weaving matter

Anderlecht, located downhill from the city centre of Brussels, was an important industrial centre where meat was processed, and textiles were spun, woven, and dyed. Today, the remaining vast industrial lots are used as hangars for storage and reselling businesses. A stream of incoming goods deposits waste into the Heyvaert quarter, creating a residue of material sediment on the streets. These remnants offer cues and traces of the ongoing choreographies of production, exchange and everyday life that shape the neighbourhood. A collection of o*bjets trouvés*, gathered during fieldwork in Anderlecht, formed the basis for understanding the site.

This thesis approaches the city as an *objet trouvé.* A covered passage, a worker's impasse, a steel structure, a hidden tower, these form the starting point of the project. The architectural interventions come from arranging and reworking these, making an assemblage. The site itself is a composite of former industrial buildings, workers' houses and warehouses. Through their assemblage, the limits between buildings, properties, and users become blurred, creating a different relationship between city, block and room.

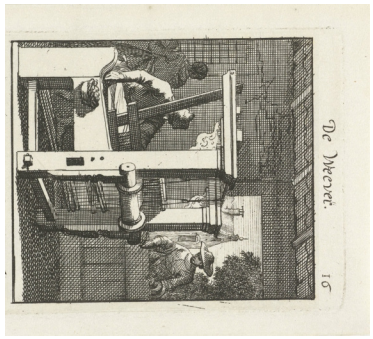
With careful interventions of cutting and removing, an open space is carved out to connect the covered passage and the workers' impasse. A new canopy links these interior streets and disparate buildings, while a central garden becomes the collective room of the ensemble. Stairs are used to bring fragmented pieces together and become the heart of the two collective housing units of the project. Hemp insulation redraws the boundaries of the buildings and loops them together to create vast working halls for the textile laboratory.

Rather than proposing a complete and autonomous object, the project understands architecture as a fragment within a larger urban fabric. By rediscovering urban features, it transforms an enclosed industrial enclave into a porous ensemble that reframes living, working and the collective within the city.

I
objets trouvés 1
II
assemblage 9
III
paper/fabric 17

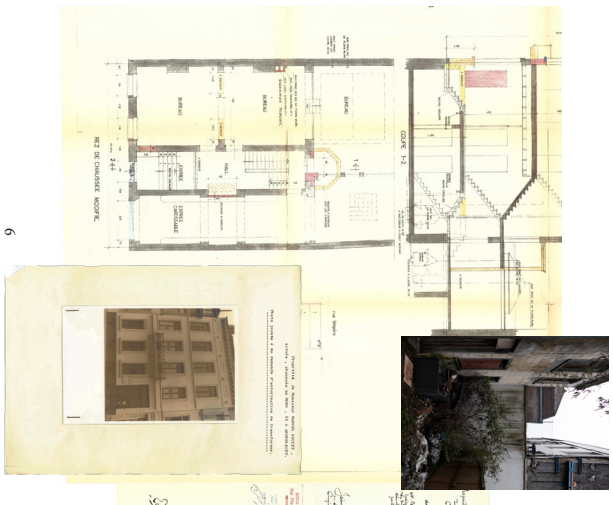
I

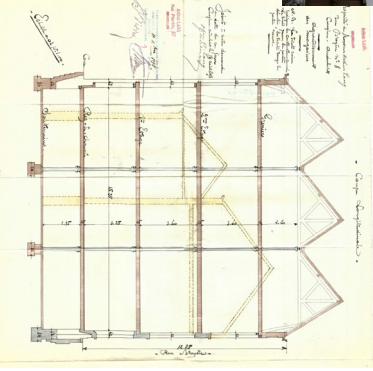
objets trouvés























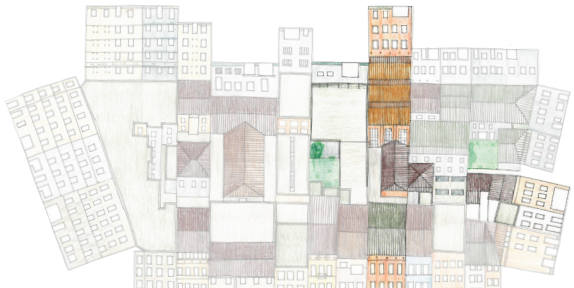












This book is made in the format of a zine. It is an A0 poster as well as 8 A3 pages.

The project began with group research. The approach we took guided my later personal design process. Research and design will be explained alongside each other, through these three phases and methods: the *objets trouvés*, the *assemblage*, and the paper or fabric.

Brussels's sloping terrain has guided how neighbourhoods developed and related to one another. Differences in elevation seem to have shaped daily life: the city's grandest buildings, such as the Palais de Justice and the Royal Palace, are located on high ground, impressively overlooking the lower districts. Downhill, along the river Senne and, later, a parallel canal, lies Anderlecht, which formed the basis of Brussels' industrial development. Much like the river Senne deposits clay downstream as the current slows down, a stream of goods deposits waste into the Heyvaert quarter, creating a residue of material sediment on the streets. While in most parts of the city these processes remain hidden or are cleverly disguised, in Anderlecht, the reality has settled. The excess of matter is not hidden behind closed doors or in the deep plots of the Heyvaert quarter, it is part of the daily choreographies of the city. These materials offer cues and traces of the choreographies of Anderlecht (p.1).

On Wednesday, 10 December 2025, together with Koen and Anna, we gleaned the streets of Anderlecht for these leftovers. The trash we picked up, a random collection of *objets trouvés*[1], formed the basis for our understanding of the site (p.2).



Duchamp (1913), *Roue de vélo.*

A wheel cover, a box of a car part. Export papers to Lebanon. A crate of dates (p.3).
Over time, productive activities gradually moved out of the city, leaving behind large plots and contaminated soil. Fertile soil, though, for businesses which require a lot of space for their activities. Around the Abattoir of

1 An objet trouvé is an "element of the real" found in everyday life and assigned a new symbolic value or meaning through the artist's creative choice (Schaerer, 2015). Linked to the Surrealist movement, the practice discovered beauty and worth in what was commonly seen as valueless (Seitz, 1968).

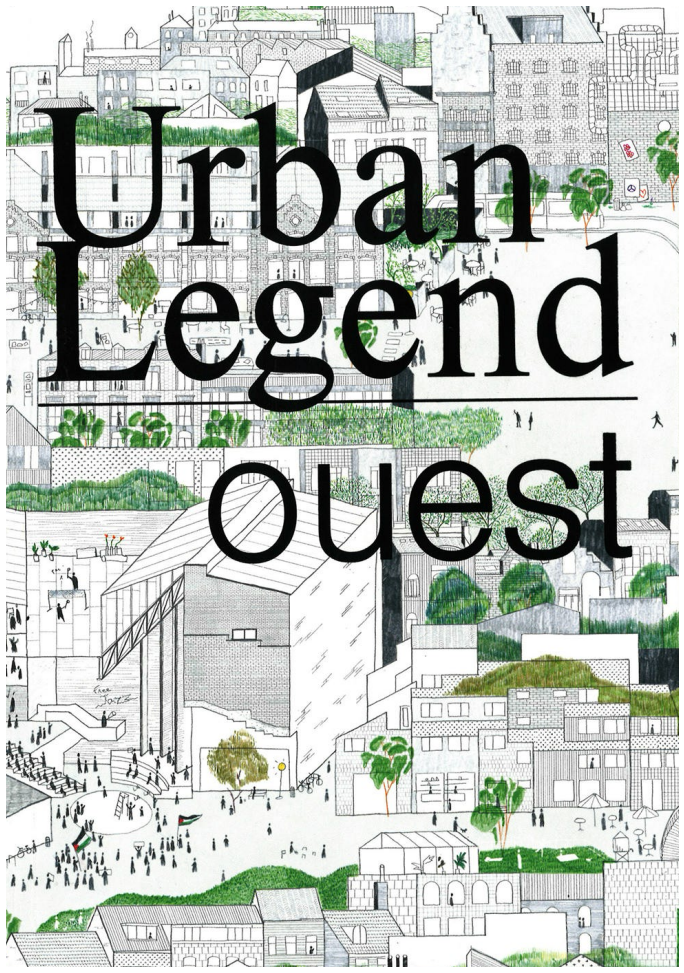
Brussels, the Heyvaert quarter, car export companies and wholesalers flourished, turning this neighbourhood from a factory into a stockpile. A stock of cars, food, packaging, building materials, and second-hand textiles, all sitting there waiting to be distributed in bulk.

A flyer of Recyclart. A Walloon child's Dutch homework, notes in Arabic of a French class (p.3).
All the while, some of the wholesale businesses in Anderlecht see their market disappearing, new types of businesses focusing on collecting second-hand materials and redistributing them are starting to appear. Beyond Brussels being a bilingual city wrestling with a language barrier, Anderlecht is also an arrival city for many struggling to find their way and learn a language. Anderlecht is a neighbourhood shaped by this multiplicity of activities, backgrounds and languages. In his book Building and Dwelling, Ethics for the City, sociologist Richard Sennett argues that cities should embrace complexity, density, and difference rather than order and separation. Mixed forms of use invite mixed users (Sennett, 2019). Reintroducing productive activities into an urban fabric that is historically shaped for it is therefore essential to support the different groups of residents of Anderlecht and create a more inclusive city.

Referencing Curegem's heritage of spinning, dyeing and printing, the site will house a textile lab where weaving techniques are developed, and textiles are produced on a small scale (p.4).

A covered passage, a worker's impasse, a beautiful steel structure in three, a little hidden tower.
In the Heyvaert quarter, buildings resemble palimpsests, overlapping layers of time are left apparent (p.4,5). The Brussels architecture firm Ouest finds that urban projects can be understood through the lens that everything is already there: the city is constantly built and rebuilt, renewed and restored. Rather than a contrast between old and new, the city is an endless reworking of its own fabric, never fully complete (Damsin & Haerens, 2025).

The *objet trouvé* exemplifies this idea of rediscovering what already exists. The word "invention" itself comes from the Latin invenire, meaning "to find" or "to uncover." Invention, therefore, is not an act of pure creation, but the ability to offer a new interpretation of what is already there (Schaerer, 2015). The architectural approach of the city as an *objet trouvé* thus means carefully engaging with the existing, looking for qualities, sometimes lost and waiting to be rediscovered, and participating in this ongoing dialogue. The covered passage, the worker's impasse, a steel structure, the hidden tower, these *objets trouvés* will form the starting point of the project (p.6,7).



Damsin & Haerens (2025), *Urban Legend*.

1 Hymans, H. (1910). *Palais de justice Bruxelles.* H. Laurens. https://archive.org/details/bruxelles00hymauoft/page/114/mode/1up

Verwest (1910), *Nouveau plan de Bruxelles industriel avec ses suburbains.*

Krikke, A. (2026). *Map of Brussels' sloping terrain 1.15000.*

2 Google Earth, (2025). *Aerial photo of the Heyvaert quarter.*

Debonnet, E. (2025). Trash collection in Anderlecht 10 december 2025.

