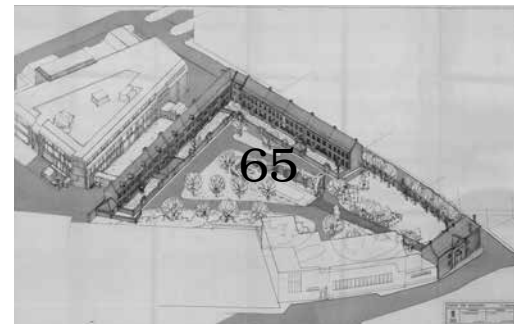


Trace

Notes on adaptive reuse

N°3 On Collectivity



Preface
S. Devoldere 5

Editorial

Sharing places
 Articulating collectivity in the existing fabric
B. Plevoets & N. Augustiniok 7

Visual essay
 'Liberating images'
 Multiple representations of adaptive reuse of monastic heritage
N. Vande Keere & S. Heynickx 14

Adaptive reuse processes and the challenge of collective hybridity
 Networks of wires anchoring monastic heritage sites in their spatial or social past and future
K. Lens. 27

Palaces of collective endeavour
 Cultural institutions as projects of using and appropriating the city
C. Grafe 37

Collective housing and adaptive reuse
 Modern versus contemporary notions of collectivity
M. Moors & B. Plevoets 45

Milieux de mémoire
 Recovering the collective memory of monastic heritage
N. Vande Keere 55

Memory as a design studio
 The transformation of the Hasselt Beguinage into a Faculty of Architecture
K. Van Cleempoel. 65

Colofon 80

Visual essay

‘Liberating images’

Multiple representations of adaptive reuse of monastic heritage

N. Vande Keere & S. Heynickx.

‘Remodeling can be seen as writing over, as underlining, as partially erasing, as interstitial writing (writing between the lines), as a way of qualifying, accentuating, quoting, commenting upon, as digression, interlude, or interval, as a way of writing parenthetically, of setting off by punctuation, as a new form for an old story. (The uses of metaphor are thick and richly layered because they expand the awareness of possibilities; let them explode, and with them liberating images of exhausted vocabularies and uncommon rhetorical manners will appear, and perhaps some invention.)’

Rodolfo Machado, *Old buildings as palimpsest*, 1976¹

‘An architectural survey has always been and always will be an activity that is free (liberated from all rigid, preconceived ideas), creative (able to reveal unexpected characteristics of the surrounding world) and progressive (ready to replace metric precision with cultural appropriateness)’.

Paolo Belardi, *Why Architects Still Draw*, 2014²

In ‘Old buildings as palimpsest’, Rodolfo Machado borrows from the terminology of literary criticism for his metaphors on remodelling or adaptive reuse. Considering remodelling similar to rewriting or altering formal features to adjust meanings, he emphasises the form-form (old versus new) relationship as a critical design activity rather than the form-function relationship in transforming buildings. With the metaphor of the *palimpsest* (a manuscript with new writing on top of an erased text), he acknowledges the inherent layered quality of the approach of adaptive reuse and, by extension, the architectural project.

In his book, *Why Architects Still Draw*, Belardi argues for the activity of hand drawing as a way of thinking – as an interface between the idea and the project itself. The difference between the use of a pencil or a computer is not relevant in his discourse. For him, the augmented sensitivity of the architectural survey is always moving beyond passive or mere measurement and informed with a historical and cultural context. In a similar way and together with the drawing, we consider the critical ‘vocabulary’ of models, photographs, maps, and other media as ‘liberating images’, translating the layered quality of a project graphically and adding to a ‘multiplicity of levels of reading’ in Machado’s sense.

