

Archiving what exactly

initial note

~~At first I would like to state that the idea of a *project journal* as a way of collecting thoughts in a quite strictly curated layout always stresses me out too much to commence right away. ∴~~

~~So here I am, starting this journal with a 5 (five) week delay.~~

Please enjoy.

Interiors Buildings Cities

MSc3/4 | *Palace*

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Contents

01-01 Looking Carefully	06
Research Model <i>ArkDes</i>	
01-02 First Thoughts	42
Three Days in Antwerp	
Room for an Archive <i>Archival Ensamble</i>	
P1 <i>Room In-Between</i>	

01 - 01

Looking
Carefully



A selection of parts of buildings, public and private, erected from the designs of Sir John Soane, between the years 1783 and 1815. Joseph Michael Gandy (1771 - 1843). (1818).

INTRODUCTION

The archive is a foundation of human civilisation. Since people first started cultivating the earth, they began to keep records: of yields, taxes and land ownerships. Governance, whether for good or ill, has come to depend upon archives. We live in a world where archives, digital and physical, systematically collate information that facilitate power or control over each of us and all of us....a condition sometimes out of control, as Kafka or Orwell remind us. Often jealously guarded and open only to a privileged few, archives have, throughout history, retained knowledge that might otherwise have been lost. Different, and often subservient, to libraries, which present the synthesis of human knowledge and its stories, or museums, which offer readings of the world through objects, archives contain the raw material from which ideas can be mined; to emerge or be assembled in new ways.

Archive can be both noun and verb. An archive, to archive. Whether data or physical materials - sometimes valuable in their own right, sometimes not - the things recorded in an archive are offered significance by the archivist's careful documentation, compilation and cross referencing of them. Individual things gain authority through multiplicity, through being part of a larger whole. Archives appear to document impassively, holding records that do not necessarily require a reader to determine their veracity. Anonymous, whether stored in boxes and files, on shelves, in drawers or encased in hermetically sealed cabinets, these wait...suspended...latent...for scholars who, like investigators, painstakingly unpack them, interrogate them, draw inference from them and gain new insights.

However, while they might contain facts, archives cannot be seen as fact. They are not innocent, they are never the complete truth. The questions archives ask; the things they choose to keep or save; the matter of what is important and what isn't, these things are dependent on a prevailing sense of order, on the

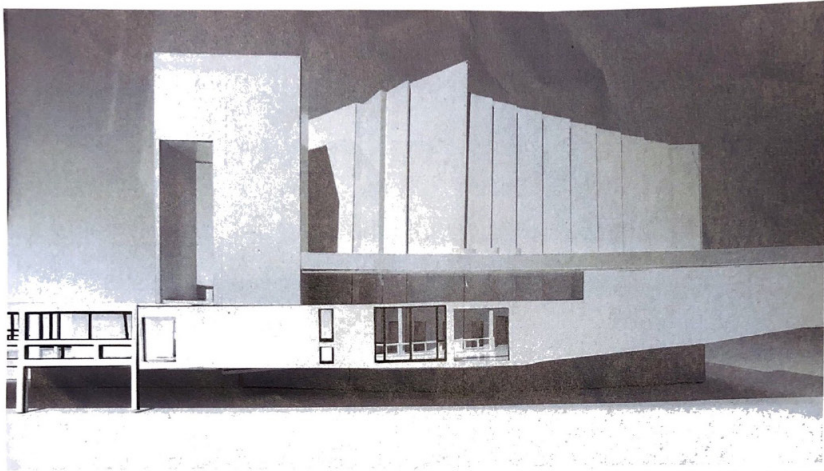
cultural certainties and prejudices of a particular place or moment in time that the material in an archive might embody. Archives both reveal and reinforce hierarchies of power and have a tendency to overlook, or put aside, things that fit awkwardly into their frame of reference, or not at all. Nonetheless in a world where material facts have been more slippery and difficult to grasp, they offer a critical measure of authenticity.

Over the last century, while libraries became democratised and museums a popular pastime, archives have remained aloof, the preserve of the few. Yet in the highly developed society that modernity has constructed, the practice of archiving has become an orthodoxy, even a necessity. We archive almost everything. The city itself has, in parts, become a kind of archive: measured, documented, prescribed and controlled. Legislation has made states responsible for them and, increasingly, publicly funded archives feel the pressure to be more public. To make themselves more available, to find ways of opening themselves and their contents up to wider scrutiny and greater interest, to become relevant to people. How do they do this while protecting the material stored within them and thus maintaining their sense of order and purpose, their authority? Is an archive only concerned with the preservation of the past or does it seek to have agency in the present or offer possibilities for the future? Is it closed or open, static or dynamic, or somewhere in between? How does the archive offer a setting for the things it archives and how might it adjust to, acknowledge or change in response to the concerns of those who archive; to the work of those who are archived, or to the desires and needs of those who only visit?

This year we will be looking at a particular type of archive, one that is particularly relevant to us: an archive for architecture. Mirroring the wider world, the history of the architectural archive is almost as old as architecture itself, whether in the form of

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Model of arts centre deSingel by Leon Stynen, Florien Du Valle Lonne Delliens, oly Caroline Voet. (2018).

documentation or physical artefacts, ideas or elements of buildings cross referenced or brought from one culture to another. Beyond the publication of his own thesis for example, the importance of the 15th Century Italian architect Palladio, in Northern Europe, was in large measure due to the collection of his drawings acquired by the English architect Inigo Jones, alongside the collector Lord Burlington. These drawings, now held in the Royal Institute of British Architects drawing collection, were translated into buildings in London and other cities. Their influence going on to establish Neo Palladianism as the dominant style of 17th and 18th Century Europe.

Burlington and Inigo Jones were private collectors and many of the earliest collections of architectural drawings and artefacts were the possessions, or obsessions, of individuals. This is a lineage which continues to the present day, in the Drawing Matter archive for example. The great London architect and collector, Sir John Soane, gifted his collection and the extraordinary architecture he made to display it, to the nation, as the first house museum. His collection of fragments and casts is representative of a wider fascination, embodied in the cast courts of the 19th Century, where fragments of buildings and their ornaments were reproduced and placed on display. Architects since, both individuals or practices, have established archives, offering bodies of significant work and collections made over a career, encompassing books, drawings, models and paperwork. Sometimes, like Soane, they give over their own house to their archive, as OM Ungers did, even extending it for the purpose. Part of the role of such private archives, made public, is to ensure the ongoing recognition of those who made them. The cabinet of Herzog de Maunon is one particularly complete version of this, where – from the beginning of their career – the practice's whole oeuvre and seemingly every sketch model was conceived as part of a collection, almost as it was being made.

Sometimes such archives become subsumed into institutions, professional or cultural, whether libraries, museums, universities or professional organisations like the RIBA for example. The archive we will study is the collection held by the Flemish Institute of Architects, the VAI, in Antwerp. This intriguing body of material not only assembles the history of significant Flemish Architects from the past. It has been very proactive in considering the archive as a living, dynamic body of material, working with architects still in practice and thus also becoming representative of, and a force in, the transformation of Flemish architecture in recent decades; helping to create a culture which might be considered amongst the most exciting in the world.

Having failed to complete a project, launched via a competition, to create a new home for the archive, within a disused church, the collection remains in need of a permanent home and new direction. This will be our graduation project for this year. We will be working with the VAI and other significant voices to think speculatively about how to develop a new architectural archive, not on its originally intended site but instead in the context of the VAI's home, the architect Leon Stynen's monumental modernist culture campus of deSingel, on the periphery of Antwerp's historic centre. Stynen is, himself, represented in the collection of the VAI and so the Singel might perhaps be considered as the archive's largest artefact.

This raises interesting questions for an architectural archive, in terms of scale and the relation between the representation, the fragment and the thing itself. It asks what an architecture archive is or might be, what and who it is for and who it might address. These are amongst the many questions we will be developing over the course of this graduation year.

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2024-25 MSc3 AR3AI100



The Reference Projects, from left to right as stated in 'Model Archives'.

PREPARATION

Brief 1: Thinking and doing

The opening weeks of the Graduation Studio engage in a collective period of design research, as preparation for the main project. This will establish the contexts in which it will develop, through a process of thinking and doing, across design studio and research seminar. Themes, questions and your developing positions, as students, will oscillate between these two spaces, with each informing the other. This is emphasised through the shared teaching and in group work, from which individual projects will emerge.

The conclusion will be a set of drawn and modelled outcomes, which are situated in a body of thinking, articulated through collective research documents and individual research plans that, together, begin to establish the concerns and ambitions of your individual graduation project. Previous examples of each will be available for consultation and discussion. The period up to the P1 will be arranged in two parts within both the research seminar and design studio respectively. These will overlap and inter-relate.

LOOKING CAREFULLY: Weeks 1-4

The archive extends far beyond a mere repository of buildings. It gives access to ideas, positions, education, knowledge and images, and that across generations. It gives insight into the social context in which designs were created. At the same time, the archive shows alternatives. Archives are not repositories of truths but places of research. They are incubators of new ideas, breeding grounds for speculation about the future, ... Without research or interpretation, the archive has little meaning.

Sofie de Caigny, former director, Flemish Architecture Institute | VAI

Through this brief, we will begin to unpack the archive, not the archive, for the VAI in Antwerp, the development of which will be the subject of this graduation study, but the idea of an archive, both historically and in its contemporary, public form. Archives, as an architectural type, have developed as a means to document, store and protect records and precious things. Access to them has

typically been restricted. What was their historical form and as they reshape themselves, as more open, public institutions, what can we imagine an archive is now, what is its purpose and who is it for? Your focus will be the development of a particular type of archive, the architectural archive. In the next four weeks you will start to define your first thoughts about this, through two parallel studies:

The idea of an archive for architecture

The Research Seminars will encompass a series of lectures and readings through which the architectural archive will be addressed as an idea, within social, political, cultural, theoretical, historical and practical contexts. Together, you will study a series of significant references that address the development of archives for architecture the architecture of archives, indeed one is an archive building by an architect, Robbrecht en Daem, whose work is also present in the VAI archive. These references engage different contexts, both in place and time, while also addressing the different aspects of what an archive does, encompassing preservation, documentation, storage, study and reference, display and education.

Alongside these documentary studies we intend to visit two important, relevant local archives, that of the NAI and MVRDV's recently completed Depot in Rotterdam. Visiting these will offer you a different kind of experience, of visiting an archive, seeing its collections, talking to its archivists and understanding its functionality, prior to your visit to Antwerp.

Through this research, you will not only consider what the conditions, concerns and limitations of the various studied archives might be but also the motivations of those who establish and make them, investigating the ways in which they are translated into spatial, organisational and functional strategies.

Through reflective discussion, writing and drawing, you will develop your own understandings of how such concerns have defined the history, development and current conditions of archives; what and who they are for and their relation to the institutions they are housed within. The concerns raised here will form the basis for your individual research plan.

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Model Archives

In parallel, the Design Studio will research and document eight reference projects that embody aspects of the themes addressed in the seminar, in built form and space. The chosen projects are:

John Soane Museum, London, 1808-1812, Sir John Soane;

Beinicke rare books and manuscripts library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, 1963, SOM;

Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, 1989, Peter Rose;

Ungers House extension, 1990, OM Ungers;

Drawing Matter Archive, Somerset, UK 2014, Hugh Strange;

Herzog de Meuron Kabinett, Basel, 2014, HdM;

City Archive, Bordeaux, 2015, Robbrecht en Daem;

Ark Des, Stockholm, 2024, Rafael Moneo (conversion), Arhov Frick (redesign).

Seen together, these range between the intimate and the institutional, between past and present, between the archive as machine and as space of representation. Working in groups of four, the history, provenance and architecture of each project will be carefully analysed and set into context. Each of the chosen situations will be redrawn at a range of appropriate scales and in ways which allow their comparability while also expressing their individual character or concerns.

The scope of these drawings will be defined collectively by the studio. Alongside the drawings, the groups will each make a spatial model, carefully analysing and recreating a representative image of different aspects of an archive, found within each of the precedents. Made primarily of paper and card, these models will be designed to be photographed, reproducing the image, atmosphere and detail of the original view as closely as possible.

