Harold Fallon, Benoît Vandenbulcke, Benoît Burquel, eds.

Raamwerk

Lichtervelde Youth Centre

In Practice

texts by Bart Decroos, Freek Dendooven,
Gijs De Cock, Harold Fallon, Benoît Burquel,
Benoît Vandenbulcke

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Raamwerk

In Practice

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Reconsidering Narratives

Two principles, I believe, rule Western painting from the fifteenth to the twentieth century. The first asserts the separation between plastic representation (which implies resemblance) and linguistic reference (which excludes it). By resemblance we demonstrate and speak across difference. The two systems can neither merge nor intersect. In one way or another, subordination is required. Either the text is ruled by the image (as in those paintings where a book, an inscription, a letter, or the name of a person are represented), or else the image is ruled by the text (as in books where a drawing completes, as if it were merely taking a shortcut, the message that words are charged to represent).

Foucault, M., *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, Fata Morgana, Paris, 1973, p. 26 (*This is not a Pipe*, translated and edited by James Harkness, University of California Press, 1983).

Originally, 'In Practice' consisted of lectures in which architects were invited to reveal the working documents of a project and discuss its development. These conferences were followed by a conversation with a panel of critics, architects, editors and academics. Architecture was opening itself up to research methods.

In 2019, after one of these lectures, the book *Philippe Vander Maren & Richard Venlet In Practice* was published. Together with Pierre Chabard, the architect and the artist presented the origin of an architecture project, shared their doubts, and revealed the mechanisms that allowed them to make choices and the intuitions that turn these into poetry.

In *Raamwerk In Practice, Lichtervelde Youth Centre*, it is the building site that is the centre for exploration. Together with Bart Decroos, the architects took a particular interest in the events that occured there and that encouraged them to continue their design work during the execution. Glances cross, from inside the process towards external observation, and vice versa.

The form of the book is significant. It establishes a parallel between the different narrations at work. Textual narration, visual narrations of the documents gleaned during the work and the informed photographic viewpoint.

Talking about the project, exploring and understanding it, is not the same as talking about the built object. It requires paying attention to Foucault, quoted above, understanding the mechanisms by which the image is subjugated to the text and the text to the image, to either be rid of them or actively engage them in the narrative.

The very size of the text gives it a specific status in relation to the graphic documents. It changes the relationship of the text to the page, and thus of the pages to the illustrations. This mechanism transforms the book-object into the condition of the contents. The

book, as an object, contributes to the contents themselves. It is no longer a simple receptacle, it cannot be formally republished without changing its meaning.

As in an architecture project where the architect engages the skills and inspirations of various partners, engineers, clients, artists, landscape designers, specialists, contractors and artisans, in the book “In Practice”, the texts, the working documents extracted from their archives, the photographs taken subsequently, the formatting and the visual sequences forge links that makes sense when taken as a whole. Architectural and visual references punctuate the book with a parallel narrative.

The image is no longer reduced to the status of an illustration for the text, and likewise, the text is no longer the simple caption for the illustration. The image can now comment on the image, the text on the image, and the image on the text. As in any work, even if purely textual, the explicit levels of reading stand side-by-side with the implicit networks of meaning. Here, the register of the contents and the nature of their relationships expand. It is a bit like a meeting of Littré[1] and Larousse[2] with Aby Warburg[3], Ad Reinhardt[4] and Gerhard Richter[5].

The aim of the *In Practice* series of books will also certainly be to explore different modalities of a changing equilibrium between text and image, to deploy narratives that become one with their subject.

Harold Fallon, Benoît Vandenbulcke, Benoît Burquel

1 The *Dictionnaire de la langue française* by Emile Littré is a dictionary that combines definitions, etymology, literary usage, tips on use and comments by the author. It is a work that derives inspiration from scientific objectivity, artistic appreciation and the consideration of anecdotal uses. Littré, É., *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, Hachette, Paris, 1873-1874

2 "Encyclopedia: work which methodically or alphabetically presents all universal knowledge (General Encyclopedia) or specific knowledge on a field of knowledge (specialised Encyclopedia)"https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais-monolingue, consulted on 08/05/2020. Translation by the authors. Larousse, the French publishing house founded by Pierre Larousse, is specialised in reference works such as dictionnaries and encyclopedias aiming at scientific objectivity and universality.

3 The *Mnémosyne Atlas* is a body of images created between 1921 and 1929 by Aby Warburg. These images and documents are brought together in black panels to evoke possible important links. These compositions have varied over time, as the nature of these organisations is unstable. Warburg, A., *L'Atlas Mnémosyne*, L'écarquillé, Paris, 2012

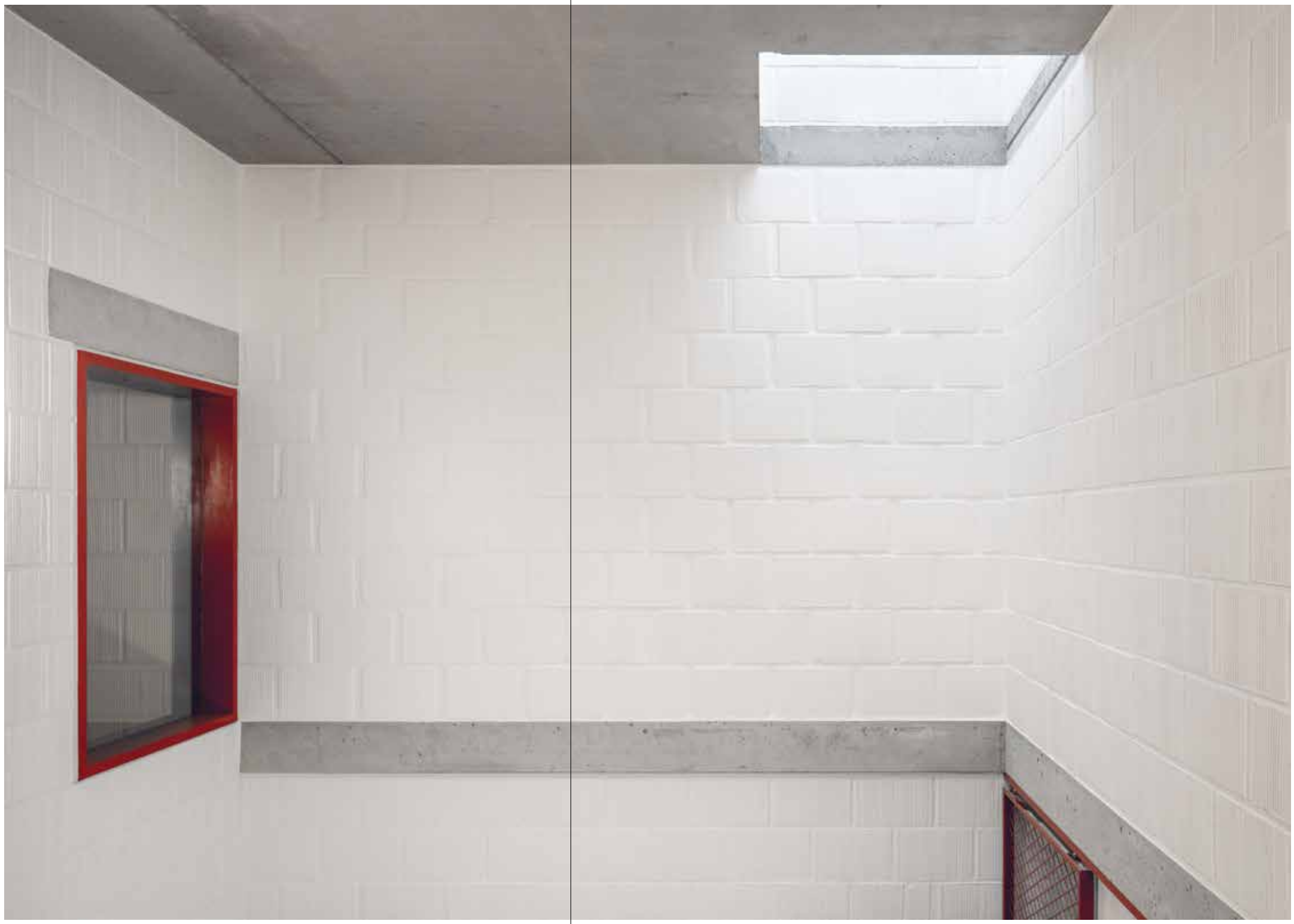
4 The series of slides used by Ad Reinhardt in his conferences operate through successions of formal similarities, regardless of the nature of the photographed subject. These series change over time, depending on the conference. Lippard, L. R., *Ad Reinhardt*, Harry N Abrams Inc, New York, 1982

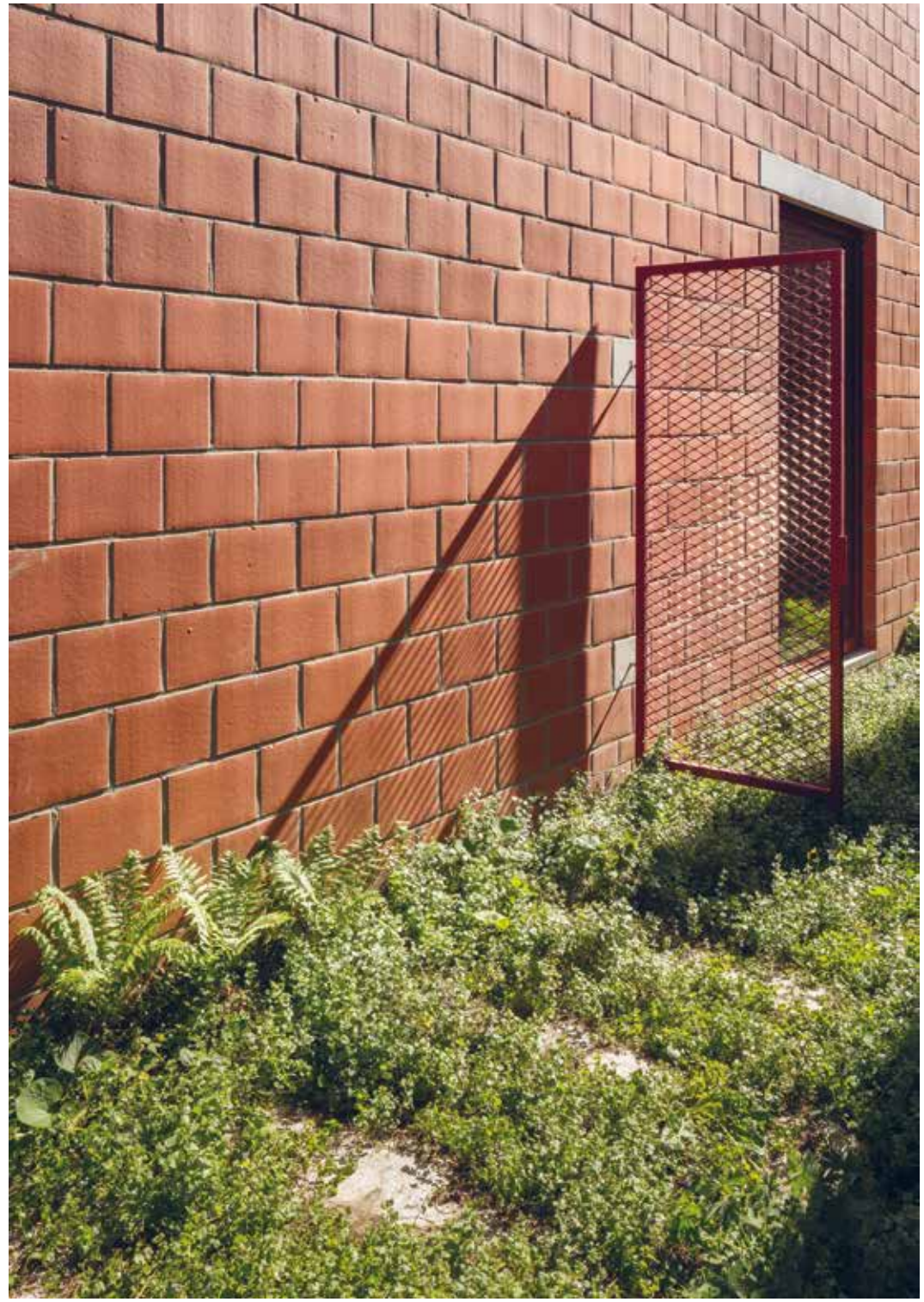
5 Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* is a chronological compilation of various documents, photos, sketches, press cuttings, etc., which accompanied his artistic production from 1962 to 2006 (date of the first publication). Richter, G., *Gerhard Richter: Atlas, in four Volumes*, Walther König, Cologne, 2015

Four Anecdotes

Francis Bacon

In my case all painting is an accident. But it's also not an accident, because one must select what part of the accident one chooses to preserve.



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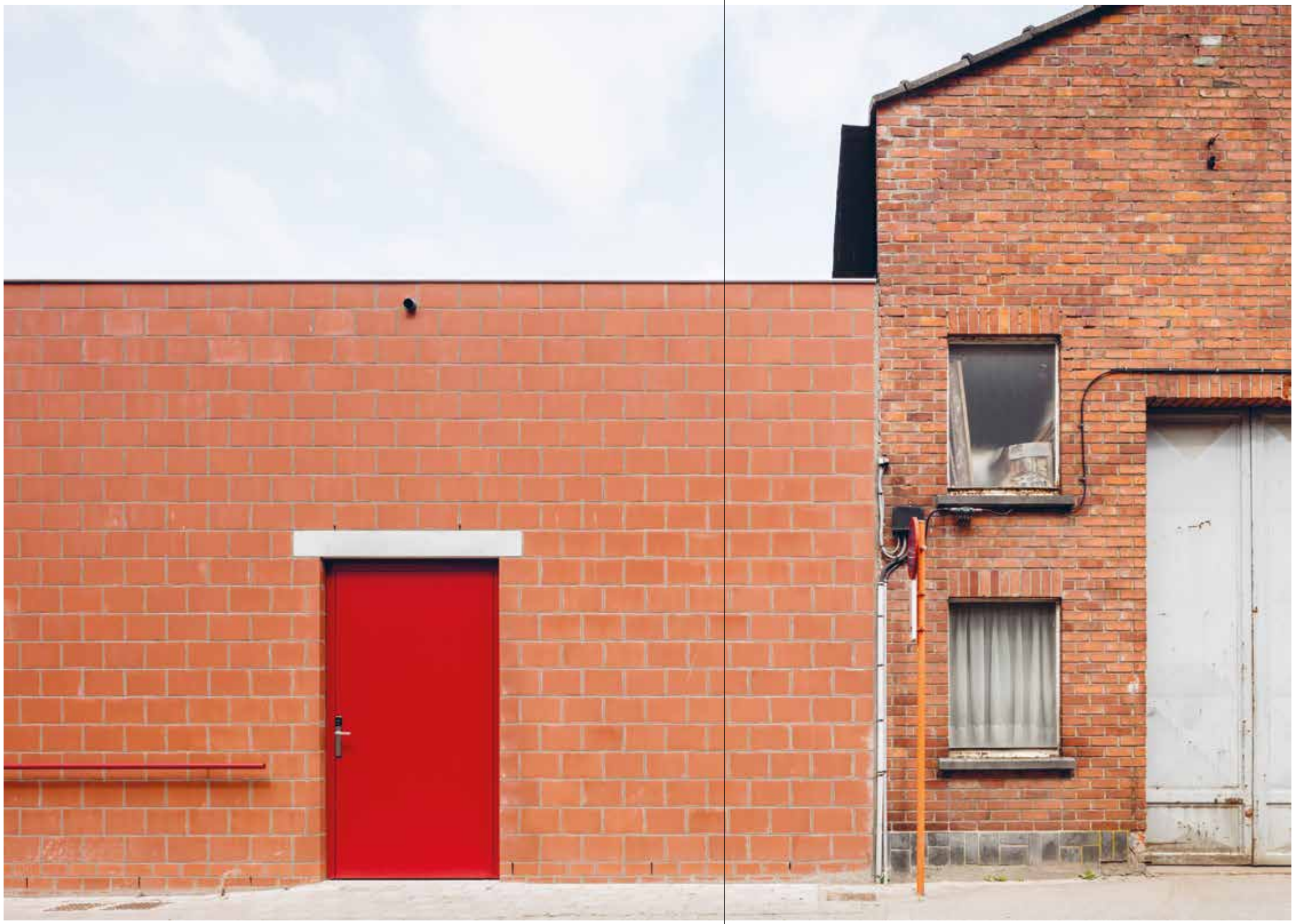



DE LICHTING

The village of Lichtervelde lies somewhere between the provincial towns of Bruges and Kortrijk, in the most westerly part of Belgium. The landscape is not really a landscape anymore: the urban sprawl of Flanders has long buried any sense of natural scenery, transforming the countryside into an amalgam of agricultural fields, small-scale industrial enterprises, and loose islands of suburban densification without real centres, and is crossed by night-lit highways

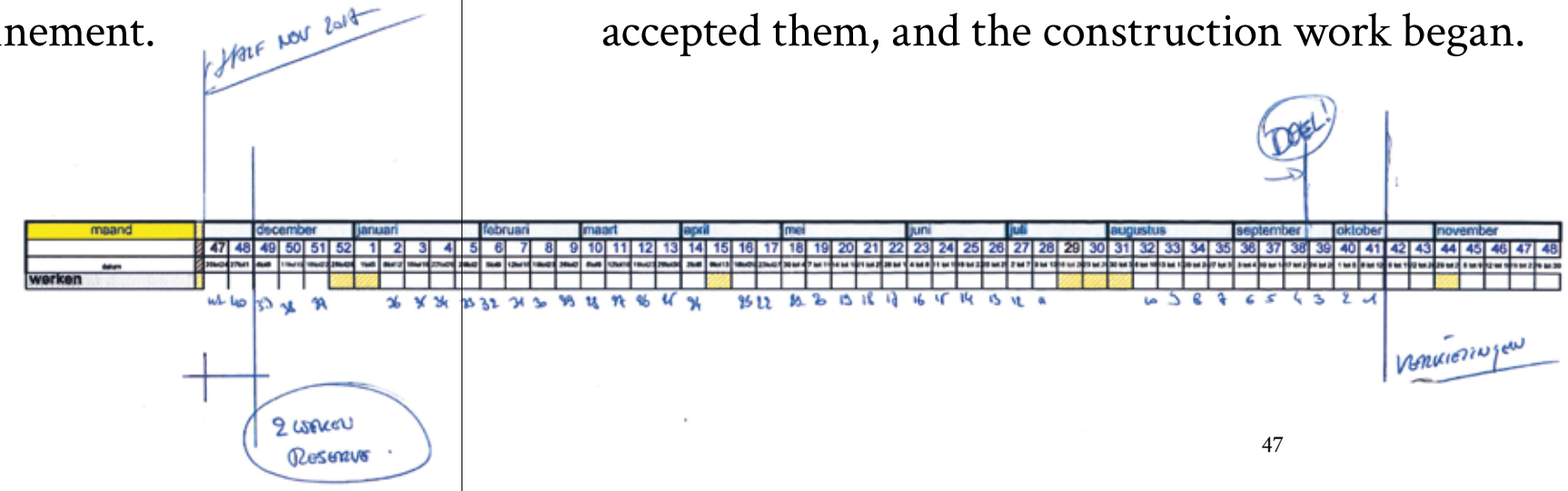
and asphalt country roads lined with villas, all-you-can-eat restaurants and over-sized furniture shops. The village centre lies at the intersection of three such country roads, with a small church in the middle and a network of smaller streets that gradually grew around it. The houses are built of red brick, the names of the cafés still refer to regional tropes, and the local shopkeepers have not yet lost the competition with the increasing numbers of supermarkets and clothing chains. By all measures, a seemingly typical Flemish village, where the generalities still appear to outweigh the specifics, and which, in contrast to the international tourism of Bruges or the overtly cultural ambitions of Kortrijk, might feel like a breath of fresh air.

