

TRANSFORMING TIMEFRAMES - STEPPING OVER LINES

ADAPTIVE REUSE THROUGH A LAYERED READING SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

This paper is situated within the field of adaptive reuse. It investigates the connection between representation and atmosphere and uses this as a tool to analyse the layered complexity of historical sites. Three fields of interest were defined:

- medieval illuminated manuscripts
- -depiction and phenomenology in architecture
- the abbey of St. Godelieve in Bruges and its history

These fields were first investigated through literature study. The research process resulted in a series of images, resp.

- a selection of manuscript illumination
- field notes, drawings and models of sites investigated by the author
- cartographic representations, historical images and remakes of these images on the site

A method of confrontation was developed and applied on a selection of these images. Through well-considered combinations, the images from the three seemingly unrelated fields gain importance and intangible concepts are visualised. These were investigated through associative writing supported by personal observations and literature study. This proves to be a valuable method to investigate the potential of a complex layered site, as is often the case in the field of adaptive reuse. This study emphasizes the importance of subjective research methods and interdisciplinary research to complete the common fact-based investigation of historic sites.

The adaptive reuse of the St. Godelievabbey forms the subject of the adjoining master's project. The research method introduced in this thesis proves to be beneficiary for this project. The last chapter introduces the findings at the time of publication.

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A STRATEGY FOR ADAPTIVE REUSE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is the product of an intensive search for the connection between representation of architecture and atmosphere. Common representational methods used by designers are architectural plans, abstract models and conceptual sketches. Even though each of these approaches is valuable in their own way, there are many others in use that are not always recognised as valuable. A distinction is often made between the “products of thinking” (e.g. conceptual sketches, field notes, schematics, working models etc.) and the “products for presentation” (e.g. architectural models, plans, renders etc.), although we will demonstrate that these fields are not always completely separable.

This paper does not aim to give a complete overview of (architectural) representation modes nor of their history. It does aim to deepen the personal understanding of the interplay of thinking, designing

and displaying and intends to result in a valuable tool for designing in the field of adaptive reuse. Designers working with existing historical buildings are not only faced with the tangible (physical) aspects such as the physiology of the site and the materiality of the building but also with intangible (nonphysical) aspects such as the history of the site, the presence of the past and the atmosphere that lingers there. Intangible aspects are not perceived through touch or sight and are therefore hard to denominate and challenging to represent. The use and application of these aspects is essential in the adaptive reuse design process.

The research forms a triptych, comparing elements and elaborating on aspects from three seemingly unrelated fields of study:

- study in history through manuscript illuminations
- study in approach through phenomenology and depiction in architecture
- study in anthropology through historical imagery from the adjoining masters' project

The interpretation and application of these fields in the context of this research will be elaborated on in the following pages, followed by the confrontations of images and its analyses. Although a general introduction on each subject will be needed the goal is not to give a complete historical overview. The main interest is in the joints, common grounds and oppositions of these fields. This study will elaborate on these observations from the point of view of an interior architect and is in that sense a highly personal inquiry emphasizing interior qualities.

METHODOLOGY

PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

The initial field of interest for this thesis consisted of the influence of medieval illuminated manuscripts on the design process. This theme was briefly explored during a previous design assignment. A visit to Illuminare (Centre for the Study of Medieval Art) in Leuven¹ and to the exposition In search of Utopia² provided further input. The literature study on illuminated manuscripts was broadened to the fields of architectural representation and phenomenology in architecture and to the history of the St. Godelieveabbey in Bruges. The aim of this study was to gain knowledge on these fields to better understand the important aspects and to explore new gateways for a strategy of design. Three fields were investigated in depth and explored through various methods.

MANUSCRIPT ILLUMINATIONS

The first aspect that will be explored are the illuminations that can be found in medieval handwritings. These intricate artworks provide unique insights into the worldview of the Middle Ages and illustrate how reality was perceived. The interpretation of the numerous symbols and allegories is an art in itself, which this thesis does not assume to match with. The illuminations were selected intuitively after reading several voluminous works on the subject, such as *Codices Illustres*³ and *Meesterlijke Middeleeuwen*⁴.