Their purpose is to address different scales of attention, considering in detail the material character and atmosphere of the space, the ways in which artefacts are placed within it, its furnishing and the presence of the technical installations, required for it to operate. Alongside the drawings and models, groups will develop analytical diagrams which will allow each precedent to be understood and compared in terms of its scale, spatial order, programmatic function and process. By the end of this you should understand the impulses and motivations which inform the various reference projects studied, but also, when seen collectively, the wider possibilities of an architectural archive and the ways and means through which they operate.

In both studio and seminar you will in effect become an archival researcher, or indeed an archivist. The archive is a less well documented architectural type than many others we have studied in the past. Undertaking these exercises might require invention in terms of how you procure information. You might need to become investigators or negotiators, piecing things together rather than finding them in a monograph. You should therefore record the processes of acquisition alongside what you acquire. The ways in which you choose to carefully document the references can be understood as a fragment of other archives – that of the studio project, which is itself part of the larger archive of Interiors Buildings Cities.

FIRST THOUGHTS: Weeks 5-9

Building Ensembles

In the second period, the research seminars will address the context of the de Singel, the modernist culture campus in the context of which we propose to work. Inspired by monastic precedents, the abstract white volumes of the building ensemble are connected by glazed cloisters. Now set against the Antwerp Ring, the composition of buildings and spaces were originally proposed as overlooking a pastoral landscape, set away from the fabric of the 19th Century extension to the existing historic centre. Intended as primarily a performing arts venue, de Singel was extended in the 1990's by Stéphane Beel, to include accommodation and exhibition spaces for the Flemish Architecture Institute, the VAI. The Seminar will explore de Singel in the context of other modernist building ensembles, exploring their architecture and relationship to the city, as a precursor to exploring it as a potential site for an intervention.

Archival Ensembles

The second period of the design studio will involve the study of a series of significant ensembles of material, held in the collection of the Flemish Architecture Archive. Researching these, and the buildings or architects to which they pertain, you will individually design a setting for one of them. This will be conceived as an accessible archive, somewhere between storage and display. Through this introductory design project, which will be presented primarily through a detailed model, supported by drawings and photographs, you will begin to consider how an archive might be conceived in relation to some form of public engagement. Questions of scale, light and material, view, spatial sequence and furnishing may be explored, while the technical questions and parameters that underpin the effective performance of an archive will also be introduced. This intense, introductory design project offers students opportunities to consider themselves as, at once, archivist, curator, architect and audience, drawing together their reflections, observations and developing understanding in a first act of proposition.

Project Journal

Finally the research seminar will introduce the Project Journal, a document made by each student individually. The purpose of this is to record their process of thinking, making, development and reflection over the course of the graduation studio and finally, to form a key body of evidence against which research and process can be marked at the end of the year, in the P5 examination. The Journal should be developed on an ongoing basis, within a form and structure chosen individually. It should record and communicate the process of the project, including outcomes and reflections on tutorials and reviews, while also offering a space for reflection and critique of the work being made and the issues that define it. Material from the Project Journal can be used to inform the research plan to be submitted at the conclusion of the research seminar.

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Research Model | ArkDes

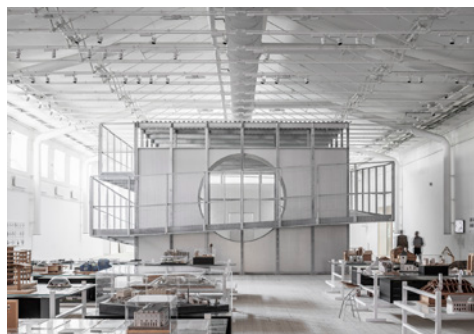
Before starting with an actual design for the VAI archive, we were all supposed to investigate one of the pre-selected precedent examples in the groups of three (or four). Aside from conventional research of how both the building and the institution operate, we were expected to work on a scale model and recreate the given photograph for the sake of an atmosphere exploration.

The group I've got assigned to was about to examine Arrhov Frick's intervention in Stockholm located ArkDes (Swedish National Centre for Architecture and Design) - as the latest interpretation of what an architectural archive might be.

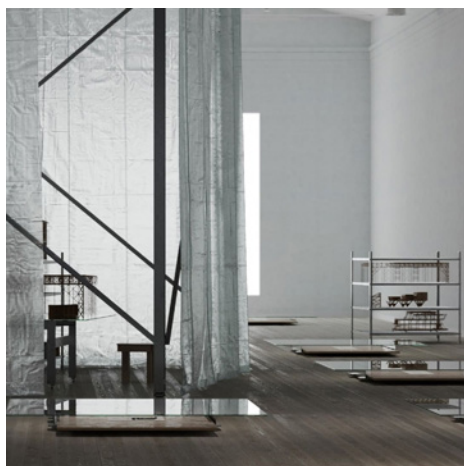
From the very beginning, the most interesting part of this project was the fact it was not yet finished for the next three weeks (September 27th). All that we could find this far were rather speculative images of what this space is supposed to look

and an information that the structures visible in the picture are repurposed from dismantled Boxen - a precedent exhibition designed by Dehlin Brattgard.

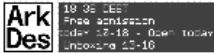
We decided, therefore, to firstly trace back all the information we could gather about ArkDes, Boxen, Arrhov Frick, and their approach towards redesigning the Centre.



Boxen by Dehlin Brattgard, 2018



the new ArkDes by Arrhov Frick, Olivier Campagne, 2023



Admission to ArkDes is free throughout 2024.

About / News / ArkDes closed for refurbishment

News 11.01.2024

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ArkDes closed for refurbishment

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Architecture: Arnhov Frick, Pär: Oskar Denzmann, 2023.

ArkDes in Transformation

On September 27th, the doors to ArkDesen Stoppelstaden will open for the first time after a year of renovation. The building has been transformed into a new museum for the ArkDes unique collection, design and architecture.

The redesigned exhibition halls, designed by the architectural firm Arnhov Frick, will display the museum's extensive collection. ArkDes collection encompasses over a million objects. The new exhibition will display 150 years of Swedish architecture and design history.

Designed by the architectural firm Arnhov Frick

Arnhov Frick utilizes materials such as steel, wood, and glass that are already available in the exhibition halls. These materials are reinterpreted to create new, dynamic structures, offering a fresh perspective on the collection. The design of the construction is profoundly influenced by the characteristics and potential of the existing materials. Everything has been dismantled and then reconstructed into new forms. Now, ARKDes, the old glass dividers have found new purpose. 70% of the steel from the exhibition space floor has been fully reused and repurposed, and all the plywood transport displays have been reused.

Founded in 2010 in Stockholm, Arnhov Frick has been recognized as one of Sweden's most compelling architectural firms. They have received numerous international awards, including the Mies van der Rohe Award and the Kröner Prize for the renovation of the building of the year. Led by Arnhov Frick with the T&B Group and Design House of the Year 2022 award in Sweden.

Welcome on September 27th to discover the transformation.

HOW SIMPLE CAN WE BUILD?

A CONVERSATION WITH JOHAN ARNHOV Y HENRIK FRICK

LILLY RUIZ & ANNEKE RUIZ



Your office Arnhov Frick creates new reality for complex residential projects made of wood on remote sites in the Stockholm Archipelago. They are characterized by a minimalist design, for example, built in terms of their formal expression and the regularity of construction. The result has been a simple solution on the form of a cube, but instead was chosen to use a more intricate structure on a larger scale and in other details. How do these projects play with different materials, construction, and how can construction be made sustainable, how would you describe the link between these two different worlds?

Yes, these two worlds would be a similar approach established in both of them, independently of the scale of intervention. The way we think, however, we don't have an explicit method regarding our working process. It is something slowly evolved to basic common sense, the idea to learn about different materials, operating with different materials, structures, and techniques, although perhaps in a more rapid way. We want to learn about them in a slow and steady way, then we move on to the next - small steps forward. This is how we prefer to work because we can also see that we gain control of the process when working with clients, consultants, and even builders with this approach. In Sweden architects are not normally in charge because of tight conditions. But we try to find ways of getting ourselves in charge, in our own way, to control the process and to be able to produce better quality for the user.

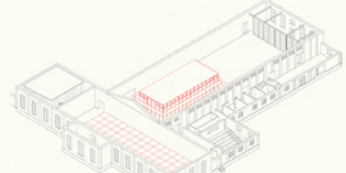
For example, in the small village where there was hardly any light, to complete the project properly, we needed to learn and understand everything there was about the context and the light natural to use. Once we had decided that would be the most we had to learn everything about the last possibility of a wooden structure how to design the best possible connections, starting up in the steel frame and the last that would simplify the construction. We needed to understand the situation of the situation, however, among other things, all material needed to be carried by two persons from the above some 50 meters via a lift to the platform of the house. This conditioning factor decided the dimensions of the wooden walls and beams with a certain regularity. It seemed us to make a structure with a limited number of elements. Then, the design process was very fast. So we were putting up the structure - these walls - and this also started to control everything for the further to adapt to the situation, windows and walls in the structure.

It's pretty to use materials and structures relating to local context and heritage of the site, even in large scale projects. However, in larger projects there is the other dimension consisting of expanding the number of production and getting something new further away from the building site. This is possible means that we must spend more on transport and logistics and the total cost will come off cheaper for someone building a small scale house where this is not an option. It is important to maintain the balance in the most economic way in Europe to build in at the moment (which is almost given the general poor quality of construction in most building projects, but that is another statement). If, for example, there should be a choice of making production more sustainable and making more effort to transport them, if that is the case, we do it in order to improve quality for the user.

TO REUSE



Boxen Studio Gallery



Arnhov Frick, 2024

Analysing the image



Oliver Campagne, 2023

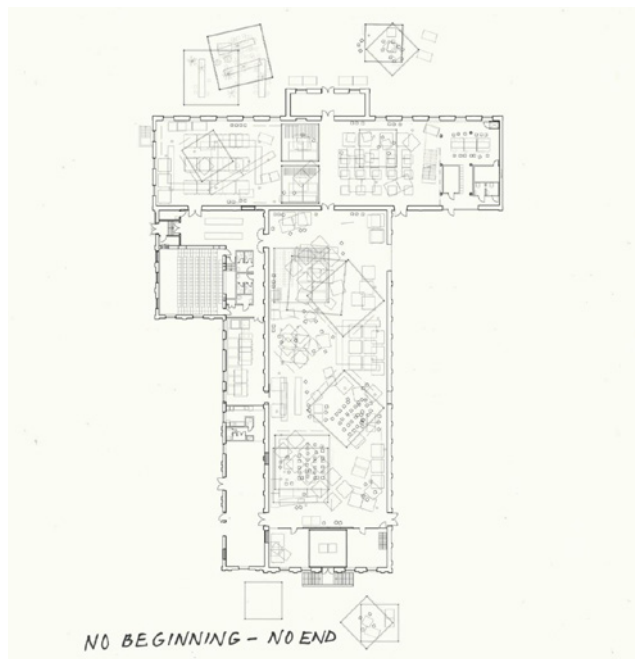
In a our search we have quickly found out that the Image has to be a zoomed fragment of a bigger image. We have done some cropping just to test it out and prove our thoughts.

Moreover, tracing back the authorship of so-thought pictures, we have discovered that the images are actually renders made by a skillfull visual artist Olivier Campagne.

That changed the logics of our thinking to more digital driven with softwares becoming actual tools of reference.

It has also switched the rajectory of how what we want the final picture to resemble: a wishful visualisation or true to reality picture.



