

LAYERING OF TIME

In the police headquarters in Rotterdam

Liselotte Klerk¹

¹ TU Delft faculty of Architecture, Julianalaan 134, 2628 BL Delft.

Abstract. The deficit of suitable housing in the Netherlands is increasing, while the vacancy rate of office buildings and other non-residential buildings is high. Transforming these vacant buildings is a sustainable and smart method to meet the housing demand. In order to transform buildings properly, their values need to be taken into account. In heritage preservation, a continuous and recurring question is how to determine values worth preserving. This paper focusses specifically on the valuation of layering of time and the importance of this valuation related to the preservation of heritage. Using the police headquarters in Rotterdam as a case study to provide a framework for future use to value the layering of time in heritage buildings. Answering the research question: How does the layering of time express itself in the facades of the police headquarters in Rotterdam, and how does it influence the perception of the building?

The tangible layering of time from the van der Steur period is only still visible in the proportions of the facades. The tangible layering of time of the redesign from Struijs are mostly valued by their concepts. The intangible layering of time is only made tangible in the current building in the memorial points. There is an opportunity to make the intangible layering of time more tangible in a new intervention to the building, using the valuation of this paper.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the Netherlands, we are currently dealing with a housing shortage. In the Nationale Woonagenda 2018-2021 is stated that in order to meet the growing demand, 75.000 new dwellings should be built every year until 2025 (Ollongren, 2018). The deficit is expected to only grow further due to the increasing number of single-person households, caused by the ageing population (CBS, 2018). This scarcity is causing housing prices to rise, especially in denser areas such as the Randstad (Lucassen, 2020). While the deficit of suitable dwellings is increasing, so is the vacancy rate of office buildings and other non-residential buildings.

According to Janusz Pelczynski, the growth of the human population and also civilizational transformations require an increase in the volume of buildings and urban areas. To facilitate this growth in a sustainable way, he focuses on a strategy of densification of cities. His first method is increasing the efficiency of the use of existing buildings by transforming their functions (2019, p.1).

In a country like the Netherlands, where building space is limited, this method is the most relevant. Transforming the current building stock is a more durable way to facilitate new functions that are needed in a city since it allows building structures to be reused instead of being demolished. According to Kuipers and de Jonge, demolition of a building is a waste of resources and a lot of embedded energy will be wasted too (2017, p. 29).

One of the advantages, of transforming the current building stock, that Pelczynski mentions is the possibility to preserve the historical value of buildings (2019, p.3). This historical value is often obvious in older buildings, but in more modern heritage it is debatable whether this value is present. The question even arises whether these building even qualify as heritage?

I am not so much concerned with the question of whether a building can be seen as heritage, but with the question of which values in a building are worth preserving. But these two questions are closely related, because the conditions for being called heritage are based on the presence of certain values.

The theme of valuation of heritage has prompted the writing of this paper. Since this theme is very broad, the focus is on specific values that can be found in every existing building, whether considered heritage or not.

This paper is a part of a graduation project to obtain a masters degree at the Delft University of Technology in which the possibility of transforming vacant police buildings into affordable housing is explored through a case study. The conclusions of this research provide new design guidelines for the project.

The building chosen in the graduation project has been refurbished over time. The fact that the original building from 1938 is still present, but

completely invisible due to the 1993 redesign, has caused intrigue, it was the reason for researching the visibility of layering of time in a building.

The research focusses on the valuation of layering of time and the importance of this valuation related to the preservation of heritage. Using the police headquarters in Rotterdam as a case study to provide a framework for future use to value the layering of time in heritage buildings.

Besides the physical layering of time, in this paper described as tangible layering of time, narratives were distinguished about a building as intangible layering of time. By defining the values of these different types of layering of time, this paper contributes to the general knowledge about the valuation of buildings and indirectly to the debate about whether or not more modern buildings can be classified as heritage.

1.1 Valuation of heritage

Vandenbroucke made the convincing statement that redesigning a building always starts with the question: Why should this building be preserved? As professionals we have to define the qualities worth preserving in order to find the heritage values of a building (2020, p. 21).

Pereira Roders developed a framework to divide different types of heritage values. Throughout this paper, this framework is used to categorize found values.



Fig. 1 (Pereira Roders, 2007)

As mentioned in the introduction, demolition of a building is a waste of resources (Kuipers & de Jonge, 2017, p. 29). Sustainability is one of the most relevant themes of our time and regarding the police headquarters in Rotterdam, with a gross floor area of over 25.000 square meters, demolition would generate an enormous amount of waste. A loss of both building materials and of usable square meters in the center of Rotterdam.