PHENOMENOLOGY AND DEPICTION

IN ARCHITECTURE

The second field that was investigated consists of phenomenology in architecture. This post-modern branch within architectural theory includes among

others the search for experiencing built space with all senses and for capturing atmosphere. The difficulty that is addressed in this thesis lies herein that all representations of architecture are de facto visual experiences. How to represent multisensory experiences through a medium that is only directed at the visual sense? Can a different approach to the depiction of architecture unravel the complexity of a layered site?

For this research the theme was explored through reading publications on the subject and through making field notes. Drawings were made on the site of the master's project, strongly influenced by the atmosphere of the place and the circumstances. This method of observation enhances the sensory sensitivity and creates an emotional connection with the site, thus bringing forward unexpected aspects. As will be explained, models are important tools of representation. An image of a model from a previous project will also be used to confront this approach with images from the other fields.

MASTER'S PROJECT

The adjoining master's project consists of the adaptive reuse of the St. Godelieveabbey in Bruges. The design project ran parallel to the work on this thesis. This resulted in a two-way influence: historical imagery discovered during the research for the project is confronted with images from the previously explained fields in this thesis. The observations that are derived from these confrontations are subsequently interwoven in the design project.

CARTOGRAPHY

The evolution of the abbey complex in Bruges from a small house to the current impressive site is well documented⁵. The progress is visible when looking at cartographic reproductions of the city of Bruges. Going through the digital archive of the Royal Library of Belgium and *cartesius.be* resulted in a sequence of maps that show the growth of the site⁶. This medium allows a reading of the geographic layers.

PHOTOGRAPHY AS A RESEARCH TOOL

A number of historical photographs were preserved. The depicted scenes give inspiring insights into the daily life of the inhabitants. However, a photograph used to be a precious thing and all scenes, actions and compositions are carefully considered. As a result, it is safe to assume that all photographs show moments, places and actions that were highly valued by the former inhabitants. A selection of these photographs were studied and reproduced on the site with the exact same viewpoint. Digitally combining the historical and the new photographs resulted in surprising insights, highlighting the changes of the complex and the absence of the nuns⁷. Can a changing context be studied through photography? Is this medium capable of capturing the complexity of the intertwining layers? A dialogue between images seems to be needed

APPROACH

Is one medium capable of capturing the complexity of the intertwining layers of an historical site? A dialogue between images and approaches seems to be required.

The final step is to investigate the problems addressed on the previous pages and their influence on the design process. To do so, a very personal study was initiated. By combining images of the fields of interest, observations are made and connections are created that enhance the conceptual aspect of the design process. Six of these triptychs are presented in this thesis and the observed underlying themes are elaborated on through literature study and the writing of personal observations. These writings aim to be focused and limited, not answering all questions raised but rather working with the addressed themes and finding contemporary relevance.

To contextualize the images that were used, three brief parts elaborating on the three fields that were previously mentioned precede this main investigation. These chapters aim to give an overview of the history and applications of the three fields and are required to better understand the references that are used in the triptychs.

The confrontations become moulds for the design project. The notions that are explored can be applied to the master's project. Although the concepts are strongly connected with this specific site, the moulds aim to be applicable in a broader context of adaptive reuse projects.

¹ This visit took place on 27 September 2016 in the context of the design project Plus est en Vous (sept.-nov. 2016).

² This visit took place on 10 December 2016. Additional information can be found on the website <http://www.utopialeuven.be/nl/tentoonstelling>.

³ Walther, I. F. and N. Wolf, *Codices illustres, The world's most famous illuminated manuscripts* (Köln: Taschen, 2014)

⁴ Bennet, A., W. Cahn, W. Cardon, and P. de Rynck, ed., *Meesterlijke Middeleeuwen Miniaturen van Karel de Grote tot Karel de Stoute*. (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2002)

⁵ Agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed, "Sint-Godelieveabdij, Inventaris Onroerend Erfgoed," <https://inventaris.onroerenderfgoed.be/erfgoedobjecten/82435>

⁶ The complete sequence of historical maps that was found during this research is added in the appendix.