In this visual essay, we show a selection of the design work developed by the students of the International Master in Adaptive Reuse during the academic year 2018–2019 at the Faculty of Architecture and Arts at Hasselt University. The first two proposals are results of the Design Studio during the first semester, working on the Beguinage of Antwerp

(BE). The site underwent various restoration phases, reflecting different approaches to preservation. The students focused conceptually on the scale of the distinct houses and convents to serve as examples for an approach of the site as a whole. They developed the transformation of a typical dwelling and an adaptive reuse project. The third proposal was developed in the second semester as a Master’s project, considering the adaptive reuse of the ruined Stoudios Monastery in Istanbul (TU). Both sites have a (semi-)monastic origin. All three projects took into consideration a new collective programme as a reflection of the former religious community, strengthening the relationship between the interior and exterior and improving the connections with the neighbourhood.³

The three projects are explained chronologically, based on the concept of an architectural survey but with the use of different ‘vocabularies’ or media. The step by step discovery of the site and its qualities gradually merge with the interventions. They all examine, invent, and build simultaneously. The layers do not have a strict order but interact according to the personal process of the designer. The architectural representation on each page shown here balances technical conventions with atmospheric impressions differently while informing the next. By switching between ‘vocabularies’, the acquired knowledge is transferred and combined with each addition. Besides reflecting the students’ stages in the design process, the intention is to showcase the variety of the graphic work, its direct and sometimes indirect intentions (subtext or ‘writing between the lines’), and, most of all, its potential to speak to the imagination.

¹ Rodolfo Machado, ‘Old buildings as palimpsest – Toward a theory of remodeling’, *Progressive Architecture* 11 (1976): 48.

² Paolo Belardi, *Why Architects Still Draw*, trans. Zachary Nowak (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014), 43.

³ For a reflection on the historical sites and design proposals in relation to heritage as a collective good, we refer to the article ‘*Milieux de Mémoire: Recovering the collec-*

tive memory of monastic heritage’. Both articles develop a discourse starting from the same projects. As such, they are able to inform each other but can also be read independently.

