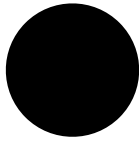


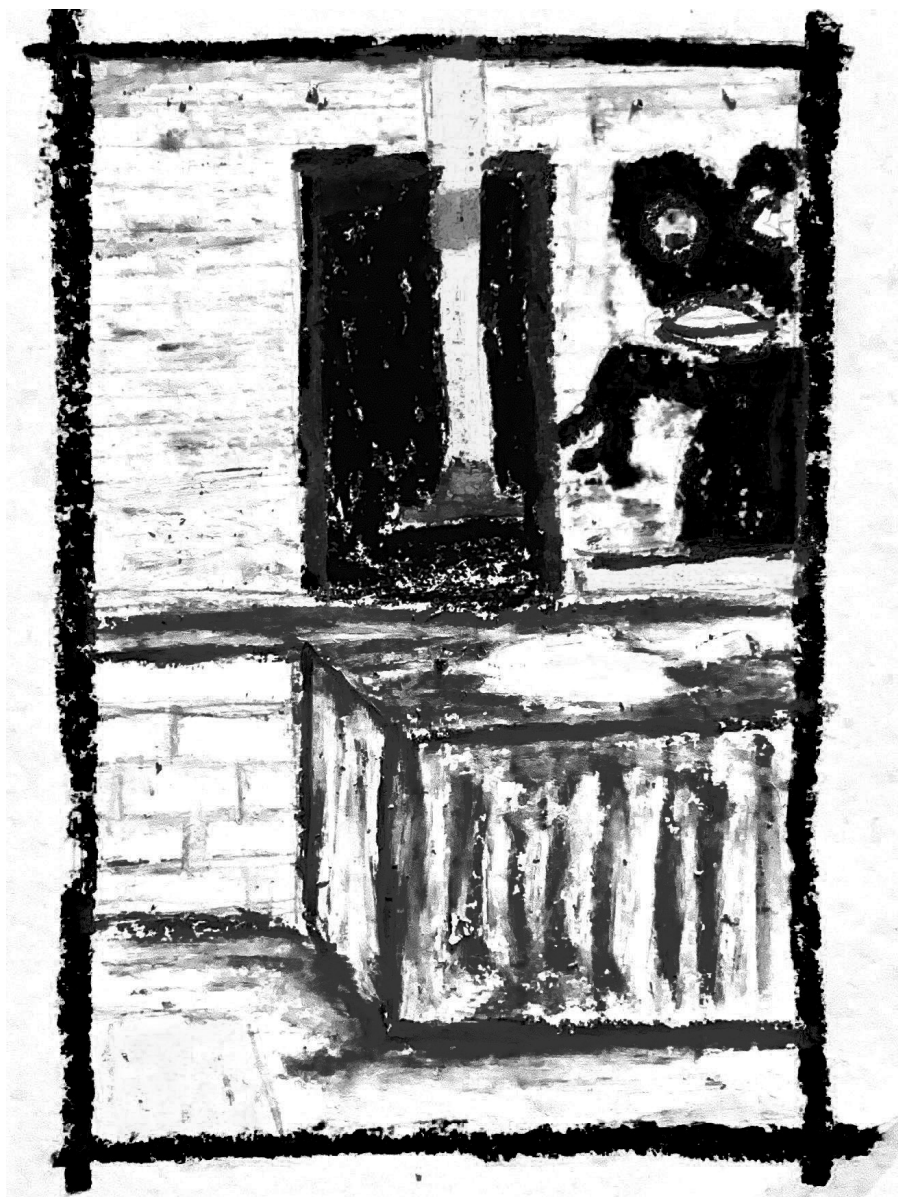
## The story of an encounter



This story unfolds as an attempt to communicate with a building. Since a dialogue can't be established with words, the protagonist immerses herself in the reality of the building.

She seeks to feel and see with the building in order to understand its existence.

## Act 1 — the hall



A red door opens up and closes this hidden world.  
Do you dare to step inside?

I find myself in the middle of the agglomeration of halls. Already far away from the red door, having crossed various structures. I stop. I look around. I'm standing in front of a wall. Behind me, seemingly endless expanses. Fragile beams cross the massive steel supports. I can see far into the forest of columns, but the wall in front of me doesn't allow any insight. Bricks between steel supports form a massive, impenetrable structure.

An almost threatening atmosphere, something spooky is in the air. The corrugated iron sheets creak in the wind. Water drips onto the metal, and it echoes. Birds chirp from time to time. In the distance, cars whizz along the road. I am alone here, but I have the eerie feeling that I am not completely alone. The old metal beams crackle. Every little sound echoes endlessly through the emptiness.