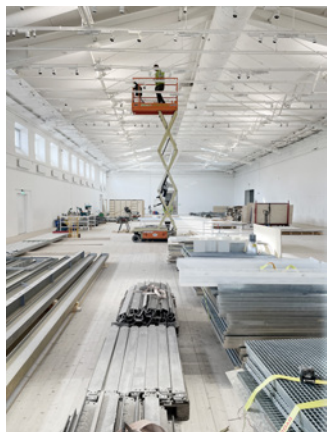


Arrhov Frick, 2024

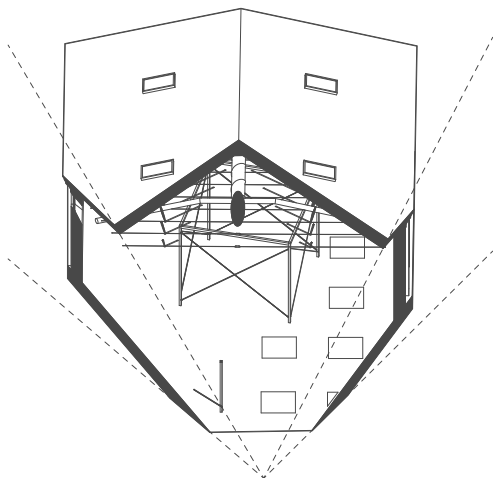


Oliver Campagne, 2023





Kieran Long, 2024



Bruno Teles Xavier, 2024



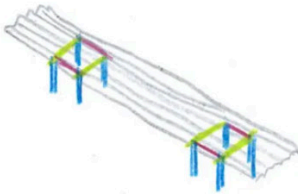
Gathering information

Since both architects and ArkDes haven't been giving away any information before their *Grand Opening*, we were forced to explore different quasi-archival sources (e.g. afasia) to find Arrhov Frick's sketches and "plans".

Their catalogue sketch appeared to be crucial for the working process since we understood that the whole idea is about the furniture loosely floating around the Exercishuset hall.

Moreover, it helped us in preparation of the material to assemble the objects in the correct scale.

With some essential help from Daniel, who used his internal contacts to get us some behind the scenes images from ArkDes refurbishment process, we could compare designed objects with their sketchy, linear catalogue found on the web (through Kieran Long's LinkedIn profile).



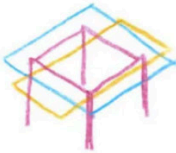
MODEL TABLE

45 KG
1 TRA
3 IPE 180
2 UPE 180
8 ITEMS:
8 TRA
24 IPE 180
16 UPE 180



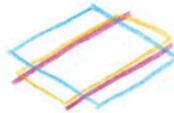
HAMMOCK

54 KG
3 UNP 65
2 IPE 80
NET
9 ITEMS:
27 UNP 65
18 IPE 80



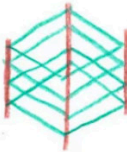
DISPLAY TABLE

260 KG
2 L-STEEL
2 UPE 100
2 FLAT PERF. ST.
1 GLASS SHEET
1 PLYWOOD
20 ITEMS:
40 L-STEEL
40 UPE 100
40 FLAT PERF. ST.
20 GLASS SHEET
20 PLYWOOD



DISPLAY PODIUM

298 KG
2 UPE 100
2 FLAT STEEL
1 GLASS SHEET
1 PLYWOOD
20 ITEMS:
40 UPE 100
40 FLAT STEEL
20 GLASS SHEET
20 PLYWOOD



DRAWING SHELF

174 KG
4 L-STEEL
4 METAL GRATINGS
10 ITEMS:
40 L-STEEL
40 METAL GRATINGS



DRAWING SHELF

94 KG
4 L-STEEL
2 METAL GRATINGS
10 ITEMS:
40 L-STEEL
20 METAL GRATINGS



DISPLAY WALL

266 KG
2 HEB 180
1 FLAT PERF. ST.
1 GLASS SHEET
15 ITEMS:
30 HEB 180
15 FLAT PERF. ST.
15 GLASS SHEET



DISPLAY WALL

477 KG
2 HEB 180
0,5 IPE 80
1 UPE 100
1 FLAT STEEL
2 GLASS SHEET
15 ITEMS:
30 HEB 180
8 IPE 80
15 UPE 100
15 FLAT STEEL
30 GLASS SHEET



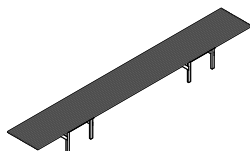
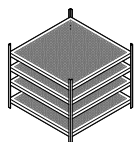
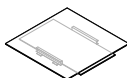
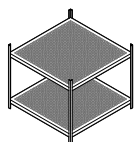
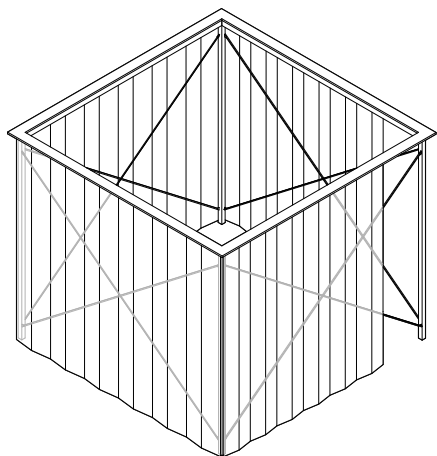
LAMP

12,5 KG
1 IPE 100
15 FLAT SHEET
18 ITEMS:
18 IPE 100
4 FLAT SHEET



STOOL

8 KG
PLYWOOD
TOT: 210 ITEMS



Bruno Teles Xavier, 2024



Arrhov Frick, 2024



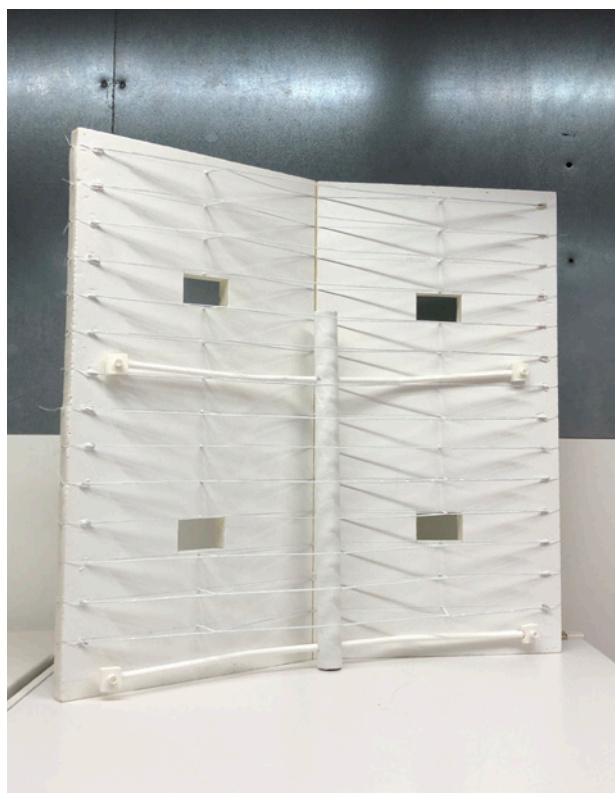
Kieran Long, 2024

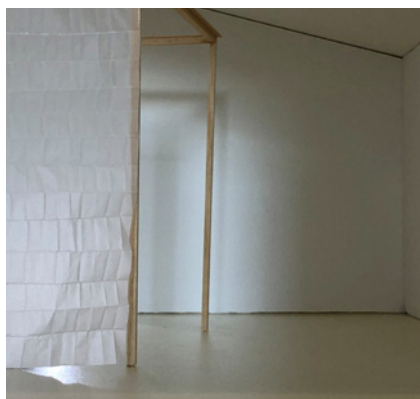
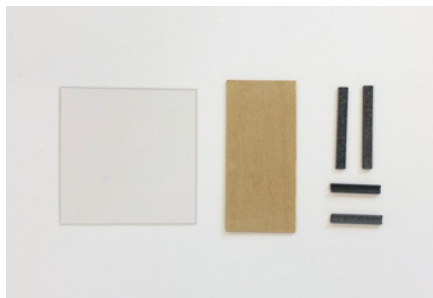
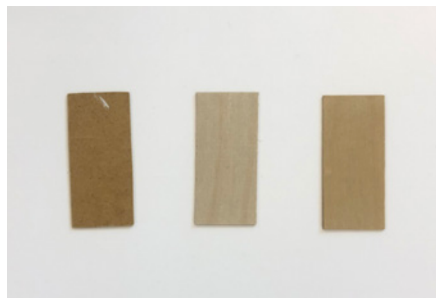
Sampling: materials | objects | lights | textures | finishes

In order to execute the image properly we had to test out the objects identified in both the source image and architects' catalogue.

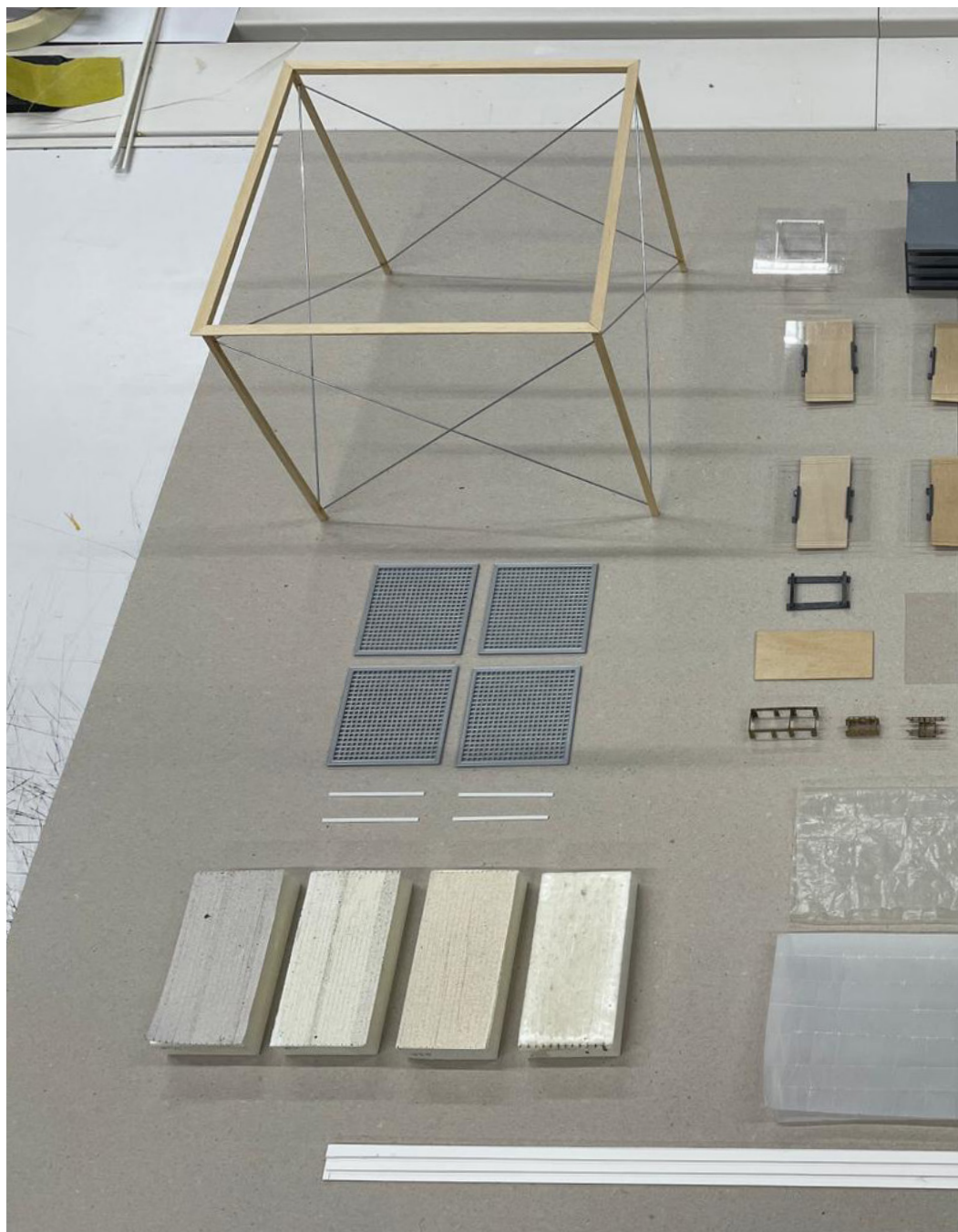
Knowing that our shot has to be quite wide , we have picked the 1:30 scale as our reference point in order not to being obligated creating a redundant model only for the sake of detailed zoom in of the final shot. We were about to recreate a render anyway.