#01 Site photographs

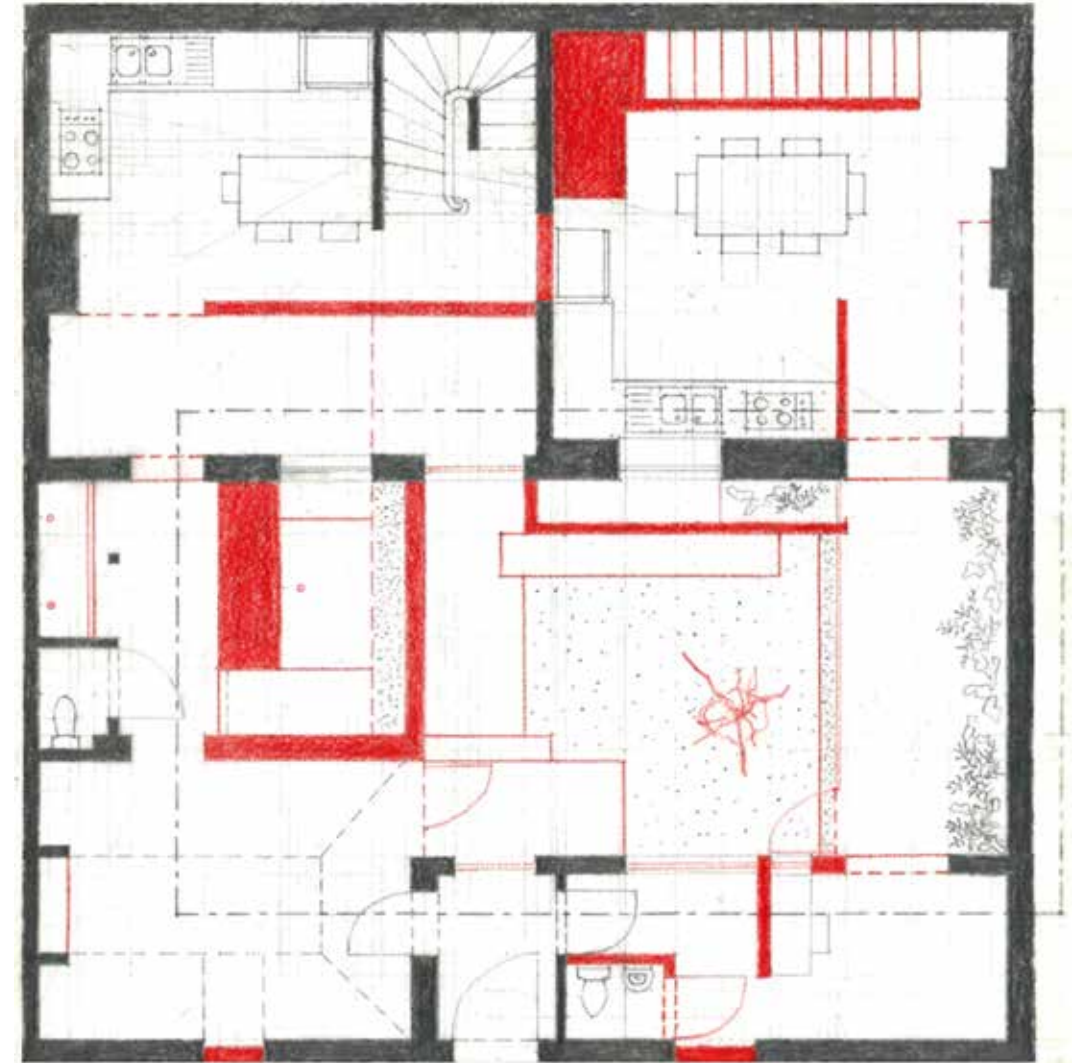


[1] Matthew Moskal, existing condition front courtyard of dwelling n°18, Beguinage of Antwerp.

The photographic survey of a front courtyard reveals the atmospheric quality of a neglected garden and dilapidated volumes. Details such as door handles, an old doorbell, a light bulb, and wall tiles betray the life once lived here. The invasion of ivy defines the horizontal green surface, its overgrowth starting to take over the inner walls. The surroundings pop

up behind the walls and the roofs. The turret on the roof of a church and the façade of a modernist building indicate an urban environment somewhere in the distance. The introvert space only exists due to its background. The combination of interior and exterior forms the inspiration for the project: the garden as a room.

#02 Handmade drawing



[2] Matthew Moskal, new floorplan of dwelling n°18, Beguinage of Antwerp.

The floorplan of the project is drawn in pencil with two colours as a dialogue between old and new. Interventions are indicated in red, the thickness of every wall filled. The old dwelling and front volumes are divided between two residents: a local artist and a visiting professor. Existing elements are kept as much as possible. New walls are delicately inserted

according to an orthogonal pattern. New trajectories partly using old ones unfold. The interior spaces envelop the enclosed garden becoming thus the central common space. The careful attention to composition, detail, and a human scale mark the transformation, which can be read as an exercise in recalibration.