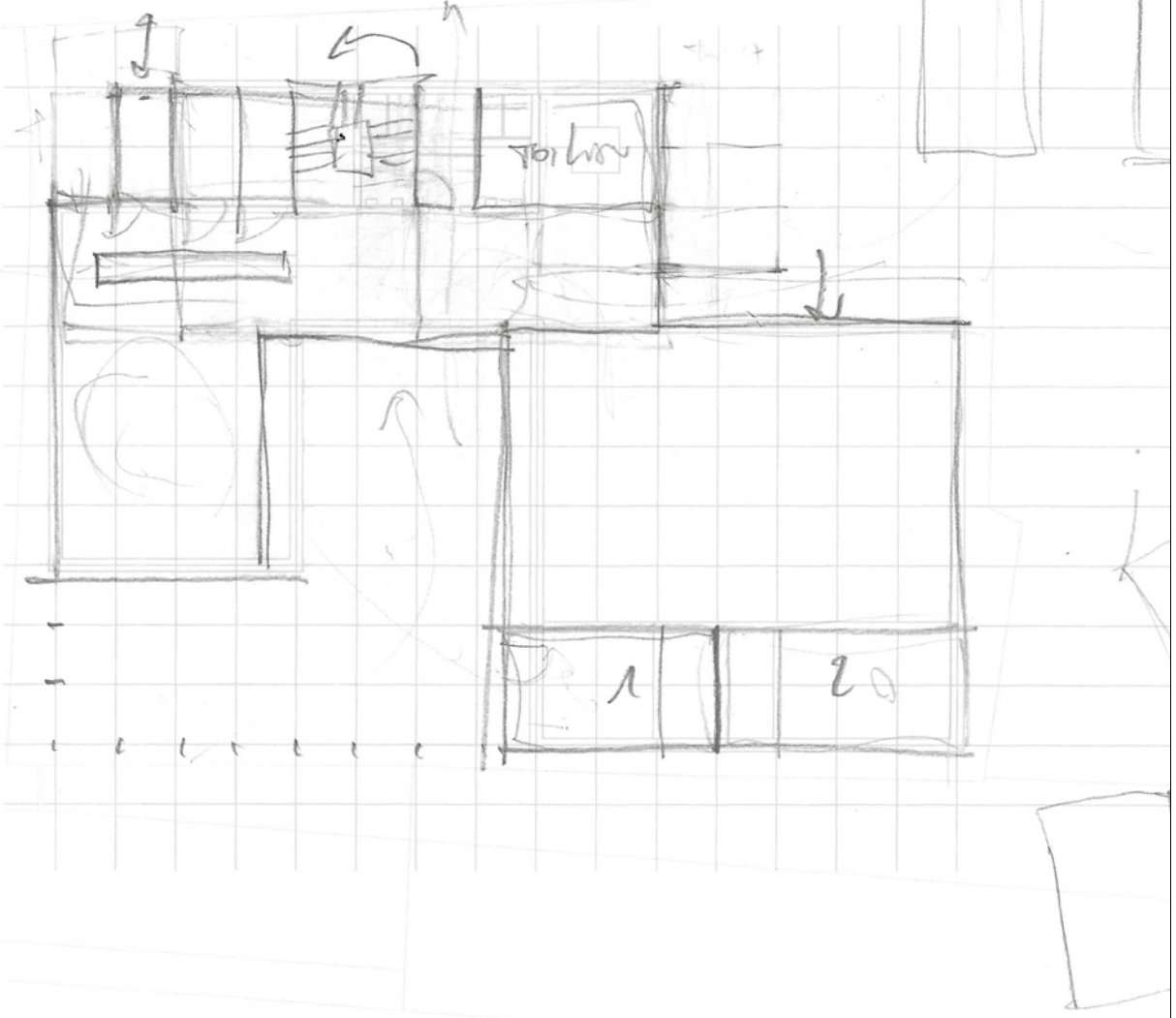
A stone's throw from the church, on the corner of a small crossroads, opposite the police station and with terraced houses all around, the city council decided to build a new youth centre. The previous one, originally on the other corner of that same crossroads, was in need of replacement, while the youth argued against moving it to the outskirts of the village. A former café was torn down and made room for a building that might appear to have been there since the beginning. As you walk down the street from the church, you see the rounded corner of the garden wall slowly come into view at the end, blending with the red bricks of the nearby houses, and it takes a while before you realise that the building is much bigger than its neighbours. A red, steel gate gives access to the inner courtyard behind the garden wall, which organises the youth center into its different parts. The youth club on one side, the event hall on the other, a central foyer in between. It is summer, which means that the green vines growing on the wall contrast sharply with the red bricks, but it will be some years before the green has overgrown the stones.

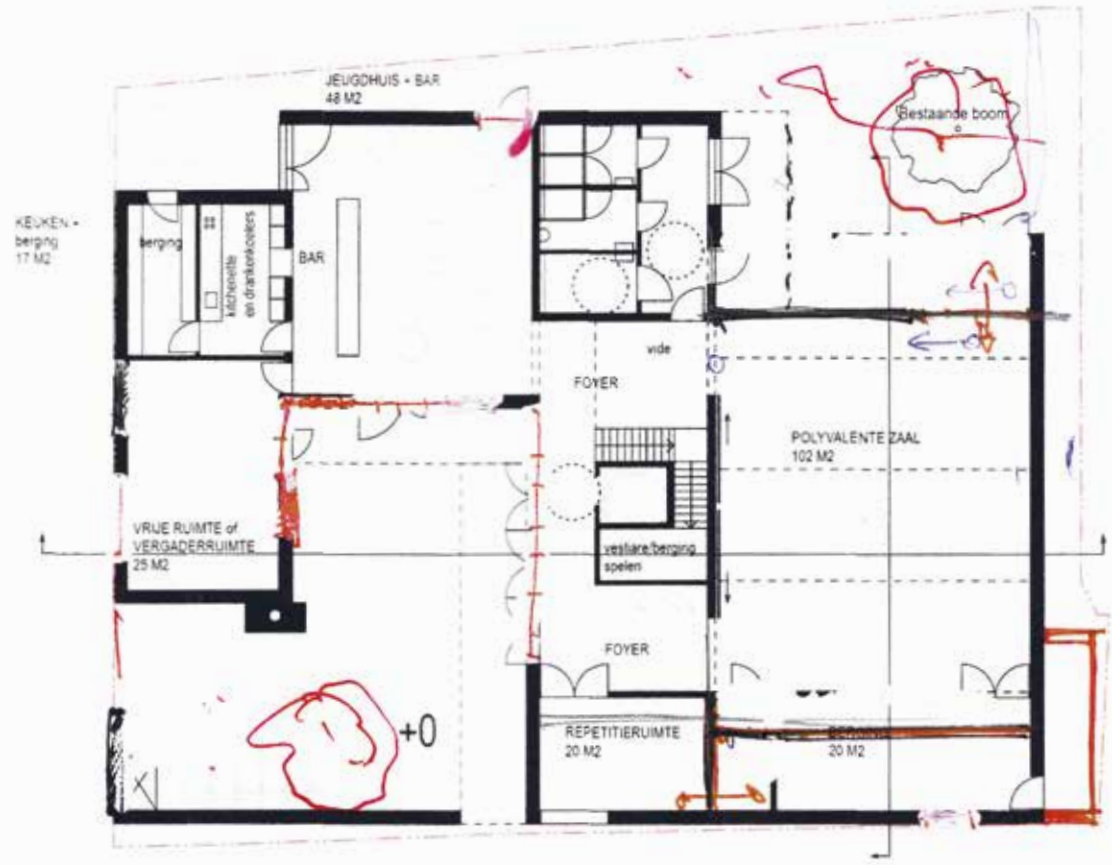
A Youth Centre

The youth centre is the result of a competition that the Lichtervelde town council launched in 2016. As with any public building, but perhaps even more explicitly here, there was almost no budget, while the planning was strictly timed to meet the deadline of upcoming elections. Given this tight timeframe, in our competition design we[1] proposed a simple ensemble of different volumes organised around a central courtyard—the foyer, the event hall, and the youth club. The dimensions of the volumes would be based on the bricks used for its rudimentary construction, with few additional elements. The design was simple and straightforward, and derived its qualities from its spatial organisation rather than from any material refinement.

As such, there was almost no design process to develop the competition design: we proposed a set of spaces, the town council debated and finally accepted them, and the construction work began.



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POLYVALENTE ZAAL
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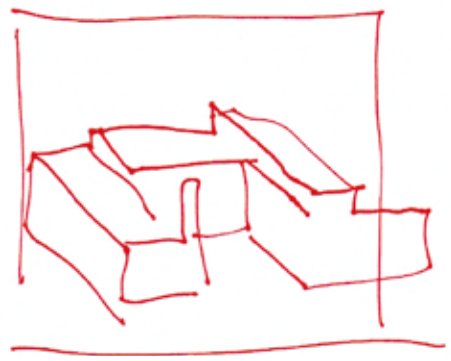
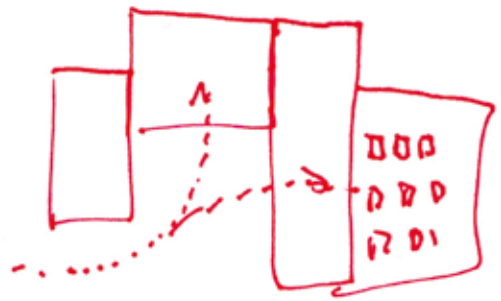


SCENARIO 1



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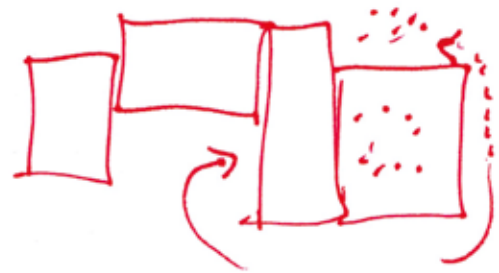
SCENARIO 2



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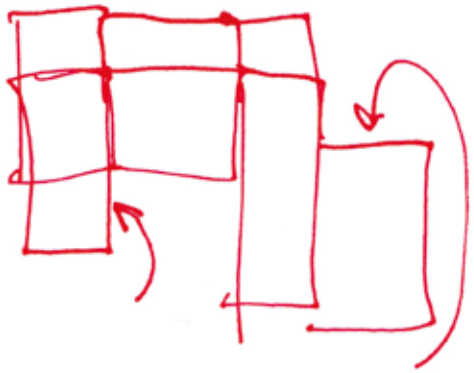

POPPENKAST THEATER

SCENARIO 4

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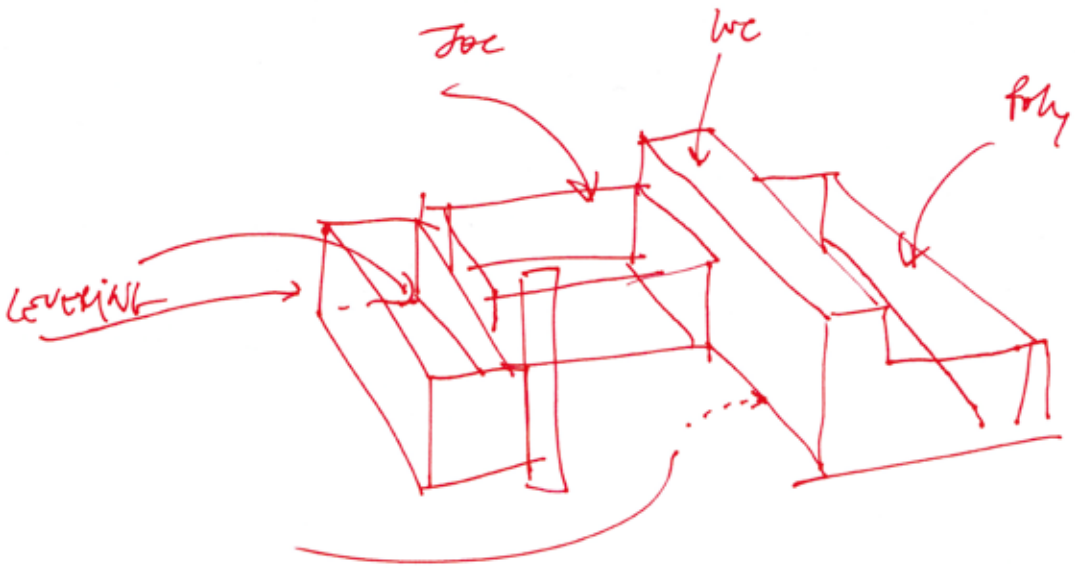
toc
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LEVITATING

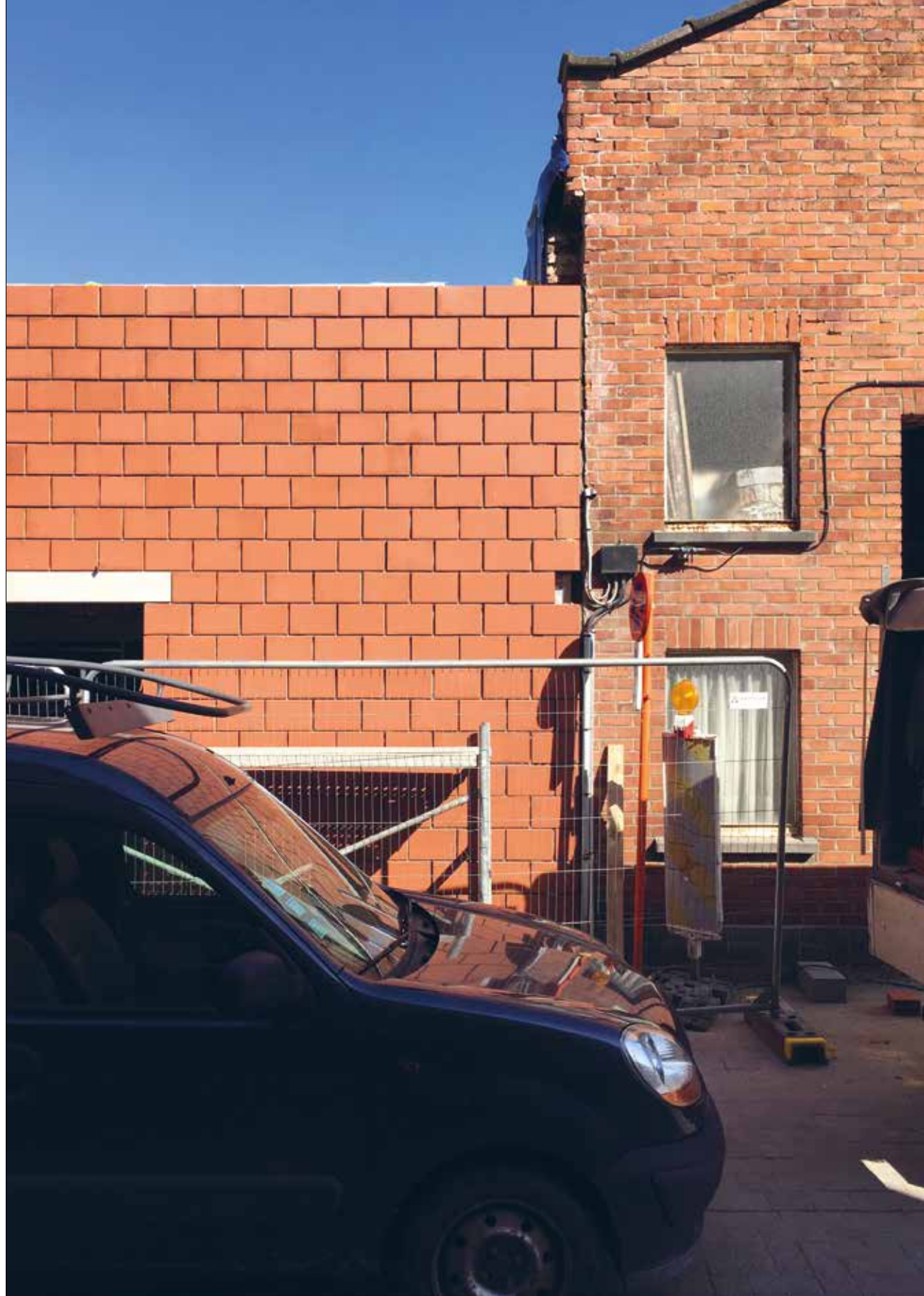
Yet, despite the scarcity of resources available for its construction, the architecture of the youth centre today nonetheless exhibits certain moments of generosity, which seem to escape any functionalist logic of cost calculation. These moments of generosity were not designed by us directly beforehand, but came into being as a result of incidents that happened during the construction process.

During these incidents, however anecdotal they might be[2], we had to recalibrate the initial architectural design to account for the materiality of its construction and the conditions under which it was built, in dialogue with the different actors involved in the process. It is perhaps no coincidence, then, that some of the building's most striking features are related to such construction incidents, since it was only in these moments that we could escape the economic and planning constraints imposed from the very start. This suggests to us that it is perhaps through the process of making and the ability to deal with the inevitable incidents and changing conditions of construction that architecture is made, beyond the conventional dualism of designing, on one hand, and construction, on the other.[3]

The recounting of four such anecdotes serves as a mechanism to offer insight into the process of the construction itself. As such, these short stories are informed by the banality and pragmatism of the building site, far removed from distant theoretical reflections on the discursive role of architecture, but closer to the place where buildings are actually made. At the same time, these anecdotes are also related to the main elements that make up the building, testifying to the inevitability of incidents happening, while offering a way into the different aspects of the project through the perspective of these elements: the brick, the roof, the wall, and the doors and windows.

The Brick

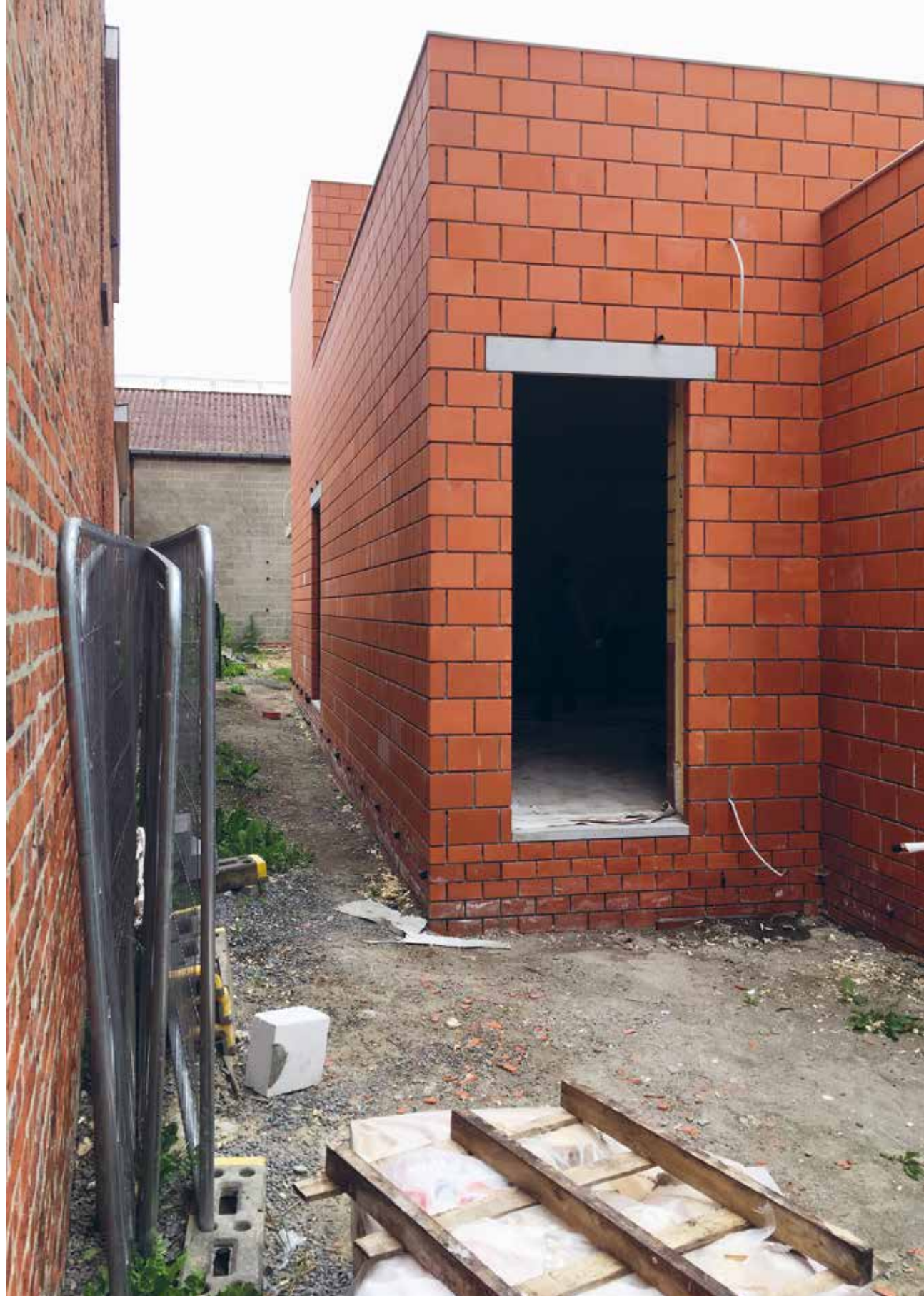
The youth centre has been built with an ordinary brick similar to the houses around it, and shows an equal measure of constraint. Not only for aesthetic purposes of blending in, but because the construction of the building was constrained by the same economic parameters as most ordinary houses. For this reason, we chose a cheap, standard brick, produced by the Flemish company Ploegsteert: a 288 × 138 × 188 mm brick, made from the clay found in the region, and nicknamed the 'Barrybloc'. Our choice of this brick was not only motivated by the budget restrictions, but also by the fact that it matched the surrounding buildings, which were built using similar, predominantly red, bricks. Yet, while the surrounding buildings use the conventional, smaller format for their façades, the exaggerated dimensions of the Barrybloc transform the façades of the youth centre into a magnified version of their context, like a parody that enlarges the typical features of its subject.

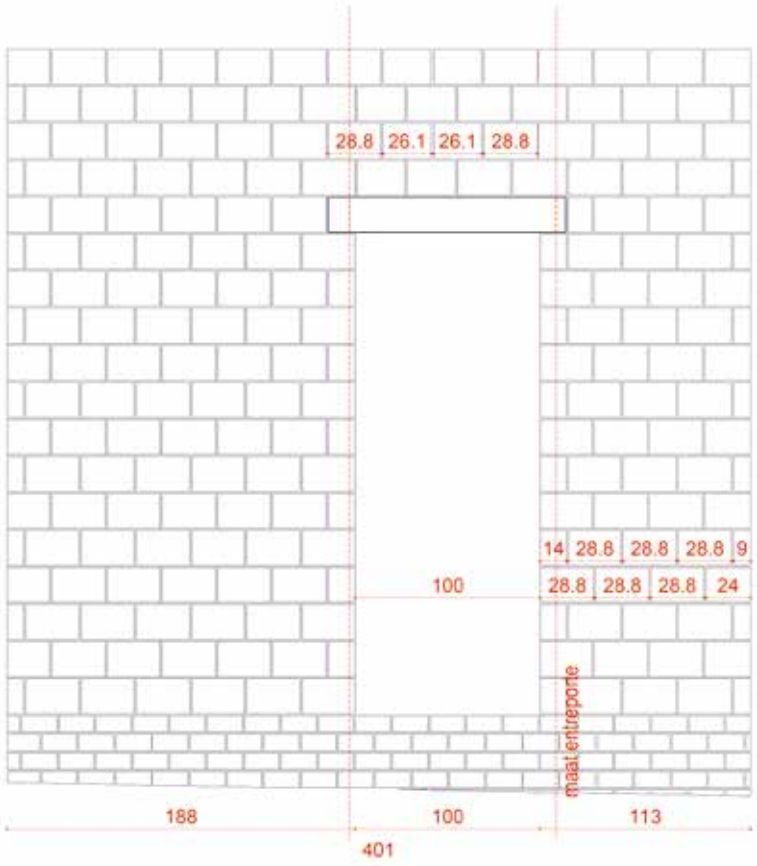


Such a logic is not immediately inherent in Western typologies, since a major reference for us in the design process were the Uma longhouses of Indonesia. There, certain villages are built as a repetition of the same housing typology, constructed in a traditional wooden structure, but with the central, communal building as an enlargement of the exact construction of these private homes: an abstraction of the village's specific domestic architecture that, as such, becomes recognisable as a public space instead.

