







Urban Architecture Graduation Studio  
2024/2025 Low Town Down Town

The Material Garden of Gift and Waste

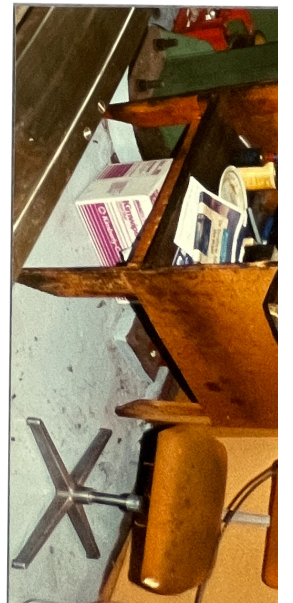
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Welcome to The Material Garden of Gift and Waste, a narrative thread in the collective exposition born from the Urban Architecture studio's expedition to Antwerp. This booklet serves as both a companion and a lens, offering a window into one of seven explorations that reveal the layered realities of this dynamic urban environment.

*"This studio goes way down low into town. We head for Antwerp, to the now rapidly developing New South area, into the patchwork of Hoboken, where medium-scaled industries, social and middle-class housing experiments and preserved polder landscapes make up an intricate testimony of a twentieth-century city-in-the-making. A halfway city, as scholars Michiel Dehaene and Annette Kuhk have labelled it: a place well on its way to shake off its suburban origins, holding in its disarray a promise of some new sort of urbanity that strikes a delicate balance of inhabitation, productivity, community and ecological resilience the traditional center has forfeited."*<sup>1</sup>

At the heart of Hoboken, a district on the southern edge of Antwerp where the remnants of a fading industrial era meet the possibilities of collective renewal, stands Blikfabriek - once a can factory, now a landscape that temporally challenges the investment-driven development and instead explores the untapped potential of communal creativity.

Blikfabriek, as we encountered it, defies the usual logic of urban renewal, becoming a site where past and future, ruin and regeneration coexist. We explored a place where work, leisure, and creation intersect, offering alternative ways to engage with the city, its people, and its resources.

However, Blikfabriek is not solely shaped by community-driven labor and innovation. External forces, such as donations from a network of supportive institutions and financial backing from the owner and future developer, help keep the site running and the lights on. Yet, for its residents, it remains a symbol of creative resistance and a safe haven from the outside world.

This booklet aims to reflect our experience of Blikfabriek and the wider urban context of Hoboken. Our exploration was not just a passive observation; it was an exercise in seeing - one that required us to experiment with various perspectives and optics to better understand the site's complexities. We invite you to not only witness our activities but also to engage with the questions we grappled with: How can we perceive this space differently, and what insights can we draw from its multifaceted nature?

We have structured the content to follow the journey we undertook - moving from broad observations to intimate engagements with the site, and then zooming back out to see the larger landscape. Through this exercise, we invite you to retrace our steps, reflect on the multi-layered nature of the space, and discover one of the seven distinct journeys that our studio has documented.

The Material Garden of Gift and Waste exhibition piece, along with this booklet, present our attempt to navigate and represent the complexities of a site where material flow, socio-economic exchange, and architectural renewal intersect. We hope it offers you a fresh perspective on the evolving relationship between people, place, and urban space.



# Underst

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**standing**







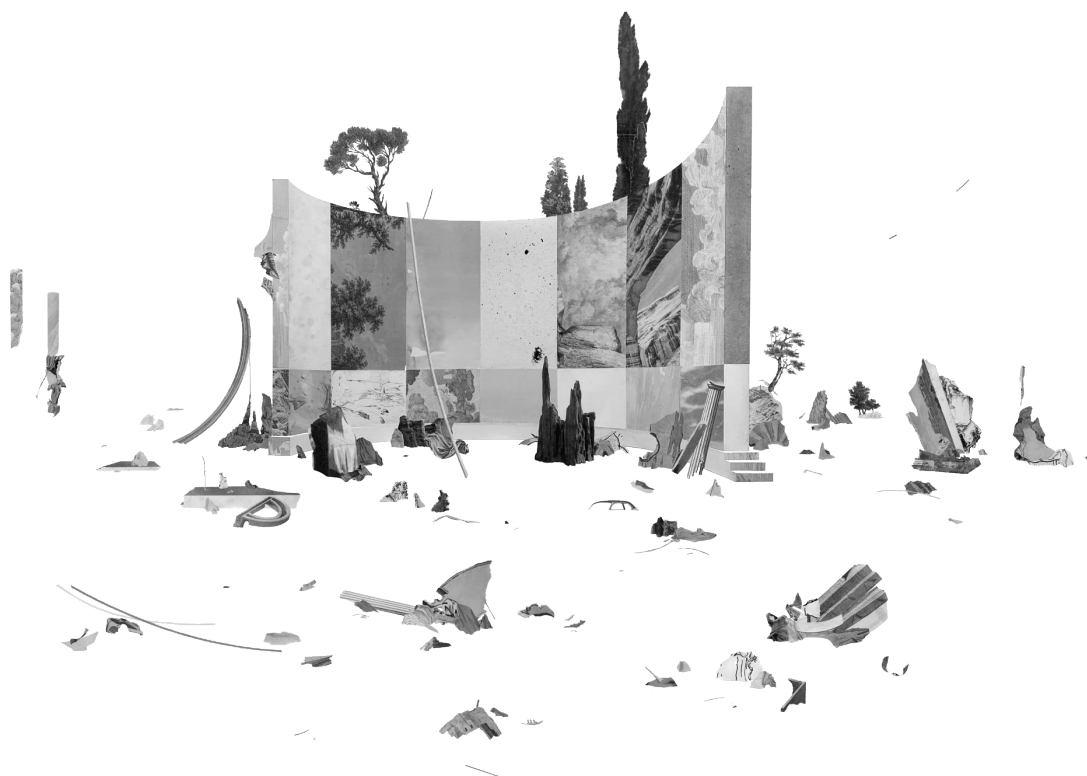
In a garden, the continuous processes of change and adaptation are readily apparent. Plants and trees grow, transforming their appearance with the seasons, while different species take turns thriving in their own time. Although a garden can be captured in a single moment, it is never a static environment.

In much the same way, at Blikfabriek, it is not the architecture of the buildings that defines the space, but the collected materials that accumulate and shift over time, creating a dynamic landscape. This landscape evolves, grows, and fosters interaction with the site. The materials leave behind traces that can be followed back to their origins, revealing more about the systems and workings of the place.

If Blikfabriek represents a living, evolving landscape, it must be explored through a lens that reflects this fluidity. As such, our research project called for a reconsideration of the tools of analysis and exploration. To understand Blikfabriek, we conceive of it as a Material Garden. We employ the layers and aspects of a garden to navigate the site and its context - while remaining mindful of avoiding the idealized, utopian notion often associated with gardens.

**“I blur things to make everything equally important and equally unimportant. I blur things so that they do not look artistic or craftsmanlike but technological, smooth and perfect. I blur things to make all the parts a closer fit. Perhaps I also blur out the excess of unimportant information.”**

G. Richter (1964-65), *Personal Notes*



04

In much the same way that Claire Trotignon's collages layer fragments to form intricate landscapes, Blikfabriek's evolving materiality constructs its own living, breathing composition. Just as Trotignon's sculptural volumes seem to emerge from or dissolve into their surroundings, Blikfabriek's materials shift, accumulate, and reshape the environment. The interplay between ruin and regeneration evokes a landscape in flux, where architecture and material grow intertwined. The scattered forms in her work reflect the site's own sense of conscious incompleteness - a landscape that reveals traces of past uses and choices about what remains hidden or exposed, echoing the non-static, adaptive nature of this 'Material Garden.'



In legion regions, the beginning of the main harvest time is marked with a yearly celebration, the harvest festival. Typically featuring large (public) banquets with food drawn from the crops, it celebrates and praises a flourishing season.

It is not uncommon that these festivities are accompanied by the distribution of produce to the poor. This marks the start of the harvest seasons also as a moment of 'gifting.'

But how should we interpret a gift coming from a garden?

Building on the works of sociologist and anthropologist Marcel Mauss, we consider these specific gifts not truly philanthropic; they carry a "spirit" that ties the giver and recipient into a cycle of mutual obligations.<sup>11</sup> This spirit is also embedded in the nature of the gift: they reflect personal and cultural identities, tied to their heritage, traditions or local knowledge. The specific crafts and practices embedded in gardening care and maintenance, is part of what is exchanged in the object.

In this perspective, gifting from, and to a garden plays an important role in forming social bonds within the community, turning the garden into a network of shared relationships. Hence, the garden becomes a space of reciprocity and relational exchange.

