



When large government-owned monuments are renovated it is customary in the Netherlands to appoint a restoration architect alongside the principal architect. Consequently, for the Rijksmuseum a separate selection was held among five architectural restoration firms. For this complex assignment, it proved difficult to formulate the brief and the responsibilities. Also, the addition of a theme – ‘Continue with Cuypers’ – gave rise to a great variety of interpretations concerning the building and the restoration.

On 12 April 2001 the views on the restoration were presented in The Hague by five firms: Architectenbureau J. van Stigt, Verlaan en Bouwstra architecten, Braaksma & Roos Architectenbureau partnered by Rappange & Partners Architecten, and Van Hoogevest Architecten. The assessment committee, chaired by Jo Coenen, was the same as that for the selection of the principal architect, and was backed by a special restoration advice committee led by professor Frits van Voorden from Delft University of Technology. Cruz y Ortiz arquitectos was also represented on the committee, since the role of the restoration architect would be a supportive one to the principal architects holding ultimate responsibility for the project. Both architecture firms would have to work closely together, so a good working relationship was a necessity. Coenen had also discussed this with the restoration architects and with Cruz y Ortiz;¹ accordingly, Cruz y Ortiz’s input was very important. The preference, though not unanimous, was for Van Hoogevest. All the firms met the considerable demands of the complex assignment, but Van Hoogevest was considered to be the most suitable ‘as regards professional know-how, experience and collaboration with the principal architect’.²

Vision Statement

The restoration architects received a letter inviting them to present a scenario for the Rijksmuseum as a monument, as part of the *structuurplan 2000*, and with the same general premises as those put before the principal architects.³ The main emphasis was on the rehabilitation of the architectural quality of the Cuypers concept (the resolution of the ‘traffic interchange’), and the approach to questions relating to structural design, building performance and services engineering. At this stage the restoration architects were not yet asked for plans, just initial ideas. Unlike the invited competition for the principal architects – and remarkably in view of the process that followed – for this assignment building archaeological research was to receive particular attention. It would be conducted prior to, but also during, renovation.⁴ The restoration architects were required to indicate how they thought such research could be integrated in the design. They were also asked to consider how an extensive decorative programme might be executed for the interior (in technical, logistical and financial terms).

From the start, Van Hoogevest’s ideas on how to approach the task differed from those of Cruz y Ortiz. In his vision statement, monument-specific, building archaeological, technological and usage aspects took a prominent place: structural solutions for technical shortcomings bearing in mind the significance of the monument, and suitability for the principal and the user.⁵ The firm was of the opinion that

4.1 Original entrance in the north wall of the western courtyard.



research into the building's structural history was absolutely essential in determining the monumental value. The results could affect the restoration plan, which would therefore have to be fairly flexible. After all, historical remains that might be revealed during the process could precipitate fresh interpretations and so mean adjustments to the design. According to Van Hoogevest, rehabilitation of the features of Cuypers' original design concept had implications for the spatiality as well as the decoration. Ultimately, they were part of his overall architectural concept, in which walls, vaults, floors and windows formed a comprehensive whole according to a specific iconographic programme and sophisticated colour palette. If the filled-in courtyards were cleared, blocked windows were opened up and the original museum galleries were reconstructed (for example, by removing false ceilings), the daylight museum could regain its original structure and character. In addition, painted-over decorations might conceivably be rehabilitated selectively, for example in public areas, where there would not be a conflict with the presentation of the collection. The library and Aduard Chapel could serve as examples.

The vision statement also presented by way of example the results of an initial study by Van Hoogevest into the original decoration in the Great Hall. An artisanal approach to possible reconstruction of the wall paintings was proposed. In that respect, Van Hoogevest urged researching the colours and technique used for the original layers of paint, to tie in with or supplement building archaeological research. Similarly, information on the quantity, quality and location of the residues might be a reason for alterations to the restoration approach. So it would be preferable for both studies to start at an early stage. With respect to the technical installations for climate control, electrical engineering and security, fire prevention and the like, Van Hoogevest proposed 'weaving' all the services and ducting (when possible out of sight) into the existing architecture. In Cuypers' building, space had been allowed for ducts for ventilation and heating in the section of the walls, or else housed in shafts. Equipment for hot air heating was located in the souterrain. Climate control system (installed at a later date) was also concealed in the building fabric. The restoration architect suggested using existing systems and ducting for the new services as far as possible. Here again, building archaeological research might supply more important information. The firm felt it would be wise to add a preliminary stage to the project. That would address not only research into building archaeological research, colour analysis and demolition work, but also research into the structural design of the building's foundations, the wood pile foundations, as well as the condition of the walls once the courtyards had been cleared.

'Continue with Cuypers' or 'Back to Cuypers'

Clearly Van Hoogevest explored the interpretation of Cuypers' legacy quite extensively for his scenario presentation. Amazingly, the theme 'Continue with Cuypers' was not even mentioned to the restoration architects in the letter inviting their proposals. Yet, according to Gijsbert van Hoogevest (b. 1951), those points of reference had been made 'perfectly clear' in the two briefings with all the architects.⁶ However, the invitation to the principal architects did specifically ask for their views on 'Back to Cuypers', which had in fact to be interpreted as being 'Continue with Cuypers'.⁷ In the presentation of their scenario, Cruz y Ortiz actually proposed reproducing Cuypers' colours in 'diluted' and toned down form.⁸ In their view the exuberant, bright colours had always been a drawback for the use of the building as a museum. So 'Continue with Cuypers' was interpreted very differently by the two firms.

