

Feel the heartbeat of history



PRESS FILE A RESTORED CASTLE



Gaasbeek
Castle



Feel the heartbeat of history

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Gaasbeek Castle, after a beauty sleep for some restoration work, is getting ready to wake up gloriously.

In September 2020, for the first time in almost a hundred years, Gaasbeek Castle closed its doors for a long time and the major restoration campaign began. Meanwhile, just under three years later, the noise from the worksite has subsided and the proverbial cherry has been put on the master plan cake: the restoration of Gaasbeek Castle.

Before the castle transformed into an impressive worksite, the historic park buildings were already being restored. A new entrance building was erected on the street side to house the ticket counter, as well as the museum shop and castle library. The restoration of the castle interiors was the final part of the extensive master plan. A delicate assignment that was awarded to architectural firm Origin and to contractor Verstraete Vanhecke.

Architectural firm Origin harboured to the ambition to preserve the spirit of the castle as best as possible. For the new interventions, to promote access and circulation, new materials were used, with motifs inspired by those introduced to the castle by

marquise Arconati Visconti and her architect Charle-Albert in the late nineteenth century. The remaining castle interiors were restored one by one, with great respect for their late-nineteenth-century Gesamtkunstwerk content. Thus, the colourful murals in the rooms, corridors and halls that were painted over in the twentieth century were reconstructed and shine once more in all their colourful splendour. The removed panelling was also recreated and once again adorns the walls. Upon reopening, not only will there be more museum space to enjoy, but more visitors will be able to experience it: for the first time, the entire first floor will be wheelchair-accessible thanks to the integration of a lift.

We are eager to once again be able to share all that beauty with visitors and are on the eve of a thriving revival. On 1 July 2023, we will open the doors to an empty but fully restored castle. Then, the result of the restoration campaign can be admired in all its purity. We are also inviting theatre company FC Bergman to bring an audiovisual exhibition

to the castle. We will announce what exactly they are going to do on Wednesday 3 May: the day of the centenary of the marquise Arconati Visconti's passing. We surely do not need to explain in so many words the link between the two.

We are also taking a long look ahead: this autumn, the castle collection will return, which will be on display from 2024 in a renewed scenography. The restoration of both the courtyard and the brasserie, and the implementation of wayfinding for the entire estate, are also still in the planning stages.

Back to the present: the castle team, in full preparation for the reopening, is immensely looking forward to hearing footsteps echoing in and around the castle.

The master plan

History

For the history of the master plan, we must go back to 2012. Gaasbeek Castle had long been a site of European importance with a unique place in the Flemish museum landscape, but suffered from several problems. The building and the park with its architectural elements were not always treated with respect during the twentieth century. The interior of the castle was in need of restoration and the whole place no longer met contemporary museum standards and needs. The preservation and management of the collection, universal accessibility and the various audience-building functions were also in need of a thorough upgrade. The extremely valuable historic buildings in the park were in a severely outdated and dilapidated state.

Because a clear vision for the overall estate of Gaasbeek Castle was lacking, at the request of the Department of Culture, Youth and Media, a contract was put out to

the market to appoint a master planner. The Brussels firm BOGDAN & VAN BROECK emerged as the best candidate and was awarded the contract.

From the outset, the master planner placed a very strong emphasis on the wider context, both of the castle itself in relation to the entire Gaasbeek Estate, but also in relation to the adjacent Groenenberg Estate, and both estates in relation to the wider environment. In addition, integral accessibility and the experience of both the castle and the surrounding landscape were the key focal points of the master plan. In order to reduce the pressure on the existing spaces in the castle, there was a further investigation as to where and how a new building could be built on the estate.

During the preparation of the master plan, the designer sought a way to integrate a new building into the park underground. Plans to place it under the museum garden, under

the castle's courtyard garden or in the grassy slope in front of the castle were discussed at length, but none of these proposals received support from the advisory bodies. Finally, by chance, a plot on the street side of the property came up for sale, located between the car park and the main avenue. The Department of Culture, Youth and Media and the Nature and Forest Agency together provided the necessary funds to purchase this ideally located site. This way, a new reception infrastructure could be implemented, which had high visibility for the public and could be a reception for the entire estate and not only for the Castle.



Saint Gertrude's Chapel. © Tess Thibaut

The master plan Implementation



Gloriette. © Tess Thibaut

In implementing the master plan, the smaller historic pavilions in the park were addressed first, because they were in the most critical condition. The old contract with Studio Roma was therefore activated so that, in collaboration with contractor Renotec, the gloriette and hermitage could be restored. Subsequently, the seventeenth-century stucco ceiling in the gloriette was also restored by Altritempi, under the supervision of Lode Declercq. In the second phase, architectural firm Bressers was appointed to restore Saint Gertrude's Chapel and the Triumphal Arch, also

carried out by contractor Renotec. The stained glass window in Saint Gertrude's Chapel was replaced, as part of 'Commissioned Art', with a contemporary stained glass window designed by artist Ben Sledsens. In the third phase, after much internal consultation, it was the new entrance building's turn. Through an Open Call procedure, the Liège-based architectural firm Pierre Hebbelinck was appointed to create a new 700-square-metre reception building on the newly acquired plot, which was to be integrated into the entire estate. An extensive programme of

requirements was drawn up that needed to be implemented within this limited footprint. However, the new entrance building is not the end point of achieving the master plan. The restoration of the castle interiors is the generous icing on the master plan cake.