Another reason to preserve a building is that people can value a memory or sensation connected to a building or place. Pereira Roders describes this as social emotional values (2007). These values can be both collective or individual. Since these values are sometimes personal and impalpable, it is a challenge to stay objective. The idea of places having an individual spirit arises from ancient times and was often connected to religious expression (Kuipers & de Jonge, 2017, p. 61). According to Kuijpers and de Jonge, this 'spirit' can give a heritage building a distinguished identity; it gives a place a soul. (2017, p. 61) The social emotional values often relate to the history of a building and the tangibility of memories.

1.1.1. To show or not to show

In 1917, the KNOB formulated the "Ground Principles" with the purport of 'preserving before renewing'. (Kalf, 1917, pp. 69-75) This approach was opposite to the reconstructive restoration approach of Pierre Cuypers at that time. Later, in the Venice Charter in 1964, was stated that: "The conservation of a monument implies preserving a setting which is not out of scale. Wherever the traditional setting exists, it must be kept. No new construction, demolition or modification which would alter the relations of mass and color must be allowed." (ICOMOS, 1964)

To the present day, the approach towards preserving heritage keeps changing. The most important part of redesigning is understanding a building and its values. The approach towards restoration and transformation differs per building. The rules should allow architects to have some freedom in choosing their approach. To be able to allow this freedom, general knowledge amongst professionals is needed. It must be possible to rely on their accumulated knowledge, but this general knowledge can always be expanded. Knowledge about the history of a building and the visibility of different time periods in the case of this paper is required.

Restoring a building back to its original form can sometimes lead to a less authentic building than leaving the various modifications over time visible. It often requires copying parts that are lost. When replaced, the historical value of this new part that represents the old is questionable.

In the book *temp, mo. mo.* they recognize the added value of showing layering over time, saying that it is a well-established opinion within the conservation of monuments to attribute cultural-historical value to changes over time (Quist, Stroux, & Bierman, 2012, p. 21).

If the interior or exterior of a building has been drastically changed several times, it will affect the appearance of the building in each time period. The discussion about which atmosphere should then be restored during restoration or, if desirable, during transformation is an interesting discussion.

The discovery of an older version of the police headquarters in Rotterdam within the current design is what led to the investigation of the values related to the layering of time in a building. What if the appearance of building is not considered valuable, can the visibility of the history of the building be considered valuable?

This interest led to the following research question: How does the layering of time express itself in the facades of the police headquarters in Rotterdam, and how does it influence the perception of the building?

1.2 Layering of time

To be able to value the layering of time in a building, we will first have to formulate what this layering exactly is. In the book 'Heritage Based design' Meurs says "each intervention adds a new 'layer' of history to the building" (Meurs, 2016, p. 36). This layering is worth elaborating on since it is often mentioned in architectural literature, especially when talking about heritage. Meurs also explains that Alois Riegl already introduced 'Älterstwert'- age value- a hundred years ago in his book 'Der modern Denkmalkultus, Sein Wesen und seine Entstehung' in 1903. A value that manifests itself, for example, in the patina (the traces of time). (Meurs, 2016, p. 36)

Riegl's value set demonstrates that any act of conservation is somehow a compromise between the ideal of maintaining the historical 'truth' of material authenticity within the historic form and fabric as much as possible, and the inevitable need to adapt technical and/or aesthetical performance to current needs to keep a building in daily use. (Kuipers & de Jonge, 2017, p. 70). The right balance between modern technologies and the historical 'truth' in re-design will contribute to the experience of a building when they interrelate well.

An example of a building in which this balance is tangible is the Monastery Predikheren in Mechelen, where they renovated the building but without making it perfectly new. By showing older physical layers in their imperfect state and adding a new physical layer with modern materials, they create a contrast. This contrast forms a harmonious atmosphere that honors the building's past but exudes its present time.

The many building traces that are visible from the various renovations are part of the charm of this building part. (Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten, sd) Showing these layers gives a historic-educational value (Pereira Roders, 2007) to the interior.



Fig. 2

The layering of time as described in the beginning of this chapter concerns physical interventions from different building periods that add new layers to a building. Besides this tangible layering of time, the layering of time also includes a less tangible side. Different narratives of different times that relate to a building or the location of a (former) building. Besides each intervention, each narrative also adds a new 'layer' of to the building.

