

Opening Entrance Pavilion 29.06.2022

photo: François Brix





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Press Release

On 28 June, the entrance pavilion was officially inaugurated by Minister-President Jan Jambon to welcome visitors from 1 July. This inauguration is the penultimate milestone of the comprehensive Master Plan for the entire heritage site. The restoration of the castle interior is the final step towards a wonderfully restored castle that will reopen its doors in 2023

The project to 'build a new reception building for Gaasbeek Castle, the museum garden and surrounding park' was launched in 2016 via an Open Call by the 'Vlaamse Bouwmeester' (a selection procedure for designers of public contracts). No fewer than 120 architectural firms applied. Of these, four were selected and invited to take part in the design competition. Designers were asked to seek a balance between a contemporary, well-functioning building with a limited footprint, and the surrounding, protected landscape of Gaasbeek Castle Park and the Groenenberg Park opposite, with which they had to establish a clear link. The choice fell on the design by Atelier Pierre Hebbelinck: a very large, inviting canopy with a closed box underneath, in which, in addition to the reception function, the museum shop, office space, the museum library and the castle archive, a closed depot, a storeroom and the sanitary facilities were also located. The architect conceived the building as a place with many functions under one roof: a generous, flexible 'box' with large, generous spaces that reflect the intrinsic qualities of the site.

The entrance pavilion deliberately does not have the same status as the castle or the historical buildings in the park, but has a humble and functional role, as a 'tool' at the service of the estate. Humble, yet no less powerful. An architectural statement that combines robustness with elegance, both in the choice of materials, where concrete, glass, wood and metal dominate, and in terms of visual allure.

The new building is located at the main entrance to the park area and thus acts as a gateway and link between the car park and the castle area, the starting point for everyone's visit to the castle, the museum garden and the park. From 1 July, visitors will be welcomed here in style. This year, only admission tickets to the museum garden will be sold, in order to be able to operate at full capacity once the castle is reopened in 2023.

Opening hours of the entrance pavilion 2022

From 1 July to 30 November

Monday Closed

Tuesday - Sunday

Open from 9.30 am to 12.30 pm and from 1.00 pm to 4.45 pm

Also open on public holidays

The Master Plan

History of the Master Plan

For the history of the Master Plan, we have to go back to 2012. Gaasbeek Castle had long been a site of European importance with a unique place in the Flemish museum landscape, but was beset by a number of issues. The building and the park with its architectural elements, had not always been treated with respect during the twentieth century. The castle interior was in urgent need of restoration and no longer met current museum standards and requirements. The preservation and management of the collection, the integral accessibility and the various public functions were also in need of a thorough upgrade. The extremely valuable historical buildings in the park were also seriously outdated and dilapidated.

In the absence of a clear vision of the entire domain of Gaasbeek Castle, the Department of Culture, Youth and Media commissioned the appointment of a Master Planner. The Brussels firm Bogdan en Van Broeck emerged as the best candidate and was awarded the contract.

From the outset, the Master Planner strongly emphasised the broader context, both of the castle itself in relation to the entire Gaasbeek Estate, and in relation to the neighbouring Groenenberg Estate, and of the two estates in relation to the wider area. In addition, the integral accessibility and experience of both the castle and the surrounding landscape were key points of the Master Plan. In order to reduce the pressure on the existing spaces in the castle, a study was also performed into where and how a new building could be constructed on the estate.

During the drawing up of the Master Plan, the designer looked for a way to integrate a new underground building into the park. Plans to place it under the museum garden, under the castle courtyard or inside the grassy slope in front of the castle were discussed at length, but none of these proposals gained support from the advisory bodies. In the end, by sheer chance, a plot on the street side of the estate came up for sale, located between the car park and the main road. The Department of Culture, Youth and Media and the Agency for Nature and Forests jointly provided the necessary funds to purchase this ideally located plot. This made it possible to create a new reception infrastructure that was highly visible to the public and that could act as a reception to the entire estate and not just the Castle.

Master Plan implementation

During the implementation of the Master Plan, the smaller historical pavilions in the park were tackled first, given that they were in the most critical condition. The old contract with Studio Roma was activated, so that the Baroque pavilion and the chapel house could be restored in collaboration with the contractor Renotec. Subsequently, the 17th century stucco ceiling was also restored by Altritempi, under the supervision of Lode Declercq. In a second phase, the architectural firm Bressers was appointed to restore the St. Gertrudis Chapel and the triumphal arch, also carried out by the contractor Renotec.

In a third phase, after much internal deliberation, the new reception building was finally tackled. Via an Open Call procedure, the architectural firm Pierre Hebbelinck in Luik was commissioned to construct a new reception building of 700 square metres on the newly acquired plot, which had to be integrated into the entire estate. An extensive programme of requirements was drawn up, which had to be realised within this limited footprint.

New reception building

The competition design introduced a spacious canopy, which fulfilled both a connecting and a functional role. This made it possible to respect the imposed footprint and to design a compact but functional ground plan. The area under the canopy provides additional space for the arrival of large groups and also allows indoor events to be organised.

In addition to a reception, the reception building also houses a number of functions that did not necessarily need to remain in the castle, such as administrative offices, a library, storage rooms and an air-conditioned depot. The location of the building contributes to a logical route from the street or the car park to the main road and the castle. This gives future visitors the opportunity to discover the site's potential at the start of their visit and to plan their overall visit, whereas in the past they had to walk all the way to the castle or the museum garden.

The designer opted for a rather atypical use of materials for this kind of programme, on the one hand based on a conviction of fair use of materials and on the other hand due to the budget proposed. Together with the canopy, this resulted in an innovative, contemporary design that does not seek to compete with the valuable historical highlights on the estate, but instead fulfils a supporting role with a contemporary character.

Future prospects

The new reception building is not, however, the end point of the realisation of the Master Plan. At present, the restoration of the castle itself is in full swing in a collaboration between architectural firm Origin and contractor Verstraete Vanhecke. The museum is currently closed for this, but will be able to be visited in its full glory again in the course of 2023.