In order to envisage the views and concepts concerning the restoration of the Rijksmuseum as a listed historic building and museum, Coenen instituted a round-table conference in the Rijksmuseum on 6 March 2002.⁹ In sessions with 'makers, guardians and consumers' of culture, ideas on 'Continue with Cuypers' and, in particular, 'Back to Cuypers', were considered, with the discussion concentrating on whether or not to reinstate the interior decorations.¹⁰ The director of the Rijksmuseum and the tenant of the building, Ronald de Leeuw, had a strong opinion on the subject. In changing ideas on the content and character of the presentation, De Leeuw felt Cuypers' *Gesamtkunstwerk* approach (in which every gallery, with its decorations, was directly connected with the objects) was inappropriate. But also, the building itself should appear to best advantage, in a museological sense as well. He proposed creating resting places along the circuit through the museum, where visitors could catch their breath after all the impressions, and where the building could speak for itself. The examples he gave were the Great Hall and the imposing staircases. At the same time, De Leeuw was a great proponent of Cuypers' original decorations combined with colourful walls.¹¹



4.02

4.2 Design drawing by Cuypers for the south wall of the west courtyard.

4.3 Rediscovered fragment of architectural sculpture.

4.4 Palms in the central passageway, decorated for an exhibition in 1926.

Fons Asselbergs, director of Rijksdienst voor de Monumentenzorg (Government Agency for the Preservation of Historic Buildings; RDMZ) also believed that 'Back to Cuypers' would not take the demands of present-day museum use into account. 'Continue with Cuypers' was, therefore, a better premise. However, in order to proceed with Cuypers, 'Back to Cuypers' would be necessary: research into what was still there, what could be rehabilitated, what could be restored and where reconstruction was necessary or feasible. Asselbergs volunteered five premises for a practicable development process. He was of the opinion that the decorative and figurative wall paintings, if present and wherever possible, ought to be exposed: reinstating Cuypers to the very maximum in non-exhibition spaces. Cuypers' decoration plan could – for instance in sequences of galleries – provide opportunities for the integral presentation favoured by the museum, possibly with curtains, terrazzo flooring and palm trees (4.04). Asselbergs did not favour toning down the colours, but rather partially revealing Cuypers' true intensity. To some extent the new integral presentation did coincide with the Cuypers concept, for example in the galleries containing fragments of architecture and sculpture. To conclude, in Asselbergs' opinion 'Continue with Cuypers' implied that Cruz y Ortiz would follow on from Cuypers, and that the layers of interventions by Eschauzier, Elffers and Quist would have to be removed.¹²

Preliminary Design for Restoration Plan

In the course of 2002 Cruz y Ortiz and Van Hoogevest developed their ideas in preliminary plans for reconfiguration and restoration. The two firms differed with respect to the restoration premises, so Van Hoogevest presented a separate Preliminary Design (PD). Cruz y Ortiz's design comprised the firm's own restoration criteria. Both PDs appeared in December.¹³ In the restoration context, four areas were worked out in Van Hoogevest's PD. They were to form the body of that firm's planning process and activities. First and foremost, for Van Hoogevest the rehabilitation of Cuypers' spatial structure meant restoring the historic structure. That was largely bound up with the construction and the services. In fact, these three components were in line with the principal features of Cruz y Ortiz's plans, but in this case from the point of view of consequences for the historic building. The fourth area was the restoration of Cuypers' decorations (4.02, 4.03).¹⁴

The first step in rehabilitating Cuypers' concept, also termed Cuypers' 'pretzel' in the *structuurplan 2000*,¹⁵ was to clear the filled-in courtyards. Then the historic shell had to be restored (4.05-4.07). Clearly, the extent to which that repair would entail rehabilitation or reconstruction of the internal walls and their details depended on the extent to which infills had compromised the building over the years. Van Hoogevest suggested returning as much as possible to the original situation: reconstructing windows, passages, iron roofing structure and also, where possible, restoring (preserving) sculpted and painted decorations. The quantity of what remained would only emerge when everything was dismantled and building archaeological research and historical colour analysis were completed. For example, the initial investigation on site had already exposed remains of sculptures and wall paintings on the window reveals.

So the rehabilitation of the Cuypers concept also meant restoring the original layout with the original floor areas and heights of the galleries, as well as opening up the windows to allow daylight to enter. The reappointment of the museum, Cruz y Ortiz's infills, the lowering of the courtyards and the passageway, the tunnel ring for the services, and the constructions for the new-build would have far-reaching consequences for the foundations. Sound plans would have to be drawn up with



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4.04

Arcadis and Arup engineering consultants (and partners) to prevent damage to the historic building. Arup had, for instance, already developed a building services package, for climate control, electrical engineering, lifts and other services, which could probably be installed out of sight in the building's shell. Therefore, it was important to repeatedly consider how technology and meticulous restoration could be combined.¹⁶

Regarding the restoration of Cuypers' decorations, Van Hoogevest focused on the experience of the building as a whole. It had changed considerably as the years went by, as decorations were painted over in 'whitewashing campaigns'; coats of paint had even been chipped away. The anticipated make-over made extensive research possible. The Stichting Restauratie Atelier Limburg (Foundation Restoration Studio Limburg; SRAL), headed by Anne van Grevenstein, had been commissioned by the Rijksgebouwendienst (Government Buildings Agency; Rgd) to start explorative research into the wall paintings in several galleries. Van Hoogevest was able to refer to the preliminary results.¹⁷ The SRAL's investigations had revealed that there were still many paintings beneath the coats of white paint. Material in the archival records demonstrated the scope and coherence in which the decorations had once been applied. And not only were there wall paintings. Terrazzo flooring, sculptures and architectural mouldings that had been part of Cuypers' *Gesamtkunstwerk* were of importance in this respect. Once the false ceilings and the partitions had been pulled down in the large picture galleries on the first floor, remains of coves, cornices, figurative heads and wall paintings emerged. All these research results bolstered the firm in its earlier position in the vision statement. Van Hoogevest no longer restricted his call for restoration and reconstruction to the public spaces only. Detailing would depend to a large extent on subsequent studies and the appearance of the building after it had been stripped, but he now recommended preserving at all events the fragments retained on the ground and main floors, though not wishing to generate a 'piecemeal plan that would have an adverse effect on the harmony of the interior architecture' (4.08-4.10, 4.12-4.14).¹⁸