[3] Matthew Moskal, design front garden of dwelling n°18, Beguinage of Antwerp.

The isometry gives a detailed and almost technical view of the interior of the patio and its connections to the surrounding spaces. The existing volumes and the darker line delineate the space as a frame. The drawing cuts away the main volume of the dwelling and opens up the patio to resemble a view into it from the top floor. The human figures and the architectural elements with the scale of furniture

make for a habitable garden. The running water of the outdoor shower feeds into a small rectangular pool. A raised step and a low wall indicate the access for the artist. A passage along an existing wall with an arrangement of plants connects the front spaces with the dwelling for the professor. An opening downwards allows for natural light in the basement.



[4] Matthew Moskal, design front courtyards of dwellings n°25-31, Beguinage of Antwerp.

A volumetric model in grey and white functions on the urban scale of the beguinage and its direct surroundings. It deliberately abstracts the natural pallet of green, red, and brown and represents the beguine houses in a unified tone. The model tests the transformation of the front gardens of the convent and adjacent dwellings as entrances and outdoor spaces for a psychiatric rehabilitation centre

for children. It shows the central interventions in a rudimentary way in cardboard. A gradual zoom-in of the model forms an introduction to the concept of the design. Where the roofscape and the outline of the front volumes largely respect the existing structure, the open quality at eye level creates transparency and new connections between the courtyards.