**"We often see what others consider waste as a gift. It happens quite frequently that someone offers wood or machines in our WhatsApp group – 'I don't need this anymore; can anyone use it?' We try to first ask if someone needs something before we throw it away. We even have a recycle corner for items we think could still be useful. What looks like garbage to one person can be a treasure to another."**

Joran, Blikfabriek resident

"Bottom Ash Observatory is an encyclopaedic book that takes the reader on a 160 page journey, following the contents of a 25 kg bucket of bottom ash. The project, and resulting tome, reveals the astounding richness of this undervalued material. Bottom Ash is incinerated household waste; the waste of the waste. Through processes of sieving, drying, laser analysing and separating tens of thousands of pieces by hand, Meindertsma extracted a wealth of different materials. The book illustrates the potential of finding value in overlooked materials such as this."<sup>15</sup>



05



Standing at the entrance of Blikfabriek, the foyer reveals itself through an oblique glance. Climbing up the narrow stairs to the left the view of the hall unfolds, but the entrance fades from view. Continuing onto the roof, the panorama of Hoboken comes into sight, but the grey bitumen obscures the view of the spaces below. Philosopher and anthropologist Bruno Latour reminds us that all images are partial, and every perspective holds equal importance. So which perspective should we chose now to represent the material garden? <sup>III</sup>

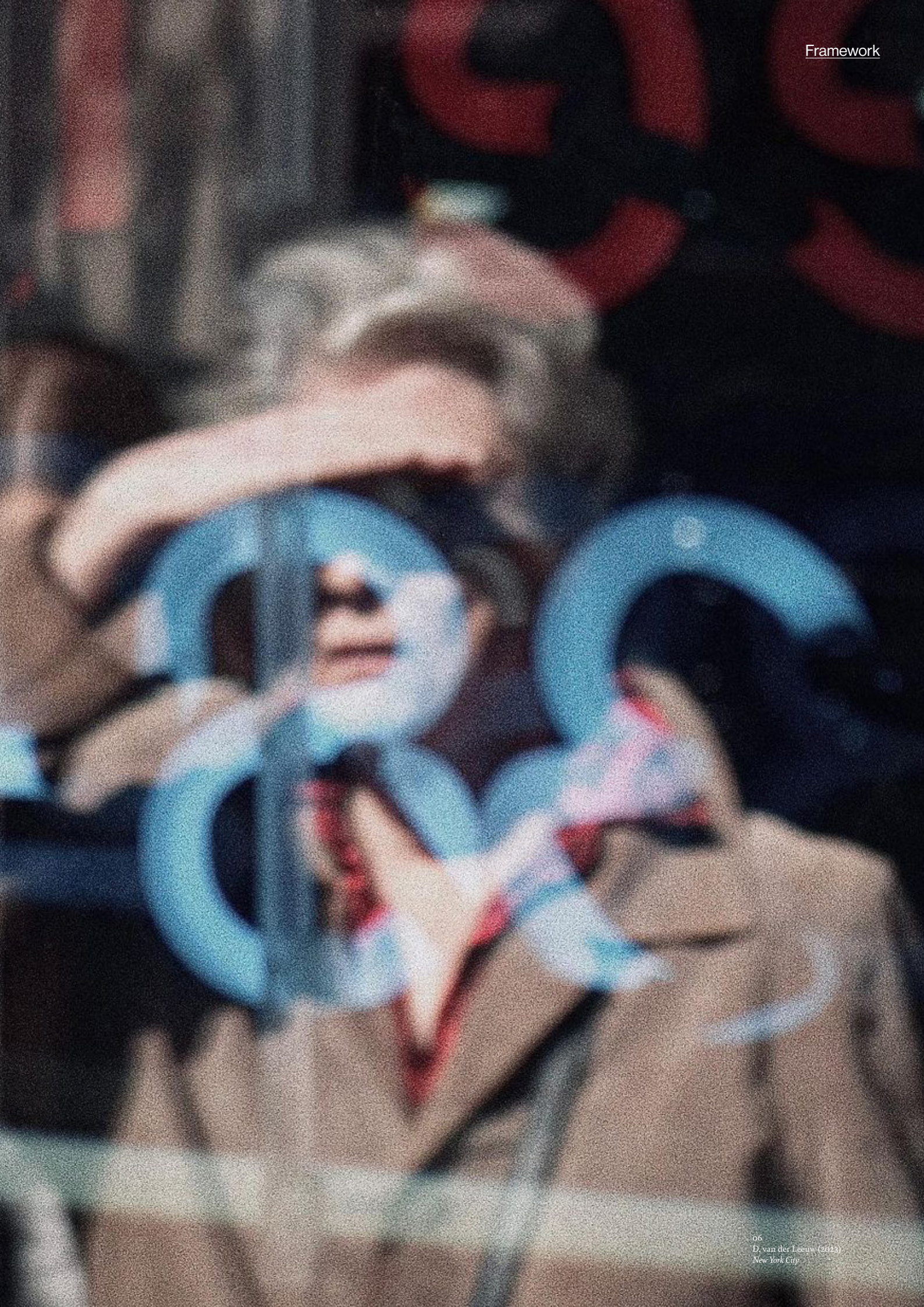
In continuation of Latour's exploration in his book *Invisible Paris*, we ask ourselves the same question: Where is this garden visible?

Following Latour's thinking, we accept that the visible cannot be captured in a single image or philosophical abstraction. Instead, it emerges through an assemblage—an unfolding sequence of images, perspectives, and pathways that format and connect. Rather than seeking a divine, omniscient viewpoint, we move around the site, making the garden visible through a series of perspectives and routes. What transforms, what is transported, what becomes distorted—all of this appears differently from one image, one vantage point to another.

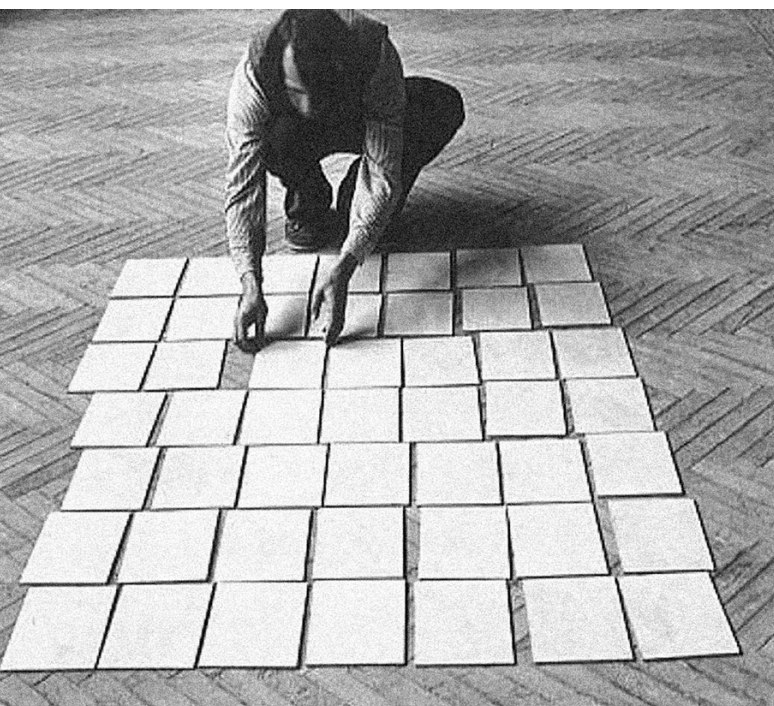
Each image should be clear, not to catch the eye, but to touch on a subject, refer to it, and most important of all, to guide from one trace to the other. Our exhibition piece, completed with 46 turnable tiles, provides multiple perspectives, encouraging an ongoing dialogue between the site and the viewer. Through these 46 lenses, we invite a layered and evolving understanding of Blikfabriek, its material flows, and its context.











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07  
F. Erhard Walther 49 (1963)  
49 Nesselplatten