In addition, a number of smaller projects are planned, such as the renovation of the Brasserie Graaf van Egmond, the reconstruction of the main road and the wayfinding for the entire estate.

Technical specifications

Location

Kasteelstraat 40 1750 Lennik

Architect

Atelier d'Architecture Pierre Hebbelinck, in cooperation with Julien Broers and Céline Schnitzler

Operational architecture

Kobe Van Praet (VersA)

Commissioning authorities

Government of Flanders, the Department of Culture, Youth and Media, the Agency for Nature and Forests

Trustee

Agency for Facility Operations

Contractor

Temporary Company Vandezande – Roels

Stability

BEG

Greisch (research)

Special Techniques

AE+

Landscape historian

Catherine Hebbelinck

Acoustics

Jean-Pierre Clairbois

Advisor

Iwert Bernakiewicz

User

Gaasbeek Castle

Contract award

Open Call

Total implementation cost

€ 2,656,994.91 excl. VAT

Photographer

François Brix

Partners

Gaasbeek Castle

Gaasbeek Castle sits enthroned amidst the rolling hills of Pajottenland just outside Brussels. The medieval castle has had an eventful history, evolving from a strategic stronghold to a spacious country house. The Count of Egmond, was one of its best-known owners. The present building was given its romantic restyling at the end of the nineteenth century by the enigmatic French Marchioness Arconati Visconti. She was the daughter-in-law of Milanese aristocrats Giuseppe and Costanza Arconati Visconti, who, between 1821 and 1839, turned the castle into a unique meeting place for intellectual exchanges between exiled Italian politicians, European writers and scientists. Marie Arconati Visconti was also interested in the great intellectual debates of her time, as her correspondence with and support for Alfred Dreyfus testify. She set up the castle as a museum for her considerable art collection and treated it like a historical theatre set. The dream castle created then is still something of a time machine with its historic interiors, tapestries, paintings, furniture, sculptures and other valuable objects.

The castle is currently closed for restoration work. The ultimate goal is a beautifully restored castle that reopens its doors in 2023 with no less than 30% more museum space, greatly improved accessibility, a cafe in the former coach house and a renewed layout. The design by the architectural firm Origin strives to balance and respect both the needs of the public and the museum itself, a unique *Theatrum Historiae* which Marquise Arconati Visconti donated to the Belgian State in 1922. In recent years, the castle evolved from a static museum into a dynamic heritage laboratory where historical heritage is juxtaposed with contemporary art.

The castle park, with its centuries-old trees, ponds, lanes, winding paths and occasional historic buildings, is the ideal place for winding down. The estate also includes a unique museum garden where old varieties of fruit and vegetables are cultivated.

www.kasteelvangaasbeek.be/en www.kasteelvangaasbeek.prezly.com/en

kasteelvangaasbeek@vlaanderen.be

Gaasbeek Castle kasteelstraat 40 1750 Lennik

The Agency for Facility Operations

The Agency for Facility Operations supports the entities of the Government of Flanders with a range of services in the area of facilities, document management and public procurement.

Government of Flanders construction projects

The Construction Projects Division of the Agency for Facility Operations implements building and renovation projects for buildings of the Government of Flanders.

These are administrative office buildings, but also youth institutions and education centres, control posts, airport buildings, warehouses and centres for environmental and nature education, cultural infrastructure and historic sites.

The projects range from minor interventions to thorough renovations, complete refurbishments or total new build.

The buildings are spread throughout Flanders and Brussels. Abroad, it undertakes the furbishing and management of several Flanders Houses where The Delegation of Flanders is housed.

The project leaders draw up the specifications in consultation with the client, place the design and construction contracts in the market and monitor the studies and works right up to delivery and transfer.

They can engage experts for professional advice and control in the area of integral accessibility, sustainability, circularity and workplace design. Themes that are central to the Agency for Facility Operations.

Coordinates

Agency for Facility Operations
Policy area of Chancellery, Public
Governance, Foreign Affairs and
Justice
Government of Flanders

Havenlaan 88 box 60 1000 Brussels T: Facilipunt 02 553 20 00 Head of communication team Bert Eggermont bert.eggermont@vlaanderen.be

Website and social media

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The Agency for Nature and Forests

The Agency for Nature and Forests cherishes, protects and develops over 222,000 acres of nature areas, forests and parks in Flanders, Belgium.

Nature and Forests loves to support precious nature projects, financially and through sharing its craftsmanship.

From planting your own woodland and initiatives aimed at improving the quality of nature to local projects for accessible nature nearby. Using the motto 'more, better, together' Nature and Forests creates broad support for nature, together with various partners.

From breathtaking European top nature in untrodden places to more modest nature gems round the corner: there is always something happening in the more than 300 nature areas of Nature and Forests. Get sporty on the multimove trails and nature runs, romp around in the play areas, feel zen in the nature oases or spot rare animals from the viewing platforms.

https://www.natuurenbos.be/



^ Sonian Forest, photo Patrick Huvenne

Playzone, photo Tom Linster >



Photos

Available in high resolution at https://kasteelvangaasbeek.prezly.com/media

Please always state the correct credit when publishing.

Contact



Annex: Press kit Atelier d'Architecture Pierre Hebbelinck

You will find the press file of Atelier Pierre Hebbelinck on the following pages.