Are those footsteps? Or is it just the wind? I step on broken glass. Knix, knax. I am jumpy. A feeling of familiarity mixes with the unease that every new trace triggers in me. Traces of human activity show me that there has been life since my last visit. There was movement. Movement amidst the rigid landscape of columns. A yellow piece of pipe lies on the ground. Yellow pipes reach up into the sky. A yellow pipe juts down as if it wants to say something. Like a microphone, it waits for the voice that gives it a hearing.

A splash of colour amidst the grey. Like snakes, they wind their way along the brick wall. Yellow stairs. Yellow banisters. It's almost exciting how this colour signals the activities of a past time. Why were they painted so bright? I wonder if there were more colours in the space or if it has always been this dreary.

The corrugated iron roof is torn. It could collapse further at any moment. Parts are sticking out. A small tree has taken root in this fragile moment and lives there on the edge. I look up to see the light. There are no windows in the walls that allow a connection to the outside world. In here, I am in a world of my own. This world is characterised by the past. Of what is no longer here. Traces in the ground bear witness to this. Trenches in the floor made of concrete and pieces of metal protruding from the ground. Together, they form a pattern. Signs of past activities.

Looking forward, I stare into the darkness of the two doorways. They give a small glimpse that there is more behind this wall. Colourful graffiti adds life to the grey wall. A frog's face. BRICK.

My fascination for this place meets awe. I am hugged by steel. Steel everywhere. Aluminium furnaces have been sweating here for decades. Now the columns and beams are rusting away.

A question pops up in my head: Was the initial radicalism of my research born out of fear for this place?

## Act 2 — inside the wall

It's time. I walk up the yellow steel stairs. Five steps, just one metre above the ground, I am now on a concrete platform. Another red door. I dare to step into the dark behind it. A corridor leads in two directions. I go to the right. It is pitch black. Holes in the floor. Tiles, trusses and darkness. It's impossible to stay here. I return to the corridor, where the opposite direction leads me to the staircase. Light pours into the staircase. From above. I move quickly. It pulls me upwards. Out of the darkness. Quickly into the light. I walk directly to the top floor.

An infinite length awaits me at the top. The wall I experienced in the hall turns out to be a free space flooded with light. I feel light. Light and space make me feel at ease. It's so bright here. And that's although light mainly streams in through the ribbon windows on the south side.

The large window front facing the street has been provisionally closed with OSB boards. The glass splinters on the floor reveal the reason. Window panels have been smashed. The thin glass is now scattered around the room.

The view from here on the third floor must have been fantastic. There are only small houses around me, and the view towards the Scheidt is almost completely unobstructed. When the factory was in use, there used to be a large car park in front of the building. I try to imagine what this building must have seen. The spontaneous growth of the polder landscape. The activists who fought for its preservation in the 70s. The transformation of

Petroleum Zuid into the new Bluegate business park. The Depannage 2000, how cars come and go every day, parked in the car racks.

I try to see. To feel. The noise of the cars is omnipresent. It is the only connection to the outside world. I only see the sky.

The walls have always been denied a view into the production halls. No windows on this side, only the sky. That could be what the wall I saw from the halls was protecting. Separating these worlds from each other.

A being inside the wall.

The glass eyes have been closed for a few years now. Now there is only a view of the interior and the sky.

