

Catalogue

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**Civic Centre Lleialtat
Santsenca 1214**

a restoration by
H ARQUITECTES

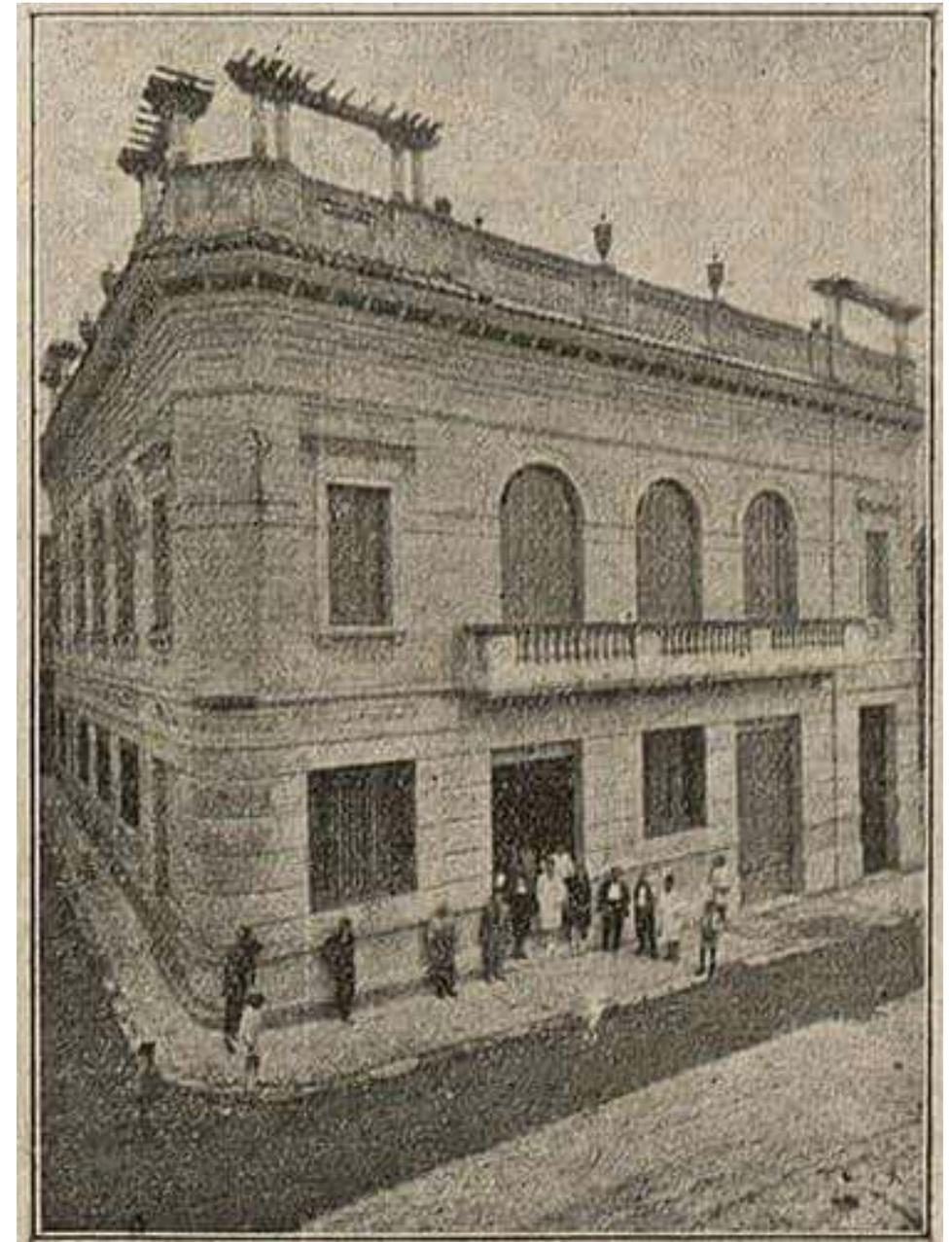
Original Architect	<i>Josep Alemany i Juvé</i>
Restoration Architect	<i>H Arquitectes</i>
Location	<i>Barcelona, Spain</i>
Constructed	<i>1928</i>
Restored	<i>2014 - 2017</i>
Area	<i>1750 m²</i>
Function	<i>Civic centre</i>

The Lleialtat Santsenca Civic Centre in Barcelona is a community-managed municipal facility that promotes culture, cooperation and civic engagement. Originally built in 1928 by the architect Josep Alemany i Juvé as the headquarters of a workers' cooperative, the building later became a nougat factory and a dance hall before falling into disuse. In 2009, it was reclaimed by local neighbourhood groups, prompting a restoration led by H Arquitectes. Their approach was based on three principles: valuing the building's historical significance, understanding its existing condition in detail in order to preserve as much as possible, and involving community organisations in a collaborative process. The project aimed to restore the building both physically and symbolically, retaining and reusing original elements wherever possible and intervening only where necessary. It engages in a thoughtful dialogue with its urban context and incorporates sustainable strategies, including passive climate control. Today, the centre, run by the Coordinadora d'Entitats per la Lleialtat Santsenca, hosts events, workshops and social initiatives, serving as a vibrant and inclusive space that reflects the values of its past while supporting the needs of the community today.

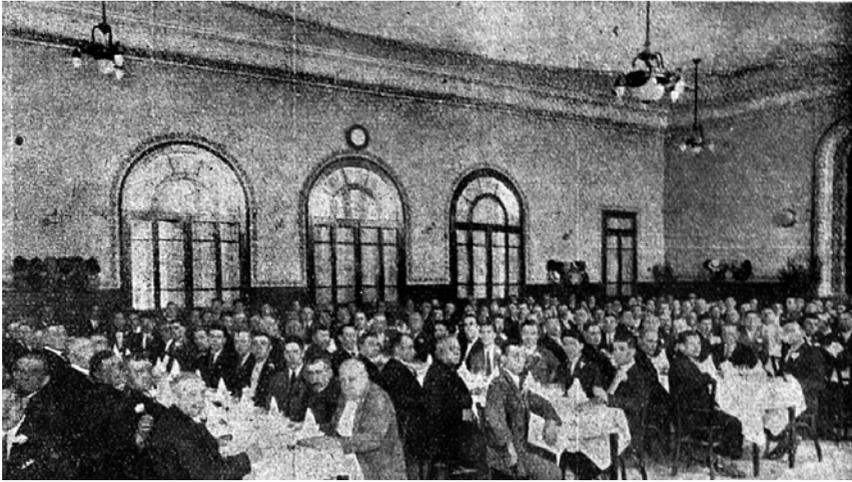


The building entrance during a period of closure during th 1990s.

Historical Timeline



Exterior of the community centre (archival photo, author unknown)



A photograph taken during the inauguration party of the building in 1928.



The Vilar nougat factory in the early 1950s. Photograph by Josep Bernal, former Viar worker



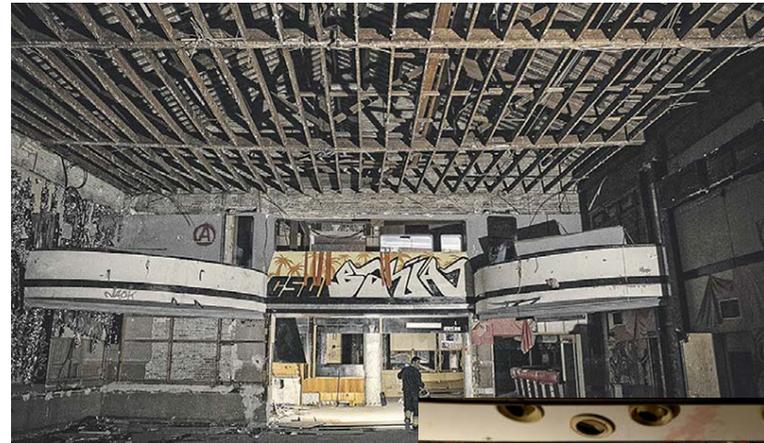
The remnants of the Bahía dance hall on the first floor, above the nougat factory in 1965. Photograph by Jaume Peris i Xancó



Event hosted at the Bahia dance club, in the building. (author unknown)



The old Bahia nightclub © LaCol



The Bahia dance club after its closure
(author unknown)





Photograph of the building during its period of abandonment, after 1988. (archival photo, author unknown)



State of building, prior to the restoration by Harquitectes. (author unknown)



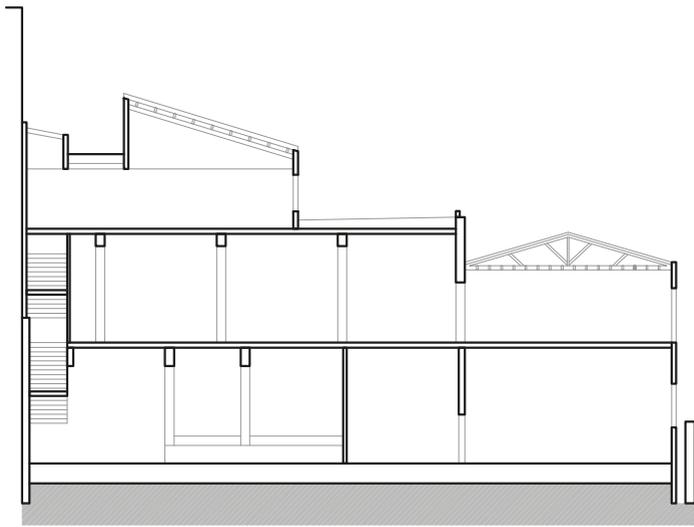
State of building, prior to the restoration by Harquitectes. (author unknown)

INTERIORITY

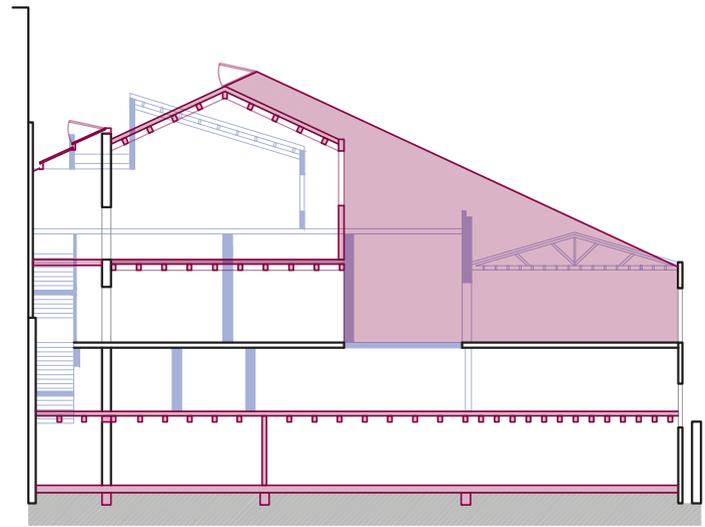
How did the architects approach spatial reconfiguration, transforming former outdoor spaces into functional interior spaces, blurring the boundary between indoors and outdoors?