⁷ Seven historical images were remade and combined with their contemporary counterpart. These are all included in the appendix.

CONTEXT AND DEPICTION

MANUSCRIPT ILLUMINATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Since the earliest civilisations, systems are used to transfer knowledge. The concept of materializing ideas by making markings on a surface is already visible in early cave drawings that were made over 35 000 years ago. Drawings, written text or a combination of the two are a universal means of communication. Writing evolved through imprints on clay tablets to hieroglyphs on papyrus scrolls to wax coated tablets and book rolls of antiquity.

In the early middle ages, the codex became the popular format for the written word. Parchment was used for the pages. This durable material made from scraped animal skin has a limited size and is therefore not suitable for scrolls. The sheets (folios) are gathered in a protective wooden cover and stitched together to create a codex. The advantages of this format are multiple: the writing

material is more durable than the fragile papyrus, not to mention the practical dimensions of the codex. Specific content could be accessed by flipping through pages instead of having to roll out the complete scroll. This resulted in the invention of classification systems that were perfected through the ages and are still mimicked in the most recent digital revolution of the written word.

The use of the codex was a major benefit for miniature painters who were hired to illuminate the manuscripts. The individual pages led the artists to draw inspiration from panel painting, fresco and mosaic. The flat surface allowed intricate images and precious colours, where previously the repeated rolling and unrolling severely damaged the drawings. This shows the essential relation between the representation of reality and the surface on which this representation is made. Rationality influences the characteristics of the depiction.

HISTORY

In the 5th century the fall of the Western Roman empire resulted in a turbulent era of migration and book production withdrew in monasteries. The heritage of antiquity was preserved in Byzantium, untouched by barbarian invasions harassing the West. The migration of missionaries to Ireland and Scotland revived book production: through close contact with traditional goldsmithing and the use of tribal symbols as the bearer of magical powers in a monastic setting, the art of manuscript illumination was born. The reign of Charlemagne (768-814) revived arts in general in Western Europe, the so-called Carolingian Renaissance. Richly decorated illuminated manuscripts were produced at the court of Charlemagne and his descendants. Great monasteries notable for their clearly distinctive styles were centres of book production.

In the middle of the 10th century the Benedictine reform in France strongly stimulated the production of

illuminated manuscripts. Encouraged by the Holy Roman Emperors and high dignitaries of the Church book illuminators searched for a spiritual expression and a figurative vocabulary of ecstatic facial expressions resulting in distinct schools attached to monasteries. The regional specialisation increased in the 11th century. Growing secularisation in the 12th century initiated a shift in content to (pseudo-) scientific works. Gothic art influenced manuscript illumination in the early 13th century through the implementation of elements from the gothic cathedral and stained glass art. The establishment of universities throughout Europe and the increasing secularisation was reflected in the field of book production: workshops in cities increasingly took over the execution of manuscript commissions. Illuminators in the 13th century find inspiration in the Italian Trecento technique and other art fields, reflecting the quest for realistic perspectives. The illumination has evolved from an illustration into a self-contained and independent drawing. As the Italian Renaissance started

to influence art north of the Alps in the late 15th century, Flemish ateliers were extremely productive and producing illuminated manuscripts in a highly efficient way in Brussels, Ghent and Bruges⁸. In the same period the printed book became a strong competitor for the handwritten and illustrated manuscript. The ability to quickly print series of books with cost-efficient line engravings on paper, the cheaper medium, ensured the success of this new method. The transition from handwritten books to serialised printing resulted in some interesting illuminated books with printed text. Manuscripts were produced until the late 16th century for exclusive publications and collectors.