08  
A. Malraux (1952)  
*Images for Le musée imaginaire*

09  
D. Adams (2012)  
*Malraux's Shoes (Video still)*

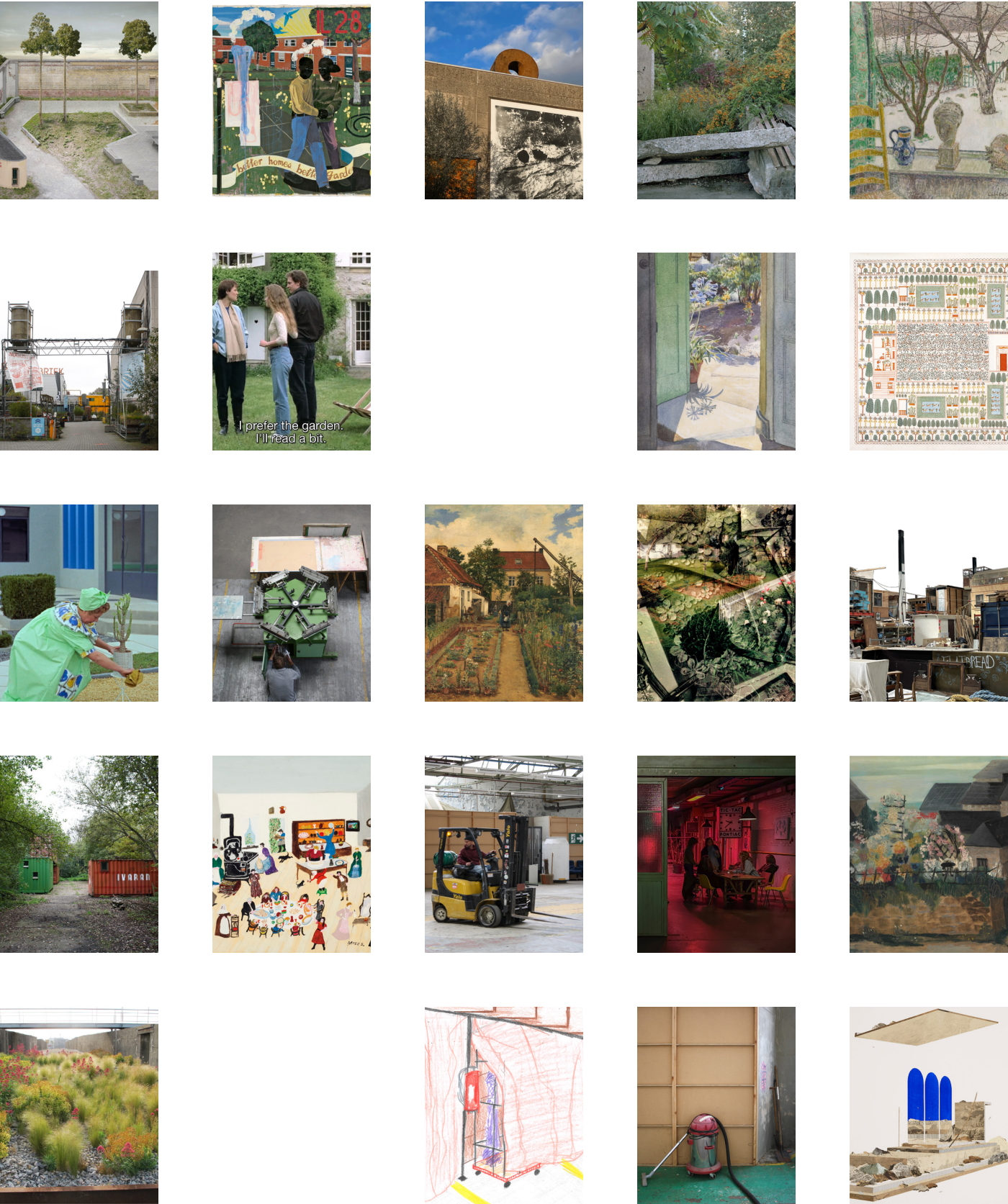




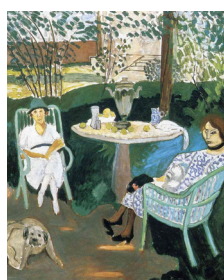
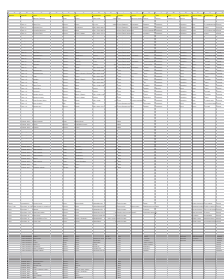
08

As we navigate Blikfabriek, we are reminded that no single image captures its essence; rather, meaning is constructed through a sequence of perspective and shifting lenses. Inspired by André Malraux's *Musée imaginaire* <sup>08</sup>, we approached the site not as a fixed entity but as a landscape revealed through the act of assembling and rearranging. Like Malraux, who believed that the relationships between images are as crucial as the images themselves, we sought to make the invisible visible by bringing together 46 perspective - each one an entry point into understanding Blikfabriek as a material garden. These references, spanning from historical to contemporary, formal to informal, real to imaginary, create a fluid narrative that shifts with every new vantage point.

As with Malraux's work, our images speak not in isolation but in conversation with each other, tracing the dynamic exchanges of the site and inviting viewers to explore the garden as something that evolves with every glance.







**Ground**



“Historically, the relation between gardens and landscapes was fundamental.”<sup>IV</sup> When speaking about a garden, its essence is often inherently linked to the ground, the exposure and the access. Hence, our first inquiry was into the groundscape of Blikfabriek. Where is the garden located? What is there? What lives and grows? How does this relate to adjacent grounds? And how do we represent it?

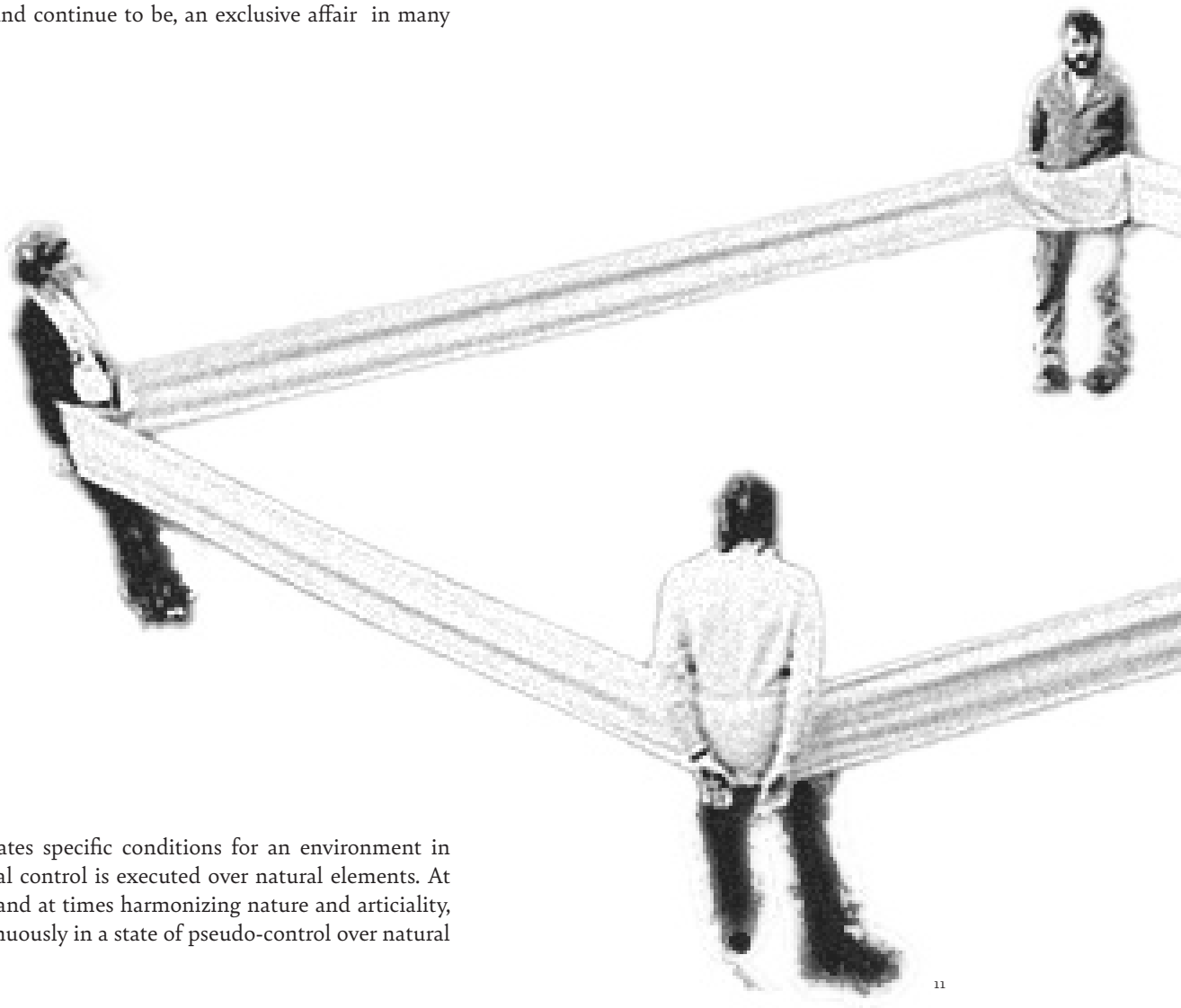
This chapter explores the tangible aspects of the Material Garden; the enclosure, the ground, the material and the architecture.

# und

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In our effort to define the garden, we must first examine the original meaning of the word and its implications. Both ‘garden’ and ‘park’ stem from terms signifying ‘enclosure’, yet it is the garden that truly embodies this characteristic in its private nature. Unlike a park, the garden keeps the ‘outdoor space’ at a distance. Where a park blurs the boundary between itself and the urban environment, the garden remains, in a sense, clear as a typology. One enters the enclosure in a formal manner, through designated access points, often requiring some form of permission to pass. As a result, gardens have historically been, and continue to be, an exclusive affair in many respects.



The enclosure creates specific conditions for an environment in which a paradoxical control is executed over natural elements. At times contrasting, and at times harmonizing nature and artificiality, it finds itself continuously in a state of pseudo-control over natural elements.

“The issue of time is relevant, because in a garden, you always have to cultivate what you do. It’s not that you can just make it and then leave it. In fact, its qualities appear if you have the time to really work with them. There’s also hopelessness to it: you’re never going to win.”<sup>V</sup>

While enclosure implies an imposed control and submission over the elements of the garden, this control, in turn, necessitates ordering principles. Within this controlled space, the grid emerges as an ideal of ordered horizontality, where the natural and artificial coexist in harmony.

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In pictorial references that explicitly depict garden spaces, the enclosure emerges as a prominent feature. Whether it is a hedge, fence, or wall, the garden is portrayed as a distinctly demarcated area. This clear contrast between the garden and the outdoor space, which typically lies beyond the frame of the image, invites the viewer's imagination to fill in the unseen. This, in turn, further emphasizes the contrast between the enclosed garden and the surrounding environment.





Taking a stroll around Blikfabriek, one immediately notices the absence of windows or access points to the interior of the factory building. Even in the courtyard, high walls enclose the open space. The site appears as a universe turned towards its inside, communicating with the surrounding urban fabric only through a single gateway. It is only where green spaces border the premises that this boundary softens slightly.

On the contrary, within the enclosure, all spaces are easily accessible, with virtually no obstacles impeding movement.