3 Krikke, A., Weber, K., & Debonnet, E. (2025). *Heyvaert in paper.*

4 Rijksmuseum archief, (1694). *De wever.*

Krikke, A. (2025). *Broyèrestraat.*

5 Debonnet, E (2025). *Palimpsest.*

Weber, K. (2026). *Worker's housing.*

6 *Archival plans Bergensesteenweg 61.* (1966)

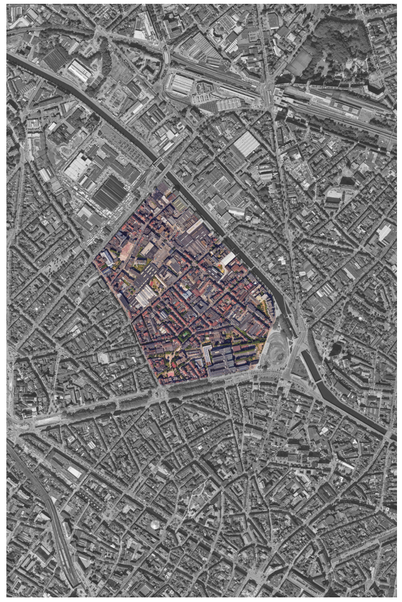
Weber, K. (2026). *Impasse migerode.*

7 *Archival plans Broyèrestraat 8.* (1898)

7,8 *Hand drawing urban block Anderlecht*









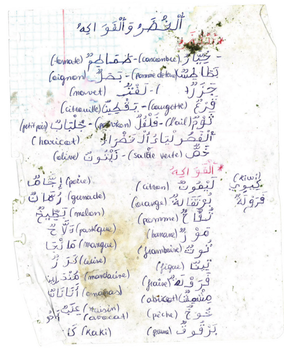



PERFECT
WHEEL COVERS
WIELSIERRINGEN
ENJOLIVEURS
RADBLENDEN

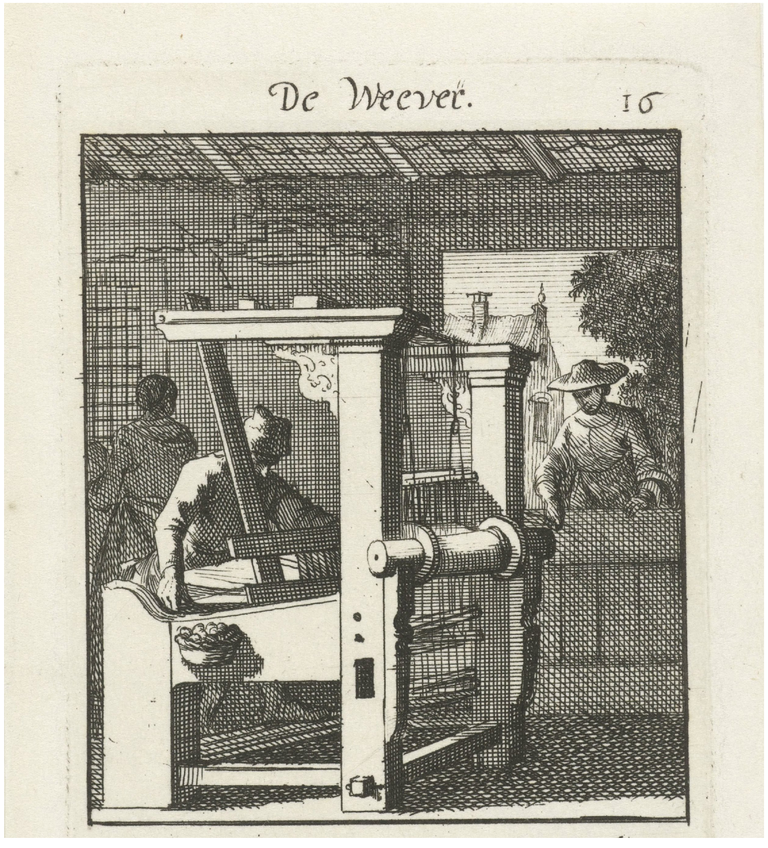

Original GKN
Automotive Parts
Original GKN Automotive Parts


Centre d'Arts
Fabrik
Bar Resto
RECYCLART


Instap



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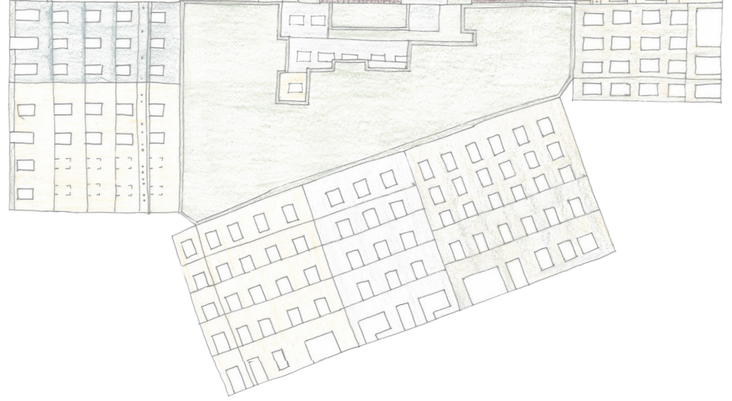
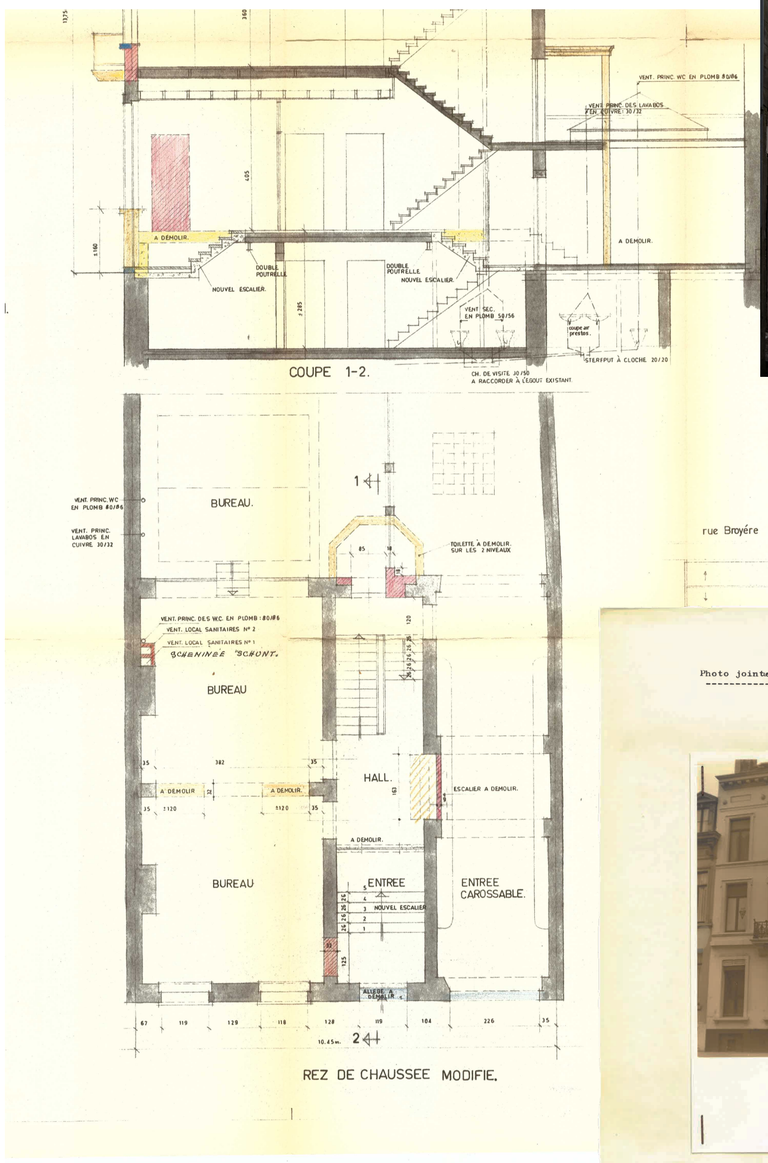
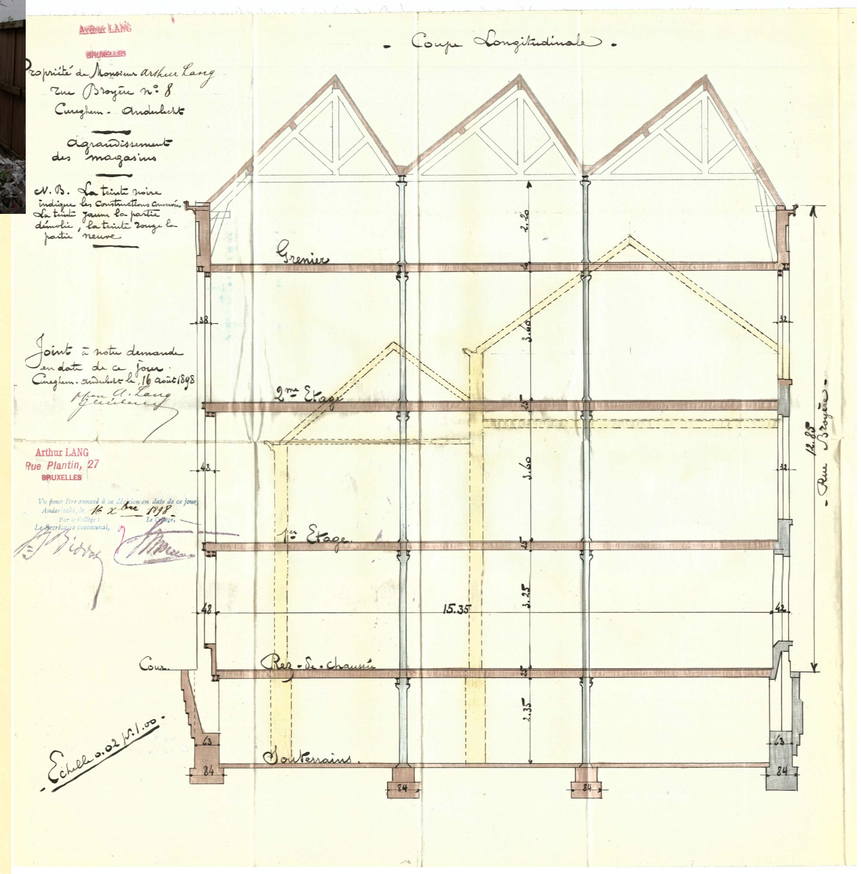