[5] Adèle Hogge, concept alley and front courtyards of dwellings n°32-44, Beguinage of Antwerp.

Simple sketches drawn on top of the existing situation plan define the narrative for a new collective form. Three interventions mark the concept of the transformation on an urban scale:
 1) An added connection to the nearby square *Ossenmarkt* in the south turns the dead-end alley into a lively urban passage.
 2) The connecting spaces between the main buildings and courtyard volumes are removed. The front

volumes are thus separated from the dwellings to function independently as pavilions or showcases to passers-by.
 3) The words jotted around the sketch indicate possible functions inspired by beguine culture and emphasising handicrafts or local retail, e.g. textile atelier, bakery, bookshop, grocery store, art gallery, café.



[6] Adèle Hogge, adaptation facades and front courtyards of dwellings n°18 and 44, Beguinage of Antwerp.

Models of the individual dwellings show the basic scale and proportions of the facades and front courtyards. The use of white cardboard and paper for both existing and new elements makes an abstraction of the materials and unifies the different spaces. Small surgical interventions become apparent only after taking a second look.
 N°18: A new transparent corridor connects the front with the back; a vertically aligned dormer window

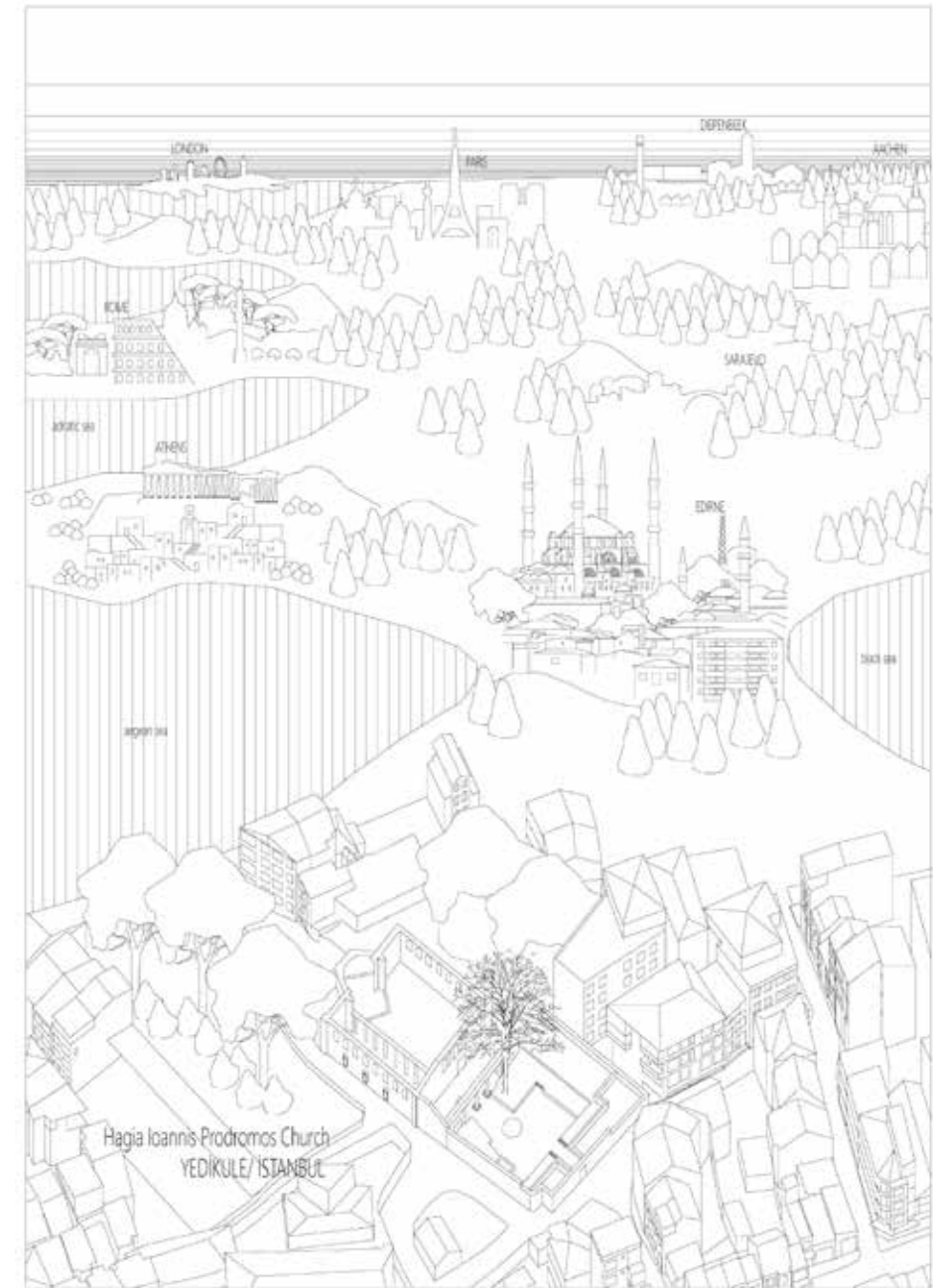
makes the attic space more functional and subtly breaks the roof edge.
 N°44: A narrow window towards the alley gives a glimpse of the interior of the front volume; an elegant steel staircase connects the garden with the first floor; a glass roof makes the attic space continuous while bringing natural light deep into the former dwelling.