ATELIER D'ARCHITECTURE PIERRE HEBBELINCK

CLIENT: FLEMISH GOVERNMENT, DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, YOUTH AND MEDIA, FACILITAIR BEDRIJF, AGENCY FOR NATURE AND FORESTS

OPEN CALL FOR PROJECTS, WINNING PROJECT 2016/ OPENING 2022 GAASBE

RECEPTIC **KASTEELSTRAAT** 1750 GAASBEEK **BELGIUM**

ATELIER D'ARCHITECTURE PIERRE HEBBELINCK



ARCHITECTURE

Atelier d'architecture Pierre Hebbelinck **Collaborators** Julien Broers Céline Schnitzler

STABILITY ENGINEER BEG

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES ENGINEER, PEB AE+

ACOUSTICS Jean-Pierre Clairbois

LANDSCAPE HISTORIAN Catherine Hebbelinck

OPERATING ARCHITECT Kobe Van Praet (VersA)

> **ADVISOR Iwert Bernakiewicz**

BUILDING COMPANIES Vandezande Roels

PHOTOGRAPHER François Brix

CREATION OF PIERRE HEBBELINCK'S MODEL Mellens et Dejardin

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CATHERINE HEBBELINCK

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ARCHITECTURE

The entrance pavilion of Gaasbeek Castle and its eponymous country estate was designed in autumn 2015 by Atelier d'Architecture Hebbelinck as part of the Open Call for Projects. After being selected as the winner, the client requested modifications to the structure of the roof. This note describes the path followed by the project from initial design to final completion.

It draws part of its substance from observations made in the wider Pajottenland region, from the analysis of its landscapes and their depiction by Bruegel. (°) (1)

The topography of the village of Gaasbeek is characterised by hills where the village is coiled around a medieval church (1381) and its century-old Saturday farmers' market. (At 3 p.m., the church bell rings and the stalls all open together, only to close less than an hour later when the exclusively local products are all sold).

In its cemetery is the humble tomb of Maurice Roelants (2), former director of Gaasbeek Castle, designed by renowned architect Willy Van Der Meeren. This tomb takes the form of a simple concrete mould of the grassy area of the cemetery, expressing the original earth, engraved with only the names and years of birth and

death of Roelants (1895/1966) and his wife. Van Der Meeren also designed the Roelants house (1962).(3)

Two castles compete for dominance on the bluffs. Gaasbeek Castle stands on a promontory overlooking a lake. It was transformed at the end of the nineteenth century (1887-1898) by the Marquise Arconati Visconti, who was a lover of art, politics and history. (4) The garden-museum with its baroque parterres, its vegetable garden and its orchards is one of the finest in Europe. (5)







[2_Tombe Roelants]



[3 Roelants House]





Between the two castles (Gaasbeek and Groenenberg), we observe a small valley, separating their lands. The pavilion project

does not set out to make an architectural statement but to provide a bridge slightly above the connecting landscape. (6)



[6_scheme coupe territorial]

It forms a simple cover, too vast to shelte r just the internal uses of a pavilion, and also offers cover to the groups of visitors and leaves room for activities. It serves as an ambassador for the local community.

The roof was first designed

as a concrete imprint of the existing floor, which saves on formwork. The perimeter required for the covering surface is surrounded by vertical boards, the reinforced concrete is poured and then lifted by hydraulic jacks along perennial columns. (7,



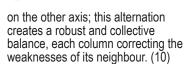
[8 Plaster model 2]

The small volume of the pavilion is then slipped under this shelter.

[8 Plaster model 1]

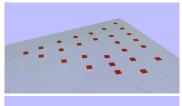
The pavilion includes an area designed to welcome visitors. a ticketing office, offices, the library and archives of the castle and a warehouse.

However, during the study phase, this idea of a concrete roof was abandoned in favour of a different concept. On a trip to Crete during the same period, when visiting the Palace of Knossos, I saw a temporary structure made, without plans, by archaeologists. (9) The simplicity and timelessness of the simple structure provided food for thought for the following proposition. We proposed to the engineer to work with slender steel profiles by alternating their performances. The IPE profiles perfectly take up the loads in one direction but are weak



In parallel to the design of this new structure, smooth, perfect, tense, we designed a volume made of the simplest and 'poorest' building material: a concrete block of 20 x 20 x40 cm. Its positioning makes use of the mortar of the joint, crushed under the weight of the block, protruding from the wall, giving it greater materiality, a hazardous texture, catching shadow and light.

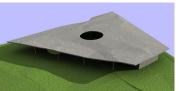
> Pierre Hebbelinck Liège 5 June 2022



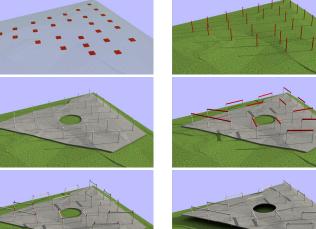


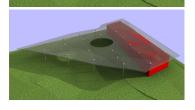






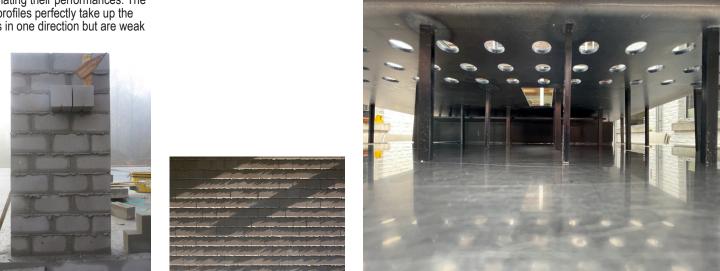








[9_Coverage of the archaeological site in Knossos]



[11_Final result]

[11_Moke up at the building site]

B

THE DESIGN GAVE RISE TO MORE THAN THIRTY MODELS (VARIOUS TYPES OF CARDBOARD, FOLDED PAPER, PLASTER,

MODELS



[Image 1 - Series]





[Image 2] [Image 3]







[Moule en platre de sol en terre, 2016]















[Cardboard model, parsley, plaster, 2017 draft, below]