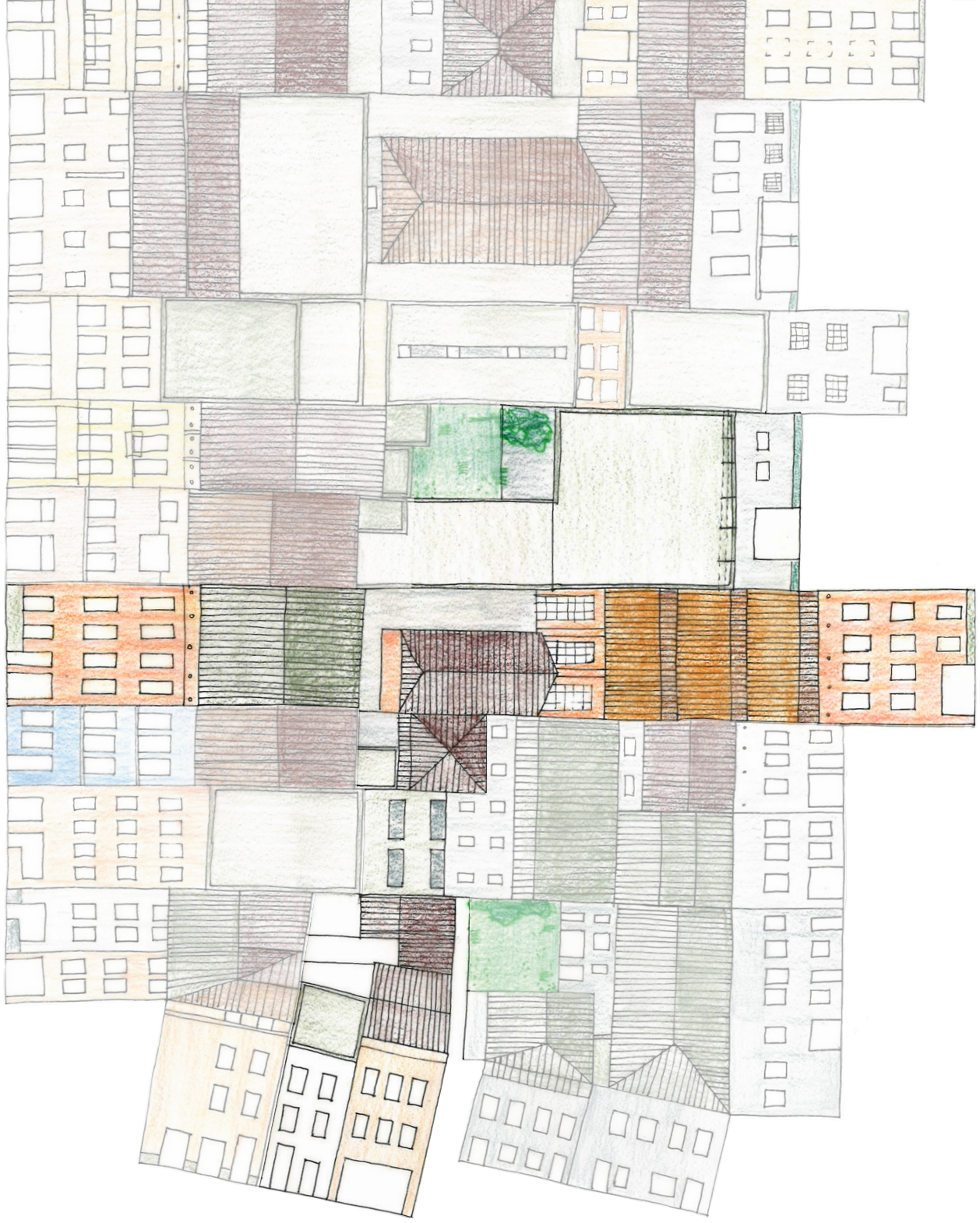
rue Broyére

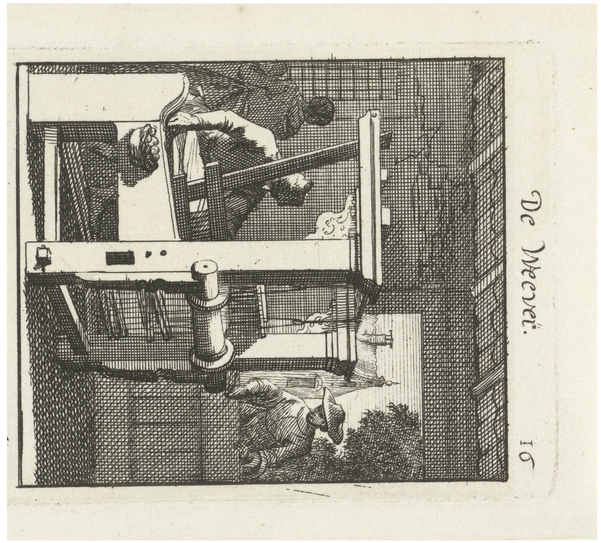
n°8

Propriété de Monsieur MARCEL SOUIET ,
située , chaussée de MONS , 61 à ANDERLECHT.

Photo jointe à ma demande d'autorisation de transformer.



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WHEEL COVERS
WIELSIERRINGEN
ENJOLIVEURS
RADBLENDEN
PERFECT


Original GKN Automotive Parts
Original GKN Automotive Parts






RECYCLART







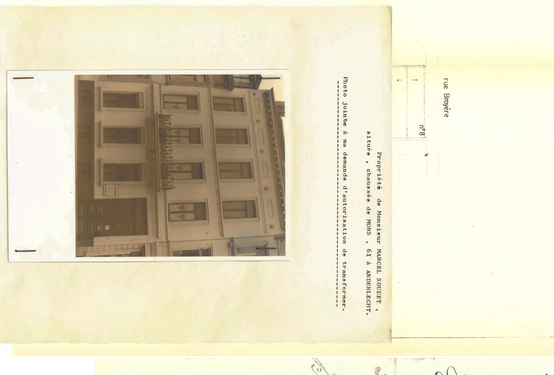


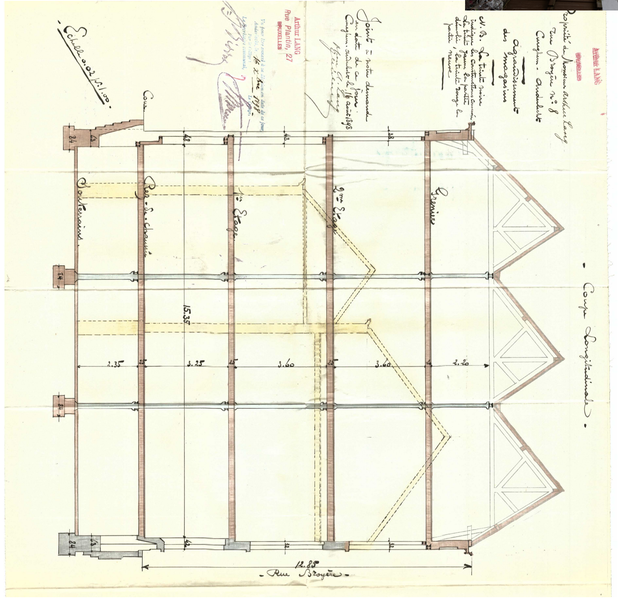

MOLENBEEK
DUREGHEM
1

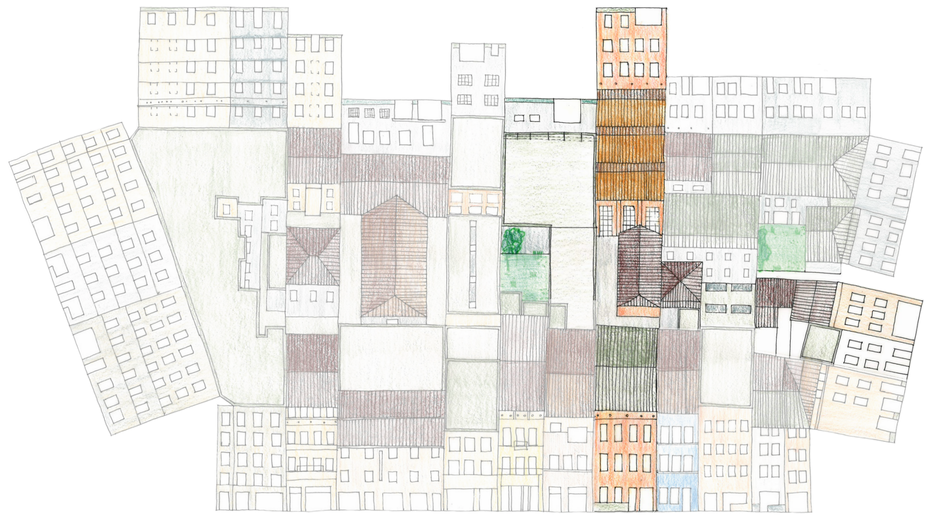



REZ DE CHAUSSEE MODIFIE.
COUPE 1-2.
BUREAU
BUREAU
BUREAU
HALL
ENTREE
CARROSSABLE
ENTREE
1+1
2+1

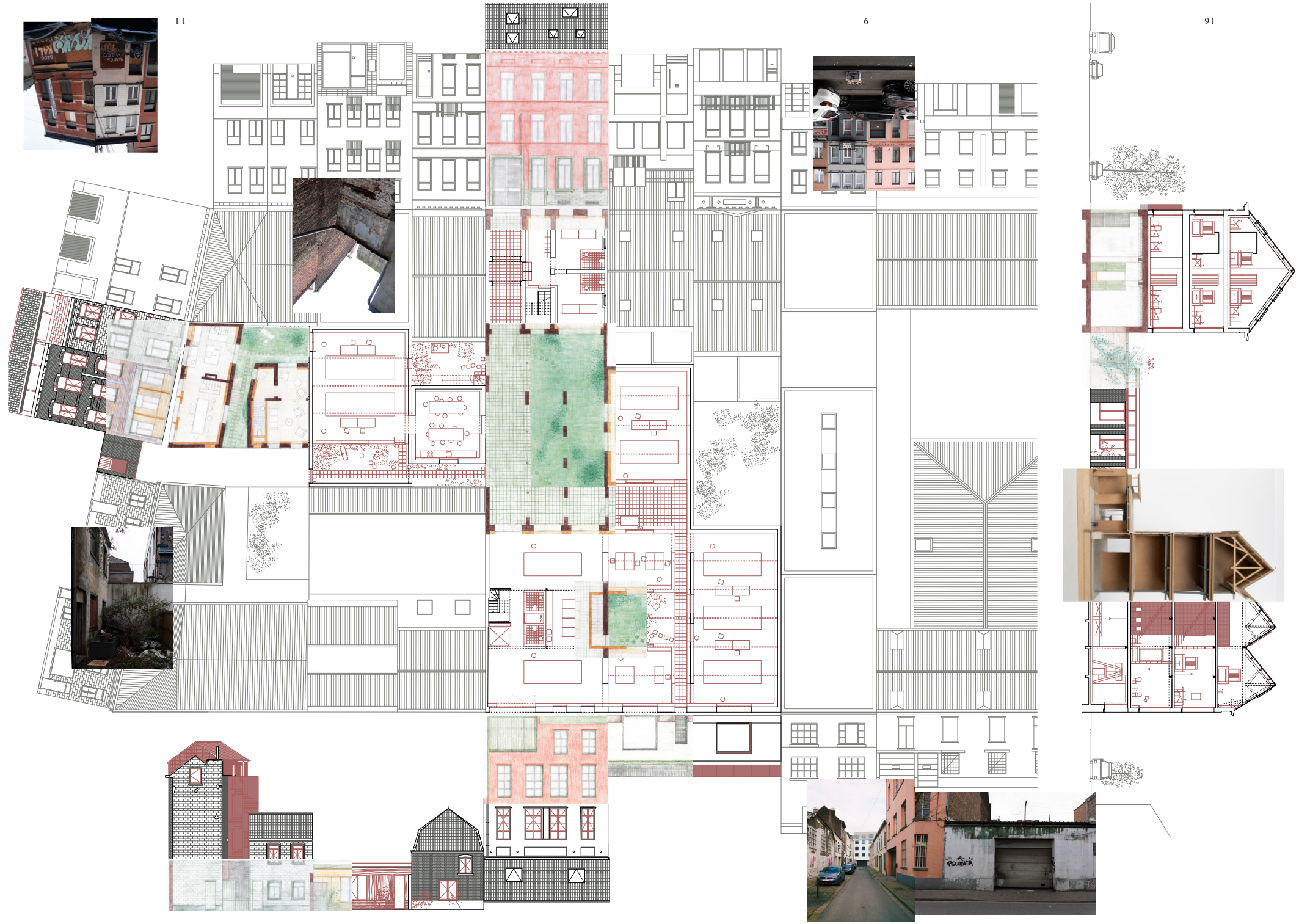



Propriété de Monsieur MARCEL VOISART,
situés, chaussée de MONS, 61 à ANDERLECHT.
Photo jointe à ma demande d'autorisation de transformer.