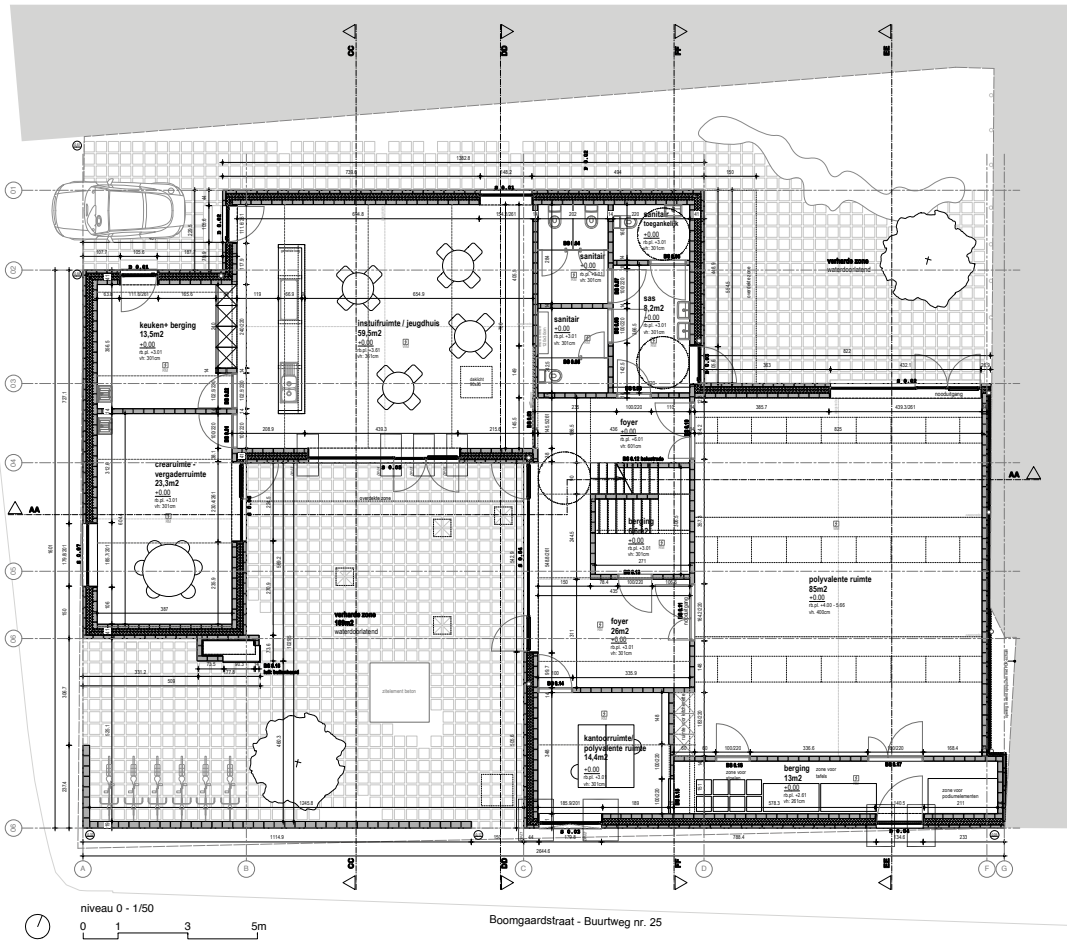
Uma Longhouses in Indonesia.[4]

In Lichtervelde, instead of wood, brick is everywhere—both in the surrounding houses and in the youth centre: in its exterior walls, where the red pattern of the brick is kept visible to link the different volumes of the building together; and in its interior walls, where most of the bricks have been painted white, to reflect the sunlight shining in. The choice of the same brick throughout the building was not necessarily intended to create a monolithic building, but was instead derived from the economy of means necessary for the building's creation. As such, as one looks closely, this seemingly monolithic character becomes nuanced through the variations in its construction, with almost more exceptions than regularities—almost.





One initial and obvious deviation we had to account for was the misalignment between the structural walls inside and the façade walls outside. As with most constructions built during the last fifty years, the exterior walls are doubled to provide space for a layer of insulation in between, with the corners extending further on the outside than within. This would be of no importance if there were no door and window openings where both walls needed to align. A layer of three thinner bricks on the bottom of the exterior walls – 188 × 88 × 65 mm – and the 'cropping' of the bricks on the corners make up for this difference.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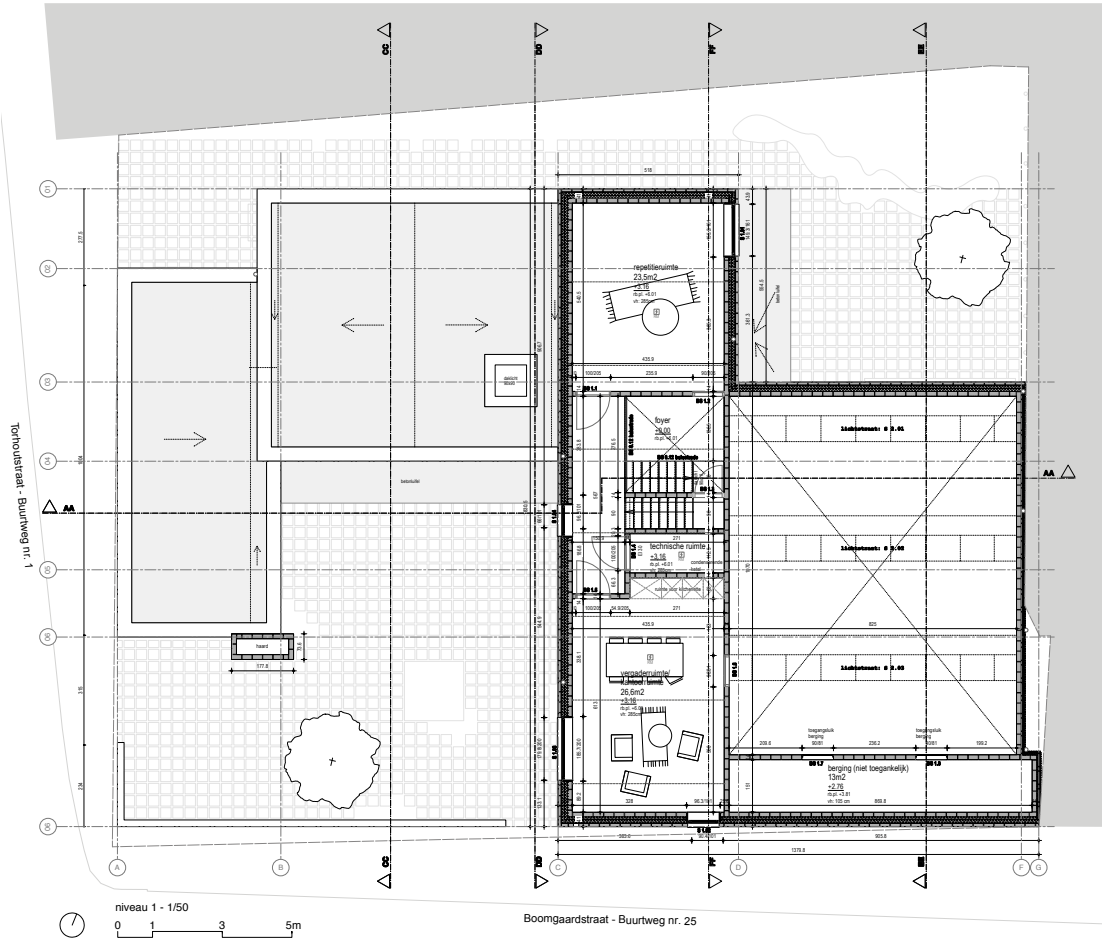
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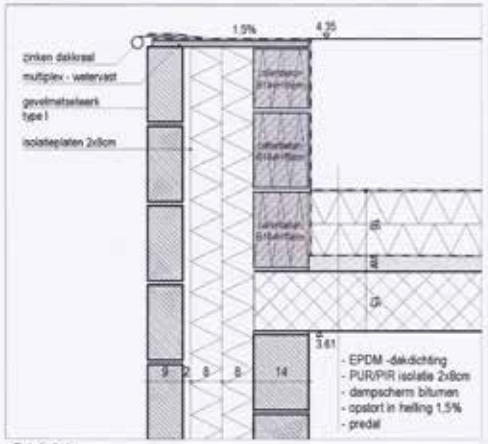

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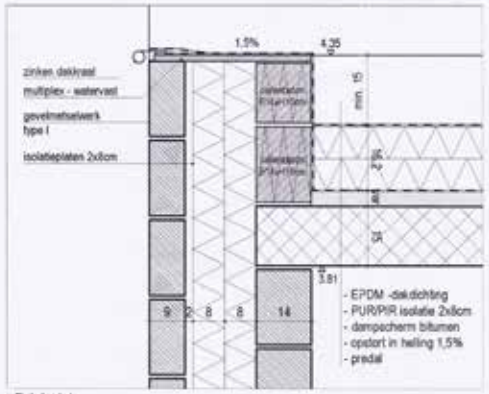

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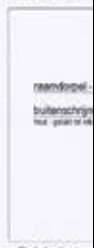

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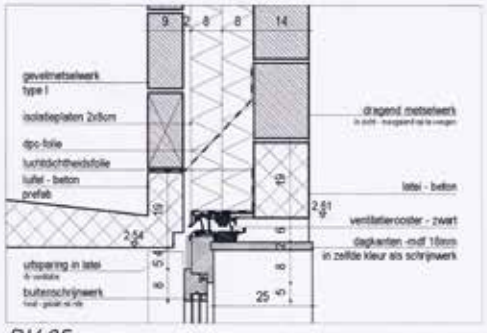

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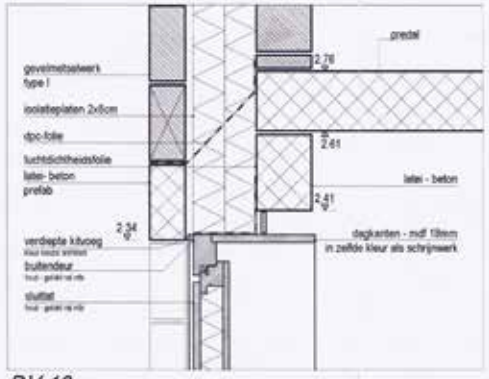

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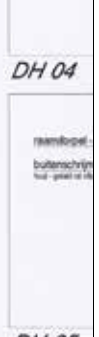

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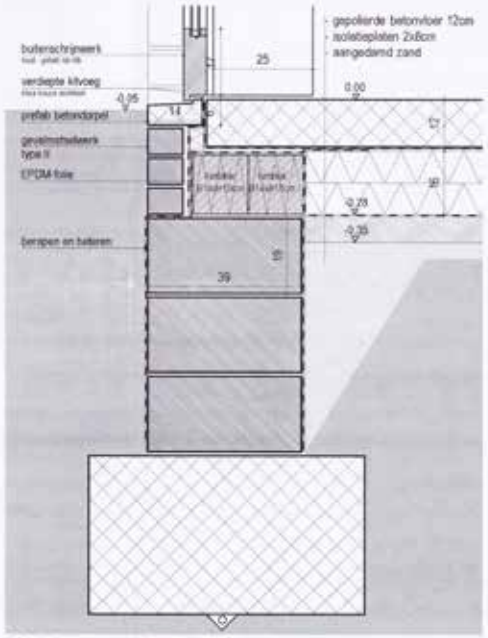
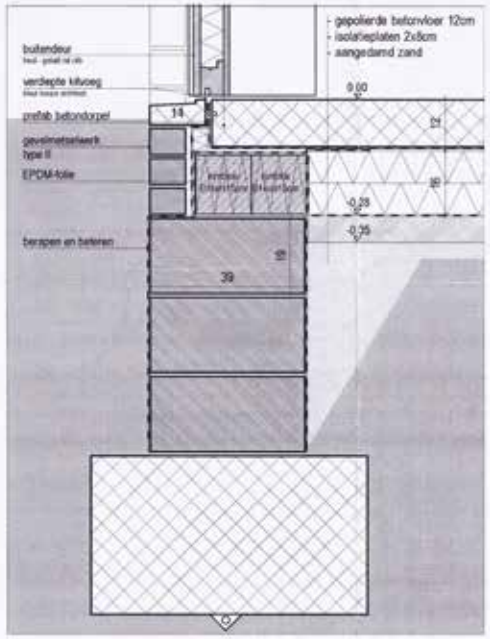


DV 04 - typedetail deur beglaasd



DV 09 - typedetail deur vol

DV 01'

In addition, since the seemingly monolithic walls are doubled, the outer layer loses its structural function and was thus built as a thinner version of the actual structural walls on the inside — 288 × 88 × 138 mm. This thinner façade is explicitly visible at the windows and doors, which are placed behind the façade bricks and as such shown as an extra outer layer.

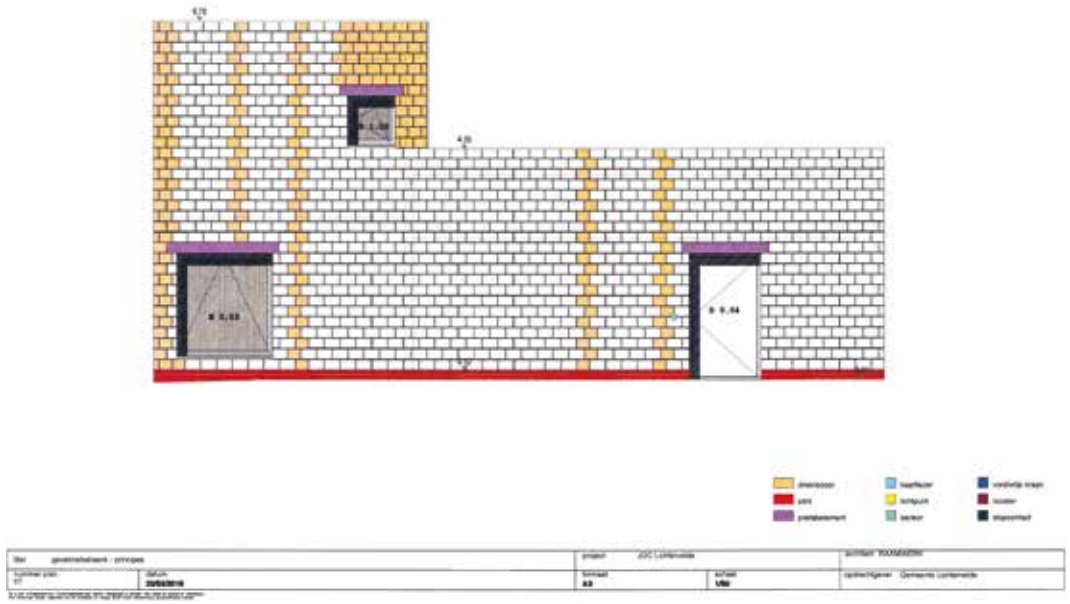
Secondly, while we initially proposed creating the entire building in red brick, we gradually became concerned about both the lightness of the interior spaces and their acoustic performance. These concerns, which grew over time, made us reconsider the choice of brick and deviate from the initial execution plans. While we kept a plinth of five stacked red bricks, the interior walls were finally made from a yellow, ribbed variation of the Barrybloc. This ribbed surface of the bricks was intended to increase their acoustic refraction, while the yellow colour would reflect the sunlight entering the spaces.

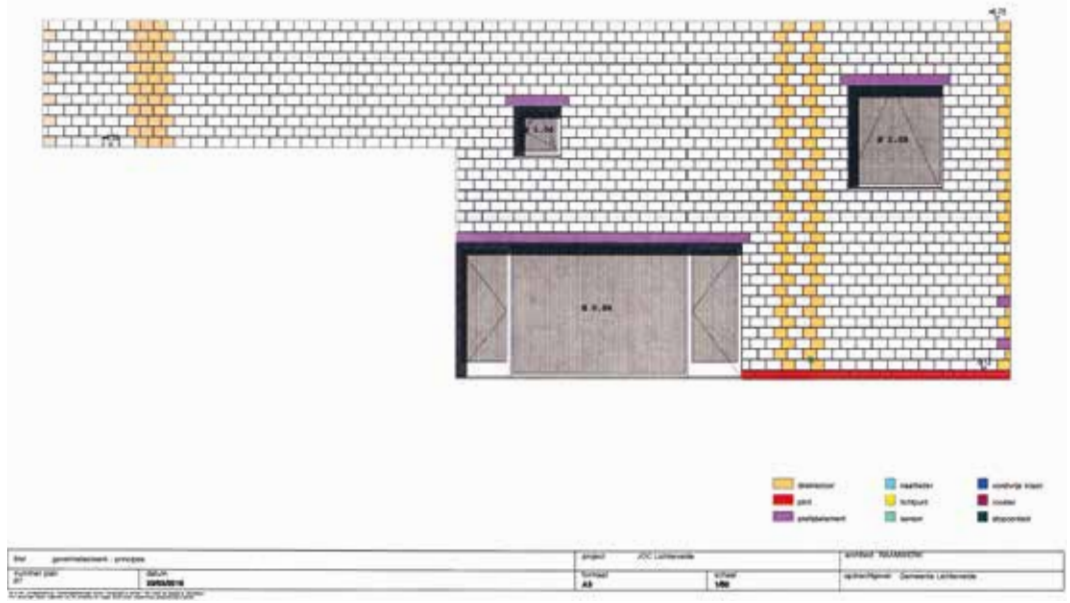
Later on, with the construction process in full swing and on the basis of a Photoshopped collage, we proposed an additional layer of white paint, to reinforce the light reflection even more. While this layer barely amounts to an extra 1 mm of material, the paint transformed the entire casco construction into a more liveable interior.

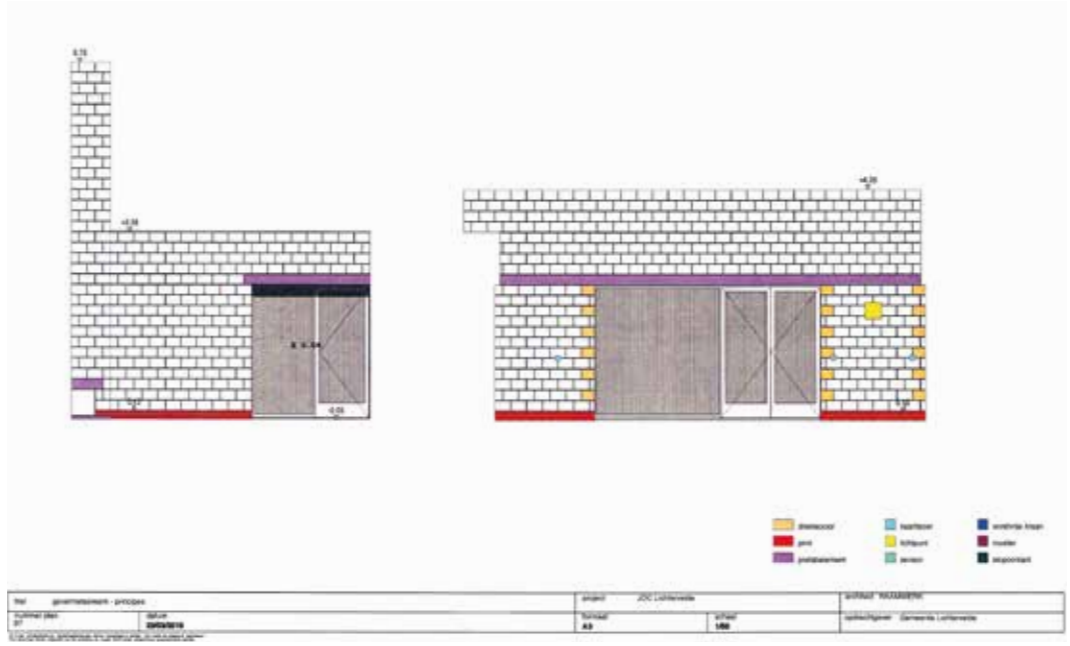
Thirdly, and most importantly, however detailed and precise our execution plans might have been, they could not account for the material composition of the bricks themselves. As a result of the production process, in which the regional clay is baked to provide its structural capacities, the bricks vary in length according to the different amounts of shrinkage, which is relative to their position in the oven. In the case of the youth centre, the bricks had a length variation of almost 15 mm, which would jeopardise the simple yet precisely calculated assembly of the bricks into walls.