The master plan Future



Entrance building. © Jo Exelmans

In order to fully complete the restoration and revaluation of the Gaasbeek Estate, several more smaller projects will be carried out in the coming years. Hence why the reconstruction of the avenue, the renovation of the Count of Egmond Brasserie and the provision of a completely new wayfinding in the park and in the castle are still on the programme. This will allow visitors to find their way to and through the castle effortlessly, and a visit can be finished off nicely on the terrace of the Castle's new tearoom or in the rural yard of the Brasserie.

In 2022, the Flanders Heritage Agency and the Department of Culture, Youth and Media hired art historian and landscape architect Ann Voets to map out the historical evolution of the castle's existing courtyard garden, along with the various possible scenarios in line with the planned restoration of this neo-Renaissance garden. These scenarios were to juxtapose the historical context with contemporary realities and determine a plan of action for the future. The study mapped out the entire evolution of the courtyard garden and determined its authentic

elements and forms. The plan, with its accompanying scenario that was created based on the garden history study, will serve as the basis for the matter of its restoration. The launch of the study for the restoration of the courtyard is scheduled for autumn 2023.



New reception desk in the castle, © Georgesdekinder.com



Knights' Hall, © Georgesdekinder.com

The master plan

Restoration of castle interiors & partial redecoration

Background for the contract

The contract for the restoration and redevelopment of Gaasbeek Castle includes, on the one hand, the restoration of the nineteenth-century interiors, and on the other, the study of the museum route, including opening up a number of spaces that are not yet part of the current museum. In addition, studies were also conducted to improve accessibility and improve several building physics and stability issues.

Introduction to the building

Gaasbeek Castle – the object of this contract – is ensconced in the picturesque Pajottenland. Its origins lie in the thirteenth century. The first castle – military in nature – was owned by the lords of Leuven, and was razed to the ground by the people of Brussels due to a political conflict. Over the following centuries, the castle experienced many developments: successive lords of the castle constantly adapted it to their tastes, forcing the military element to give way to luxury and splendour. Especially the sixteenth-century Charles V staircase is of

exceptional value; a rare witness to secular Renaissance architecture in our regions.

The castle as we can admire it today owes its appearance almost entirely to the major 'restoration' that took place at the end of the nineteenth century, at the initiative of marquise Arconati Visconti. She opted for an 'archaic renovation' in the spirit of Viollet-le-Duc and wanted to turn the castle into a 'Theatrum Historiae' – a shrine to her impressive art collection. Thus was born the current 'dream castle' – a time machine designed to allow the marquise and her (often high-class) visitors to relive the past by visiting period rooms. The design for this restoration was made



Gaasbeek Castle. © Georgesdekinder.com

by architect Jean Van Holder and, after his passing, architect Charles Albert.

A republican at heart, the marquise had a particular fondness for the sixteenth century and the Renaissance. At the École des Chartres in Paris, she encountered the special methodology of 'better understanding' a period in history through the experience of its material culture. It is in this context that the castle's period rooms must be understood. Both building and interior, along with the collection, form an exceptionally preserved example of a meticulously planned 'Gesamtkunstwerk'. The marquise donated the park and

castle with part of the collection to the government in 1921, with an obligation to open it as a museum.

The museum evolved over the last few years from a static museum to a dynamic meeting place. The museum strives to put the visitor experience first and to be a place where historical heritage enters into dialogue with contemporary art. The visitor is not merely a passive observer of objects here, but rather – through this confrontation – becomes an active experienter. The museum also strives for greater interaction between interior and exterior: the built museum versus its green surroundings. The museum does not focus solely on heritage

as a tourist attraction, but has set forth an ambition to be accessible to a wide audience: schools, families and children. Exhibitions are always developed at different levels and for different profiles.