This intangible layering of time is less related to the physical building and can therefore be more difficult to grasp. The police headquarters in Rotterdam is used as a case study to try out how these (intangible) narratives and fragments from a building can be perceived and how we can value them alongside the tangible layering of time.

2. METHODOLOGY

In order to get a better understanding of this intangible layering of time which was introduced, the police headquarters of Rotterdam will be used as a case study in which both different interventions (tangible layering of time) and different narratives (intangible layering of time) of the building are being discussed and valued.

First, an overview is made of all values found in literature and by observation. This overview is made according to the framework of Pereira Roders (2007).

Second the tangible layering of time from both construction periods will be formulated. Based on available literature from both architects. A valuation of these tangible layers is made according to the framework of Pereira Roders (2007). These values are also visible in the value assessment in the first part.

Besides the tangible layering of time, the intangible layering of time is listed. These narratives were extracted from news articles and old footage of former employees who tell stories about the building. Each intangible layer of time has also been valued according to the scheme of Pereira Roders (2007).

The city archive of Rotterdam held a very structured overview of all available drawings and changes made over time at Oud Gemeentewerken. The city archive of Rotterdam had drawings available as well as news articles about the building and even some old footage of the construction of the building in 1935. The footage shows former employees telling stories about the building. These articles together with the books about the architects and online research were the sources for this research. The books contained the substantiation of design choices made in the building by both architects. While the articles, the short movie and the online research provided mostly the public opinion and perception of the building.

3. RESULTS

In this chapter describes the interventions and writes down the narratives of the building. Showing the layering of time in the police headquarters of Rotterdam and how it is perceived in the facades.

3.1 Case study: Police Headquarters in Rotterdam

To obtain an overview of the values of the building, the framework of Pereira Roders is used (2007).