An architectural exploration into circulation strategies, material thresholds, the creation of intermediate spaces, and re-programming voids such as atriums.

by
Julia Wintersteller

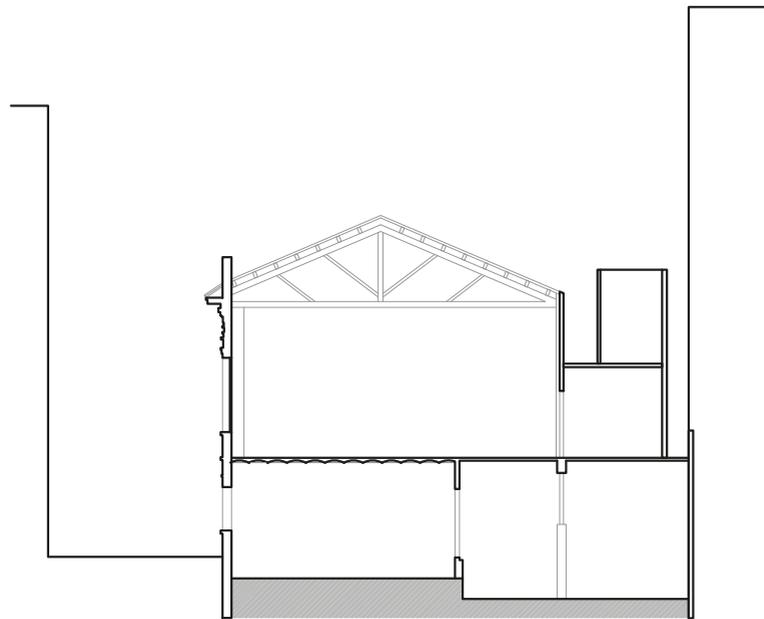


Before

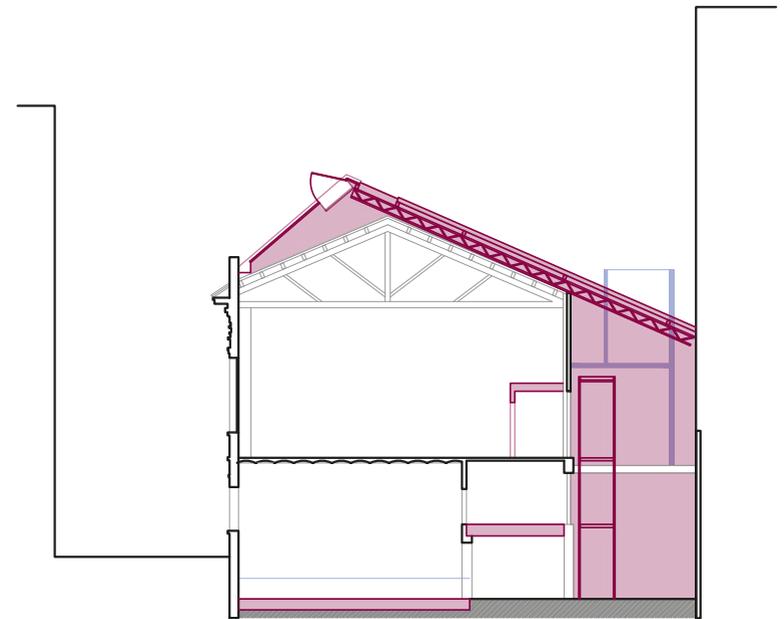


After

Section A - A



Before



After

Section B - B

0m 5m

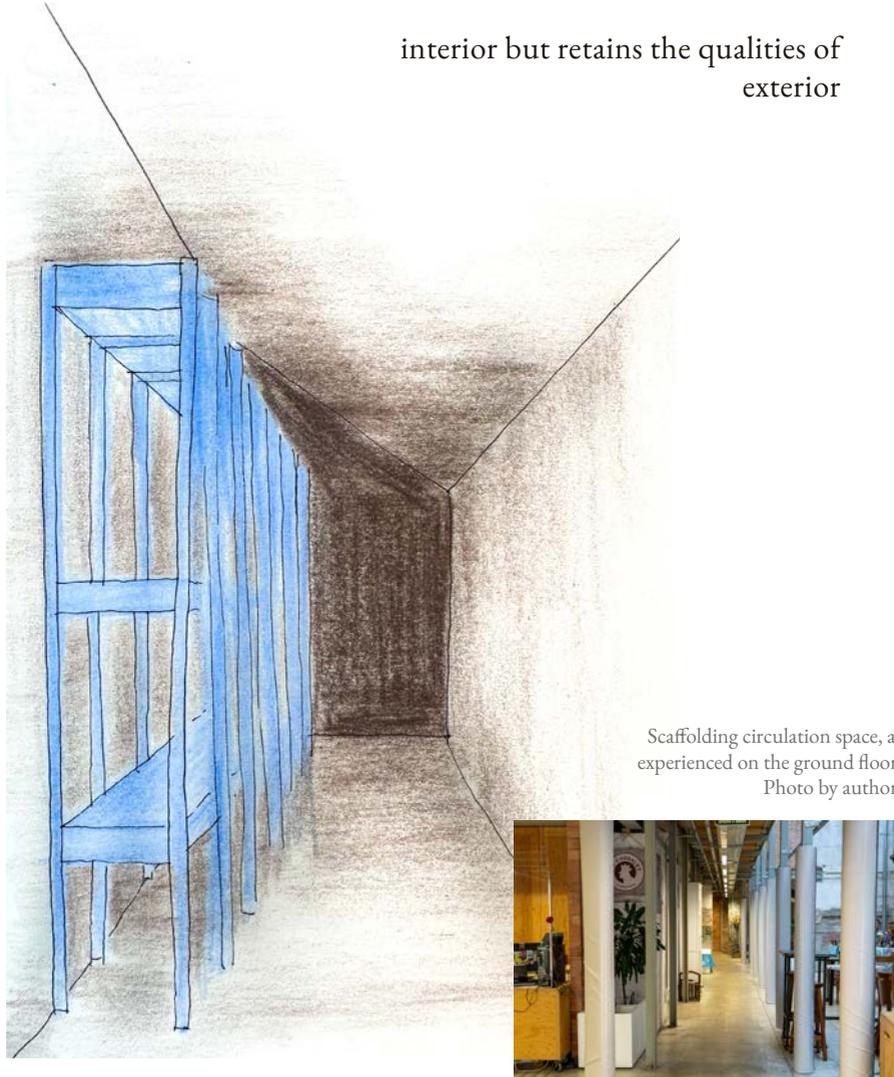
- Existing
- Demolished
- New

The Interior Street

Circulation as Urban Space

At the heart of the intervention is a tall, linear void, which acts as an internal street created by selective demolition. This space, surrounded by other volumes, acts as an open, urban thoroughfare, evoking the character of narrow city streets. The circulation along this street consists of a central **light steel** walkway and staircases that connect spaces and buildings that were previously disconnected. These elements blur the codes of interiority, offering movement and experience more typical of outdoor environments within an enclosed volume.

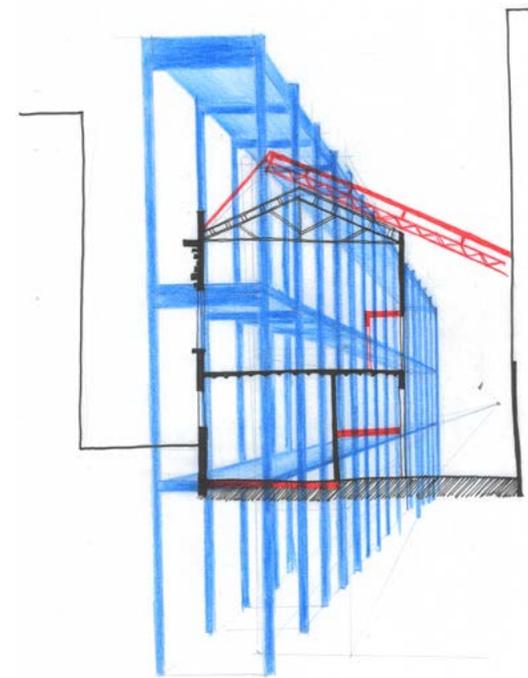
interior but retains the qualities of exterior



Scaffolding circulation space, as experienced on the ground floor.
Photo by author.



View of interior street, dominated by the scaffolding-like circulation pathway.
Sketch by author



Scaffolding-like circulation pathway. Sketch by author



Scaffolding-like circulation pathway. Photograph by author

The architects demolished parts of the building volume to create a void that becomes an interior street but retains the qualities of an exterior urban space. It introduces light, air and a spatial rhythm reminiscent of urban lanes, while enclosing the space and making it climatically and socially interior.

The pathways remind us of scaffolding or external fire-escapes...

... combining outdoor movement with indoor logic.

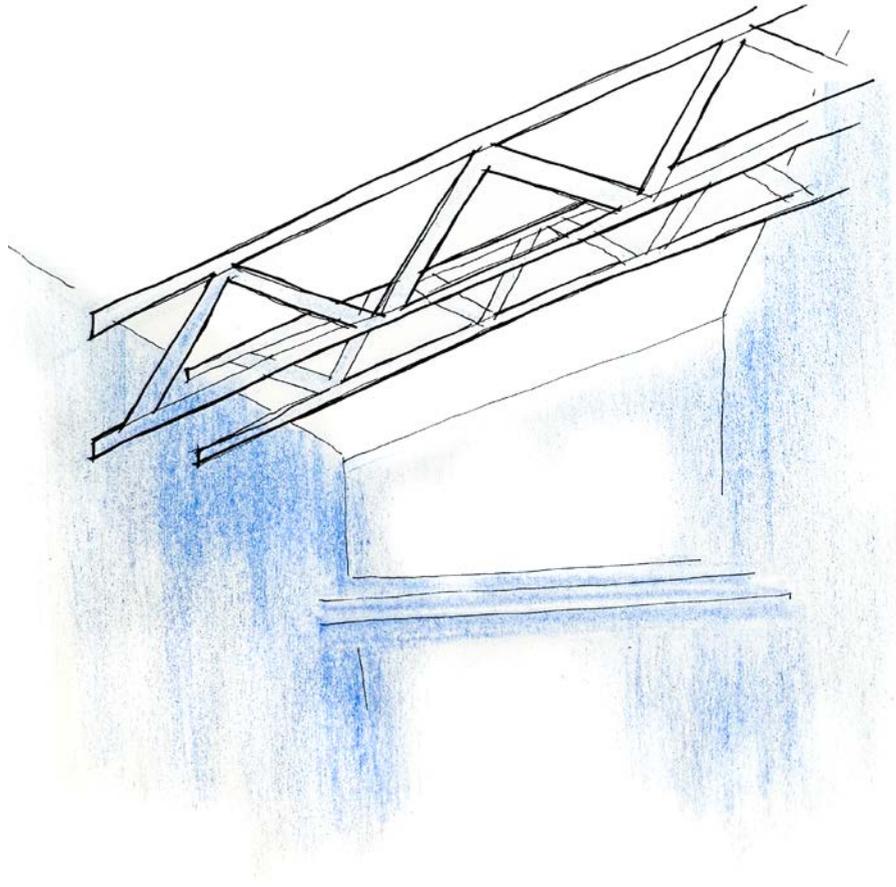


Scaffolding-like circulation pathway. Photograph by author

Atmospheric Thresholds

Material as a Mediator

Harquitectes introduces a new range of lightweight and translucent materials, in particular polycarbonate panels, to create facades that are neither fully enclosed nor exposed. These translucent surfaces mediate light, temperature and visual connection, creating interior spaces that feel permeable and breathable. The semi-opaque quality of the material allows the building to absorb and filter the outside world, creating conditions that are both environmentally responsive and experiential.



View onto roof of atrium, covered by a polycarbonate roof structure. Sketch by author

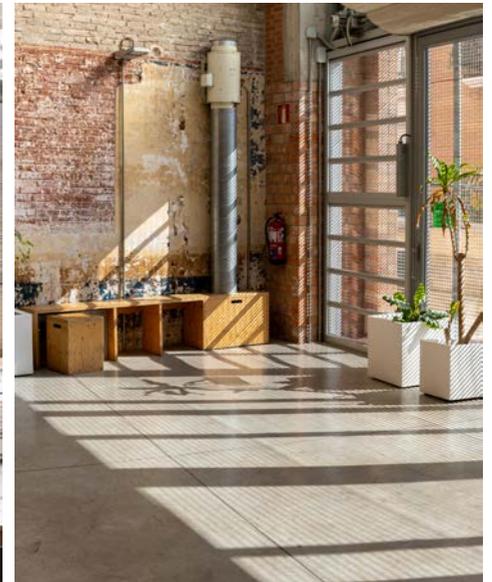
The lightweight, almost transparent roof of the atrium highlights the existing historic walls instead of distracting from them. It is purely functional.



Lightweight roof structure. Photograph by author

The lightweight roof structure maintains the lightness and temporal character of exterior shelters, helping the previously outdoor spaces, read as interior spaces, whilst providing protection and comfort.