The master plan

Restoration of castle interiors & partial redecoration

Introduction to Charle-Albert (1821 – 1889), architect from the past

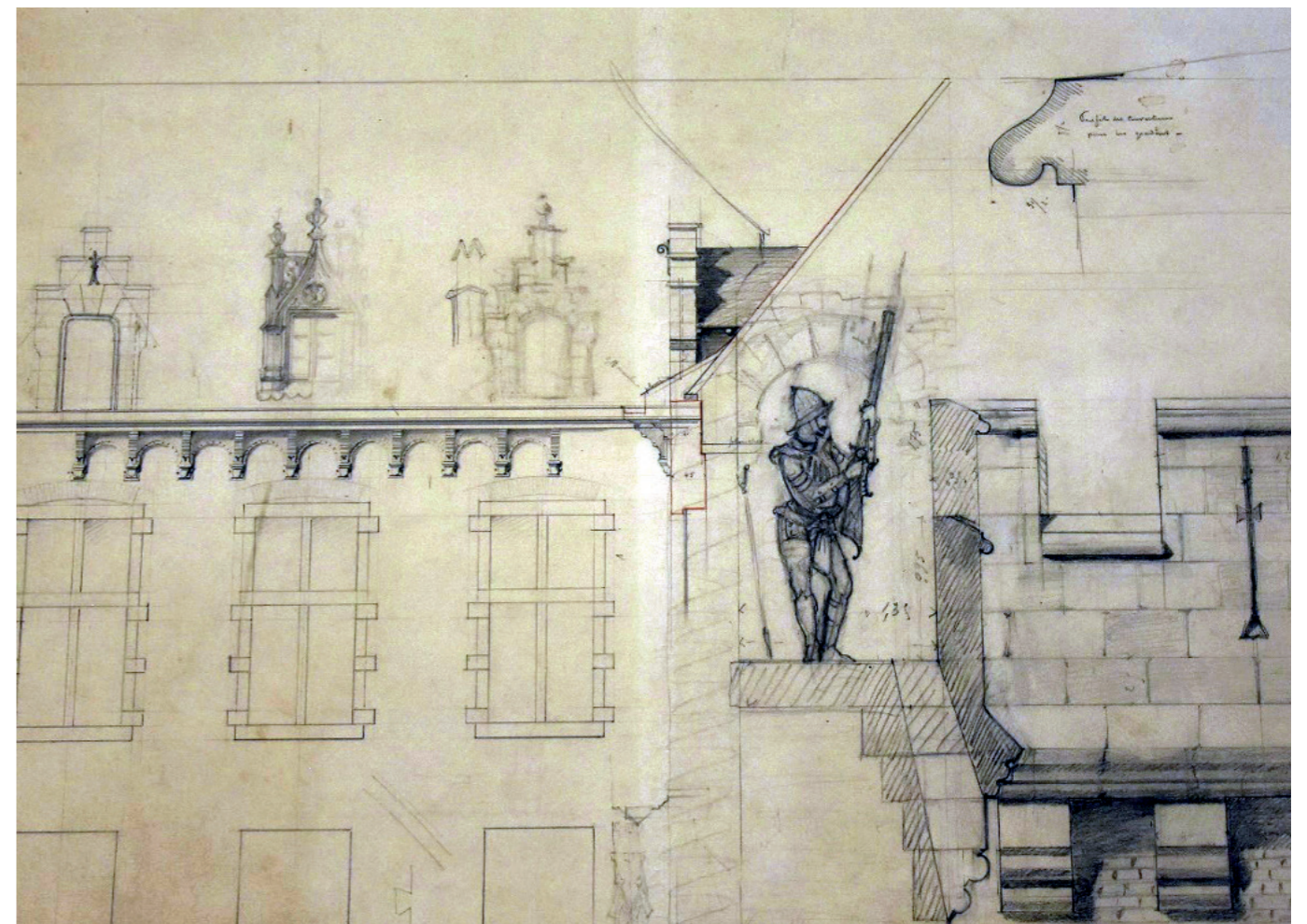
The nineteenth century, the century in which Gaasbeek Castle took on its present appearance, was the century of history. Historical research emerged as an academic discipline, local history (then called 'Archaeology') and genealogical research flourished. The radical rupture of the French Revolution had aroused among part of the population a longing for the old, the lost. Young nation states in search of strong historical roots, such as Belgium, fully encouraged the glorification of a rich past. Thus, as early as 1835, the National Royal Commission on Monuments was formed to encourage the care of neglected monuments.

The old and worn needed to shine once more – the ruins of the past were polished. The thermometer of restoration fever was red hot. The French architect Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc is the best-known name of this movement, which started to dig up old styles and resurface them as what became known as 'neo-style'. In this, he went far beyond merely purely restoring what was. Viollet-le-Duc claimed to perfect the past by adding elements to historic buildings, especially to structures from the Gothic period. He made the mediaeval original even more 'mediaeval' than it had ever been. His ideas also jumped to other European countries, including Belgium, through successful publications. The Brussels resident Charle-Albert began as a cabinet-maker in the 1850s and worked his

way up, including a commission at the Palace of Nations in Brussels. He was largely self-taught and did not limit himself to one art form. In addition to designing furniture, he was also skilled in glass and wrought iron art, as well as décor painting. Charle-Albert was known for murals designed to imitate tapestries. So the play between real and imitation was in his blood. In addition, he had a great admiration for crafts. In this was couched a longing for what was rapidly being lost in the nineteenth century. A nostalgic love of craft flourished in a society that was becoming increasingly industrialised.

Charle-Albert, Construction drawing for the restoration of Gaasbeek Castle, no date – Gaasbeek Castle collection.

Charle-Albert even added a 16th-century soldier when designing the pseudo-defensive elements that were entirely decorative and that we still see today.