Whereas Van Hoogevest saw more and more opportunities for returning Cuypers' decorations to the museum's interior – partly thanks to the research carried out there – Cruz y Ortiz continued to be very restrictive, adhering to a new aesthetic concept. In their PD, Cruz y Ortiz urged the use of neutral backcloths for the exhibition galleries. Moreover, the coloured masonry of the vaulted spaces should, in their view, have uniform cladding. Only the Great Hall, the stairwells, the Aduard Chapel and the library would be eligible for restoration. As we have seen, the principal architects proposed toning down Cuypers' bright colours somewhat. In their view, no painted fragments should be kept or restored as 'archaeological remains'.¹⁹

Reactions to the Preliminary Designs

The differing scenarios concerning the restoration of the interior unleashed many reactions and questions in the spring of 2003 in heritage conservation circles. People at the RDMZ, the Bureau Monumenten & Archeologie Amsterdam (Office of Monuments & Archaeology Amsterdam; BMA), the Amsterdamse Raad voor de Monumentenzorg (Amsterdam Advisory Council for Historic Conservation) and Cuypers Society urgently advised the Programme Board to develop one scenario for addressing these issues before commissioning the architects for a Final Design (FD).²⁰

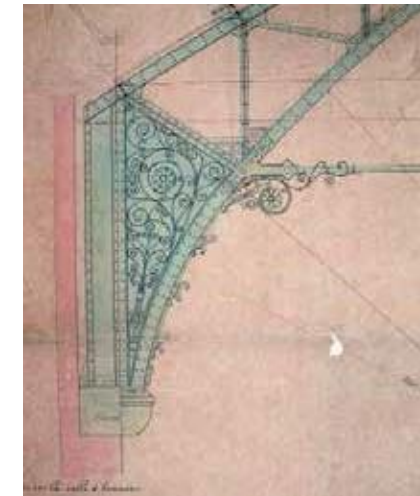
The organizations were unanimous in their call for more research, concerning building archaeology and colours – as in fact proposed in Van Hoogevest's PD. Asselbergs took the lead and challenged the principals to indeed develop the

The decorated trusses of the restored roof structure above the courtyards.

4.5 Detail of Cuypers's design.

4.6 Elements preserved behind an added wall.

4.7 The restored roof structure, now fully visible again.



4.06



4.07

declared 'Continue with Cuypers' theme 'with conviction', and for the entire building.²¹ They also emphatically demanded the restoration of the facing brickwork, treatment of the areas where building and collections interfaced (for example in the gallery for ecclesiastical architecture) and the ideas for picture galleries on the upper floor with the cove paintings and mouldings. RDMZ and BMA even suggested making the research a condition for (assessment of the plans for) the planning permission procedure.²²

Cruz y Ortiz was of the opinion that its scenario for the restoration would already reinstate Cuypers by '85 per cent' on account of the rehabilitation of the original structure, restoration of the shell and part of the decorations. De Leeuw again had an important say. He had been convinced by what Van Grevenstein had meanwhile revealed in her research. Accordingly, he was in favour of achieving better cohesion between the Great Hall, Gallery of Honour and the Night Watch Gallery (4.11, 4.15-4.17). Even he could visualize keeping the vaults inside the museum exposed.²³ Coincidentally with the substantive arguments, the Programme Board also had concerns about the estimated costs of the restoration work. In addition, the desire was expressed to have clear ideas on the monumental value and to be free of 'open-ended issues'.²⁴ The outcome was what might be termed a pragmatic



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Images of the museum interior in 2005, after the building was dismantled and prior to renovation.

4.8 Gallery of paintings on the main floor.

4.9 The Gallery of Honour.

4.10 Vaulting on the ground floor.

Restoration

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4.09



4.10

4.11 The SRAL restoration studio at work in the library.

4.12-14 Sculpture and polychrome fragments that came to light after the building was dismantled and the walls and vaulting were cleaned.



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solution for an 'optimal compromise': the deployment of building archaeological research, a more comprehensive commission for the SRAL, and a joint formulation by Cruz y Ortiz and Van Hoogevest of 'intervention and restoration criteria'.

Building Archaeological Research

Immediately after the PDs were presented in January 2003, Rob Apell of the Chief Government Architect's office chaired a meeting about the cultural history (including structural history) research. Apell stated beforehand that:

although a top-ranking monument is involved, no overall building archaeological research is available, nor has incorporation of research in the design and building process been taken into account. The programme team and board would prefer not to have building archaeological research carried out, and the Rgd's projects management feels the same. Nor is there any real support from the principal architects in this respect. Recent external pressure . . . has meant that the Programme Board of the project is gradually changing its mind somewhat.²⁵

Bearing these premises in mind, a list was compiled of the available research data, also identifying what limitations and objectives could be formulated and applied to reach a clear, rational proposal, without 'open ends'. Two memos were drawn up, by Van Hoogevest and the Rgd. In one, Van Hoogevest formulated a number of considerations for study based on his restoration and layout plan. The Rgd's memo drew attention to the exemplary function of this 'Grand Projet' of the government's and sound reporting of the research, urging that the *Guidelines for Structural History Research*, edited by the Rgd, be observed. Moreover, the Rgd considered a 'solid data base' (which that Agency would finance separately) containing existing and new data to be of *essential* importance.²⁶