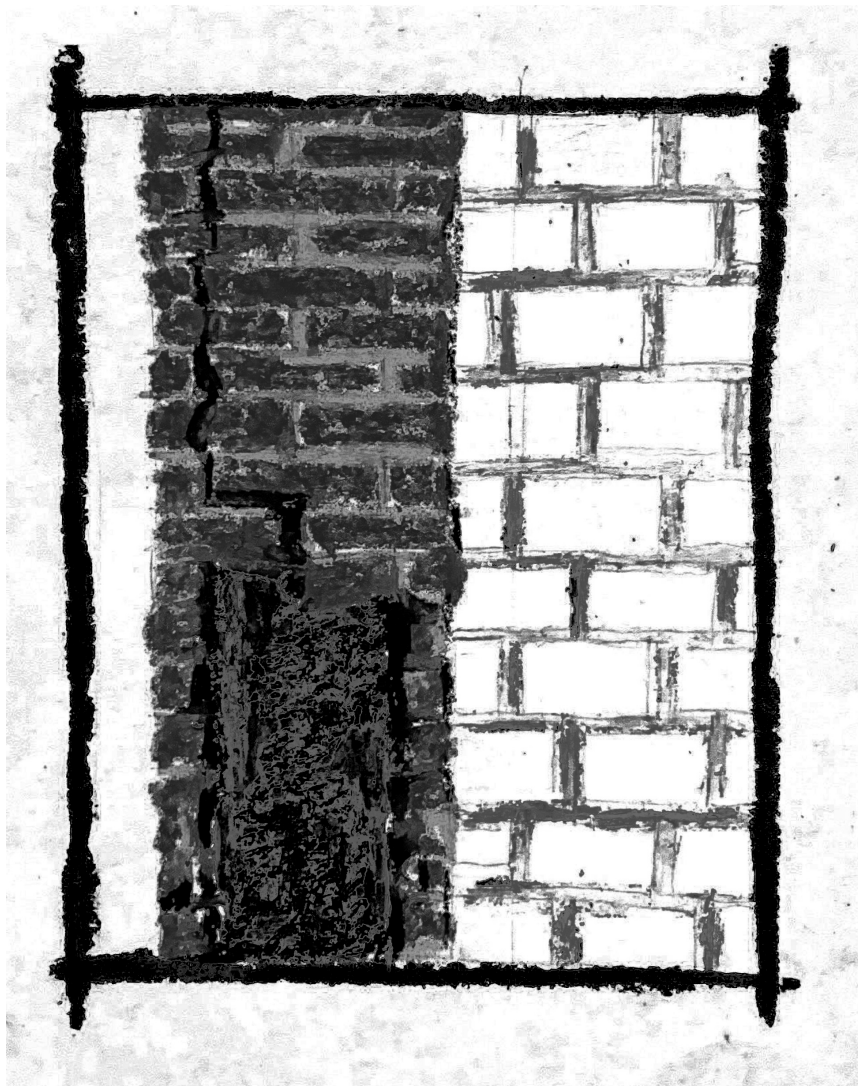
I am inside the wall. Being inside the glass wall, the glass of which is closed. Somehow paradoxical. The lightness and freedom that this building used to radiate have become so threatening and closed off due to its vacancy.

Sketch of perception length/width

The rhythm of the beams on the ceiling. Rusted by the water coming in through the open skylights.

Lightweight walls whose insulating material is spread across the floor indicate the former division into smaller office units. I imagine how the workers traversed the endless space. Was the mood relaxed, or did the daily production routine take over? People in the canteen. This place as a break, as a little time-out away from the hot ovens.

## Act 3 — in dialogue



I sit between bird shit, wires and insulating material. I listen, see and feel. Is that diplomacy? Listening, observing and empathising. Does the building have the same feel as I? Do I sense its feelings?

Grief over what has been lost: the view to the outside, the light on the inside, the life within its walls and its purpose. Grief over what has been destroyed. The shattered windows, ripped open ceilings, and smashed walls are hurtful. Fear and uncertainty about what is yet to come. What else will be destroyed? When will this destruction end? Or worse, does the end of the destruction also mean the end of existence?

The future is uncertain, the present is full of sorrow, and the past is just a distant memory. The current existence is one of waiting and worrying. The building's existence lies in the hands of the investor. They decide on demolition or preservation.

This building was built for a very specific purpose, its long and narrow body served as a changing room, cafeteria and office space. A protective body for workers and the production halls. Only this one use was intended. How can it be given a second life?

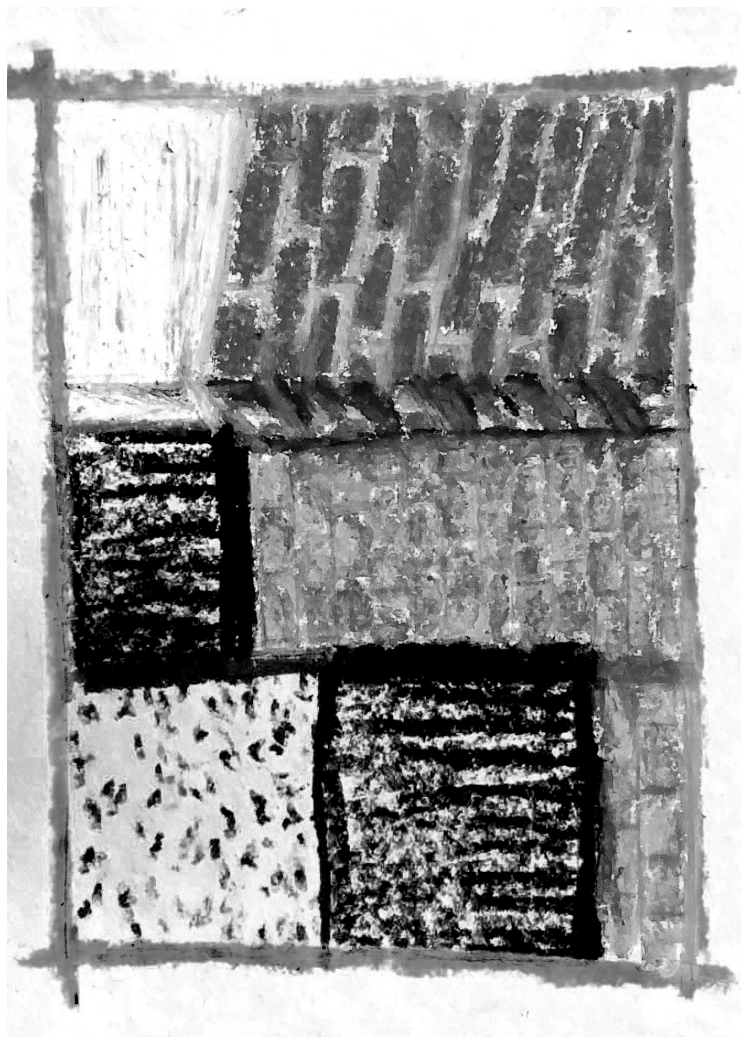
Therefore, it needs careful observation and comprehension.