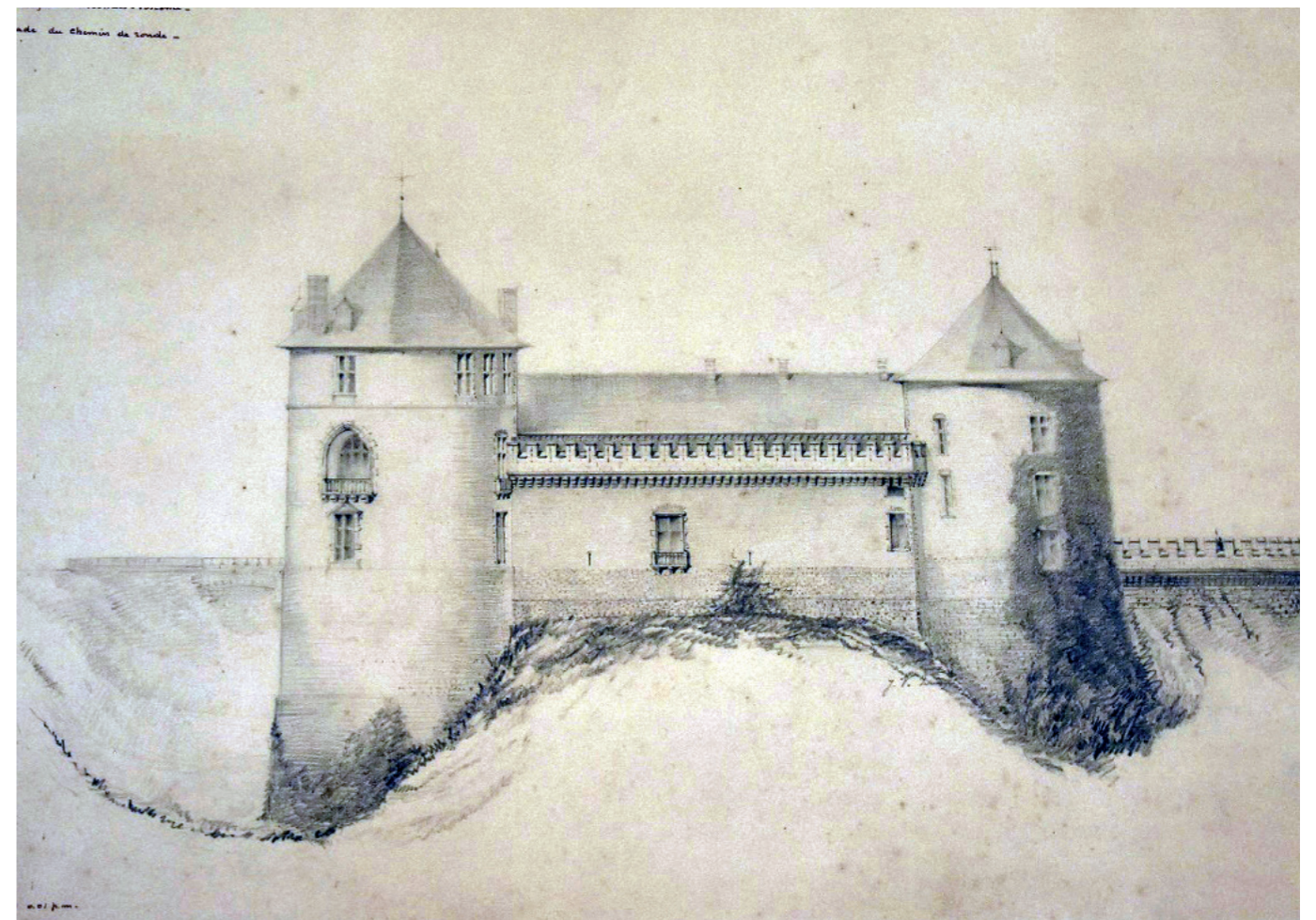
Charle-Albert thus eagerly rooted around in the past in search of inspiration. His favourite period in this was the Renaissance. His masterpiece was his own house, known as the Flemish House in Watermael-Boitsfort. He built this little castle starting in 1868, completely inspired by his favourite period in history. For this, as with many other projects, he worked with architect Jules-Jacques Van Ysendyck (together, they also shaped Anderlecht's town hall). Throughout the rest of his life, Charle-Albert continued to work on this total work of art in which both building and interior, upholstery, furniture and garden served to evoke the sixteenth century. Charle-Albert integrated some authentic pieces into this new setting, mixing historical objects and romantic reinterpretations in a mash-

up of old and new. The Charle-Albert Castle, as it is known, is one of the most important examples of neo-Flemish Renaissance architecture that was later, in the twentieth century, maligned. Maligned or not, it is this Flemish House that gained Charle-Albert his job as architect of Gaasbeek Castle. Marquise Arconati Visconti was so impressed with Charle-Albert's work after a visit that she asked him to make her own Neo-Renaissance rêve ('dream') come true at Gaasbeek. Among other things, he added some new battlements and a fortified entrance tower to Gaasbeek Castle, which at that time had served no defensive function for centuries. He turned the illuminated summer house back into a fortified stronghold, almost more authentic than the original. After Charle-

Albert's passing in 1889, the marquise even bought some of the Flemish House's contents to place in her own castle. The Charle-Albert Castle itself unfortunately fell into disrepair later on, but was protected in 1988 and renovated a decade or so ago.

Charle-Albert, Construction drawing for the restoration of Gaasbeek Castle, no date – Gaasbeek Castle collection.

The many windows that adorned the castle in the period before its restoration were bricked up by Charle-Albert to provide a solid 'defensive wall'.





Kitchen, © Georgesdekinder.com



Gallery, © Jo Exelmans



Marquise Arconati Visconti dressed up as a page, ca. 1880, collection Gaasbeek Castle



Reconstruction of the mural paintings. © Jo Exelmans



Exposed mural in kitchen. © Jo Exelmans



Blue Room with new silk wallpaper. © Georgesdekinder.com

Origin's vision

From the fascinating and eventful past of the castle and its collection, we identified a specific phase as the reference phase. Starting from this valuation of the past, with a thorough analysis of the building's existing condition, we worked towards the future. In doing so, we always took into account the ambitions set forth by the castle. Our philosophy for tackling this particular project was soon clear: we want to carry on the wish of the castle's last owner, marquise

Arconati Visconti. She furnished the castle with many period rooms and a dynamic collection and donated the castle, along with its park, to the Belgian State with the explicit requirement to open it to the public. This also became our motivation: to restore the legacy of this extraordinary marquise and to open the castle to the widest possible audience.

Some special facets

Entering the museum will be different after the restoration. The new reception area – in a new location – immediately leads the visitor into the museum wing of the castle; the visitor immediately enters the world of the marquise.

Gorgeous walls

In the first few rooms, visitors will soon discover the original nineteenth-century murals. Over the course of the twentieth century, these were painted over; now, they have been reconstructed from the original. In several rooms throughout the route, those valuable murals were revealed from under the old layers of plaster and paint, and removed panelling was reconstructed.