Although, remarkably enough, there was no viable building archaeological report, an impression could be obtained from earlier preparatory, exploratory work of the vast extent and complexity of the research – relating both to archival research and structural history assessment.²⁷ However, those involved believed that architects, heritage conservation people and clients would only obtain sufficient information on their designs, plan assessment and decision-making if the appropriate work were tackled thoroughly, monitored and supported by experts, and facilitated by the Rgd database. Accordingly, these considerations were the basis for a proposed estimate for two-stage structural history research.²⁸ The proposal met with queries from the Programme Board as to exactly what research was required, in terms of content and cost.²⁹ Coenen once more noted in writing the motivation for the research, with respect to content and to the 'Grand Projets' memo.³⁰ In the end, pressured by both the municipal and national agencies responsible for conservation of historic buildings, research was started by the Rgd itself.³¹ In the summer of 2003 Rgd researchers already began making material available.³² They used it to fill the database, information for which was available via the website www.waardestelling.nl.³³ Via the four-tier website, 'sources of data used to realize building archaeological reports and assessments' were registered and opened up. Registration was fast: in March 2004 the system already contained some 16,000 pages.³⁴

'In fact that building archaeological research was impossible to work with', according to Gijsbert van Hoogevest.³⁵ The website (in Dutch) was not very comprehensible, certainly not for the Spanish architects, nor was it organized. The design team became increasingly dissatisfied, because the research only collected



4.14

and documented data, but did not answer urgent questions about important places in the building (described as hotspots). Van Hoogevest was obliged to provide answers themselves (from the database) to questions on Cruz y Ortiz's hotspot list concerning the building's structural history. Once more, confusion, misunderstandings and incorrect interpretations resulted – not improving the atmosphere between the two architecture firms.³⁶ Accordingly, the high ambitions of the building archaeological research evaporated under pressure from the advancing development process. The website was still used, for instance for BMA's assessment of the plans, but a concluding report did not materialize.³⁷ Research into the painted decorations was another matter; the approach there was more pragmatic and provided visualizations and concomitantly, results.

Historical Colour Analysis

At the start of 2002, the SRAL had already carried out initial research into the building's decorations and colours. Since its opening, the museum's layout had been altered frequently and the original finishes in the interior adapted regularly to changing ideas on museology. Consequently, many of the original decorations had disappeared – painted over or even completely removed. The SRAL's activities were aimed at determining whether there were still any original decorations left, and what condition they were in.³⁸ Their studies combined stratigraphical and topographical research (to expose paint layers in their spatial context) with the study of archival material including drawings, sketches and photographs. Wall paintings that were still present at many different places in the museum were examined, for comparison with areas where only stratigraphical research (scraping off the layers of paint) could reveal the original, often vulnerable decorations. For instance, the wall paintings in the library, Aduard Chapel, and remains of paintings behind the organs in the Great Hall and the upper part of the Night Watch Gallery supplied important information on the original surface, colour saturation and detailing of the paintwork in all of the museum spaces. The SRAL ascertained that much of the original paintwork must still exist. In the concluding report they noted: 'In spite of the wealth of motifs, the degree of stylistic unity in the various decorative paintings found at various locations in the Rijksmuseum is remarkable' (4.12-4.14).³⁹

The authentic surface mostly comprised a matte distemper, alternating sometimes with bronze paint or gold leaf, and sections in oil paint (4.15, 4.16). Where still present, these authentic layers proved to have become darker and duller over time. However, the majority of the wall paintings in the museum were no longer visible and had disappeared under new layers of paint. In addition, the first layer of white lead painting had penetrated the underlying plaster so much that the bottom layer could not be revealed without causing damage. The layer of lead white had combined totally with the layer of plaster, and if the former were scratched off the top part of the plaster would come off as well. So the SRAL proposed reconstructing the decorations only where there were repetitive patterns, but not in the freely painted sections (4.17). However, more research was needed into the original templates, the historical context and, especially, into primary sources (wall paintings and painted canvases) if the possible reconstruction was to be conducted properly. For example, for the Great Hall and the Gallery of Honour, it was important to learn more about the quality and potential of the work done by Georg Sturm. His paintings had been installed in the first decade of the twentieth century, but had meanwhile been removed and stored away.

In the discussion about the interpretation of the 'Continue with Cuypers' theme in the interior, the SRAL's exploratory research produced interesting, but also fairly

4.15-16 Details of the colour research by the SRAL restoration studio.

4.17 The application of reconstructions using templates.

concrete information. The SRAL proposed continuing research into the paint, colours and pigments, as well as the historical context for the sake of restoration (where possible) and reconstruction. They also suggested – in consultation with Van Hoogevest – making test reconstructions. Those might well prove very useful for decision-making.⁴⁰

In the spring of 2003 the SRAL was able to carry out an initial test reconstruction, in a corner of the Great Hall (4.19). One of Sturm's canvases was returned to its original place and the painting work was reconstructed around it (4.18). That brought to light the purpose of the decorations: thanks to the effect of the paintings on the cornice, painting and sculpture work and architectural elements seemed to blend seamlessly together. This approach – rather than remaining seated at the conference table – was a far better way for all concerned, including the Spanish architects, to get an impression of (and later be convinced by) Cuypers' decorative interior, the historical context and the aesthetic result.⁴¹ And in that year the SRAL was actually commissioned to carry out analyses in the Gallery of Honour, a side gallery and in the Night Watch Gallery. Their successive preliminary investigations



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4.18 A Georg Sturm painting restored to its place above the Gallery of Honour.