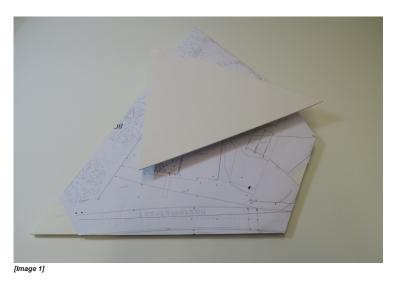


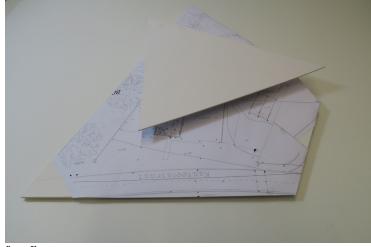




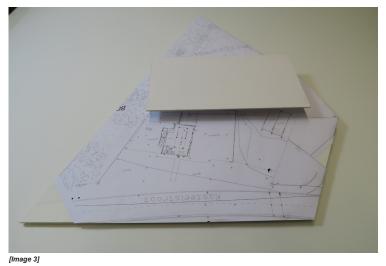


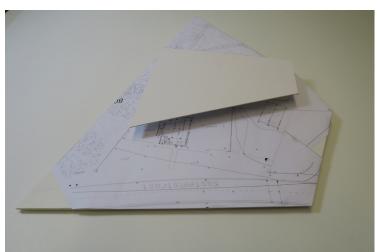
[View 4]



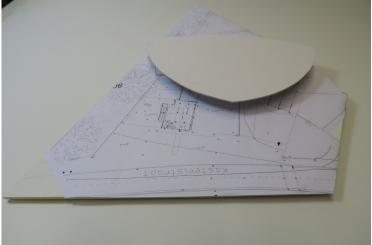


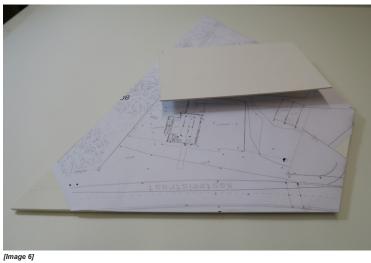
[Image 2]





[Image 4]





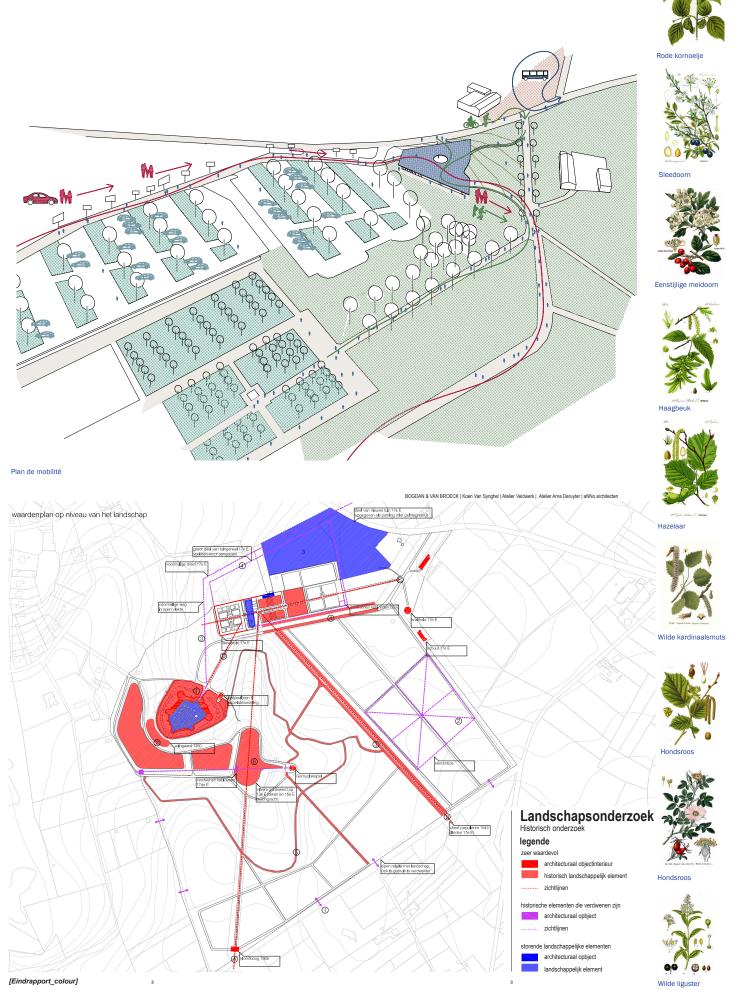




CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF EXPLOITING
THE LOCATION'S PEDAGOGICAL CAPITAL BY
ARRANGING A BOTANICAL NARRATIVE PATH
WITHIN THE VAST CAR PARK

THE LANDSCAPE HISTORIAN, CATHERINE HEBBELINCK

3. TOEGANGEN



D

THE CONSTRUCTION SITE PROVIDES
OPPORTUNITIES TO TEST SOME PLASTIC
ASPECTS OF THE CONSTRUCTION AT FULLSCALE: MOCK UP OF BLOCKS, FACTORY TEST
FOR THE FRAMES, ...)

MOKE UP





[Moke up blockwork with backflow joint / sculpture support]



THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN LUC VANACKERE, DIRECTOR OF THE CASTLE, AND THE ARCHITECT PIERRE HEBBELINCK WILL CREATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PLACE WORKS FROM THE COLLECTION BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE PREFABRICATED CONCRETE VOLUME.