Photographs by author

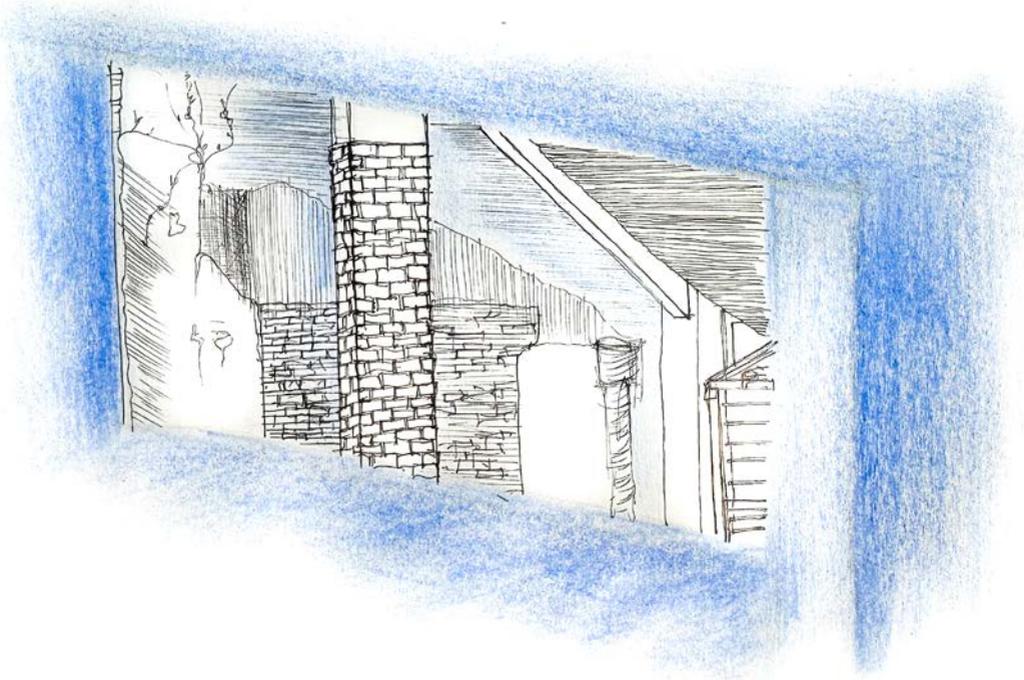


The new materials introduced are often lightweight, such as light steel, polycarbonate, and translucent facades. The polycarbonate adds diffused natural light to the space, and reads neither as fully solid or fully open...

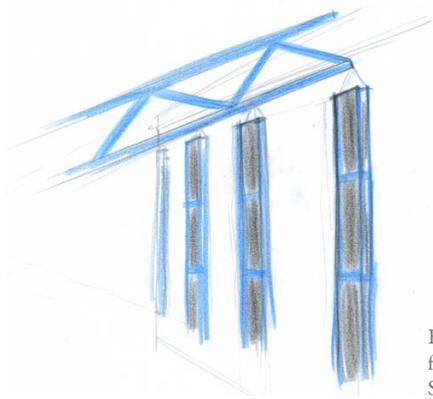
... blurring the threshold between interior and exterior.

Framing the Existing

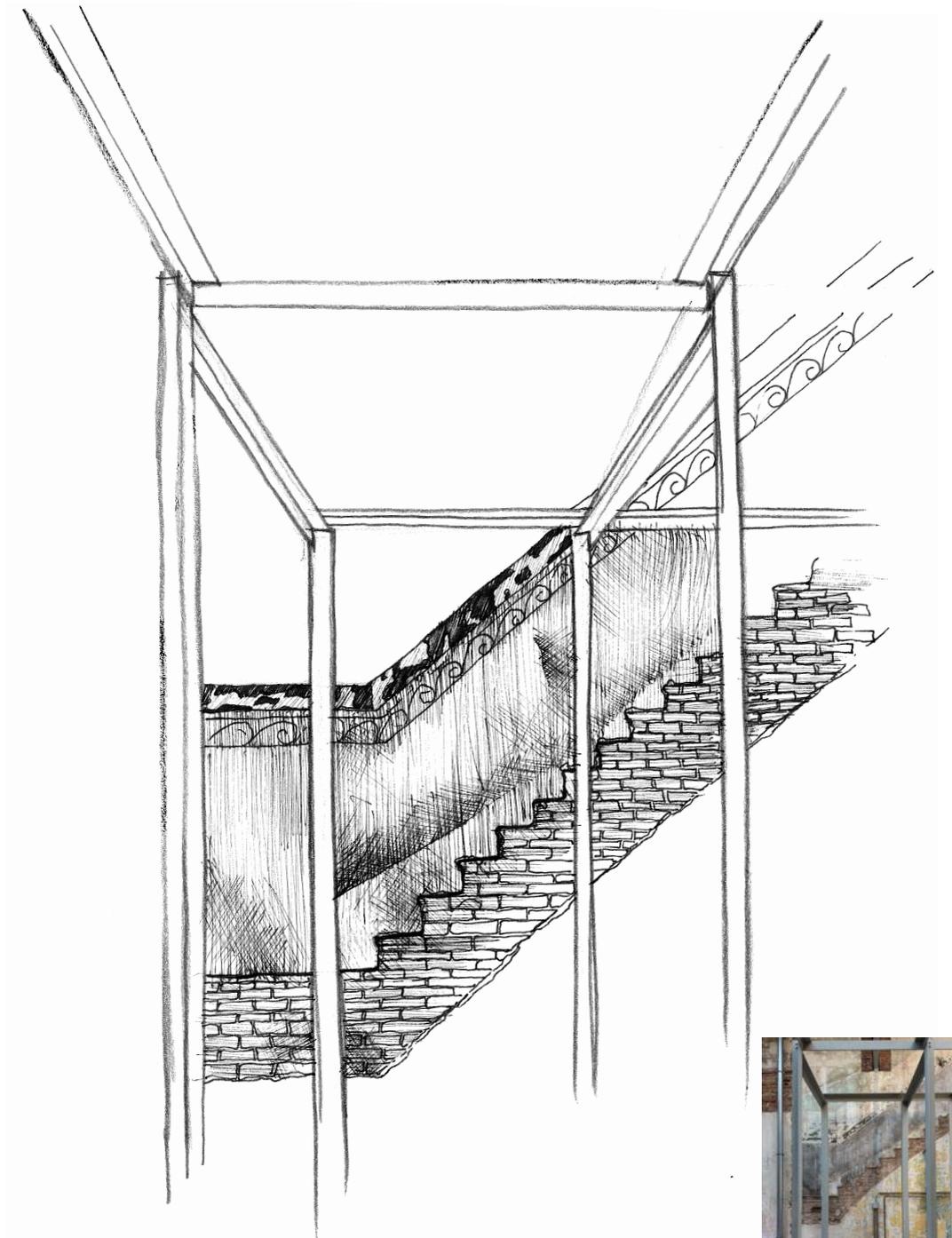
Traces of the original structure, such as historic openings, scars or remnants of former exterior walls, are not concealed, but carefully preserved and framed. Rather than treating these as imperfections, Harquitectes uses new interventions to highlight and contextualise them, integrating them into the narrative of the new interior. This framing approach transforms the architectural memory into a deliberate spatial feature, allowing the residual outdoor character of the site to remain legible and celebrated.



View of wall with the historic traces of decay, framed by added structures and openings. Sketch by author



Existing brick columns, reinforced and framed by new steel additions. Sketch by author



View of interior street, dominated by the scaffolding-like circulation pathway. Sketch by author



Programmatic Anchor

The Climatic Courtyard

The original courtyard is retained and emphasised as the central anchor of the project. Around it, Harquitectes weaves new layers of programming, some of which were previously open-air circulation or residual spaces, now transformed into enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces. The courtyard not only provides spatial orientation and congregation, but also plays an essential role in climate regulation, natural lighting and experiential continuity. It becomes a mediating core from which a spectrum of inwardness radiates outwards.



View of wall with the historic traces of decay, framed by added structures and openings. Sketch by author

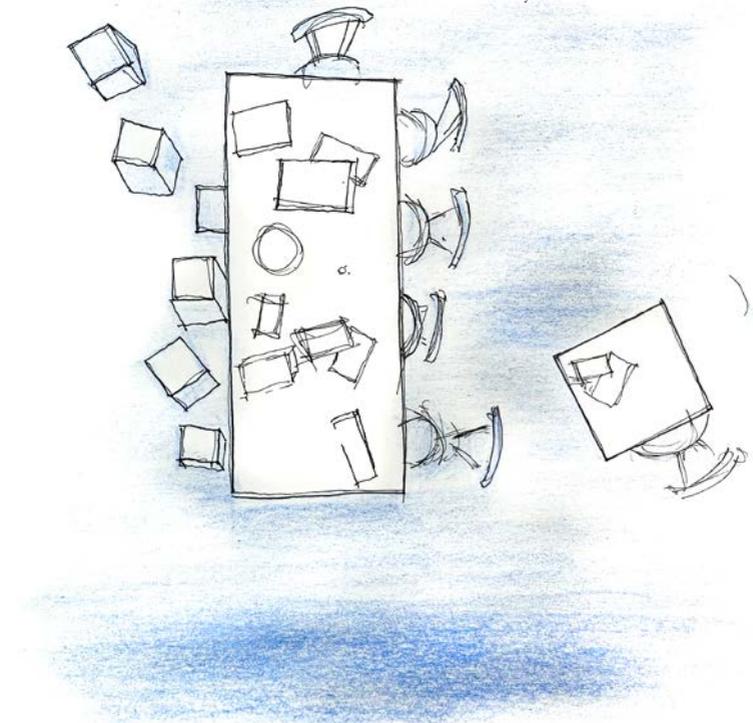
“It’s so rare that you get to experience the entire facade of a building at once!”

- User of the community centre

The architects created a void along the central axis by removing the façade and walls of the building facing the atrium. The formerly indoor space becomes an outdoor area under a single roof. This open space connects users to the building’s rich history as a community centre and becomes a semi-public space.



View of interior street acting as a programmatic anchor. Photo by author



Central gathering space, viewed from above, on the scaffolding-like circulation space. Sketch by author

Het Predikheren Mechelen Public Library

a restoration by
Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten

Original Architect	Unknown
Restoration Architect	Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten
Location	Mechelen, Belgium
Constructed	1650
Restored	2011 - 2015
Area	5840 m ²
Function	Public Library

The Predikherenklooster in Mechelen, originally built in the 1650s as a Dominican monastery, has undergone a remarkable transformation. After its deconsecration at the end of the 18th century, the complex served for over a century as a military barracks before being abandoned in 1975. For decades, the building remained in a state of disuse, its deterioration affecting the atmosphere of the surrounding area in Mechelen. In 2011, the city of Mechelen initiated its restoration, envisioning a new future as a public library. The architects Korteknie Stuhlmacher, in collaboration with Callebaut Architecten, approached the project with care and precision. Their design preserves the historical fabric where possible, while introducing bold contemporary interventions that clearly distinguish new from old. The result is a space that feels both monumental and deeply humane.

This building is central to my research for its ability to create a sense of domesticity and warmth within a structure once associated with austerity and control. Through careful material choices, light, and spatial rhythm, the library invites people in, transforming a cold relic into a generous, welcoming public space.



Predikherenklooster entrance during its time as a military hospital, 1914 (archival photo, author unknown)

Historical Timeline

- 1650s**
Construction of the Monastery
The Predikherenklooster was designed as a monumental complex with a church, cloister and residential wings for the Dominican order, built in the Baroque style.
- 18th Century**
Deconsecration and Secularization
At the end of the 18th century, following the French occupation, the monastery was closed and secularised. It was then repurposed for civil and military use.
- 20th Century**
Military Reuse
Over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, the former monastery was used for various military purposes. It was used as a military hospital and later as barracks, *Kazerne Delobbe*. Durring WWI and WWII, the site played various roles.
- 1975**
Abandonment
After the end of the war, the building became abandonned as its military functions had become obsolete. The building is fully vacated and left unused for decades. In 1980 the building was officially protected as a heritgae site.
- 2011**
Decision to Restore
After several failed attempts to repurpose the complex, the city of Mechelen decided to invest in its restoration, choosing to transform the site into a public library.
Restoration and Transformation
Architects Korteknie Stuhlmacher and Callebaut Architecten work on designs for a project that respects the building's lost beauty.
- 2018**
Opening of the Library
Het Predikheren officially opens to the public in the autumn of 2018, offering a public library with a restaurant, café, co-working space and a cultural venue.



