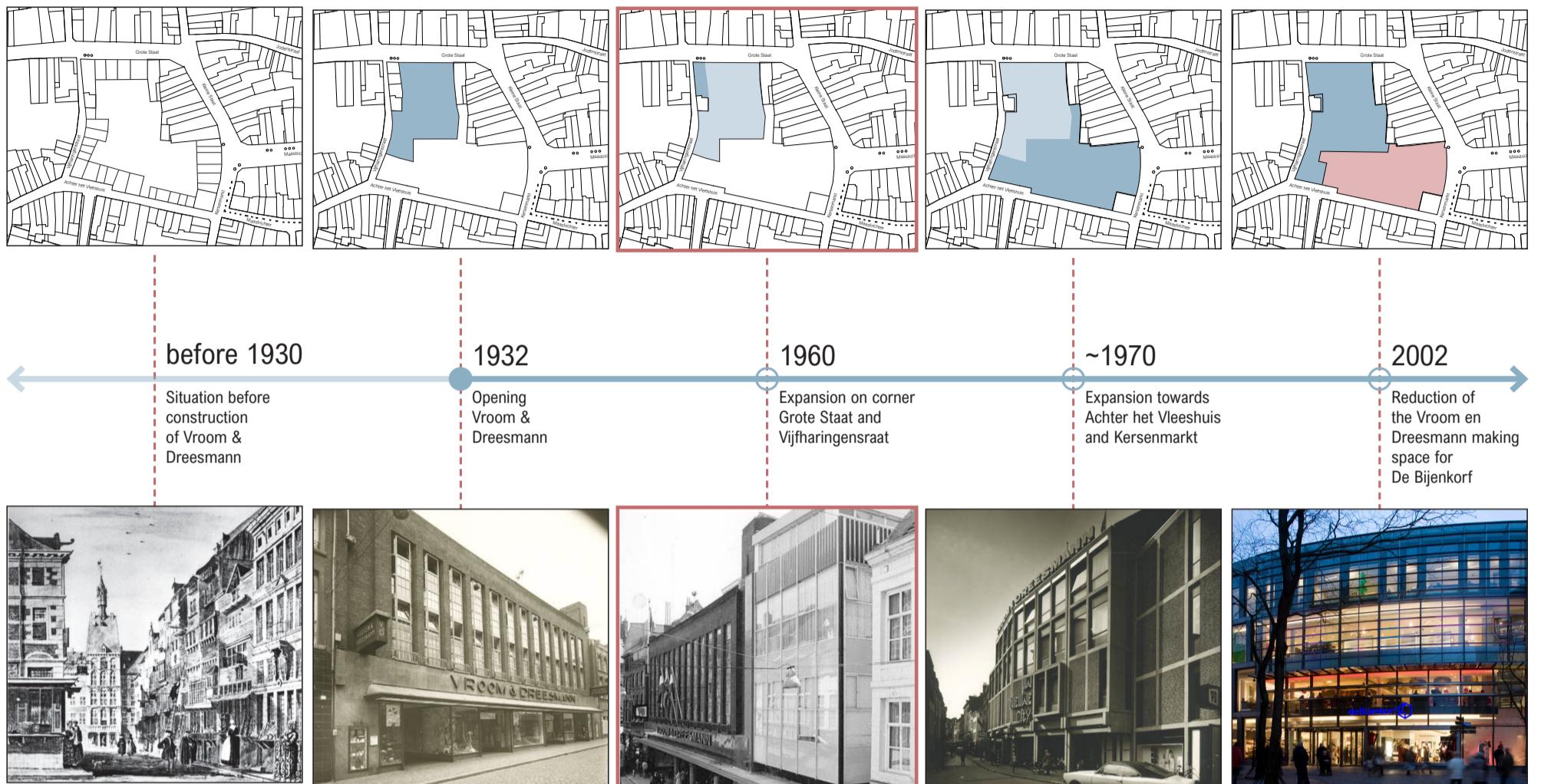


Vroom & Dreesmann Maastricht
Jaap van den Elshout



Transformation history - I

Picture I

Transformation history of the Vroom en Dreesmann
Vroom en Dreesmann, Grote Staat 5-15, Maastricht
Jan Kuijt

The Vroom & Dreesmann in Maastricht is designed by Dutch architect Jan Kuijt and was opened to the public in 1932. Before the construction of this large department store, the company had a significantly smaller store at the Grote Staat in Maastricht. This scaling up of the stores was part of the nationwide development of the Vroom & Dreesmann company (Miellet, 2001). Kuijt designed a three-story building with a basement with an iconic façade at the Grote Staat. Part of the strategy of Vroom & Dreesmann was to maximize the amount of products on display (Kok, Pauw, & Woerkom, 1987). In accordance with this strategy, Jan Kuijt designed the so-called 'showcase islands'. A space before the entrance door with shop windows along the façade and islands of shop windows in the middle. Visitors could walk through this intermediary zone and browse the products on offer, before entering the actual store.

Almost 30 years later, the first expansion of the Vroom & Dreesmann started to take shape. With the annexation of the menswear store Jungschläger at the corner of the Grote Staat and the Vijfhoekstraat, the Vroom & Dreesmann saw an opportunity to expand (Thewissen, 1957). A large striking light structure with an abundance of glass was built. The modern architecture of the expansion strongly contrasted with the first structure that was built in the style of the Amsterdam School (Boetsen, 2007).

In 1968, the Vroom & Dreesmann saw another opportunity to expand further. This expansion meant that the store doubled in size, it would have a total area of approximately 25.000 square meters. The Grand Bazaar department store that was previously in this location was replaced by a design of architect Snelders. With the expansion of the Vroom & Dreesmann, the showcase islands were removed to maximize the total amount of shopfloor area (Boetsen, 2007).

