

Press release

**The CASS**

**London Metropolitan University**

**Architectures  
Wallonie-Bruxelles**

**Inventaires  
Inventories #2  
2013–2016**

**Exhibition**

**06.04.2017 - 27.04.2017**

CONTACTS

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# WHAT ABOUT BELGIAN ARCHITECTURE ?

A cultural season on Belgian contemporary architecture, London, April-October 2017.

The CASS give us the great opportunity to show two main exhibitions on Belgian contemporary architecture between April and October 2017: *Architectures Wallonie-Bruxelles Inventaires #2 Inventories 2013-2016* and *entrer: five architectures in belgium*. Two exhibitions quite different in their presentation but similar in their statement. They both want to go beyond the common picture of architecture. The one that you easily find on Internet or in magazine because they are 'free of charge'. What they want to give is an analyse of the project and not the point of view that the architect wants to transmit about their own 'oeuvre'.

The exhibition *Inventaires #2 Inventories* propose to analyse 28 projects by on the interpretation of 25 authors from various media: writing, drawing, comics, photography. The projects shown were selected by an international jury from the 152 projects included in the book *Inventaires #2 Inventories*. Xavier Lelion and Anne Sophie Nottebaert, curators, with Benoit Henken as comic strip editorial adviser have associated an author with each project. These authors are, in some ways, novice users, they describe an inhabited architecture as they discover it. This creates a tangible and intellectual complicity between architects and authors. The intertwining of discourse and image allow us to understand a synthesis between form and its use, its destination; a work of mediation, transmission and explanation of the architecture to a wider audience.

*entrer: five architectures in belgium* is an

invitation to take a stroll through the traces of five committed architecture projects that have recently left their mark on the Belgian landscape. The stroll emerged as not only a result or a tool by which to grasp the spatiality and materiality of the projects, but also as an analytical method and as a medium to convey the results. It was the occasion for Audrey Contesse, curator of the exhibition, to glean and select objects relating to the history of the project and to architectural practice, and for the artists, Maxime Delvaux and Christophe Rault, to draw from it films and sound bites, respectively. These independent fragments – gleaned objects, films and sound bites – form five triptychs through which to enter, experience and understand these architectures.

Both of the exhibitions also want to show the diversity of the Walloon's and Brussels' territories and the diversity of the architectural answers that result in qualitative places of life.

These exhibitions are going to be coupled to a series of lectures.

Two of them (one in April and one in September) will have the same theme : Urban density, brownfields, landscape: how to transform the context to make it more sustainable? Six architects will explain their own architectural strategy on context (geographical, architectural, social, societal and political) to transform it positively on the long term. Even if the similarity of these territories and problematics in Belgium and England are obvious for us, we propose that William

Mann introduce the series: regarding to his implication in Inventories 2, he is the best person to highlight this similarity.

Proposition of programme :

06th April 2017

1/introduction by William Mann

2/Dessin & Construction office

3/MSA office

25th September 2017

1/introduction by William Mann

2/Baumans Deffet office

3/L'Escaut office

4/Baukunst office

5/Vers.A office

The two other events are linked to the specificity of each exhibition.

Inventories 2 had invited several comics authors. Comics is a particularity of Belgian culture.

Comics highlight another point of view on project: it gives an analyse of them and on the meantime, another way of representing it.

Because CASS is an art and an architectural school, it may be interesting to organise a workshop during the summer on this specific relationship. One of the comics author (B. Henken, for example) and one of the curator could work with students about the way to represent architecture in comics. This option and its detailing have of course to be discuss with the professors of the CASS.

*entrer:* had based its projects' selection on projects questioning their own commissions which is very specific from Belgium. The other particularity is the organisation of the public commissions that are more and more supervise by the three government architects mainly in charge of developing an architecture of quality all around Belgium. Is such a position conceivable in England? How to get public or private commissions in England compare to Belgium? We propose to organise a round table with 6 people maximum: Belgian's architects, London's architects, one Belgian government architects, relevant personalities from London identify with your help.