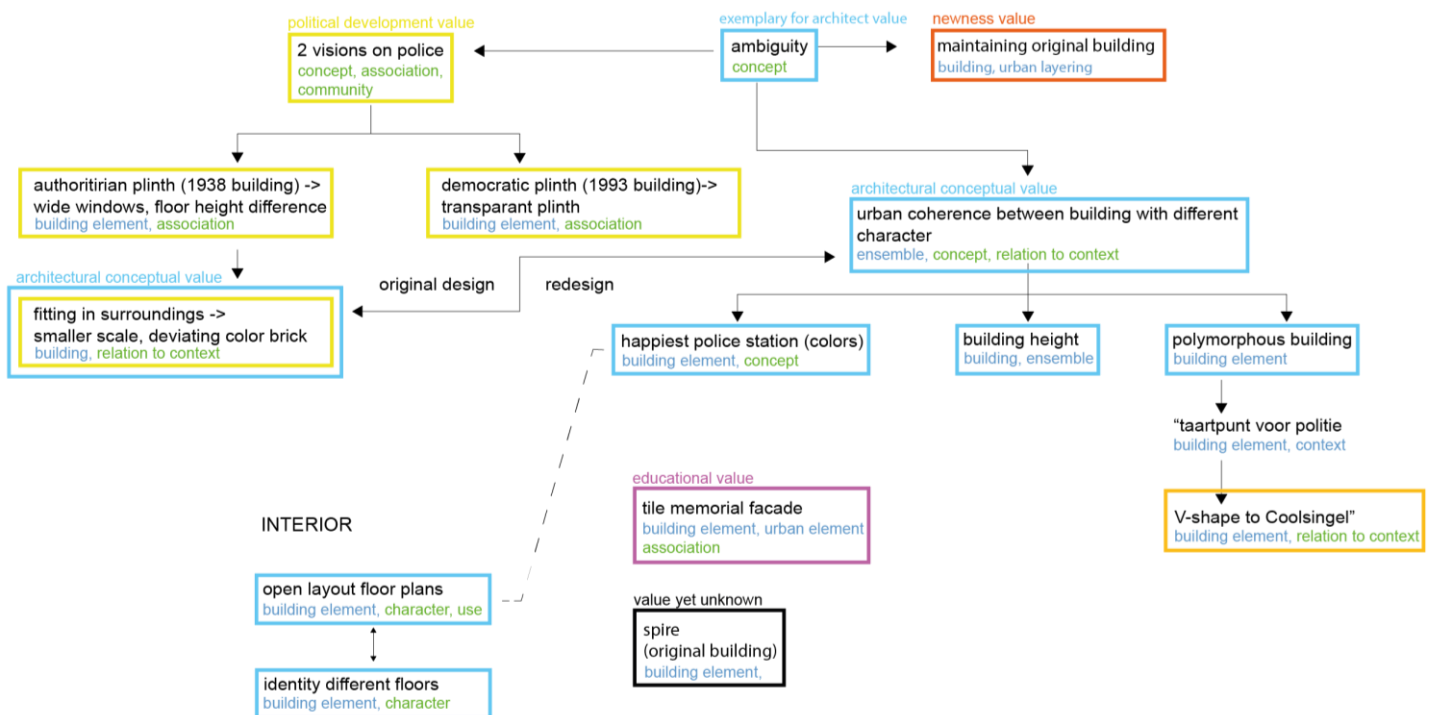


Fig. 1

3.1.1. History

The Police has been at this location in Rotterdam since 1904. First in the 'Oude Stadsdoelen van het St. Jorisgilde', that previously served as the district court. This building was demolished in the 1930s. (Stichting Heimisj, 2020) On the same location they started building a new building designed by Ad van der Steur. This building was finished in 1938.

On May 14th 1940 the bombing of Rotterdam had left the city destroyed. The location of the Police headquarters, and the look of the building today would suggest that the old building was demolished in this tragedy. However, upon further investigation this does not appear to be the case. The building as it is today is a redesign by Maarten Struijs, finished in 1993. Although the original building is still standing, the redesign has rendered it unrecognizable.

3.1.1. Tangible layering of time - Ad van der Steur

The original building was designed by Ad van der Steur and was finished in 1938. Van der Steur wanted a building that fitted in its surroundings. This meant the building had to be subordinate to the city hall, to articulate the hierarchy of the municipal authority. The dimensions of the building were also kept in proportion to the then still existing old part of Rotterdam. (Gielen, 2002, p. 90) According to Gielen, the smaller scale and the deviating color of the bricks caused the police headquarters to be subordinate to the city hall. The color of the bricks also related to the old city. (2002, p. 90)

The bricks are covered and the old city to which they refer is gone, so this part of the concept of fitting in its surroundings is lost. But the proportions are still visible in the façade. This tangible layering of time has an aesthetical-conceptual value, according to the framework of Pereira Roders (2007). The bricks could have a historical-educational value if shown in future redesign.

In the time this building was completed, the police building had to radiate authority. Especially the floors where the board was seated. The agents rooms on the ground floor needed wide, not high windows, van der Steur said in his lecture: "Het hoofdgebouw van politie te Rotterdam". These considerations led to a building of red hand-moulded bricks with sills, some sandstone decorations and a high plinth of Scandinavian granite. (Gielen, 2002, p. 90)

The concept of radiating authority is still visible in the proportions of the facades and this tangible layering of time has a historical-educational value, according to the framework of Pereira Roders (2007).

Even though Struijs writes in Concrete Magazine that van der Steur's design is not highly valued because the building was not the most interesting in his oeuvre (Struijs, 1990). In this case, the place in relation to its (former) function is of more importance than the physical building.

3.1.2 Intangible layering of time - during World War II

During World War II arrested members of the resistance were brought to this police station. Like resistance leader Joop Westerweel after his arrest at the Belgian border on June 10th 1944. He was tortured for helping Jewish youth cross the Pyrenees, but together with a group of members of the

resistance he had committed more acts of resistance. After his time at the police station in Rotterdam he was sent to Kamp Vught, where he was executed. This particular group of the resistance was renounced the Westerweel-groep after the war. (Stichting Heimisj, 2020)

The former police building had a large cell complex where many Rotterdam Jews who did not report for deportation spent their last nights in Rotterdam after they got arrested. (Stichting Heimisj, 2020)

In a short film about the construction of the new police headquarters in Rotterdam in 1938, in which former employees Mr. J. Pijper and Mr. A. van der Hoek talk about the building, Mr. J. Pijper tells the following story about the headquarters at the time of WWII:

The new police station in 1938 included seven residences for employees. In one of these houses, the one next to the canteen, Mr. Hulsman lived. In 1944 he participated in the liberation of 44 detainees from the police headquarters. The residence had its own entrance and from this house you could reach the rest of the building. Hulsman opened his front door for the armed forces so they could free those 44 detainees. He then went into hiding somewhere near de Zweth. In retaliation the Germans shot seven people at the Hofplein, detainees but also some randomly taken from the street. One of them a boy of just 16 years old.

These narratives relate to the function and use of the building. This intangible layering of time has, according to Pereira Roders framework (2007), an economic–use value.