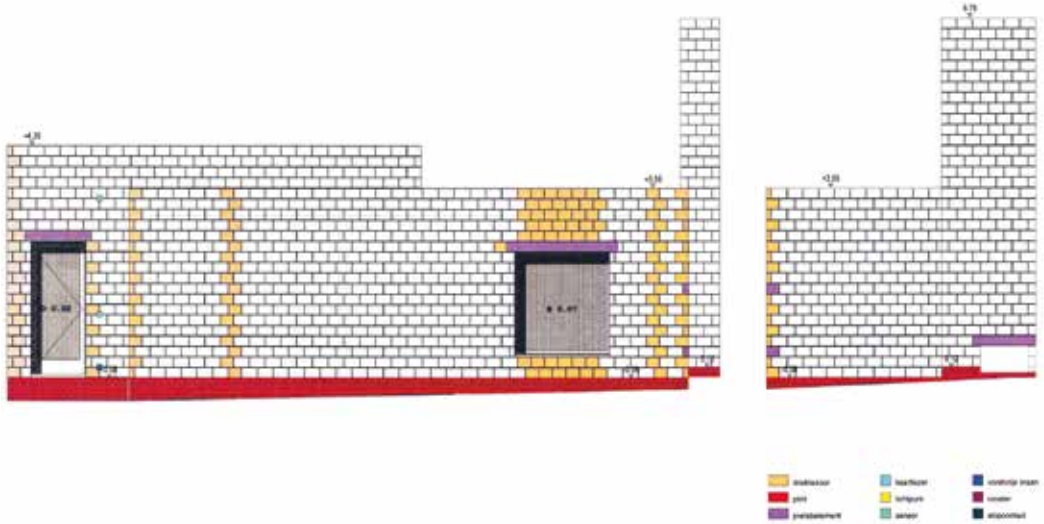
To minimise this effect, two things happened: one a pragmatic solution and the other a design decision. The unusual but straightforward solution was proposed by the contractor, who found other construction sites that employed the same brick and went on a quest to swap the most divergent ones for some that adhered more closely to the standardised dimensions. This was a simple yet intensive journey in his truck to nearby sites, for which no specifications document can account.

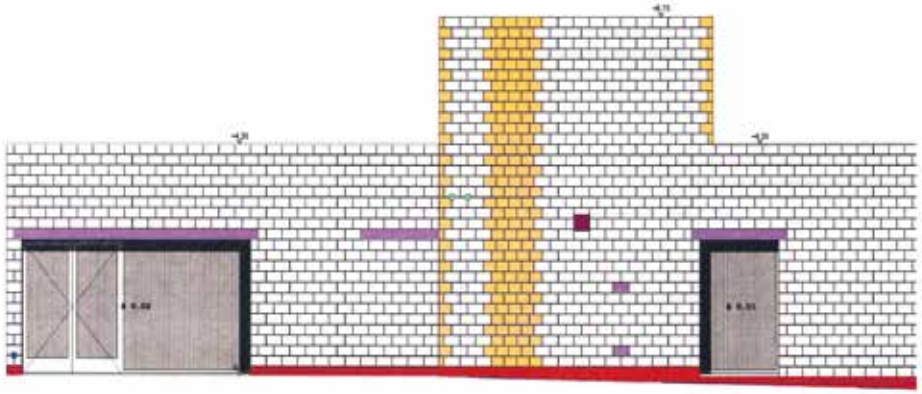
On the other hand, we redrew the elevations
for the façades to introduce vertical, intermediary
strips of where to place the diverging bricks,
so that they could absorb the difference.
In contrast to the initial design drawings, the
redrawn version of these elevations was based
on the actual dimensions of the delivered bricks
rather than the official dimensions.

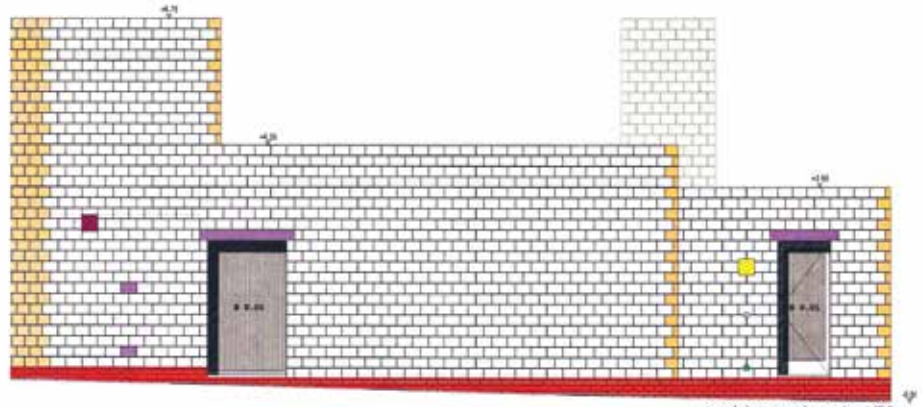




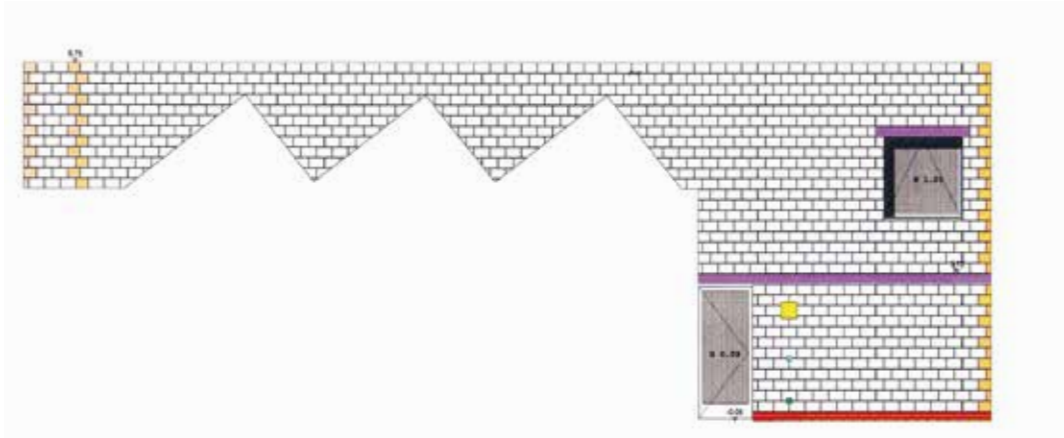








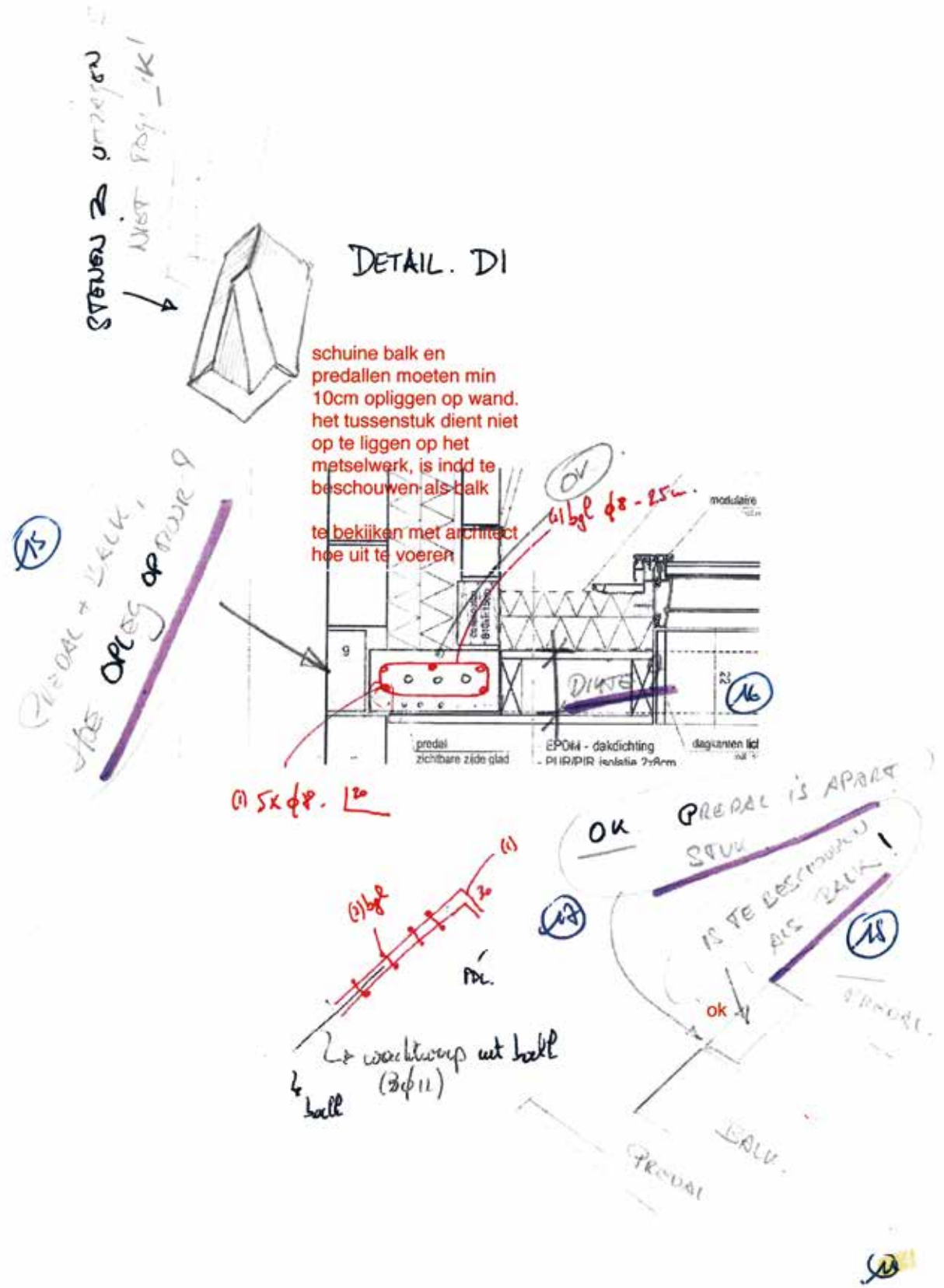
aanzicht noordgevel - 1/50



However well planned and detailed a design might be, its actual construction with materials that have a life of their own thrives on such discrepancies between drawing and building. While the standards and regulations of the construction industry aim to even out the differences between the drafting table of the architect and the construction work on-site, the lives of the construction materials always tend to escape such commensurability. It is only on the construction site itself, when the trucks deliver the stacks of bricks, and the plastic around the wooden pallets is unwrapped, that the discrepancies between both worlds become visible and perhaps the real design work starts: how to mediate between what is drawn and what is built.[5]

The Roof

One of the paradoxes that the construction process revealed was how our straightforward design eventually led to made-to-measure solutions, precisely because it was so straight-forward. In the competition design, we had proposed shed roofs for the event hall, in order to have neutral light entering the space from above. While the other flat roofs were already designed to be made from prefabricated concrete slabs, it seemed equally logical and economical to do the same for the angled roofs of the event hall. And even though it seemed a straightforward decision on paper, in the first conversation with the contractor this unconventional application of a standardised element brought up complications.


DETAIL. D1
schuine balk en
predallen moeten min
10cm opliggen op wand.
het tussenstuk dient niet
op te liggen op het
metselwerk, is indd te
beschouwen als balk
te bekijken met architect
hoe uit te voeren
predal
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ok
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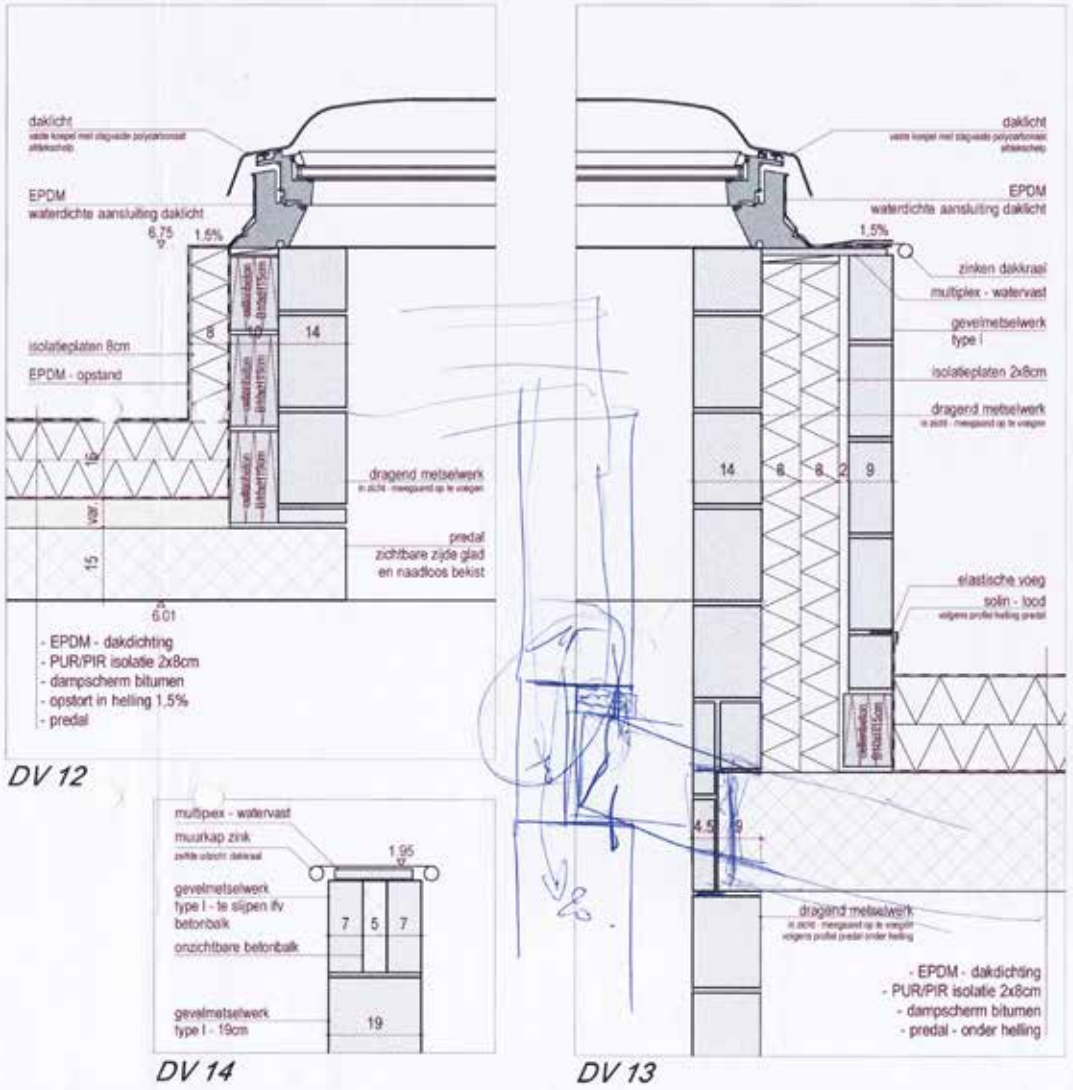
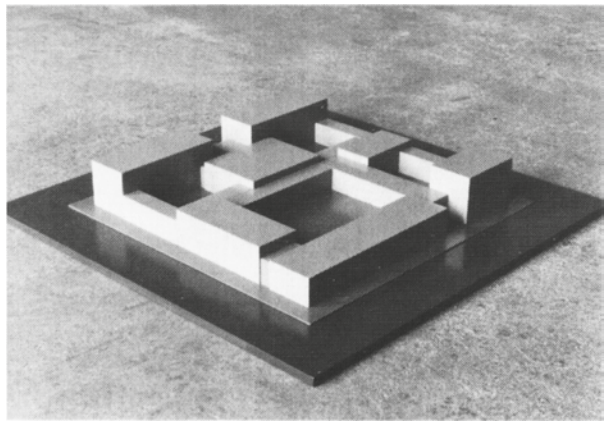
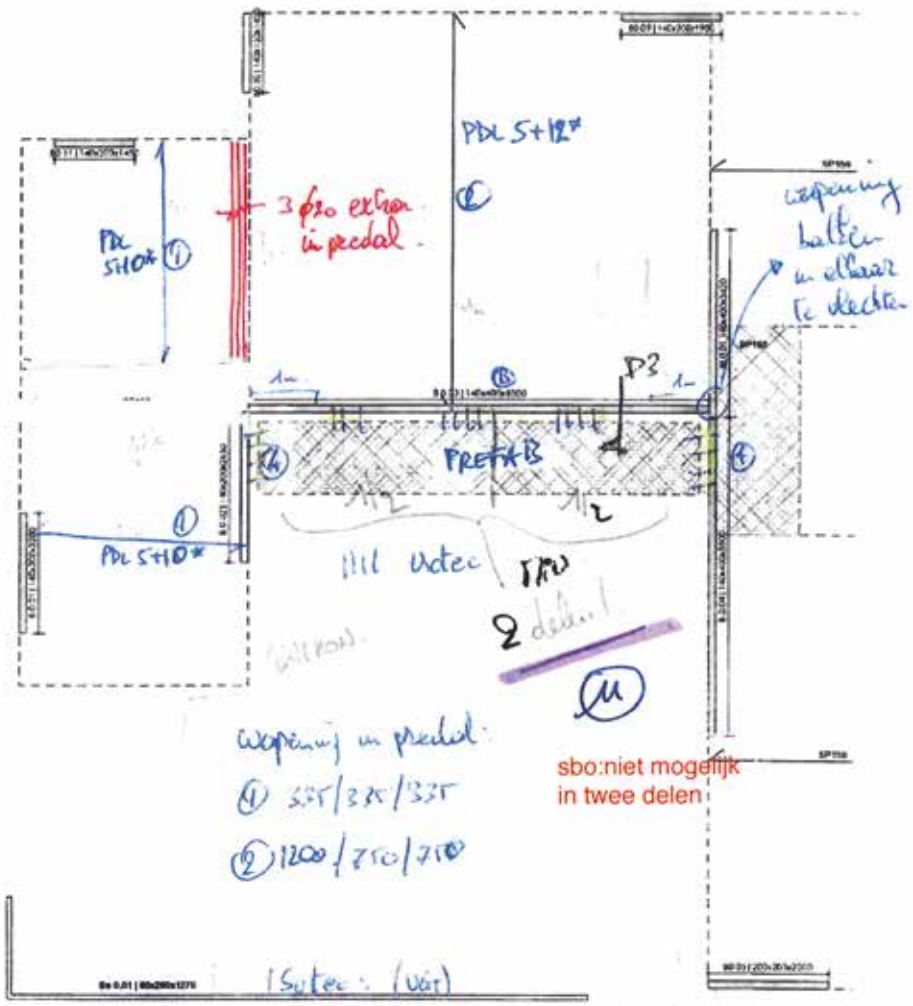


While we used a 14 cm wide 'Barrybloc' for the entire construction, the contractor expressed his concerns about the unconventional, angled position of the prefabricated concrete slabs for the event hall. Instead, as a safety measure to ensure more stability, he proposed using a 19 cm brick for the walls, which would support the roofs, as there would be more support surface available. During that first meeting, on a print-out of the execution plans and in between two window details, the contractor drew a simple sketch of how the bricks should be cut to give a wide enough support for the slabs, while hiding their cross section in the foyer, of which the walls supported the slabs.

Abacus configuration by Dom Hans van der Laan (1969). [6]



minimum dikte
+ opstort variabel



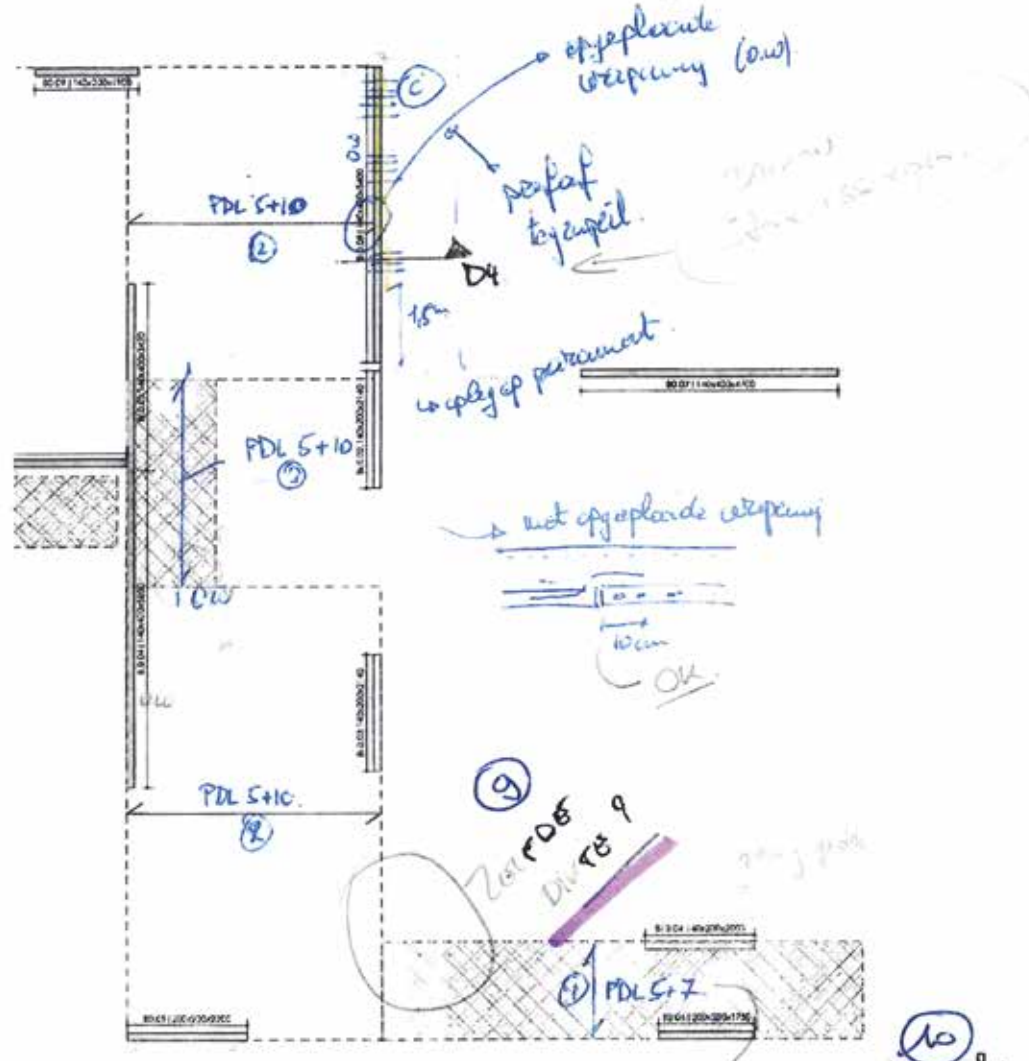
wapening in predal:
① 335/335/335
② 1200/750/710

Ⓐ Vsd = 29 kN/lm (meerw + opstort)
Ⓑ Vsd = 15kN/lm (meerw).

