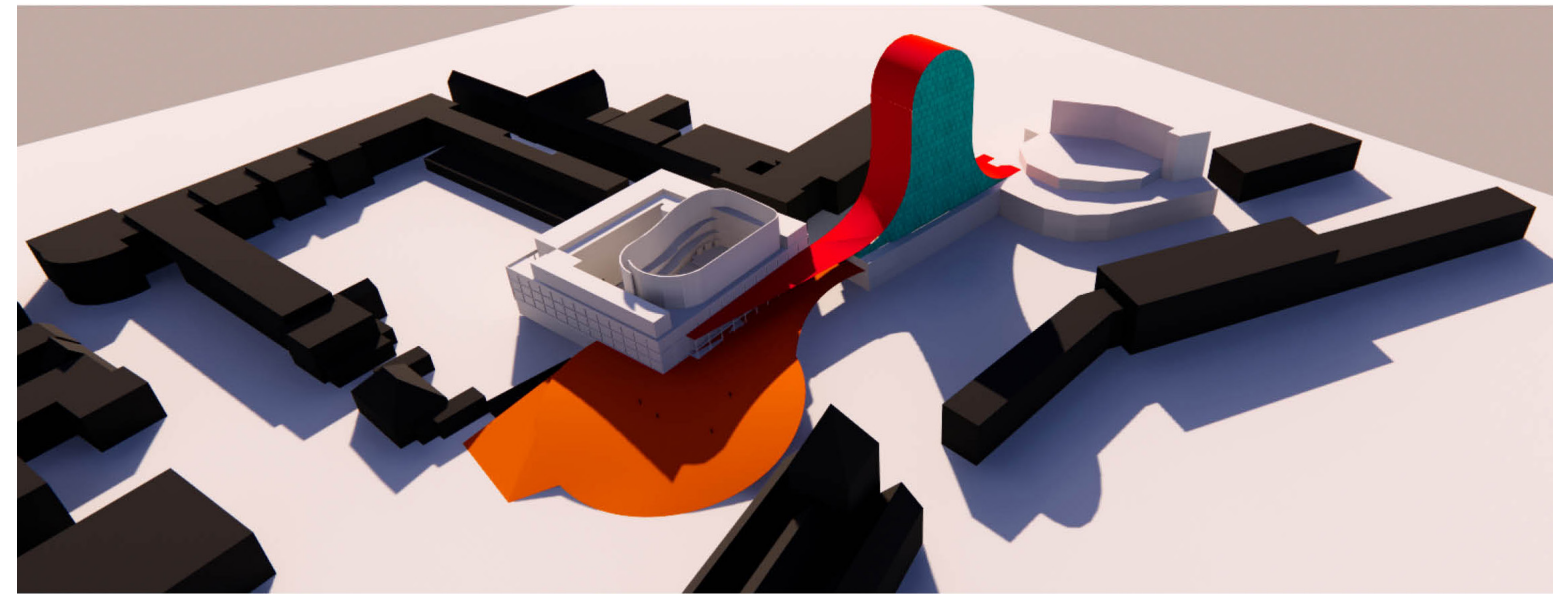
Winter school 2021



a hill in front of the Concertzaal

During winter school I elaborated the concepts with help of four other students of the academy. The students felt the most for the concept of making a direct connection with the Stadsforum: we created a hill from the city floor to the concert hall. One of the students suggested to add a new program to make the project profitable: a tower with student housing. At the very start of winter school I did not have a clear idea of what I wanted to achieve with it, so it went

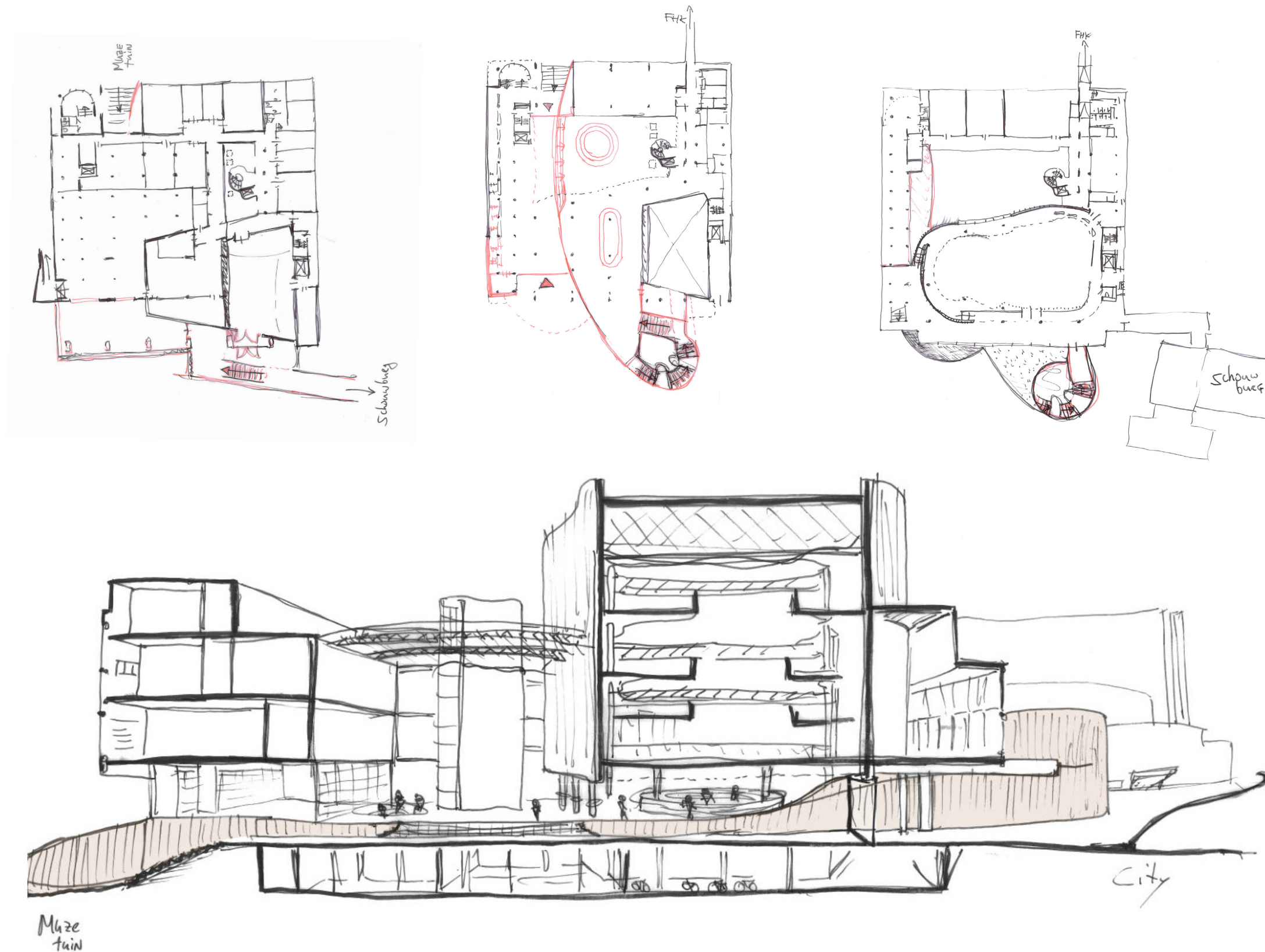
in all directions. This made it difficult to steer the project to a next step. After winter school I concluded that the plan of the hill in front of the building was not possible, because the hill would be too steep. The adding of the new program did not make me enthusiastic. The challenge of making the arts more accessible, in my opinion, does not need an extra tower with student housing.



The sketch on the left is made by 2nd year student Teun Prins, other students in my group were: Kaan Kalak, Theo de Laat, and Stijn Graat.

