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Reading Sites, Building Stories

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As Found

International colloquium on adaptive reuse

5-7 September 2023

📍 Hasselt & Antwerp, Belgium

Hasselt University &
Flanders Architecture Institute

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



Vlaamse
overheid

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Opening new horizons



IMAGE: Castelvecchio Museum Verona by architect Carlo Scarpa (cc) presso Archivio Paolo Monti

AS FOUND INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ON ADAPTIVE REUSE
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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Organized by the Faculty of Architecture and Arts of Hasselt University and
Flanders Architecture Institute

5-7 September 2023 in Antwerp & Hasselt

Conference Chairs and editors: Bie Plevoets, Hülya Ertas, Sofie De Caigny



Fig.1, Glaneurs and glaneuses: exhibition as excavation of a site during the Urban Architecture graduation studio, Faculty of Architecture in Delft. Photograph by Leeke Reinders, 2021.

READING SITES, BUILDING STORIES

Leeke Reinders, Paul Vermeulen
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Doing architecture is an act of bricolage. New things take shape out of the existing. The architect makes do with the materials at hand. Accidents happen, incidents occur, circumstances meet. The site-specific nature of the architectural project opens up questions on how to work with materials at hand and as found, and how to capture, approach and unlock their meanings and stories.

This paper explores acts of reading, narrating and translating sites as fields of architectural exploration. It grows out of an ongoing educational and research program, developed in the Chair of Urban Architecture at Delft University of Technology, which engages with the real stuff and site-specific elements of the city. Architecture is approached from a sustainable understanding of structures and materials, that in a sense are continuously ‘on the move’, transforming from one project, meaning or purpose to another. In the paper, work from three graduation studios is used to reflect on ways of acting upon the materials and conditions of a site and how to ‘read’ cultural, historical and political forces at work. The potentials of sites are exploited through the exhibitions of visual media, working from section drawings and material samples to moving pictures and sequential stories.

The paper argues for stretching and thickening the architectural project. To stretch means to improvise and experiment; a willingness to cross disciplinary boundaries, to see through spatial scales and to involve notions of past, present and future. To thicken requires time and care; to look careful, be non-judgemental, and embrace ambiguity and contradiction. The architecture of bricolage, we argue, refers to acts of interpretation, adaptation, re-use and juxtaposition. The existing materials are input for design thinking, as resources and components. They refer to physical elements of a site, as well as to neighborhood structures, social spaces, political and economic developments. To bricks and buildings as well as stories and histories.

Sites are found, stories to be told. The paper offers three episodes of fieldwork, that each touches upon a specific feature of the as-found as architectural discourse. ‘Spolia’ introduces the collector and the practice of re-purposing and re-use: to transplant existing pieces into new structures. ‘Bricolage’ offers architecture as a science of the concrete and specific; to make do, and use what is at hand. ‘Gleaning’ concerns acts of reading and reaping; the glaneurs harvest the field by collecting left-overs. In three episodes the paper explores an architecture that acts upon the existing and grows out of the specifics of a place and time. The paper is a collaboration between practicing architects and an anthropologist, and is inspired by practical needs and academic reflection [1].

- [1] Carol J. Burns & Andrea Kahn (eds.), *Site matters: design concepts, histories and strategies* (Routledge, 2005), Charles Jencks & Nathan Silver, *Adhocism: the case for improvisation* (Secker & Warburg, 1972), Claude Lichtenstein & Thomas Schregenerberger (eds.), *As found: the discovery of the ordinary* (Lars Müller, 2001), Aldo Rossi, *The architecture of the city* (MIT Press, 1982), Colin Rowe & Fred Koetter, *Collage city* (MIT Press, 1995), Irénée Scalbert, *Never modern* (Park Books, 2013).

Leeke Reinders is an anthropologist who explores different ways of thinking, sensing and doing the city. In his research, writing and education he works on the intersections between theories of the city, anthropological fieldwork and practices of urban design and (interior) architecture. He works in the chair of Urban Architecture at Delft University of Technology. In the recent past, he was involved in courses and graduation projects at the Faculty of Architecture of KU Leuven in Brussels and Ghent, the Design Academy Eindhoven, the Academy of Architecture in Rotterdam, and the international master of Interior Architecture (INSIDE) at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague.

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This colloquium is organized as an extension of the exhibition *As Found: Experiments in Preservation* by the Flanders Architecture Institute. Curated by Sofie De Caigny, Hülya Ertas and Bie Plevoets, the exhibition is on show at De Singel, Antwerp, from 6 September 2023 to 17 March 2024. The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue, available in English (ISBN: 9789492567321) and Dutch (ISBN: 9789492567338).

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