LOPENDE IN PREDAL
HOOG GLV

⑦

1Soter Ⓒ Vsd = 10 kN/m/lm V&T.
Vsd = 36 kN/lm.



niet opgeplooide wapening
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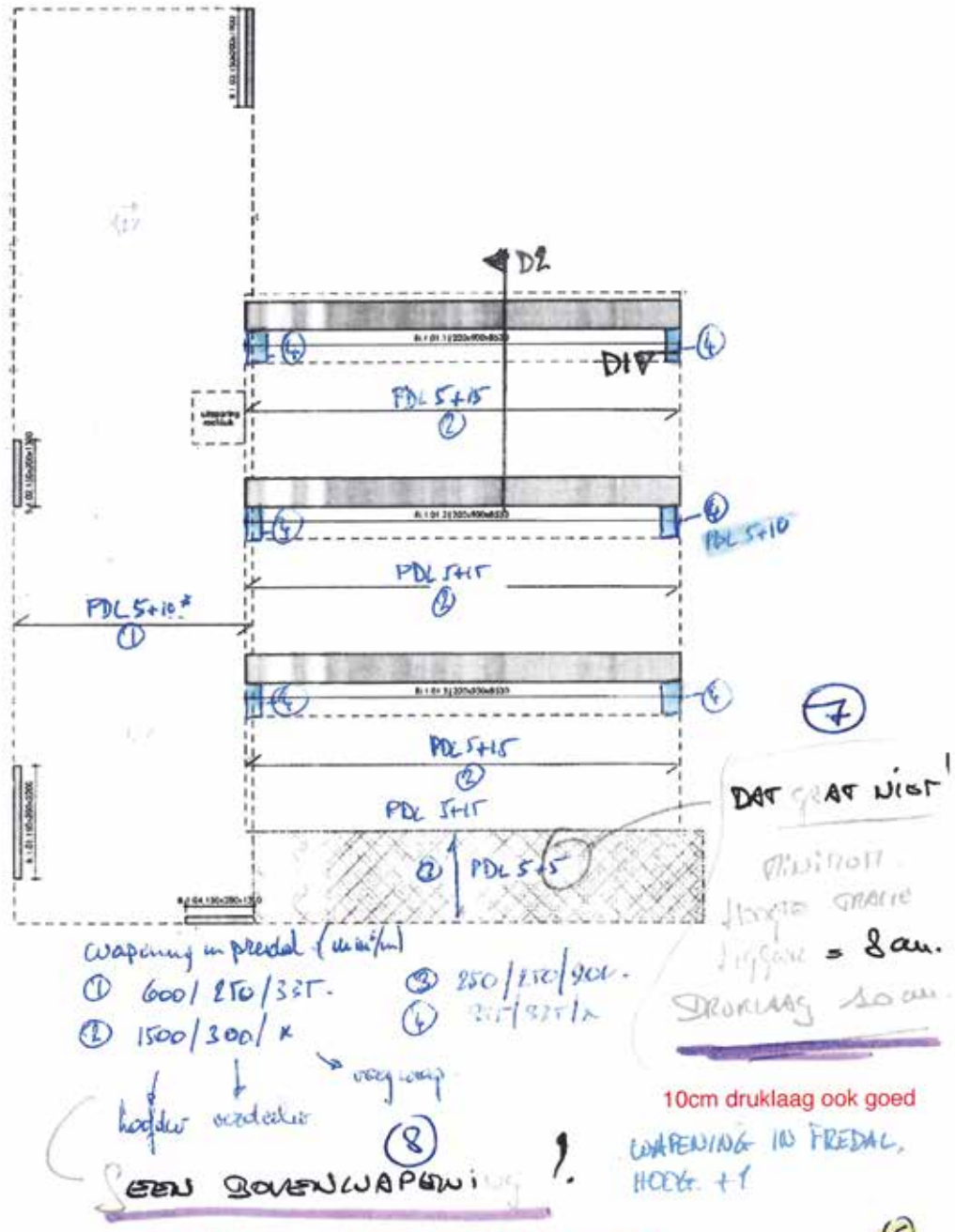
OK

① 250/250/200
② 525/525/525
③ 400/335/325

⑥


D2
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PDL 5+15
DAT GAAT NIET!
Wapening in predal (min/m)
① 600/250/33T.
② 1500/300/x
③ 250/250/90T.
④ 33T/33T/x
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EEN BOVENWAPENING!
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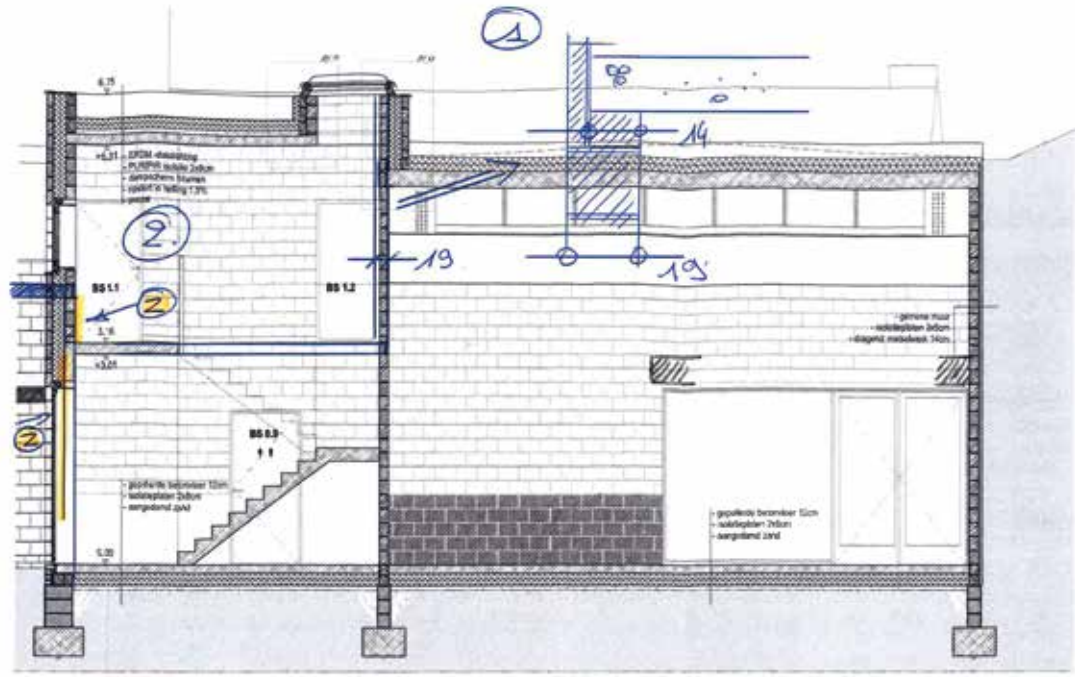
10cm druklaag ook goed
er is wel bovenwapening voorzien zie andere pdf



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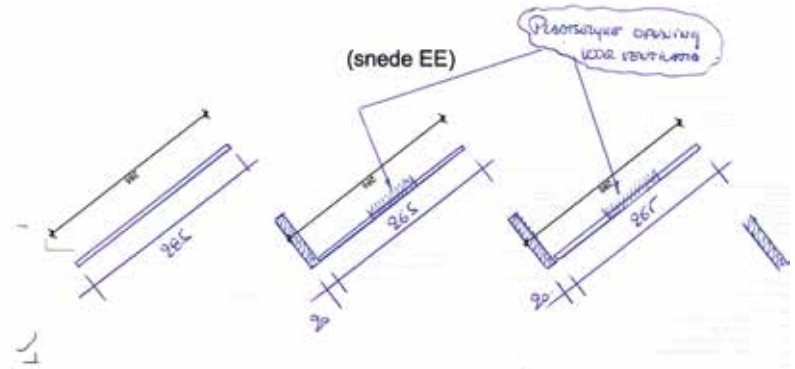
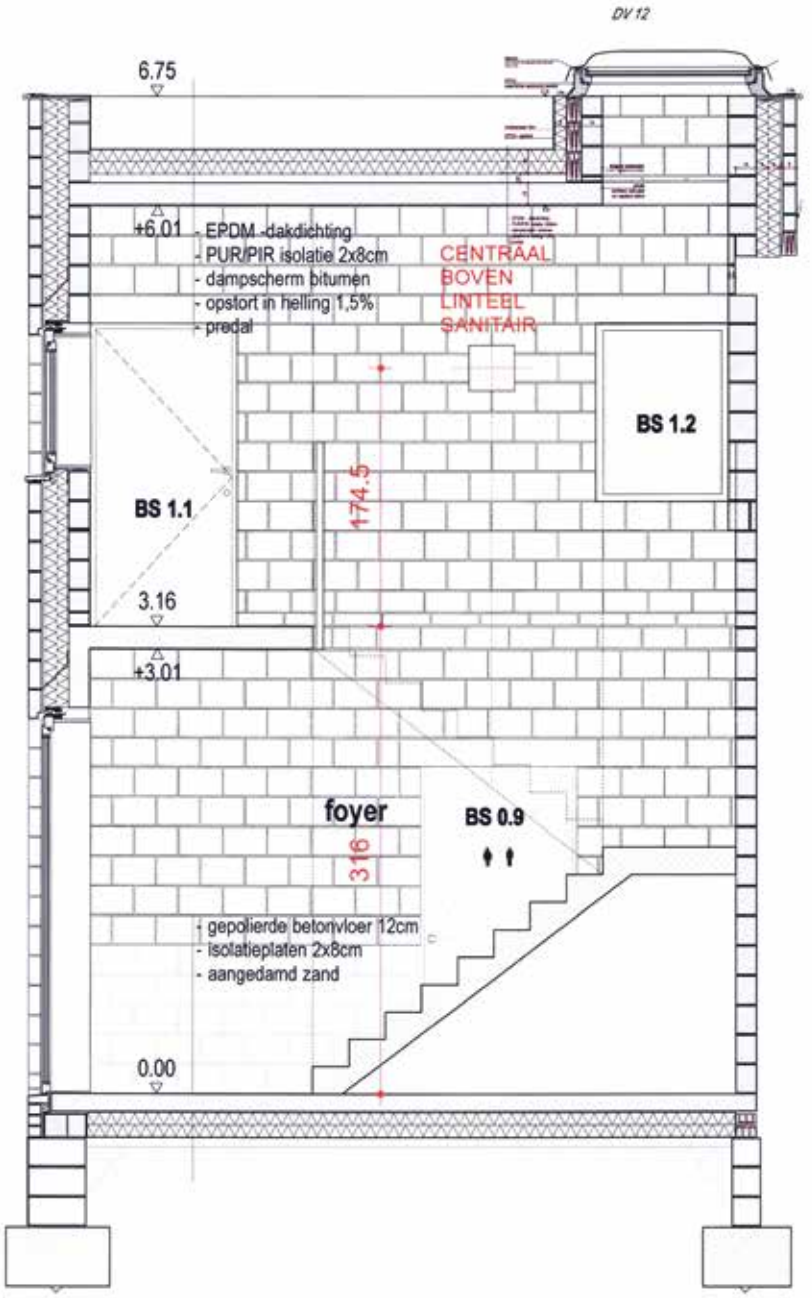
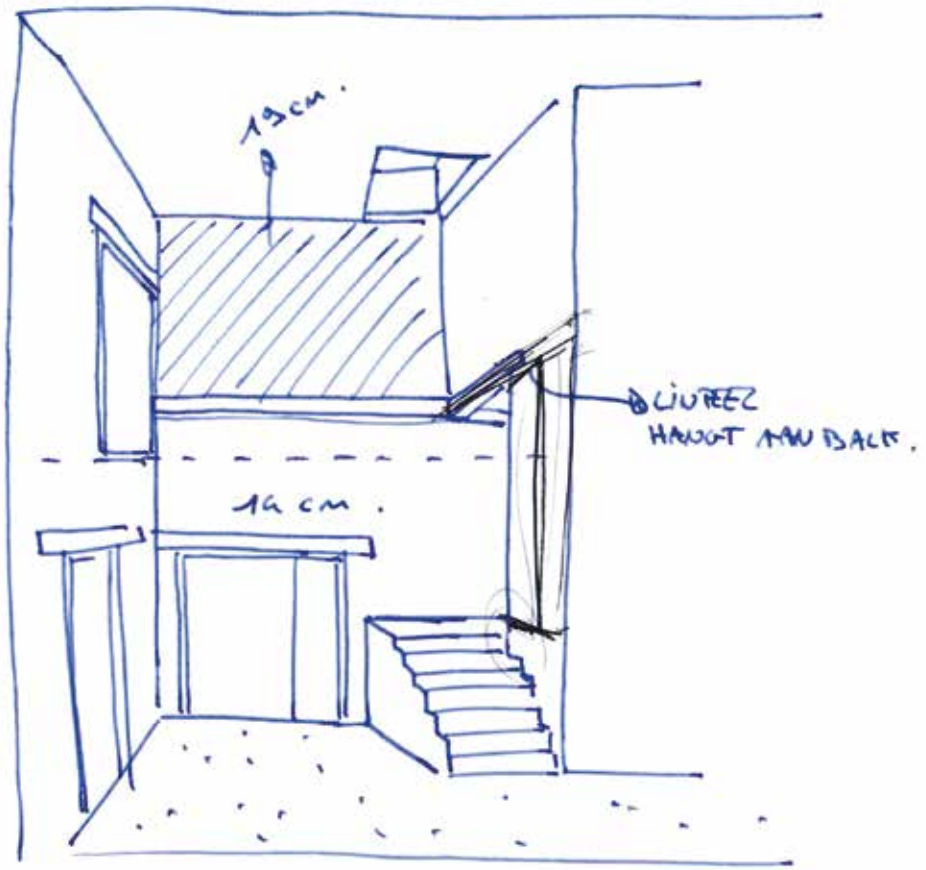




titel principesnede foyer		project JOC Lichtervelde		architect RAAMWERK
nummer plan I/2	datum 26/03/2018	formaat A3	schaal 1/25	opdrachtgever Gemeente Lichtervelde

This minor detail functioned as a domino block that gradually changed the constructional logic and appearance of the foyer:
the thicker bricks needed an additional concrete beam to rest on, which became a prominent element in the wall construction.



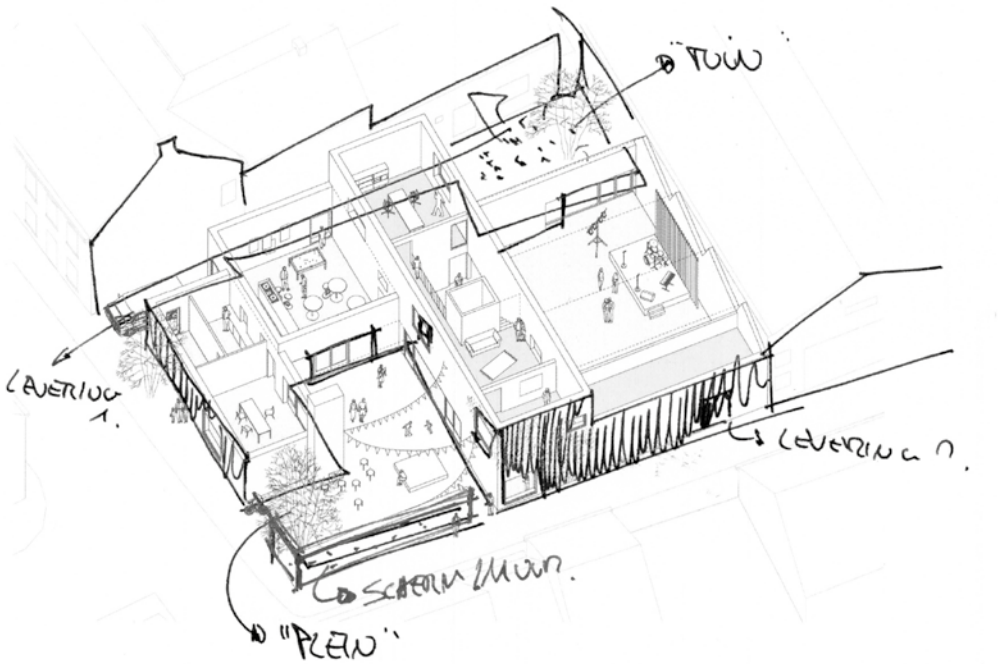
This beam offered a solution for the red steel door mid-way up the staircase, acting as a barrier to the administrative spaces above, on which the client insisted and which could now be hung on a lintel that extended from the concrete beam.

Finally, the visual presence of this concrete T-beam seemed to invite a different alignment of the interior windows in the foyer, through which we could balance out the entire constructional ensemble.

Already in the competition design, we had envisioned the foyer as the mediating space between the large, rectangular boxes of the event hall on the one side, and the youth club on the other. While these different programmatic elements had to be able to operate autonomously, we aimed to create an atmosphere of homeliness, both in scale and in spatiality, where both entities would inevitably interact with each other. Even though the shed roof of the event hall suggests its more public nature, the constrained scale of the space nonetheless feels more akin to a large living room, while the foyer allows for a visual connection to the other parts of the building and houses the shared functional spaces. Now, through these constructional changes, the foyer also becomes the expression of a dialogue between ourselves, the contractor and the client, in which the space absorbed the required constructional changes to account for the wishes and concerns of all parties.

The Wall

The wall incident is as anecdotal as it is significant. Anecdotal, since what happened is what happens on every other construction site ten times over. There was a discussion between architect, contractor and client, in which not all motives were perhaps clear, but where a discussion of who was responsible for what prompted us as architects to act fast to make a final decision. Yet significant, since the incident gave rise to perhaps the most defining feature of the building, which was not included in the competition design: the rounded corner wall. And it is perhaps all the more significant, since the rounded corner wall was not included in the design due to budget constraints; but in the process itself, such unexpected discussions, on the construction site itself and far from data sheets and cost calculations, suddenly transcend mere economic concerns and more become possible.



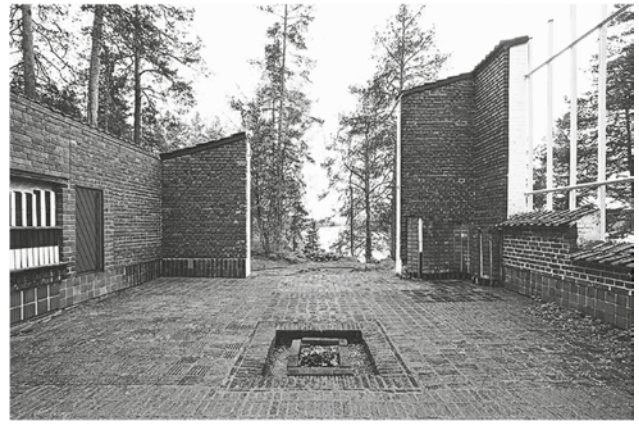
On the side of the crossroads, we designed a free-standing square brick wall to run around the corner in order to separate the youth centre courtyard from the public space of the street. At both ends of the wall, a gate provides access to the courtyard, which organises the different entrances to the foyer and event hall on one side, and to the youth club on the other. Yet, while the wall might at first seem to be an anti-social gesture, which blocks any social connection between life inside the building and that on the street, we felt that the wall was necessary as the constitutive gesture of the site.

Building a youth centre, with an event hall for concerts and parties, in the middle of a residential neighbourhood, might have prompted concerns from the neighbours. Instead, the wall ensures a certain limit to the potential noise and night-life, while also shielding the youth inside the building from too much surveillance—especially with the police station across the street.

Fredensborg Houses by Jørn Utzon in North Zealand, Denmark (1963). [7]

In addition, the wall transformed the courtyard into a veritable outdoor room, as an addition to the functional spaces that were requested in the programme brief. In the competition proposal, we had designed this outdoor room to have an explicit 'domestic' character, with a chimney and fireplace as its archetypical expression, and a concrete canopy to soften the division between inside and outside; for this we used the references of Jørn Utzon's Fredensborg Houses and the courtyard of Alvar Aalto's Experimental House in Muuratsalo to refine the scale and dimensions of what it means to create such a walled off, outdoor space.