January 2021
winters school

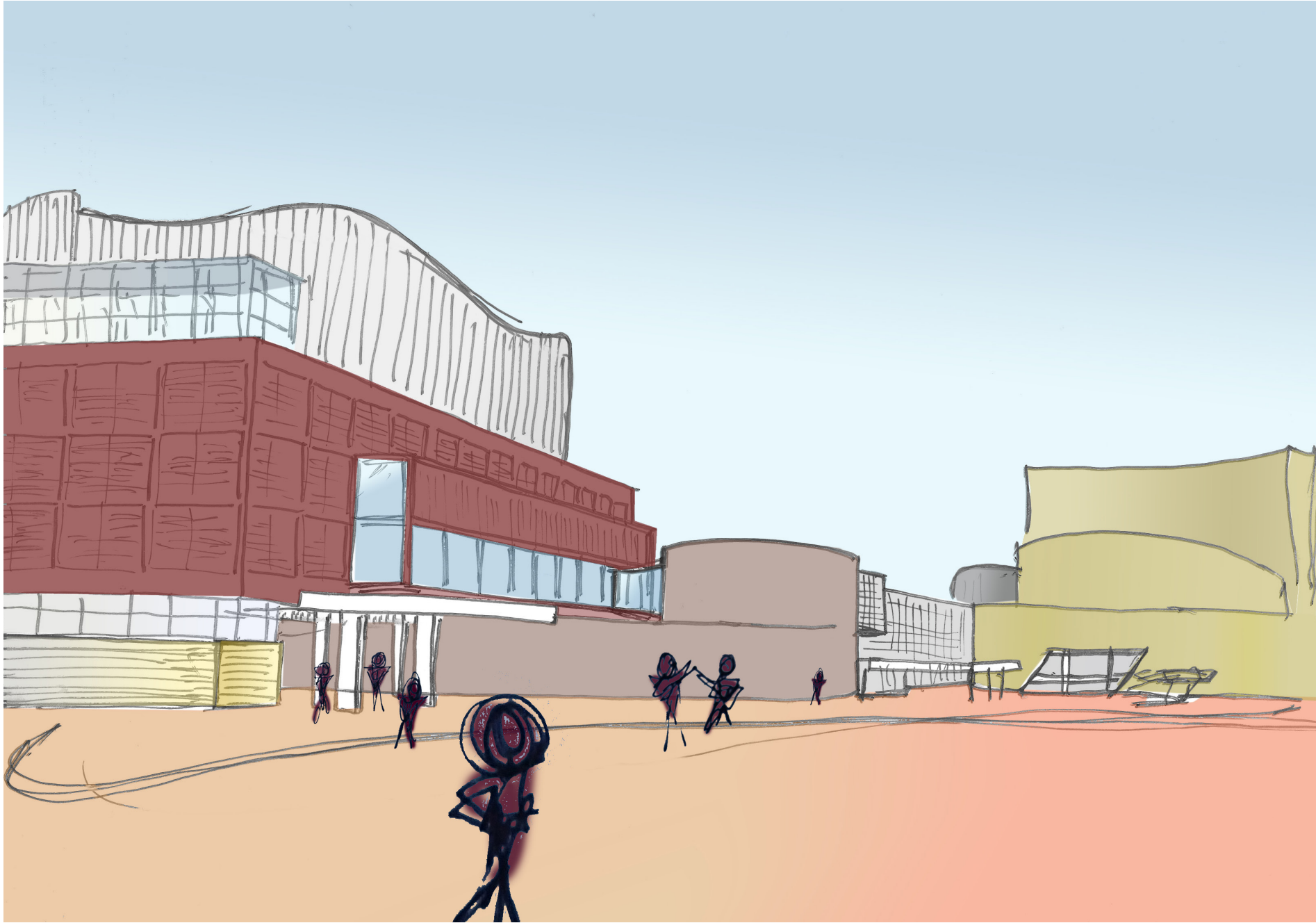
Preliminary design



With the preliminary design I finally found the intervention that I needed. Creating a city-Foyer, at street level as an indoor extension of the *Stadsforum*. To create this City foyer, the patio got roofed with glass, and so became an atrium. A wooden wall was introduced to create a connection between the *Stadsforum* and the *Muzentuin*, - I still wanted to do something with the wall - inside the building the wall lowered to become the steps to overcome the 1,1 m height difference in the foyer. In the basement I made a connection with the theater, and the entrance for the underground venue was located. This venue is a double height class room of the Rock Academy that consist of a box in box construction, and thanks to that suitable for loud concerts, eventually at the same time as in the concert hall.

February 05, 2021
Presenting preliminary design

Preliminary design



In front of the Quadrangular building I added a new staircase. That at the same time accentuated the beginning (or ending) of the wooden wall.

This staircase got a sculptural rounded form that could compete with the theater.

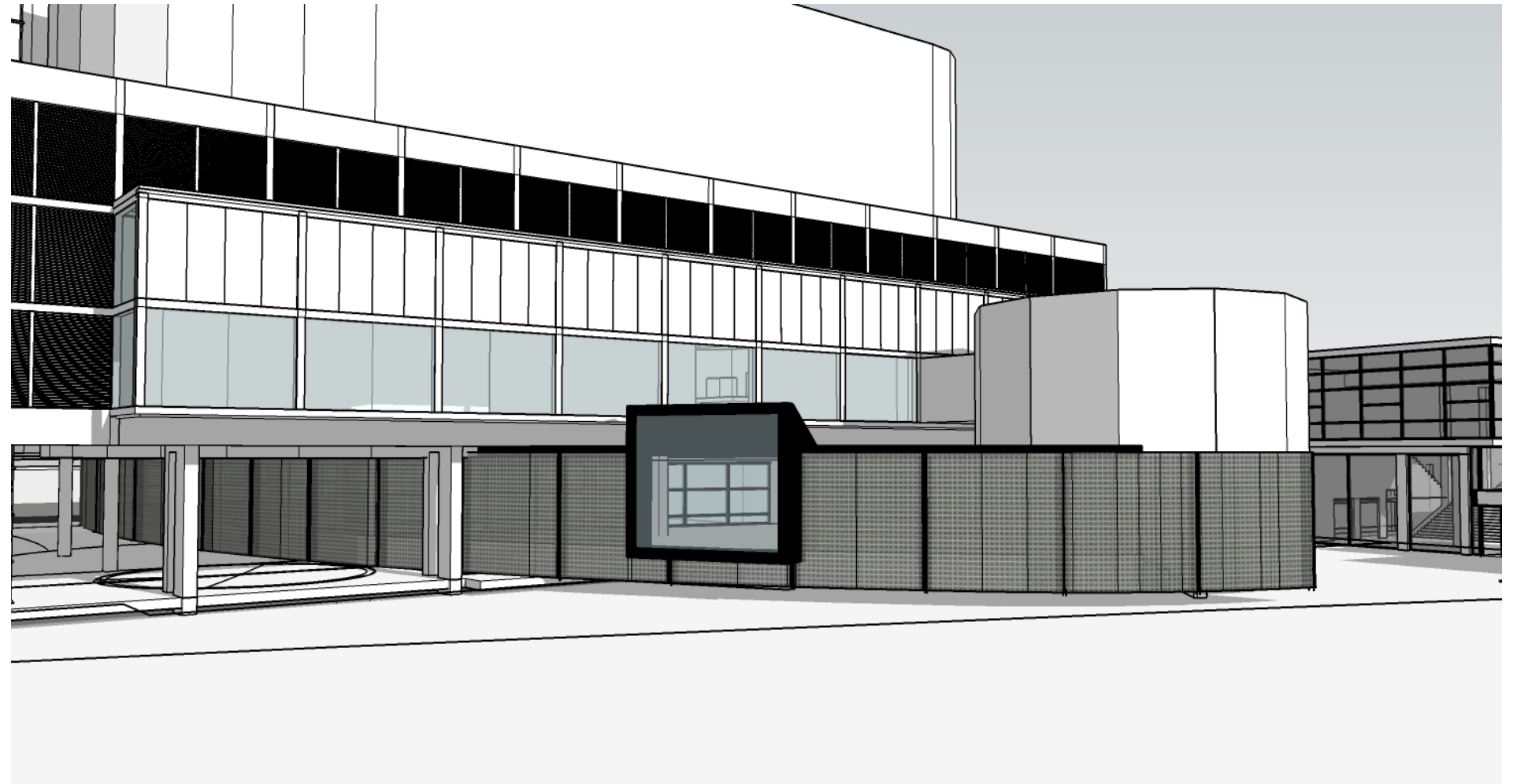
The entrance of the building as accentuated by a big new awning.