After Vroom & Dreesmann merged with Koninklijk Bijenkorf Beheer (KBB) in 1999 a new relationship emerged between the various department stores in the Netherlands. In 2001, the decision was made that De Bijenkorf would open a department store in Maastricht. As Vroom & Dreesmann was now part of the parent company of De Bijenkorf, it was decided that the current Vroom & Dreesmann building would be split up to make space for De Bijenkorf. De Bijenkorf settled in the half of the building that was added during the expansion in the early seventies. The architectural office of Kees Rijnbout was responsible for the transformation of the (what now became) two department stores.

After the bankruptcy of Vroom & Dreesmann in 2015, the Hudson's Bay company opened a new department store in the building in 2017. The Canadian company was new to the Dutch retail market and had to close its doors only a few years later in 2019.

As there appears to be a lack of engagement between the public and private domain, which finds its border at the façade line. This research aims to find an answer to the following research question:

'How does the architecture of the former Vroom & Dreesmann department store engage in the relation between the public, semi-public and private space and the people moving within and between these spaces and how can this be applied in the new design?'

An answer to this question is found by studying various elements of the façade. By studying how these elements work, affect people and affect the surroundings, a framework can be made that can be used for the redesign of the former Vroom & Dreesmann.



Architectural context: Grote Staat (top), Vijfhuizingenstraat (b.l.) Achter het Vleeshuis (b.r.) - II

Picture II

Architectural context

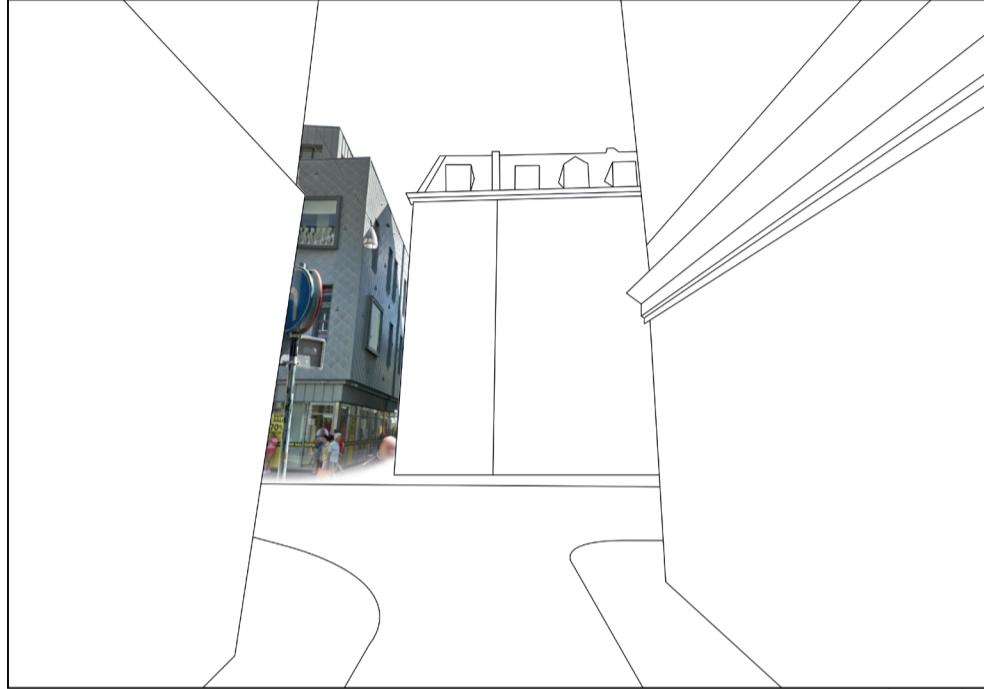
Vroom en Dreesmann, Grote Staat 5-15; Vijfhuizingenstraat; Achter het Vleeshuis, Maastricht
Jan Kuijt

After all the expansions throughout the years, the building of the Vroom en Dreesmann is located on three different streets. The main façade of the building is found at the Grote Staat. The secondary façade, of which about one thirds is part of the original structure, is located on the narrow Vijfhuizingenstraat. The expedition space, that is shared with the expedition space of De Bijenkorf, is located on the Achter het Vleeshuis street.

When taking a look at the architecture surrounding the Vroom & Dreesmann the first thing that stands out is the difference in the building age of the various buildings. As Maastricht is one of the oldest cities of the Netherlands, it can be expected that the architectural stock is also

old. Within the historic city center, the Vroom & Dreesmann is a fairly 'new' building.

Furthermore, there are two extraordinary situations taking place between the façades of the department store. Due to its fragmented expansion, the Vroom & Dreesmann had to buy out a number of stores/building owners. Most of these were willing to move, however two businesses were not. At the Vijfhuizingenstraat, the leather goods store from (built in 1738) is surrounded by the Vroom & Dreesmann. At the corner of Achter het Vleeshuis and the Kersenmarkt, a restaurant is found. This building was constructed in 1764.