4.19 Trial reconstruction in a corner of the Great Hall, 2003.



4.18

and tests were to result in the commission to carry out restorations and reconstructions between 2005 and 2013 in parts of the museum about which a compromise could be reached in the 'intervention and restoration criteria'.⁴²

Intervention and Restoration Criteria

While the staff and students of the SRAL were up on the scaffolding continuing their preliminary research, consultations were taking place between the two architecture firms and the Programme Board about a joint scenario for the building's restoration, within the available budget. Rehabilitation of the spatial structure, the clearing of the courtyards, the opening of the museum galleries, restoration of the historical shell and the installation of new services in that shell were not on the agenda, but were premises for the Final Design (FD). Communication on the reinstatement of the decorative elements was more problematical. Were decorations that were eligible for reinstatement part of a new museum (concept) or were they part of the historic monument? Should they be incorporated in Cruz y Ortiz's design or were wall paintings, traces of construction and building fragments actually important expressions of the 'Continuing with or Back to Cuypers' theme?

In March and April 2003 each of the two architects drew up an annex to their own restoration criteria, but their views still differed.⁴³ It was not until June 2003 that they arrived at an initial, jointly formulated idea of the restoration, which was



4.19

to be communicated via the principal architect. According to these 'intervention and restoration criteria' (an annex to the PD) agreement had been reached on the reconstruction of the decorations in the stairwells and the Great Hall, and on preservative restoration of the Aduard Chapel and the library.⁴⁴ The approach to be taken for the Gallery of Honour and the Night Watch Gallery was not yet definite, but a 'kind of transitional restoration' was being considered, perpetuating the coherent sequence Great Hall-Gallery of Honour-Night Watch Gallery. In the courtyards the authentic roofing and elevation would be meticulously and circum-spectly restored. However, traces of construction and fragments of sculpture or mouldings were not included. Walls would only be restored in the elevation plane; Cruz y Ortiz was to design infrastructure for the new museological use (passages, doors and glass walls to the arcades, for example). Several other decisions were postponed until more was known about the research results, the situation after the areas had been stripped, the Rijksmuseum's views on routing and presentation. Consequently, more precise treatment of the Gallery of Honour, the Night Watch Gallery, the vaulted areas in the souterrain (including the remaining architectural elements) and the museum galleries on the ground and main floors would only be specified in the FD.

In the first part of the FD, dating from October 2004, there was greater consensus on the Gallery of Honour and the Night Watch Gallery, thanks to the SRAL's research and trials: the reconstruction programme could be extended to the entire central axis.⁴⁵ The Night Watch Gallery was to be restored and in the Gallery of Honour Cuypers' decorations would be reinstated on the frieze, capitals and pilasters (4.21). There, the decorations were part of the architecture and represented Cuypers' ideas on space and decoration, according to the FD. When completed, the central axis, and the Great Hall in particular, would ultimately be the most pronounced expression of this Cuypers concept. This social or rest area does not contain a collection of its own, but is itself part of the collection, as it were. It represents an important component of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in which walls, vaulted ceilings, windows and terrazzo flooring are part of an iconographic programme. Important points of reference for the reconstruction of the entire axis were the 70 authentic paintings by Sturm – which could be restored – and the original wall paintings and (sculpted) caryatids in the Night Watch Gallery.⁴⁶

The decorative painting and sculpture work, and the building fragments elsewhere in the building should, the FD stated, be considered part of a historical museological concept. Those decorations and fragments were not to be rehabilitated or reinstated, and should even be removed (possibly placed elsewhere), to bring the spaces and their colour schemes in line with the wishes of the Rijksmuseum. For the picture galleries on the first floor it meant that the authentic decorations that had been exposed could not be retained. The wainscoting would be concealed behind false walls, but the cornices under the cove would be visible or even completed. The authentic wall paintings that would be exposed after the building's shell had been restored at the lower levels – for instance, in the Gothic Gallery – would eventually all be hidden from view, to the regret of the restoration architect, the restorers and agencies for the conservation of historic buildings (4.22, 4.23). Only three columns would remain in the east souterrain.

The FD contained no comments on the finishes of the galleries in the souterrain nor on the ground floor. Treatment of the facing brickwork was the problem. At that stage there were still doubts whether the best option was a neutral character for these galleries. On the other hand, the colours of the brickwork should not distract from the displayed works of art. Therefore, the FD pointed out that brickwork,

4.20 The west stairwell with reconstructed decorations.

4.21 pages 154-155:
The Gallery of Honour after renovation; most of Cuypers's decorations have been reconstructed.







4.22



4.23

4.22-23 Masonry patterns and decorative painting in the ecclesiastical architecture section, visible now that the façades have been cleaned.

4.24 The Aduard Chapel in 2005.

which would be restored only in vaults, columns and pilasters, could best be painted in a colour in keeping with the museological context. For the vaults on the ground floor a 'white or very pale colour' was suggested. These premises were also retained in stage two of the FD which was published after the building's shell had been stripped.⁴⁷ Ultimately, the finishes of the galleries would be determined in consultation with the Rijksmuseum and the interior architect (who was actually appointed in 2004).

The Paradox of the Theme

The FD confirmed that Cruz y Ortiz's approach would be pursued, also as regards restoration criteria. The motto was 'Continue with Cuypers', in accordance with a new aesthetic and museological concept, and without 'archaeological remains'. Van Hoogevest achieved consensus for the building's central axis. There, Cuypers returned in all his glory, and the decorations could also tie in with the Rijksmuseum's wishes. So consensus and compromise also expose the paradox of the theme. Authentic wall paintings and fragments, seemingly discovered by chance, once more disappear. And, by contrast, lost decorations have been reconstructed. The interpretation of Cuypers – backwards or forwards – had not been clearly defined beforehand and proved, afterwards, to be caught, as it were, between a rock and a hard place (4.24).



4.24



D.01



D.02

D.1 The north wall of the west courtyard after removal of the added floors.

D.2 The same wall during restoration.



D.03

D.3 Pillar on the ground floor; the polychrome decoration has been partly preserved and partly painted over, 2005.