QUESTION : HOW IS A CLOSED WALL EXTENSION HELPING TO MAKE THE BUILDING MORE ACCESSIBLE?

Run up to definitive design

Writers block

After the preliminary design presentation I was stuck for a few weeks. The writing of my essay was not easy for me, because I did not have a convincing design yet nor a clear thinking path. When I started altering the design and forgot about the essay for a little more, I got renewed energy. In the meantime I have read the book *Het is aan ons* by Merlijn Twaalfhoven, which was super inspiring, and convinced me of being on the right track with my attempt to democratize the arts.



From closed wall to overflow of space

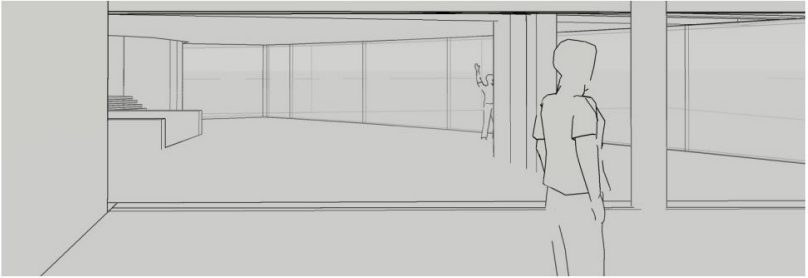
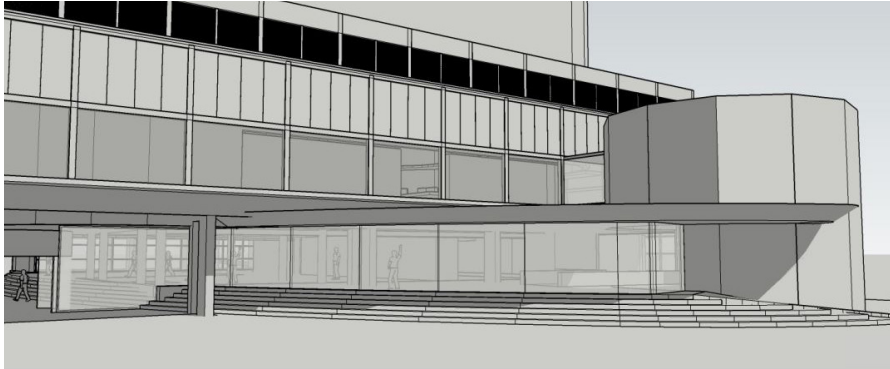
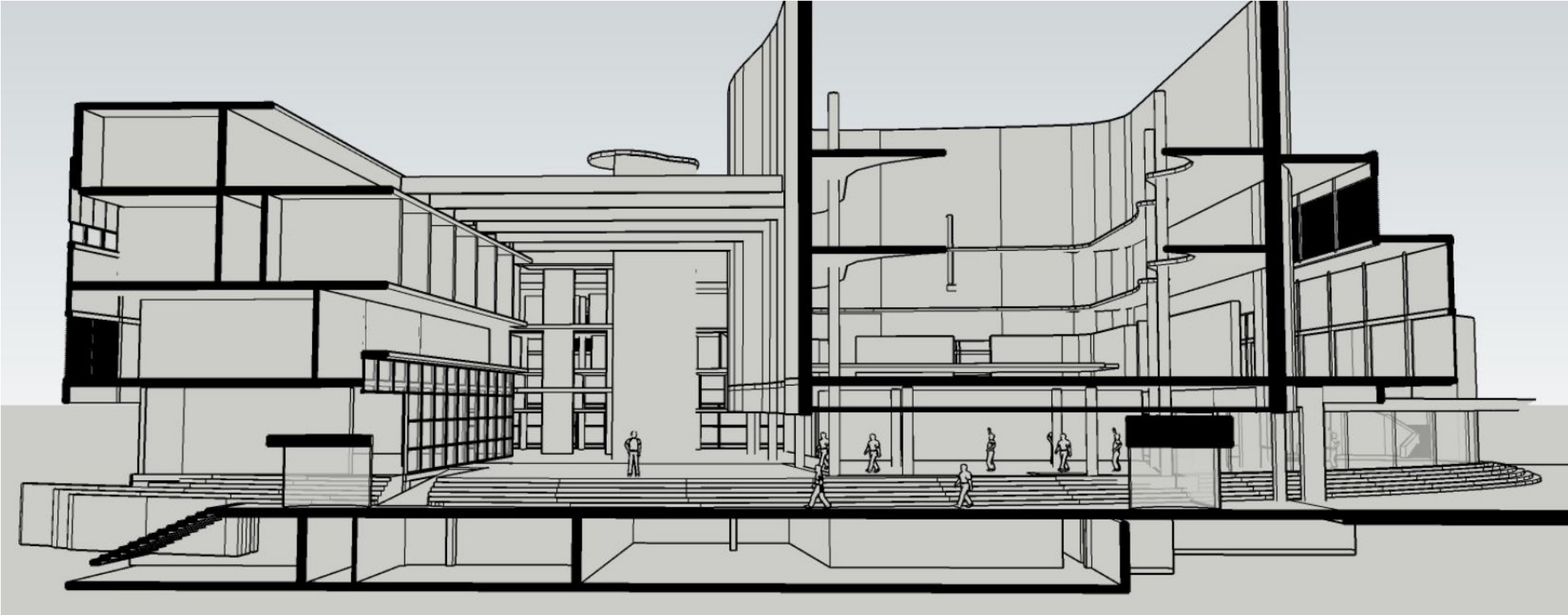
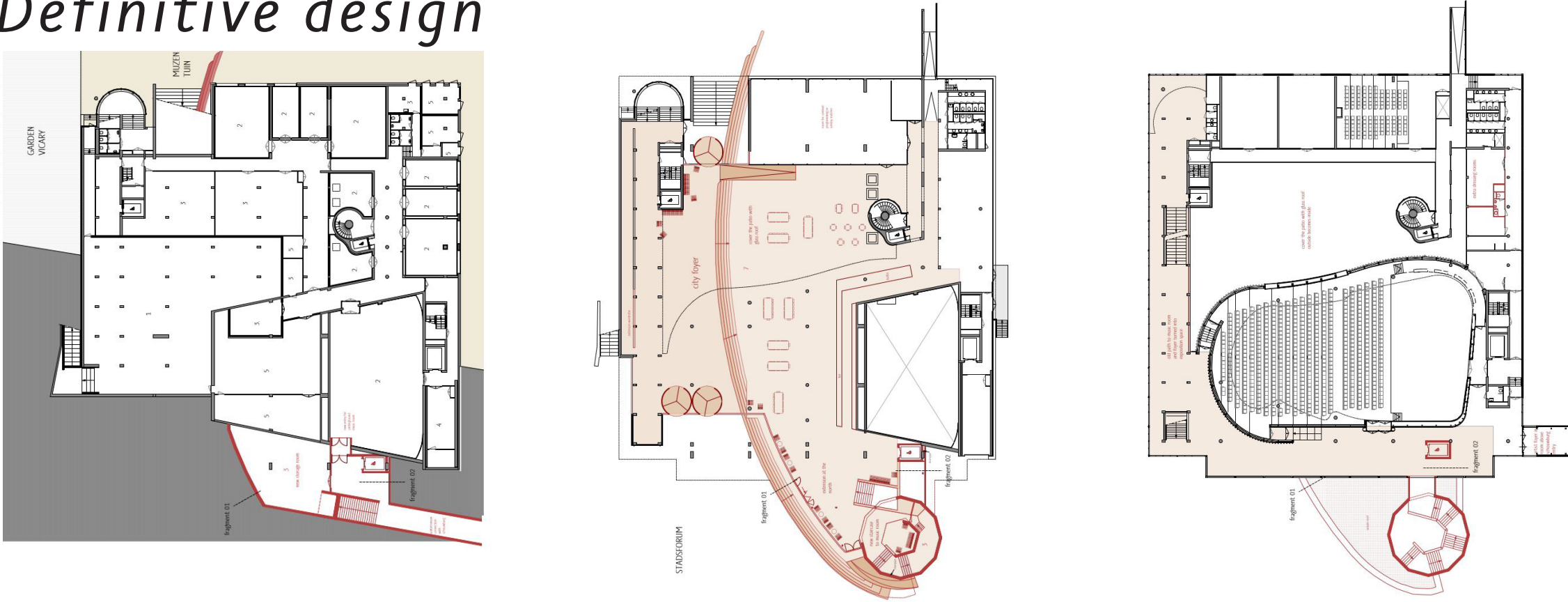
The wooden wall had to become open to make the building more inviting and to connect it with her surroundings.