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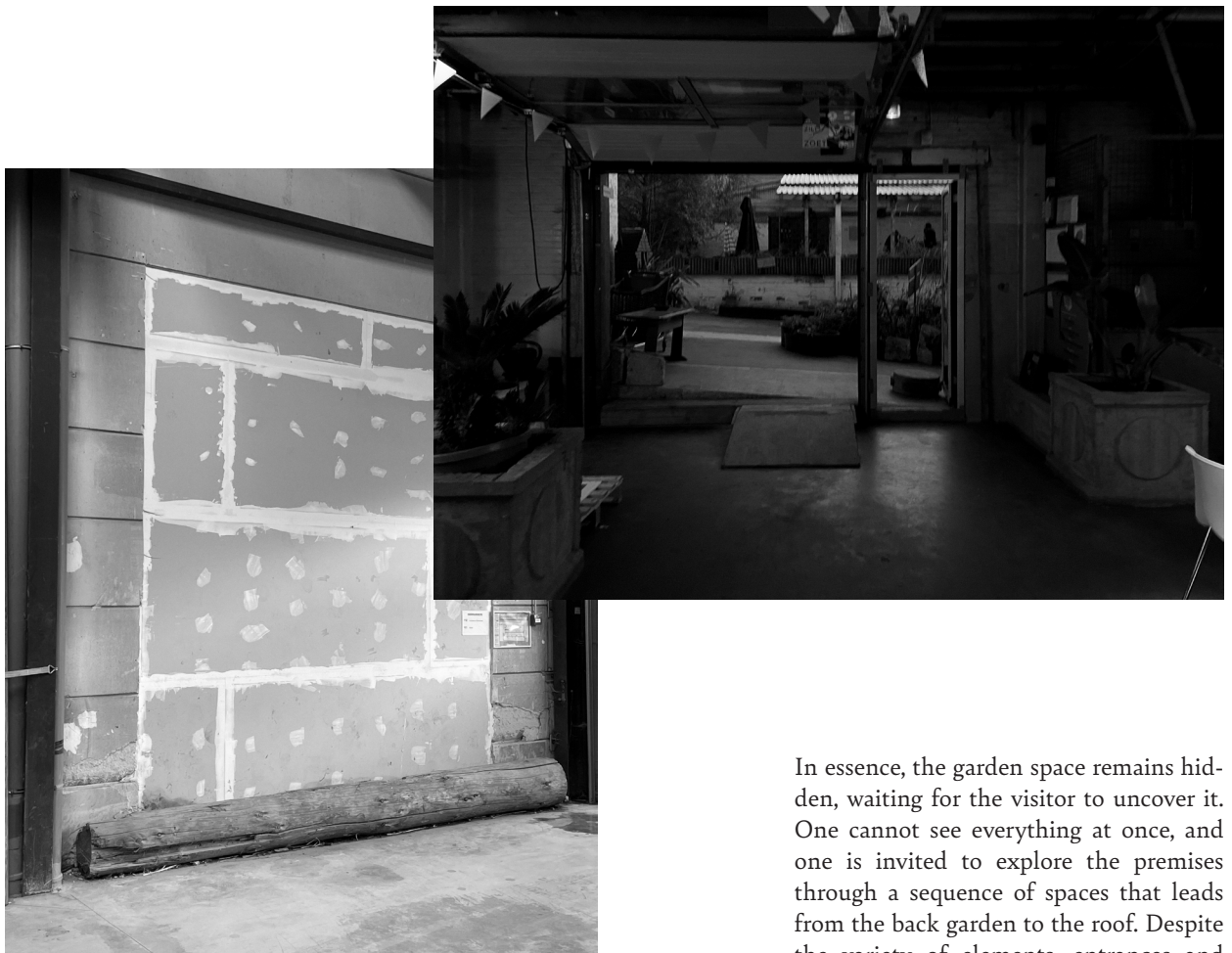


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In essence, the garden space remains hidden, waiting for the visitor to uncover it. One cannot see everything at once, and one is invited to explore the premises through a sequence of spaces that leads from the back garden to the roof. Despite the variety of elements, entrances and staircases, the visual experience stays cohesive, creating a sense of continuity. As we walk around, the surroundings begin to feel less hostile, and the space starts to appear. Our true exploration can begin.



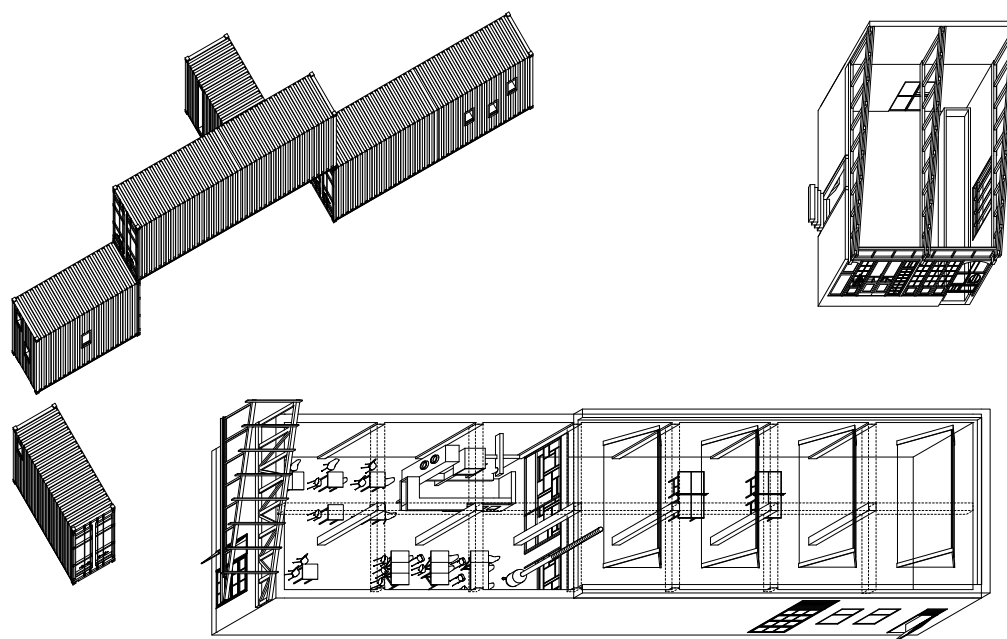


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| pavilion |       | pavilion |       | pavilion |       | pavilion |       | pavilion |
| pavilion |       | pavilion |       | pavilion |       | pavilion |       | pavilion |
| pavilion |       | pavilion |       | pavilion |       | pavilion |       | pavilion |
| pavilion |       | pavilion |       | pavilion |       | pavilion |       | pavilion |
| shed     | shed  | shed     | shed  | shed     | shed  | shed     | shed  | shed     |
| shed     | shed  | shed     | shed  | shed     | shed  | shed     | shed  | shed     |
| shed     | shed  | shed     | shed  | shed     | shed  | shed     | shed  | shed     |
| shed     | shed  | shed     | shed  | shed     | shed  | shed     | shed  | shed     |
| house    | house | house    | house | house    | house | house    | house | house    |
| house    | house | house    | house | house    | house | house    | house | house    |
| house    | house | house    | house | house    | house | house    | house | house    |
| house    | house | house    | house | house    | house | house    | house | house    |



The spatial experience of the Material Garden is not solely defined by its open floorplan; the placement of architectural objects plays a crucial role in shaping these spaces. These objects create a variety of spatial sequences, forming a distinctive part of the garden's scenography. Existing at Blikfabriek in the curious condition of being either interior or exterior spaces in a larger interior, its situation is rather unique. Being in a state of constant contradiction, we attempt to understand their peculiar state of being through their function and typology.

Having identified pavilions, sheds, follies, and a house, we asked ourselves: what do these structures signify?



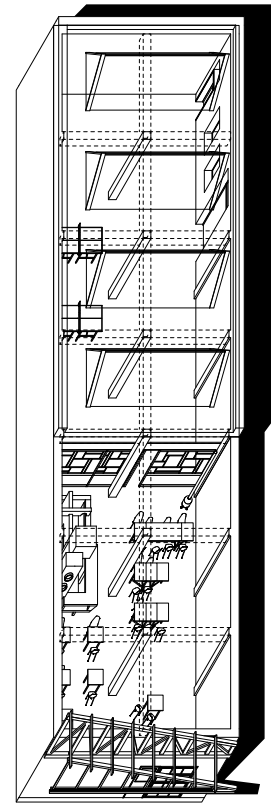






As with the concept of enclosure, a house is a recurring element in garden representation. Whether it emphasizes the domestic nature of the scenery or the extension of interior spaces into the exterior, a garden house can be viewed as a metaphor for humanity's relationship with nature. In this sense, it becomes a place of shelter, a retreat, a symbol of 'homeness' in contrast to the surrounding barren landscape. While this might seem contradictory within the 'controlled' environment of a garden, it suggests a certain comfort not easily found elsewhere.

At Blikfabriek, one structure consistently meets these criteria: Cantine. It is where people take breaks, linger after work, and gather for conversation. Warm and inviting, it feels disconnected from the outside world. Here, we found our house.