The long history of the Rijksmuseum and its many refurbishments and restorations gave the historic complex a many-layered quality even before the recent renovation. Prior to the renovation project, no definite decisions had been made about which parts of the complex would be preserved and what role they would play in the new Rijksmuseum. The theme of 'Back to Cuypers' or 'Continue with Cuypers' was interpreted in diverse ways by the different architects involved. A balance had to be struck between the historical significance of the building and its practical role as a museum.

While the building was being dismantled, new issues kept coming to light that had never before been studied by experts or researched thoroughly in the archives. These included building fragments, vestiges and painted decorations in many different parts of the museum. Outside a few areas where Cuypers' decorations were restored or reconstructed – such as the library, the Aduard Chapel, the stairwell and the central axis extending from the Great Hall to the Night Watch Gallery – most of the exposed fragments were removed, or else painted or plastered over. Only a handful of elements in a few places were left in place or restored.

In the west courtyard, for instance, where originals and copies of funerary monuments, sculpture and parts of buildings were on display in Cuypers' day, fragments of the south façade were exposed when the intermediate floors were demolished. These were replicas of façade segments from the historic city hall in The Hague. Because remnants like these in the courtyard façades did not fit into the aesthetic concept that Cruz y Ortiz had developed, they were removed. The decorative painted borders in the recesses surrounding various windows around the courtyards were left in place after being uncovered, but were concealed from view.

In other parts of the atrium, rediscovered fragments were left in place or returned to their original place. For instance, there were originally portals on the north and south sides of the courtyards leading to the exhibition galleries. The south portals were flanked by columns that supported a total of four statues of seated or standing sentries. Two of these sentries have been partly preserved; the other two have been lost. The architectural design for the new atrium did not involve returning these statues to their original places. But after the building was completed in the summer of 2012, the Rijksmuseum asked Replique, a reproduction and reconstruction studio, to reconstruct the four sentries on the basis of the two remaining statues. The earliest sculptures from Cuypers' studio were made from multiple blocks of sandstone to limit costs and then finished with stucco and paint. The two surviving statues were modelled by hand at Replique. These models were then used to make moulds with digital technology. Shortly before the museum reopened, the four acrylic sentries were mounted on flat surfaces on the façades. These modern replicas of architectural sculpture from the original building have thus become part of the collection.

Soon after the construction of the Rijksmuseum began in 1876, it was decided that the courtyards would be used as exhibition areas and therefore covered with glass roofs. The ironwork of these roofs interrupts the sandstone cornices of the façades. During restoration, the cornices were not restored but completed, so that they can serve as reminders of the building's history.

When the original museum building was erected, tile panels (tableaux) designed by Georg Sturm were placed in the west, south and east façades at the main floor level. These depict key moments in Dutch art history. The three panels in the middle of the south façade, over the passageway, soon disappeared behind the Vermeer extension. This extension was initially connected to the main building in the spot where the rightmost panel had been, the other two were hidden from sight behind a wall. During the recent

renovation, it was hoped that fragments of these panels would come to light when the building was dismantled. When the false walls in the Vermeer extension were removed, the panels were found to be in much better condition than expected. A few fragments of the rightmost panel were found, and the other two had been preserved in their entirety. The Rijksmuseum chose not to integrate these panels into the building interior, however, because they would have dominated the space and hence made it unsuitable for exhibition purposes. One option considered was to remove the panels from the façade and exhibit them in the garden. But this proposal was unacceptable to the national and municipal agencies responsible for the preservation of historic buildings, which regarded the panels as an integral part of the main building. Furthermore, there was a risk that removing the tiles would damage them. The panels were ultimately left in place and hidden from view with a false wall.

A similar discussion was prompted by three columns in the east section of the southerrain, which had originally been part of the collection of architectural elements used by Cuypers to illustrate the history of Dutch architecture. Because the columns said so much about Cuypers' intentions for the Rijksmuseum, Bureau Monumenten & Archeologie Amsterdam (Office of Monuments & Archaeology Amsterdam) opposed their removal. The columns can now be found in the Special Collections area.

When the historic fabric of the building was dismantled and restored on the southeast side of the museum's ground floor, authentic decorative and figurative paintings were discovered in a number of galleries in which ecclesiastical architecture had been exhibited. Some were in good condition. Although Cruz y Ortiz and Van Hoogevest wished to consolidate some of them (the best examples) or have them restored by the Stichting Restauratie Atelier Limburg (Foundation Restoration Studio Limburg), the Rijksmuseum and Willemte decided to leave these fragments hidden from view as well.



D.04

D.4 Two sculpted heads under the cornice in one of the painting galleries on the main floor.



D.05



D.06

D.5 Decorative painted borders in the recess surrounding a courtyard window.

D.6 Fragments of the original painting and masonry vaulting in the ecclesiastical architecture department.