The castle's 'Blue Room' is, once again, literally blue. Based on the original punch cards from the nineteenth century, the silk wall covering was recreated by the weaving company Lelièvre of France. Fun fact: this company took over Tassinari & Chatel, the same producer on whose door marquise Arconati Visconti knocked more than 130 years ago.



Reconstructed wall paintings. © Georgesdekinder.com



© Jo Exelmans



Attic with display cases. © Georgesdekinder.com



Carletto's Room after restoration. © Georgesdekinder.com

More castle

The museum is expanding within the existing volume, which means more castle for the visitor. For example, an attic that was not open to the public was transformed into an attic with viewing showcases accommodating collection pieces that could not immediately find a place in the castle's rooms.

Carletto's room, never before shown to the public, has also been restored and will be on display. This room has important historical value to the castle. Carletto Arconati Visconti (1818 – 1839) was the brilliant son of castle-owners Giuseppe and

Costanza Arconati Visconti. In 1838, he graduated summa cum laude in Law, but unfortunately died a year later at Gaasbeek. He still rests in the Gaasbeek cemetery, next to Paul Arconati. His parents left Gaasbeek and never returned there.

Bats

The castle is a protected monument, but its inhabitants housed in the attic spaces also enjoy protection. We are talking about the bats. During the restoration, as well as after the works, this habitat is to be preserved as far as possible. A box-in-box system in the attic spaces provides

the answer: it protects the bats along with the stored collection. A screened visitor route prevents unwanted contact between visitors and bats. So the little animals can continue to inhabit 'their castle' with peace of mind, and the collection will receive the care it deserves. Objects can be exhibited in specially designed display cases that are insulated and moisture-controlled.



Carletto's Room after restoration. © Georgesdekinder.com



Room for the Cast Collection. © Georgesdekinder.com

Caffè Carletto

With Caffè Carletto, named after the brilliant son of Giuseppe and Costanza Arconati Visconti, Gaasbeek Castle will have its own tearoom with a terrace for the first time. The garden, previously open only to paying visitors, will become free to all upon reopening. Its restoration will take place at a later stage. Reliving all the castle impressions? You can do so in the company of all that beauty. Sipping on a glass overlooking the courtyard garden.

Plaster room

The former reception area in the castle was renamed the free-to-visit plaster room. The exceptional collection of plasters by Georges Houtstond and others will be exhibited in it. This plaster room is the only air-conditioned room as such in the castle. In order to limit the intervention of technology, the decision was taken to locate it in the wing, where the offices are located. There are few heritage elements preserved here anyway, so this choice is certainly justifiable.

Climate

In the museum wings, a deliberate choice was made not to use 'classical' museum air-conditioning, but to use conservation heating in a limited way to limit the impact on the heritage. The climate of the castle was carefully studied by the Daidalos-Peutz study bureau, more specifically the fluctuations in relative humidity and their effect on the interior decorations and collection pieces. In order to avoid excessive fluctuations, the climate in the castle is regulated by this conservation heating. The



Technical installation in the attic. © Jo Exelmans



© Jo Exelmans

technology was carefully integrated into the protected interiors. Precious objects can be displayed in the insulated and moisture-controlled display cabinets.

Substantially improved accessibility

Much of Gaasbeek Castle will be accessible to all for the first time. Small steps that used to make the castle inaccessible to wheelchair-users were subtly eliminated. A lift and platform lift will make the first

floor of the museum fully accessible for the first time. Unfortunately, due to the difficulty of the historically grown conglomeration of buildings, it was not possible to make the attics fully accessible as well. Yet the total visitable area for wheelchair users will increase by a whopping 183%.



Model of a period room, by Niek Kortekaas

A setting within a setting

The rooms of the Petit Blois wing on the second floor, which immediately precede the last marquise's private apartment on the visitors' route, have been given their own scenographic installation. Built in these three boxes, literal stages that allow 3 generations of castle-owners to have a tangible presence. The intention here is to evoke the world and timeframe of these characters with numerous objects, art and furniture from the collection, in a setting that subtly evokes their 'era', as small capsules with a certain theatrical content, without therefore opting

for meticulous period rooms (which never existed or about which we know nothing or little). In this sense, we are in line with the philosophy of Viollet-le-Duc, to which Charle-Albert also adhered: 'When we reconstruct the past, we do so not as a re-enactment of what once was, but of what could have been...' That assumption creates a margin of freedom that we are eager to exploit. These are the three rooms below. We are happy to give a hint about the layout of these boxes. The result will not be on display until 2024, when the castle will open with a returned

collection and new scenography.

The redecoration of ...

... the Arrivabene room

evocation of the life and thought of Paul Arconati (1754-1821), first marquis of Gaasbeek and a figure of European status. Mayor of Brussels under Napoleon, Catholic Freemason, exuberant and eccentric, globetrotter, philosopher and mystic, loner, manic-depressive, Austrian citizen and admirer of Empress Maria Theresa, avid writer and entertainer. Chaotic atmosphere, man cave, but within the bright colour palette of empire and neoclassicism.

... the room with large window

evocation of the 'salotto' by Giuseppe and Costanza Arconati-Visconti, c. 1830-1835. This couple turned Gaasbeek into a 'literary salon, at which numerous great names of the period were guests. Atmosphere: quite crowded, comfortable, full, un beau désordre étudié. Northern Italian with strong Austrian and Central European influences.

... the room with bay window

evocation of the period of the last marquis, Arconati Visconti, Giammartino (husband of Marie Peyrat). Mysterious character about whom we know little; many documents were deliberately destroyed. A small oasis bathed in a mysterious, oriental atmosphere. Evoked here is the atmosphere of a somewhat uprooted spirit; someone who sought happiness in a place other than where it was located – a melancholy traveller.