*These exhibitions are the initiative of Wallonia-Brussels Architectures (WBA) and of the Architecture cell of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels. Together we support practices which testify of the know-how of our architects, with a particular attention on the emergence. We aim to confer an international visibility on these talented designers in particular by creating exhibitions, ensuring their international tour and organizing lectures that give the opportunity to allow architects' panel of Wallonia and Brussels to make their work known.*



# ARCHITECTURES WALLONIE-BRUXELLES

## INVENTAIRES # 2 INVENTORIES

### 2013-2016

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#### AUTHORS

Abdel de Bruxelles, cartoonist  
Pierre Blondel, architect  
François Chaslin, architect and critic  
Laurent Cilluffo, cartoonist  
Nathalie Cobbaut, journalist  
Marie-Noëlle Dailly, photographer  
Laurent Dandoy, cartoonist  
Sophie Dawance, architect  
Cyril Elophe, cartoonist  
Maud Faivre, photographer  
Joseph Falzon, cartoonist  
Loïc Gaume, cartoonist  
Jochen Gerner, cartoonist  
Sacha Goerg, cartoonist  
Florent Grouazel, cartoonist

Benoit Henken, cartoonist  
Alain Janssens, photographer  
Mathilde Kempf, architect and town planner  
Stéphane Lambert, writer  
Lisa Lugrin and Clément Xavier, cartoonists  
William Mann, architect  
Michel Mazzoni, photographer  
Jean-Philippe Possoz, architect  
Françoise Rogier, illustrator  
Michel Sadowski, photographer  
Adrien Tirtiaux, cartoonist  
Katrien Vandermarliere, critic, curator  
Cécile Vandernoot, architect  
Daniel Wagener, photographer  
Aurélie William Levaux, cartoonist, illustrator

# PRESENTATION

The exhibition highlights the third volume of the *Inventaires # Inventories* collection. Initiated in 2010, the *Architectures Wallonie-Bruxelles Inventaires # Inventories* collection sets out to paint an up-to-date picture of recent architectural developments in Wallonia and in Brussels and to illustrate the commitment shown by the public authorities and private individuals in the search for an architecture that is in step with its time and with concerns to improve our living environment.

This third volume, entrusted to Xavier Lelion et Anne Sophie Nottebaert after a call for projects, it identifies, appraises and reports on architectural production in Wallonia and Brussels.

The exhibition aims to present a survey of inventories, investigations and texts written for the eponymous publication. It sets out to analyze 28 projects by examining the work of 25 authors from a variety of media: writing, drawing, comics, and photography. Selected in partnership with our comic book advisor, Benoit Henken, these authors are, in some respect, 'newbies': they describe a living architecture through the process of discovering it. This approach develops a delicate sense of complicity and an exchange of ideas between architects and authors. The marriage of written and visual forms becomes a means of understanding the meeting of form and use, the destination. It is a project grounded in mediating, communicating and explaining architecture to a wider audience.

In London, William Mann will present a framework for the exhibition which aims to

shed light on the conditions of production for architecture within our sphere of action. This sphere may be limited, but it offers a wide variety of contexts for action, for both architects and contractors from Wallonia and Brussels. Our intention is to organise projects in the print racks into a classification that includes the different types of territories (dense cities, post-Industrial sites, and rural areas), which will allow us to communicate the physical texture and social context of the different situations in which architects work, in order to allow the London public to grasp and appreciate the inventiveness of the architects. Some projects, exclusively represented by a comic strip, are displayed on the wall with all of the documents concerned.

The inaugural conference, to be introduced by William Mann of Witherford Watson Mann Architects and the curators, will feature contributions from MSA and Dessin et Construction, two agencies whose work involves town planning as well as architecture. The conference represents an opportunity to explain the process behind a building short-listed for the Mies Van der Rohe prize within the context of 'neighbourhood contracts' (an urban renovation project organized by a public contractor) and, on the other hand, an architectural practice akin to editing in response to the efforts of residents seeking to improve their living environment.