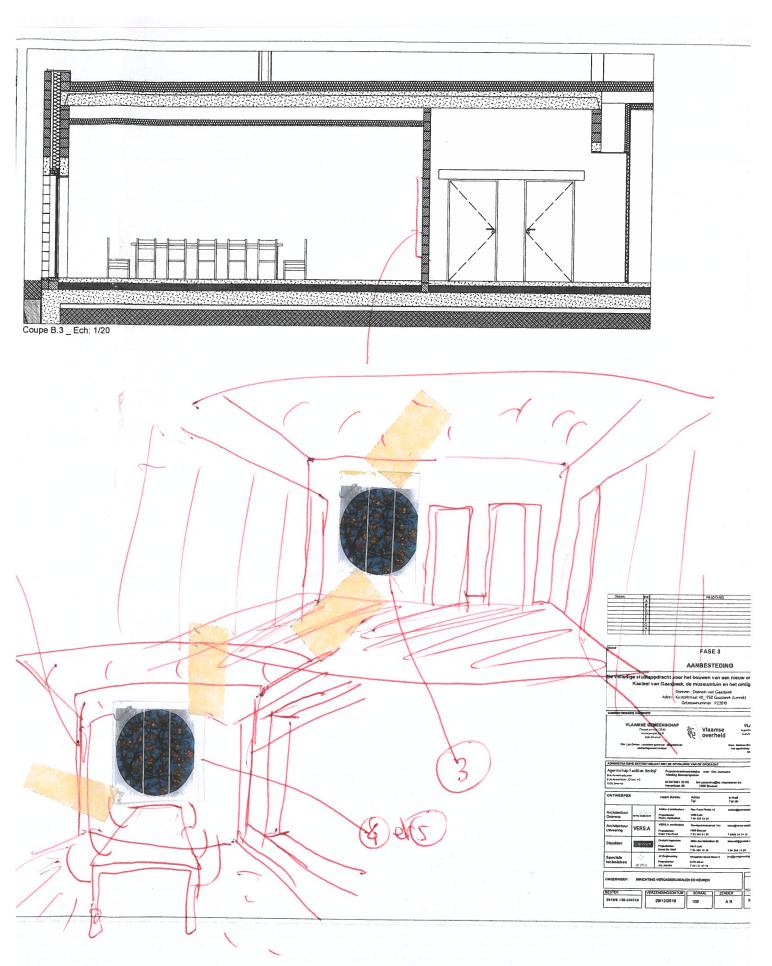
THE INSIDE OUTSIDE WORKS



[Carved head, medieval stone]



[Test of placement of Midievale stone sculptures on wall/in garden (collage on pencil drawing)



[Test work in collective office (collage / bic on paper)

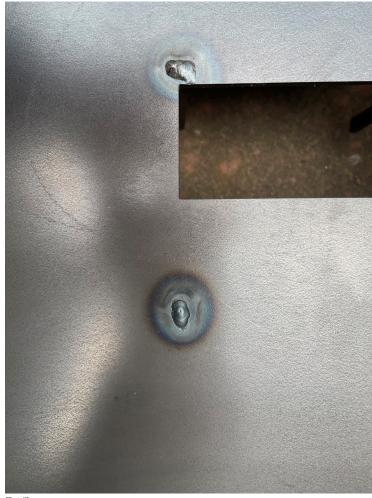
F

HIDDEN IN A DISCRETE PLACE, CONVEYING A FORM OF INITIATION. THIS PRACTICE COMES FROM THE OBSERVATION OF THE ITALIAN CHURCHES OF THE XIITH CENTURY WHERE THE MASTER BUILDER OFFERED A STONE MODEL TO HIS CLIENT. IT IS ALSO INSPIRED BY THE POEMS MOULDED IN THE SUMERIAN BRICKS AND WHICH DISAPPEAR IN THE THICKNESS OF THE WALL.

PIERRE HEBBELINCK PLACES A MODEL IN ALL OF HIS PROJECTS



[Fabrication atelier Mellens et Dejardin]



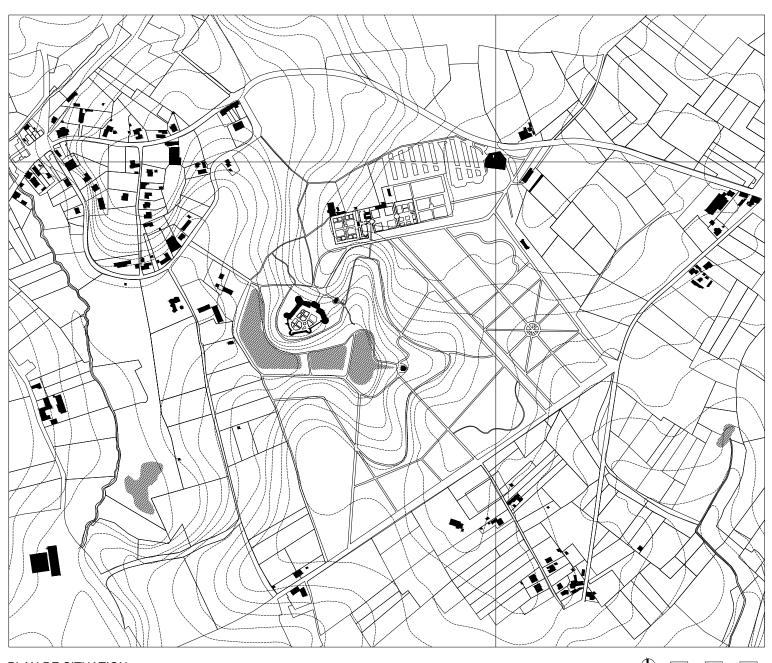
[Detail]





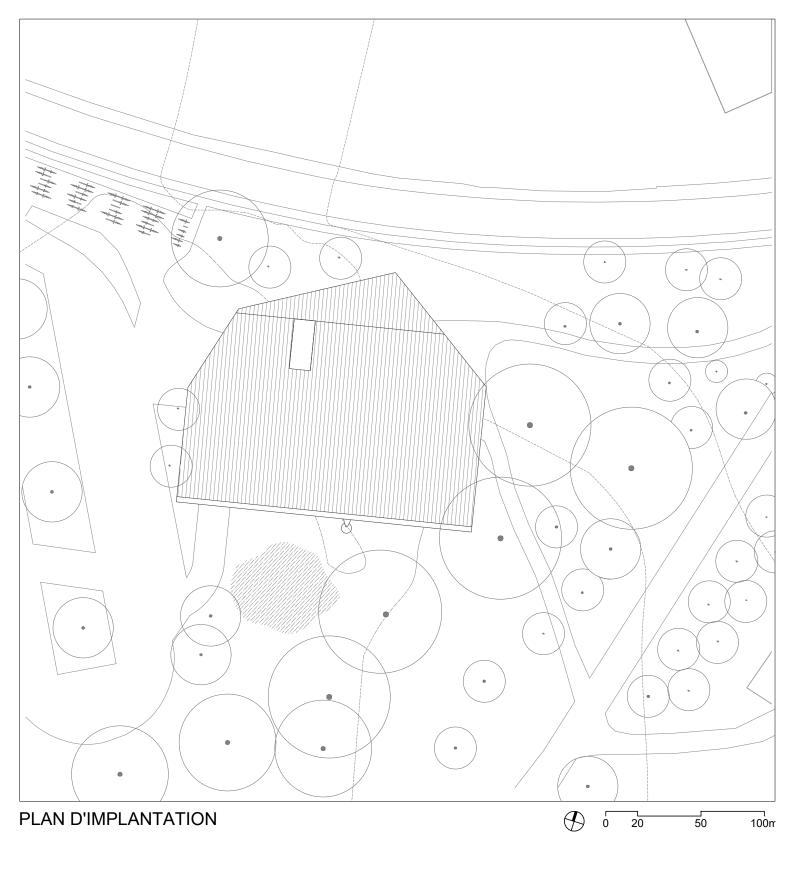
ATELIER D'ARCHITECTURE PIERRE HEBBELINCK