Parallely we were also sampling the finishes for the only still elements of the picture - the walls, the floor and the ceiling.











Testing the image

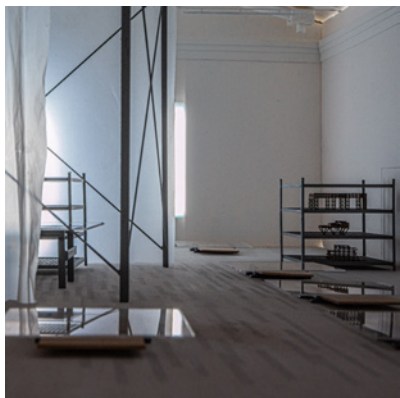
By the end of the third week of model work we had to finally make an attempt to a proper photograph. However, we still didn't know how to execute some of the effects visible in the image (especially knowing that all of them were actually digitally produced in Olivier Campagne's high-end hardware devices).

We have prepared a quick reproduction of the plan to rationally situate made objects in close to actual relation to each other from the source image.

In the photographic studio we could manage to fabricate the environment of an almost complete darkness, that could help us to recreate the source image - clearly visualised in a "windows closed and shut" setting.



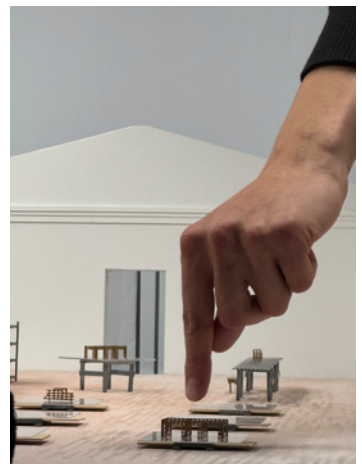




Depicting the render

After seeing the results and comparing them with the source image(s) we already knew what kind of changes are needed for the image to get as close to the original, as possible. However, at this stage we realised there are aspects of the image that simply can't be recreated with analogue technique - even via a digital camera. Some of the angles were just impossible to match exactly with the original render.

At this point we decided our photo needs to be somewhere in between those two visual languages. We went through the material over the weekend and walked into the photo studio right after. With the desired quality in mind, we started the final photoshoot, also considering taking some complimentary shots, if explain Arrhov Frick's intervention solely through those images.





original image | Olivier Campagne for Arrhov Frick

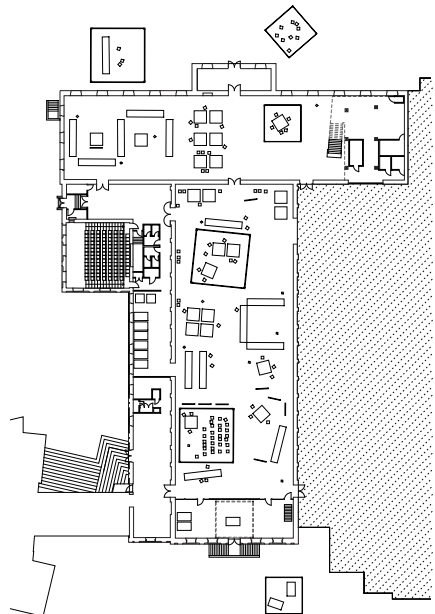
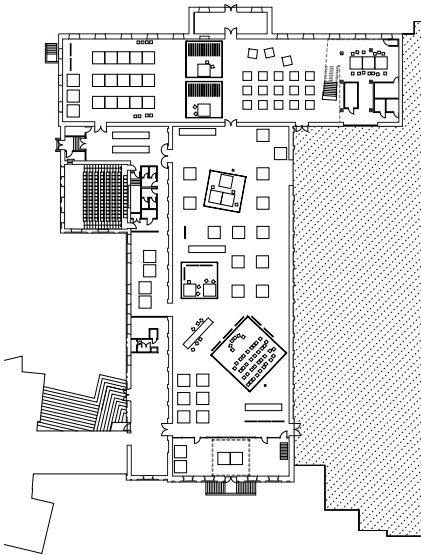


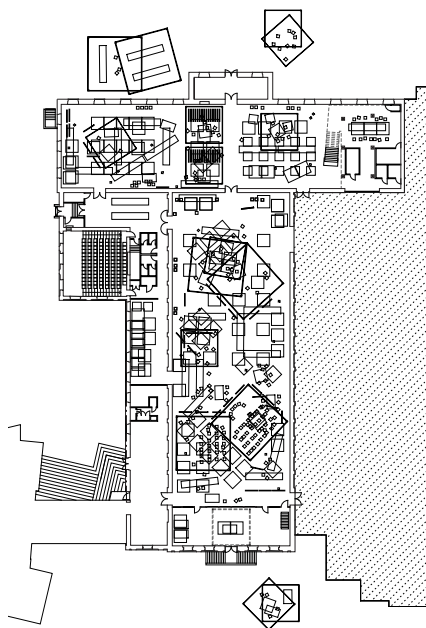
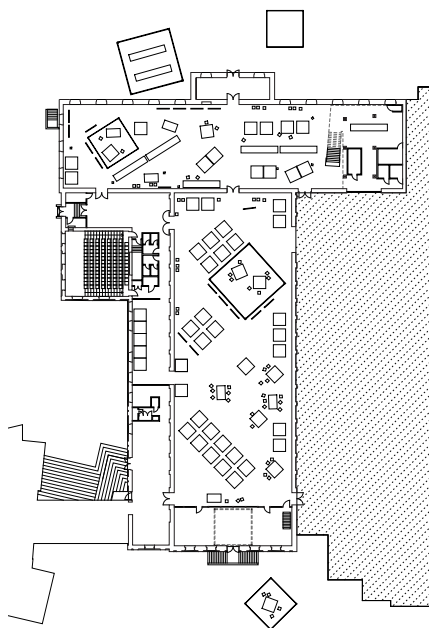
image reproduction | Maksymilian Bernady, Bruno Teles Xavier, Yuqing Zhang

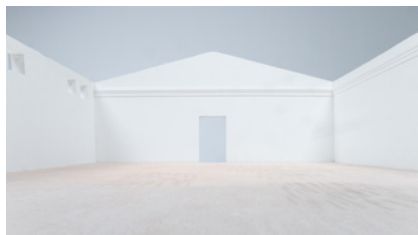
Playing with the convention

Parallely, in order to understand the flexibility of the objects in a plan, we redrew some of the layouts from Arrhov Frick's sketch, and superimposed them again afterwards to create our own speculative drawing. At this point, having neither a proper plan original plan of the layout, nor a picture of the realised space of ArkDes yet worked in our favour.

We decided to experiment with the layouting of created objects and set our own layouts - exactly as Arrhov Frick want ArkDes to operate. Having actual scale models in 1:30 allowed us to play with the model convention, removing some elements for the sake of final shots not being too literal







Maksymilian Bernady, Bruno Teles Xavier, 2024

Reality confronted

Right after having finished our research model, the opening of the actual ArkDes has had place. From then on, therefore, we could see the glimpse of how the intervention of Arrhov Frick looked like in real life, compared to Oliver Campagne's initial renderings, and both our model and photographs.

Struck by the contrast of architects' vision - the ephemeral rooms with the furniture as stand-alone objects defining the space - and photographs of a dazzling colorful exhibition (*Designing Motherhood: Things That Make and Break Our Births*) where mentioned objects suddenly seem thicker and way more substantial, we honestly

thought that the project had simply missed the point. The exhibition arrangement is now clearly mobile, however the general layout in the halls remain as curated as it was with Boxen, but now it is just more flexible for the curatorial changes to happen over time.

Our finding of the actual ArkDes' archive space look added to the slight disappointment of an underwhelming and scenographic outcome of Arrhov Frick's bold and thorough project.



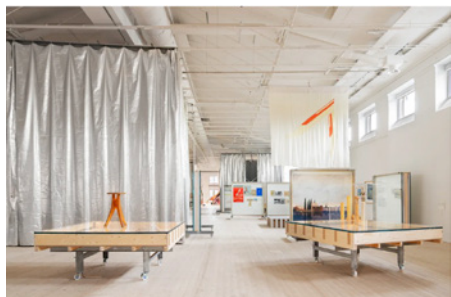
Mallin Paterson Oberg, 2018



Marco Cappelletti, 2024



Marco Cappelletti, 2024



Marco Cappelletti, 2024





01 - 02

First Thoughts



Dries Jageneau and Armand Vermeij, model new city quarter in Antwerp, 1965

First Thoughts: Archival Ensembles

When thinking of an architectural archive, many people think of a collection of beautiful drawings of unrealised dreams or of famous monuments. The first thought of an architectural archive conjures up representations of architecture in its purest form, without scuffs or prosthetics, spared from the mistakes of contractors or inadequate budgets, untainted by use and unweathered by time. This idea does not correspond to how the VAI intends to build its collection.

We explicitly want to consider the architectural archive that VAI (Flanders Architecture Institute) manages and continues to build as a set of interactions. The archive consists of a collection of unrealised ideas, correspondences with clients, executors, lecturers and officials, various material forms and contents, such as letters, plans, website, analogue and digital drawings, models, photographs and slides, collages, sketchbooks, books and magazines and material samples, make up the archive. All these objects stand in relation to each other.

Sometimes those relationships are very pronounced, at other times the relationships consist of cultural affinity, shared interest in historical examples, similar education, or the social position the designer claims for himself and architecture. The architectural archive is first and foremost a set of relationships between all

these objects, which immediately makes the immaterial meanings of those objects part of the archive. In this view, the archive becomes a unique place where conversations take place across time and space between designers among themselves, and with the world in which they find themselves.

Sofie De Caligny, excerpt from 'Introduction: On the archive, the building, the train and the world. Some reflections before the project definition', Open

Having studied and looked carefully at existing archives, this is your first opportunity to begin to think about how to engage the archive of the VAI, and to consider how the material in it might become engaging for others, whether researchers, curious visitors, architects or the archivists themselves. The archive contains a rich collection of artefacts of many different types and is a dynamic, evolving collection, which includes the work of living, practising architects. Its purpose is to protect and preserve those things, in their various material states, from the worst effects of entropy. It stores, sorts, categorises and records them in ways that allow them to be retrieved and cross-referenced. Its other role might perhaps be to give them

Archiving Architecture



Henry Van de Velde, Léon Stynen and Victor Bourgeois, model Belgian Pavilion for the New York World's Fair of 1939.

a voice and an ongoing sense of purpose, to allow the artefacts it holds to tell stories and build ideas. It might exist somewhere between a highly rarefied warehouse and a very particular type of museum, perhaps more akin to those of 19th Century scholarship than the pieces of mass tourism we know today...perhaps not.

Not all the things in the archive might be perceived as being immediately valuable. As Sofie De Caligny proposes, one might discover, alongside models and beautiful drawings in the archive, items which feel less visually engaging on first glance: a marked-up site plan; a bill of quantities; a letter to a client; a brief for a project never executed. These aides might fill in the gaps, complete the story, or illuminate the manuscript you thought you were looking for.

At the outset of this brief, you will visit the current archive of the V&A, with its curators, look at documents and artefacts from the collection, meet the archivists and hear from Sofie Decaligny, its former director. They have created a series of individual ensembles of things, one for each of you, from the work of several Belgian architects held in the collection, living and dead. You will get to see these things firsthand, to carefully hold them as an archivist or researcher does.

This week, prior to visiting you will research and get to know as much as you can about the architecture practice you are going to be working with.

Your task is to design the environment within which to both store, protect and present the elements you are given. What

are the conditions they need? How can they be understood? In what relation? You will make the proposal as a physical model at large scale. It should be spatial and architectural but might also include elements of furniture or display. It will be presented as a physical artefact, through photographs or other forms of visual imagery and as a short description of 100-150 words. You might choose to critique the role or limitations of the archive through it, including things not currently held or collected for example. You should think carefully about the technical parameters that need to be achieved in relation to the objects you are given to work with, such as light, air, temperature, humidity, contamination and fragility, or robustness. What impact would the control of these conditions have on the architectural character of the space you are designing. How can the restrictions they impose be balanced with the idea of people looking at the work? What process would people need to go through in order to see or engage with the artefacts, if any?