At first I tried to make the wall of glass bricks (see image above), later it became a colonnade, then I extended the steps to the outside of the building. In the end I chose to get rid of the wall, but keep the line as connecting element between the Stadsforum and the Muzentuin that cuts through the entire City-Foyer. The wall became stairs and connected the platform of the City-Foyer most directly with the Stadsforum.

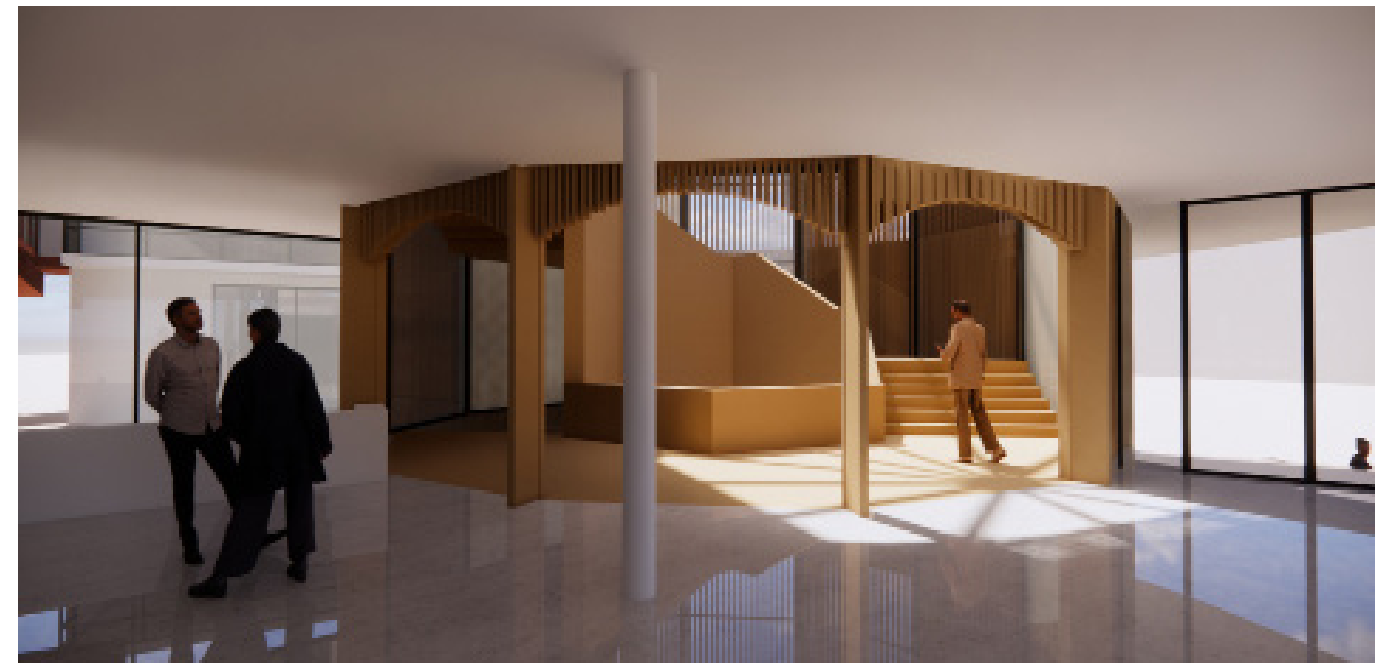
The stairs are mirrored by a sloped roof edge. In between the roof edge and the stairs there is only glass. I learned that it is good to keep objects/volumes loose from each other. So the staircase was cut loose from this line as a free standing element.

February 06 - March 12 2021
stuck in the process

Definitive design



April 09, 2021
Presenting definitive design



May 21, 2021
Presenting retake definitive design

TO BE CONTINUED....

from the first exam - on which I failed - to december 2021

the last weeks for the exam I worked hard to get everything done in time, I had a week or 5.

I was quite relieved when I handed in my materials, and lived with confidence towards my exam.

As you might know I failed.

The material was not on the required level, and the red line in my story was hard to find. The subject however was good and deserved a better elaboration.

CONCLUSION : I had to rework the project, using the same ingredients, which were good, but rework it to a proper cake....

I made a planning for the task I had to do, and agreed with my supervisors that in November we would see if I could try the exam again.

I started full of fresh energy after the summer but I quickly got stuck. I didn't know where to adjust my design to make it more logical. I tried a lot: removing the facades, removing the floors, but nothing led to an improvement. Was my research good? By the time September ended I lost my motivation and slowly withdrew from the project. Finishing in November was not an option anymore and I planned to get it on track again in December, when I had two weeks free from work.