CONCLUSION

The restless history of Medieval Europe plays an important role in the history of manuscript illumination. Not only as a guideline through the evolution of style and quality, but also as a reminder that the illuminated manuscripts that have survived until now are merely a fraction of what was once made. They owe their survival to their supreme quality of work, having been sold, repaired, rebound and preserved by collectors. What is most striking today are the illuminations, originally merely an addition to the written word. However, as the field of illuminated manuscripts developed they gained importance and eventually on some pages the images seem to overtake the word as a dominant means of communication⁹. Through rich symbolism they enhance the content of the manuscript and offer the eyes of reader some rest. In prayer books the miniatures also have a contemplative function, allowing the reader to reflect on the liturgical text through looking at the intricate details.

OBSERVATIONS

When analysing manuscript illuminations, it is striking that although the artist is searching for a realistic way to portray the subject the image is simultaneously an advised impossibility. Characters are often portrayed multiple times in several stages of the accompanying story, resulting in transformed timeframes. In other cases we witness the telling of a tale indoors, while the tale is unfolding outdoors. Space is not literally represented: it is transformed by the imagination of the artist. Walls are freely opened to create a visual connection between the interior and the exterior. The reader is hardly ever part of the scene: he witnesses through an arched opening in the wall on the foreground. Techniques like these are inherent to the art of manuscript illumination.

In manuscript illuminations, the relationship between interior and exterior is extended to enhance the story. The opening of walls without windows, frames or thresholds allows the interior to become a part of the outside world, without releasing its encasing properties. The symbolism of the threshold is strongly related to this interplay as is the notion of Hortus Conclusus, the symbolic enclosed garden that gains interior properties.

The depiction of architecture does not strictly resemble the reality, but serves rather as an illustration of how it is perceived. This is an interesting notion for designers who apply a similar method: a vision on the world is often created from a personal perception through sketching and model-making. A utopian idea of how a designer hopes to shape the world. This is a notion that can be directly derived from the illuminations in illuminated manuscripts.

However this is just a starting point. Contemporary reuse does not relate to a specifically identified moment in history but rather converses with the variety of layers that form the identity of the site. In the following chapter the discussion will focus on notions and tools that contribute to the awareness of this layered nature.

⁸ The creation of a codex was a group effort and therefore the production could be split in stages where each worker has his own specified task, similar to the revolutionary production system introduced by Henry Ford.

⁹ The illumination of manuscripts has many forms. Full-page illuminations have the most impressive appearance but were expensive and therefore rare. More common are historiated initials, marginalia (small side-doodles) and smaller illuminations combined with text. The decorated framework is often detailed and enhances the story. This is further explained in *Codices Illustres* (Walther & Wolf), p. 11-17.

sources consulted for this chapter :

Bennet, A., W. Cahn, W. Cardon, and P. de Rynck, ed., *Meesterlijke Middeleeuwen*

Bousmanne, B., T. Delcourt, I. Hans-Collas, P. Schandel, C. van Hoorebeeck, M. Verweij and A. Kelders, eds., *Vlaamse Miniaturen 1404-1482*. (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2011)

Walther and Wolf, *Codices illustres*

PHENOMENOLOGY AND DEPICTION IN ARCHITECTURE

INTERTWINING SYSTEMS

After exploring the world of illuminated manuscripts on the previous pages, an investigation of systems to denominate the experience of space is needed. In medieval times, the depiction of space is highly influenced by the knowledge and the mental leaps of the artist. The contemporary interpretation of an illumination can be obstructed by the radically changed context and worldview. Communication about experience is often based on personal observations and intangible aspects. Phenomenology within architectural theory inquires these aspects. The depiction of atmosphere and sensations is inherent to this discipline, since communication about sensations is ideally aimed at more than one sense. The two systems complement each other. When words are not enough, depiction supports and vice versa.

PHENOMENOLOGY

The term phenomenology refers to both a disciplinary field in philosophy and to a movement in the history of philosophy. It was introduced by Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre and other authors in the early 20th century. A wide arrange of publications debate the interpretation and application of the field¹⁰.

In a larger context, the term phenomenology refers to the characterization of sensory qualities and experiences. It is in this sense of the word that the postmodern architecture movement adopted the term and somewhat loosely applied its characteristics. Juhani Pallasmaa, Steven Holl, Peter Zumthor and many others advocate an architecture that refers to all senses, not only in the experience of architecture but also as an important tool for designing, through personal intuition¹¹.