Illustration of Mechelen and the monestrary from 1790 (author unknown)



The entrance during its time as a military hospital, 1871 (archival photo, author unknown)

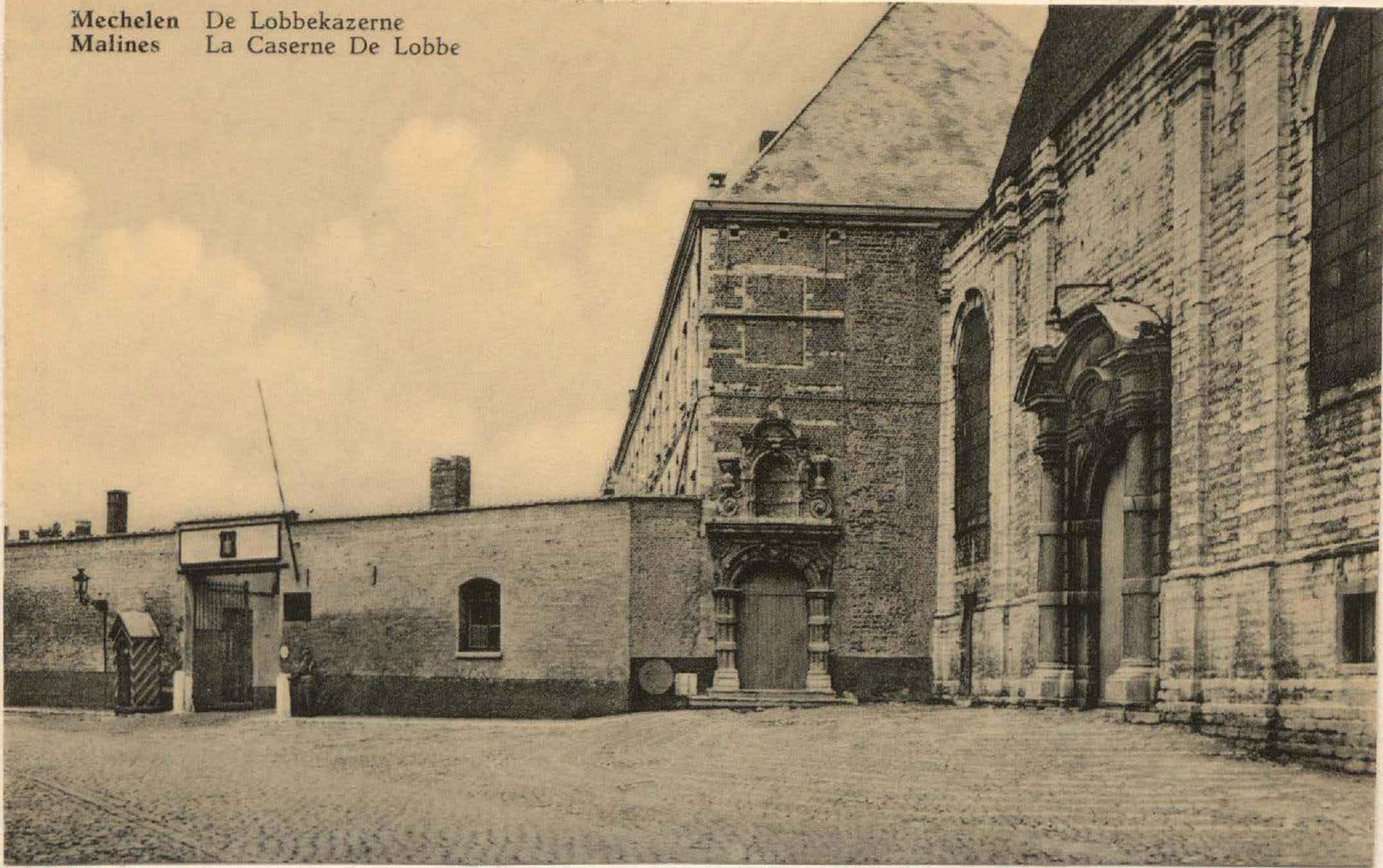


The monastery used as a military hospital, photographed in 1914 (archival photo, author unknown)



Internal staircase in 1914 (archival photo, author unknown)

Mechelen De Lobbekazerne
Malines La Caserne De Lobbe



Entrance, photographed in 1950 (archival photo, author unknown)



Situation in 2013, prior to the restoration © Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten



Situation in 2013, prior to the restoration © Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten



Situation in 2013, prior to the restoration © Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten



Interior situation, prior to the restoration © Stad Mechelen, www.mechelen.be

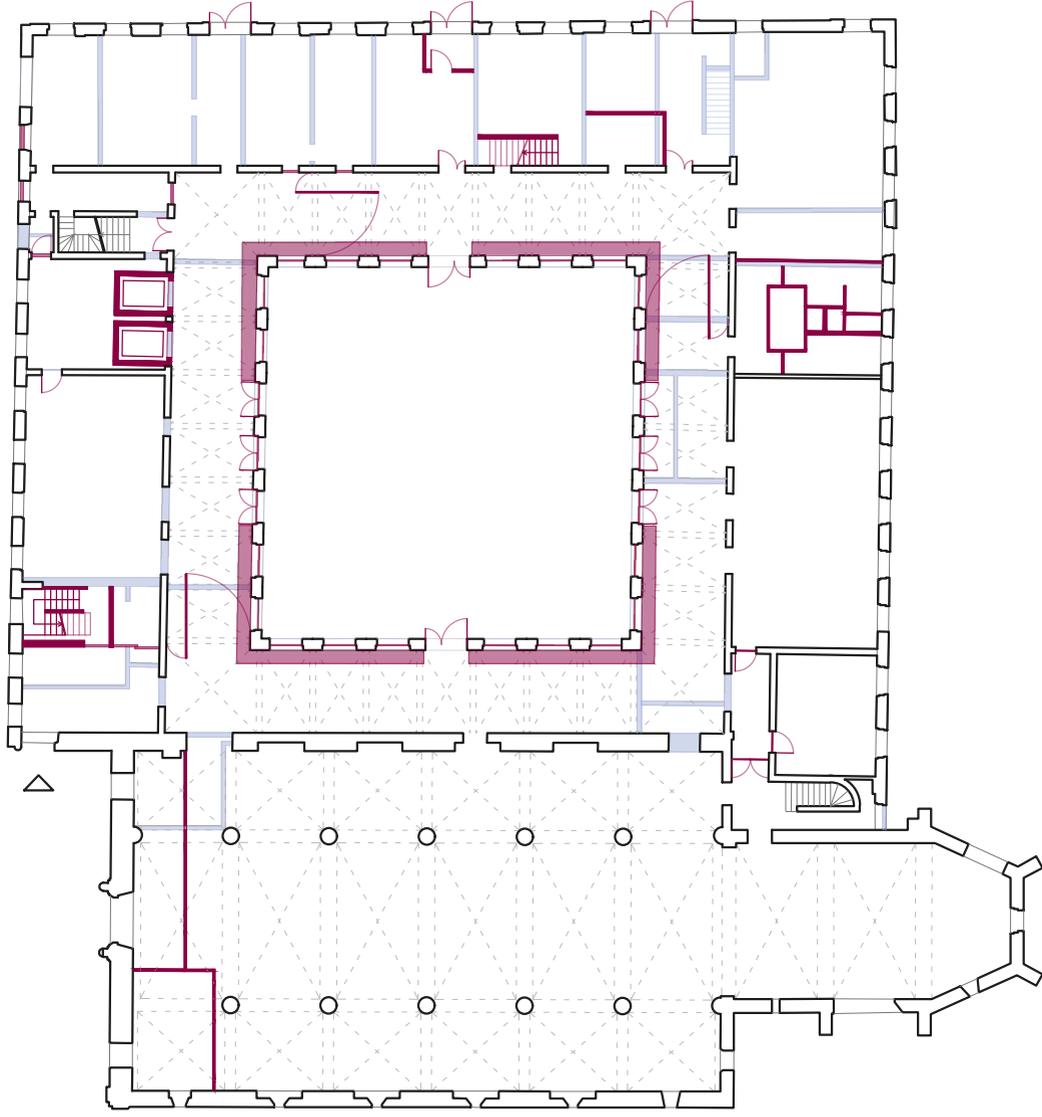


Situation prior to the restoration © Stad Mechelen, www.mechelen.be

DOMESTICITY

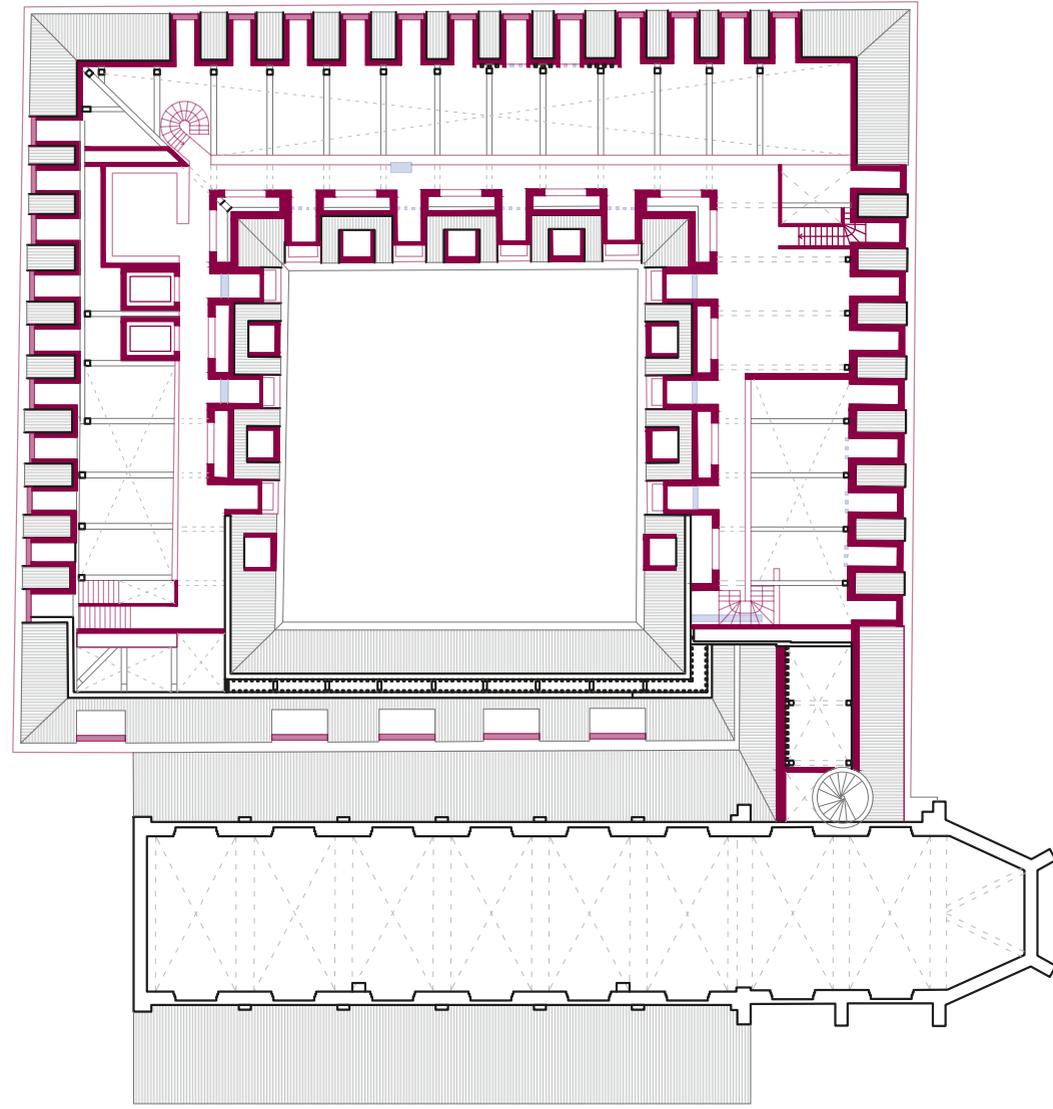
How were the architects able to introduce a domestic atmosphere into a building with a formerly institutional and monumental character, such as a monastery?

An architectural exploration into the use of material contrast, treatment of decay, preservation of historical layering, and soft transformation techniques, to create a sense of intimacy and domesticity.