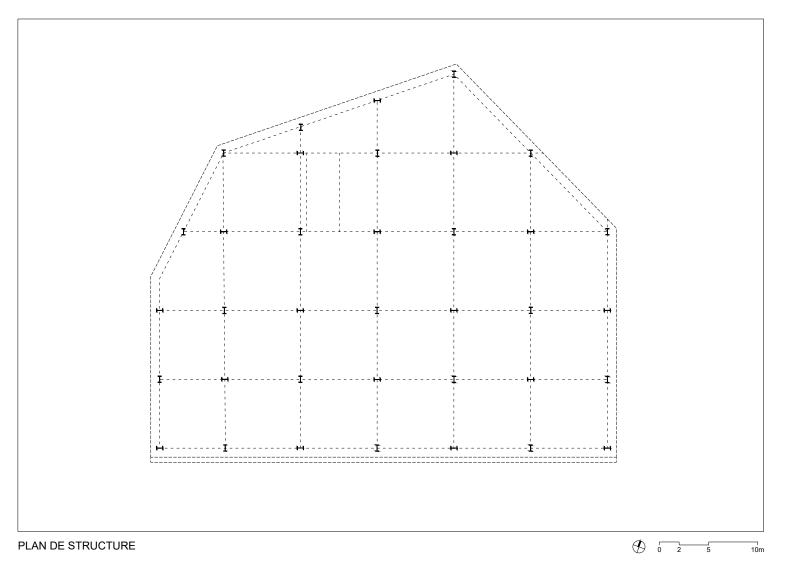
PLANS

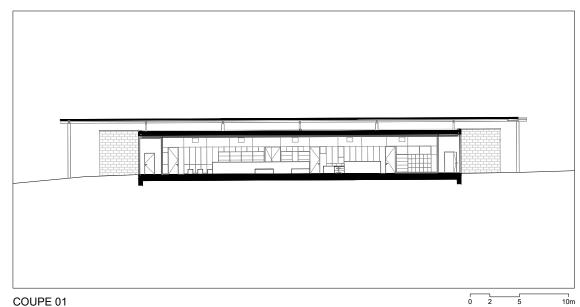


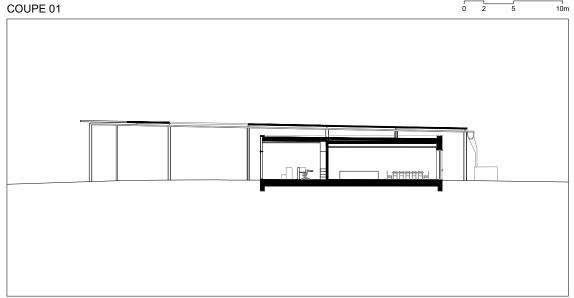
PLAN DE SITUATION

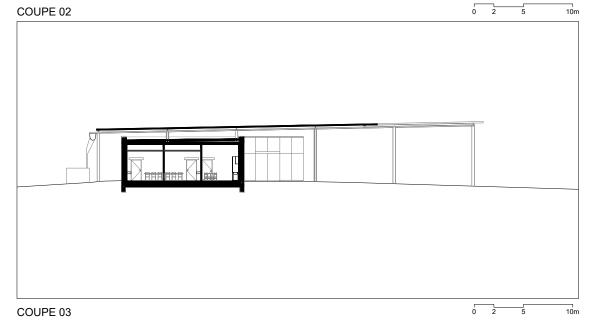
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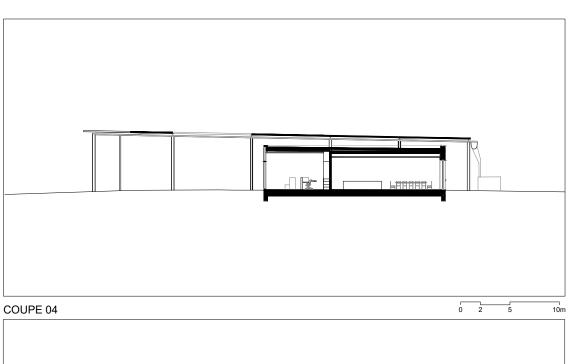


