

PRESS RELEASE

The 'As Found' exhibition and book argue for a building culture that focuses on the existing

No one building in Flanders today starts from a blank page

What are the social benefits of a construction sector that focuses on the transformation of existing buildings? In 'As Found', the Flanders Architecture Institute uses examples of national and international experiments to show the enormous potential of a built-up region like Flanders. For the launch on 5 September, Pritzker Prize winner Anne Lacaton (Lacaton & Vassal) will give a lecture at De Singel.

As Found. Experiments in Preservation

Exhibition | from 06.09.2023 to 21.05.2024

Opening lecture by Anne Lacaton (Lacaton & Vassal) | on 05.09.2023 at 20:00

Flanders Architecture Institute at De Singel, Antwerp

Transformation as the first design choice

It is no news that there is hardly any room for new constructions in Flanders. And yet the urge to use up extra space or to raze buildings and put up something new in their place is entrenched. Architecture in Flanders and Brussels, however, demonstrates a unique position in dealing with the existing built environment. The exhibition 'As Found' proves this. Seven experimental approaches to transformation architecture and a series of national and international reference projects show that the existing arsenal of buildings in Flanders offers a range of possibilities. The exhibition looks not only at the end result, but above all at the design process and the sometimes very different parties involved. Each project is illustrated on the basis of preliminary studies, drawings, photos and models uncovered by the curators at the design offices. With this exhibition, the Flanders Architecture Institute wants to inspire architects, policymakers, users, funders and clients to tread new paths in dealing with our existing patrimony.

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Buildings as repositories of the collective memory

Recent discussions around the extension of Het Steen in Antwerp and the Gravensteen in Ghent show that professionals are not alone in having an opinion about how we should treat our heritage and the built environment in general. Empowered citizens are expressing their opinions. This shows the importance of buildings as an essential part of the collective memory. The book and the exhibition therefore argue that it is necessary to achieve an appropriate transformation collectively, together with users, clients, designers and historians.

Short-chain building and urban mining

In a densely built-up region like Flanders, where open space is scarce, restoring, infilling or reactivating is not just a cultural decision. It also has an impact on global flows of materials and on local employment. The more buildings are restored, the greater the need for skilled labour and local (artisanal) industry. Urban mining is a good example of this: materials that until recently were dismissed as waste from construction sites are upgraded into raw materials for building projects. In this way, the transformation of existing buildings is more sustainable than a new construction according to the latest EPB standards.

Featured projects

As the backbone for the exhibition and book, the curators present seven architectural positions: ensemble, void, reconfiguration, inside out, traces, mirror and nuance. Contemporary examples make each position concrete. The projects are all experimental investigations into the role a building can play in the challenges of the future, such as climate change, migration, globalization, social inclusion and how to deal with knowledge of the past in a digital world that has different ways of making, sharing and preserving.

National

- Het Steen, noAarchitecten, 2021 Antwerp
- Chapex, AjdvivgwA : AM architecten jan de vylder inge vinck – AgwA, 2024 Charleroi
- Open-air depot for the Art in the City collection, Aslı Çiçek, 2021 Antwerp
- Mortselsel Town Hall, Eagles of Architecture, 2024 Mortselsel
- Het Predikheren, Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten, Callebaut Architecten, Bureau Bouwtechniek, 2019 Mechelen
- Boekentoren, Robbrecht en Daem architecten, 2021 Ghent
- Ghent State Archives, Robbrecht en Daem architecten, 2014 Ghent
- Malibransel, Carton123 architecten, 2020 Elsene