Approach of the main façade - III

Picture III

Approach of the main façade

Vroom en Dreesmann, Grote Staat 5-15, Maastricht

Jan Kuijt

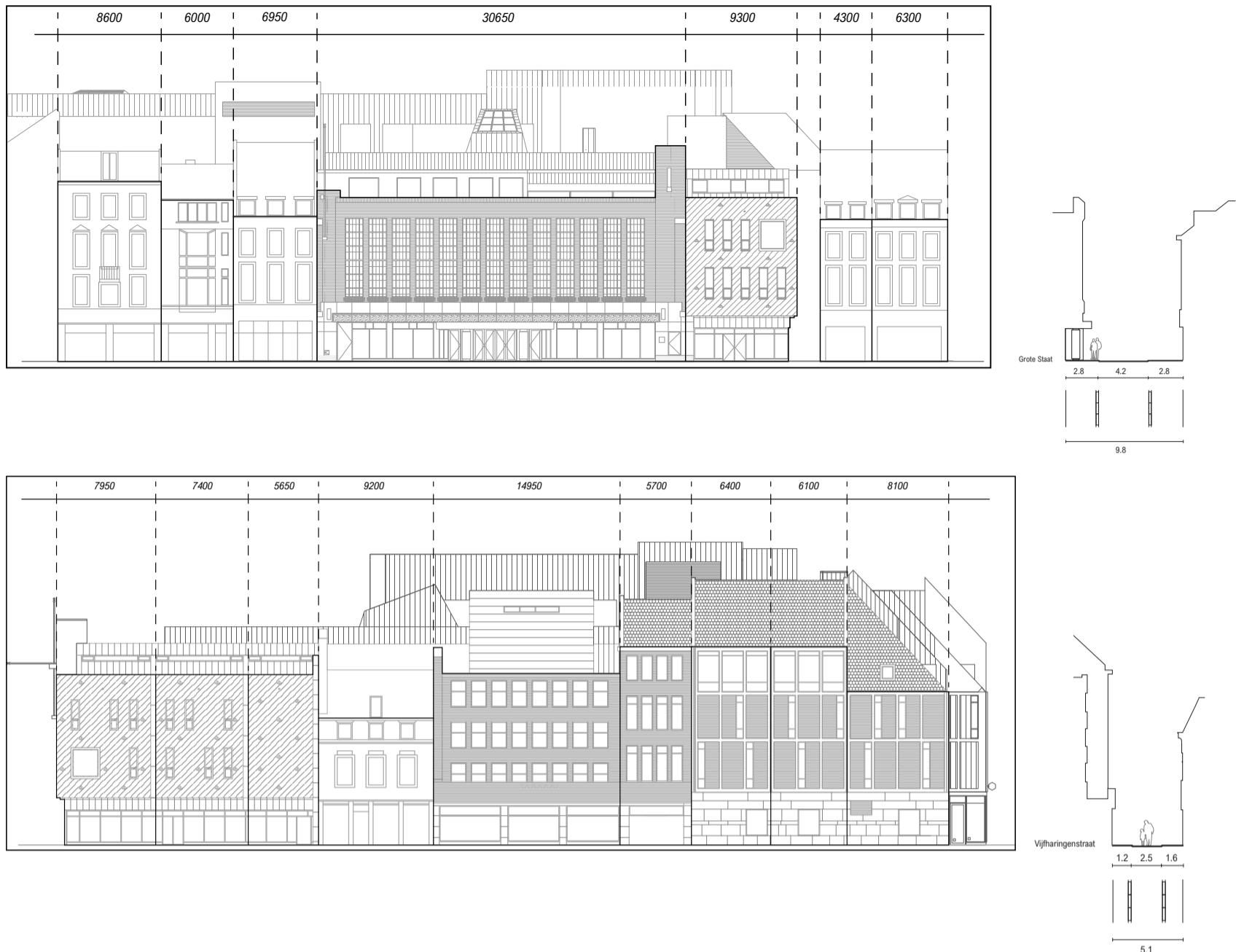
The main façade of the Vroom & Dreesmann is located at the Grote Staat. This street is one of the main shopping streets in the city center. The approximately 250 meter long shopping street runs from the Vrijthof square, which is one of the city's main squares, to the VVV visitor center. In the shopping street a large amount of retailers are located, of which most are part of a larger chain of retailers. As these large chains aim at large target groups, they also attract a large amount of people. Which in turn results in a large flow of people in the shopping street (Deckers, 2005). This is also the case in the Grote Staat.

So it is established that the Grote Staat is a busy shopping street within the city center, but what does this mean for the Vroom & Dreesmann? The department store can be approached from a few directions, but what are the striking elements of the façade of the Vroom & Dreesmann?

In the four drawings shown above, the approach of the department

store is depicted from four different angles. When the surroundings are abstracted, the emphasis is put on the façade of the building. However, the attention of the passerby is mostly drawn towards the corner extension of the building.

This extension from 1960 on the corner of the Grote Staat and the Vijfhoekstraat was redesigned by the Rijnboutt office in 2002. The façade was transformed and zinc diamond shaped tiles were added as a finishing material. These zinc tiles are commonly used in architecture in the last few decades, but contrasts sharply with the old architecture that characterizes the city center of Maastricht. This contrast is a result of a difference in material use, but also in the way the façade is laid out and designed. The result of this, is that this corner of the Vroom & Dreesmann draws a lot of attention towards itself. As this construction becomes the center of gravity in the shopping street, it means that the role it plays becomes significant. Although the former department store is now vacant, this corner construction can play an important role in the redesign of the building.



Façade rhythm, Grote Staat (top) Vijfharingenstraat (bottom) - IV

Picture IV

Rhythm of the façades

Vroom en Dreesmann, Grote Staat 5-15; Vijfharingenstraat, Maastricht
Jan Kuijt

The two images show the façades at the Grote Staat and the Vijfharingenstraat. These two façades are the façades which the passerby has the most interaction with. The façade at the Achter het Vleeshuis street is used for expedition purposes only and therefore less relevant in this topic.