The outcome should consider whether the archived places need to, or have the opportunity to say anything as an ensemble. Is there a narrative that underpins them which you would like to draw out? This proposes perhaps a different kind of categorisation or relation, which moves closer to museology than archiving, as it is currently understood.

The work will be presented at the P1 in the form of a compact exhibition comprising drawings, images and the model itself, alongside your project journal and a short 150 word statement.

Jo Crepain

As part of the beginning of the second brief, the studio has preselected various Flemish architects, whose works are part of the VAI archival collection, and used them as a mean for putting us together into thematical groups for the next weeks.

The architect I was supposed to investigate was Jo Crepain (1950-2008)- a postmodernist Flemish starchitect, whom... I actually haven't known about since.

Before going to Antwerp I have briefly investigated his most iconic projects in order to understand what were the themes, typologies, styles or materialities that he was working with. I have quickly discovered that his personal style and agenda has been radically changing over time, resulting in no particular stylistic approach.





Three Days in Antwerp

In the very beginning of October, we all went on an excursion to explore the dedicated site - deSingel cultural complex - and broader context within the closest neighbourhood, as well as the whole city.

Antwerp, as any of the Belgian cities, being very different from what is the daily context of living in the Dutch urbanscape; Delft in particular. This *difficult whole*, compromised from tiny different bits resembles somewhat more the general urban feeling of some Polish cities - Warsaw and Poznań in particular. This strange, yet familiar feeling facilitates the understanding of the context as something not totally organised or complete, but in perpetual shift, organically evolving from one to another.





deSingel

At first sight this enormous complex feels like a big labyrinth. I have a sense of how I was walking through it, but I would have failed if I was to show where exactly I have been to on a plan.

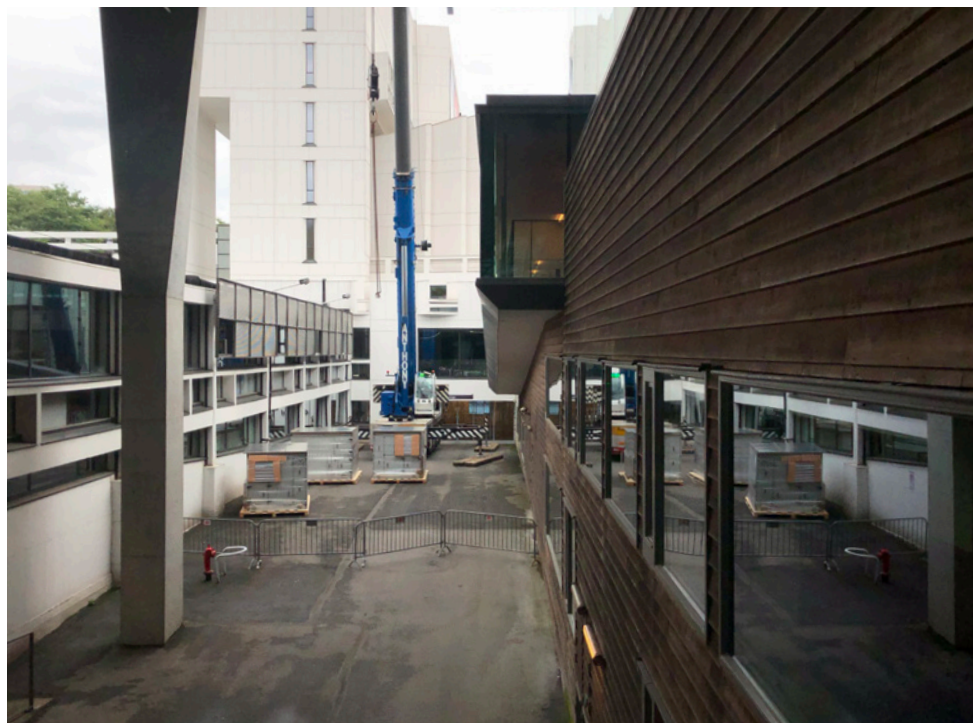
Nevertheless, I've taken some pictures as a sort of photo-memorisation of the sense of this place.













VAi Archives

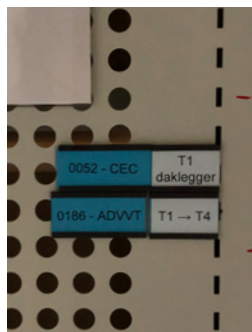
On our second day in Antwerp we went to the current location of VAI Archives in the centre of Antwerp. Besides the fact of the place being barely locatable even when using the navigation apps - therefore surely non-situated in a common perception of wider public - the place is cramped by its own built fabric and in the substance of the archive. VAI cannot use the most modern and accurate compactors, not because of a limited budget, but because of the unfavourable layout of the floor, with its too dense column spacing and the unfortunate location of the core (in the centre). Therefore, they are forced to fit on regular shelves, which fit a part of the collection, but do not allow for flexible use of the space.

The acquisition processing seems to be rather difficult for them. For instance, the quarantine room for the new acquisitions should be separated from the rest of the archive but VAI does not

have enough space for it, so if the contamination is discovered, the material needs to be transported to special lab rented in a different location.

Same problem applies to any material that is much larger than a standard size (mostly models) - therefore, the large-size objects either stand wherever or are transported to rented satellite storage spaces located around the city.

When asked, what would be their desired space, the archivists say they dream about having an open depot somehow connected to reading room or researcher spaces - so when working they can take a glimpse and engage with the collection while conducting a research.













Archival Ensemble

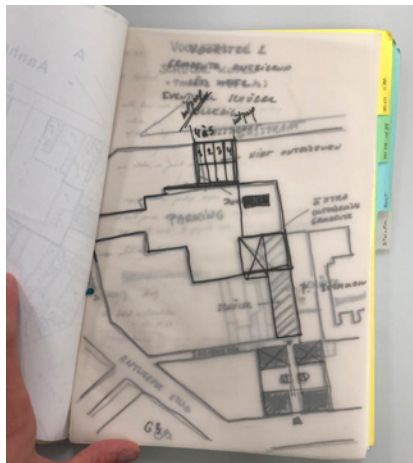
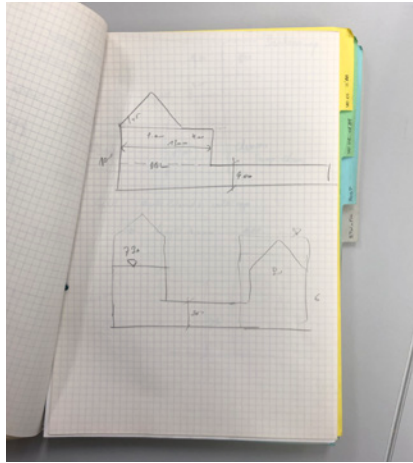
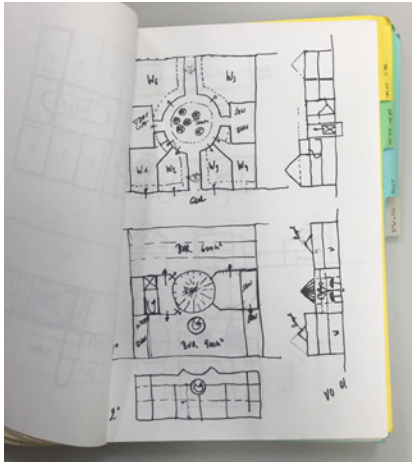
On our second day in the VAI archives we have been presented to the archival ensembles that were supposed to be prepared for us personally. Each of us has been given an ensemble on a single table, however, we have been sitting in a one space together and next to each other.

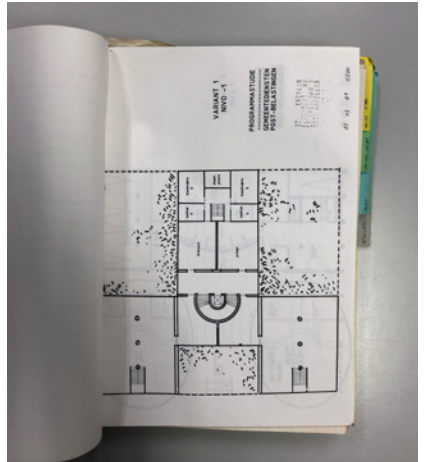
My ensemble of Crepain's work consisted of precisely:

- container 0071 - JC-sd 225:
 - two A4 project dossiers containing sketches, cost calculation documents, preliminary study drawings (site plans, plans, sections, facades), perspective drawings, etc;
- container 0071- JC-fd1:
 - six project albums (200x245mm),
 - a photograph (100x250mm);

- A0 folder containing prints of:
 - technical drawings (A0,A1);
 - diagramtic drawings: plans, sections, facades, isometries (A5, A4, A3);
- scale model:
 - G.Syssens House in Brasschaat (base: 300x300mm);







Post-VAi reflections

With the individual ways of each of us interacting with the material and with a strict time slot of 40 minutes it became quite an uncomfortable experience and an unmanageable task to actually engage with the given ensemble.

This experience has crucially affected my thoughts on ways of studying the archival material when one is put in the current reading room of the VAI archive. Considering such archive as a tool of reference (for any researcher, but mostly for someone from within the discipline), the following questions began to arise:

- What are the optimal conditions of the study room for a researcher to conduct an insightful investigation in the archive facility?

- How these conditions interfere with a spatial genericity of a storage room being the main purpose of any archive building?

- Can these two conditions co-exist in one space/room?

- How can the individual and the collective researches do so?



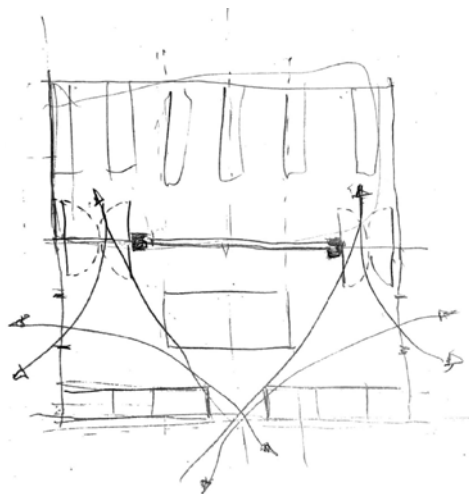
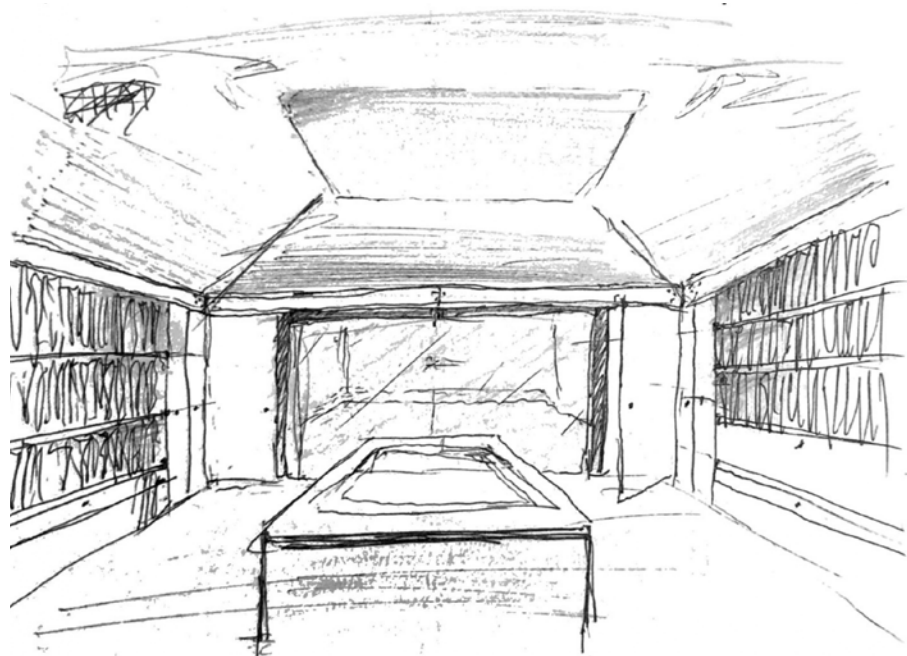
Room for an Archive

Taken into account, that Jo Crepain's extensive 30 year career resulted in no clear architectural style, I searched for a common denominator of the architect's complete oeuvre in the general language of representation. Suprisingly quickly, I discovered the notion of symmetry to be the element repeating in almost every single project of Crepain, appearing either in the project itself, or at least in the photograph of it.