Ground Floor Plan

0m 10m

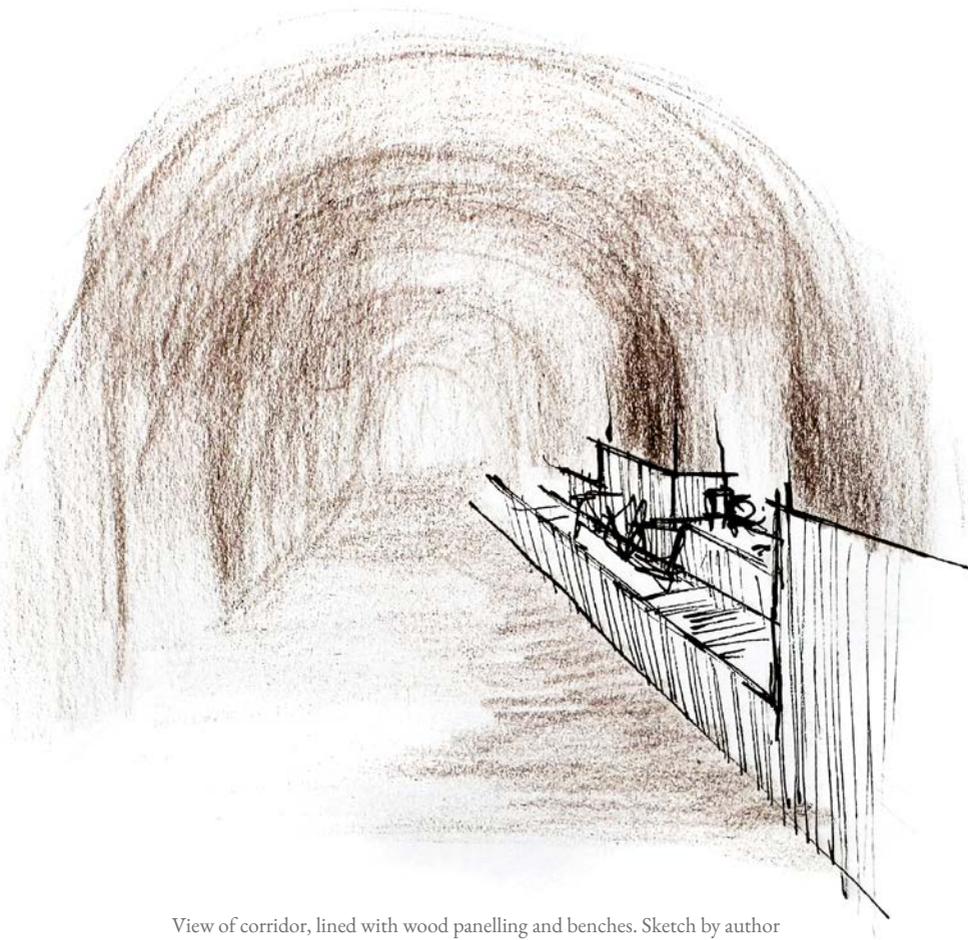


Fourth Floor Plan

- Existing
- Demolished
- New

Tactile Warmth through Material Contrast

The intervention introduces finely detailed timber elements as the primary new material, establishing a dialogue between the smooth, warm tactility of wood and the textured roughness of the existing historic material, such as stone and masonry. This juxtaposition softens the building's ecclesiastical rigidity, infusing a sense of familiarity and intimacy that evokes domestic atmospheres within the monumental shell.



View of corridor, lined with wood panelling and benches. Sketch by author

The timber panelling is used to dress the otherwise long and bare corridors, instantly transforming the underused circulation space into a warm and welcoming area.

The light-toned timber elements soften the impact of the rough monumetal materials, and this contrast creates a sense of warmth and domesticity in the space.

Wood and glass partitions are also used to divide the space for functional requirements. The wood adds to the domestic atmosphere, while the glass allows the space to still feel open, preserving the sense of the long corridors, typical for the building typology.



View of corridor, separated by wood and glass partitions. Sketch by author



Use of timber panels used to furnish the corridors.
© Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architekten

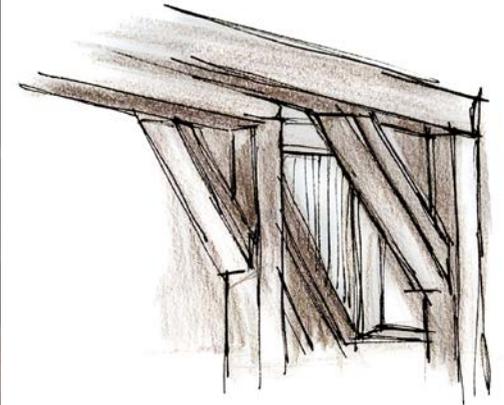
The wood also serves to frame the historical traces of the monastery. It frames the walls and ceilings, highlighting the centuries-old detailing.



View of corridor, furnished with wooden bookshelves and benches. Photograph by author

Creation of Intimate Spatial Conditions

During the restoration, the architects introduced carefully placed cut-outs and voids in the attic roof and upper levels, transforming the former convent and military hospital into a more intimate, welcoming space. These interventions bring daylight deep into the plan of the building while creating small, secluded reading alcoves. Some of these niches are furnished with solitary armchairs, providing isolated and inviting spaces that evoke a sense of domestic comfort. By strategically cutting into the existing structure, the architects have created pockets of space that mediate between the public and private and encourage introspective use. These architectural gestures not only enhance visual comfort and atmosphere through light wells and roof openings, but also foster a quiet, personal experience within the larger public setting of the library.

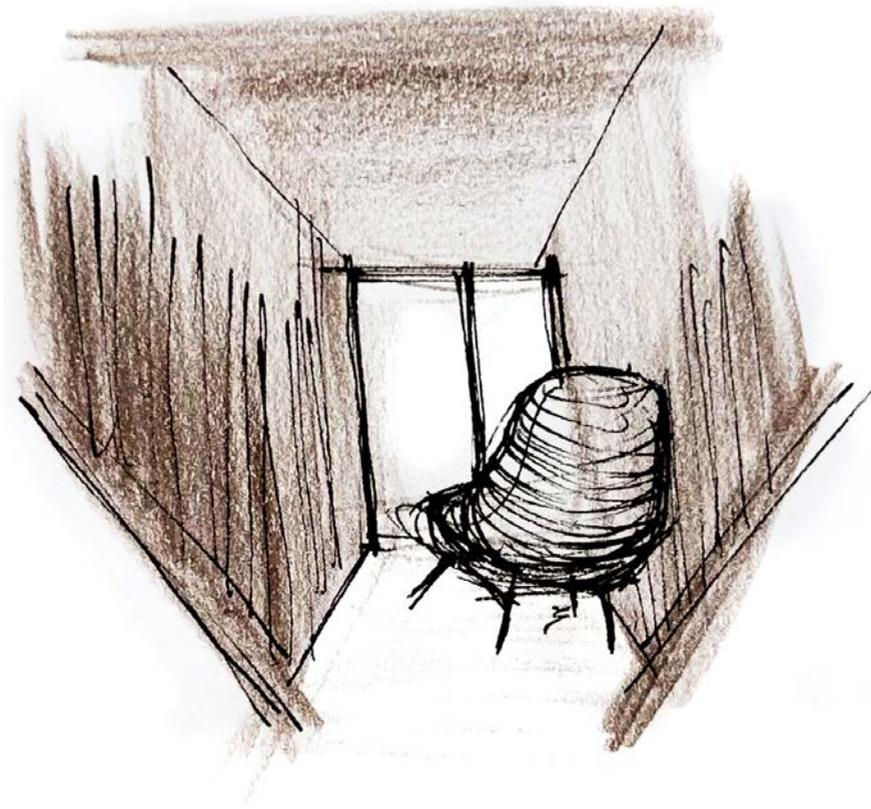


Voids and roof cut-outs introduce daylight and human-scaled retreats, evoking domestic seclusion.

Skylight inserted into the existing roof structure. Photograph by author



Skylight inserted into the existing roof structure, allowing light to penetrate the library. Photograph by author



Alcove cut out from the existing roof structure, creating private and intimate reading areas. Sketch by author

Light wells and window cuts provide varied atmospheres and visual comfort

Narrative Layering of the Past

Rather than returning the building to a single historical moment or erasing its layered past, the architects adopted a strategy of selective revelation. Historic scars, textures and material traces have often been preserved, but not in their entirety, but with careful restraint. In many areas, new timber panelling covers parts of the walls and ceilings, not to hide the past but to frame it. This deliberate interplay between covering and revealing intensifies the contrast between old and new, allowing moments of historical presence to emerge with greater clarity and emotional resonance. Through this layered spatial narrative, the building gains a tactile and atmospheric depth that contributes to a more intimate and domestic quality, softening the monumentality of its former institutional character.



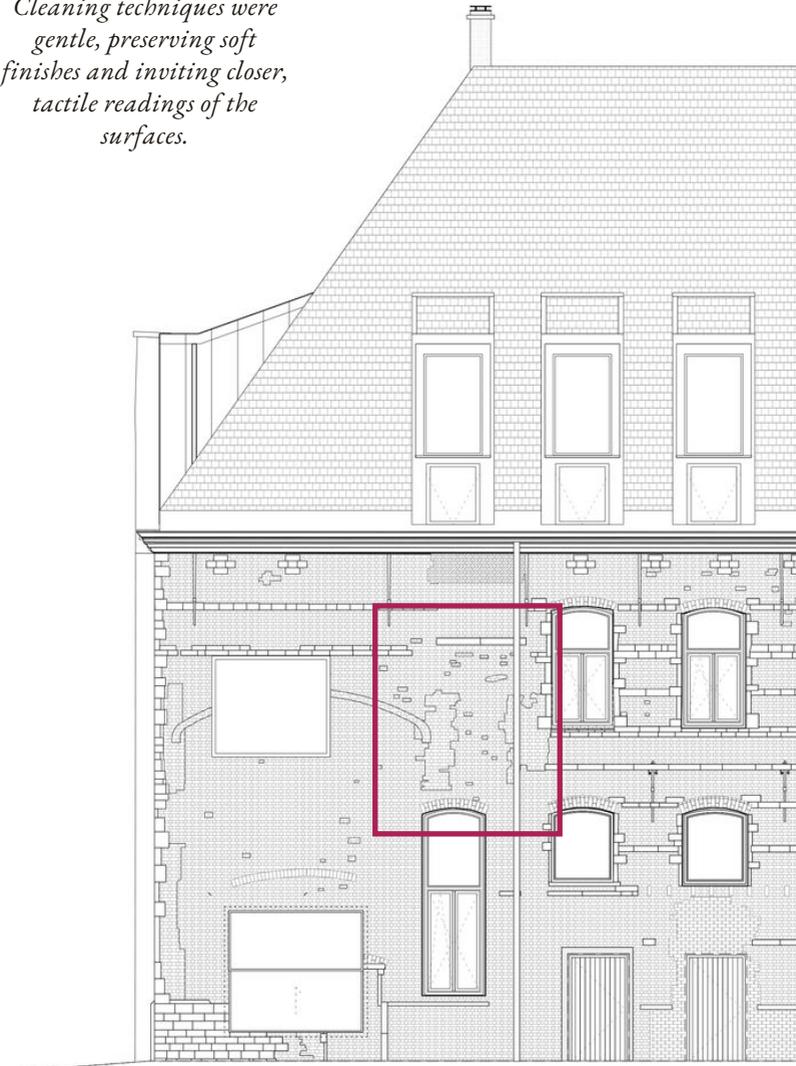
Photograph showing the careful restoration efforts
© Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architekten



View of corridor showing the layered traces, highlighted by the contrasting wood panelling. Photograph by author.

This process of revelation was preceded by a highly sensitive method of investigation during the restoration. The architects gently tapped the surfaces of the walls and ceilings to determine their structural integrity. Parts that remained intact were deemed strong enough to endure and were therefore left in place.

Cleaning techniques were gentle, preserving soft finishes and inviting closer, tactile readings of the surfaces.



Detailed Elevation, showing the intentional traces of history © Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architekten

The selective exposure of aged textures and historical layers invites emotional connection and memory. This avoids over-sanitisation and allows for a richer spatial narrative.

Adaptive Reuse of Existing Structure

The robust timber framework of the former monastery, particularly in the attic, is harnessed as an organizing device. These pre-existing structural rhythms are used to spatially frame new programmatic insertions such as bookshelves, seating, and reading areas. This generates a natural spatial cadence that is understandable to the library's users.



View of a bookshelf niche framed by the existing timber structure. Sketch by author

Here the massive existing timber structure is used as a spatial organization tool to create smaller, more intimate spaces. This is further reinforced by the placement and alignment of the bookshelves with the timber structure, enhancing the feeling of the niche.