Rue Stoyte
Coupe Longitudinale



II assemblage



11 6 16

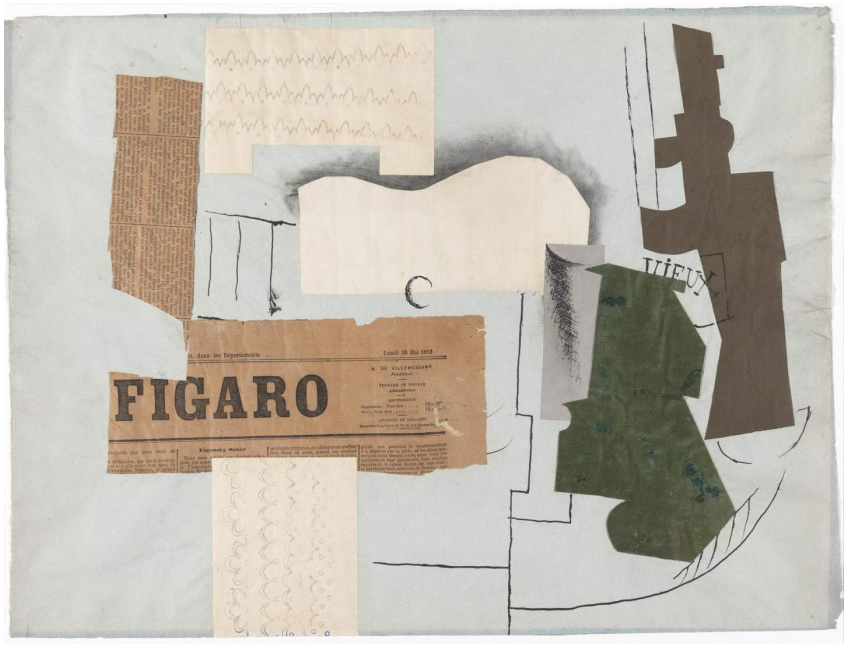
12 13 14 15

II

This drawing is an assemblage of different techniques and projections. The whole urban block is drawn as context to the ground floor plan of the project. The facades of the project are mirrored. The roofs of the surrounding buildings and facades are drawn as a floorplan and elevation. The section A-A' changes axis along the middle fold of the zine.

The next step in our group research was to assemble our collection of *objets trouvés* into a book. Organised by street, we catalogued everything we found. An index at the back provides an overview. The design task merely began with the discovery of these *objets trouvés* and unfolded through many attempts at their *assemblage*.

As Rowe and Koetter describe in their book Collage City, the *assemblage* makes use of the “left-overs of the world”. By combining this reality with interpretation, the *collage* brings together elements that do not naturally belong together, producing unexpected results (Row & Koetter, 1978/1995, pp. 142–143). Pablo Picasso, one of the “inventors” of the *collage*, was the first to transmit artistic value to compositions assembled through elements of no value. *Collages* and *assemblages* transmit their message through the juxtaposition of different materials (Seitz, 1961). The meaning does not come from the object itself, but from its placement and context, how it relates to the other elements, and from the harmonious discord that ensues.



Picasso (1913), *Bottle of Vieux Marc, Glass, Guitar and Newspaper*

The idea of *assemblage* has always been central to the design project, even in the choice of plot. As it is uncharacteristically small for the neighbourhood, the site is a *collage* of different buildings: two former industrial buildings, an office along the Bergensesteenweg (p.1) and a hall along the Broyèrestraat, three small workers’ houses along the Habermanstraat, some storage halls in the centre of the plot, a little tower and a large one-story storage hall along the Broyèrestraat. Through their *assemblage*, the buildings no longer function as separate islands. The limits between properties, buildings, rooms, and users become blurred, creating a different hierarchy between city, block and room.

I will address some of the steps I took to craft this *assemblage*.

Sewing a thread

The site is a triptyque, with three facades opening to different streets. Each offers a mere hint of the bigger, hidden world that unfolds behind it. The facades keep their individual character, and ad hoc solutions to close certain openings are found that match each façade’s expression. Sometimes it is blue stone cladding (p.2), sometimes it is

slender wooden panelling (p.3). Their unity is merely hinted at by the new gates and signage elements, made out of a metal grill, but articulated differently according to the level of privacy required. Modest interventions, sometimes as small as replacing a thick door with a transparent gate (p.10), can have a social significance for the surrounding city: creating the possibility of invitation.

Carving

By untangling some of the knotted threads, breathing room is created within the tight-knit fabric. Removing certain built parts: a hall in between the two industrial buildings and the edge of a storage hall uncovered a connection between the workers' impasse facing one street and the covered passage facing another (p.10-11). This gesture was inspired by the *traboules* in Lyon that we visited with our studio. They are semi-private passageways that intersect the building blocks for quick access to fresh water from the river. Later, they also became an architectural tool used to bring light into the deep plots, where housing is stacked one behind the other. Carving out space unveiled a central garden (p.10). To define this newfound outdoor space, a delicate roof is added. This covered passage defines the new main wayfinding thread, connecting the big industrial halls and linking them to the outdoor impasse. The indoor street reframes the chaos that once was.



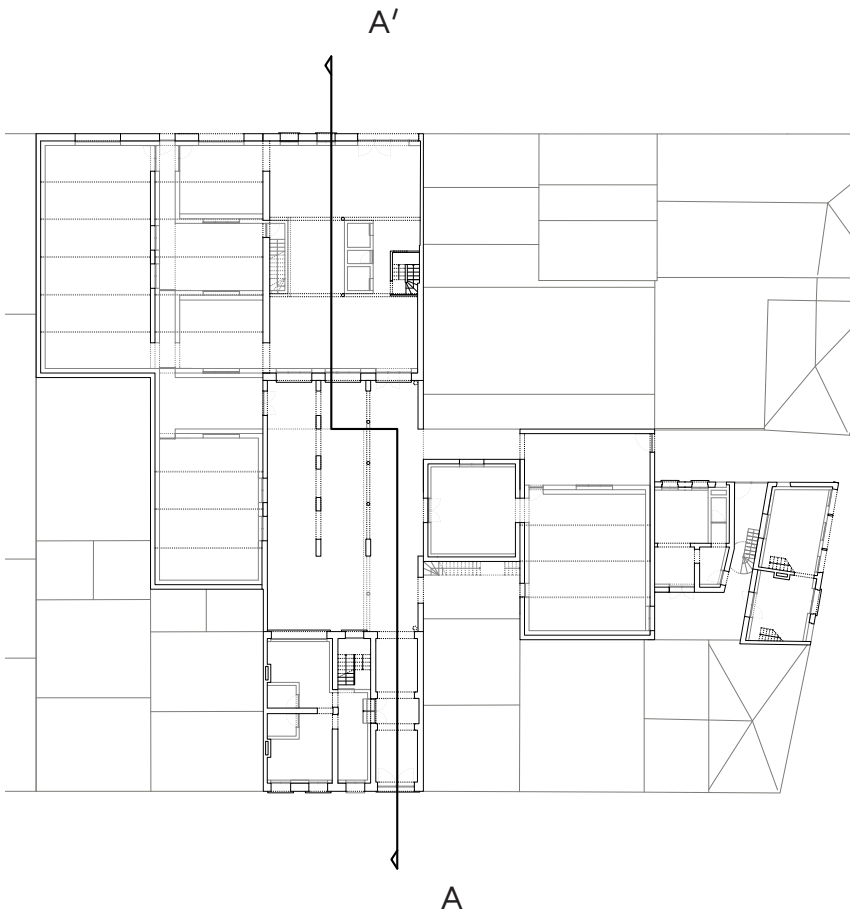
Diagram by Lebonnet (2025), *Traboules Lyon*

Glueing

Stairs bring fragmented pieces together. The three small workers' houses are repositioned as the impasse is now an accessible backstreet (p.11). The third formerly hidden façade now becomes visible. A new communal entrance is added facing the impasse to reinforce their unity (p.12). The three modest houses together form a generous co-housing ensemble through the addition of a staircase, connecting the communal rooms on the ground floor to the bedrooms on the upper floors. What was formerly a back room, the garden, is now a central communal space.
A staircase, as a mirror of the existing one, is added to the industrial hall (p.13). It links the upper floors, an artist-in-residence co-housing, to the street as well as the rooftop terrace, making it independent from the weaving halls. The staircase becomes the central collective space as the kitchen and the living room are stacked on top of each other, around it. It is made from a metal grill and serves as a light well, with a skylight on the upper floor bringing light to the lower floors (p.15).

Redrawing

An insulation line redraws the boundaries of the buildings. To adapt these simple structures made of brick walls, insulating hemp walls are added. These new walls define the new borders of indoors-outdoors-, heated-unheated space. A patio is formed to access the new staircase. A semi-indoor space ensues, as an extension of the covered street. It serves to separate the two halls and provide natural light (p.13). The industrial building and the one-storey hall next to it become one through the hemp insulation layer extending outward, reaching out to loop it together as one (p.13). The hemp walls sometimes cover the brick but also skirt around, leaving the materiality of the existing brick wall apparent. The walls and their texture or level of finish reflect the climate of the space and the activities that take place.



9 Weber, K. (2026).*Bergensesteenweg*.
CAD drawing facades Bergensesteenweg.

10 Hand drawing mirrored façade Bergensesteenweg 6.
CAD drawing ground floor plan scale 1.100, facades Bergensesteenweg and roofs of neighbouring buildings.