Damp

The Castle still shows some damp walls here and there, even after the restoration. The cause of this issue was addressed in part thanks to some detailed studies by the RICH. But because of the huge wall masses, sometimes more than 2 metres thick, it will certainly take several years to a decade before they are completely dry.





Facts & Figures

The oldest part of the castle is the Charles V staircase: 2nd half of the sixteenth century.

The fabrics for the marquis's apartment come from the same supplier as in her day: Tassinari & Chatel, well-known Lyon silk-weavers who have been around since 1680 (now taken over by Lelièvre).

3 km

At least 3 kilometres of natural stone imitation joints were painted.

183 %

Previously, only 377.29m² was accessible to visitors in wheelchairs. This is now 1,068.71m².

That is a whopping 183% more.

11.527 tiles

In Caffè Carletto and the plaster room, 11,527 bluestone tiles were carefully laid according to a new pattern based on the existing brick patterns in the castle.

25

The museum castle route contains 25 rooms.

377 m²

There is now 1,672.87m² of publicly accessible area in the castle. This is 377.29m² more than before.

Technical sheet

Building type

Cultural building

Location

Gaasbeek Castle

Kasteelstraat 40

B-1750 Lennik

Style

Neo-Flemish Renaissance

& neo-Gothic

Date

Basis: 13th century

Major building components: 16th century

Current view: late 19th century

Legal status

Protected as a landscape (26/10/1936)

and as a monument (26/03/1998)

Principal

Flemish government

Department of Culture, Youth and Media

Rue d'Arenberg 9

B-1000 Brussels

User

Gaasbeek Castle

Architectural firm

Origin Architecture & Engineering

Main contractor

Verstraete Vanhecke

Subcontracting:

Daidalos-Peutz (building physics and acoustics): Dries Haesendonck

Ney & Partners (stability): Olivier Gallez, Pierre-Yves Adant

HP Engineers (technology): Henk Pijpaert, Tom Mostrey

Scenography: Niek Kortekaas

Origin Architecture & Engineering – Architecture Team

Barbara Pecheur, Pieter-Jan Debuyst, Griet Bronselaer, Joke Nijs, Egeleen Romaen, Marion Bourgeois, Monique Van den Berg

Verstraete Vanhecke – Contractor Team

Maarten Van Hout, Peters Vidts, Keanu Rosiers, Sander Peters, Bruno Janssens

Tapestry restoration

Koninklijke Manufactuur De Wit

Allocation of contract

Public procedure for services

Public procedure for works

Total investment cost

The Flemish government invested more than €6,500,000, ex. VAT

The total cost is not yet known.

Surface area

4,750m² gross

State of progress

Commencement of study: 08/2018

Commencement of the works: 11/2020

Preliminary completion of works: 04/2023

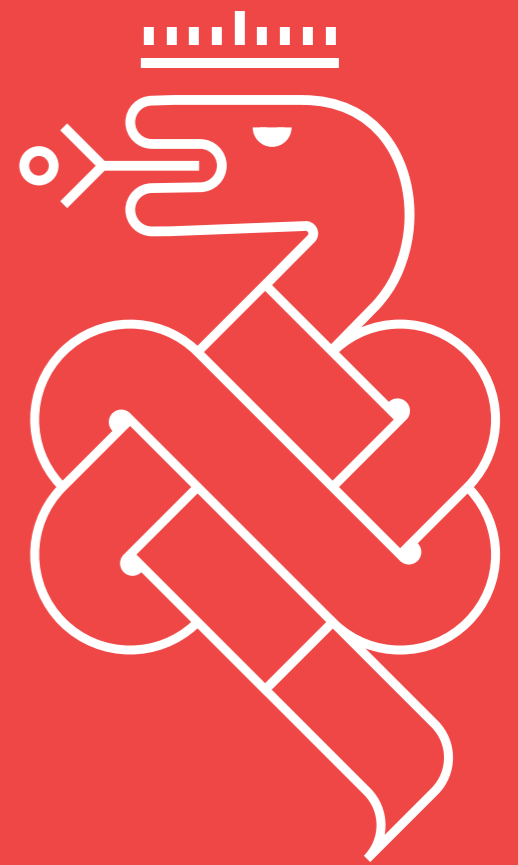
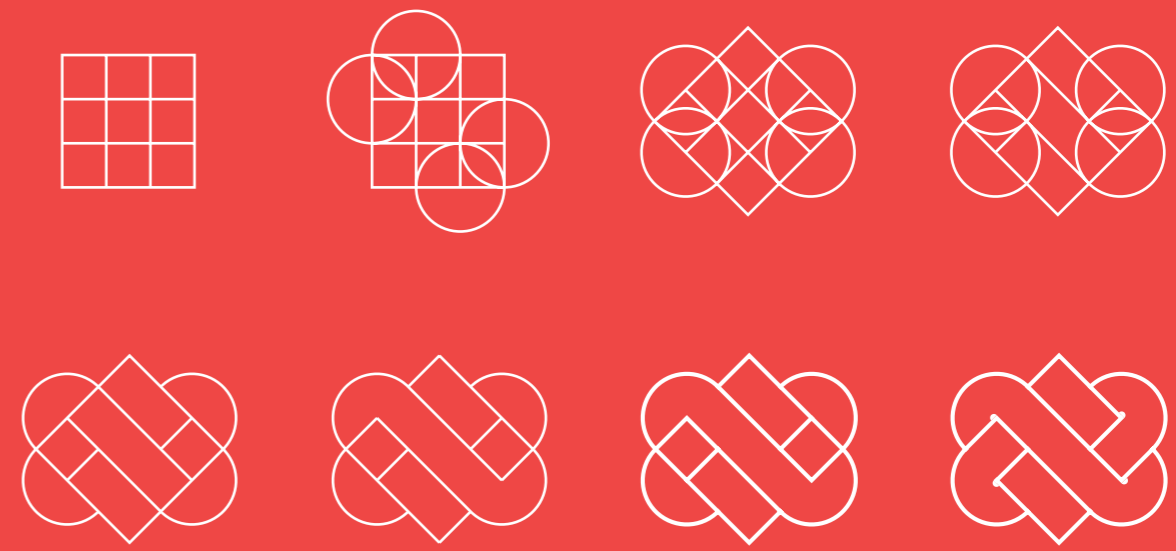
A revamped castle with a new house style