Attic structure prior to the restoration © Stad Mechelen, www.mechelen.be



Current design of the building's attic, using the massive structure to organize the space. Photograph by author

Z33 Museum

a restoration by
Francesca Torzo

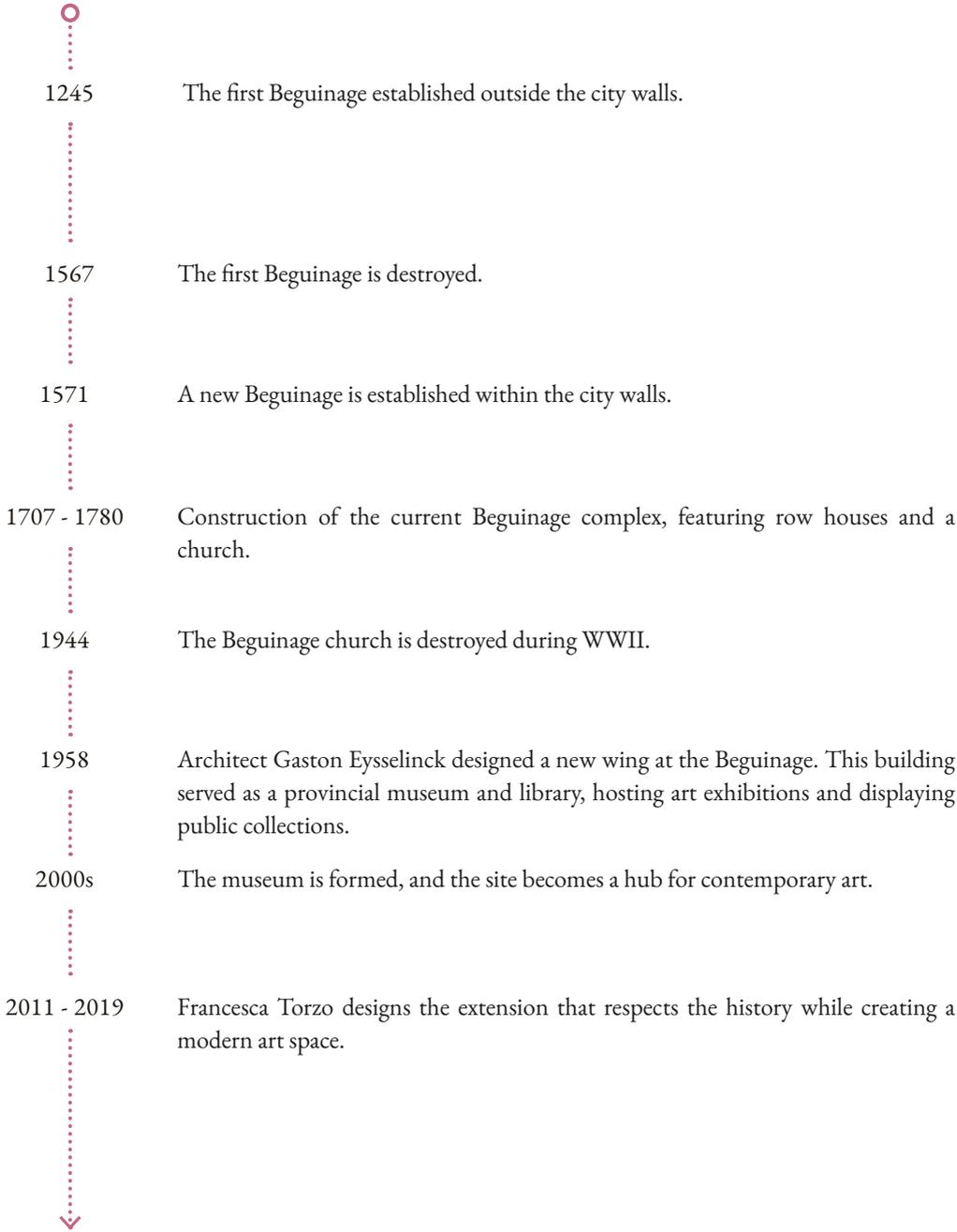
Original Architect -
Restoration Architect *Francesca Torzo Architetto*
Location *Hasselt, Belgium*
Constructed -
Restored *2011 - 2019*
Area *4660 m²*
Function *Museum*

Francesca Torzo's design for the Z33 Museum in Hasselt, Belgium, is a sensitive and thoughtful response to the site's history and context. By blending contemporary elements with the existing architecture, Torzo establishes a dialogue between the past and the present, emphasising the importance of materiality and spatial experience. The project reflects an intricate understanding of architectural layering, particularly in the use of brick, which both mirrors and reinterprets the site's history. Torzo's approach evokes a sense of intimacy within the museum's spaces, subtly echoing the surrounding urban fabric while providing an open, contemporary environment for art and culture.



An illustration of the beguinage (archival material, author unknown)

Historical Timeline



Entrance of the new Z33 museum, designed by Francesca Torzo



67. Hasselt Begijnhof en Kalvarieberg — Béguinage et Calvaire



Hasselt Provinciale Bibliotheek en Museum, Begijnhof

Photograph of beguinage as a library and museum, after 1958 (author unknown)



Archival photograph (author unknown)



Photograph of entrance prior to restoration (author unknown)

Photograph of entrance after the restoration by Franzisca Torzo (author unknown)





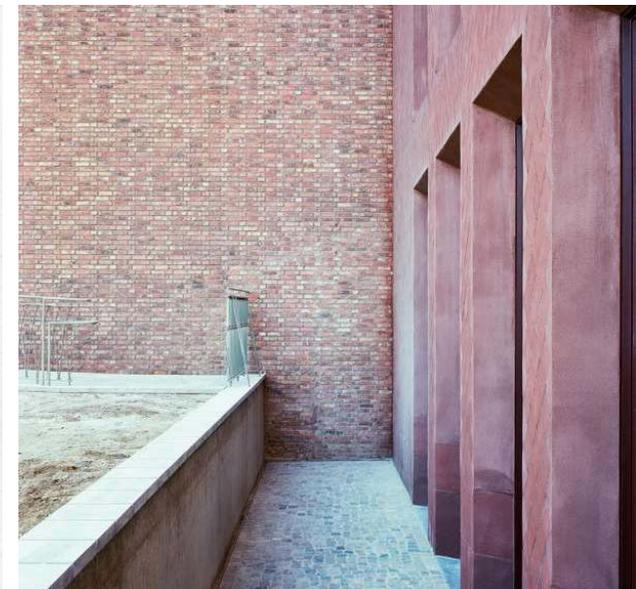
MIRRORING

How does the architect use the architectural strategy of mirroring to negotiate between historical context, spatial experience, and material identity in the Z33 museum extension?

An architectural exploration into mirroring strategies, spatial sequencing, material reinterpretation, the reflection of historical context, and the duplication of proportions and rhythms across old and new.

Material Reinterpretation

Torzo uses brick to mirror the surrounding historical context, while also providing a contemporary reinterpretation. The handcrafted, lozenge-shaped brick tiles of the extension reflect the city's brick-making traditions, but also introduce a distinctive colour palette of reds and mauves that honours the historical fabric while adding something new. This mirroring of material qualities establishes a connection between the old and the new, creating continuity and adding depth to the design.



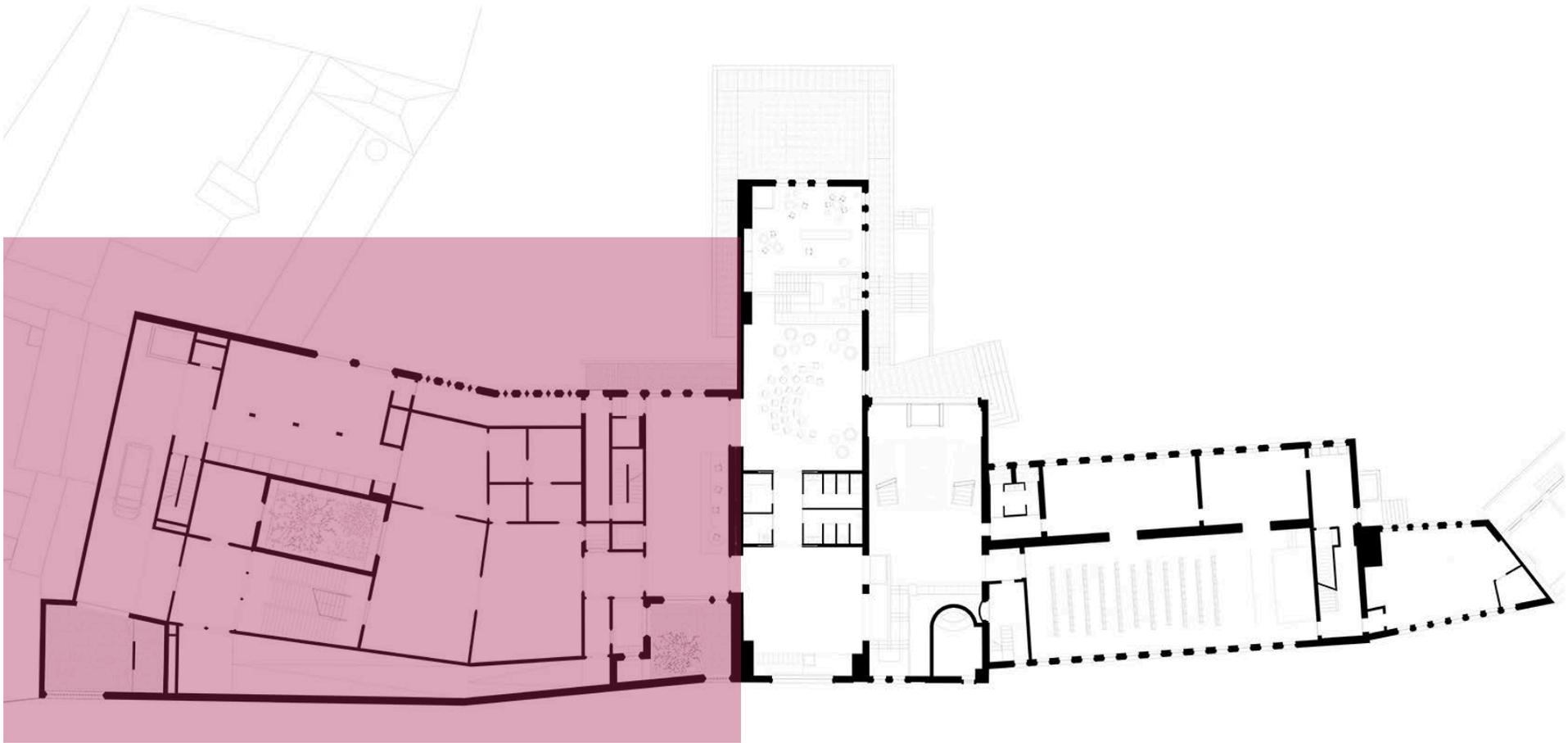
Mirroring of the Building's Context in the Interior Spatial Organization

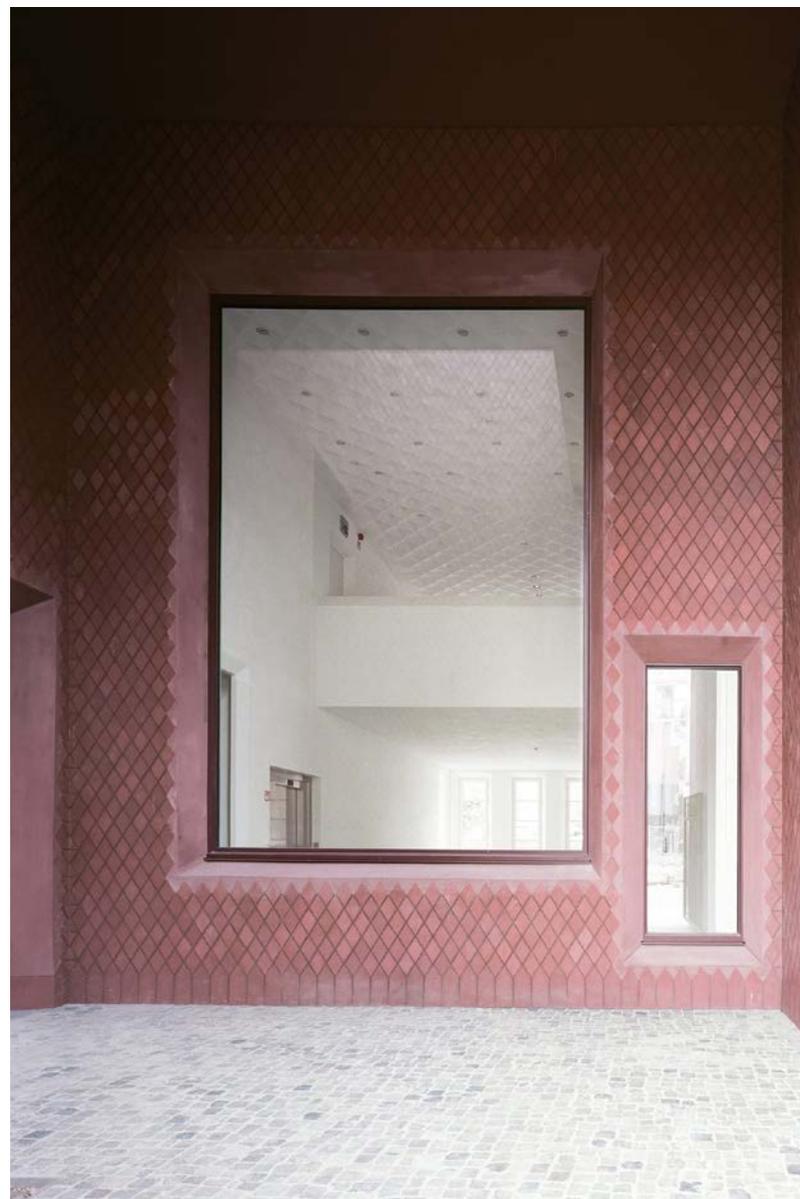
The design of the interior spaces reflects the external context of the surrounding neighborhood. The building's labyrinthine, meandering layout mirrors the winding alleyways, narrow streets, and passageways found in the historic town center and the beguinage. The varied proportions and scales of the rooms evoke the complexity of urban life, allowing the visitor to experience different atmospheres and interactions, similar to the street-level experiences of the city outside.