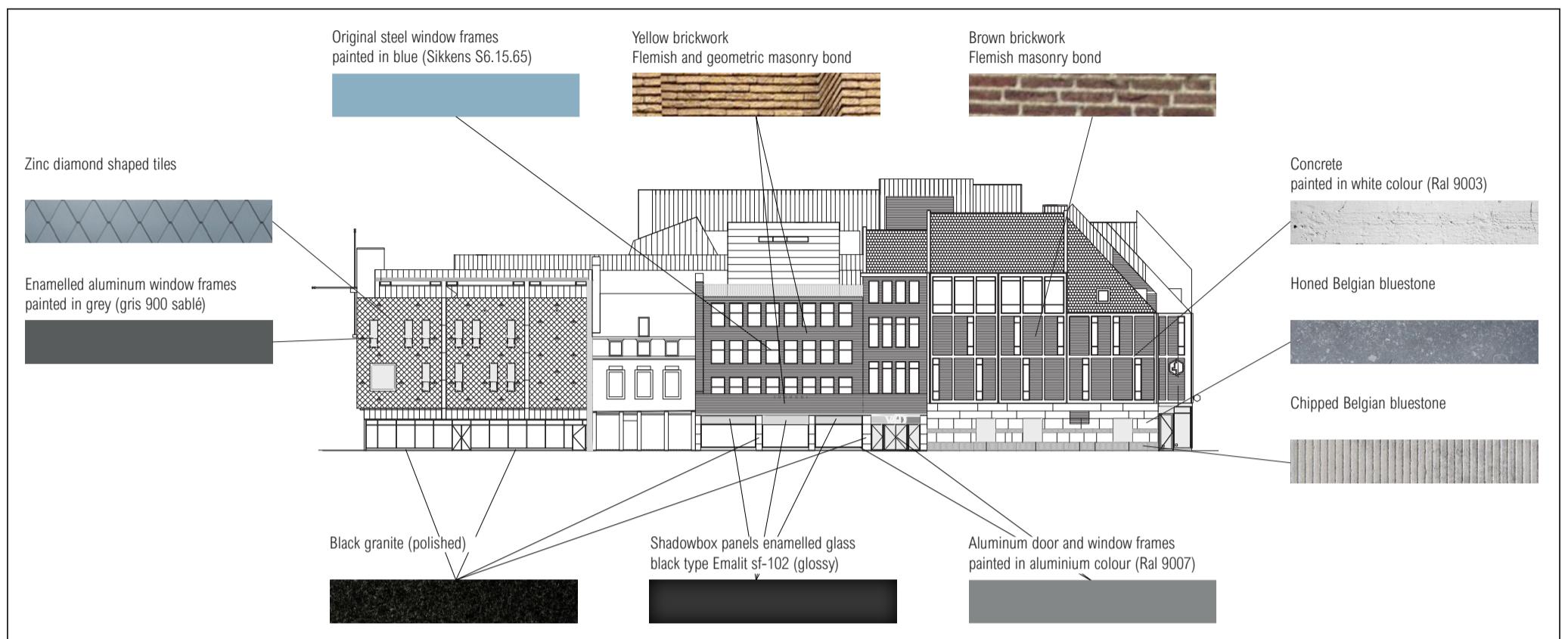
When observing the façade of the Grote Staat with its surrounding architecture a pattern is discovered. The traditional architecture of Maastricht all have a similar façade width. All of these buildings are fairly narrow compared to their height. This is not an uncommon phenomenon in older cities in the Netherlands.

However, the façade located on the Grote Staat breaks with this pattern in the shopping street. With a width of almost 31 meters, the façade is four to five times wider than the surrounding buildings. With its width it alienates itself from the rhythm of its surroundings. Nonetheless, this does not result in a negative influence on the perception of the building. As the façade breaks with the rhythm, it also stands out from its surroundings. This results in the façade becoming more salient in its environment.

The 1970 extension at the corner of the Grote Staat and the Vijfharingenstraat however, does not break with this rhythm mentioned above. As this part of the building was built at a later moment on the building plot where there used to be a single building, it is bound to those dimensions. The result is that this extension fits in with its context

dimension wise, however it enhances the effect discussed in the text about Picture III. As this material change becomes extra noticeable.

When observing the façade of the Vijfharingenstraat, it is hard to discover a pattern based on other buildings along the block. As there is only one building in the entire façade of the block. However, a division can be made within the façade of the Vroom & Dreesmann. First of all it can be divided into the original structure and the two extensions. In addition to this, all the architects of the three structures have played with this façade rhythm in their design. First, Jan Kuijt with his contribution to the building in the middle. This façade can be divided into two parts, one with a width of almost 15 meters and one with a width of 5.7 meters. Then the extension from the seventies by architect Snelders, which can be divided into three parts with widths of respectively 6.4, 6.1 and 8.1 meters. Finally, there is the extension from the sixties, that was redesigned by the Rijnboutt office in 2002. This part (on the left) can also be divided into three parts with widths of approximately 7.9, 7.4 and 5.6 meters. In addition to these parts of the façade there also is the leather goods store with a width of 9.2 meters. Rather than having one large continuous façade, the three architects that worked on the Vroom & Dreesmann throughout the years, they divided the façade into parts and thus recreating the rhythm that can be observed in the façade at the Grote Staat. And as in the façade of the Grote Staat, the façade of the Vijfharingenstraat also has one element that breaks with this rhythm; the 15 meter wide façade that covers the main staircase of the building.



Materialisation of the façades: Vijfharingenstraat - V

Picture V

Materialisation of the façade

Vroom en Dreesmann, Grote Staat 5-15; Vijfharingenstraat,
Maastricht
Jan Kuijt

As mentioned earlier in the text, the building of the Vroom & Dreesmann was constructed in three stages (and one more stage where it was reduced in size). The façades of these three different construction stages are finished with different materials. This creates a clear distinction between the time when each element was constructed. The façade in which this is best visible is the façade of the Vijfharingenstraat. In the center the original structure by Jan Kuijt, on the right the extension from the seventies by Snelders and on the left the extension from the sixties redesigned by Rijnbout office in 2002.