In this way, I appropriated the Crepain symmetry as a sort of tool for working with the task and not really constrain the spatial or stylistic qualities with the given ensamble's content, nor author. Considering the ensamlbe as a tool of reference

rather literally, the inital idea was to allocate two identical rooms next to each other in a way, that would result in two different symmetries - one being compositional in plan, and the other to be compositional and visible in the perspective view (enhanced by some kind of axuality). The resulting space was therefore a study room divided by the glass partition from the archival ensamble, that, secluded from both the rest of the archive and the study, becomes a tool of reference.





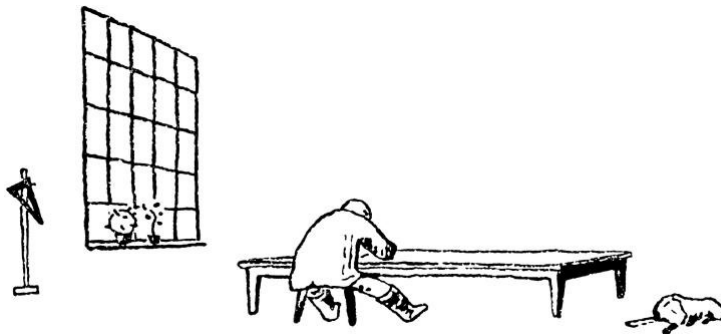
Studiolo in a Problem of Scale

After the first crit conversation with the tutors I realised that the space I concentrate on considers solely the researcher as its target public and that then the study room is my typology.

At the same time the concern of possible expansion of the room began to bother me. How do the furniture - that became the room partition elements move and thus, how and what directions does the room expand? Is it a part of the system? Could the rooms be connected by a sort of an enfilade?

In order to come across with a solution comprehensive to both of the concerns, I decided to investigate both the studiolo - as an evocation of a intimate space to study and concentrate - and the storage hangar - as a seemingly infinite, redundant space where only the content and some flexible system of distributing it exist.

Juxtaposing two different scales in a series of sketches has led me to discovering a problem of the room's limit. Whenever I tried to collide the studiolo atmosphere within the unspecified margin of an archive storage I ended up with only placing a desk in a neverending sequence of storage racks, not really defining the space of the room it is located in, nor an explicit atmosphere, different from any other storage hall, be it either mysterious as the Hangar 51 (as in *The Raiders of the Lost Ark*) or as trivial as an Amazon depot.



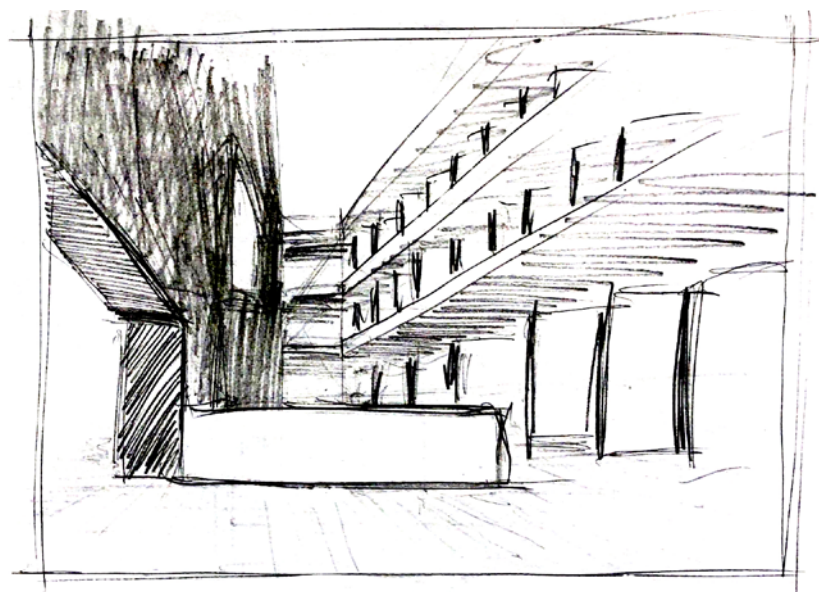
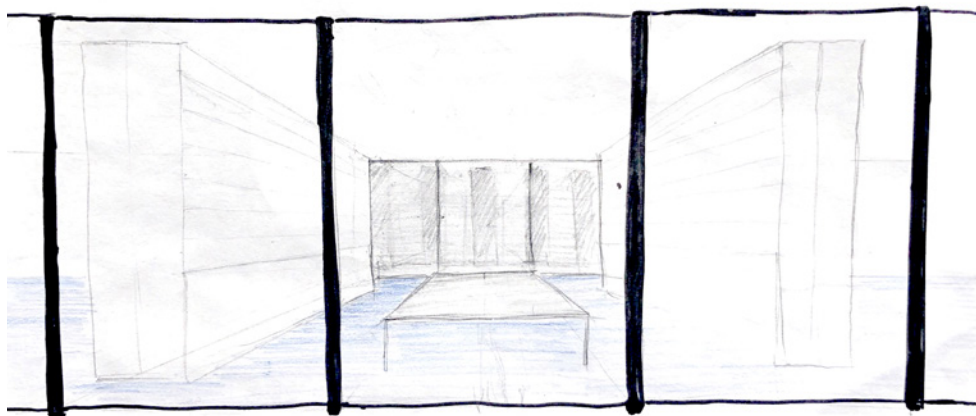
sketch by Heinrich Tessenow

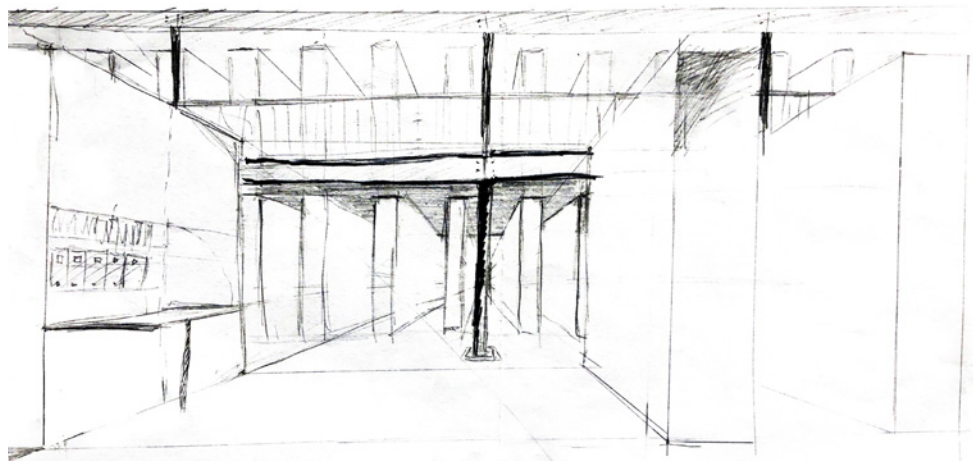


Amazon warehouse



clip from *Indiana Jones: Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Spielberg, 1981, 1:46:24)





Looking elsewhere

Encountering the problem of scale I decided to dwell into the examples of archival approaches that somehow differ from established standard of organisation and conditioning.

Donald Judd Library, being one of them - shows an attempt of dividing shed-made-library - an archive of artist's intellectual reference - into subjective sections with tables standing in the middle of them, containing carefully chosen, yet not described archival material - tools of reference for Judd's work. The surrounding shelves, however not being actual partitions, work as internal limits to subsequent studies forming an intellectual framework for the space.

The other example of rather radical approach to an archive is Stiftung Sittewerk in St.Gallen - a material archive and art library that operates in a completely open, layout based on collective work; the two spaces blend with each other and the archival organisation is guaranteed by a system called *Dynamische Ordnung* - a digital tool allowing the arrangement of the material to be constantly changed, yet still traceable - facilitating the work of researchers to use the archive as an actual tool of reference.

Finally, the third one - a temporary exhibition set-up of Peter Zumthor's "Dear to Me", where the shelves create an actual partition enabling space for both collective and private study.



Donald Judd Library,



Stiftung Stittwerk



Peter Zumthor - "Dear to Me" in Kunsthhaus Bregenz,

Enfilade

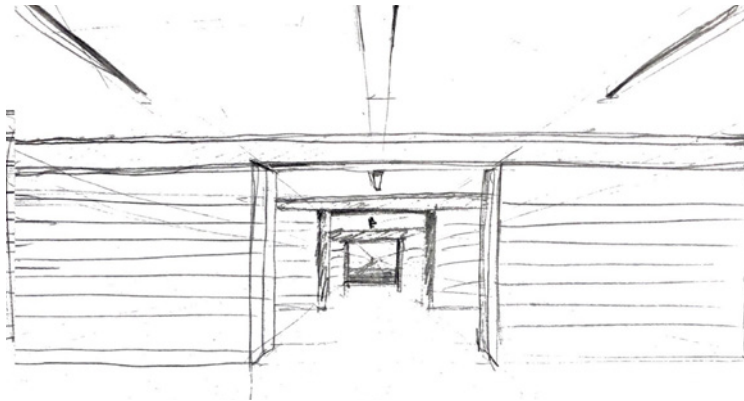
After struggling and failing with setting the studiolo atmosphere into a rather generic storage space it suddenly struck me... For all that time I've been asking myself the wrong question. I should have tried to make the storage a study room instead.

That brought me back to the first sketches I made, so after trying to alter the layout of the space to give it more of an open, collective character I ended up with a somewhat simple, if not simplistic sketch of an central enfilade with the shelves as see-through partitions between sequential study "coves" for the researchers, which - imagined in this scenario - are already checked and validated by the archive administration and therefore, can collect their material in the personally assigned spot, using the archive as a proper tool of reference for their work.

I felt that I finally found the right answer to my dual problematic; the enfilade - sets a simple rule for a system based division of rooms and spaces, like the storage racks give order to the archival depot; the cove - an intimate space for a researcher to dwell into their work - is my studiolo.



Le Corbusier - Couvent la Tourette, 1958; photograph: Thilo Rohlander



Study models









Pre-P1 | Detailing

The pre-P1 crit gave me some crucial insights on how to precise my room(s) in order for them to become a more explicit, detailed representation of the approach expressed with the task.

First and foremost, the rooms lacked spatial relation to the perimeter - what happens across the enfilade? Is it the archival storage already? Are they any other rooms with different purposes and if so, then what are they?

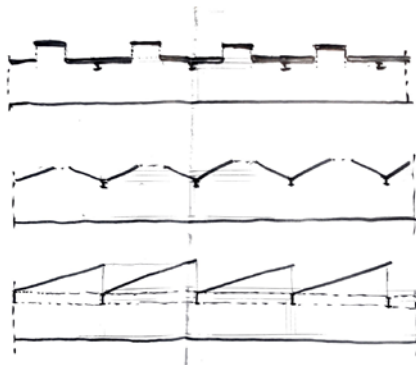
Secondly, the space was rather simplistic - it missed a roof, or at least a specified ceiling finishing. After a comment from my side saying that, actually, I was thinking about either composite

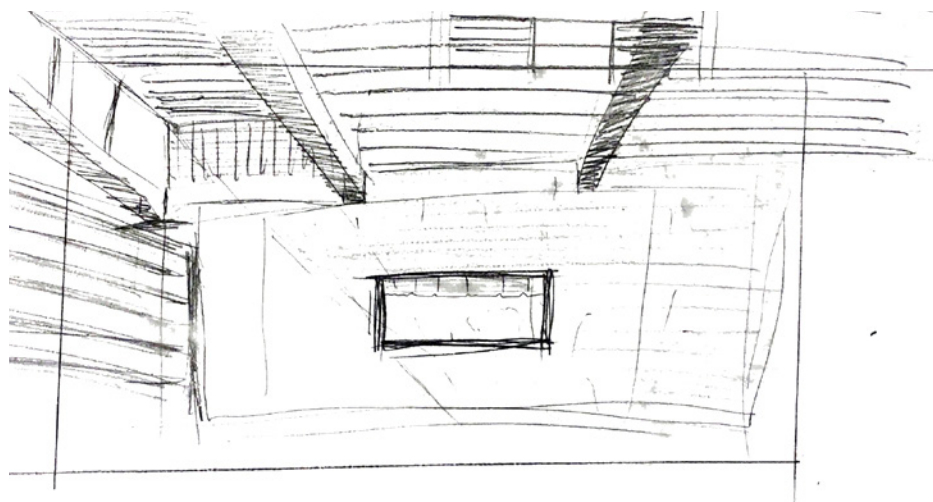
slab or pop-corn plaster finish - mostly because of their economic (cheap) and acoustic (pop-corn one) qualities, I was suggested that the cheapness of such building could be already quite a radical approach to address the publicly funded, yet quite marginal, hermetic archive facility.