Experimental House by Alvar Aalto in Muuratsalo, Finland (1953).[8]

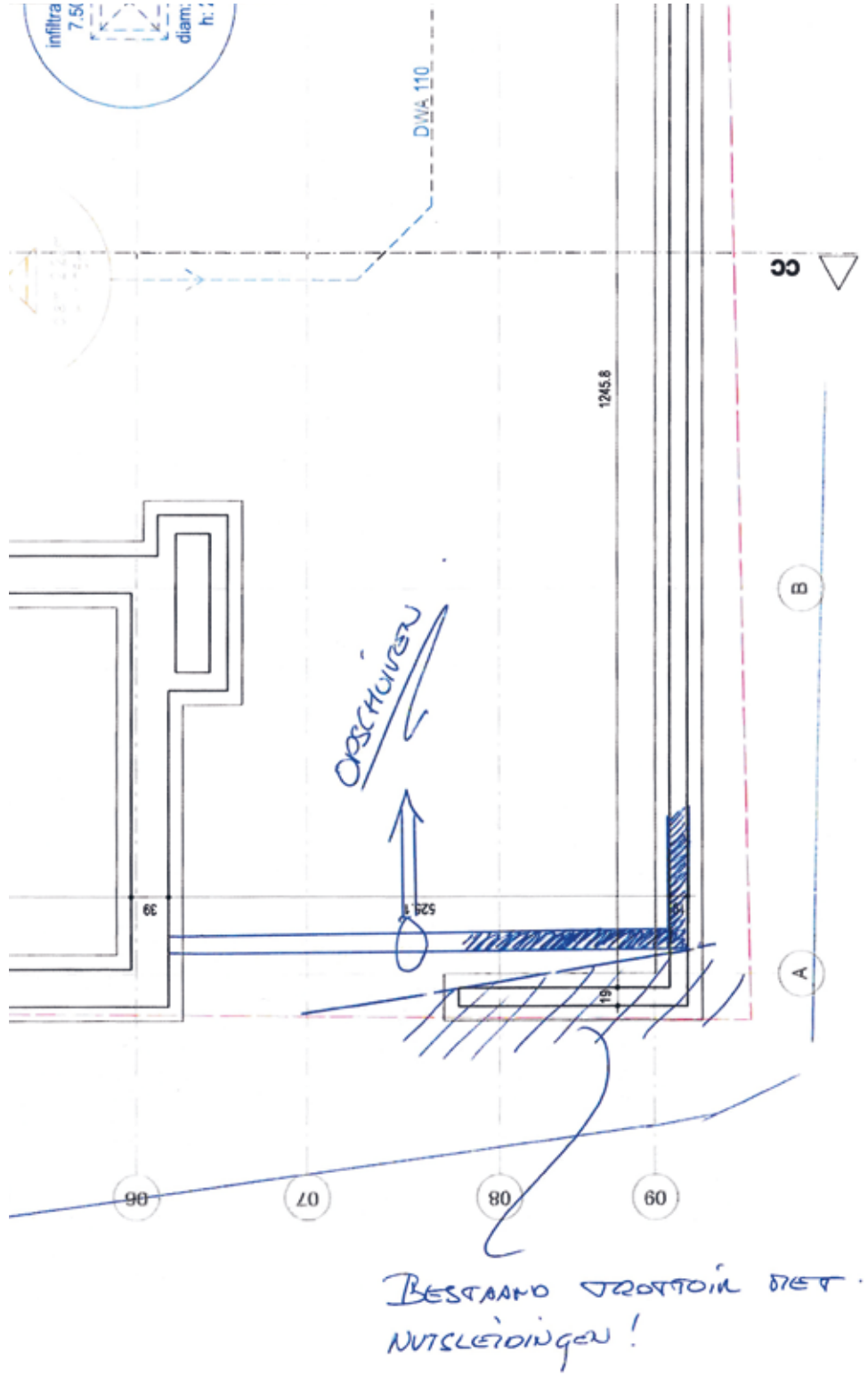


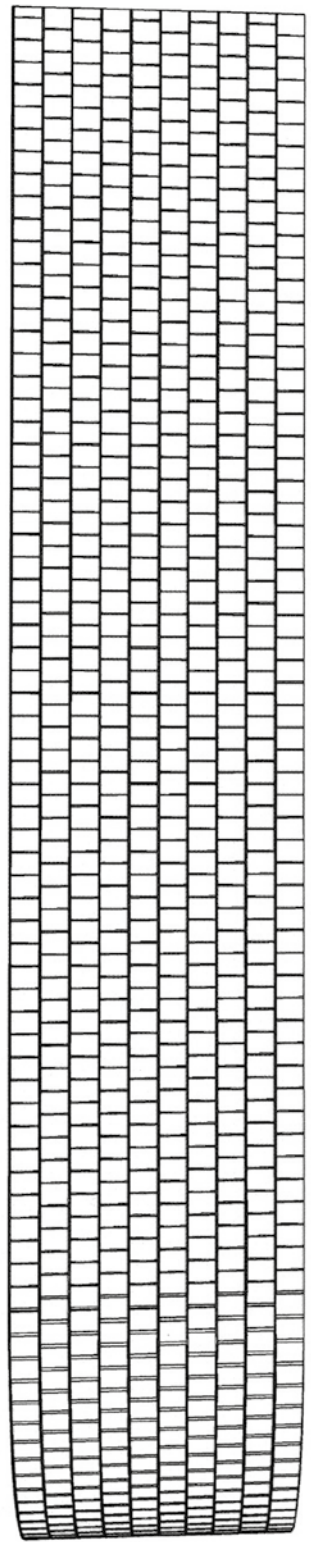
Atelier House by Raamwerk in collaboration with Peter Van Gelder in Mariakerke, Belgium (2015).[9]

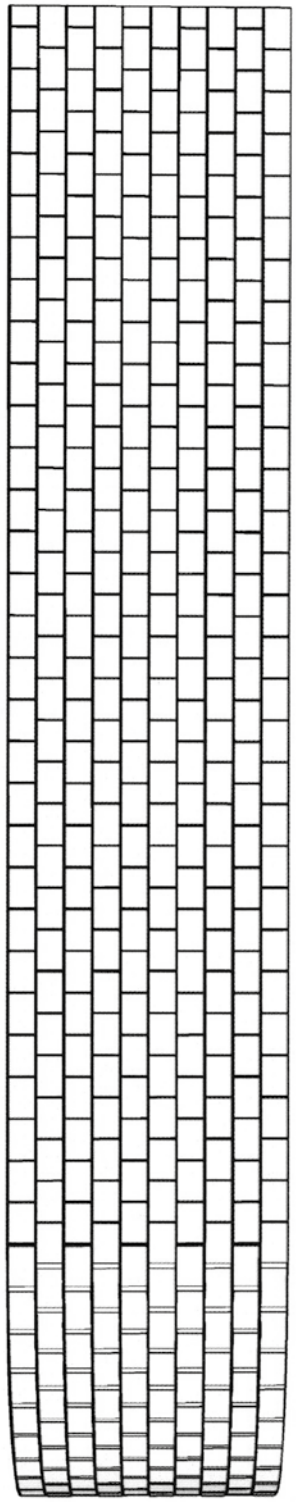
Yet, while architects have always worked with references, both explicitly as citations and implicitly as inspiration, it is often one's own work that becomes the most defining reference. The competition for the youth centre overlapped with the construction of our Atelier House in Mariakerke.

To achieve the combined programme of both a house and a sculptor's studio, we proposed two separate spaces on either side of the plot which, in combination with a surrounding garden wall, produced an additional outdoor room in between to connect both programmatic activities. The photos of Utzon's and Aalto's aforementioned projects, along with the schematic diagrams of how to relate two separate volumes through an intermediary 'unbuilt' space, were still up on the wall or lying around on our office desks when we also received the competition brief for the youth centre, which needed an event hall on the one hand and a youth club on the other. While the Atelier House had a certain generosity of materials, the youth centre became a much more restrained version of the same principle, except for that corner.

While the wall was being constructed as one of the last brick elements on site, we received an e-mail from the contractor one day, saying that the corner wall had been planned right on top of an underground utility flow. The wall had to be moved back, the e-mail said, by decision of the town council. The e-mail contained a drawing in the attachment, showing how one of the sides would be pushed back a meter, not even as a proposal, but as an announcement. The fact that the town council was preparing for the upcoming elections and the corner wall might presumably raise concerns about the visibility of the crossroads and the mobility of wheelchairs on the narrowed pavement could have been related, but instead of questioning the underlying motives or objecting that the site plans clearly showed the utilities to be further down the road, we took this change of plans as an opportunity to propose a further alteration.



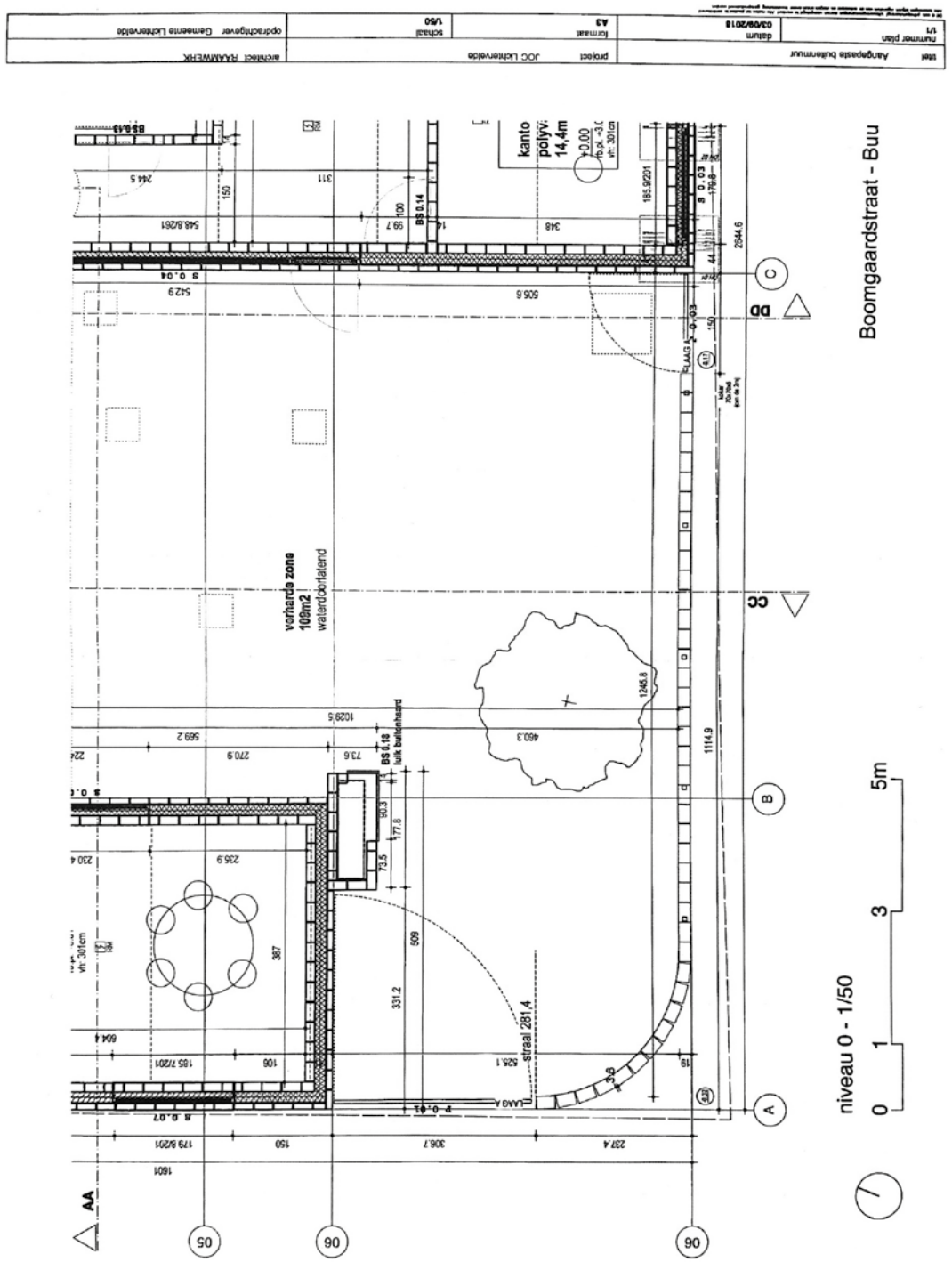


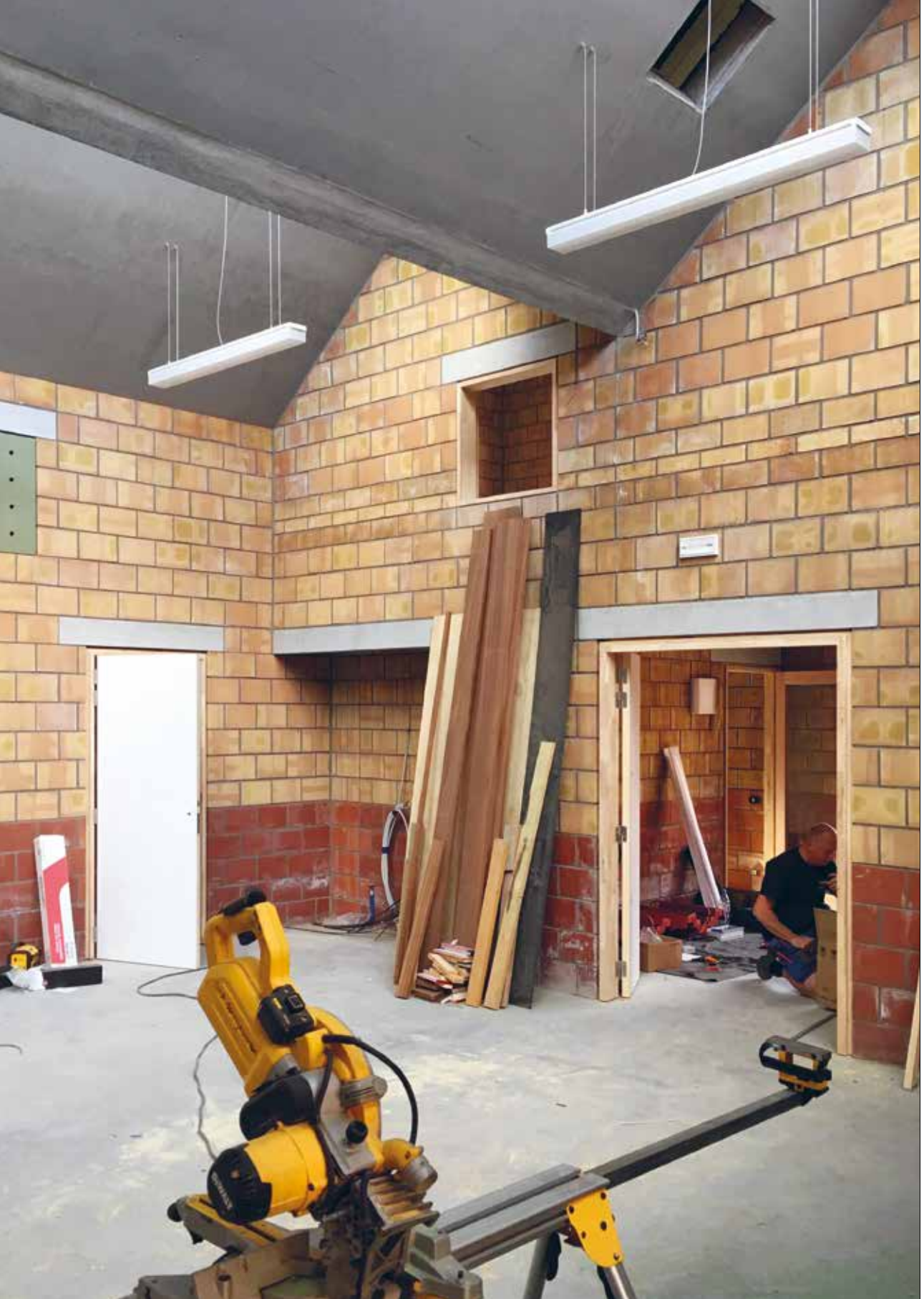


As well as Utzon and Aalto, the Sonsbeek Pavilion by Aldo Van Eyck was an additional, implicit reference for the construction of the walls in over-sized bricks. The curves of the pavilion never made it into the design for the youth centre, since we already knew during the competition phase that the budget did not allow for such formal experiments. Yet, with the concerns about utilities, visibility and mobility raised by the town council, we suddenly saw an opening to propose at least one rounded corner, which would mitigate all three.

Sonsbeek Pavilion by Aldo Van Eyck in Arnhem, the Netherlands (1966). [10]

Since the construction site was advancing rapidly to deliver the building in time for the elections, which were explicitly emphasised in the schedule as the final deadline, there was not much room for debate or calculation. We proposed the rounded curve of the wall in a reply e-mail, and this was finally accepted and executed the very same day. Additionally, and rather unexpectedly, the rounded wall seemed to echo a similar rounded corner wall in the former youth house on the other corner, a reminder of where the project originated.





Doors and Windows

A simple mistake sometimes has far-reaching consequences. And a simple mistake sometimes results in unexpected refinement. Once the structure of the youth centre was finished, the contractor for the doors and windows came to measure the openings for the woodwork. At the time, no one suspected a thing, but afterwards, through speculation based on the mistakes that had been made, it appeared to us that the tolerance of the laser-based distance meter was not set to include the thickness of the instrument itself. When the doors and windows were delivered to the construction site, the wooden frames appeared to fall a consistent 4 cm short of the actual openings.

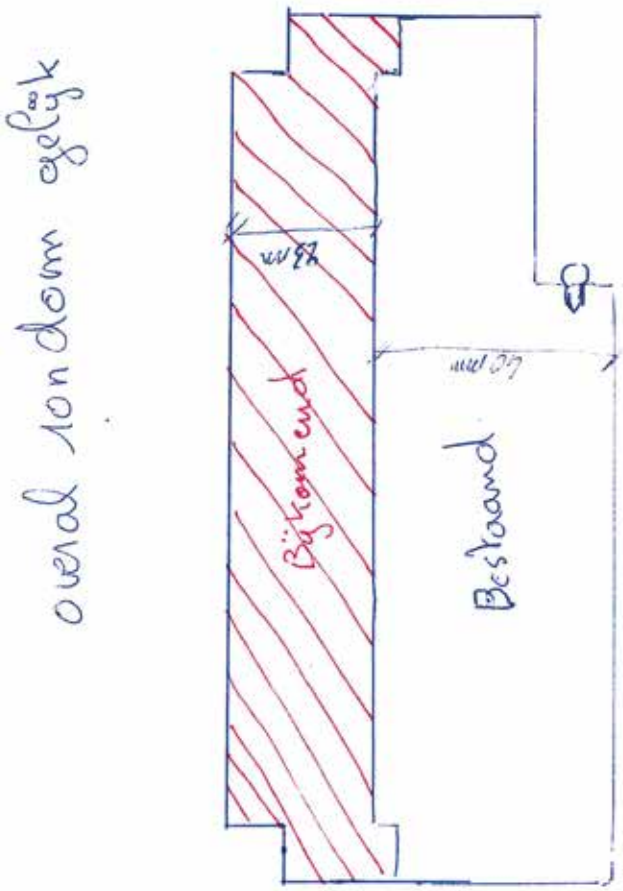
We designed the openings not only to allow enough daylight to enter the spaces, but also to provide sight lines throughout the different interior spaces. In the large event hall, for example, we placed a rather standard-sized window to provide a view from the ground floor into the office space on the upper floor, adding a sense of urban scale to the public interior.

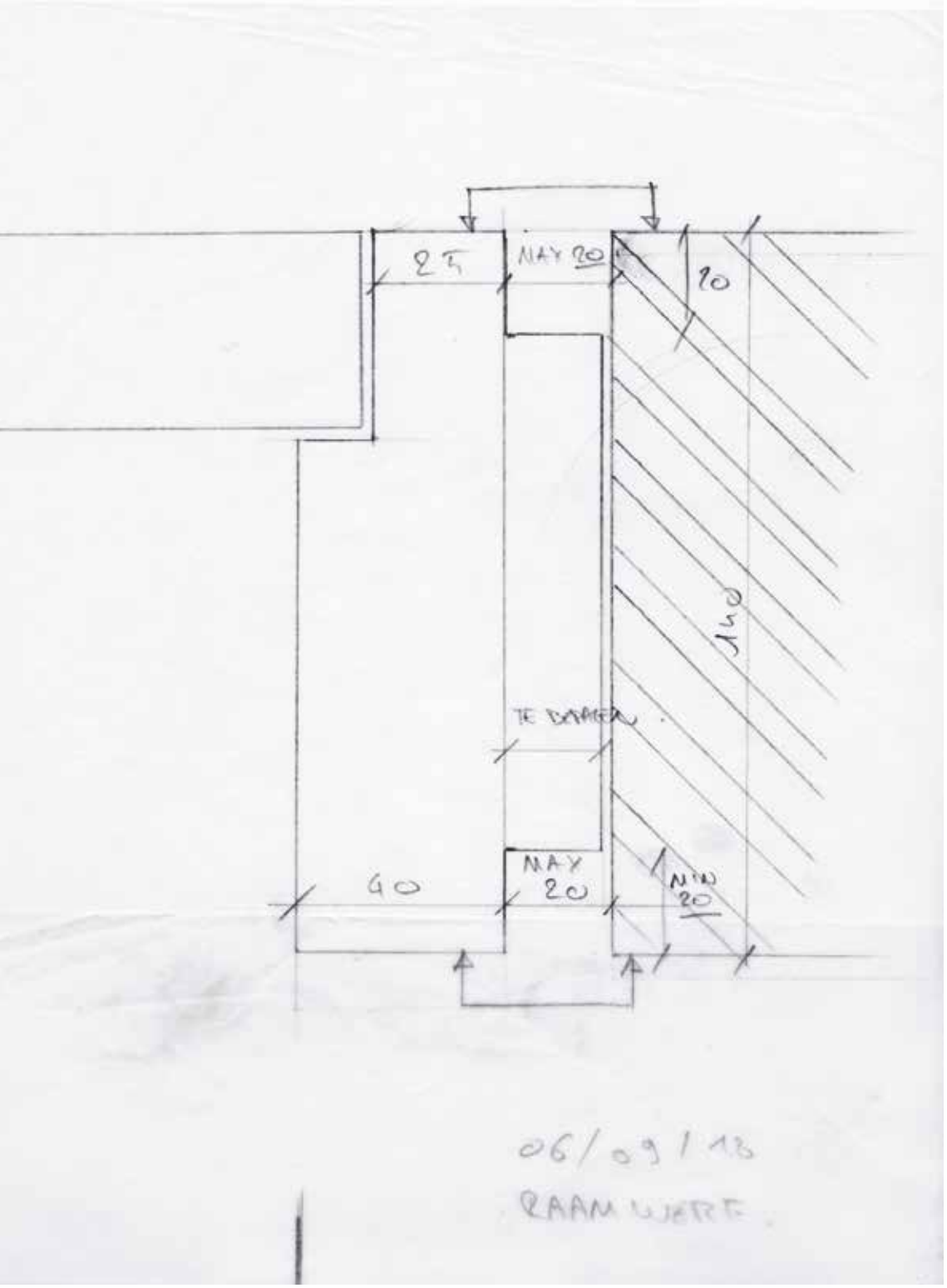
Yet, in a turn of events, the window opens into the office room at the top of the floor, revealing only a close-up of feet walking by, thus emphasising the smaller scale of the building as a whole. This play on different scales in one and the same room relates to our fascination with the work of Italian architect Luigi Caccia Dominioni. In his houses, Dominioni would include indoor windows and balconies to simulate exterior façades, adding a different scale to the usual domesticity of such interiors.