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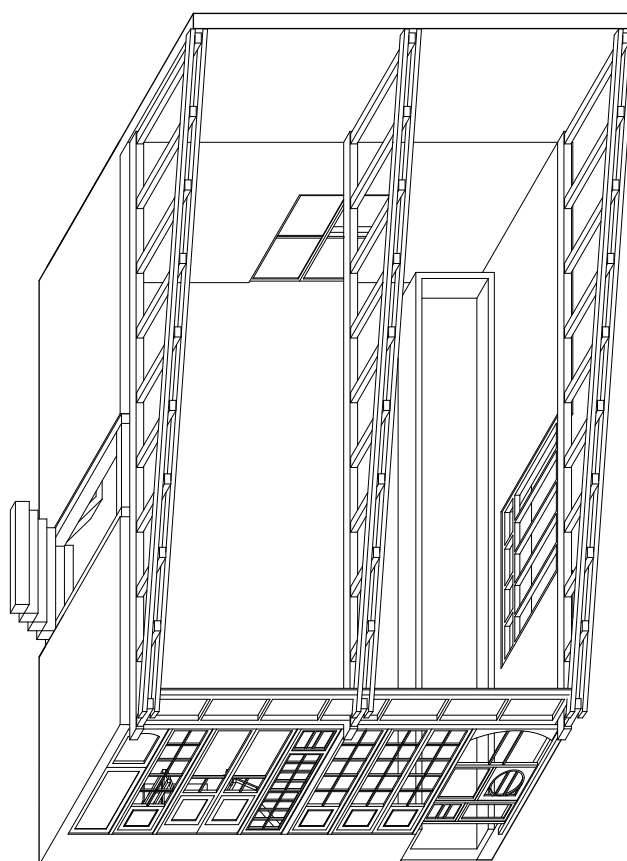


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“A Pavilion is a flexible architectural open space that invites people to come in and spend time in it. It could be temporary or permanent and might even change its form and function.”<sup>VI</sup>

Pavilions invite playful interaction with the site. They can be seen as micro-universes, offering different perspectives and experiences within the larger landscape, while remaining an integral part of it.









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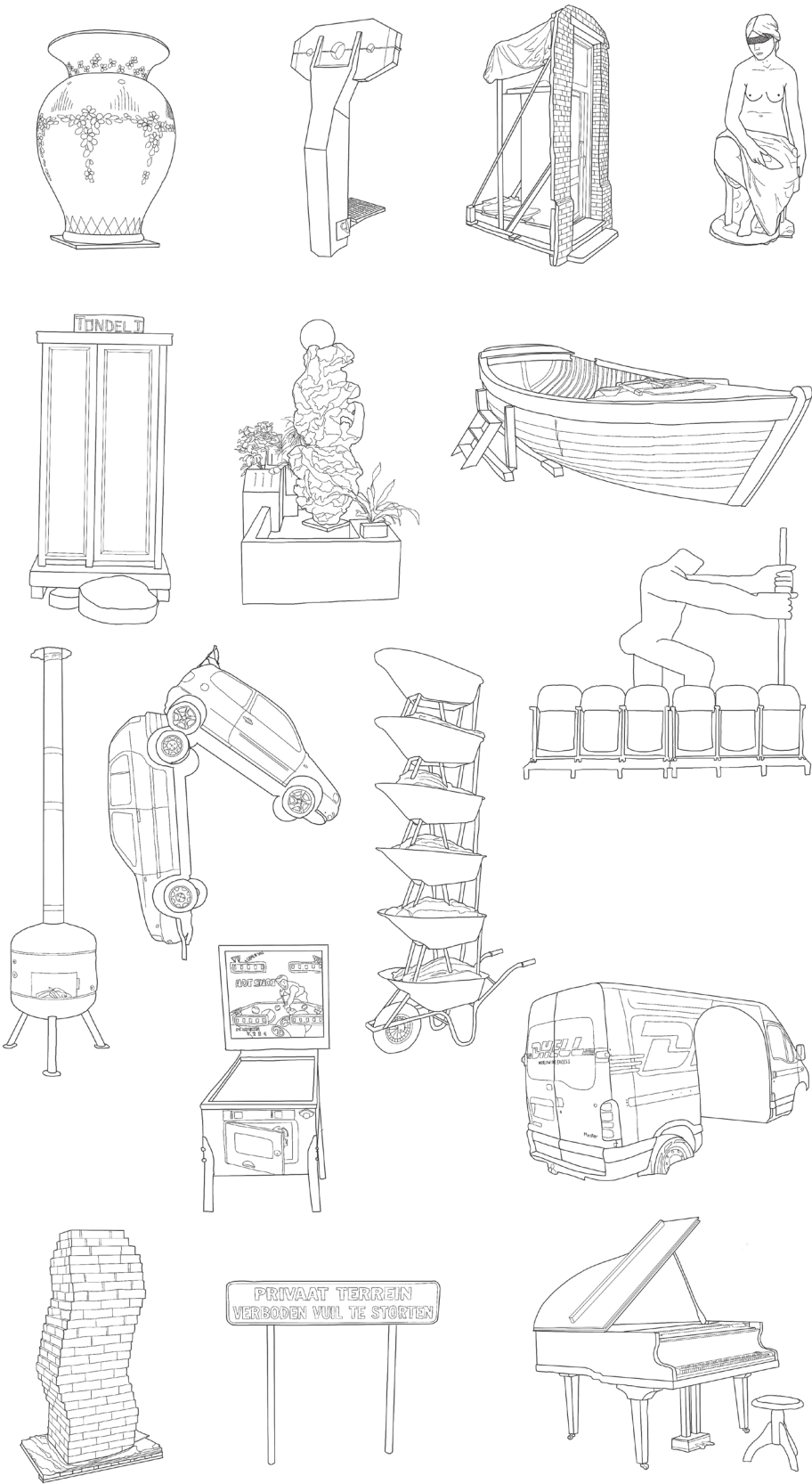
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The shed, humble and pragmatic, occupies spaces in the shadow in the Material Garden. Historically tied to simplicity, its origins as a ‘schudde’ or hovel for beasts remind us that it began as a structure on the edge of human habitation, closer to nature.<sup>VII</sup> In the contemporary garden, however, the shed holds a different place - home not to animals but to tools,

chairs, and the remnants of past projects. At Blikfabriek, the material is stored in shelves, sitting on wooden pallets, or simply peaking out of cardboard boxes. The sheds we encounter are more than mere shelters; they are architectural objects that blur the line between the pragmatic utility and scenography. These sheds, covered by curtains and filled with the traces of human activity, extend the garden’s narrative of time, where the boundary between past and future project is constantly revisited.



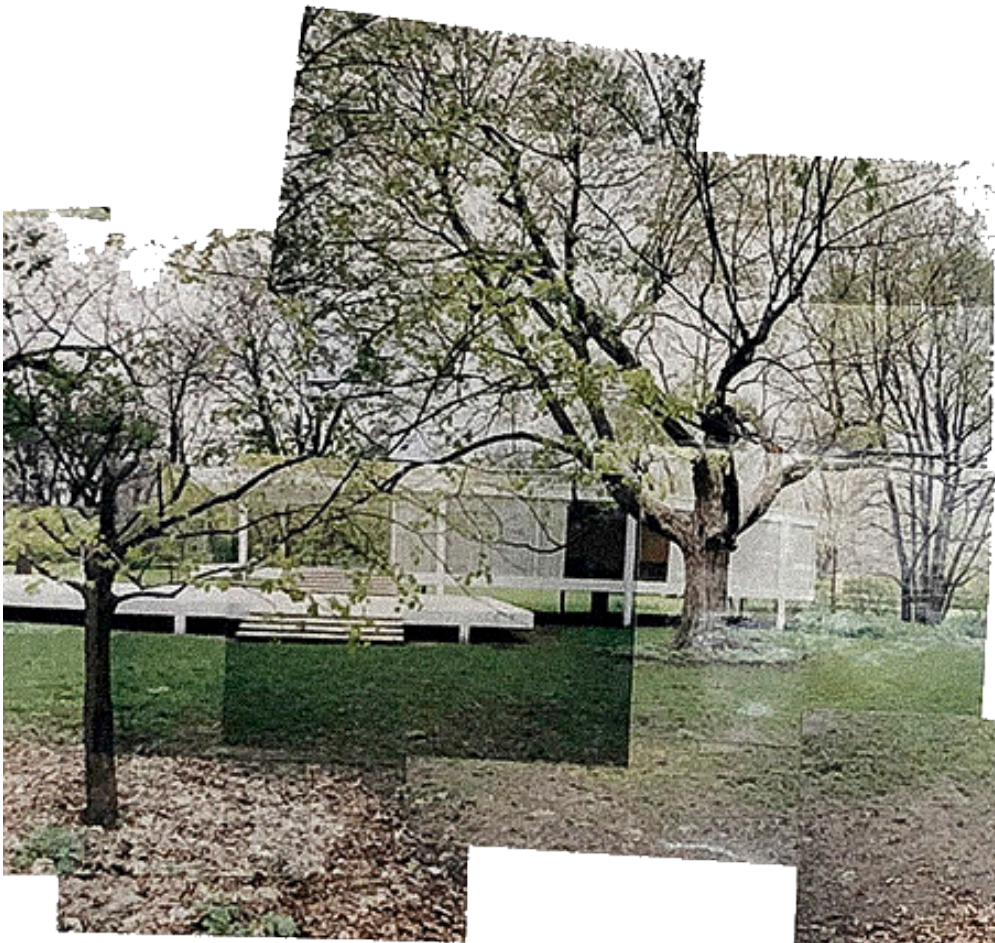




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According to the Encyclopedia Britannica a “Folly, (from French folie, “foolishness”), also called Eyecatcher, in architecture, [is] a costly, generally nonfunctional building that was erected to enhance a natural landscape.”<sup>VIII</sup>

At Blikfabriek, artists are permitted to store their large artworks until they find a new home for them. These ‘follies’ become a distinctive part of the landscape, often ‘stored in plain sight.’ Their conspicuousness among the piles of various indistinct materials makes the follies points of reference and orientation within the space.