[7] Adèle Hogge, new floorplans and sections of dwelling n°44, Beguinage of Antwerp.

The combination of floorplans and sections on one page reveals the vertical character of the dwelling. Together with the revivalist stepped gables and twin façade, the new spiral staircases both outside and inside emphasise upwards movement. Inspired by beguine activities, the design introduces a sewing atelier with a bar in the main building and a small showroom facing the courtyard on the ground floor.

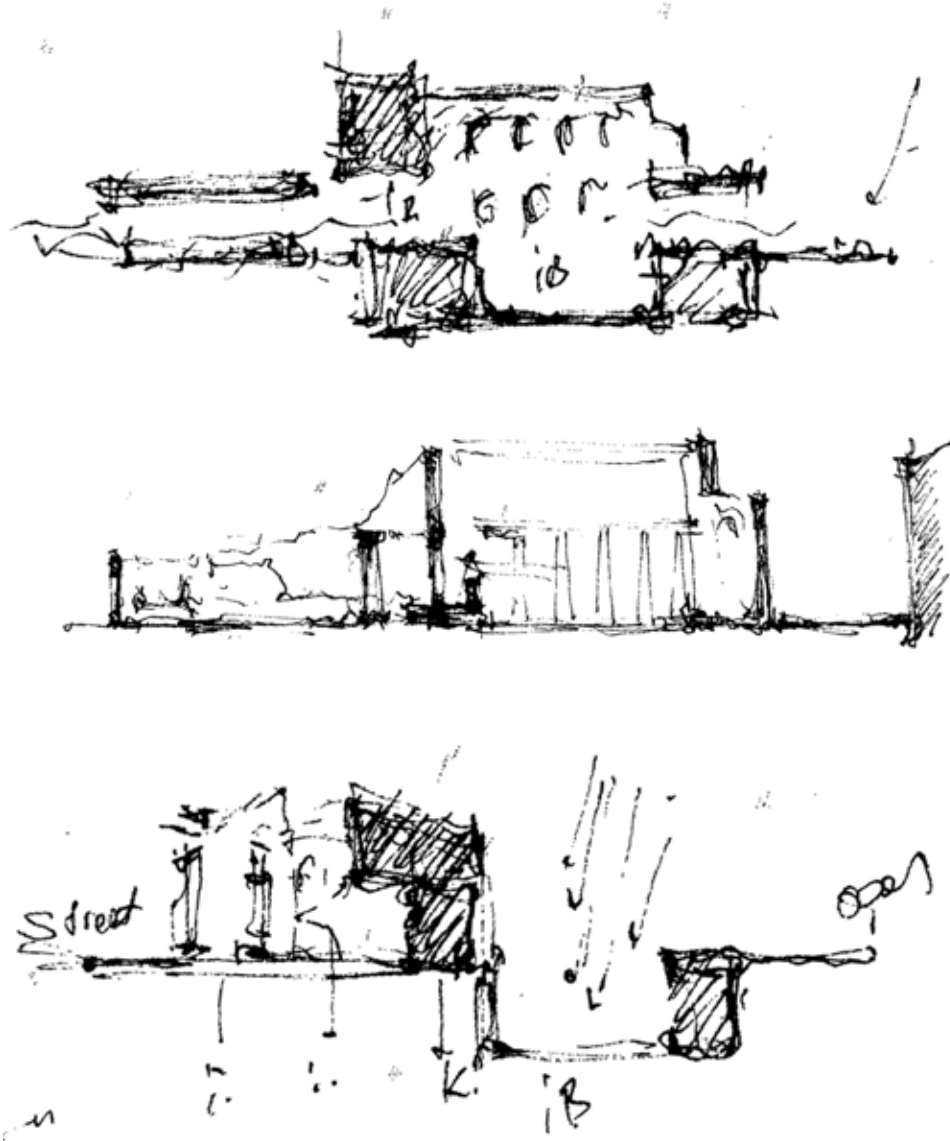
The garden textures and colours define the atmosphere of the drawings and design. Its informal look and use balance the rigid quality of the architecture. The garden becomes publicly accessible; its surface is maximised by avoiding additional connecting volumes or terraces and using stepping stones to link the different doors.



[8] Merve Yildirim, situation of the site looking towards the west, Stoudios Monastery in Istanbul.

The map confronts the axonometric view of the ruined site and its surroundings in the urbanised neighbourhood of Yedikule in southern Istanbul, with the schematic representation of the iconic architecture of the increasingly remote cities to the west of the city: Edirne, Athens, Sarajevo, Rome, Aachen, Paris, London, and Diepenbeek (the loca-