In memory of the victims of the war, there is a memorial point both in the building and on the outside of the building. These points are where the intangible layering of time are made tangible.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

3.1.3. Intangible layering of time - rope-jumping girl

On the blind wall of the wing of the 1938 building that was later destroyed to make space for the new addition of Struijs, a mural of the rope-jumping

girl was created in 1976 by the artist Co Westerik. His daughter Christine was the model for the artwork. Although he had always known the painting would later be destroyed, he stated that he hated the brutal way it was done. Westerik therefore chose to never recreate the mural, even though many inhabitants of the city loved to see the painting again somewhere else in the city. (BKOR, sd)

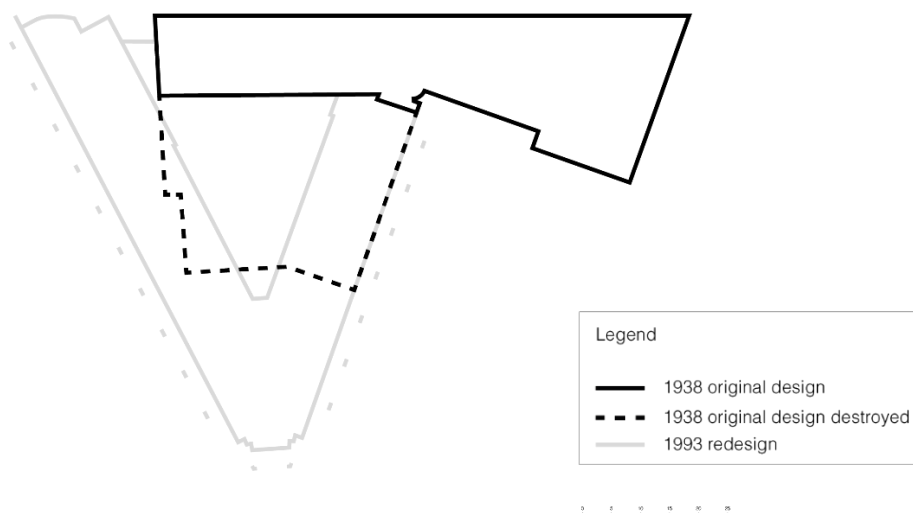


Fig. 5

The mural was visible from the Coolsingel. When walking to the Hofplein, the girl popped up directly after the city hall. (Thisen, 2018) The mural was therefore part of an important route through the city center at that time.

When the artist died, it was decided to recreate the girl on a facade of the eye hospital in Rotterdam in memory of Westerik (Het Oogziekenhuis Rotterdam, 2019). This seems like a strange decision, as the artist has always firmly stated that he never wants to paint the girl again. To this day, however, she has not been recreated yet.

A mural is tangible, but since the painting is demolished, the value of the tangible layering of time is lost. The intangible layering of time can be found in the narrative of the artist. The mural used to be an eyecatcher in the city center, so considered collective memory of the inhabitants of Rotterdam. Relating to art in the city. Rotterdam being the city which allows art to be present (like poems on buildings). According to the framework of Pereira Roders (2007), this intangible layering of time had a social-emotional (collective) value.



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

3.1.4. Tangible layering of time - Maarten Struijs

For Struijs, architecture is not about design, but about the demand of society. His architecture serves the public. As the municipal architect of that time he designed several public services. During his studies Struijs came up with the so called 'onder-orde'. This stems from a social idea on the functioning of society based on facts and not his own philosophy on the truth (Galema, 2006). His idea that his architecture should serve the public is visible in the expression of the facades of the redesign. His 'onder-orde' idea is mostly shown in the possibilities for transformation in the future. The circulation and routing through the building is more important than the police character of the rooms. The systems allow the rooms to be changed easily. (Galema, 2006) This tangible layering of time has an aesthetical-conceptual value, according to the framework of Pereira Roders (2007).

The redesign of the building was finished in 1993 and was criticized a lot because of the multitude of colors, forms and styles. The chaotic ensemble of forms, colors and styles was something Struijs liked, since it could be seen as a symbol for the city: Rotterdam is already a mix of styles and therefore the city allows to build something different. (Galema, 2006)

His ideas about the city mean that he has also designed a building in his own way that fits in its surroundings. The concept of fitting in surroundings has an aesthetical-conceptual value, according to the framework of Pereira Roders (2007).

The literal new layer of insulation stucco covers the brick facades and the classic sloped roof had to make way for a wavy, elevated roof, which refers to the water of the Haagseveer. Although the concept of this tangible layering of time is valuable, the execution of the concept is not. This 80s redesign radiates the post-war ideas of the city: Everything was possible.