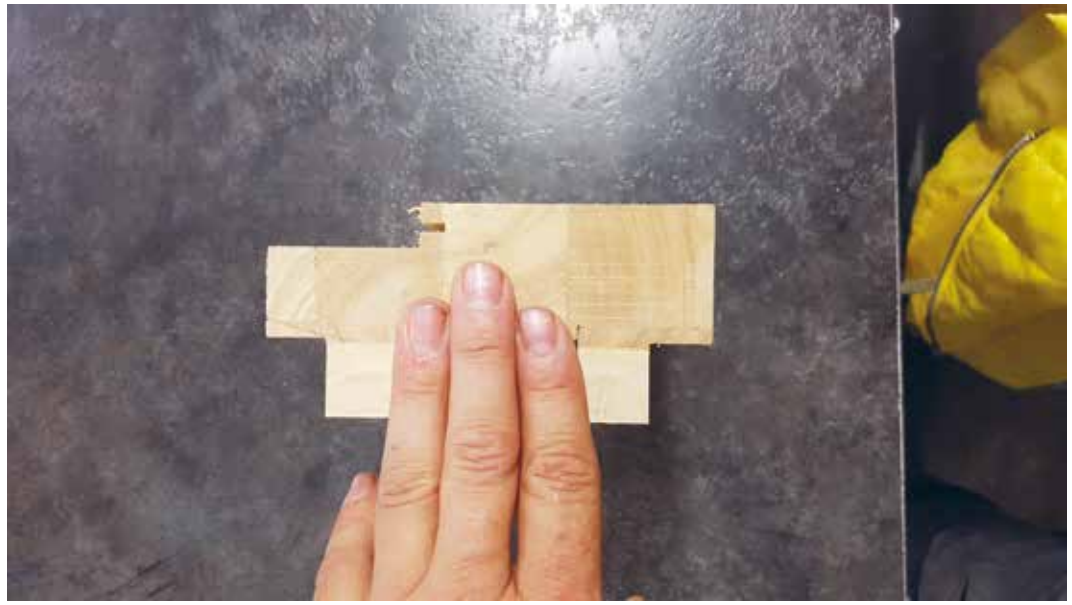
House on the Via Cappuccino by Caccia Dominioni in Milan, Italy (1962).[11]

In other examples throughout the building, we included windows to make connections between the staircase and the rehearsal room, bringing zenithal light in from above, or framing a specific view of the street and the village context. These windows, both interior and exterior, are precisely placed to charge the rudimentary construction with a sense of life and complexity, which is why their execution was so important.

Yet, instead of returning all the window and door elements, we asked the carpenter to come up with a solution to make the existing ones fit the opening anyway. The carpenter proposed adding an extra wooden frame between the aperture and the elements, which would make the frames look extra heavy.

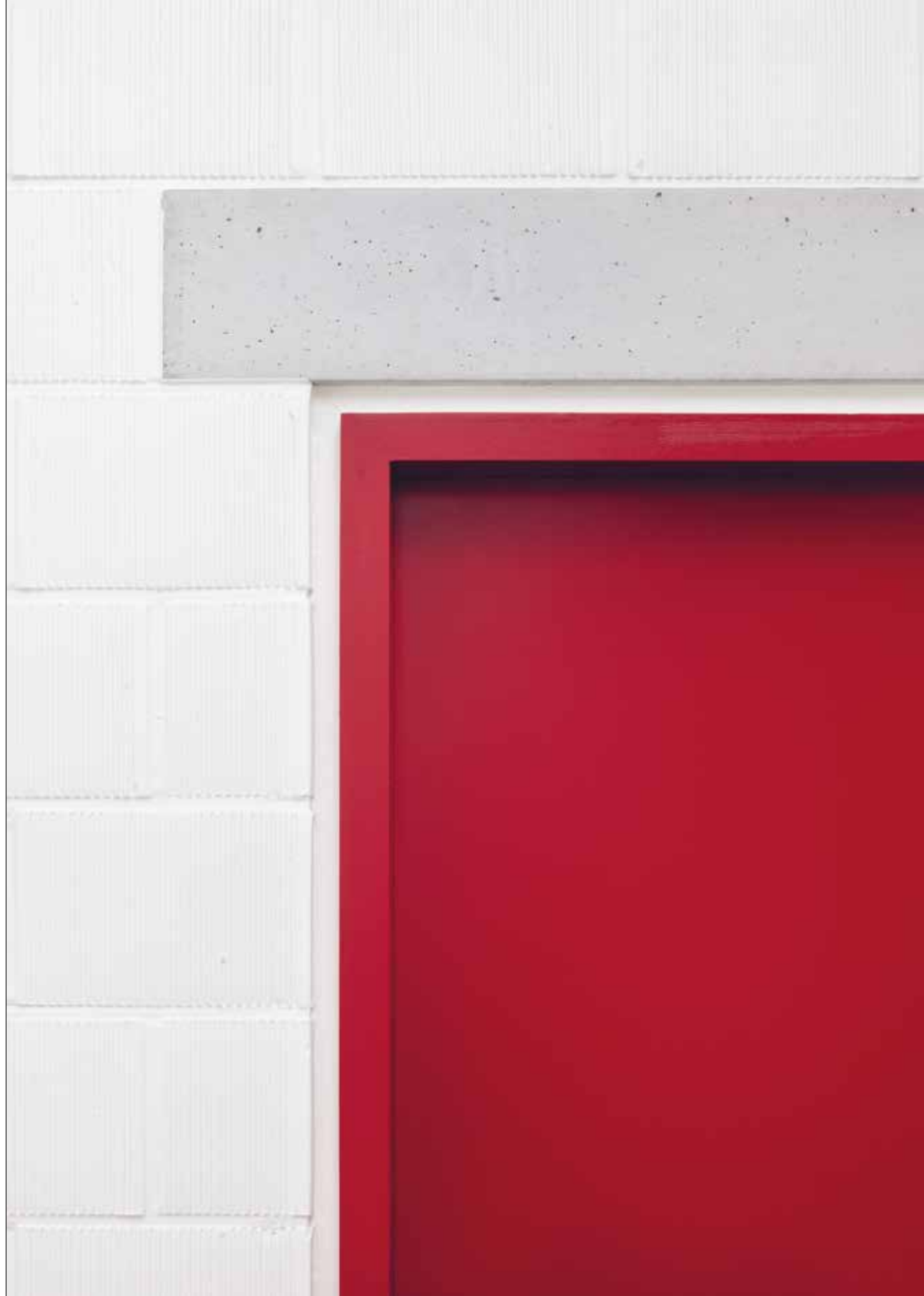






In response, we designed a simple, receding wooden frame, that would not expand the existing ones, but would instead add a fine line of shadow around the openings.

Mock-ups on the construction site confirmed that this intervention would not encumber but rather refine the frames, and thus the views, and this has become a detail that we are now carrying with us to other projects as well.



Anecdotal Evidence

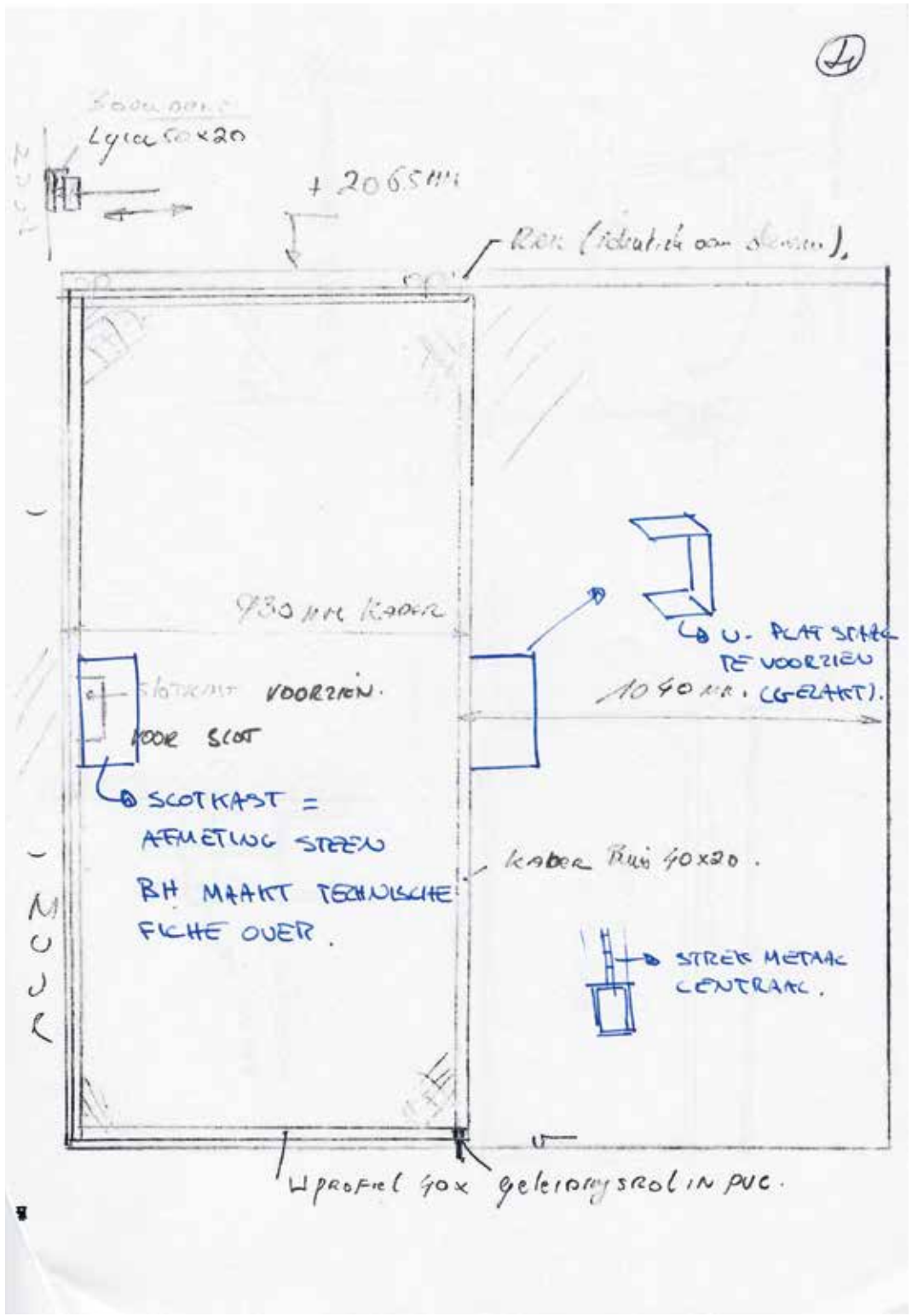
The above narrative of these four anecdotes about the construction site of the Lichtervelde youth centre might be what scientific research would call anecdotal evidence. But precisely because of their anecdotal quality, banality and obviousness, it is easy to imagine how such incidents, and others like it, occur on construction sites all over Belgium and are representative of how architecture actually gets made. They offer a perspective beyond the usual theoretical duality projected onto the industrial processes of architectural construction, with design and drawing on one hand, and construction and execution on the other. Even in the nineteenth century, faced with the advent of industrialisation, the Victorian writer John Ruskin critiqued such a rigid distinction, in which he saw the artisan—now contractor—become a mere operative who had to execute a set of preconceived, fixed instructions, alienating workers from their own labour.

As he wrote in the most famous chapter 'The Nature of Gothic' in his treatise on Gothic architecture *The Stones of Venice* in 1853:

"It is verily this degradation of the operative into a machine, which more than any other evil of the times, is leading the mass of nations everywhere into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for a freedom which they cannot explain the nature to themselves." [12]

While there is still a lot of truth in this today, since the construction industry has been increasingly organised around the division between the drawing, conceiving architect and the executing, obeying contractor, the above anecdotes nonetheless nuance such a rigid distinction. The construction of a building, even in industrialised societies, still relies on the labour of contractors, who make mistakes, propose alternatives, and might even go beyond what is expected of them.

In addition, the client might change their motives during the construction process, directing the contractor beyond the architect's design instructions, changing the course of the building's creation. The architect may still be the one who conceives and the contractor the one who executes, yet during the construction process, what matters is the dialogue between them, which is a mutual conversation rather than a one-way street. A final step that exemplifies such a dialogue between architect and contractor was the addition of a number of finishings to this rudimentary construction. Perhaps especially in Flanders, it is often through the informal networks between architects, contractors and craftsmen that architecture is created.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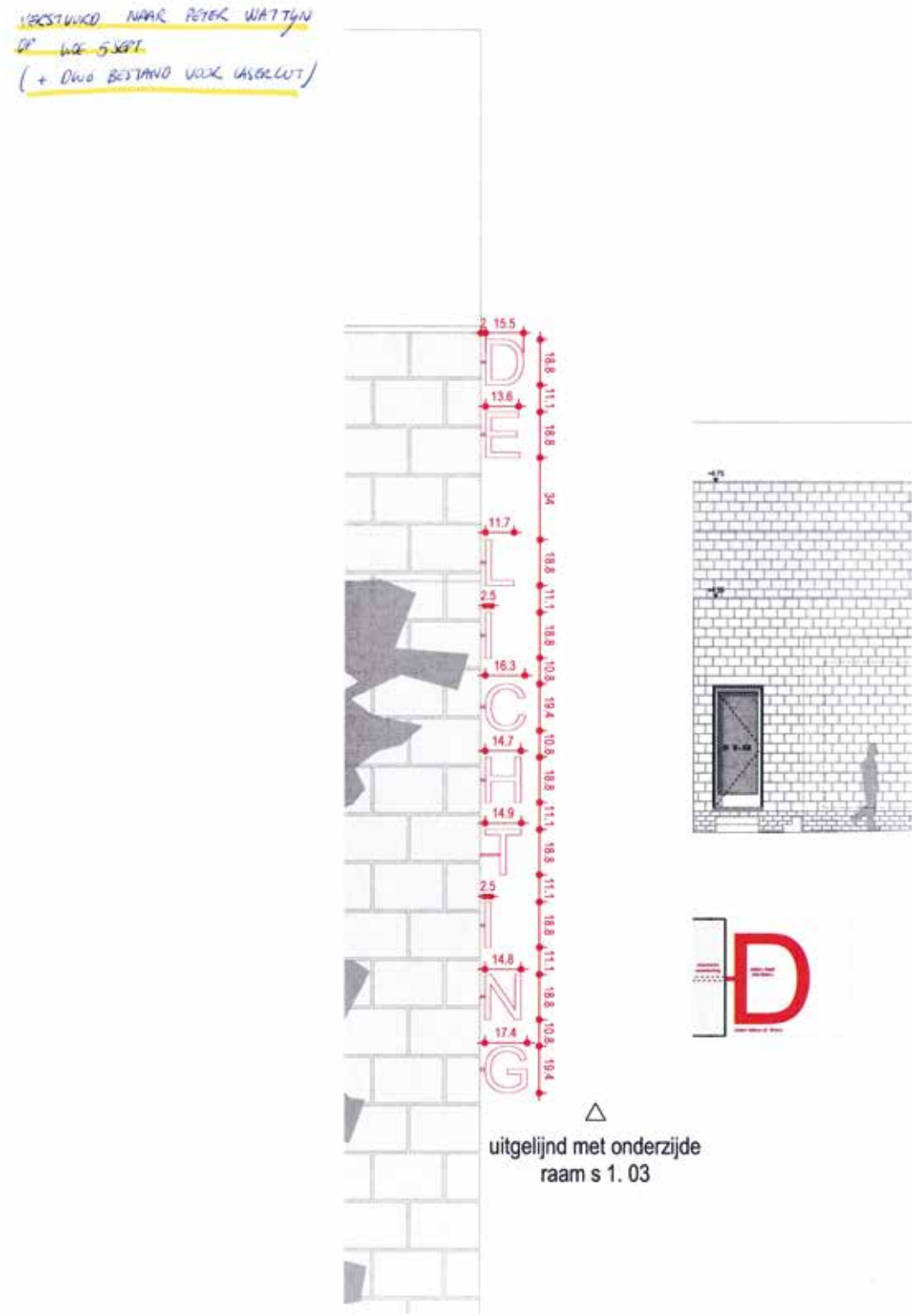
In this case, it was the contractor who brought us into contact with his brother-in-law, a metal-worker who, with much enthusiasm, produced the metal fences, railings and lettering on the façade. While such elements are crucial to the functioning of a building, in this case, we designed them as additional elements, as a secondary layer that barely interferes with the brick-and-concrete construction of the building itself, and which thus might be the first elements to be removed again at a later stage to make room for other uses.



In addition to this openness to future changes, the landscape design is intended to slowly but surely overgrow the mineral materials of the building, with grasses and herbs planted in between the increasingly broadening seams of the concrete tiles and vines climbing up the red bricks of the outer walls.

While we designed the building as a basic ensemble of volumes, made tangible in a single type of brick, both the construction process and the subsequent appropriation open up to unexpected changes, which are embraced as the processes of life settling in between its walls. In these anecdotes, we have tried to give a sense of the banal and often messy reality of its construction, staying as close as possible to the reality of its incidents. Yet, to really grasp the building's life today, one would simply have to visit the village, arrive along one of those three country roads that meet in the centre, turn right at the church, and walk down that small street where, at the end, you will see the rounded corner wall slowly come into view.

Gijs De Cock, Freek Dendooven, Bart Decroos

Notes

1 This text is the result of a collaboration between the architects Gijs De Cock and Freek Dendooven of Raamwerk and the academic researcher Bart Decroos. As such, the text has a hybrid authorship, oscillating between the embedded position of the architects and the outsider position of the researcher, which blur and overlap with each other.

2 In recent years, much attention in architecture has been paid to the notion of incident, contingency, or event. These words (and their increased meaning in architectural discourse) might seem to signify a tendency to question the authorship of the 'starchitect' that arose in the late twentieth century in favour of a distributed agency across collaborators and things within processes of design. In this text, however, we focus on the 'anecdotes' that occur during the construction process, which sometimes acquire an 'incidental' character that surpasses the intentions of the architect, but often amount to nothing more than the mere observation of the construction site. In doing so, this text more specifically aims to question the division between the design process on the one hand and the construction process on the other, suggesting that, in practice, there might not be a strict boundary between both. See for example Matteo Ghidoni (ed.), *San Rocco* 'Mistakes', p. 3, 2011.

3 For a more thorough investigation of the modern division between drawing and building and its effects on the construction industry, see for example Tim Ingold, 'On building a house', in: Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2013) pp. 47-59.

4 The Uma longhouses are vernacular houses found on the Siberut island in Indonesia. They are rectangular, wooden constructions on piles, usually without windows, and consist of a sequence of different, interconnected family units. See Barry Dawson and John Gillow, *The Traditional Architecture of Indonesia* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994) pp. 32-33.

5 In their essay 'Give Me A Gun and I Will Make All Buildings Move', anthropologist Albena Yaneva and sociologist Bruno Latour argue that the design work extends far beyond the drawing table of the architect and instead includes the "engineering blueprints", "the many pieces of paper used by the workers on site (glued to the walls, folded into attaché cases, smeared with coffee and paint)", and all of the "new types of diagrams, new flow charts, new series of boards and labels" needed for the maintenance and repair of a building. See Albena Yaneva and Bruno Latour, 'Give Me A Gun and I Will Make All Buildings Move: An ANT's View

of Architecture' in: Reto Geiser (ed.), *Explorations in Architecture: Teaching, Design, Research* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2008) pp. 80-89.

6 A possible configuration with the abacus (1969) by Dom Hans van der Laan embodying the proportions of the 'plastic number': "Dom Hans van der Laan combined the study of the Plastic Number with the abacus, first presented on 25 April 1952. It was used to test different design options and proportions through symmetrical relations, but also train one's discernment and ability to design through sketching and making things with precision." See Caroline Voet, *Dom Hans van der Laan: A House for the Mind* (Antwerp: *Vlaams Architectuurinstituut*, 2017) p. 211.

7 The Fredensborg Houses by Jørn Utzon in North Zealand, Denmark (1963): "Both of these single-story residential communities were based on an atrium typology comprising an L-shaped dwelling in plan, set within a square court and enclosed on all sides by brick walls. … In both settlements each house, attached to its neighbor, is accessed in two ways; first from the relatively blank, brick-faced exteriors fronting onto streets feeding into the fabric and second from an interstitial greensward permeating the settlement, exclusively restricted to pedestrian use." See Kenneth Frampton, 'The Architecture of Jørn Utzon' in: *The Pritzker Architecture Prize 2003 Jørn Utzon* (The Hyatt Foundation, 2003) p. 32.

8 The Experimental House by Alvar Aalto in Muuratsalo, Finland (1953): "The courtyard, functioning like an outdoor hall, is the heart of the house. It is monumental and, at the same time, intimate, with an open fireplace at its center that draws guests and residents together on summer evenings. Famous for its brick collages on the façades and floor, the yard served as a testing ground for the durability of various ceramic materials and their appearance." See Jari Jetsonen and Sirkkaliisa Jetsonen, *Alvar Aalto Houses* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2011) p. 142.

9 Atelier House by Raamwerk in collaboration with Peter Van Gelder in Mariakerke, Belgium (2015). The design consists of a house and an atelier, which have been designed as separate volumes around a central courtyard.