The launch of our revamped website kicks off our new house style. Not only were the castle rooms and hallways thoroughly redecorated, our house style was also given a new look.

The tailor commissioned was Jim Van Raemdonck from design firm Soon. After an intense process, we are very proud and happy to share the result. A new colour palette, a restyling of the logo, a powerful baseline ... these are just a few of the many facets of our new visual identity.

Notice the two intertwined hearts in the revamped castle logo? They symbolise the past and the present feeding, embracing and transforming one another without end. It also reveals the architecture of the castle towers. Fans of the biscione – the familiar snake of the Arconati Visconti's family crest – need not grieve. Rather than throwing the serpent out with the bathwater, we embraced it as a nice contemporary extension to the basic logo. Not only because we find it a powerful symbol, but also because the castle

owes an enormous amount to this Milanese family. As it happens, it was Marquise Arconati Visconti, the last owner, who donated the castle to the Belgian state. She is the reason we can all enjoy the castle today as a place of connection and wonder. Of course, we do like to keep highlighting that.



Gaasbeek
Castle

Feel the heartbeat of history...

One powerful sentence summarising Gaasbeek Castle and its operation – this was no easy task. In the many brainstorming and focus groups with different target groups, our dual identity emerged very clearly: on the one hand, a unique historic house with a rich history; on the other, a lively meeting place developing initiatives that playfully connect past and present.

The perfect words came from an unexpected source and were found in a review by Karl Ove Knausgård, who praises the British writer and

historian Orlando Figes with the following words: “An outstanding historian and writer, he brings distant history so close that you could feel its heartbeat.” In this, we recognised our reason for existence, our motivation, our mission.

Now that our logo and baseline have also been refocused, we are more ready than ever to welcome visitors with open arms and make their hearts beat that touch faster.

www.kasteelvangaasbeek.be



Partners

Gaasbeek Castle

Gaasbeek Castle is ensconced among the rolling hills of the Pajottenland region, just outside Brussels. The mediaeval stronghold had an eventful history, evolving from strategic bastion to lavish country retreat. The Count of Egmond was one of the most famous owners. The present building received its romantic restyling in the late nineteenth century, thanks to the intriguing French marquise Arconati Visconti. She was the daughter-in-law of aristocrats Giuseppe and Costanza Arconati Visconti, who between 1821 and 1839, made this castle a unique meeting place for intellectual exchanges between exiled Italian politicians, European writers and scientists. Marie Arconati Visconti was also open to the great intellectual debates of her time, as evidenced by her correspondence with and support

for Alfred Dreyfus, among others. She set up the castle as a museum for her vast art collection and played it as a historic theatre setting, which she donated to the Belgian State in 1921. The dream castle created then is still something of a time machine today with, historicising interiors, tapestries, paintings, furniture, statues and other valuable objects.

The restored castle will reopen its doors to visitors on 1 July 2023. Gaasbeek will see a flourishing summer.

The castle park, with its century-old trees, ponds, avenues, winding paths and historical buildings erected here and there, is a dream place for relaxation. The estate is also home to the unique museum garden, where ancient fruits and vegetables are nurtured.



Het Departement Cultuur, Jeugd en Media

As a Flemish government organisation, the Department of Culture, Youth and Media is building a creative and inspiring Flanders, where everyone, from young to old, can experience, create and share culture.

We do so by pursuing a convincing and forward-looking sectoral policy, with the intrinsic values of culture and youth and the independence of media as our guiding principles. The department is a partner and stimulator of the field of action and collaborates with other policy areas, with local governments and with actors inside and outside the Flemish government. By deploying high-quality tools, we create opportunities for those actors. Professional development, customer focus and commitment are central to all employees. We look

outward by responding to social and international developments, thus constantly questioning and updating our own operations.

As owners and users of diverse real estate, the Flemish government has an important exemplary role. For that in-house infrastructure, the Department of Culture, Youth and Media coordinates all tenders and awards of new construction and renovation works. Examples besides Gaasbeek Castle itself: the recently reopened KMSKA, Kaaitheater – currently under renovation, and soon the Ancienne Belgique. With this proprietary heritage, we are fully committed to progressiveness and sustainability.



Partners

Agency for Facility Operations

Policy Area by Chancellery and Governance by Flemish government

The Agency for Facility Operations, or Het Facilitair Bedrijf in Flemish, supports the entities of the Flemish government with a range of services in the field of real estate, construction projects, housing, catering, cleaning, purchasing, logistics, printing, ICT, e-government and information management. Provinces, cities, municipalities and other institutions covered by open government can make use of a number of framework contracts. Zooming in on real estate, we can see that the government, as a public actor, owner and user, has an important exemplary role. But from a business perspective, it is also important for the Flemish government to manage its portfolio of properties as an 'excellent steward'. The focus lies on a general real estate policy, developed at the level of the Flemish government and linked to the specific real estate policies of the departments and agencies.