Lastly - when approaching the public building, such as an archive, in the standardised, cheap, industrial way, it is necessary to represent the idea in a space evoking those attributes, yet giving a beyond ordinary spatial quality, (as in Christian Kieckens printery in Oudenaarde) for example in a dedicated roof design.



Christian Kieckens - Drukkerij Sanderus in Oudenaarde, 1998





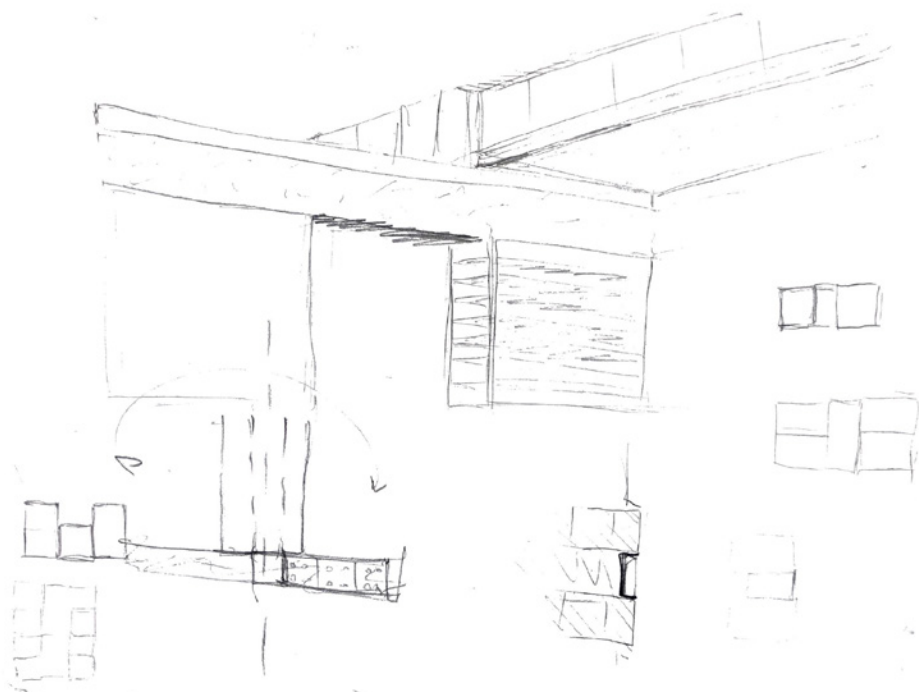
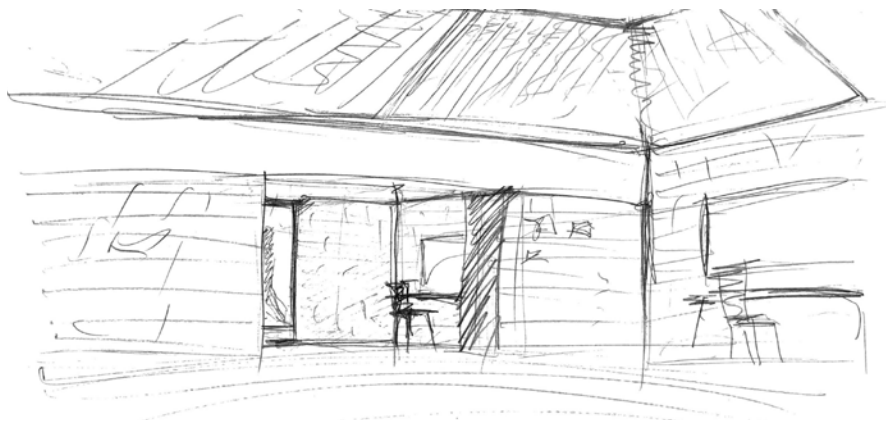
Corner as focal point

Whilst investigating how to contextualise the enfilade layout within a little wider, internal relation of the rooms, I've started to think about the most evident problem of each enfilade sequence - the turning point - the corner. What happens around it? Does the enfilade continue on the same organisational and proportional rules?

I decided, that figuring out the corner problem shall become my focal point for the final model and thus, the spatial answer for already conceptually defined idea of a sequential, collective, yet intimate study room in an archive.

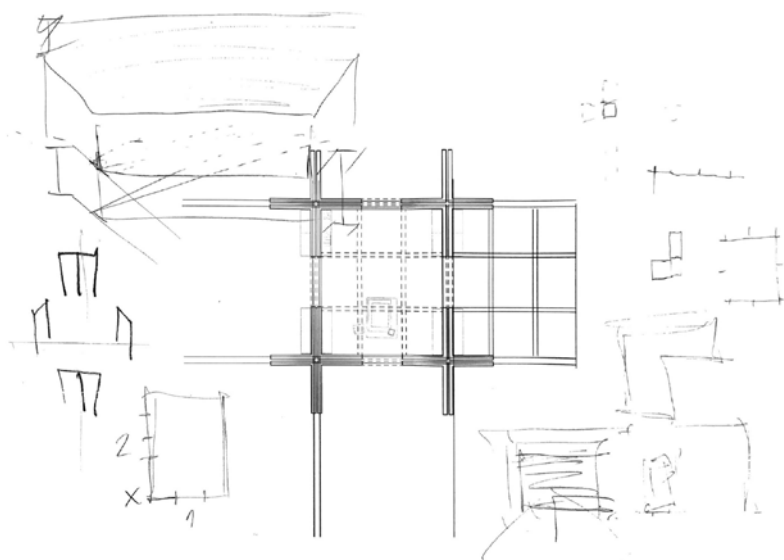
The corner becomes a fulcrum for a system, or (maybe) a pair of systems - the moment of collision and unfolding - setting the division for zones of access, use, and even climate.

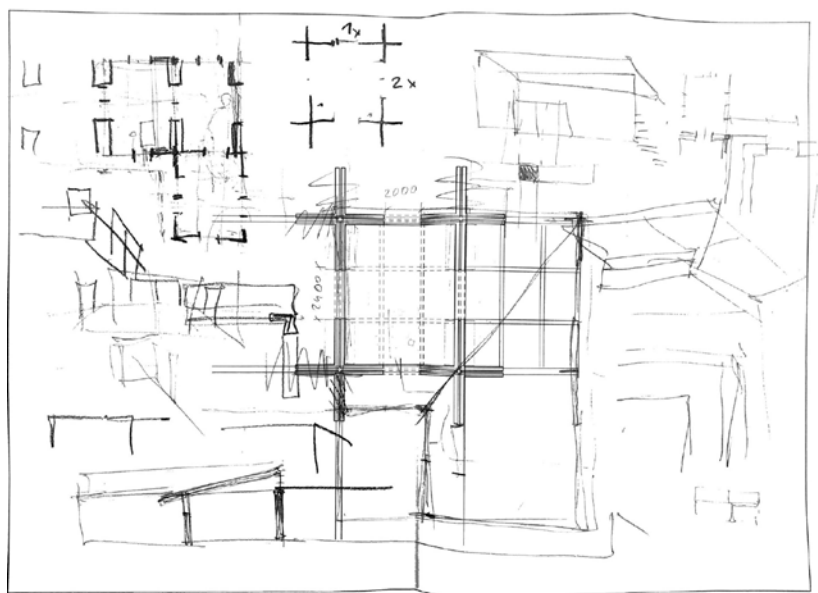
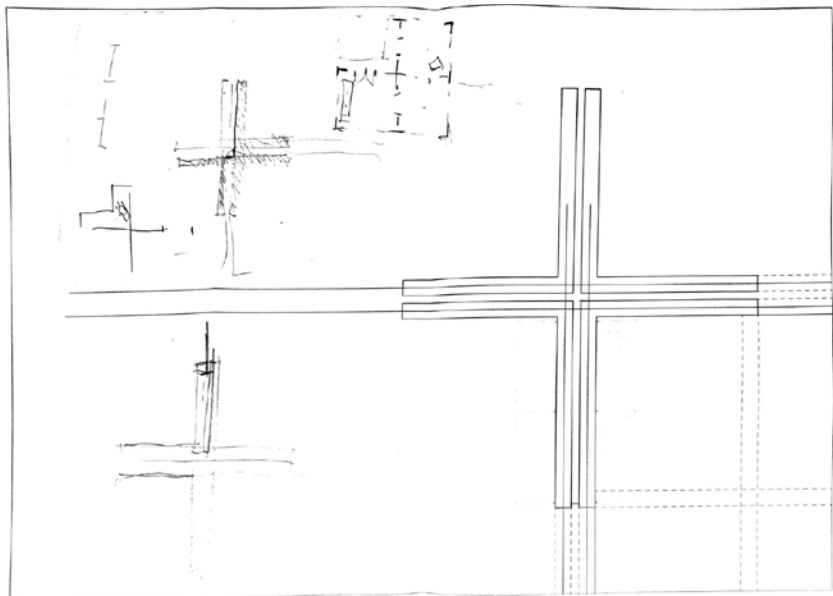
For the sake of spatial and planar clarity of the introductory exercise I repeated the initial enfilade, however I changed the relation of the passage (now in an actual wall) and its proportion - becoming the $\frac{3}{4}$ of the width of the initial enfilade.



A day of making mistakes

Unsuccessful experiments with double wall crossings and corners...





(Un)learning from

On a week before the P1 the whole studio visited Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam. Being there this time specifically to focus on its essential purpose - storage and archive, gave me a chance to explore the “museum” with a rather critical approach to how it is organised: as a building, an intention and a result of an public investment.

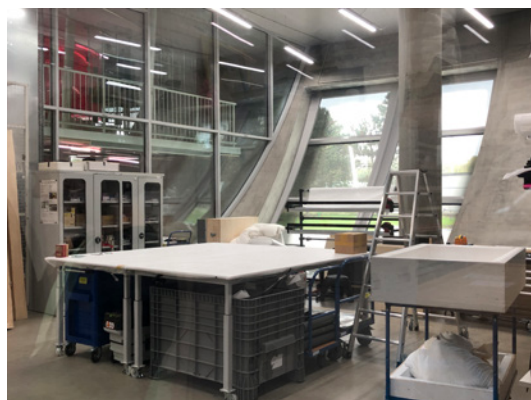
The building by itself appeared to me quite redundant and somewhat pointless considering its rounded shape not corresponding with the top-down pragmatism of its primary function (storing mostly large rectangular canvases).