Pallasmaa points at the omnipresent 'ocularcentrism', where visual experiences are predominant¹². This favouritism of vision over the other senses dates back to classical Greek thought, where sight brought certainty and wisdom. This developed into numerous metaphors where sight and clear vision symbolize knowledge and truth. In the Renaissance vision was regarded as the highest sense. Pallasmaa argues that the visual level in architecture (and all arts) is only one of its many layers, while mostly only this superficial visual level is accounted for.

"The inhumanity of contemporary architecture and cities can be understood as the consequence of the negligence of the body and the senses, and an imbalance in our sensory system".

(Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, 17 - 19)

The increasing rationalization of the design process is tackled by the exploration of the term Genius Loci. Norwegian architect and theoretician Christian Norberg-

Schulz addresses the so-called 'spirit of the place' as a valuable factor in the design process. The term Genius Loci originates in antiquity. Every place was said to house protective spirits that defined the singular identity of that place. To address this awareness of an intangible identity, the term was reintroduced by Norberg-Schulz¹³. Evidently, the genius loci is perceived not only by sight but by the combined experiences of all senses. It is an important yet intangible aspect of the field of adaptive reuse, where designers aim to reinvigorate vacant structures without erasing the history and the atmosphere of the site by implementing new functions.

DEPICTION

The concept of depiction will be explored to confront the visions discussed above with architectural practice. A depiction of architecture is inherent to the practice of a designer, whether it is to study the built environment or to present a new design. Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Louise Pelletier¹⁴ make a distinction between the accurate transcription of a project and its translation. The transcription must be efficient and accurate since its main goal is to communicate with the builders. Projective representations present the design in an unambiguous way to ensure the correct execution of the project. On the other hand the translation investigates how the project will be employed and the interactions on a human level.

While the prosaic transcription is essential for the practical success of a project, the poetic translation is indispensable to realise

“(...) places where a fuller, more compassionate human life might take place (...)”

(Pérez- Gómez and Pelletier, *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge*, 7)

This argument connects with Pallasmaa’s vision on phenomenological architecture.

Numerous representational methods are in use, some of which focus mainly on the transcription and others are more suitable for translation. A distinction is often made between the “products of thinking” (e.g. conceptual sketches, field notes, schematics, working models etc.) and the “products for presentation” (e.g. architectural models, plans, renders etc.), although we will demonstrate that these fields are not always completely separable.

Some of these methods are capable of exceeding the visual level. The tactile qualities of model making are self-evident. It communicates materiality, volume and weight in a much clearer way than any digitally rendered image could hope to achieve. For example the encounter of light and shadows touching the surfaces evoke a deeper connection than a purely visual representations would. Although the level of detailing might have to be lowered, a real-life model will at any time feel more authentic and closer to reality. A model allows visualising the human level of the design. Scale figures are the mediator that invites the onlooker to imagine himself interacting with the real-life building.

In the field of adaptive reuse the analysis of the site is an essential aspect of the design process. This should not be done on an empirical, objective level only. To involve other levels drawing techniques can be valuable tools. the drawing is a well-known medium for communicating designs and to improve the design process. Simon

Unwin explores it as a medium for acquiring knowledge. By analysing examples through drawing, a deeper understanding of the possibilities and workings of architecture can be acquired¹⁵.

Frances Downing, for example, uses drawings to capture and analyse places of memory. A memory consists of sensory experiences that interact in an unexplainable way, where seemingly unimportant elements predominate. This methodology allows to emphasize the important factors and is therefore much more suitable than a photograph of the same place¹⁶.

The Genius Loci that lingers on the layered sites can be captured in field notes. By making drawings on site, the atmosphere can be of influence. The weather, smell, humidity, sounds, senses and other, intangible aspects can all unknowingly find its way to the drawing.