The ranking is as follows:

## DENSE CITIES

### Rack n°1

- Straw-bale house
- Van Elewijck
- MD conversion
- Extension PAB

### Rack n°2

- Delhaize Quai de Rome
- Barracks

### Rack n°3

- Place communale de Molenbeek
- Quais de Sambre
- Jardin des quatre tourettes

### Rack n°4

- Mundaneum
- Arsonic
- Liège Theatre

### Rack n°5

- Galatea crèche
- Sceptre
- Passive apartment building in Schaerbeek

### Rack n°6

- Conservatoire de Nantes
- Prins Dries

## POST-INDUSTRIAL SITES

### Rack n°7

- Keramis
- Interlac
- Martinet
- Pôle Marexhe - Herstal station

## RURAL AREAS

### Rack n°8

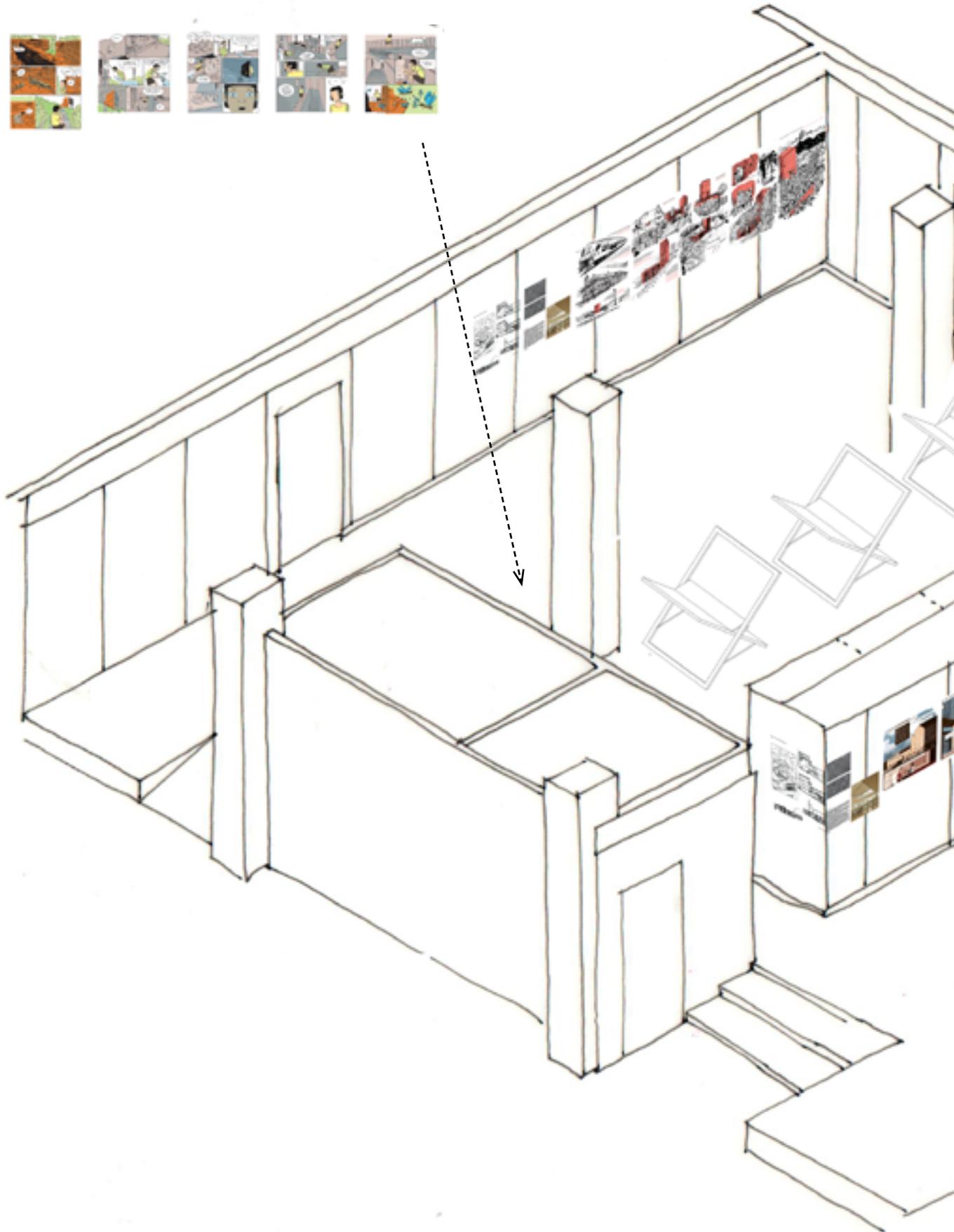
- Schaap
- CR house
- Workshop

### Rack n°9

- La Fraineuse
- EESCF
- Thieusies
- Montigny-le-Tilleul town hall



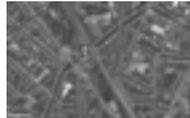
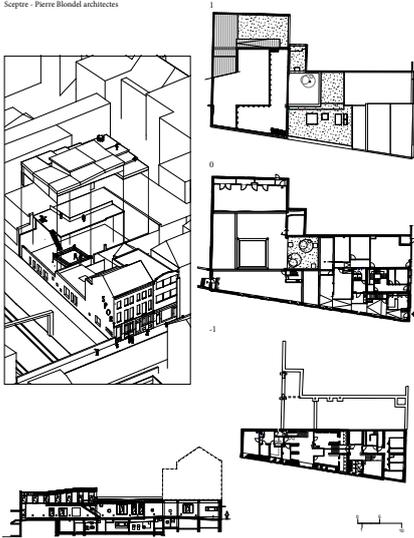
# LAYOUT OF THE EXHIBITION AT THE CASS - LONDON





# ON THE WALL (two of the projects)

Sceptre - Pierre Blouard architects



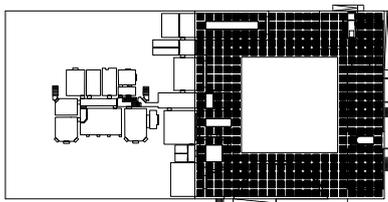
**"SCEPTRE"**  
 Architect: PIERRE BLOUARD ARCHITECTS  
 Client: CITE DE LA BIÈRE  
 Building owner: COMBINE CRÉDIT

What is public architecture any more? Both classical and modernist architects conceived public buildings from the street and beyond, asserting and celebrating the improved power of the state or the abstract collective. This project shows an interesting path for design writing an architectural sensibility for the final, granular collective spirit of the building.

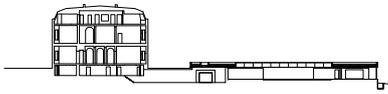
The project creates a series of hall for housing and several are, based on the logic of the urban block, and carved out from an old factory building. It is a reference to the horizontal lines of the front, a great sense reached by a modern door and a side passage. The modernity of the existing space makes for complex architectural expressions, wrapping and weaving.

The roof of the sports hall appears like a ribbon out of the old brick facade, the design is not an addition. This ribbon comes from the space of the street, the design is not an addition. This ribbon comes from the space of the street, the design is not an addition. This ribbon comes from the space of the street, the design is not an addition.