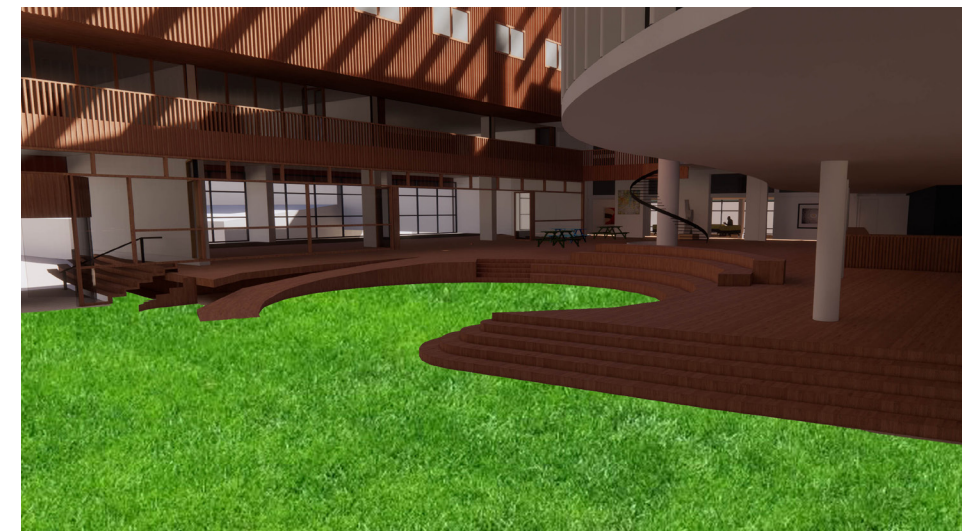
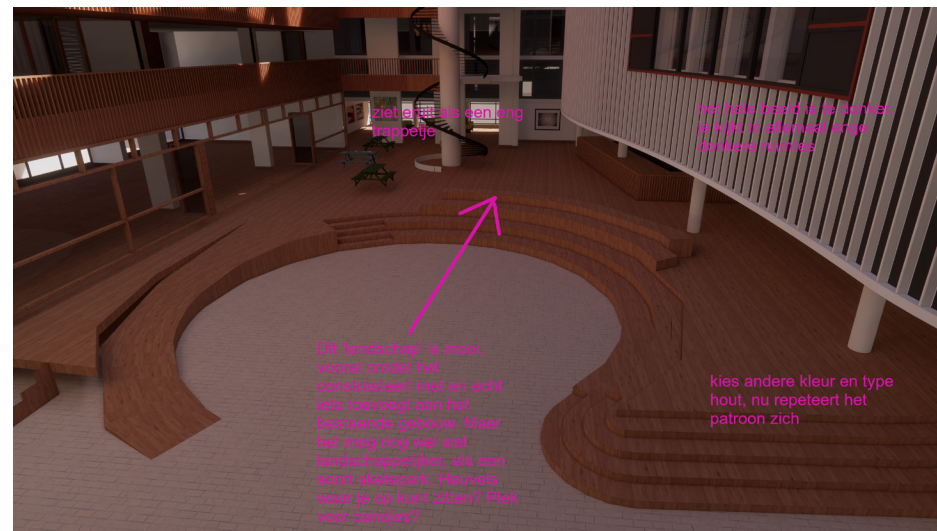
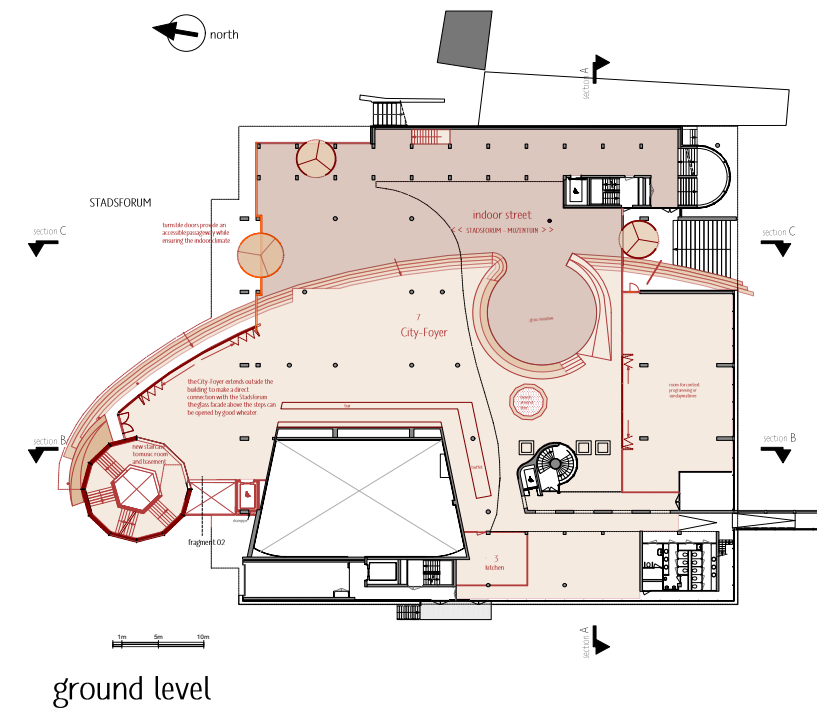
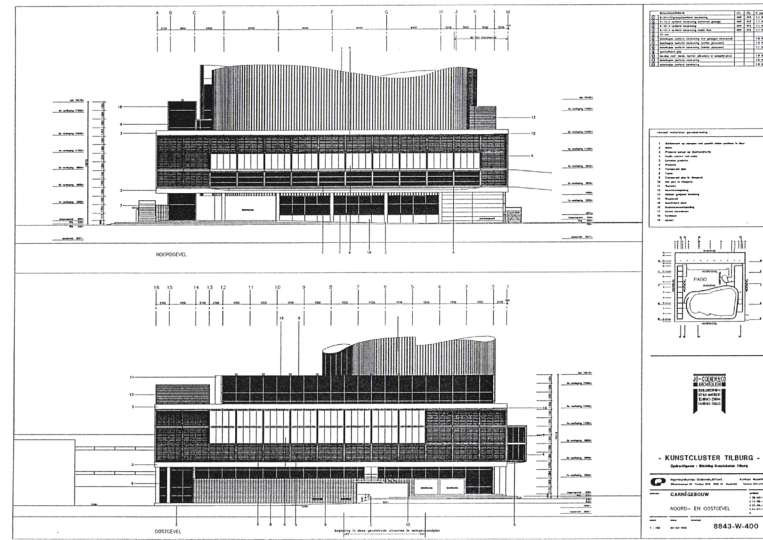
June 25, 2021
Exam 01

Getting back in the game - December 2021 - March 2022

starting with the existing building:

I had found out that the sections I had downloaded from the internet did not correspond with reality, for example the floor levels were not correct. I scheduled an appointment at the archive in Tilburg to see if i could find the correct drawings there. Unfortunately no accurate drawings could be found there either. There was only one set of revision drawings that appeared to be correct, but they were scaled to an A4 format and therefore unreadable.

So the only thing I could do was measure things myself:



in the last week of december I tried to improve the project by designing a circle pit in the new atrium space, an old idea from previous year, it didn't satisfy me.

At the second day of the new year I decide to make an alternative design....

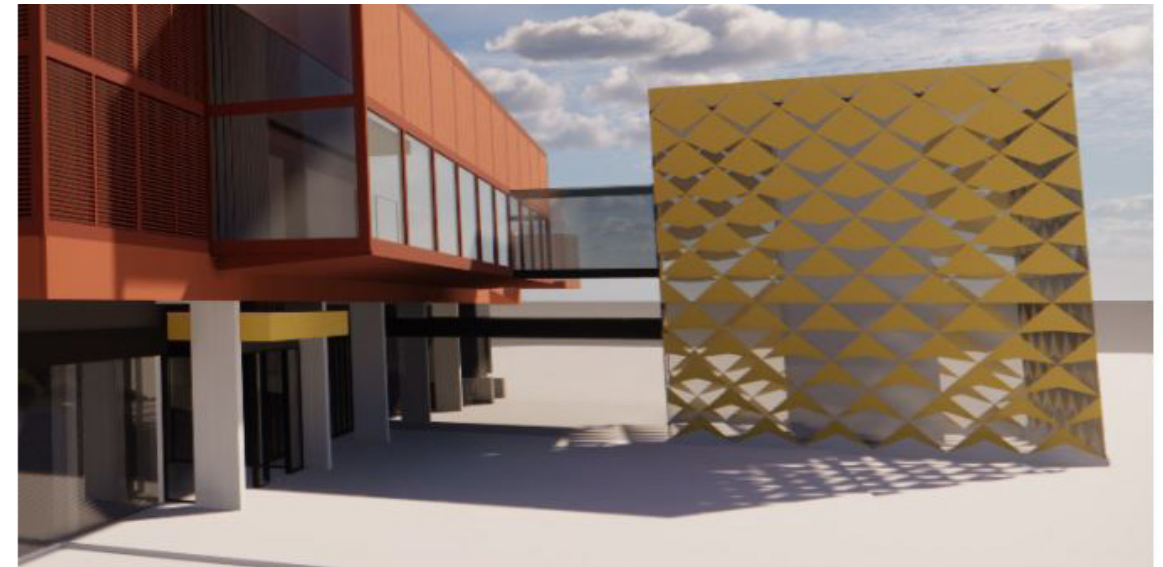
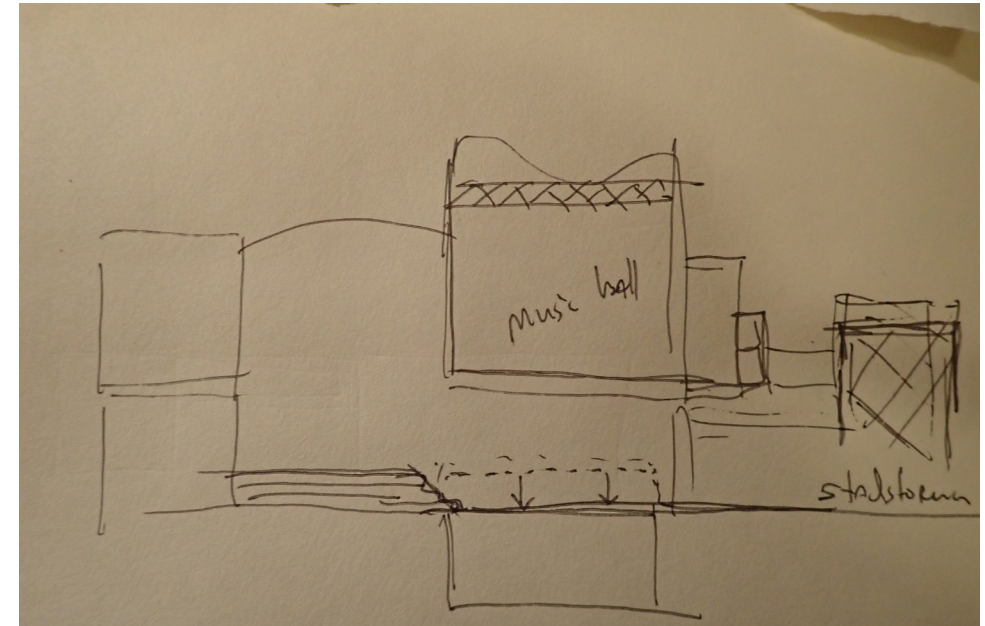
December 10, 2021
visiting the archive Tilburg