11 CAD drawing corner Bergensesteenweg and Habermanstraat.
Weber, K. (2026).*Worker's housing*.
Weber, K. (2026).*Habermanstraat*.

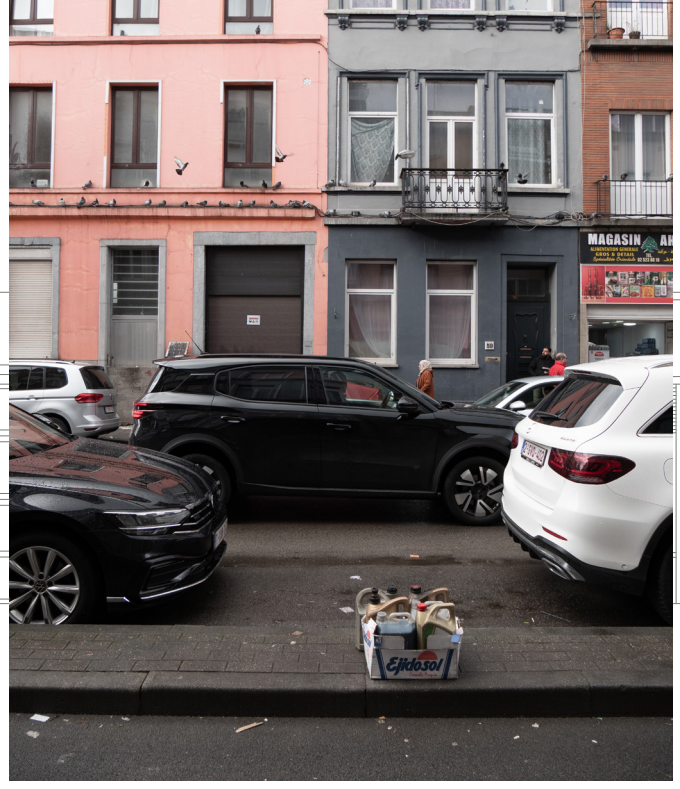
12 Hand drawing facades along the impasse Migerode scale 1.100.
CAD drawing corner Habermanstraat and Broyèrestraat.
Weber, K. (2026).*Impasse Migerode*.

13 CAD drawing ground floor plan scale 1.100, hand drawing mirrored facades Broyèrestraat, roofs of neighbouring buildings.