Mirroring the Beguinage's Historic Layout

The placement of the new building within the context of the beguinage is an example of spatial mirroring. Just as the beguinage complex historically contained a series of enclosed spaces, the museum extension follows this logic with a somewhat closed-off exterior but an intricate and varied interior that invites exploration. This echo of the beguinage's layout creates a dialogue between past and present in the museum's design.





WERKPLAATS

The Art of Adaptive Reuse

a graduation project by
Julia Wintersteller

Author
Graduation Studio
Date
Tutors

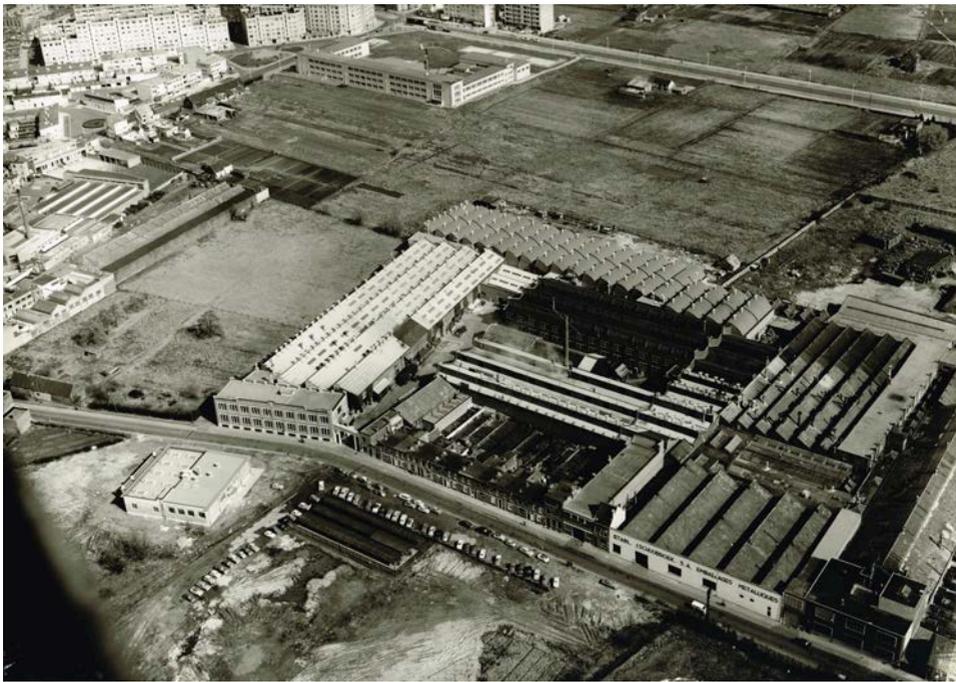
Julia Wintersteller
Urban Architecture
May 2025
Sam Stalker
Eireen Schreurs
Anèt Meijer

My graduation project proposes the transformation of two existing warehouse structures in Hoboken, Antwerp, with a new volume introduced between the two, acting as a physical and a programmatic hinge. The building houses a technical arts school and the extension of the Hoboken Academie, while also functioning as a public hub for the local community. Together, the three volumes create a layered, educational campus that opens itself up to the surrounding urban area.

The design approach is rooted in three interrelated themes derived from precedent analysis: interiority, domesticity, and mirroring. Interiority guides the transformation of formerly open, industrial spaces into places of shelter, learning, and connection, blurring the boundary between indoor and outdoor. Domesticity informs the creation of intimate, human-scale spaces within the vast industrial halls, inviting occupation and informal appropriation. Lastly, mirroring is explored through material choices and the desire to relate to the surrounding context, reflecting the character and needs of its evolving community, whilst introducing a contemporary architectural project. These strategies collectively shape an environment that is civic, educational, and deeply embedded in place.



Photograph of P3 Fragment model, 1:33



Aerial view of the site, photographed in 1962 © Stadsarchief Anwerpen www.felixarchief.be



Workers inside the Schippers Povevyn factory © Stadsarchief Anwerpen www.felixarchief.be



Aerial view of 'Lemmerz', an industry iron foundry, in 1980, showing the rapid development of the site © Stadsarchief Anwerpen



The 'Metaalgietterij Giesen B.V.' factory, photographed in 1997 © Stadsarchief Anwerpen

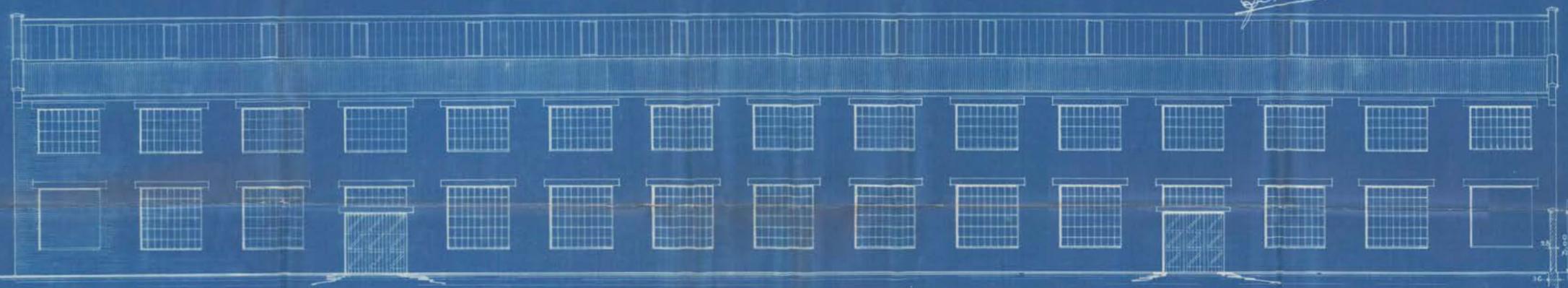


NOUVELLES INSTALLATIONS POUR COMPTE DES ATELIERS ET FONDERIES
SCHIPPERY ET PODEVIJN S.A. RUE BASSE A HOBOKEN - ANVERS

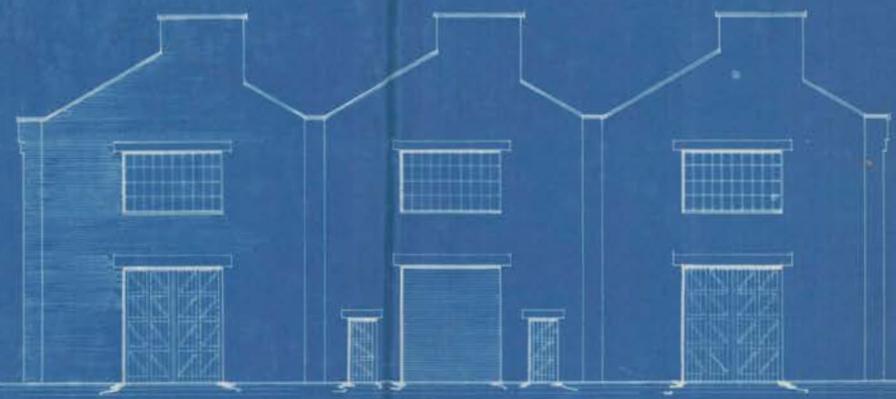
BÂTIMENT POUR LES ATELIERS DE CONSTRUCTION - FACADES ET COUPE.

TOURNEE DANS L'ARCHITECTE JOUIGNÉ
ANVERS, LE 1934.

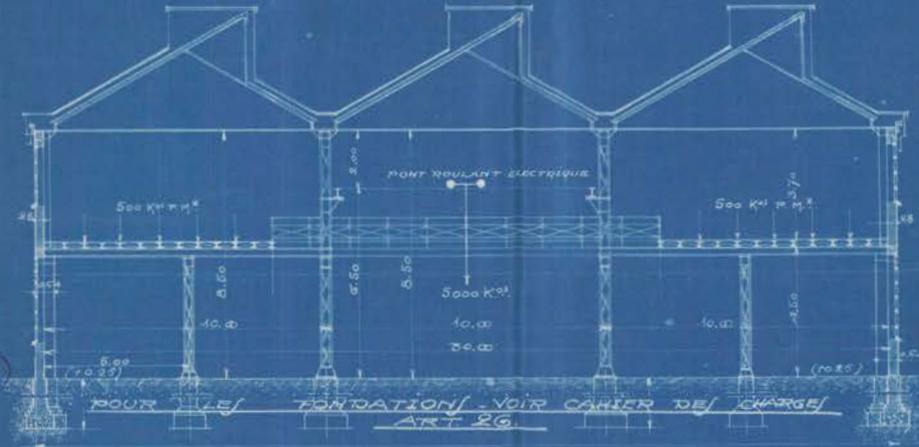
J. Van der Meulen



— FACE LATÉRALE —



— FACE PRINCIPALE —



— COUPE TRANSVERSALE —

Atelier et Fonderie SCHIPPERY & PODEVIJN, 2^e ét.

Handwritten notes and signatures in red ink.

ECHELLE : 0.01 1/10



Current state of a warehouse on site, photograph taken by author



Current state of a warehouse on site, photograph taken by author



Masterplan proposal



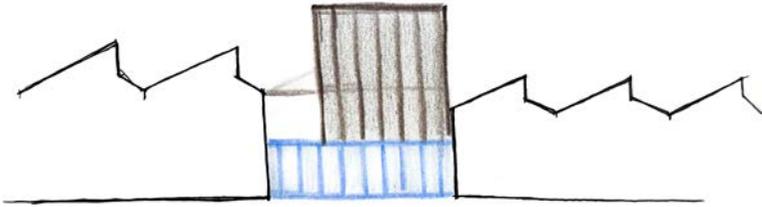
Photographs taken of Masterplan proposal in the 1:333 site model