Alternative design

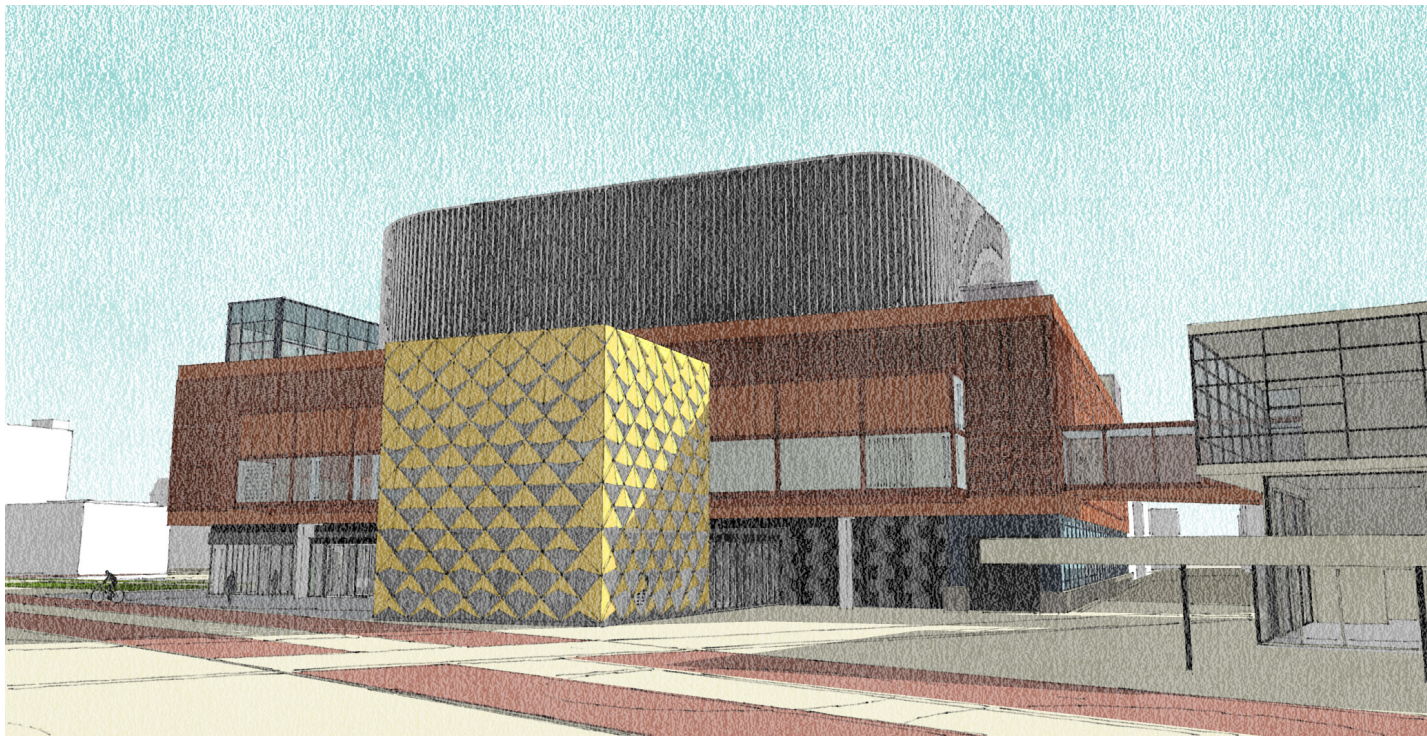
In the alternative design I lowered the first floor level so that the transition from the stadsforum to the foyer was smoothened.

Besides that I got rid of the curved wooden steps that cuts trough the building, but which in terms of design has absolutely no connection with the existing architecture, the bandstand in front of the building also suddenly looks strange to me. I decided to align everything more with the existing building.

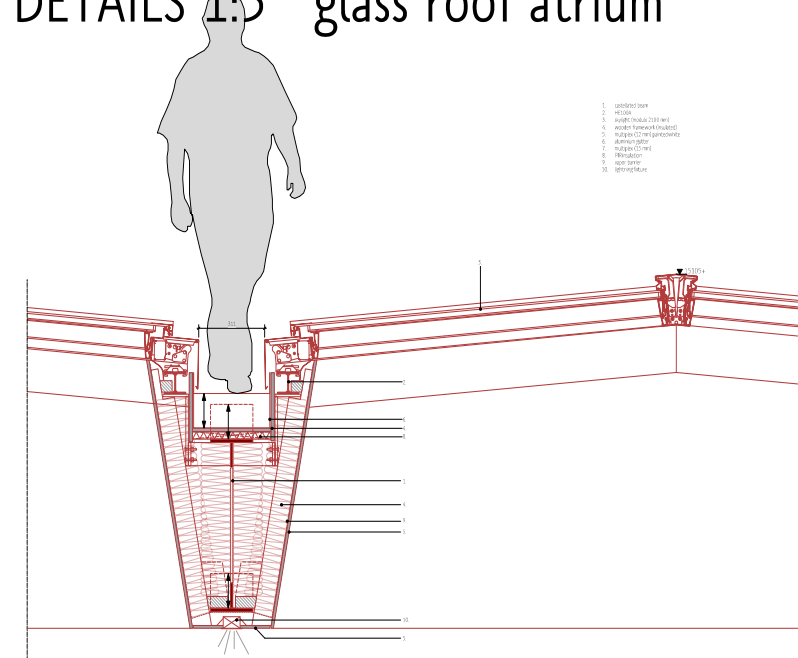
The new stairwell in front of the building, with facade felled according to blowing instruments.