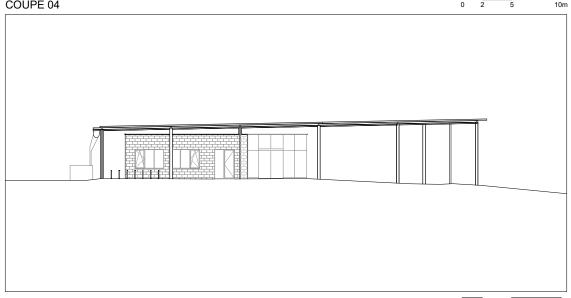


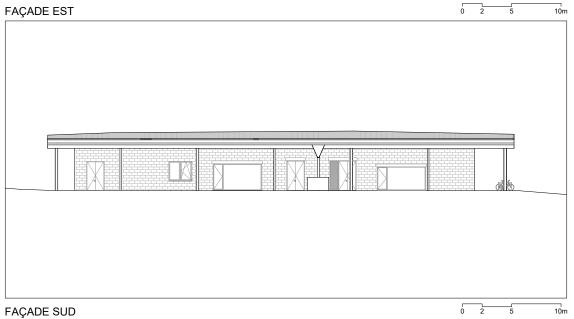


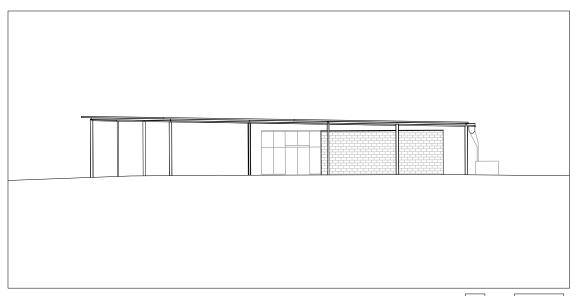


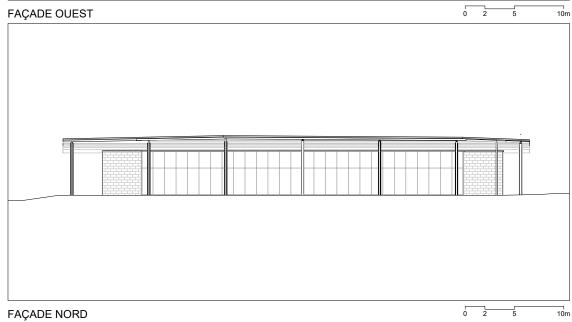


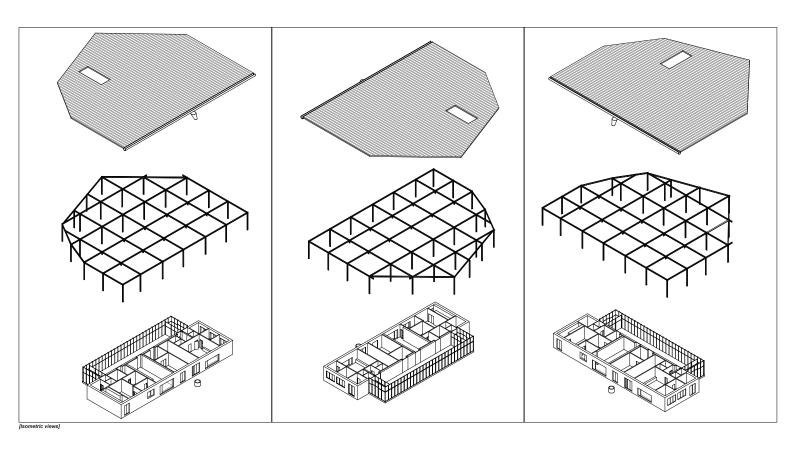




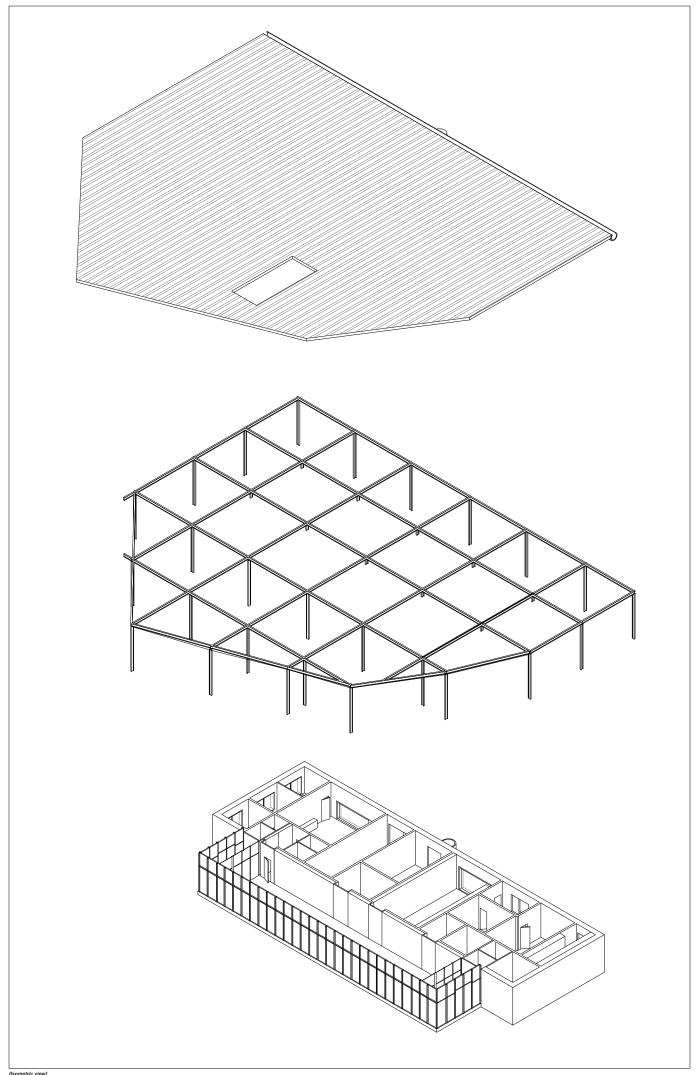








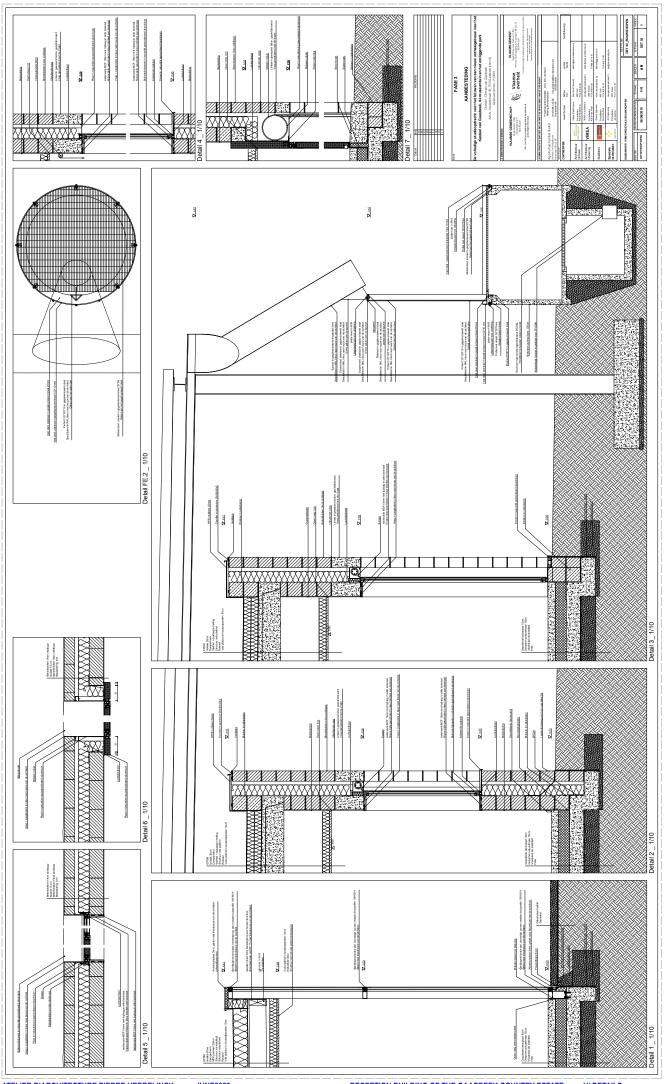
ATELIER D'ARCHITECTURE PIERRE HEBBELINCK



[Isometric view]

Н

DETAILS



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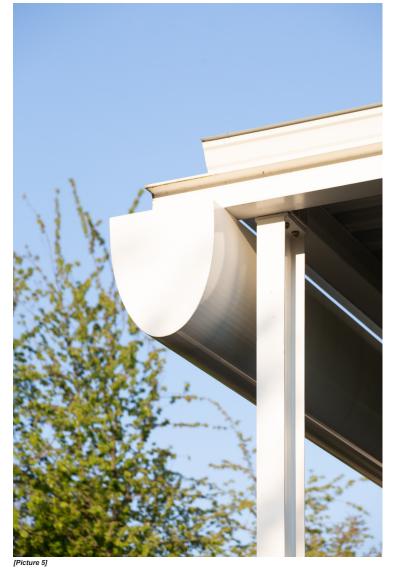