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International

- Granby neighbourhood regeneration by Assemble, 2013, Liverpool, UK
- Pleasant Place Doctors' Surgery by Caruso St John, 1990, Hersham, UK
- General Archive of Navarra by Rafael Moneo, 2003, Pamplona, Spain
- Musée Unterlinden by Herzog & De Meuron, 2015, Colmar, France
- Deutsches Architekturmuseum transformation by Oswald Mathias Ungers, 1984, Frankfurt, Germany
- Construction of a new house within the remains of Astley Castle by Witherford Watson Mann, 2012, Warwickshire, UK
- Parco Dora by Latz+Partner, 2012, Turin, Italy
- Istanbul Planning Agency Public Hall by SO? Architecture and Ideas, 2022, Istanbul, Turkey
- Rehabilitation of the ruin of the Church of São José do Queimado by Instituto Modus Vivendi, 2020, Serra, Brazil
- Path to the Acropolis by Dimitris Pikionis, 1957, Athens, Greece
- Great Synagogue Memorial Park by Narchitektura, 2019, Oświęcim, Poland
- Sala Beckett by Flores i Prats, 2014, Barcelona, Spain
- Ningbo History Museum by Amateur Architecture Studio, 2008, Ningbo, China
- Cristalleries Planell Civic Center by H Arquitectes, 2006, Barcelona, Spain
- Transformation of Tour Bois le Prêtre by Lacaton & Vassal, 2011, Paris, France
- Tate Modern by Herzog & De Meuron, 2000, Londen, UK
- Commercial building Weinstrasse by Hild und K, 2020, Munchen, Germany
- Temporary Refurbishment of the Spanish House by the local community, 2013, Belgrade, Serbia
- The Alte Pinakothek by Hans Döllgast, 1957, Munich, Germany
- Solar do Unhão by Lina Bo Bardi, 1963, Salvador, Brasil
- Neues Museum by David Chipperfield and Julian Harrap, 2009, Berlin, Germany
- Can Sau, Un Parell d'Arquitectes, 2018, Olot, Spain
- Castelvecchio, Carlo Scarpa, 1964, Verona, Italy
- The House for Josephine Baker of Adolf Loos (1928), Bob Van Reeth/A.W.G Woning Van Roosmalen (1986, Anwerp, Belgium), Inez Weisman Ordos project (2008, China)
- House Christine Clinckx by Luc Deleu/T.O.P. office, 2001, Ekeren, Belgium
- Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery by Venturi Scott Brown, 1991, London, UK
- The Barnes Foundation by Tod Williams and Billie Tsien Architects, 2012, Philadelphia, USA
- Extension of City Hall by Gunnar Asplund, 1936, Gothenburg, Sweden
- Tolou Plug-in Tower by Rural Urban Framework, 2019, Longyan City, China
- Fittja People's Palace by Spridd and NCC, 2013, Stockholm, Sweden
- Old Port by Manuel de Solà-Morales (master plan, 2002) and by 51N4E (Jacques Brel Hall, 2018), Saint-Nazaire, France
- Ruin Academy by Marco Casagrande, 2010, Taipei, Taiwan

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Quotes

- *‘A growing proportion of architectural practice focuses on transformation rather than new construction.’ – Sofie De Caigny, Hülya Ertaş and Bie Plevoets (curators of ‘As Found’)*
- *‘Architecture in Flanders and Brussels demonstrates a unique position in dealing with the existing built environment. Although the experimental approaches vary according to the design methodologies, the interventions always show audacity, whether it is a medieval structure or a twentieth-century building.’ – Hülya Ertaş, curator Flanders Architecture Institute*
- *‘As regards building permits for heritage buildings, there is a long tradition of dialogue between architects, restoration experts and officials at the interface of heritage care, architectural design and concern for our living environment. This dialogue and this collaboration are essential components of the thinking and design process.’ – Leen Meganck, director of Architectural Heritage Research at the Flanders Heritage Agency*
- *‘The extension and redesign of Het Steen by noAarchitecten not only shows that history is neither fixed nor finite but also restores the building as an ensemble of voices and melodies from different periods.’ – Christoph Grafe, professor of architectural history and theory, University of Wuppertal*
- *‘Architecture is a time machine.’ – Jonathan Hill, professor of architecture and visual theory, The Bartlett School of Architecture, London*
- *‘The open-air depot for the Art in the City collection in Antwerp addresses the difficult issue of colonial monuments by bringing together culturally problematic public sculptures that can no longer be displayed in an urban space.’ – Sally Stone, professor of Architecture and Adaptive Reuse programme leader, Manchester School of Architecture*
- *‘We as architects have been slow to realize the potential of the “as found”. We have a lot of catching up to do.’ – William Mann, Witherford Watson Mann Architects*
- *‘We have recently seen several projects that aim to restore the public role of a building rather than preserve its materiality.’ – Stefan Devoldere, professor and dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Arts, Hasselt University and former Flemish Government Architect*

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As Found Experiments in Preservation

production Flanders Architecture Institute and De Singel

curators Sofie De Caigny, Hülya Ertas, Bie Plevoets

scenography FELT architecture & design

with work by noAarchitecten, architecten jan de vylder inge vinck, Aslı Çiçek, Eagles of Architecture, Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten, Callebaut Architecten, Bureau Bouwtechniek, Robbrecht en Daem architecten, Carton123 architecten

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exhibition | As Found. Experiments in Preservation

Wed. 6 September 2023 → Sun. 17 March 2024

Flanders Architecture Institute at De Singel (Desguinlei 25, 2018 Antwerp)

open Wed → Sun / 14:00 → 19:00 and during evening performances until 22:00

€5

opening event | keynote by Anne Lacaton (Lacaton & Vassal)

Tue. 5 September 2022 – 20:00

De Singel, Blue Hall (Desguinlei 25, 2018 Antwerp)

€0 (but registration is compulsory)

info and tickets at vai.be or desingel.be

book | As Found. Experiments in Preservation

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