14 Wasserbäch, M. (2025).*Broyèrestraat*.
CAD drawing facades Broyèrestraat.

15 CAD drawing section A-A' 1.100.
Fragment model scale 1.33 .

16 CAD drawing section A-A' 1.100.


MAGASIN
Elfdosol



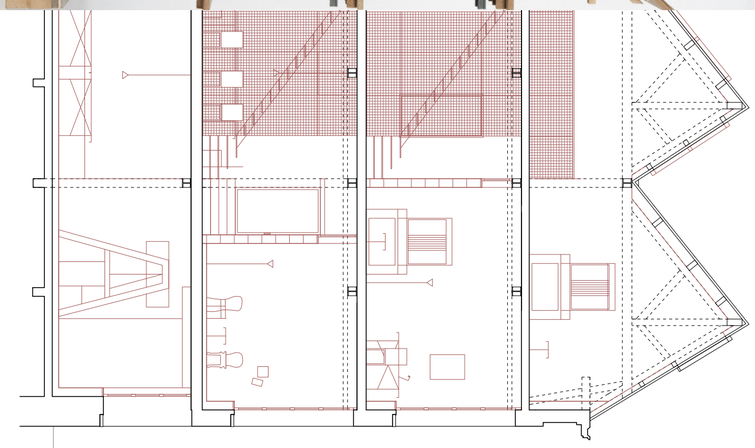

BONJOR6..
HIZED
GECO.
KALi

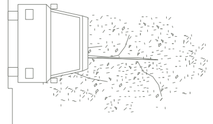


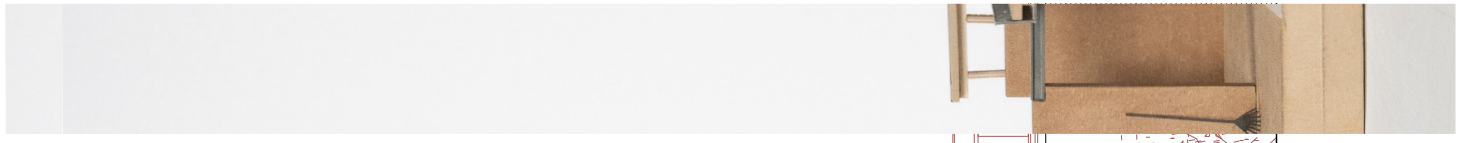


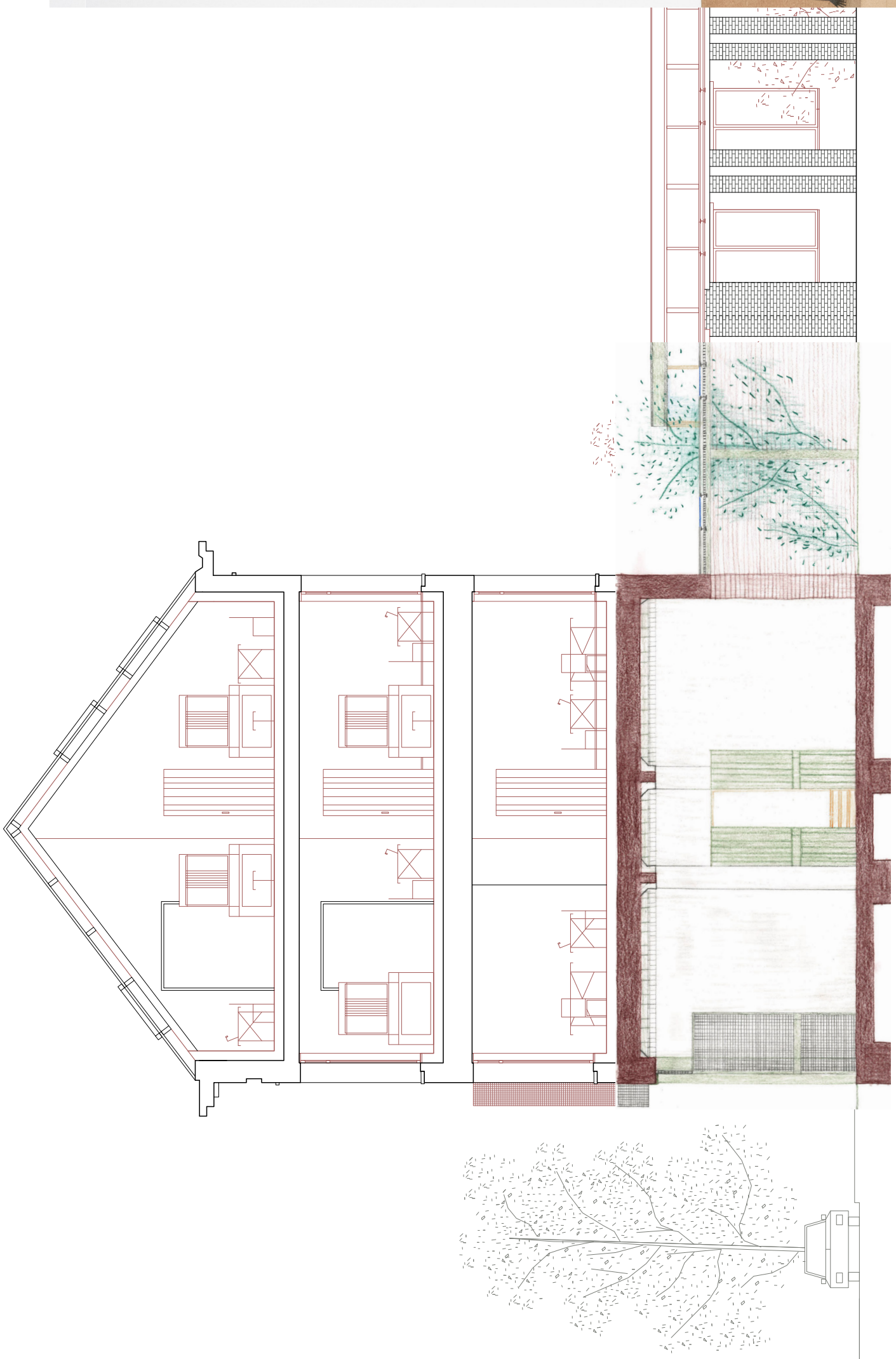


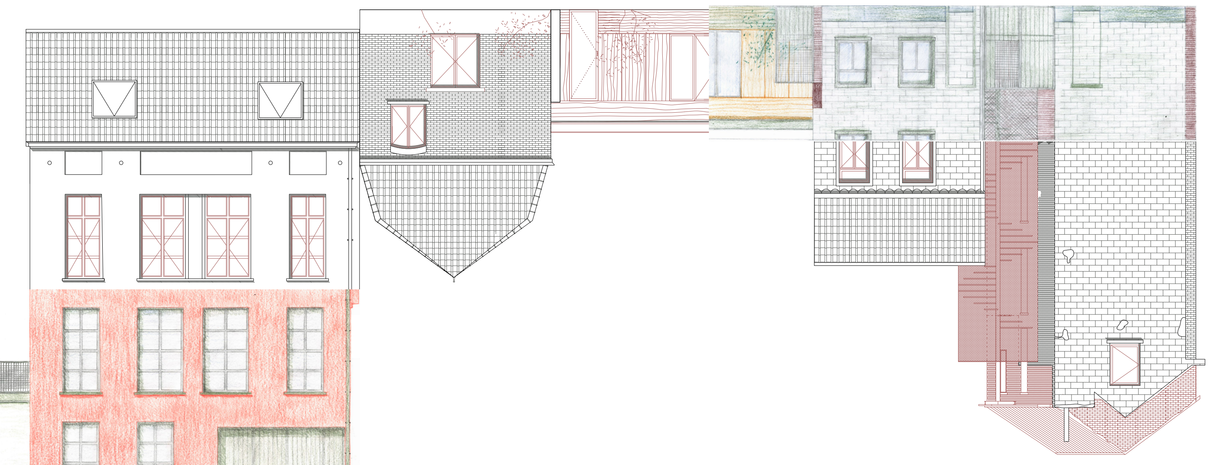






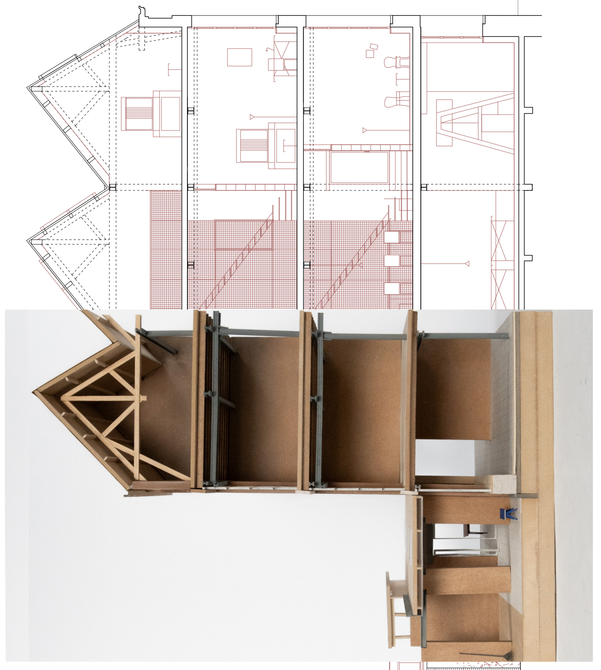


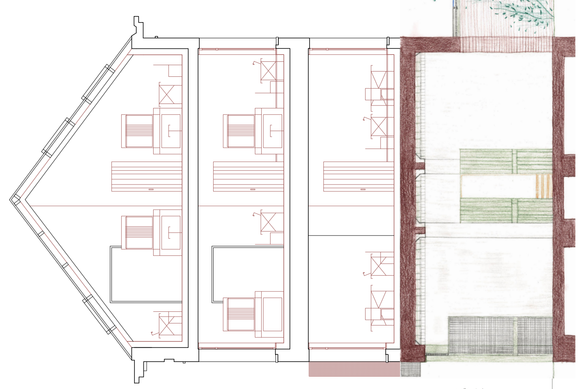


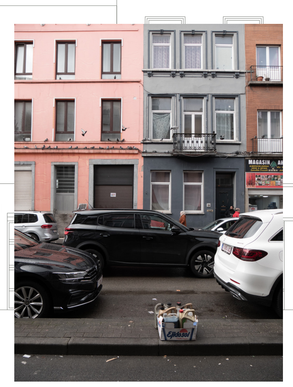
















III

paper/fabric



III

This drawing is a sequence of different sections.

As the final step of our research, we made paper out of the *objets trouvés*. It serves as a metaphor for our view of the site. The process of paper making is similar to sedimentation: paper is created by sieving through a watery mixture to collect a thin layer of wet pulp. The result is a material that has a colour, grain, texture, feel and atmosphere. Tactility plays an important part in the project









Debonnet (2025), *Papermaking*

Hemp is used for its technical properties, as an insulating material that is porous and can stand on its own. The constructive simplicity of the hemp and timber walls draws a parallel to the simple industrial buildings on the site (p.17, 18, 19, 20). Similarly, the bags filled with rubble, stacked and bound together, originate from a technical necessity (p.22). Hemp, due to the capillary rise of moisture, can't stand on the floor. This matter-of-fact approach is inspired by the ''as found'' material aesthetic of Alison and Peter Smithson. They are proponents of using materials as they are. It allows architecture to remain more closely linked to its material reality. Hemp and piled bags have a *hairy* quality, as described by Pauline Lefebvre in OASE's issue *Ecology and Aesthetics*. This unconventional look is evocative of a stance against the current construction systems of most buildings: air-tight and impossible to untangle. Alison and Peter Smithson similarly use the idea of ugliness to counteract the rhetoric of classical architecture and beauty (Moravánszky, 2018).



Garden Building, St. Hilda's College. Alison and Peter Smithson, 1972.

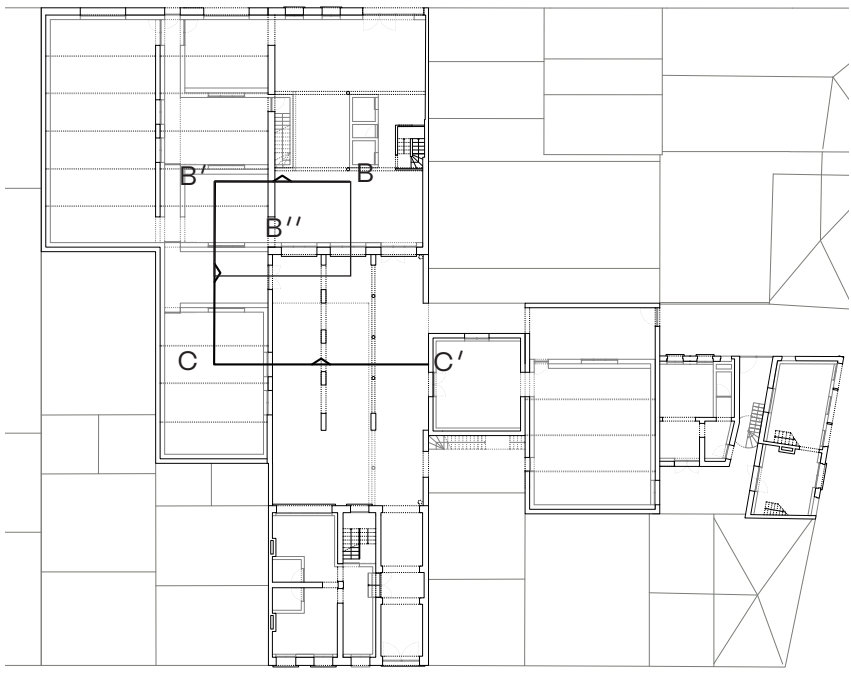
The weight of the hemp and the piled bags contrasts with the delicate structure of the outdoor roof (p.20,21). The metal grill here is used to filter the light. Similar to the metal grill staircase, letting light through from the upper floor skylight. This material seeps all the way through back to the gates and signage elements facing the street. The grid pattern is a subtle hint to the warp and weft of the textile that is being produced behind.

Textile is used to wrap the inner sides of the hemp walls, as they tend to crumble (p.17). It is a nod to Semper. As explained by Ákos Moravánszky in Stoffwechsel: Materialverwandlung in der Architektur, Semper sees the history of architecture not as a series of inventions but a continuous thread of transformations, where the memory of an original material remains imprinted in a new substance. A famous example is the influence of textiles on patterns in architecture. Semper theorised that as the textile wall was the original spatial boundary, memory of this craft survived in brick patterns, mosaic floors, or painted decorations. Textile here re-enters architecture but with a humorous interpretation, as it has a pattern of a generic 15 by 15 tile woven into it.



Handwoven textile samples, to clad the hemp walls and bind the bags filled with ruble

The pattern of warp and weft is scattered throughout the project: from the cross shape of the ensemble, the intersecting outdoor path, the grill that seeps from the roof of the canopy to the gates of the entrances and finally the visible warp of the textile-clad walls.



17 Material list

18, 19 CAD drawing axonometric section B-B’ scale 1.33.

20 CAD drawing axonometric (horizontal) section B’’ scale 1.33.

20, 21 CAD drawing axonometric section B’-C scale 1.33.

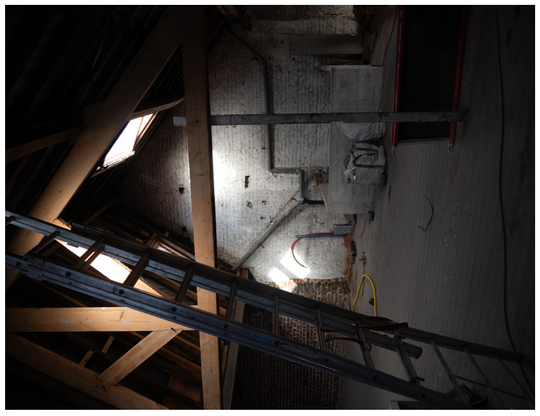
22 Hand drawing detail scale 1.5.

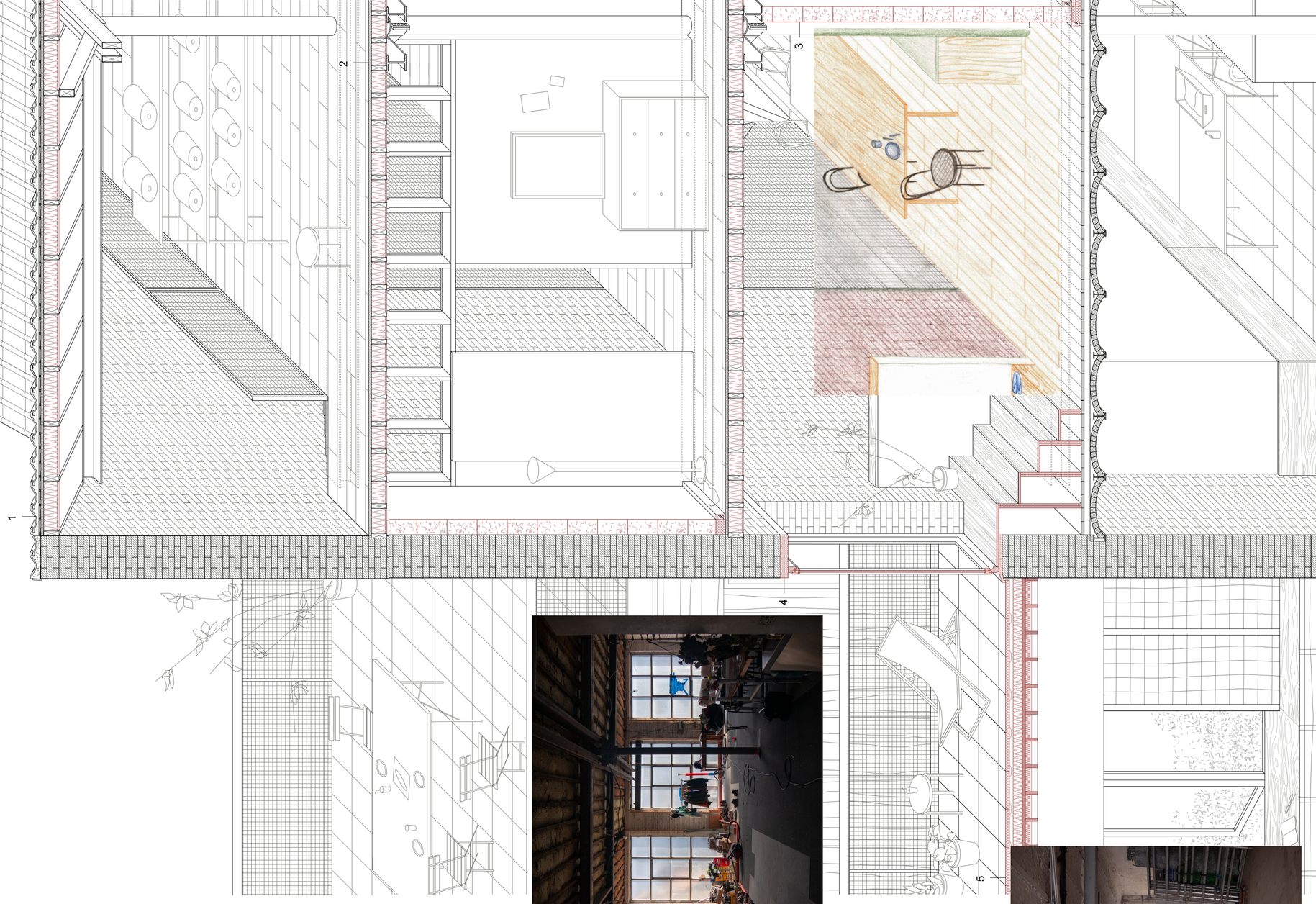
23 CAD drawing axonometric section C-C’ scale 1.33.