[Picture 3]





[Picture 4]
ATELIER D'ARCHITECTURE PIERRE HEBBELINCK







[Picture 8]



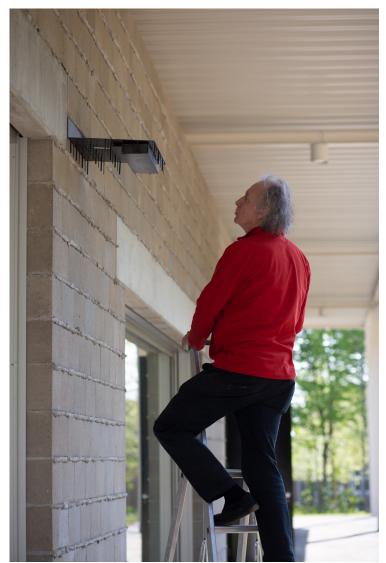
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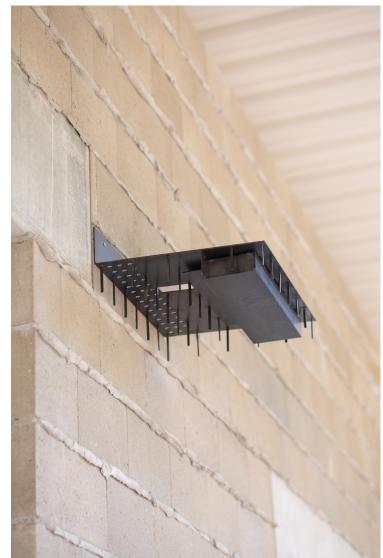


[Picture 10]



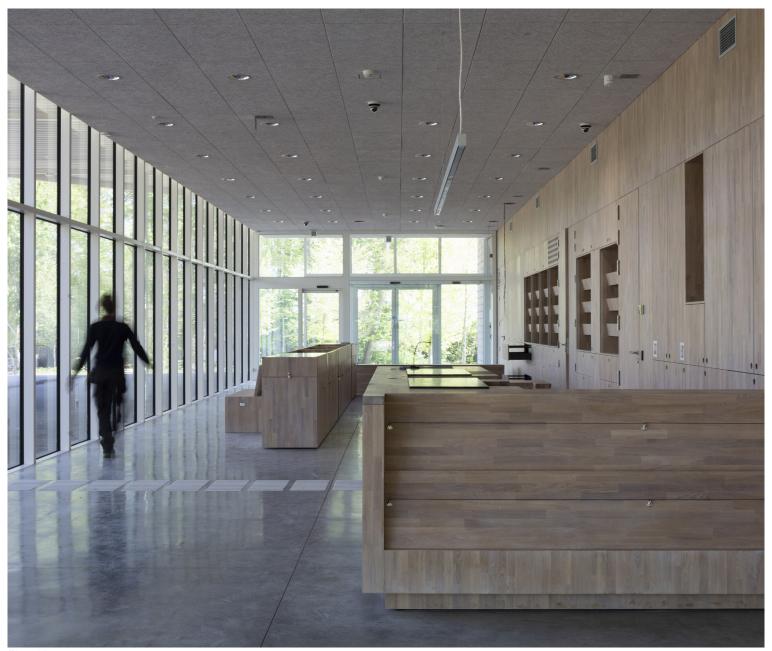
[Picture 11]





[Picture 12] [Picture 13]





[Picture 15]



[Picture 16]



[Picture 17]



[Picture 18]



ATELIER D'ARCHITECTURE PIERRE HEBBELINCK





JUNE 2022