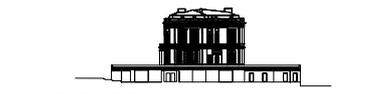
William Mann



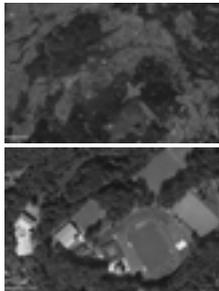
PLAN REC-DE-CHAUSSEE / GRAND PLAIN PLAN



COUPE UNIVERSELLE / UNIVERSEL SECTION



COUPE TRANVERSAL / CROSS SECTION

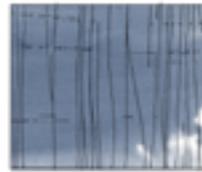


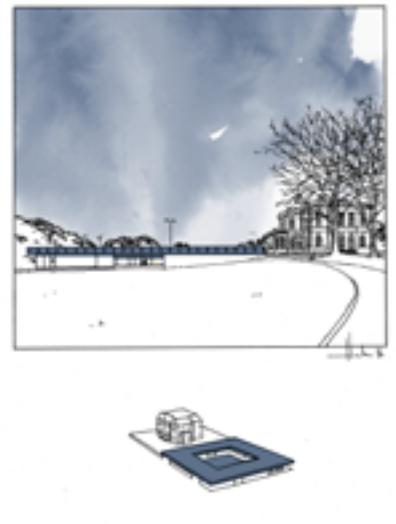
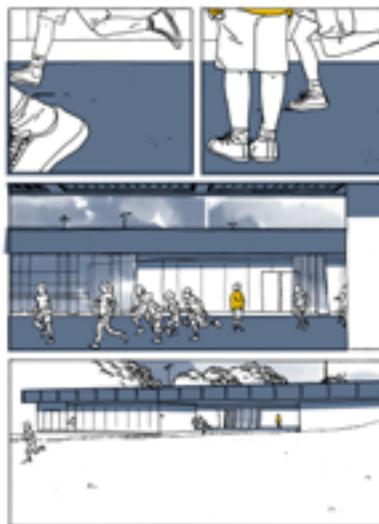
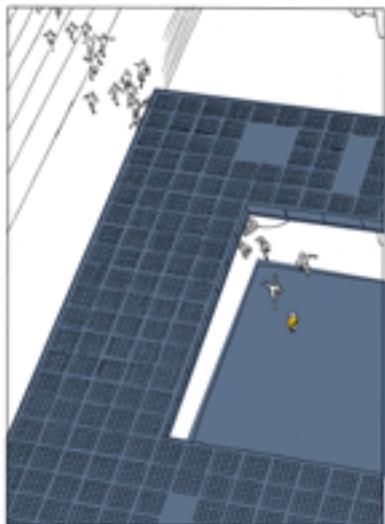
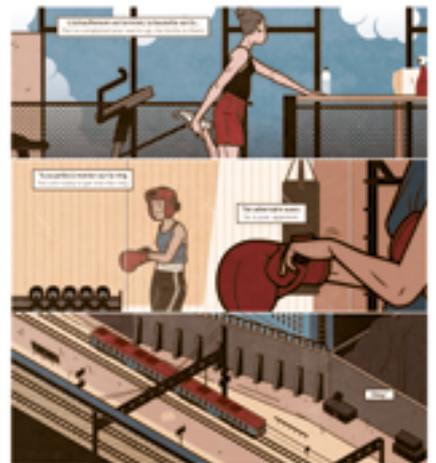
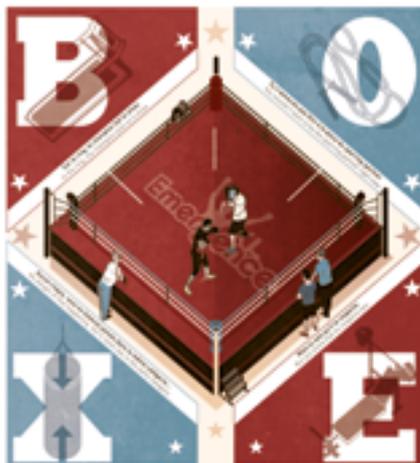
315 - Adepto sport center in Spa-La Fraïreuse

The redevelopment of the La Fraïreuse sports site by the architects' firm Baukunst is an interesting project in many ways. Their brief had ambitions in its ambition. Could a young firm with a limited track record yet rigorous design principles be entrusted with reorganizing the whole historic site, dating from the 19th century? The answer was "yes". Indeed, the project was part of a series of pilot projects, initiated by the Architecture Unit of the Walloon-Brussels Federation. Baukunst architects' firm has managed to redevelop the entire site through a series of strategic design choices. The castle, for example, now rests on a gravel base. In addition, the topography of the site, as well as traffic and occupancy of its spaces have been given new meaning thanks to the new infrastructure.