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Let us begin this subchapter with an assumption. We will adopt John Dixon Hunt's definition of a garden, as articulated in the second chapter of his book *Greater Perfection*. Hunt writes: "The specific area of the garden will be deliberately related through various means to the locality in which it is set: (...), and by drawing out the character of its site (the *genius loci*)."<sup>IX</sup>

We now assume that this holds true for *Blikfabriek*, and that by unraveling its layers, we can uncover something about the unique character of this site.

Our approach must follow a structured order. It is not the architecture but the groundscape and its exposure that dictate what can grow here. To grasp this, we must first discard the conventional dichotomy of interior and exterior spaces. By suppressing the presence of the building, we can obtain a clearer view of the various soils and how material traces have inscribed themselves into the landscape. These traces, in turn, inform us about the different cultures that have flourished at *Blikfabriek*.

IX  
J. Dixon Hunt (2004)  
*Greater Perfection*





Upon entering Blikfabriek, one is immediately overwhelmed by the sheer number of objects, installations, and materials scattered throughout the site. A sense of total anarchy seems to govern the premises, with no apparent organization, ordering principle, or hierarchy in sight. Any attempt to categorize this inventory would be futile, as by the next day, the landscape will have shifted

- the hills eroded, the fruits picked, the scenery transformed. How, then, can one make sense of this seemingly random arrangement? The materials appear to follow their own elusive logic, fluctuating at their chosen pace.









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However, upon closer inspection, one begins to notice that certain objects return to the same storage places after each use, that some piles remain untouched, and that there is a steady influx of new materials. What hidden principle governs this continuous motion? A thorough investigation would reveal no manual, no control room, no board of executives.

Joris' personal point of view is of no interest to us yet. We'll revert to it in a while. From where he stands, issuing directions, it is impossible for him to oversee all the objects and spaces. At most, he might catch a glimpse of half a hall, or a diagonal view past some curtains, if he positions himself strategically. Yet, when he shifts his focus from the dusty hall to his phone screen, the perspective radically changes. No longer does he see concrete columns, steel frames, or wooden planks. Instead, he sees written messages, donations, and requests, transmitted through internet cables and Wi-Fi signals. As Joris fixes his gaze on the phone, immersed in the coded world of messages, the space, the time, and the materials come into focus. Blikfabriek becomes visible.





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“Blikfabriek cherishes dreams, Maakfabriek has clients.” Whenever cultural institutions have surplus materials, they reach out to Joris to see if he can use them. He then decides where these materials should go and for which projects they will be used. If he receives more than he can handle, the remainder is offered to others at Maakfabriek.

In WhatsApp groups, findings and leftovers are actively exchanged among people from Maakfabriek; waste materials are valued before being discarded. These materials follow various paths through the building, leaving their mark in the built projects and etching scratches on the walls and floors.









What may initially appear to be an enormous, open-access, free-for-all material stock is, in fact, a carefully curated allotment, reserved for future (often personal) projects. On closer inspection, the method of storing these materials reveals a subtle care: stored behind curtains, stacked in boxes, or arranged on shelves, the materials are rarely left scattered or neglected. Yet, as the stock grows and expands, materials slowly spill into the spaces, revealing themselves beneath curtains or around corners, gradually leaving their traces on the site.



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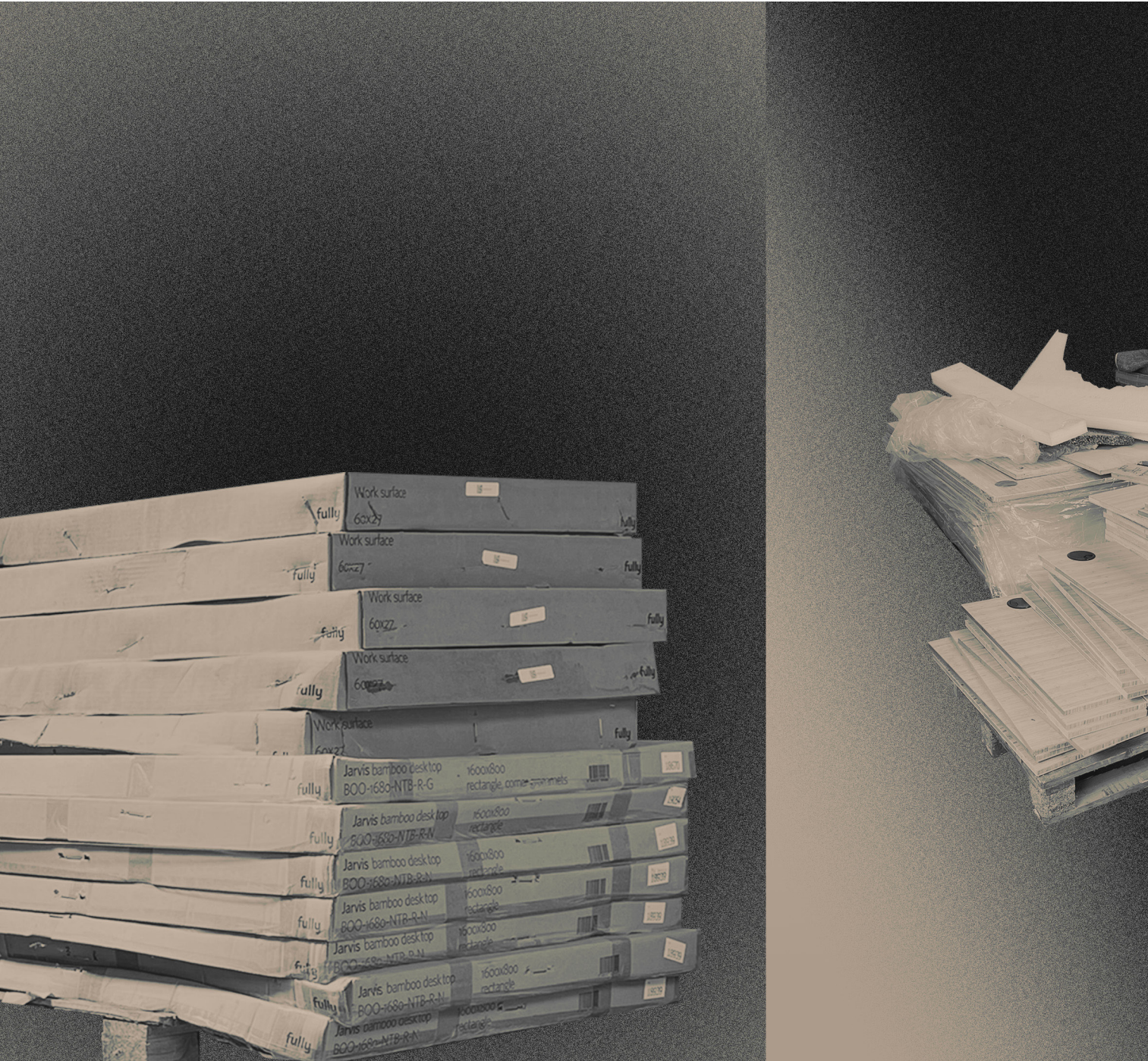
38  
Authors (2024)  
*Peeking through*