Retake definitive design



DETAILS 1.5 glass roof atrium



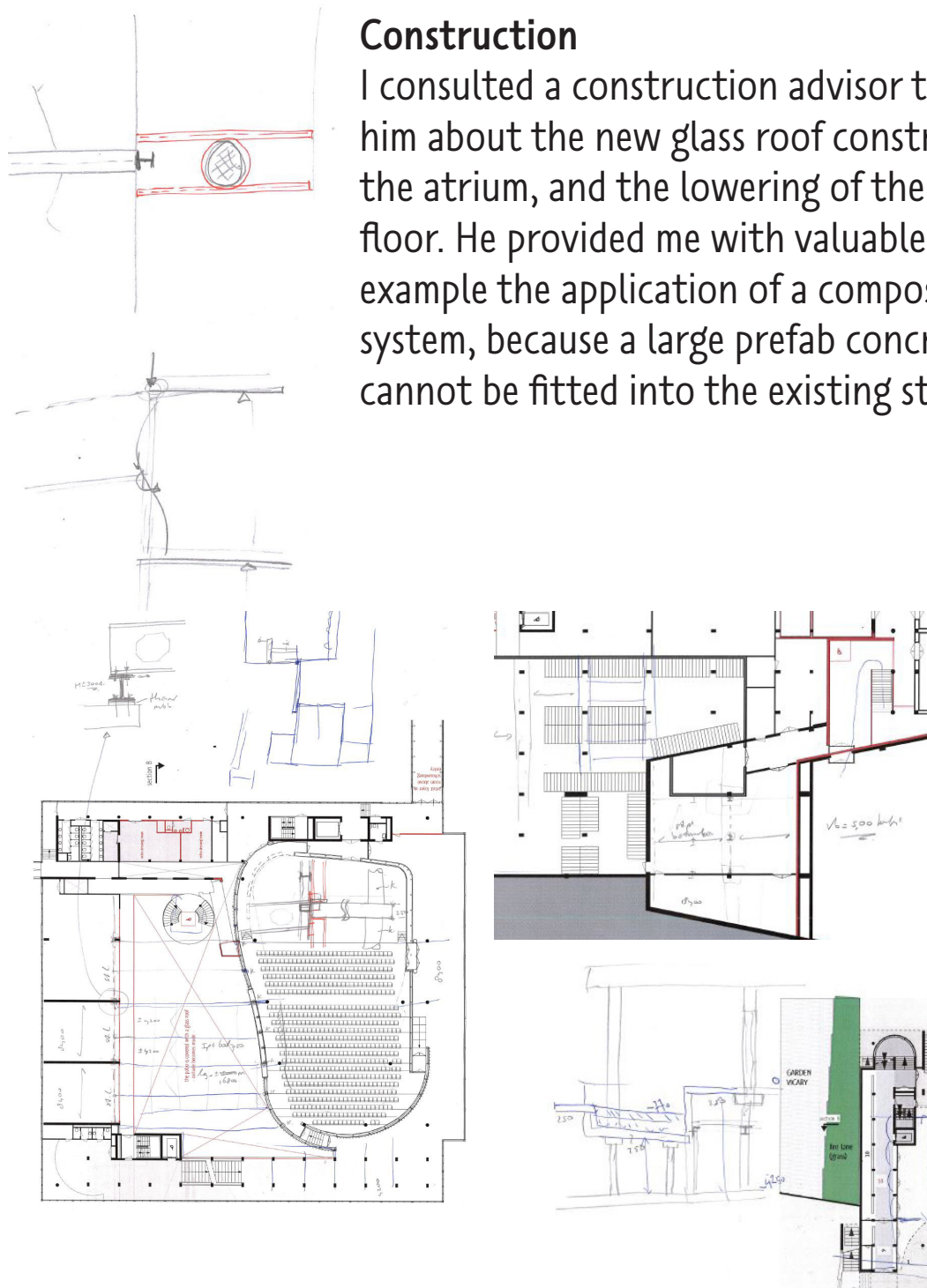
Despite hard work in the last two weeks, I experienced a lack of time for this presentation, my presentation fell very badly, the renders were not good, but my modified concept, the design more in line with the existing building, and the existing building as much as possible turned out to be positive changes. I was able to proceed to the exam with this

April 1st, 2021
Presenting retake definitive design

up to exam...

Construction

I consulted a construction advisor to talk with him about the new glass roof construction of the atrium, and the lowering of the ground floor. He provided me with valuable advice, for example the application of a composite floor system, because a large prefab concrete floor cannot be fitted into the existing structure.

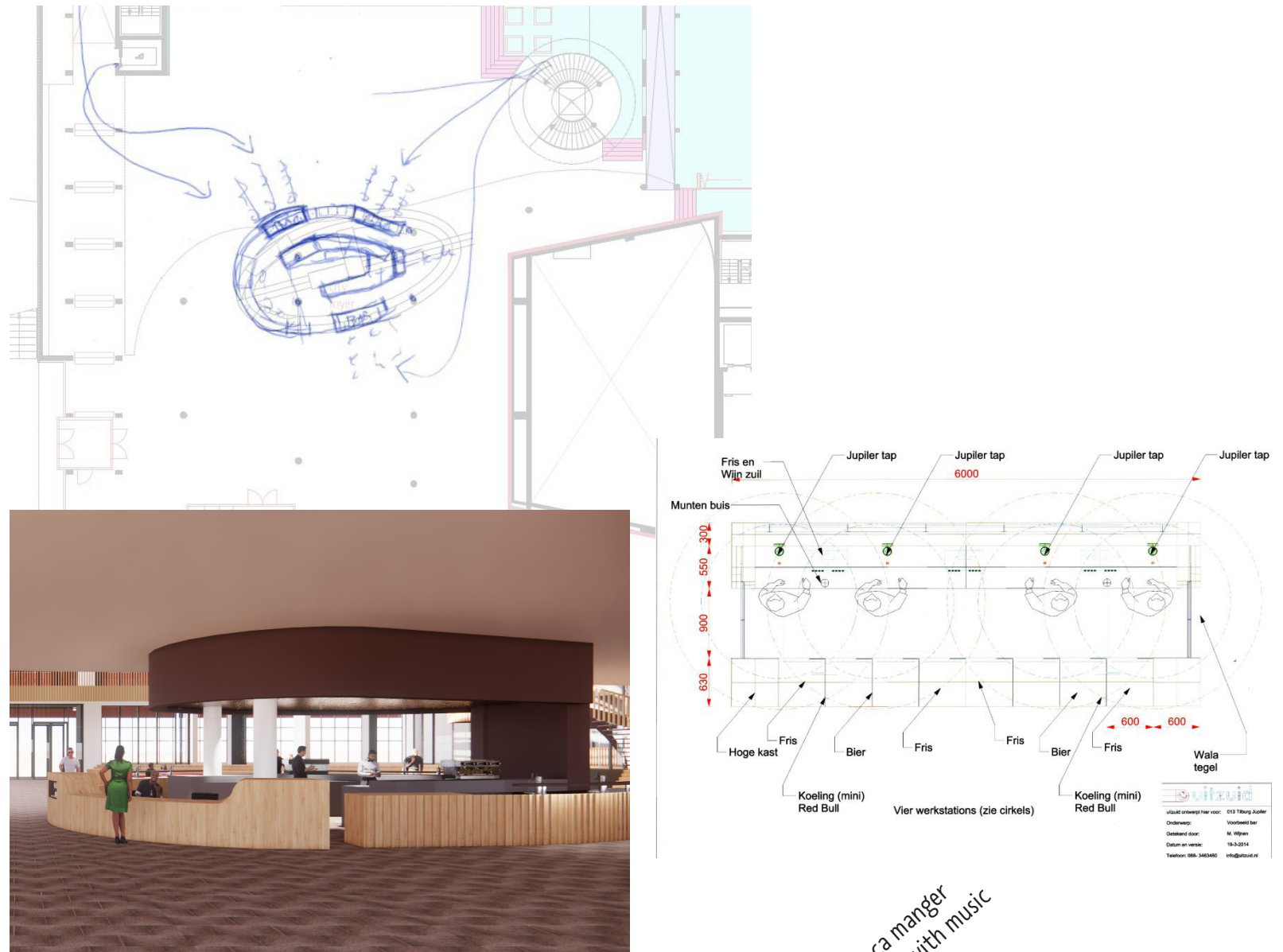


April 25, 2022
Consulting a construction
advisor

The bar

Although the new foyer had to be flexible, I thought it was important to attach 1 element that would be needed in every scenario, that is: a bar. I see this as an element that connects people.