But looking at it from the present time, the building looks chaotic and outdated. The radiation of post-war ideas of the city through the expression of the facades has a political– symbolic value according to the Pereira Roders framework (2007), but to fit in today's city, there is a need for simplification.

4. DISCUSSION

The intangible layering of time relates to the police during the time of the original building from Ad van der Steur, since the appearance of this building is lost it seems difficult to attach the found values to the current facades of the building.

A building that has no meaning in the eyes of the experts can be regarded as monuments by locals. Meurs calls this their 'lieux de mémoire', a place that holds memories. This community value is closely linked to the personal memory and perception of people. (Meurs, 2016, p.43) This paper is based on the perspective of the professional.

Although a truly objective framework to value the layering of time in a building is unobtainable, it does serve a good method to value the historical and cultural importance of a design. The narratives about the building formed a valuable basis for a valuation of the intangible layering of time in this building. The method therefore certainly has value for the further design process and adds to the general knowledge on the theme of layering of time.

5. CONCLUSION

How does the layering of time expresses itself in the facades of the police headquarters in Rotterdam, and how does it influence the perception of the building?

The tangible layering of time from the van der Steur period is only visible in the proportions of the facades. The tangible layering of time of the redesign from Struijs are mostly valued by their concepts. The intangible layering of time is only made tangible in the current building in the memorial points. There is an opportunity to make the intangible layering of time more tangible in a new intervention to the building, using the valuation of this paper.

5.1 tangible layering of time

The expression of the intangible layering of time in the facades of the police headquarters of Rotterdam.

5.1.1. Ad van der Steur

The concept of fitting in surroundings has an aesthetical-conceptual value, according to the framework of Pereira Roders (2007).

The proportions to the city hall are a part of this concept that is still visible in the current facades of the building.

The now covered bricks could have a historical-educational value, according to the framework of Pereira Roders (2007), when shown in future redesign.

The concept of radiating authority is still visible in the proportions of the facades and this tangible layering of time has a historical-educational value, according to the framework of Pereira Roders (2007).

5.1.2. Maarten Struijs

Struijs's idea that his architecture should serve the public is visible in the expression of the facades of the redesign. This tangible layering of time has an aesthetical-conceptual value, according to the framework of Pereira Roders (2007).

Although the concept of this tangible layering of time is valuable, the execution of the concept is not. This 80s redesign radiates the post-war ideas of the city, but looking at it from the present time the building looks chaotic and outdated. The radiation of post-war ideas of the city through the expression of the façades has a political– symbolic value according to the Pereira Roders framework (2007), but to fit in today's city, there is a need for simplification.

Struijs's ideas about the city mean that he has also designed a building in his own way that fits in its surroundings. The concept of fitting in surroundings has an aesthetical-conceptual value, according to the framework of Pereira Roders (2007).

5.2 intangible layering of time

The expression of the intangible layering of time in the facades of the police headquarters of Rotterdam.

5.2.1. Ad van der Steur

The narratives during World War II relate to the function and use of the building. This intangible layering of time has, according to Pereira Roders framework (2007), an economic–use value.

The mural of the rope-jumping girl is tangible, but since the painting is demolished, the value of the tangible layering of time is lost. The intangible layering of time can be found in the narrative of the artist. According to the framework of Pereira Roders (2007), this intangible layering of time had a social-emotional (collective) value since it is part of the collective memory of the inhabitants of Rotterdam.

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8. IMAGE CAPTIONS

Figure 1. Pereira Roders, A. (2007). *Re-architecture: lifespan rehabilitation of built Heritage* [PhD]. Technische Universiteit Eindhoven.

Figure 2. Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten, Predikheren, Mechelen, Belgium, 2022. © Credits Liselotte Klerk

Figure 3. police headquarters, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 2022, memory plate WWII interior. © Credits Liselotte Klerk

Figure 4. police headquarters, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 2022, memory place WWII exterior.. © Credits Diederik Bouter

Figure 5. police headquarters, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 2022, scheme ground floor plan time periods. © Credits Liselotte Klerk

Figure 6. police headquarters, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 2022, former west wing with mural.

© From: <https://www.bkor.nl/beelden/touwtjespringend-meisje/>

Figure 7. police headquarters, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 2022, former west wing being demolished. © From: <https://www.trouw.nl/cultuur-media/rotterdam-wil-co-s-meisje-weer-zien-touwtjespringen~bd5b375d/>