39  
Authors 2024  
*Material Pile*

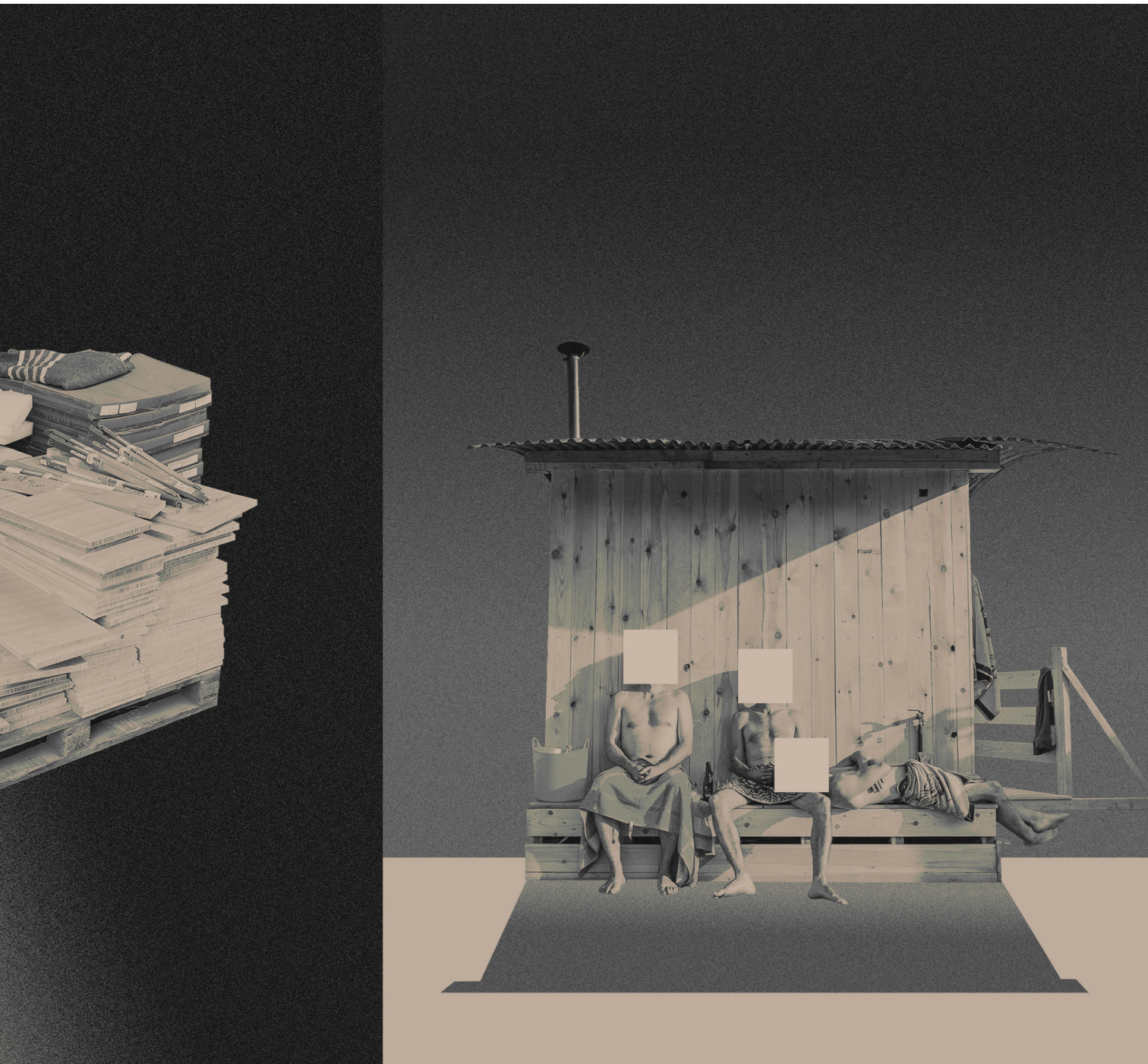
40  
Authors (2024)  
*Behind the curtain*

41  
Authors (2024)  
*Behind the curtain, Sketch*













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A state of equilibrium is only reached over time, as the initial, short-lived elements make way for more enduring ones. So, in this process, materials flow both in and out of Blikfabriek. The site becomes a micro-link in local, national, and international networks. Some elements leave as waste, others as gifts; some are sold, while others remain temporarily. Their presence strengthens Blikfabriek's connection to Antwerp and beyond, acting as a tangible expression of its link to the 'outside' world.



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# Care



Now that we have addressed the physical aspects of the garden, it is time to focus on its keeper. Maintaining a garden is essential not only to its functioning but also to its perception and experience. As Rein-Cano suggests:

“In fact, its qualities appear if you have the time to really work with them.”<sup>x</sup>

This implies that the garden only becomes visible when someone tends to it consistently and carefully. With this in mind, we will explore the works and care that bring Blikfabriek to life. But most importantly, we ask: Who is the gardener, and where can we find them?





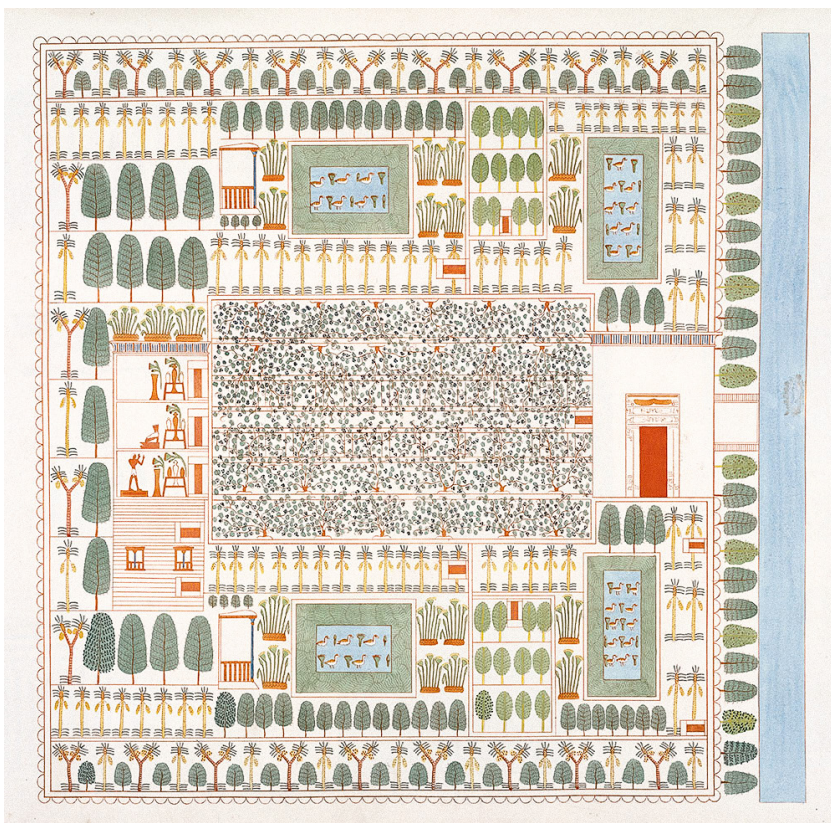


The association of a garden with the notion of utopia stretches back a long way. One might think of Oriental Gardens, sacred spaces that represent the world as a microcosm, in the serene setting of the vegetation. From this perspective, it is not surprising that the word “paradise” stems from the ancient Persian term meaning “walled garden.”<sup>XI</sup>

This utopian concept was later theorized as the harmonization of (high) culture and untamable nature. At its foundation lies the ground grid, an ideal of ordered horizontality where the natural and artificial coexist in balance. The argument follows that the grid stood at the origin of the garden, as it emerged as attempts at ordering the ground plane. In this sense, modern gardens evolved through the modulation and expansion of this grid. However, when the grid tightens, it becomes a network of regulations and surveillance, suffocating the environment.

**“I mean, I show it like it is. It’s a fantastic place, fantastic people, and kind of the bad people that used to be here, they’re kind of leaving for some reason, so the place kind of stays in the same way, in a magic way.”**

Oleksiy, Blikfabriek resident



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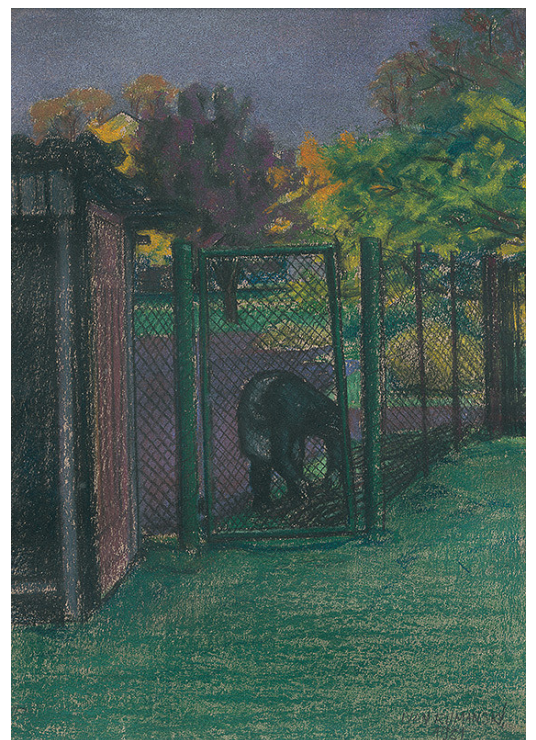




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“The issue of time is relevant, because in a garden, you always have to cultivate what you do. It’s not that you can just make it and leave it. In fact, its qualities appear if you have the time to really work with them. There’s also hopelessness to it: you’re never going to win. But this is also why people love gardening, because it’s almost relaxing to know that you will never win.”