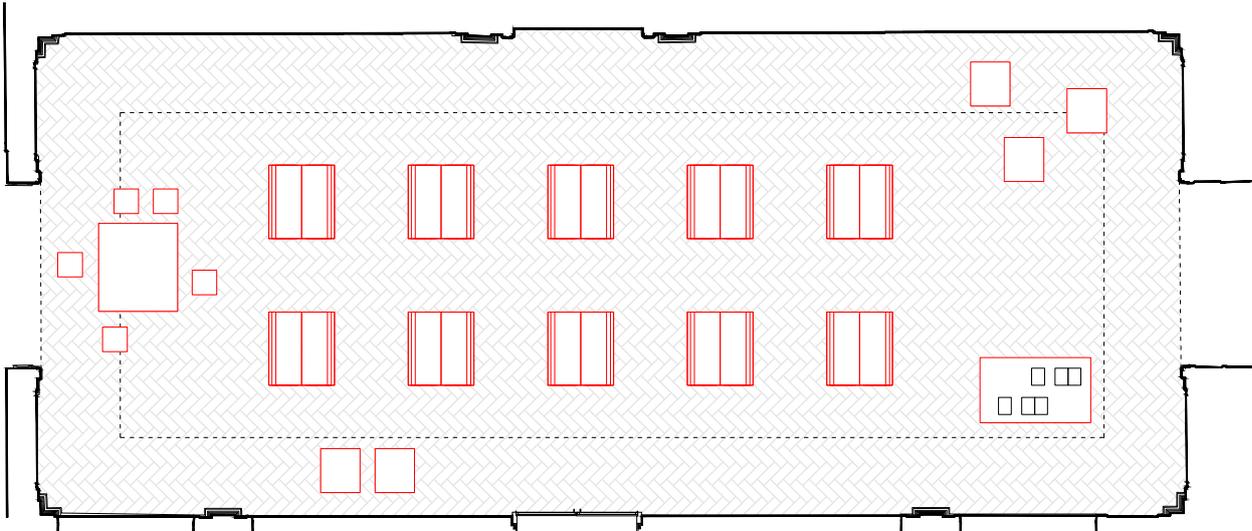
In terms of construction, the ambitions of Baukunst take the tangible form of a pure structure, comprising hard boundaries, which imply a certain abstraction, and generate a self-standing architecture. This architecture is not incompatible with the informal character or the adaptive character of sports or youth centers. When mastered, a pure architectural hierarchy, which clearly reflects some historical references, can be welcoming for any kind of informal activities. The primary need has been met if the design provides a structure, a centre, and a lodging. If its space is proportional to the site and individual, and if it allows freedom of use and various forms of experimentation, then it transcends the values of representation and symbolism that only consensus of architecture are able to see.

Baukunst architects' firm has opted for a limited range of materials. A distributed graphic design is enhanced by a minimalist choice of materials, and even more so by ruthless execution. As far as the La Fraïreuse site is concerned, this is the case for concrete, steel and steel. This know-how, or the ability to obtain a great result from contractors and workers on the construction site, is one of Baukunst's key features, which is quite remarkable for a young architectural firm, or may be after all, considering the previous track record of





# THE EXHIBITION AT THE THEATRE DE LIEGE









# THEMES DEVELOPED IN THE LIEGE EXHIBITION

## *AN ARCHITECTURE OF NEGOTIATION*

The architects of Wallonia and Brussels have shown how skilled they are at developing “an architecture of negotiation”, of a very high quality, as some members of the jury remarked. We do not like this term, which in a way compares architects to carpet sellers! Instead of its Latin etymology, which refers to a commercial activity, we prefer the meaning as used in 1544, in *Papiers de Granvelle*, because of its political and diplomatic dimension: “an activity undertaken to reach an agreement about public or private affairs”\*. This type of architecture focuses on combining considerations of use, location, economy. Strong contingencies influence the intentions. It accepts the existing situation as a canvas, as a place to start the design process.