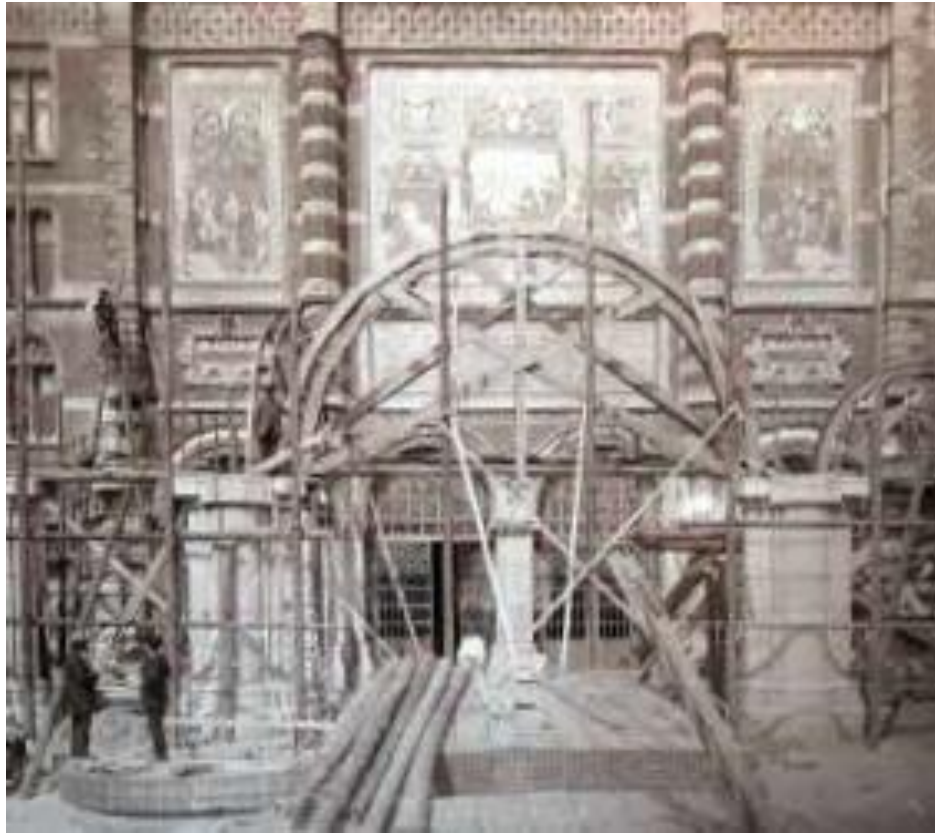
D.07

D.07 The east courtyard in use as a weapon gallery, c. 1914.



D.08

D.08 The west courtyard in use as an exhibition space for architectural fragments, some of which have been incorporated into the walls.



D.09



D.10

D.9 Construction of the Vermeer extension behind the Night Watch Gallery.

D.10 Tile panel based on a design by Georg Sturm on what was formerly an outer façade, rediscovered during renovation of the Vermeer extension.



D.11

D.11 Design for the interior of the Vermeer extension.



D.12

D.12 The museum's south façade with the Vermeer extension, 2013.



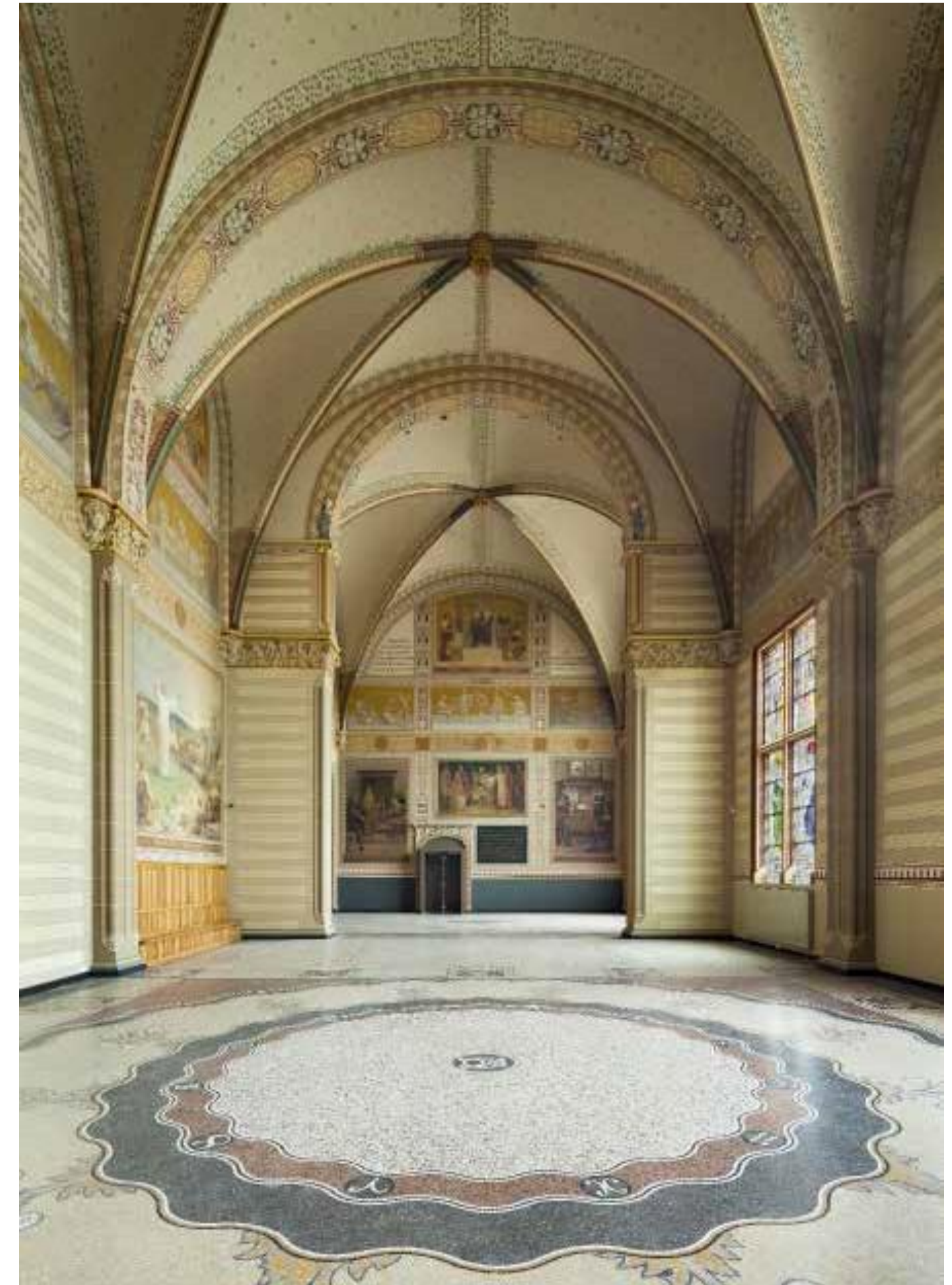
D.13

D.13 The original decoration of the Great Hall.