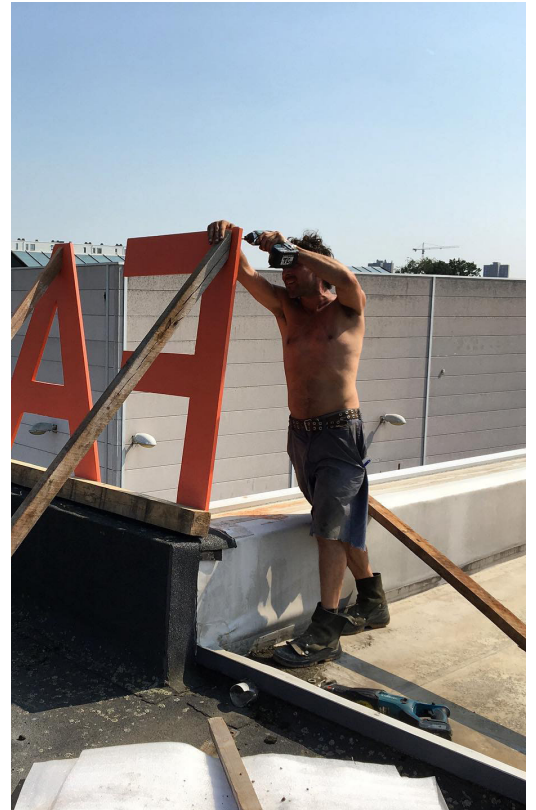
M. Rein-Cano, Interview for CCA



52

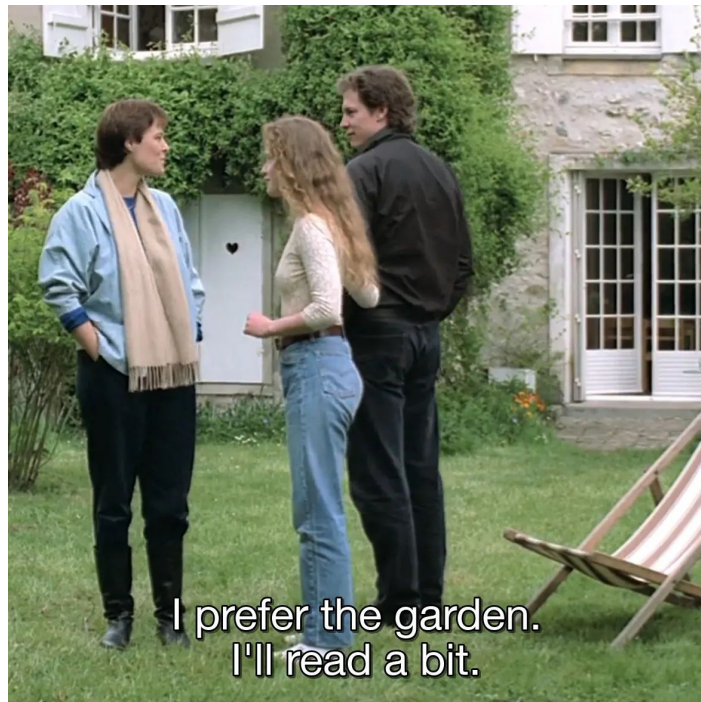


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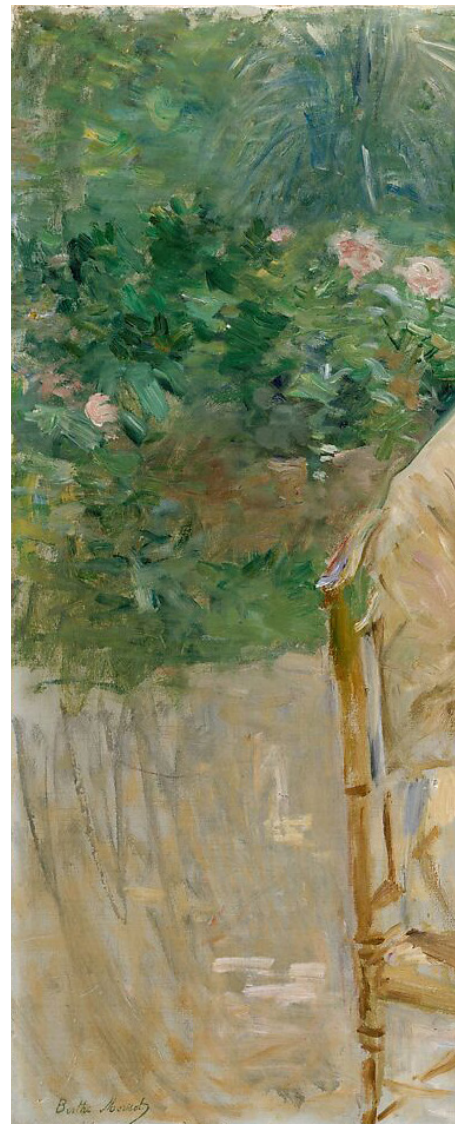


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If the grid exerts system and control, merging order and pleasure, it provides the garden with a utopian dimension. In this light, the garden is often portrayed as offering intellectual or spiritual rewards, thus contributing to (domestic) well-being. It is worth noting, however, that the main benefactors of a garden are often associated with leisure activities. A glance at garden representations reveals a panoply of tea and dinner parties, picnics, and leisurely reading in the sun. The (often heavy) maintenance work is rarely depicted. Yet, as we know, it is only through careful tending that a garden truly flourishes. This leaves us to wonder: Perhaps a garden is not entirely utopian?

At Blikfabriek, everything has been built from the ground up. The material traces speak of hard labor; there are no tea parties to be found. We have to find our utopia elsewhere. While the expansive, open nature of the space might seem like an obvious answer, it isn't what we uncovered. Instead, the utopia here transcends the physical—it resides within the community itself. What they cherish most is the absence of control, the freedom that permeates the site, where no one dictates what they can or cannot do.



57







When people enter Maakfabriek, they are allocated a 5-by-3-meter space, marked out with tape on the bare concrete floor. While their construction is confined to this specific ground space, there are no limits on how high they can build towards the ceiling. Each Maker is responsible for their own construction - no rules apply, and no hierarchy governs the hall. The result is a landscape of makeshift towers, some soaring up to three stories high.

In the middle of the space, they share machinery and leftover materials, and at times, their workspaces spill into the common areas. However, personal objects, machines, and materials are securely stored within their individual towers. What might appear to be unique personal expressions are, in fact, mostly practical storage and workspaces, designed for functional use.



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**“The community feeling, the home feeling, but also the place that I can do what I want. That’s also very important of artistic process. the freedom that you can get over here.”**

Siglinde, Blikfabriek resident







Behind the walls of Blikfabriek, exchange is a daily theme for the residents of the studios in De Stelling and Maakfabriek. The shared space and tools foster a sense of community where even small scraps of material find new life in someone else's project. Yet, it's important to move beyond a romanticized view of this exchange as a utopian ideal where everything is shared. Waste may escape its fate by becoming a gift for someone else, but this is often an unconscious act rather than an intentional gesture of generosity.

The community of Makers is diverse, including both professionals and hobbyists who work alongside their day jobs. For some, this is their first experience owning a workshop, while for others, it's an extension of their daily work. The members come from various backgrounds, hailing from different parts of the world, and while they exchange advice, offer assistance on specific tasks, and learn new skills from one another, their focus tends to remain on their own projects, rarely extending beyond personal interests.



# Season

The irregular, seemingly random alterations of Blikfabriek's landscape suggest that its evolution is driven by external factors, but obscured in any given moment. What appears to be haphazard change gradually reveals itself as a pattern of regular seasonality, governed by clear principles of maintenance and harvest – such as repair and production. To uncover these underlying principles, a meticulous observation of a typical work-day seemed to be the key, offering insight into the rhythm that sustains this ever-evolving environment.

# son









**“Sometimes somebody posts, ‘Hey, there’s somebody renovating their house and they threw away a lot, come and pick it up, you can get it for free.’ We try to get as much as we can for free.”**

Joran, Blikfabriek resident



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**“But then again, I mean, in the winter, the plants grow much slower; there’s less light, so the garden is kind of okay during that time. You don’t have to do much. It will probably get busier before spring, to clean it up and plant flowers, for when we open again.”**

Michael, Blikfabriek’s volunteer gardener

The makers at Maakfabriek largely operate in tune with the rhythm of their orders. While they may receive gifted materials, they typically source what they need themselves. As their clientele increases, so does their time spent in the workshop. With multiple projects underway, their workspaces and storage areas inevitably expand, resulting in the gradual but atypical growth of the Maakfabriek.

Conversely, the flow of donated materials fuels the projects at Blikfabriek. Its growth and upkeep rely on two factors: the availability of materials and the skilled hands to bring projects to life. A paradox emerges—when Maakfabriek thrives, Blikfabriek slows or even pauses. Materials that cannot be used immediately are stored away, yet as the inventory expands they gradually escape their confines, pile up and become visible. Once again they prompt the landscape to grow.



# Refle

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What a strange thought: what appears to be a landscape frozen in time, rusted in place, is actually in constant evolution. The heavy piles of materials move as swiftly as leaves carried by the wind, driven by unseen forces. Within the protective enclosure of Blikfabriek, we uncovered an unfamiliar territory governed by its own set of rules and logic. Yet, this framework occupies only a small physical space. Its true power remains invisible—it lives in the minds of its keepers. Their community flourishes beyond the grid of the ordered garden, untouched by any controlling institution.

# etion

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Taking the garden as a transformed grid, Blikfabriek exists at the intersection of the natural, uncontrollable sky above and the rigidity of the archetypal ground grid. When the grid tightens, when control and surveillance take over, creativity stagnates, Blikfabriek starts to disappear. However, when it loosens and opens up, it is in between the lines of the grid, in between the physical and virtual networks, that Blikfabriek comes to life.

It resides in a permanent state of 'ordered chaos,' neither a utopia nor a wilderness. Yet this life thrives only within the privacy of its enclosure, hidden from the city's gaze. But when our eyes get used to the dark, we start to see clear. The seeming disparity and arbitrariness dissolve, and the whole reveals itself. Seasons become distinct, movements articulate. Kept in motion by the pragmatic hands of its keepers, Blikfabriek gradually grows, expanding its influence. It occupies the edge of the governed world, being at the same time the smallest parcel of the world and a total world in itself.







We started our exploration with this panorama, and now, eight weeks later, we return to it. Standing firmly on the roof panels, clouds drift by in the light blue sky, merging with the grey of the bitumen. In the far distance, Antwerp nestles itself along the curves of the Schelde. As a counter-gift to Blikfabriek, as to prove our commitment, breathing the sawdust, sleeping on the cold floors, staggering up the shaky staircases, we have put together this booklet. From our high up viewpoint, we now understand that the research on Blikfabriek was not only to explore its multiple perspectives, its community or its materials, but also to pay a small tribute to its idiosyncrasy, complexity and its charm.