Negotiation takes the living and inanimate objects into account. Negotiation means envisaging the future, starting from the existing situation, namely the buildings, the city, the material heritage as well as the inhabitants, the intangible heritage and social practices. Negotiation operates between these two polarities, creating a space where people can live (starting from an empty space) as well as buildings, mass (filling the space) to help situate people themselves in the space.

This architecture cuts away a space for a “boxing club” or a nursery in the dense built space that is Brussels, adds an “empty floor” to double the size of a playground in a school in Antwerp and shows that a city can regenerate. And in contrast with cases such as the Martinet coal mine, Interlac in Dison and the banks of the River Sambre, this architecture wants to reduce the excess of vacant space (too little activity to ensure a site’s viability), establishing reference points so a future can be envisaged.

## *BUILDINGS THAT CREATE PUBLIC SPACE*

L’espace public n’est pas qu’une question de zone, de flux, de circulation, de réglementation, de mobilier urbain, de revêtement de sol : il se dessine, il s’articule. Une série de projets, parfois même privés, comme l’ensemble de logement «Caserne» à Mons, l’installation d’une surface commerciale à Liège, démontrent que l’architecture peut être fondatrice de l’espace collectif extérieur. Le Mundaneum se construit autour d’une place intérieure. La gare d’Herstal est un pavillon qui connecte verticalement les quais haut perchés à la rue principale de Herstal située dans la vallée.

\* [www.cnrtl.fr](http://www.cnrtl.fr) : Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales

## *CROSS-SECTIONS AND PROFILES*

Seen from this angle, certain buildings resemble portraits, characters, creatures. This anatomical game, which forgets about the reality of scale, becomes a metaphor for creative connivance, which operates in the same way in large and small projects. A square can be a neo-classical salon. Even though this inventory clearly reveals that the majority of private projects are small-scale projects and family dwellings while medium to large-scale projects are public buildings (culture, sport, schools, community contracts).

Apart from the principal, taking into account concerns that extend beyond the private sphere often gives rise to qualitative architectural projects. A series of buildings comes together to form a public space, a park reorganises a neighbourhood, a house suggests a reflection on the relationship between comfort and environmental awareness... There are not that many larger, community projects in this category. An ongoing challenge, where precursors are showing the way.

This anatomical game, which forgets about the reality of scale, becomes a metaphor for creative connivance, which operates in the same way in large and small projects.

## *THE INHABITANT'S PERSPECTIVE*

Neither the architect, nor the editorial team have direct control over the submitted image. Who is the author closest to? The architect or the user? When there was time or because the authors wanted this -, we focused on the mediation, transmission and explanation of the architecture. In some of the contributions, there are doubts about whether the project was understood. Certain contributions do not exactly incarnate what the architect is explaining. But the authors' enthusiasm about receiving this trust often led to interesting encounters (Stéphane Lambert and Matador, Loïc Gaume and Martiat + Durnez) or astonishing projections (ARJM's Herstal station as seen through the eyes of Florent Grouazel) They led us to see things that we had not yet seen, not yet understood in the projects: in some cases, a certain overlap between form and use, purpose (La Fraineuse as seen through the eyes of Benoît Henken, the Mundaneum as seen through the eyes of Joseph Falzon, the school in Thieusies as seen through the eyes of Lisa Lugin and Clément Xavier). The combination of these stories from different sources tells us more about how this architectural project was received. It should also help us better understand the creative process.



*An architecture of negotiation*



*Buildings that create public space*



*Cross-sections and profiles*



*The inhabitant's perspective*