24 Hand drawing (horizontal) detail scale 1.5.





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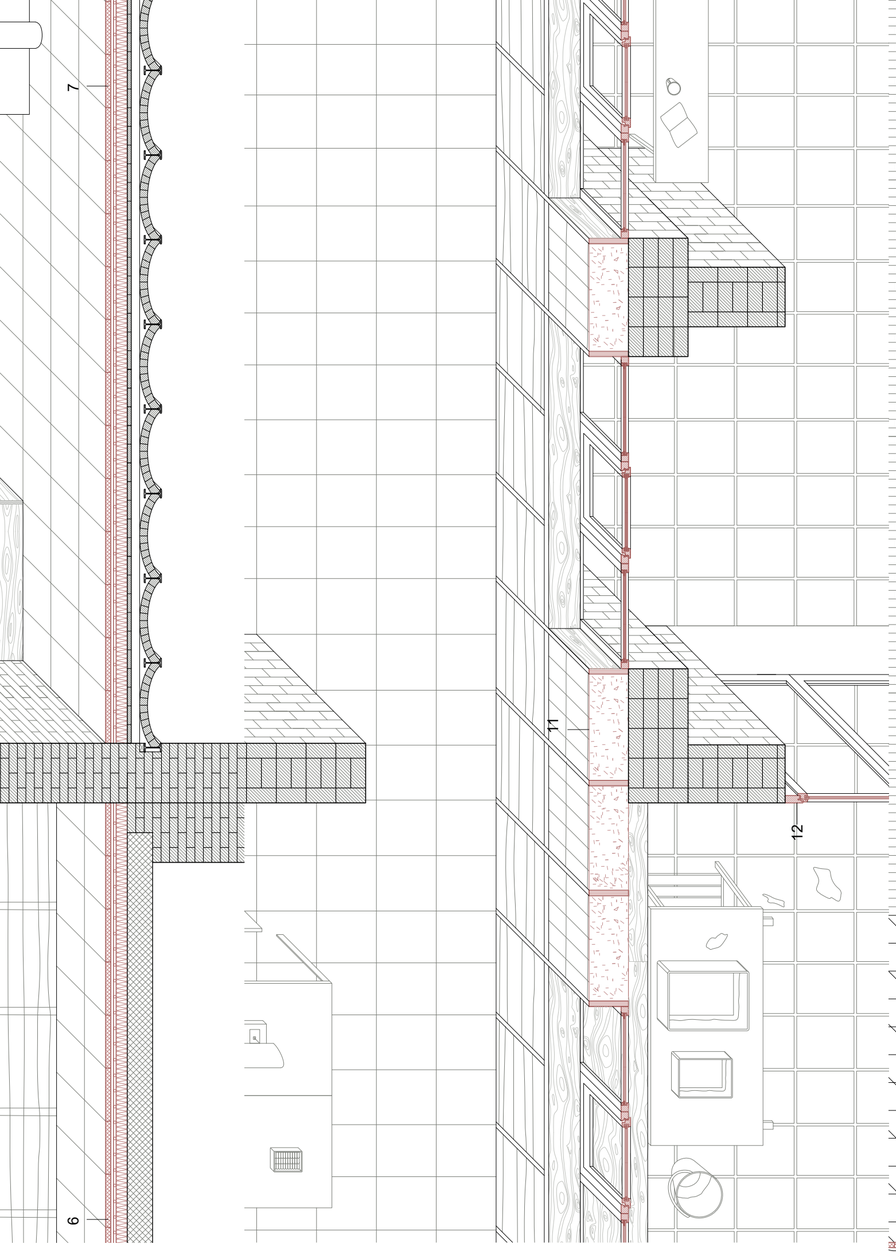
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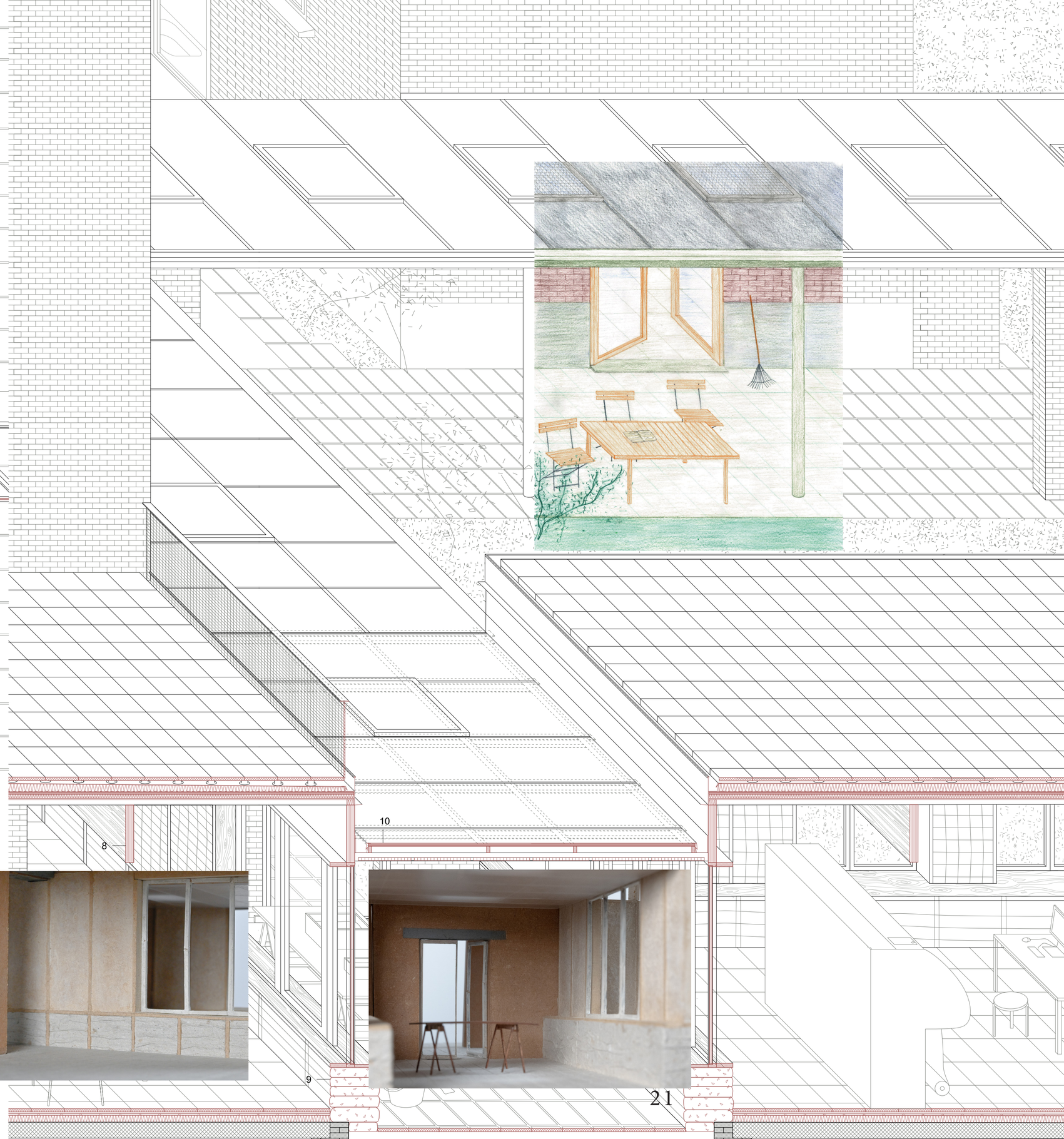
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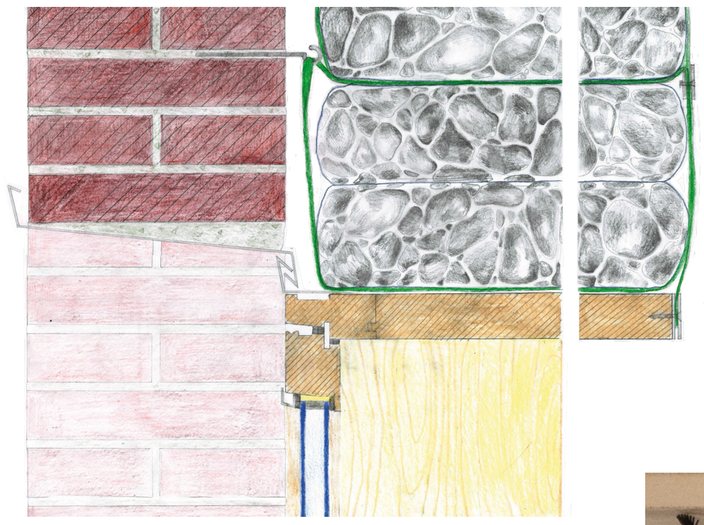



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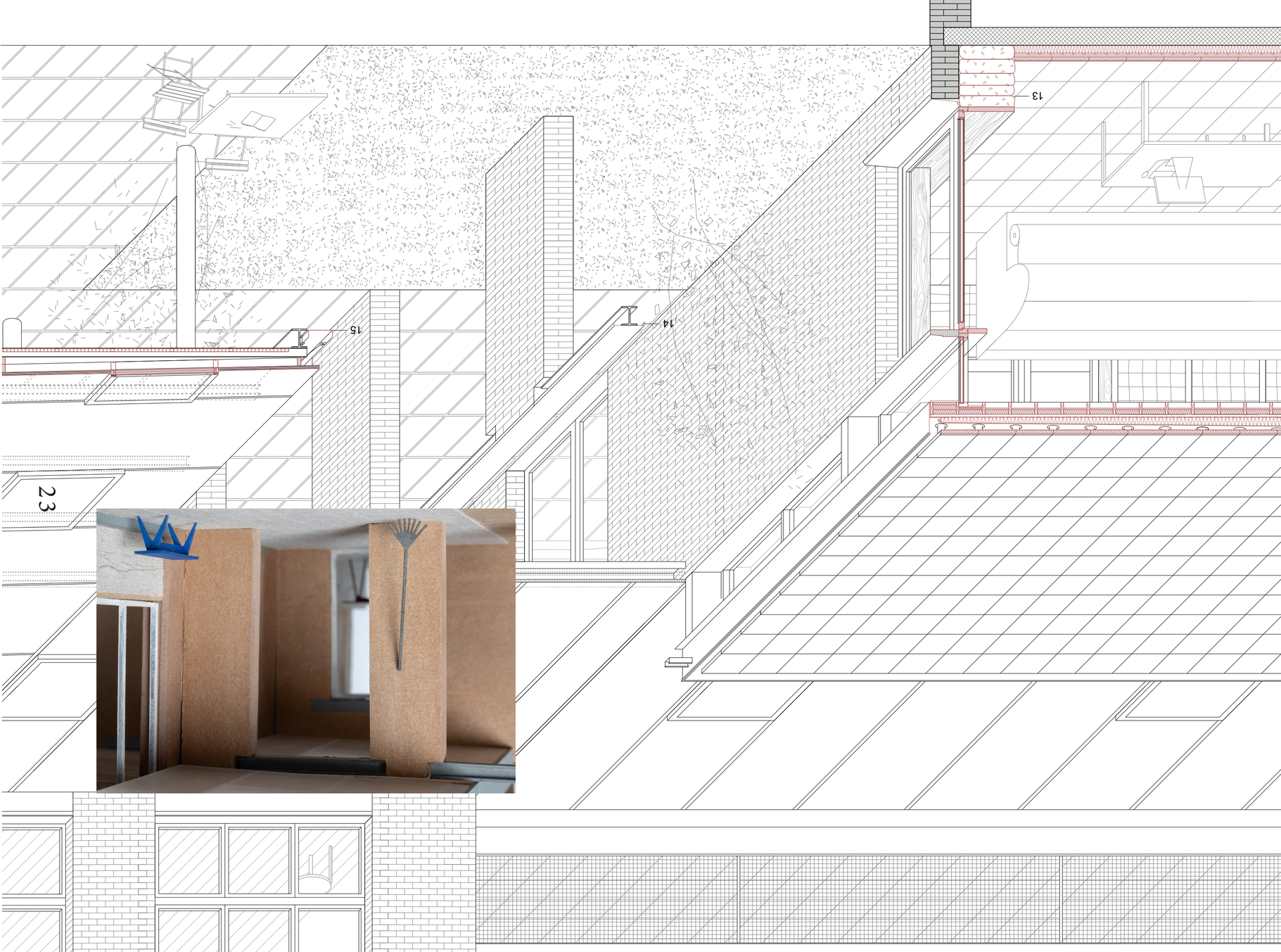