The original structure by Jan Kuijt is characterized by the Amsterdam School style, of which the characteristics are clearly visible in the façade. First of all, the obvious use of brickwork. Both the façade at the Vijfharingenstraat as the Grote Staat are constructed using yellow brickwork in a flemish and geometric masonry bond. It is highly likely that the decision for this masonry bond was influenced by Flanders being in such a close proximity to Maastricht. This yellow brickwork also contrasts with the other façades in the area that are predominantly made of red brickwork or white painted stone/brickwork. In addition to the brickwork several limestone sculptures are applied to decorate the façade. The façades still have their original steel windows frames that are finished in a light blue colour. In accordance with the Amsterdam School style, these window frames were so-called 'ladder windows'. These are windows a large number of horizontal accents within the frame. This is still clearly recognizable in the window frames in the façade at the Grote Staat, however these horizontal elements have been removed from the windows frames at the Vijfharingenstraat.

The façade of the seventies extension is also made from brickwork, unlike the original structure its façade, this façade is made using the

more common red brickwork. It is matched to its adjacent façade by applying the same masonry bond however. In terms of the architectural style it does not share many similarities with Kuijt his design. The red brickwork that is used on the elevated levels is divided by a straight pattern of concrete painted white. The vertical lines of this white painted concrete is used to recreate the effect of the façade rhythm. Furthermore, the brickwork is interrupted by tall and narrow windows that allow for a minimal access of daylight. The plinth is made up of mostly Belgian bluestone which is processed in different ways. The large façade tiles are made from honed and chipped bluestone. A material that is also used in the plinth of Kuijt his façade at the Grote Staat. There a mix of honed, chipped and burnt Belgian bluestone is used to create the stonework frame around the entrance and shop windows.

Finally, the façade of the sixties extension. The main material of this façade was already briefly touched upon in *Picture III*. The façade is finished with diamond shaped zinc tiles, a shape that is not seen anywhere in the proximity. The old structure was almost completely made from glass, but is now largely closed off. The window frames in the façade are of two varying dimensions, one large windows and multiple tall and narrow windows. The last ones are similar to the windows in the 1970 structure. Rather than steel window frames finished in a light blue colour, these window frames are made from aluminium that is painted grey to match the colour of the zinc. The plinth is almost entirely made up of shop windows with a low black granite strip as the parapet. This black granite parapet is also seen underneath the shop windows in the original construction. This was added there during the renovations in 2002.



Display and branding opportunities - VI

Picture VI

Display and branding opportunities in the façade
 Vroom en Dreesmann, Grote Staat 5-15; Vijfhoekstraat,
 Maastricht
 Jan Kuijt

As any other retailer does, the Vroom & Dreesmann used the space in its plinth to promote their products. Although, changes have been made to the plinth through the years, the essence remained the same. The green surfaces in the drawings represent the shop windows in the plinth, they are the main opportunity for displaying products/promotion. Aside from their function as promotional element, they also allow the passerby to get a sense of what is happening inside of the building, due to their highly transparent character. In addition to the shop windows, there are multiple poster boxes in the plinth. These are marked in blue and serve a similar purpose. The difference between the two is that they do not offer a view into the interior of the building. The transparent character of the shop windows in combination with the small poster boxes offer a variety of opportunities in the redesign of the building. In a similar fashion, they can be used to promote whatever is happening on the inside of the building, but they can also be used to blur the line between the public realm and the interior space.

Aside from the shop windows and the poster boxes, there are two more types of elements in the façades. These are the branding opportunities. The Vroom & Dreesmann had logo and name branding above the entrances of the department store (marked in orange). These are not only to indicate which company is settled in the building in question, but also indicate where someone can enter the building through.

The final branding opportunity are the flags and potentially signs hung from the façade. These are the final piece of the puzzle of display and branding opportunities. The large flags on the flagpoles (marked in pink) on the façades allow for a higher visibility of the store from a further distance. This is an advantage compared to the smaller retailers/businesses in the shopping street, as there is usually a lack of space to add such elements to their façades.

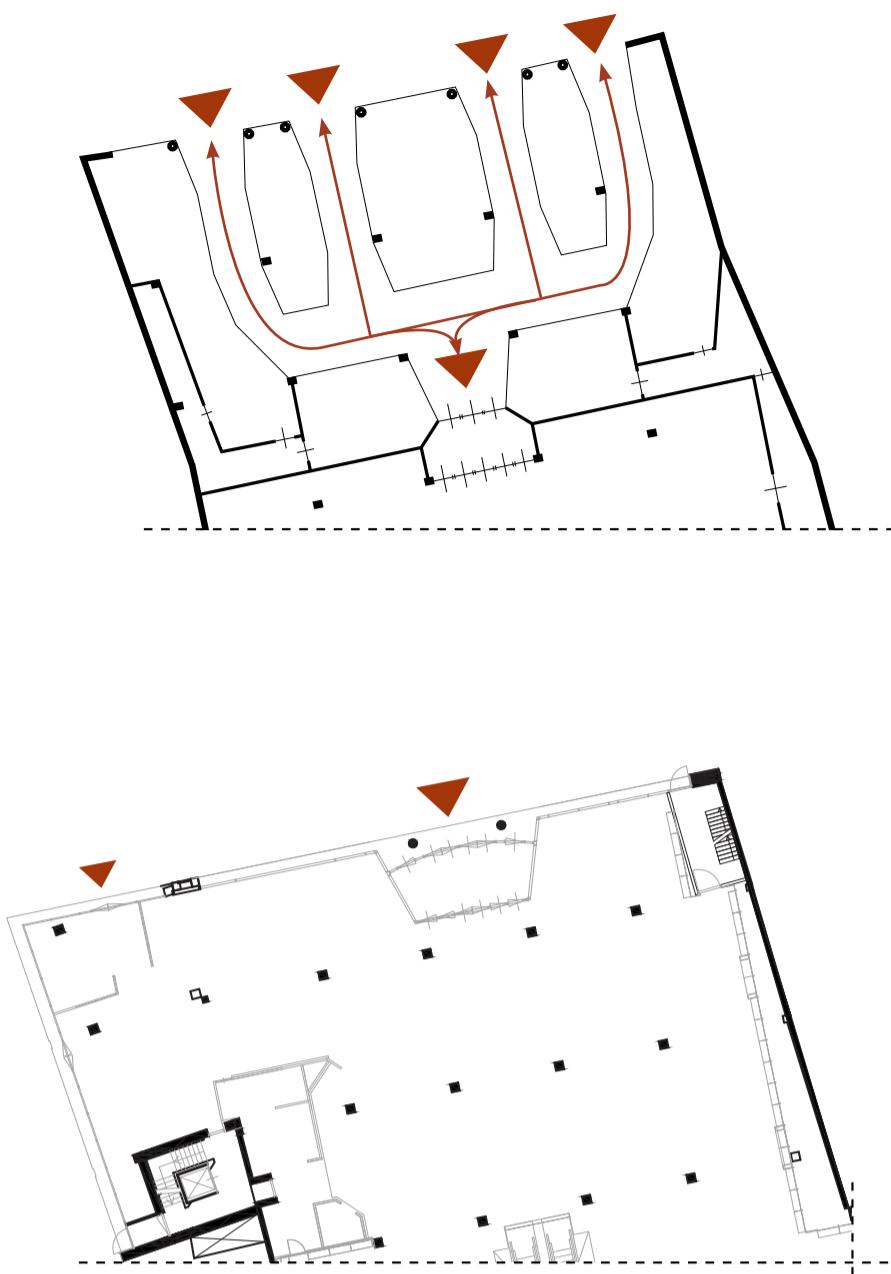
When comparing these display and branding opportunities, it becomes clear that there is a division in the scale at which they serve their purpose best:

At a large scale, the flagpoles and the 3D logo signing allow for recognition at a large distance.

When approaching the building closer, the world behind the shop windows is not yet clearly visible, but the arrangement of the façade becomes clear. The passerby can now identify the entrances and the shop windows around it.

At the close-up scale, the shop windows are coming into play. The passerby is now able to see what is displayed in the shop windows, and perhaps also what is happening behind it.

In any redesign of the department store, these three scale levels in the display and branding opportunities require close attention in order to attract visitors.



Transformation of the entrances - VII

Picture VII

Transformation of the entrances through the years

Vroom en Dreesmann, Grote Staat 5-15; Vijfhoekstraat, Maastricht

Jan Kuijt

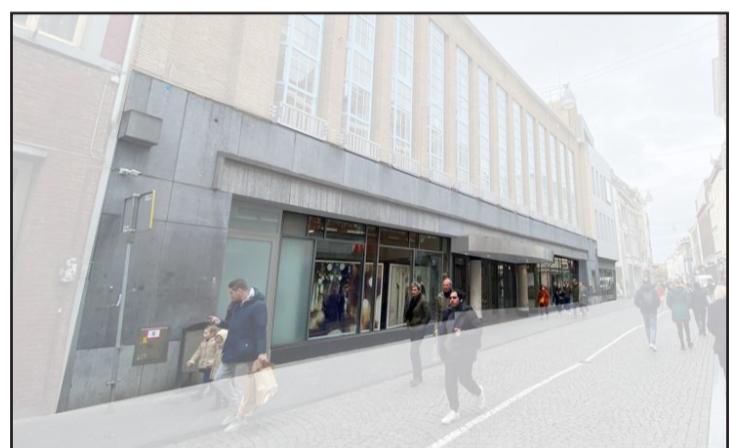
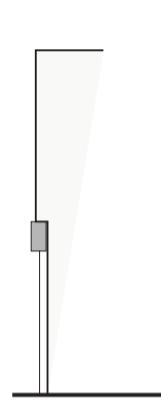
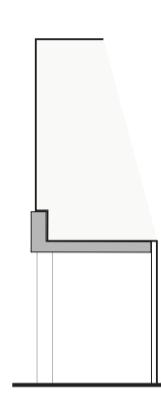
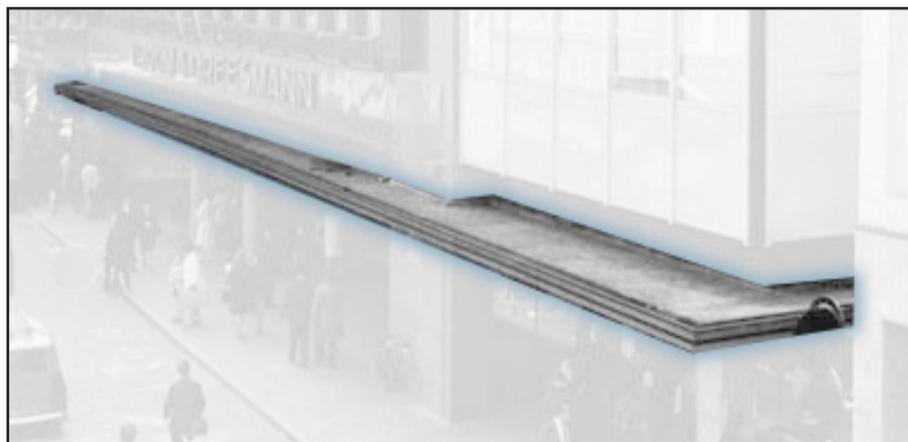
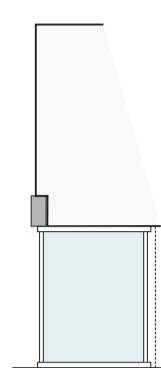
Through the years the priorities of the Vroom & Dreesmann department store have changed. This resulted in multiple changes to the architecture of the building. Most recognizable are the expansions of the building. During these large scale expansions of the building, certain elements have been transformed as well. Most notable is the way the main entrance of the building has been adapted to modern needs of the building. The introduction (Picture I) mentioned the initial strategy of maximizing the amount of display space. Through the years this changed into a strategy of maximizing the amount of shop floor space. This affected the design of the entrance space of the building.