Diplomacy also means taking time. Taking time to understand the other party. I've been here so many times. It has taken time to understand the building. Every time I see something new, I learn something new.

I try to read the language of the building: the rhythm of its load-bearing steel structure, the concrete floor and concrete beams spanning between the steel columns. The brick-wall infills and grid of the glass facade. That is how his body is composed. However, its body does not consist of just one part, it is divided into two. To get a better understanding of this, I move towards the joint, the connecting piece between the two body parts.

## Act 4 — the junction



The lift shaft forms the centre of this room, dividing it into two halves. Width and narrowness. The curved corner gives me a sense of security. A play between expansiveness towards the public and narrowness towards the rear. A wooden door provides an insight into another world. Warm brown-reddish wood evokes a sense of comfort. This is a strong contrast to the otherwise cool materials, the brick, concrete, steel and glass that dominate here. Almost out of place or as if from another age, this door signals a change. A leap in time and also in place. When you step through it, a white, high and once again long room awaits the visitor. The walls are plastered, albeit mouldy, and the paint is falling off. Paint and plaster are falling off everywhere: the ceiling, the walls and columns. The tiles on the floor are broken. A thin wall, made of the same warm wood as the door, frames the end of the room. It endows the room with warmth and elegance. The big windows on both sides are open, shattered glass, flooding the room with light. An enfilade of white plastered thin columns frames the space for visitors to move around. White painted beams under the ceiling follow the rhythm of the windows and bear the load of the roof. Turning to the left, the windows are facing a wall, a view against the hall. Again, no insight. The hall leaves a narrow space in between. A small no man's land that has been claimed by nature. Its sole purpose was to generate a separation. The Halls and the building. From the street, one is covering the other. To experience this perspective, I head outside.



Act 5 — the public space

Again I think, I would love to look into your eyes. But just as they are closed from the inside, they are also closed from the outside. However, the OSB boards have been colourfully painted on the outside, almost like advertising posters, each window now has its own message. The building speaks

This length is being interrupted. Through the rhythm of the facade. As stringent as it is, it brings liveliness to the length.

Suddenly, the moment of the bend. Distance to the street space is created. A sudden change of direction. Heralded by the stairwell tower. It protrudes and stands out. It gives plasticity to the building. It takes up one more storey than its neighbour. Makes itself taller and longer. Much longer. One hundred metres long, more than twice as long as its little brother.

The gate serves as a mediator between these worlds. It opens the space to the hidden world of production. A piece of infrastructure, the unloading and loading areas give an idea of what used to happen here. The historic entrance building frames this space. It follows the course of the road.

Along the Lageweg. Cars are speeding, and it is difficult to cross the road as a pedestrian. This is no place to stay. Either drive past quickly, or get out of here fast. Halls, covered in corrugated iron or brick, line the street. Fallow land and car parks on the opposite side. Terraced houses, now side by side with the halls. Are they pressurised or embraced?

through these works of art. They are the voices of local artists from the Blikfabriek. An attempt to create quality out of necessity. What would the building say if it could paint one itself? – Save me!?

I think of a cemetery, every closed window is a gravestone. Mourning the past. Rubbish is dumped in front of this sacred place. Therefore, the cemetery is turned into a junkyard. The unwanted was deposited here in front of the unwanted building. Who still wants you? A sad sight. A feeling of helplessness.

The building shows its face. The corner uncovers: steel behind brick. A moment of reveal. This is the structure. Steel and not brick like its old neighbour. The protection of the steel supports is falling away. Rust and decay are revealed. Its steel skeleton is now exposed to wind and weather. And yet the attempt to match it, to fit in.

## Act 6 – Confrontation

How do I explain to the building: I see who you are, I value you. But also, we need to talk about change!

To survive, you need a new purpose. To fulfil this purpose, we have to transform you.

I will be respectful.

You need a new structural system that would take off the load of your rusty steel skeleton.

You need a new function that ensures your liveliness and the fulfilment of a purpose: une raison d'être.

tbc.