The Agency for Facility Operations also manages the leases and relationships with the owners of buildings housing Flemish officials. The entity provides practical, technical and legal support in the hiring, purchase, sale or rental of (part of) a building.

Flemish government construction projects

Construction Projects Division coordinates various construction projects in the Flemish government's buildings. This may involve both new construction and renovation projects, furnishing or optimising buildings.

The Flemish government's real estate portfolio is highly varied, ranging from administrative buildings to youth institutions and training centres, management posts, airport buildings and hangars, centres for environmental and nature education and cultural and historical infrastructure. Most of the buildings are located in Flanders, but we also have some in major cities abroad.

All Flemish government entities can make use of our services. A tailored project team is assembled for each project to guide the construction project through its various phases. We supervise about 100 projects every year.

During the study phase, we will use public procurement (e-procurement) to find a design office and a contractor. During the performance of the works, our project managers and site inspectors can regularly be found on the site.

Our team of architects and engineers monitors the schedule, budget and scope throughout the entire project.

**HET FACILITAIR
BEDRIJF**

Partners

Origin

Origin Architecture & Engineering is an architecture and stability firm that wishes to give the richness of the past a future. The restoration, renovation and repurposing of a valuable building or site means treating this heritage with respect for its place, people and meaning.

Are contemporary architecture and heritage restoration or renovation, as the result of a similar approach, not the same profession, then? The answer is not obvious: yes in principle, but no in practice.

The act of intervention in existing buildings requires the performance of in-depth preparatory studies to discover, know and revere all their peculiarities and qualities. So this automatically means calling in specialists. For example, many of the partners, project managers and staff at Origin Architecture & Engineering hold master's degrees in heritage restoration. The knowledge is all the more focused. Several associates and employees of Origin Architecture & Engineering teach at this country's Dutch-speaking and French-speaking

universities (University of Antwerp, UCL, ULB, Master Paix Dieu and VUB).

Today, Origin Architecture & Engineering consists of 40 employees, with approximately an equal distribution between Dutch and French-speakers. That makes Origin Architecture & Engineering an architectural firm that operates in both language communities.

For both public and private buildings, bridges or other infrastructural works with patrimonial value in the cultural sense of the word, Origin Architecture & Engineering is responsible for the studies and monitoring of their restoration or renovation. Historical, architectural and technical studies, among others, are undertaken for this purpose.

Origin Architecture & Engineering is also responsible for the stability studies and coordination of technical equipment. The approach is universal – all the technical problems are studied.

ARCHITECTURE
& ENGINEERING
origin

Partners

Verstraete Vanhecke

As a family business, Verstraete Vanhecke ensures the future of beautiful buildings and monuments, through its expertise in complex and challenging renovation and restoration works.

With our experience since 1820, we are a reliable partner that guarantees flexible collaboration and high quality. Knowledge of our crafts in a safe and sustainable working environment, and respect for agreements with our customers as well as our employees, are our building blocks in this regard.

We implement projects tailored to the client's needs, with no worries for that client. Be it the restoration of a monument, the renovation of a stately hotel or the reconstruction of an exclusive residence in Belgium or abroad.



Partners

Royal Manufacturers De Wit

CONSERVATION

Fondée en 1889, la Manufacture royale De Wit est leader mondial dans le domaine de la conservation de tapisseries pour les musées et les particuliers. Durant les 30 dernières années, les trois plus grandes campagnes de conservation de tapisseries lui ont été confiées. Elle compte parmi ses clients les plus grands musées dont le musée du Louvre, Paris, le Victoria & Albert Museum, Londres, le Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, le Mobilier national-Manufacture des Gobelins, Paris, l'Art Institute of Chicago, the Cleveland Museum of Art et bien d'autres.



Restoration of the castle's tapestries. © Jo Exelmans

DE WIT
since 1889
ROYAL MANUFACTURERS OF TAPESTRY

COLLECTIONE

De Wit Fine Tapestries is also a leader in the acquisition and sale of ancient tapestries for private collectors and museums. In this capacity she participates in major international fairs such as BRAFA and TEFAF. De Wit also welcomes her clients to her showrooms in the Refuge of the Tongerlo Abbey in Mechelen, where a wide variety of tapestries from different periods and origins are presented. Thanks to its privileged relations with major museums and private collectors, De Wit Royal Manufacturers has realised notable sales of tapestries.

EXPO-EVENTS

De Wit Royal Manufacturers is also known for organising successful international tapestry exhibitions, such as Tissus d'Or in cooperation with the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in Munich (90,000 visitors in total) and Los Honores in cooperation with the Patrimonio Nacional in Spain (93,000 visitors). Together with the City of Mechelen, it is currently preparing an exhibition on the Granvelle tapestries scheduled for 2024.

GUIDED TOURS

De Wit Royal Manufacturers is located in the Refuge of the Tongerlo Abbey, founded in 1484, where it presents a collection of tapestries from the early 15th century to the present day. The workshop, exhibition rooms and the building, which is a protected monument, are open to the public for tours organised by the De Wit Foundation.

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Restoration of the castle's tapestries. © Jo Exelmans

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Visual material

Visual material can be found in high resolution at

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Gaasbeek
Castle