The entrance (and plinth) of the original design was equipped with the 'showcase islands' (seen top right and top left). An intermediate space with an abundance of display space. This space was neither part of the public domain or the 'private' interior of the department store. It was an accessible and approachable way for potential customers to browse the goods on offer, without feeling obliged to make a purchase. As this space was sheltered due to the shop floors above it, it was a pleasant space to retreat to as well when weather conditions were bad.



With the expansion in 1960, the first big change was made to the main entrance and the plinth. The showcase islands were removed and replaced by a straight shop window (seen middle right). However, the principle of creating a sheltered browsing space remained in place. Similar to the original design, the threshold for browsing was fairly low in this design. In the psychology of shopping would also mean that it is in turn 'easier' to enter the department store, as someone already had the opportunity to browse freely.

After the last expansion, the main entrance and the plinth changed once more (bottom right and bottom left). Once again to increase the amount of shop floor. However this resulted in a loss of the low threshold to browse and then enter the department store. The permeability decreased by moving the line of the shop windows to the allowed building line. Potential customers were no longer able to browse products while being sheltered from bad weather conditions. And in addition to this, they are now left standing on street where all other pedestrian traffic moves through. The act of taking a moment to casually browse through the products in the shop windows became less comfortable.



Development of the canopy and the stonework frame in the plinth - VIII

Picture VIII

Development of the canopy and the stonework frame
Vroom en Dreesmann, Grote Staat 5-15, Maastricht
Jan Kuijt

With every change made to the main entrance (and the plinth), one other element was changed with it: the canopy above the shop windows. The canopy is both a functional element as a guiding element in the façade. In its essence, the canopy provides people with shelter from either bad weather or the sun.

As the original entrance consisted of a large sheltered zone between the showcase islands, there was no direct need for a large canopy. Jan Kuijt designed a small (presumably) zinc canopy with round corners. These round shapes of the canopy stood out from the overall ensemble of the main façade, which had only sharp orthogonal corners. It served as a purpose as a decorative and guiding element.

After the expansion in 1960, the architect changed the entire shape and size of the canopy, because the sheltered walking space had decreased as a result of the removal of the space with the showcase islands. A large canopy was added to the façade that protruded above the street. This larger canopy in combination with the smaller sheltered browsing space, resulted in a large enough space where people could take shelter from the weather. In turn it also provided the space with a sense that part of the public pavement was part of this sheltered browsing area.

When eventually the shop windows were placed at the building line, the sheltered space was lost. Considering the previous design interventions, a large canopy is expected. However, the opposite was done. The design for the new canopy is a lot smaller than any of the previous canopies. The half ellipse shaped canopy only covers the main entrance space. The lack of a proper canopy combined with the lack of sheltered space due to the movement of the shop window line, worsen the problem of permeability and the threshold of entering as mentioned in *Picture VII*.

When examining the stonework frame in the plinth, these changes of the canopy become visible. The Belgian bluestone frame has not changed much throughout the years. In the current situation (bottom right) the outline of the very first canopy is still visible in this stonework frame. The material which the canopy was connected to, was recessed compared to the rest of the stonework frame. While this recessed part of the stonework frame was hidden by the dimensions and strategic positioning of the second canopy, it can not be hidden in the present day situation (bottom right).



Façade openings - IX

Picture IX

Façade openings

Vroom en Dreesmann, Grote Staat 5-15; Vijfhoekstraat; Achter het Vleeshuis, Maastricht