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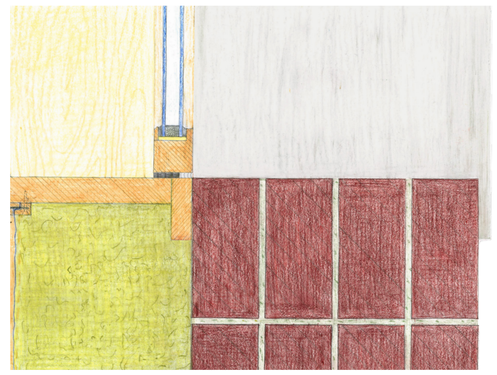









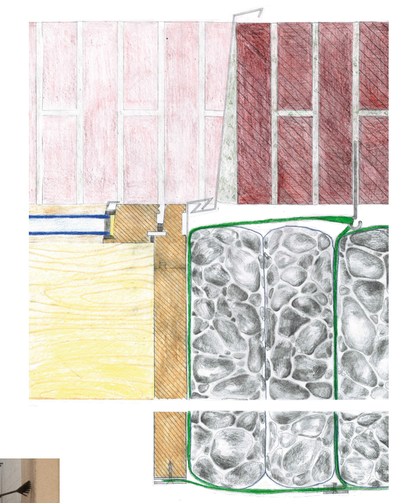

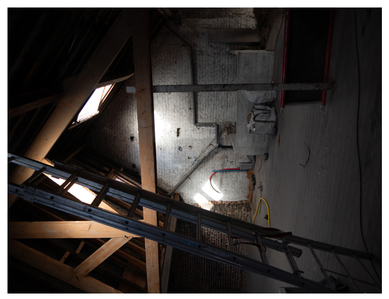







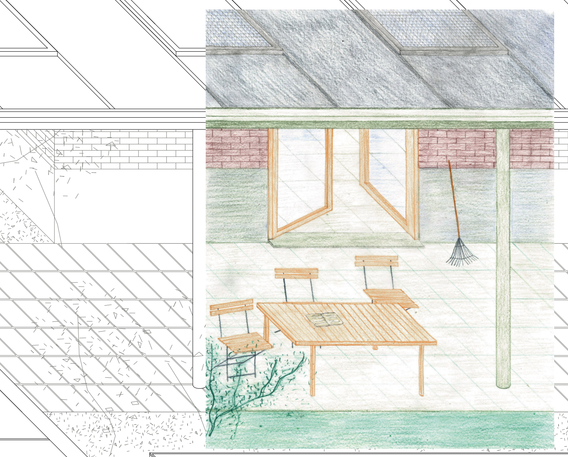



section scale 1.33

1
roof construction:
roof tiles
wood rafters
wooden sheathing - 30 mm
wooden beams- h= 160 mm
breathable underfelt
inlaid wood fibre insulation - 140 mm
vapour barrier
mineral bonded wood wool board- 18 mm

2
floor construction:
wooden flooring - 30 mm
wooden beams- h= 160 mm
inlaid wood fibre insulation - 140 mm
mineral bonded wood wool board- 18 mm

3
new interior walls:
ISO hemp bricks 300 x 140 mm- 200mm
mortar bed -20 mm
sealing tape
clay based plaster finish
skirting/ services channel

4
window/ door:
85 x 450 mm blue stone lintel
insulation glazing in Douglas fir frame
blue stone sill

5
accessible roof:
300 x 300 mm cement tiles - 40 mm
tile supports - 32-45 mm
roofing - 5 mm
insulation - 100 mm
vapour barrier
LIGNATUR surface element (LFE), - 160 mm with 50 mm of insulation
mineral bonded wood wool board - 18 mm

6
insulated ground floor:
polished and grouted cement tile - 40 mm
wood fiber sound insulation - 20 mm
floor heating element - 18 mm
insulation - 90 mm
poured concrete floor - 200 mm

7
insulated ground floor:
polished and grouted cement tile - 40 mm
wood fiber sound insulation - 20 mm
floor heating element - 18 mm
insulation - 90 mm
wooden flooring - 30 mm
wooden beams- h= 65 mm
vaulted brick floor with steel I-beams - 160 mm

8
150 x 700 mm CLT beam

9
window:
insulation glazing in Douglas fir frame
50 x 200 mm Douglas fir reveal
30 x 300 mm Douglas fir reveal
textile bags filled with site rubble stacked and bound together - 600 mm

10
canopy:
skylight 900x 900 mm
zinc roof covering, seam every 900 mm
plywood sheathing - 40 mm
wooden beams 40 x 70 mm
I-beams 130 x 100 mm
600x900 metal grating - 30 mm

11
insulation existing wall:
woven fabric finish
hemplime insulation - 300 mm
wooden frame work 300 x 40 mm every 800mm
insulation glazing in Douglas fir frame

12
door:
insulation glazing in Douglas fir frame

13
window:
insulation glazing in Douglas fir frame
50 x 200 mm Douglas fir reveal
30 x 300 mm Douglas fir reveal
textile bags filled with site rubble stacked and bound together - 600 mm

14
existing outdoor structure:
brick wall
I-beam
zinc roof covering

15
canopy:
skylight 900x 900 mm
zinc roof covering, seam every 900 mm
plywood sheathing - 40 mm
I-beams 130 x 100 mm
600x900 metal grating - 30 mm

details scale 1.5

p.17
horizontal:
insulation glazing in Douglas fir frame
40 x 300 mm wooden stud
in situ poured hempcrete - 300 mm
textile stretched around wooden frame (20 x 20 mm) screwed to wooden profile
(20 x 25 mm) before hempcrete is poured

p.22
vertical:
insulation glazing in Douglas fir frame
30 x 300 mm Douglas fir reveal
textile bags filled with site rubble - 600 mm
stacked and bound together with textile straps screwed to the reveal using a metal plate and
attached to the brick wall with an anchor

detail legend

As I did on 10 December 2025, roaming the streets of Anderlecht for clues to understand the site, on 30 May 2026, I combed through the drawings and models I made to reflect on my process.

The collected trash from Anderlecht, a catalogue of the trash and a series of 20 types of recycled paper.
Looking back, I realise that the research project and the topic we chose: Pit hole, fly tipping: waste, danger, slaughterhouse was pivotal in establishing my approach towards the design task. The unusual approach of looking at trash in the streets to understand the site, cemented the idea that working with the constraints of a complex, existing site demands looking at things carefully. By making paper out of this trash, we did not offer an easily digestible read of the site. We merely made something else to work upon. And maybe unconsciously already declared our position: architecture should try to leave room for reworking, it is a step, not a final result. Although I was doubtful during and even after we had completed the research, whether it had helped us gain any kind of understanding, I now think it established my position towards the site early on in the process.

A model 1.333 and a hand-drawing of the urban building block.
The collective site model 1.333 set the level of detail at which the city was studied. It is a weird in-between scale where small-scale details such as doors, windows and colour stand in relation to the broader city fabric. How it was made, with scraps and leftovers, perfectly represents the diversity and amalgam that is Anderlecht. The discovery of this scale and style inspired the first drawing I made of the site (p.7,8). The technique I used, collaging different architectural drawings together, became key to understanding the complexity of the site. This drawing style, for better or for worse, followed me throughout the whole project. It also shaped my interest in the relationship between city, block and room.

A hand drawing of the pink façade on Bergensesteenweg.
Although the many iterations of the plans of the urban block (p.9-14) testify to the importance I gave to the assemblage of the different buildings together, and the relationship between city, block and house, the first part, city, was maybe given less attention. The three facades remain almost unchanged. On the busy street Bergensesteenweg, only a solid door has been replaced with a transparent gate (p.10). This strategy is similar to that of the linear park that is planned to be built in Anderlecht: opening up the interior of the block to the street to offer public space. Even though the idea is that it will invite people in, the effect this change will have on the neighbourhood is hard to predict. If this project were realised, I wonder if this openable and see-through gate is enough to suggest an invitation to enter.

An AO poster / 8-page zine of the building block.
The block, visible in the AO poster, functions as a whole, but it is also a series of A3 pages, separate buildings
and rooms. I thought of this composition early on in the project, and it meant that I mainly made drawings of the ground floor plan. This heavily steered the focus of my project. From the start, my main interest was to solve the wayfinding puzzle on the ground floor, to somehow offer a clear hierarchy between the different rooms of the plot. I find this the most successful intervention. Other small interventions, such as the staircases for the communal housing, I solved quite late in the process, and didn't have as much time to detail.

Hand-drawn ½ detail drawings.
I chose to draw the details by hand to communicate the tactility of the materials and to acknowledge that they are not full-fledged technical details. My main interest was the atmosphere

they convey. It is an experiment in making elegant architecture with hairy bio-based resources. These details represent a position I have observed in my other projects. I tend to skirt the requirements in favour of an unconventional, maybe provocative outcome. Although I wouldn't say my project is very bold, it is even rather quiet and discreet. I would say my approach was provocative in spite, maybe, of its realism.

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Weaving matter
Elise Debonnet

contributors
Mikel van Gelderen
Leeke Reinders
Paul Vermeulen

Anna Krikke
Koen Weber

Graduation project TU Delft 2025-2026

Urban architecture - River Ghost Park, back as front