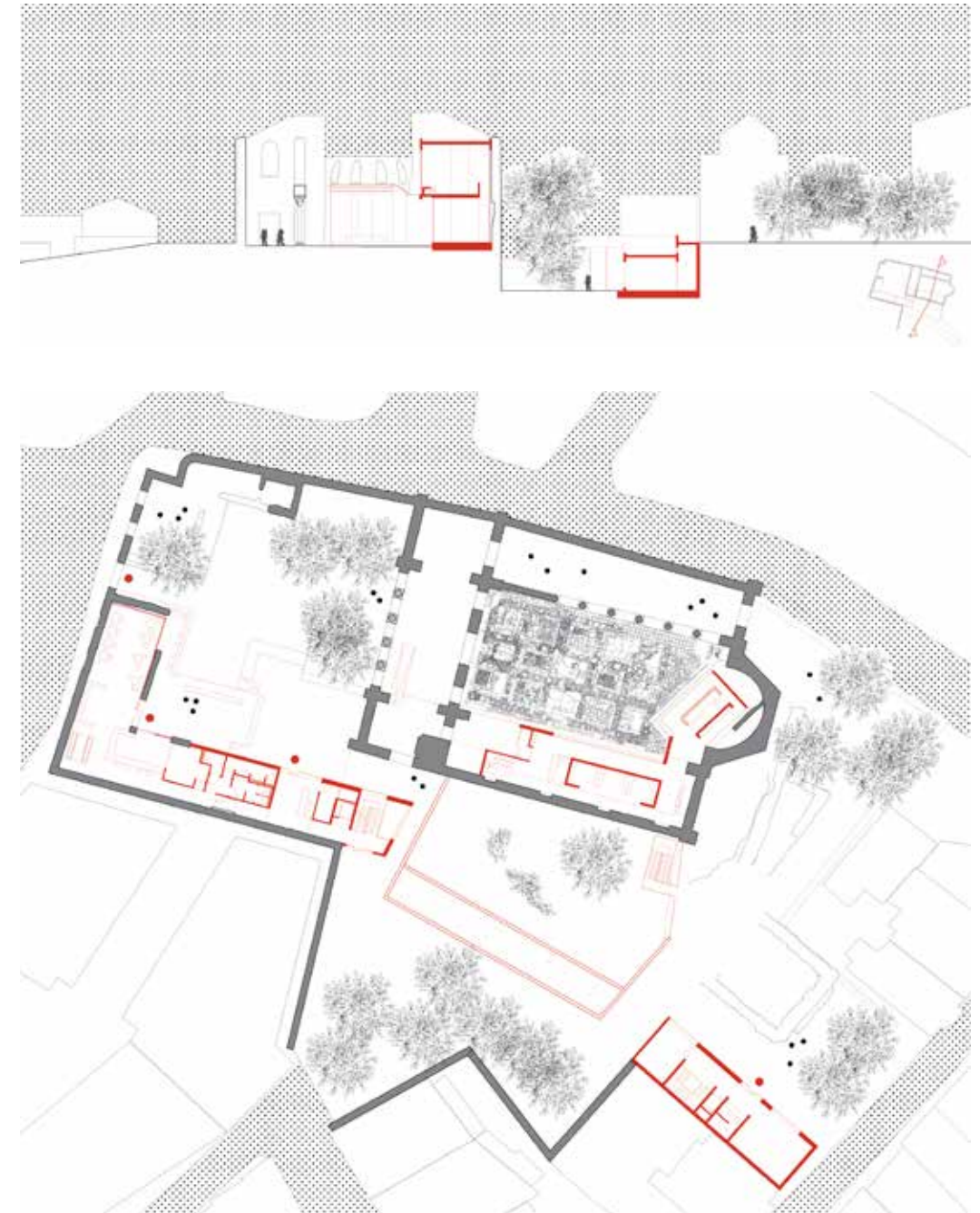
tion of the Faculty of Architecture and Arts, Hasselt University) on the horizon. The view alludes to the historical, cultural, and religious connection of former Constantinople to Europe and the role of the Bosphorus as a gateway between the two continents. It introduces and anticipates the design, following some traces of its Christian origins.



[9] Merve Yildirim, sections through church and cistern, Studios Monastery in Istanbul.

The sketches search for new connections between the remains of the site, including the courtyard entrance, the side wings of the church, the *mihrab* of the mosque, the underground cistern, and the small graveyard. The lines are drawn in quick gestures of the hand, through the sketched ruined parts, and do not consider their history or origin. They resemble different promenades, enabling the exploration

of the ruins and gardens in varying ways. The new volumes are defined along some of the trajectories or existing walls. Together they form a fragmented composition that reflects various angles and heights and allows the visitor to the new spaces to experience the complex and layered quality of the site in an indirect and atmospheric way.



[10] Merve Yildirim, new floorplan and section of the site, Studios Monastery in Istanbul.

The digital drawings evoke the ruinous remains, partly filled in with the new volumes in red. The straight lines and dotted hatching contrast with the tree patches and the central montage of the floor mosaic in the church. The random and angular boundaries of the site are the result of urbanisation, leaving the monastery with a fraction of the property it once had. Inspired by its history of manuscript illuminations and spiritual retreat, the project in-

troduces a modest library including study spaces for the local population, especially students and children. The project opens up the site to the public by creating various access points to and from the surrounding streets. It redefines the relationship between the interior and exterior by only partially filling in the old structure and strengthening the natural character and informal quality of the garden.

Colofon

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