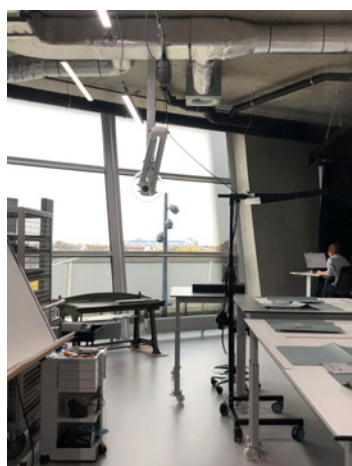
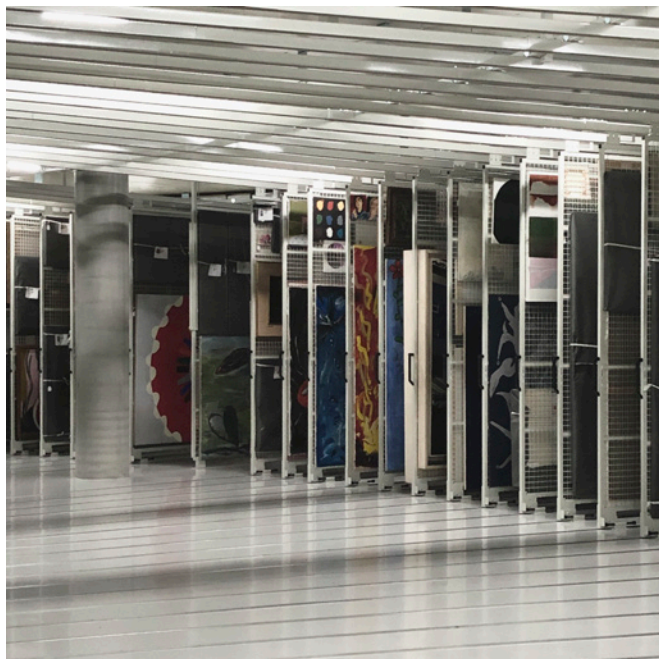
The original intention of the Depot was to show approx. 95% of its collection (with 8% shown in the regular museum), however, even our tour guide said that this is probably far from true, as the artworks cannot be exposed to either unstable

temperature, humidity or light for more than ten minutes. In that sense, considering the standards that drive museum institutions’ preservation agenda, the architects’ intention was missing the point from its inception.

** Wondering, how all those art pieces have survived for past hundreds of years of non-regulated conditions?*

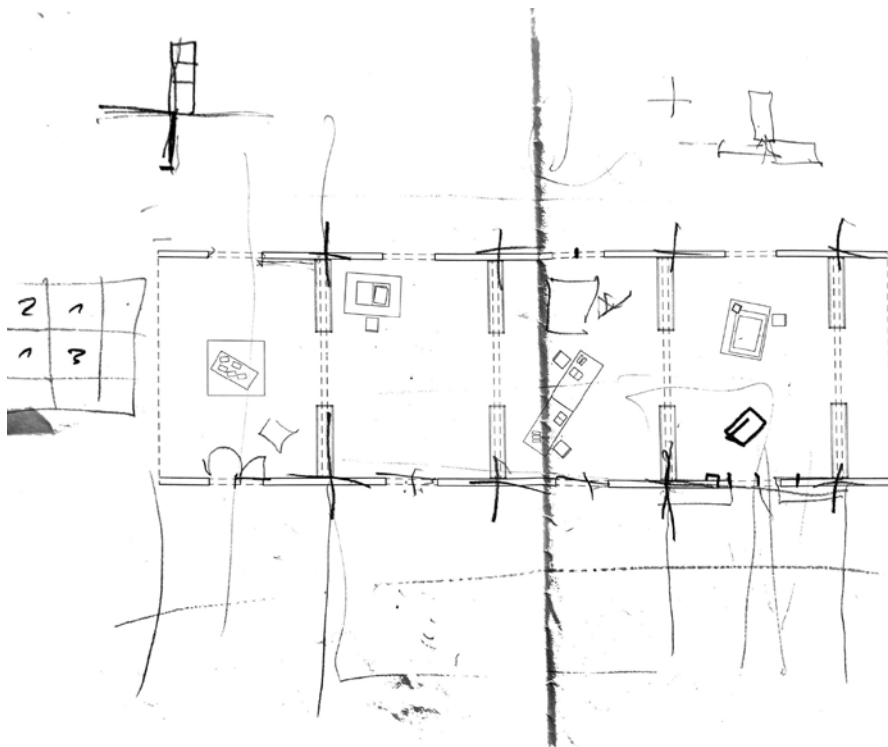
Finally - the public investment in a storage facility, the Depot becomes simply an excess and a waste of resources with its construction budget of 90 million euros - compared with the € 40 million joint project of the city of Amsterdam and other public institutions (incl. Rijksmuseum) for the city depot constructed around the same time.





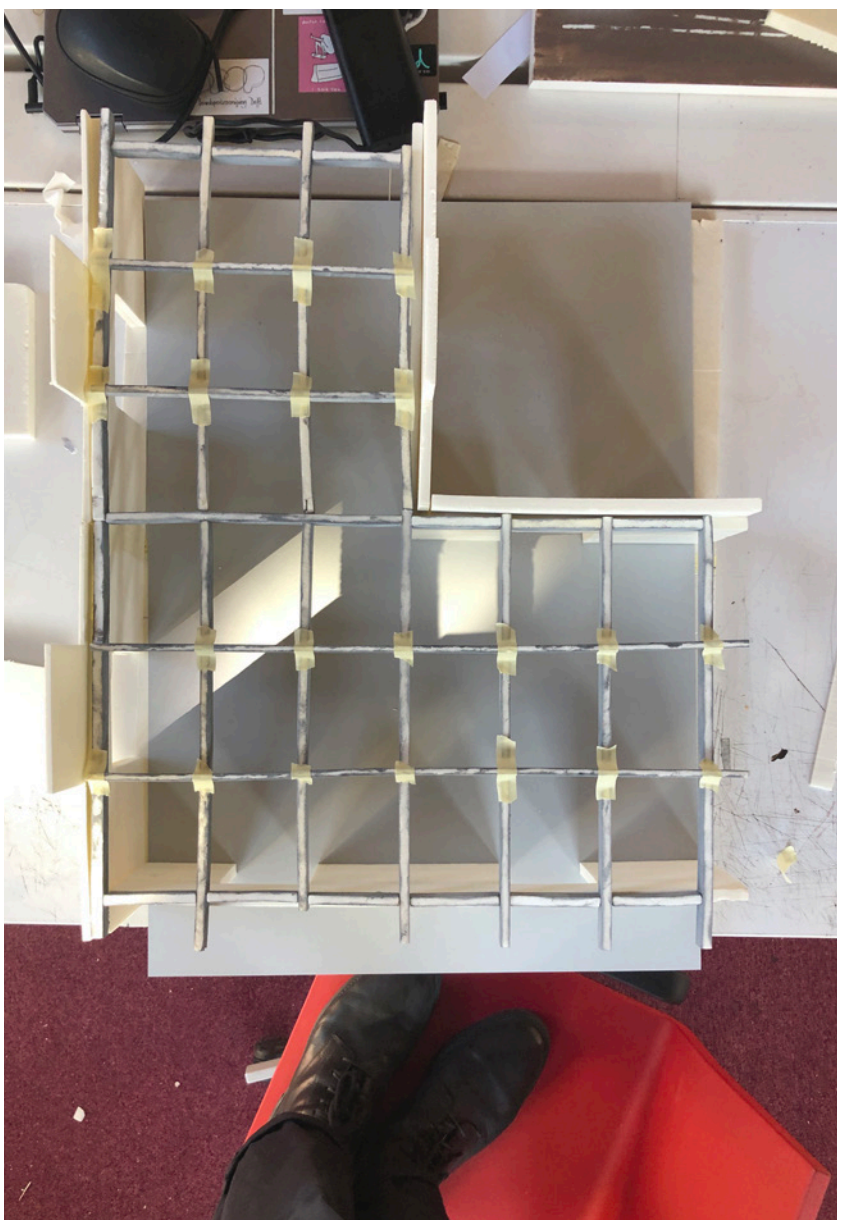
Back to basics | Towards the P1

For the sake of spatial and planar clarity of the introductory exercise I repeated the initial enfilade, however I changed the relation of the passage (now in an actual wall) and its proportion- becoming the $\frac{3}{4}$ of the width of the initial enfilade. Then the idea had to be finally tested on a model.



Due to the intense process of making the final P1 model, there was no time to taking careful notes of the process. Therefore, the following pages constitute an image essay capturing all of the days of making process and progress.













P1 | Room in-between

In this initial, yet intermediate phase of the research-by-design process, during which the majority of prospective design decisions remain undetermined, the room in-between reflects the intricacies and ambiguity inherent in the questions surrounding the nature and purpose of the architectural archive.

The room manifests multitude of intermediate states. It is in-between a traditionally perceived building programming, and an absolute flexibility and open-endedness, driven solely by the user appropriating it; It evokes an intimate, studiolo-like atmosphere of a study room with the expansive infinite feeling of storage space of any repository. It is located somewhere between the archival vault - containing the fragile gems of actual value for the discipline, that require a strictly controlled, stable climate - and the rest of the collection which, for reasons of its unidentified or questionable importance, could be at least temporarily stored in a less climatically restricted, regular environment of the building.

Ultimately, as an architectural archive – an institution that will likely remain a niche entity despite its aspirations for broader public accessibility – the room employs the use of standardised materials and dimensions, emphasising the simplicity of construction. This approach is also aligned with the economic constraints of the publicly funded project, which advocates against the discipline's necessity of building its own *Palace*.

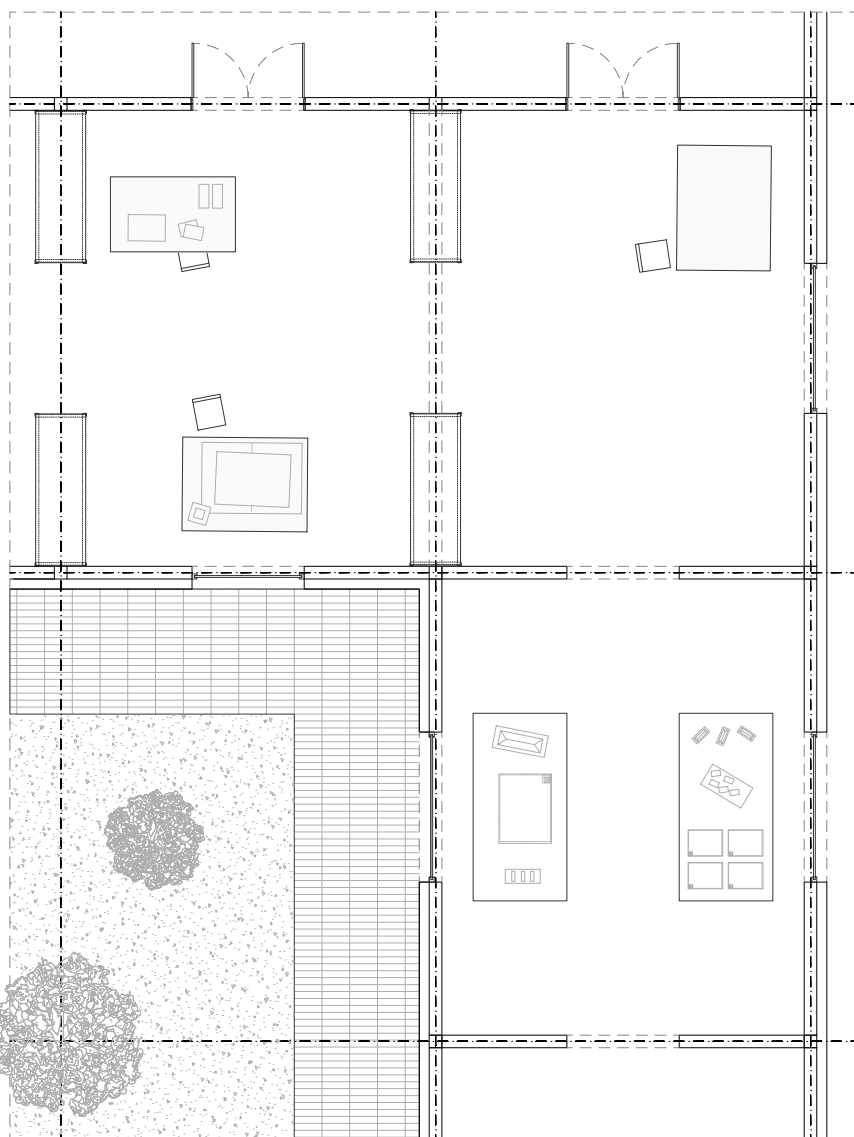












[illegible]