Jan Kuijt

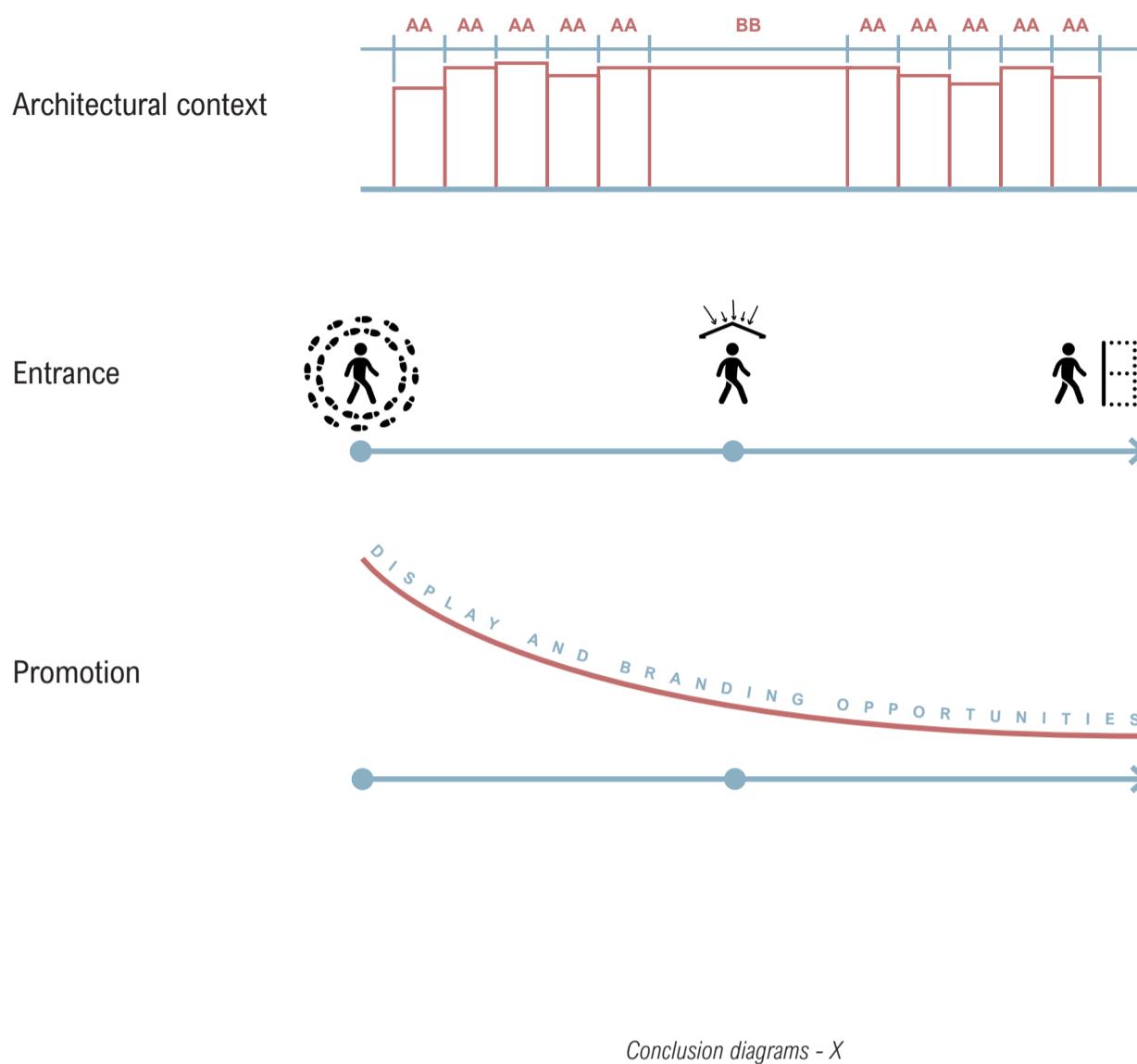
A building is more than some floors with a façade, there are specific elements that add life to a building. One of these elements are the openings in said façade. They are essential for a pleasant and comfortable user experience and they add a sense of scale to the exterior of the building. Furthermore, they can be applied strategically to highlight certain elements in the façade. These openings, or windows, are placed with a certain philosophy for the building in mind. But this philosophy can change over the course of time. The façades of the Vroom & Dreesmann are a clear example of this.

In the original structure, by Jan Kuijt, there is an abundance of openings in the façade, not just in the plinth. On the elevated levels there is also a large area dedicated to façade openings. In the main façade at the Grote Staat, tall vertical elements have been added. These create the impression of verticality within the building. It appears that the floor above the plinth runs all the way to the top of the façade. In front of these windows, at the bottom, wrought iron fences have been added. These have been designed as if they are small balcony railings. Due to their small size, they in turn create the impression that the windows are larger than they actually are. In the original design a few of the windows (on both interior levels) could be opened as seen on the right. The windows served as a source of natural, indirect daylight in the building. Later they were closed off by a retention wall and were lit up

using spotlights to resemble a lit up interior. This is a clear indication of a change in the philosophy. Whereas in the past it was conventional to have a lot natural light in a store, but when the possibilities with artificial lighting became bigger all of this changed. Natural light started to interfere with the way the products were displayed. Using artificial lighting the products could be displayed more advantageously for the shop owner.

In the other façade of the original structure the situation is different. Behind the windows, the central staircase of the building is located. A space where natural light is desirable. The window frames have been changed from ladder windows to 'regular' windows, but not much else required changing.

The change in philosophy concerning the lighting of the interior space is also recognizable in the 1960 and 1970 extensions. The façades on these parts of the building have a minimal amount of windows. The tall and narrow design of these windows do give a false sense of transparency in the façade.



Conclusion diagrams - X

Picture X

Conclusion

Vroom en Dreesmann, Grote Staat 5-15, Maastricht
Jan Kuijt

The goal of this research was to find an answer to the question:

'How does the architecture of the former Vroom & Dreesmann department store engage in the relation between the public, semi-public and private space and the people moving within and between these spaces and how can this be applied in the new design?'

To find an answer to this research question, multiple architectural elements that have an effect on this relation were researched. Not only the architecture of the building itself affects the relation between the public, semi-public and private space and the moving within and between these spaces, but also the (architectural) context of the building. In the research a clear rhythm in the facade dimensions was discovered (top). This rhythm of building with a similar width is broken by the main facade of the Vroom & Dreesmann at both the Grote Staat as well as at the Vijfhoekstraat. Therefore, attracting more attention to the passerby. In addition to this, the construction of the expansion in 1960 at the corner of the Grote Staat and the Vijfhoekstraat, influences this relation as well. While fitting in with the rhythm of the facades, it has always stood out in its architectural design and appearance. This results in the architecture attracting the attention of the passerby. These are the first elements of engaging in the relation that is researched.

Following up on this, are the entrance opportunities. The main entrance of the department store has had multiple shapes and sizes throughout

the years. Each of these variations had a different effect on the passerby. Starting with an easily accessible, low threshold, sheltered browsing space; which was then transformed to smaller, more straightforward, but sheltered browsing space; to eventually become a harsh border between the public and private space. By examining these changes, it became apparent how these three variations can affect the passerby and passively engage in a relation by offering comfort to the passerby.

Finally, there are the display and branding opportunities in the facade. From researching these opportunities of promoting products, a brand or something else, a division of scales was found. There are three distinctive scale levels, on which a certain aspect of the display and branding opportunities play a role. To make effective use of the opportunities of promoting the building and its program in the redesign, it is required that these three scale levels are examined and tested to actively engage in a relation between the public, semi-public and private space and the people moving within and between these spaces.

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