WERKPLAATS

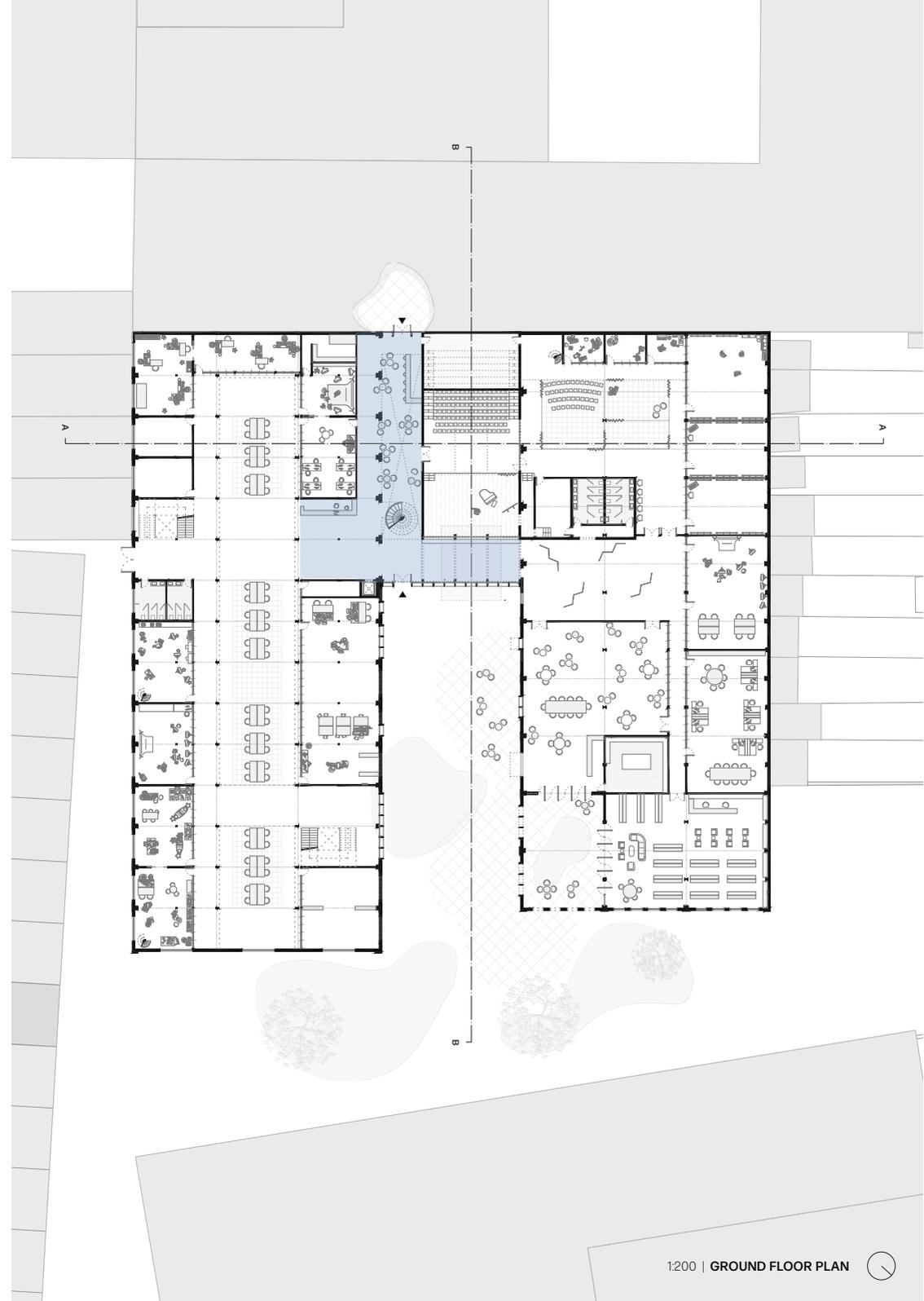
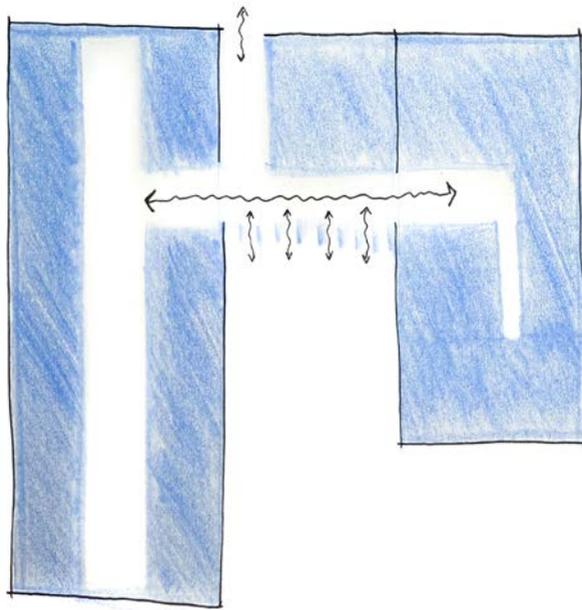
How can a historic industrial structure be transformed
into a contemporary cultural and educational space
through strategies of
interiority, domesticity, and *mirroring*?

Interiority

Redefining Existing Spaces

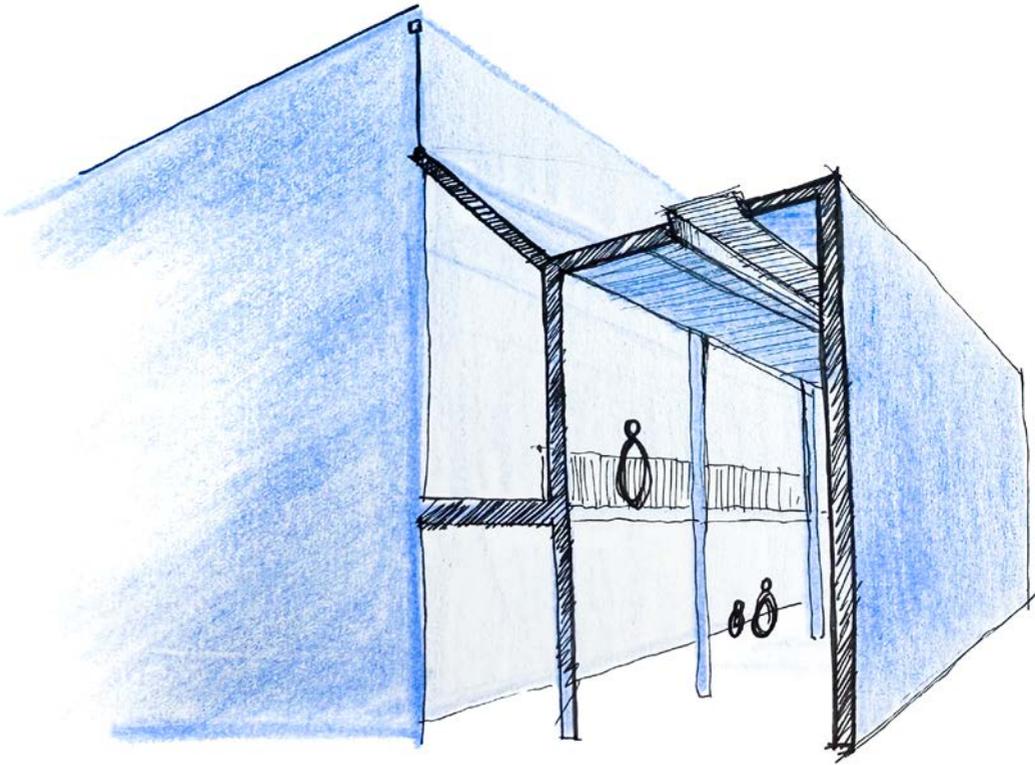


Introducing a new entrance and central axis, penetrating the existing structures and redefining the space.

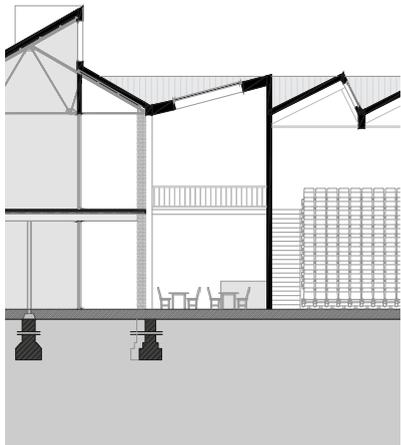
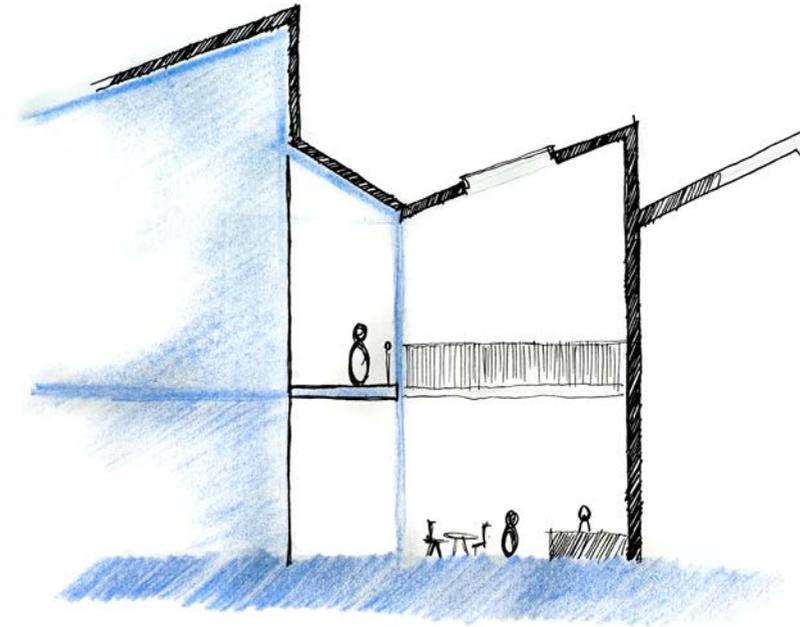


Interiority

Transforming formerly Exteriors into Interior spaces



The existing brick wall is peeled back, revealing solely the brick column and the intricate truss structure



By removing the existing brick wall and placing a roof over the adjacent space, the previously exterior space becomes an indoor circulation area. To ease the transition from old to new, I have followed the existing slanted roof pattern and continued its rhythm. The new open atrium adjacent to the existing space gives the old building 'breathing room' and blurs the threshold between new and old.

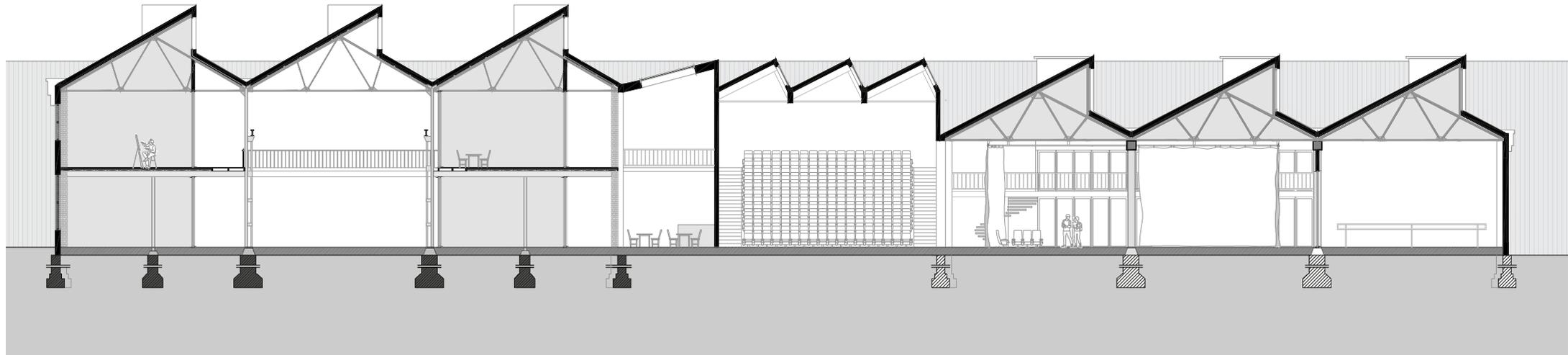
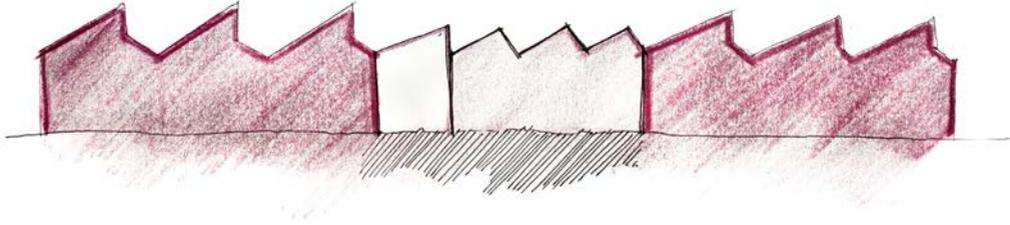
Users of the building are invited to directly interact with the existing structure, as the act of isolating the columns allows for the existing to be highlighted and celebrated in the space



Mirroring

Reinterpreting the Roof Geometry

One aspect of the new design takes inspiration from the distinctive formal language of the existing warehouse roofs, reinterpreting their sawtooth geometry. Rather than replicating the pattern literally, the new volume abstracts and resizes it, creating a more refined and contemporary profile. This reinterpretation establishes continuity between the old and the new, enabling the roof to serve as a visual and spatial bridge between the building's different eras. It establishes a respectful yet transformative dialogue, grounding the new volume within its industrial context while giving it a clearly contemporary expression.



Mirroring

Echoing the Brick Materiality Through Copper-Treated Timber

While the existing warehouses are made of brick, the new structure that I am introducing, is primarily composed of timber, a more appropriate material choice given the structure's lightweight nature, environmental performance and programme requirements. However, in a nod to material resonance, the timber has been treated with copper, giving it a warm reddish-brown hue that subtly echoes the colour of the surrounding brickwork. This treatment establishes a visual and tactile connection between the old and new elements, whilst providing a modern interpretation of the site's material identity.