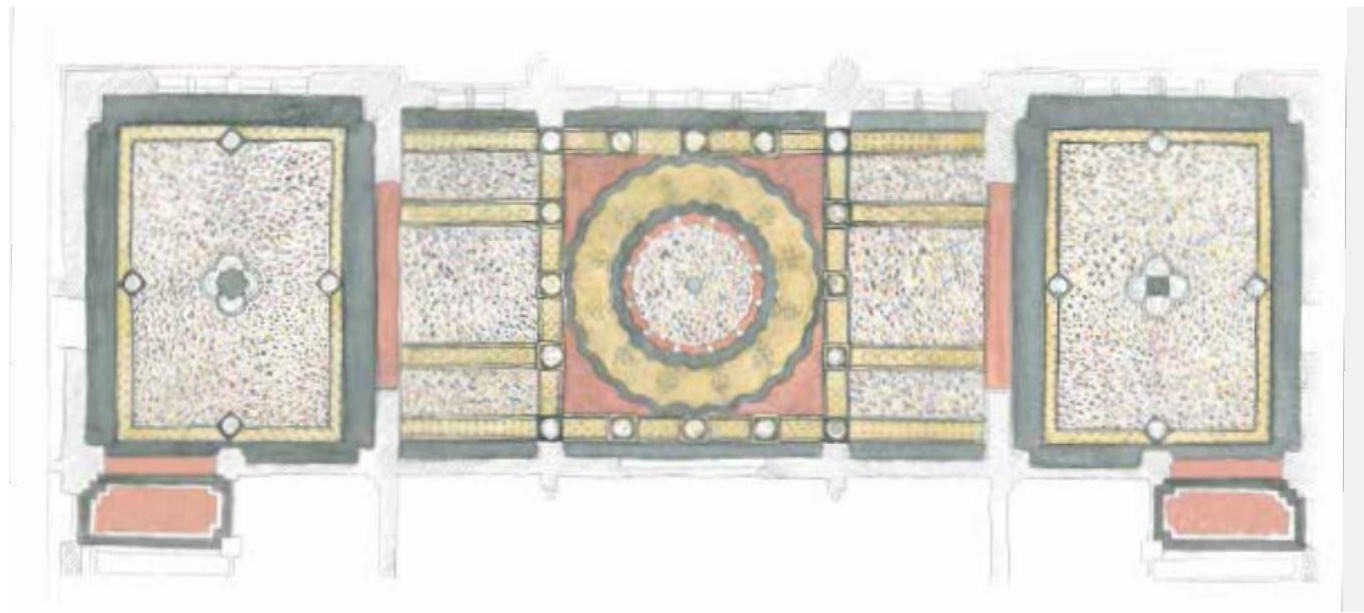
D.14

D.14 The situation in 1959.



D.15

D.15 The Great Hall after reconstruction, 2013.



D.16



D.17



D.18



D.19

D.16-19 Designs and detail drawings for the reconstruction of the terrazzo floor in the Great Hall.



D.20



D.21



D.22

D.20-22 Italian terrazzo workers lay the floor in the Great Hall.



D.23

D.23 Detail of the reconstructed terrazzo floor.



D.24



D.25



D.26

D.24 Historical photograph of one of the four sculptures of sentries.

D.25 One of the two remaining original sculptures.

D.26-27 Making the acrylic replicas at the Replique studio.



D.27



D.28

D.28 Sentry sculpture by Replique attached to the south wall of the west courtyard.

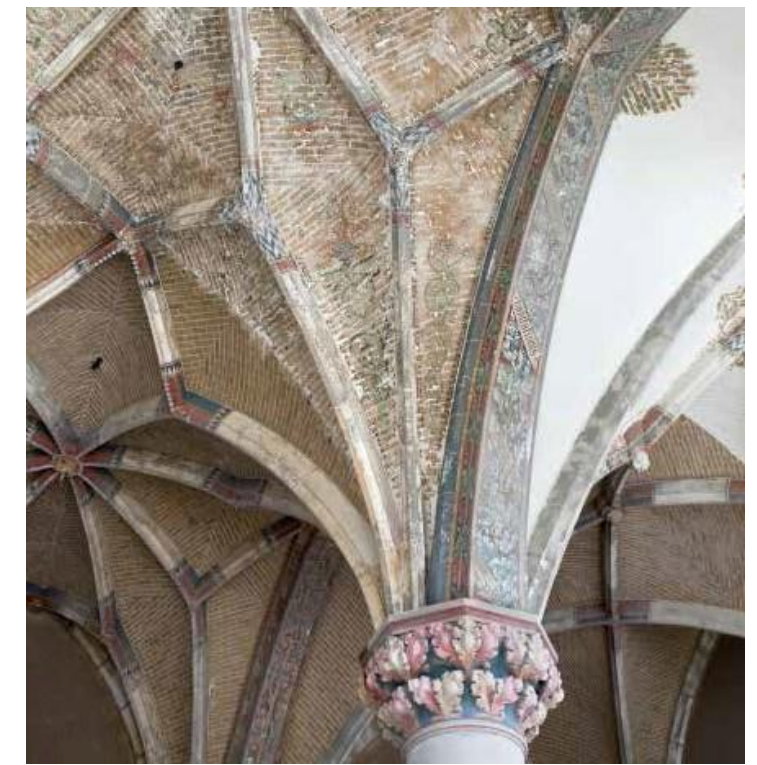


D.29

D.29-31 Fragments of original paintwork and masonry vaulting in the ecclesiastical architecture department.



D.30



D.31