10 The Sonsbeek Pavilion by Aldo Van Eyck was a temporary pavilion in the Sonsbeek Park in Arnhem, The Netherlands, for the exhibition of nearly thirty sculptures during the summer of 1966. After a few months, the pavilion was demolished and later rebuilt in 2006 in the garden of the Kröller-Müller museum in Hoenderloo, The Netherlands: "… the Sculpture pavilion in Arnhem (1966), again a building as a little city, but this time constituted from a fusion of straight and curved walls, convex and concave forms which

produce narrow and large spaces, parallel and diagonal directions." See Francis Strauven, 'Aldo van Eyck: Shaping the New Reality', Mellon lecture at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, 24 May 2007.

11 House on the Via Cappuccino by Caccia Dominioni in Milan, Italy (1962): "In English, the word 'urbanity' is synonymous with 'good manners': the city is the place, where one constantly exchanges one's experience with others and, therefore, continuously acknowledges their existence and values. I consider Gigi Caccia's architecture very 'urban', even in its interiors, which show a highly civic character without any hint of affectation. Civilization could be defined as a set of values that are implicit rather than explicit, and that are implied in its forms rather that stated outright." See Cino Zucchi, 'A Balcony Under a Vault: Growing Up in a Gigi Caccia Work' in: *Werk: Bauen+Wohnen*, p. 12, 2013.

12 John Ruskin, 'The Stones of Venice, II (1853). The Nature of Gothic', in: Dinah Birch (ed.), *John Ruskin. Selected Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 47.

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Evidence

Caractère de ce qui est évident ; notion si parfaite d'une vérité qu'elle n'a pas besoin d'autre preuve.

Littré, E., *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, Paris, 1863. Translation by the author: "Character of what is evident; notion of a truth so perfect that it needs no further proof."

The authors of the text about Raamwerk's Lichtervelde Youth Centre use the term anecdote on two occasions. First, the title itself announces that it will be organised around four anecdotes: four moments, four events on the construction site that caused a modification or a precision in the architectural design. The term refers here to the unpredictability of the events nourishing a process, to its contingent nature. Second, the closing part of the text enounces the anecdotal nature of the narrative itself. Here, anecdote refers to the illustrated text itself, being the accurate relation of a series of events.

Traditionally, architecture is considered as an observable and interpretable field with inherent rules, genealogies and ruptures. This can be traced back to the appearance of art history as a discipline in the 18th century around the work of Winkelmann[1]. It is a field of artefacts and persons, of influences and realisations.

It is useful to recall that in the postmodern cultural reality, it has become increasingly difficult to determine the relevance of artistic and architectural creations. All univocity vanished after the fragmentation that resulted from the avant-gardes[2], to the point that some have suggested that market value is a lasting and stable marker[3]. Since the second half of the 20th century, artistic and architectural productions have progressively dissolved until the point that individual identity has become the main source of coherence[4]. On another level, for more than a century now, the scope of the available materials and constructive solutions has wildly increased, widening the horizon of possibilities, while norms and regulations have increased exponentially, reframing the role of the architect[5].

In a way, architecture itself has become anecdotal. In the words of Koolhaas, it is "a chaotic adventure. Coherence imposed on an architect's work is either cosmetic or the result of self-censorship"[6]. Even if streams can be identified, it is not satisfying to reduce a contemporary architecture practice to a school or current. Even if local influences can be traced, architecture today is not predictable, it escapes causality and necessity. Architecture happens in response to a multitude of unspoken reasons, operated influences, uttered wishes, contingent constraints and implicit urges. The diversity and multiplicity of these facts fuel the architecture design activity driven by the intelligence of the architect. Attempts to talk about these practices are often stranded in caricatural

simplifications. How then can we make an account of architecture projects? How can we understand their coherences and engage that knowledge in new projects? We could make use of adapted lenses to observe architecture, and suitable forms to talk about it.

There is also an anecdotal character to the appreciation of a project. How is the relevance of a project assessed? This assessment is always situated on multiple levels. Architecture, should it be built, may need to be constructively coherent, economically and administratively feasible, functionally and ergonomically apt. Today, it also has to be accessible, flexible and robust. It is expected to blend into the context, to be ecologically and socially conscious. Sometimes, the cultural relevance, the beauty and the challenging character of a project are praised. The list is virtually endless. The markers of these qualities are variable, depending on each configuration, context and assignment. There are attempts to quantify and regulate several of them, while other aspects stubbornly escape quantification and are left to (inter)subjective appreciation[7]. When is a project a good project? We could make use of adapted filters to reveal architecture and understand its qualities.

In his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France in 1971, Michel Foucault suggested that we should "call into question our will to truth, restore to discourse its character as an event, and finally throw off the sovereignty of the signifier"[8]. The author's rigorous account of the events punctuating a specific process acknowledges honestly the anecdotal nature of architecture. It is a reaction to the unsatisfying results of interpretative accounts. It reveals the strategies adopted in the process with regard to specific situations.

In this way, the focus on the anecdotal nature of architecture in the text proposes a shift from interpretative knowledge towards transformative operationality. Beyond "What is it? What does it mean?", the question (also) becomes "What did they do? What does it allow?". Indeed, before becoming an observable reality, architecture consists of the making of proposals to transform reality. To architects, the world is an opportunity for action and change[9]. Next to the stability of knowledge about architecture (as a fact), a space can be opened up to discuss the operationality of the production of architecture (as a project).

It is useful to explore the conditions of the relevance of architecture in terms of operationality, rather than confront it with endless external parameters. When it is feasible to point out how things operate inside the development of an architecture project, it also becomes possible to maintain its qualities through a process which is by nature long and hazardous. Furthermore, when the architectural attitude is precisely about how to react to these

events, triggers and constraints, the process will only enrich and sharpen the project.

These four anecdotes have the value of a precedent, which can be invoked when considering other projects in the making. It does not aim to propose generalising principles or repeatable conclusions, even less absolute truths. It describes a consistent modality of operationality in a design process, it situates it and it shows how it produces a remarkable output.

Herein perhaps lies the strength of the four anecdotes in Raamwerk's Lichtervelde Youth Centre. It is a small building in an unnoticed village, definitely not a spectacular game changer. But it does change perceptions of how to make architecture, and in a way, it is universal. Because it speaks of a process in which unexpected small problems each time make the project better. Even small ones, like the tolerances on the production of ceramic blocks. Even when it is seemingly too late, like on the construction site, when everything is supposed to be already defined.

Harold Fallon

1 Winckelmann, J.-J., *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 1764

2 Riout, D., *Qu'est-ce que l'art moderne*, Gallimard, Paris, 2000

3 Cometti, J.-P., Quintane, N., *L'art et l'argent*, Editions Amsterdam, Paris, 2017

4 Fallon, H. *Metarbitrariness*, PhD thesis, RMIT University, 2012

5 Vandenbulcke, B., *Abstraction, concrétion, Lecture et production du projet d'architecture par immersion*, PhD thesis, UCLouvain, 2015

6 Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., *S,M,L,XL*, 010 Publishers, Rotterdam, 1995

7 Verbeke J., 'This is Research by Design', in: Weidinger, J., *Designing Knowledge*, Berlin, 2015

8 Foucault, M., 'The Order of Discourse', inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, 1971, translated in: *Untying the text: a post-structuralist reader*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Boston, 1981

9 Findeli, A., 'Le cœur théorique du design est-il vide' ?, CRAL, Paris, 2017

Transmettre

[L'obj. désigne une chose abstr.]
1. *Faire passer à quelqu'un une qualité, un caractère, des connaissances.*

https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/transmettre consulted on 08/05/2020. Translation by the author: "To pass on to someone a quality, a character, knowledge".

Contemporary architectural practices have become diverse and eclectic. In Belgium, we can see the emergence of a number of young architectural firms, such as Raamwerk, whose founders have just finished their studies without completing an initiatory phase with a Master during their first years of professional practice.[1] It has become difficult to identify a unity that oversees the discipline of architecture or a form of 'hereditary' continuity. The issue of its transmission is a challenge. This is particularly true as in Belgium, the teaching of architecture, which originally stemmed from a fine arts tradition, has recently been integrated into universities. This means that it is important to find a new way of passing on architectural practices.

As Bernard Huet proposes in his conference 'Sur un état de la théorie de l'architecture du XXe siècle'[2], we can observe the evolution of architecture theory, particularly the founding treaties which have marked its history and its teaching, to understand the divided landscape of our discipline.

Until the 18th century, the entire architectural debate was based around on the one hand, a definition of what architecture was, and on the other hand, a (re)definition of the Vitruvian categories: 'firmitas' (strength: materials and architecture), 'venustas' (beauty: how to create) and 'utilitas' (functionality: architectural objects – programme). These lines were clear and developed along with society around a common foundation based around universal laws (composition) and a common ideal (beauty): "Beauty is harmony, ruled by a given proportion, which rules between all the parties of the whole to which they belong, to which teacher, that nothing can be added, taken away or changed without making it less worthy of approval."[3]

An epidemiological rupture appeared in this equilibrium around the Vitruvian Triad, with the statement by Etienne-Louis Boullée that, "Vitruvius is mistaken, there are two parts to architecture, there is Art and Science, and Art alone, meaning Art and not the art of building, Art alone falls within architecture."[4] This rupture also occurred at the same time as the appearance of the first engineering colleges in France and the appearance of new materials such as steel and reinforced concrete, which would transform the role of architects, who until then had been omniscient and now saw their discipline gradually (de)limited and precised from the outside.

In his course entitled 'Précis des leçons d'architecture données à l'École Polytechnique'[5] in 1825, Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand anticipated the industrial era, proposing a system of composition that integrated simple and modular elements and questioned the role of ornamentation.

Eugène Viollet-le-Duc and Gottfried Semper were the first to truly distance themselves from the Vitruvian tradition[6], putting forward a theory that only had recourse to the "requirements of the art of building"[7] for one, and a theory in which spatiality was the core concern through the skin (*Bekleidungprinzip*—principle of dress[8]) for the other.

In 2002, in his article 'On en veut à la composition', Jacques Lucan states that, the term composition is no longer able to describe design processes that do not respond anymore to compositional logics and objectives that make the necessary correspondence of the parts in the unity of the whole the understanding key of architecture."[9] In his book, *Composition, Non-composition*[10], he looks at the architectures of the 19th and 20th centuries and offers a historical analysis of the many different approaches to architecture in the 20th century. He is no longer concerned with the ideal to be achieved, but questions the strategies that make it possible to produce architecture.

Today, the question of passing on architecture and its theories is a vital one for education and university research. While the very broad field of contemporary practices that we can observe no longer allows the identification of unity in the discipline, made possible by composition, it is still possible to understand what confers consistency and coherence on individual motivations through the project processes. Understanding the nature of this journey through the reality of the working documents also means understanding the relationships between the abstraction of an intention and the concrete nature of materiality. Observing such a design process and these shifts between the abstract and the concrete also involves challenging an epistemological dichotomy of architectural research based between culture and technique, between dissemination (*faire-savoir*) and know-how (*savoir-faire*)[11].

Currently, in architectural teaching, the question of how to 'do' is asked more often than that of the ideal to be achieved. How does a project emerge? What are its motivations? What project resources[12] are at work? What design tools are being used? What contingencies have affected the process? How is all this part of a consistent and shareable proposal? Because it is essential to have a basis for an architectural project and understanding the process is now one of the keys to this.

The design process of an architectural project is a complex, non-linear path. The 'post-operative' narration of the project therefore aims to bring together, reorganise and reveal, without preconditions, the acts and thoughts that really occur in the development of a project. It involves making the project processes intelligible and stating the operating methods involved in these processes in order to make them transmissible. There is no question here of developing and generalising decision-making procedures like the first generation of design thinking methodologies attempted to do in the 1960s[13].

This methodology for discovering project operations is aimed at the practitioner, the theorist and the teacher of the architecture project. Rather than seeking to extract from certain projects a single theory, whose aim would be to bring together different practices, 'post-operative' narration sets out to reveal, demonstrate and disclose, without preconditions, the actions and thoughts that really occur during the development of a project. Beyond the process, it demonstrates the relevance of coherent, remarkable projects. The possibility of transmission is increased after this process, which involves the recognition and enhancement of the diversity of approaches.

Benoît Vandenbulcke

1 Fallon, H. *Metarbitrariness*, PhD thesis, RMIT University, 2012

2 Huet, B., *Sur un état de la théorie de l'architecture du XXe siècle*, Quintette, Paris, 2003

3 Alberti, L.-B., *L'art d'édifier*, Sources du savoir, Seuil, Paris, 2004, pp. 278-279

4 Boullée, E.-L., *Architecture, essai sur l'art*, Jean-Marie Pérouse de Monclos, Paris, 1968, pp. 49-73

5 Durand, J.-N.-L., *Précis des leçons d'architecture données à l'école polytechnique*, J-N-L Durand, Paris, 1825

6 Huet, B., *Sur un état de la théorie de l'architecture du XXe siècle*, Quintette, Paris, 2003

7 Viollet-le-Duc, E., *Entretien sur l'architecture*, Pierre Mardaga, Bruxelles, 1980

8 Sempe,r G., *Du style et de l'architecture, Écrits, 1834-1869*, Parenthèse, Marseille, 2007

9 Lucan, J., *"On en veut à la composition"*, in : Matières n°5, Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes, Lausanne, 2002, p. 41

10 Lucan, J., *Composition, non-composition architecture et théories*, XIXème et XXème, Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes, Lausanne, 2010

11 Vandenbulcke, B., *Savoir-faire / faire savoir*, inaugural lesson, ULiège, Oct. 2017

12 Vandenbulcke, B., *Abstraction, concrétion, Lecture et production du projet d'architecture par immersion*, PhD thesis, UCLouvain, 2015, p. 528-529

13 Clayes, D., *Architecture & complexité : Un modèle systémique du processus de (co)conception qui vise l'architecture*, PhD thesis, UCLouvain, Sept. 2013, p. 108

Only by generating earthly accounts of buildings and design processes, tracing pluralities of concrete entities in the specific spaces and times of their co-existence, instead of referring to abstract theoretical frameworks outside architecture, will architectural theory become a relevant field for architects, for end users, for promoters, and for builders. That is, a new task for architectural theory is coming to the fore: (...) to tackle the admittedly daunting task of inventing a visual vocabulary that will finally do justice to the "thingly" nature of buildings, by contrast to their tired, old "objective" nature.

Latour, B., Yavena, A., 'Give Me a Gun and I Will Make All Buildings Move: An ANT's View of Architecture', in: Geiser, R. (ed.), *Explorations in Architecture: Teaching, Design, Research*, Birkhäuser, Basel, 2008, p. 89

In their account that the Raamwerk's project in Lichtervelde, the authors reveal the many different actors involved in the production process. Just like the architects, the local politicians or the metalworker, the brother-in-law of the general contractor, also play a specific role. Nevertheless, it is through the material that the project is narrated. In this account, the bricks, roofs and doors are far from being inert, docile receptors. Their complex, surprising nature and their active resistance require architects to take them into account, to set aside their preconceived expert knowledge to develop specific tools[1]. And it is this taking into account that gives the project its consistency, that seems to allow these 'moments of generosity' beyond all constraints.

But close acquaintance with the materials is not limited to the building site. More than anything else, it is the working documents that make it possible to trace the design process. While some testify to the interactions between the different stakeholders, these artefacts cannot be limited to the role of passive witnesses to a process that remains external to them. Sketches, collages, plans and models play an active role in the process. They surprise, stimulate the tactile imagination and open up alternatives. There is no doubt that they allow an understanding of the architecture to come to help it emerge. They are none other than producers, in the etymological sense of "that leads forth". As Albena Yavena suggests[2], the very notion of creativity, based on the invention or projection of original ideas onto matter, is challenged. The project decisions seem to find a place in the creation and transformation of these artefacts.

In Practice gives 'a voice' to these inanimate artefacts in order to explore the design process, to explain a possible material trajectory[3] of a project, to make it intelligible and extract operating methods that can be shared. This methodology echoes forensic sciences. Challenging the primacy of testimonies, during a judgment forensics call for sciences as diverse as medicine and architecture, anthropology and geology. As Eyal Weizman[4] maintains, while

forensic expertise is currently limited mainly to the legal sphere, its etymology (*forensis*) refers to the sphere of debates in the public forum in ancient Rome. Whether these debates were linked to judgments, political affairs or economic strategies, inanimate beings were invited along through the representational work of the speakers. Evidence can no longer be understood as a property of an object, but as a series of relations between people, objects and materials. The constitution of evidence and that of the forum appear to be intrinsically linked through a practice that can be described as aesthetic. Giving a voice to artefacts therefore involves challenging the means of representation of research and creating (aesthetic) tools that are specific to architectural practice.

Avoiding a priori external discursive practices, we are concerned here with revealing architecture in what Giorgio Agamben[5] describes as its "taking place", its whatever singularity. Whatever not within the usual meaning of 'it does not matter which', but according to its etymological origin *quodlibet*, which Agamben translates as "being such that it always matters". And, by avoiding the antinomy between the universal and the specific, returning this architecture to a common use[6].

Benoît Burquel

1 Lefebvre, P., *Tracer des reprises du pragmatisme en architecture (1990-2010). Penser l'engagement des architectes avec le réel.*, PhD thesis, ULB, 2016

2 Yavena, A., *The Making of a Building: A Pragmatist Approach to Architecture*, Peter Lang, Oxford, 2009

3 Vandenbulcke, B., *Abstraction, concrétion, Lecture et production du projet d'architecture par immersion*, PhD thesis, UCLouvain, 2015

4 Weizman, E., *Forensic Architecture, Notes from Fields and Forums*, dOCUMENTA (13), Hatje Cantz, Kassel, 2012

5 Agamben, G., *La comunità che viene*, Einaudi, Torino, 1990

6 Agamben, G., *Profanazioni*, Nottetempo, Roma, 2004

Biographies

Gijs De Cock and Freek Dendooven graduated as architects from Sint-Lucas Ghent in 2010. They founded Raamwerk in 2014 as a design collective working on a portfolio of diverse projects of various sizes. The purpose is to create empathic architecture that is characterised by critical, social, programmatic and economic research. Raamwerk wants to achieve a certain generosity within the architectural process, finally resulting in spaces that can be claimed by its users.

Bart Decroos is an architect, researcher and editor based in Antwerp. He is currently a PhD candidate (fellowship of the Research Foundation Flanders FWO) at the University of Antwerp. He is a member of the editorial board of *OASE Journal for Architecture* and writes for various architecture magazines.

Stijn Bollaert studied architecture and photography and received his Master in Visual Arts from Sint-Lukas Brussels in 2002. His work focuses on space and the built environment. He also collaborates with architects and architectural institutions. In his work, he looks for the moment in space and landscapes, while paying great attention to context.

Benoît Burquel graduated as a Civil Engineer Architect at ULiège in 2005 and obtained a Master in Human Settlements from the KU Leuven in 2007. Having carried out research at ULiège, he teaches at ULB since 2017. He co-founded Real Estate Architecture in 2015, exploring the reconversion potential of architecture by private developers from the 1960s and 1970s through summer schools, research, and publications. He is a partner at AgwA architects since 2017.

Prof. Dr. Harold Fallon graduated as a Civil Engineer Architect at UCLouvain in 2001. He co-founded AgwA architecture office in Brussels in 2003. He lectures and researches at the KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture since 2007. His PhD in architecture at the RMIT (AU) *Metarbitrariness?: AgwA, an architecture of practice* researches the design strategies rooted at the heart of the practice and the relationships with the literary practice of poet Francis Ponge as an inspirational force. Since 2018, he has been supervising and supporting practising architects engaging their practice in doctoral research. He co-founded the In Practice inter-university research group.

Prof. Dr. Benoît Vandenbulcke graduated as a Civil Engineer Architect at UCLouvain in 2001. He co-founded AgwA architecture office in Brussels in 2003. His PhD in architecture at the UCLouvain is entitled *Abstraction, concrétion : lecture et production du projet d'architecture par immersion*. Departing from researches in his practice at AgwA, his doctoral research uses the tools of a designing architect to engage with the work of Sanaa, Zumthor and Herzog & De Meuron. He is a professor at the Faculty of Architecture of ULiège since 2017. He co-founded the In Practice inter-university research group.

Orfée Grandhomme and Ismaël Bennani run a design office focusing on editorial design in the fields of arts and architecture, as well as artwork production for artists and institutions. From 2010 to 2020, they have operated as the Überknackig Bureau. In 2014, they co-founded Accattone, exploring minor practices in art and architecture through the specific means of the printed magazine.

Raamwerk In Practice, Lichtervelde Youth Centre

edited by Harold Fallon (KU Leuven), Benoît Vandenbulcke (ULiège) and Benoît Burquel (ULB)

texts by Bart Decroos, Freek Dendooven, Gijs De Cock, Harold Fallon, Benoît Vandenbulcke, Benoît Burquel

designed by Orfée Grandhomme
& Ismaël Bennani (Überknackig)
typeset in Crimson Text

translated in English by Onliner

double-blind peer reviewed:
www.architectureinpractice.eu

printed and bound by Graphius, Gent
on Munken Polar 240 g/m² and Polar Rough 120 g/m²
dust jacket on Etibulk 80 g/m²

Raamwerk would like to specifically thank Steven Bogaert and Joost Vanderhaeghe (Lichtervelde municipality), Frank Verhaege (Algemene Bouwonderneming Verhaege nv), Jon D'haenens and Helena Sileghem (Raamwerk), Els Staessens, Donald Desmet and Siemon Bosschem (Robuust ao), Donald Desmet (Robuust ao), and Arne Deruyter and Marjolein Eggermont (Atelier Arne Deruyter) for their close collaboration at various moments during the process of realising the youth centre.

published by MER. B&L

ISBN: 978-9-4639-3342-1
legal deposit: D2020/11.089/131

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ISBN: 978-9-4639-3342-1
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