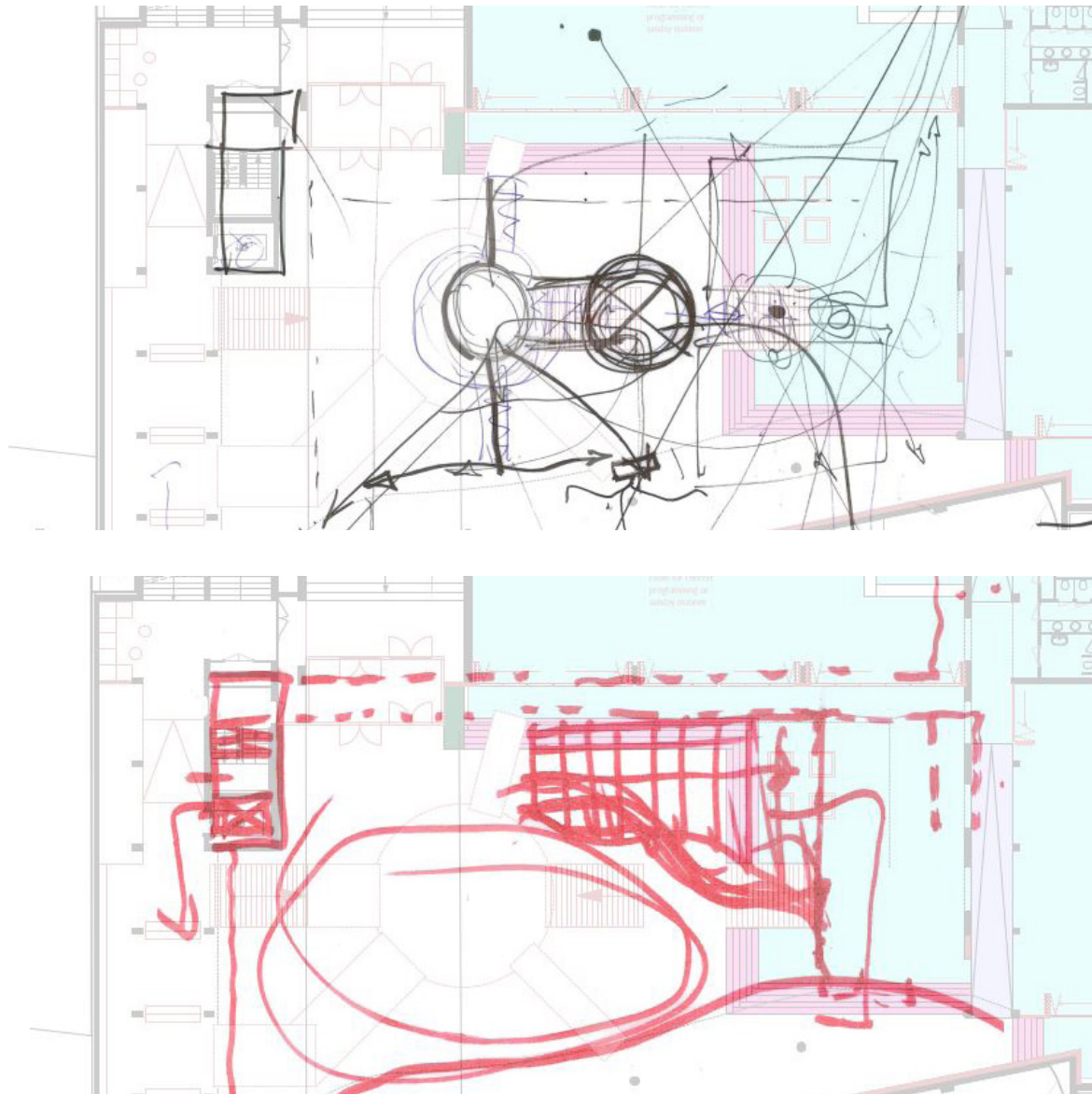
I wanted an organic shape derived from the music hall it would be placed under. I discussed with the catering manager of poppodium 013 what dimensions and facilities would be needed for a bar that could serve 1200 people at the same time. He also gave me a drawing of the bars in 013 with dimensions that could serve as a reference.



May 6, 2022
Consulting a horeca manager
who has experience with music
venues

The new stairs

Because I decided to skip the staircase in front of the building, I had to design a new staircase in the atrium. My tutors all said that the stairs could be more than just a stair. This way they challenged me to make a special staircase, one similar to the one of the opera in Paris. I tried a lot with stairs and level switchers but it turned out to be a difficult task.



In the end I arrived at a round staircase, similar to the existing one with a small platform halfway up the first staircase to look out over the atrium from there.....



.... which in the end could not satisfy me either.

TO BE CONTINUED....

sources



literature

books:

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- De Ruijter, E. (2000) *theaters van de toekomst*
- Twaalfhoven, M. (2020) *het is aan ons*
- Rossi, A. (1966) *Architecture of the city*
- Arendt, H. (1958) *de menselijke conditie*
- Boer, H.P.G. (1983) *architect G.H.M. Holt (1904)*
- Mollema, J & Leemans, S. (2017) *Bernard Bijvoet, cher maître van de Nederlandse architectuur*
- Syrng, E. & Kirschenmann, J.C. (2010) *Sharoun*
- Wortmann, A. (2005) *the theaters of Herman Hertzberger*
- Van Beusekom, J. & Jolles, A. (2007) *Hey Ho, Let's Go!*

research papers:

- Boele, E. B. & Van Eijck, K. (2018) *Van de canon en de mug; een inventarisatie van inzichten rondom de culturele niet-bezoeker*
- Sebragts L. (2010) *Jaap Bakema en Jo Coenen: twee generaties architect-stedenbouwkundigen of stedenbouwkundig architecten in Tilburg*
- Tepaske, E. (2010) *betekenis van kunst en cultuur in het dagelijks leven*

policy documents:

- OCW [Dutch ministry] (2019) *cultuurbeleid 2021-2024*
- Raad voor Cultuur (2019) *Cultuur dichtbij, Dicht bij cultuur*
- Gemeente Tilburg (2016) *cultuurplan 2017-2021*
- Theaters Tilbrug (2020) *Jaarverslag 2019*
- Theaters Tilbrug (2019) *Jaarverslag 2018*
- Theaters Tilbrug (2019) *Jaarplan 2020*
- Theaters Tilbrug (2016) *Toekomstvisie 2017-2020*

Expert talks



21-09-2020, Tilburg

Jan Zobel

Program creator - schouwburg Kunstmin,

In the past: artistic director, festival director, , theater director, dancer, teacher.



20-11-2020, Tilburg

Dick Doeze Jager

Director Buildings & Technics - Theaters Tilburg



25-09-2020, Tilburg

Rob van Steen

Director - Theaters Tilburg



20-11-2020, Tilburg

Pernel van Herpt

Production Manager - Theaters Tilburg



12-11-2020, Amsterdam

Herman Hertzberger

Architect



23-11-2020, online

Rogier Telderman

Musician / composer



25-04-2022, Dordrecht

Ron Houdijk

Construction advisor - bureau Van der Ven



06-05-2022, Tilburg

Jasper Reinhoudt

Horeca manager - 013 popcentre