¹⁰ David Woodruff Smith, "Phenomenology," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/>

¹¹ ABIBOO Studio, "Quick Tour through Phenomenological Thinking in Architecture," <http://www.abiboo.com/arch/quick-tour-through-phenomenological-thinking-in-architecture/>

¹² Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin* (Chichester: Wiley-academy, 2005)

¹³ Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: towards a phenomenology of architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1979)

¹⁴ Alberto Pérez- Gómez and Louise Pelletier, *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 3-8

¹⁵ Simon Unwin, "Analysing architecture through drawing," *Building Research & Information* 35, no. 1 (2007); 101-110

¹⁶ Frances Downing, "Transcending memory: remembrance and the design of place," *Design Studies* 24, no. 3 (2003); 213-235.

MASTER'S PROJECT

SAINT GODELIEVE

The master project consists of the adaptive reuse of the Sint-Godelieveabdij in Bruges. The Benedictine nuns founded the abbey church in 1626 after fleeing their pillaged abbey in Gistel. The cult of St. Godelieve admires the devotion of a young woman who was unhappily married and tortured by her in-laws but piously persevered in her marital duties. She was generous towards the poor despite her own troubles and allegedly performed several miracles. Her husband ordered his servants to murder her by strangulation and drowning. A blind girl who washed her eyes in the well where St. Godelieve was drowned was miraculously cured. The original abbey in Gistel was founded around this well. The saint is called upon for marital problems, sore throats and eye problems. Vessels of blessed water from the sacred well in Gistel are still being sold on July sixth when the annual procession is held¹⁷. The small

well as symbol for St. Godelieve was duplicated in the enclosed garden of the new abbey in Bruges. It can be read as a model of a story used in a real context.

SITE LOCATION¹⁸

The former abbey is situated in the wedge of two outdoor areas in the historical centre of Bruges. Although the Sint-Godelieveabdij is located within the historical centre boundaries near a formerly important gateway, it is not perceived as such nowadays. The construction of the railway, now transformed into an important access road separated the neighbourhood from the city centre.

Through the years the abbey was in constant transformation resulting in an immense site of 11.000 square metres. The last building phase was the construction of a new wing in 1953¹⁹. In 2014 the last

nuns left the building due to their old age and the complex is maintained by Camino Brugge vzw (an initiative of diocesan congregations). A leasehold of 50 years by the city of Bruges is agreed on in 2016 to preserve the site and its heritage. The municipality has communicated its intentions to give the site a public function²⁰.

The location of this site creates a strong link with the field of illuminated manuscripts since the city of Bruges was extremely productive in the late 15th century with entire streets dedicated to different stages of manuscript production. The medieval past of the city is nowadays extremely present and cherished and attracts many tourists. In 1870 Louis Delacenserie was appointed City architect of Bruges. Under his impulse many historical buildings were restored following the principles of Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, who restored and sometimes partly demolished buildings to complete them into a historical unity. This principle was applied

to monuments and houses alike, encouraging private owners to change the style of the facade, thus creating the uniform late-gothic look that is nowadays predominant within the centre of Bruges²¹. Visitors experience the historical fabric as an authentic shrine from the past, a place where time has stopped.

The site can, in the historical context of time and place, be read as a palimpsest²², showing traces of earlier stories and meanings. One example are the neighbouring houses that were gradually acquired and transformed by reworking the interiors in a coherent style and cladding the facades with a uniform white plaster. However, the different floor and ceiling levels of the individual houses are still present, indicating that the original constructions are completely preserved. The most recent wing was built by Bruges architect A. Degeyter, who realized many projects in a variety of styles but is most known for his modernist work. His design required the demolition of an existing wing from

1877 of which he recuperated many decorative elements such as windows and doors. This act of spolia²³ softens the contrast between the new building and the wing from 1643²⁴.

HISTORICAL IMAGERY

Since the first settlement of the Benedictine nuns in Bruges they gradually acquired more properties, slowly working towards the impressive site as it is nowadays. This progress is also visible when looking at cartographic reproductions of the city of Bruges.

The evolution of the abbey was also captured on camera, where a comparison with recent photographs shows parts of the buildings' history. The depicted scenes give inspiring insights into the daily life of the inhabitants. However, as was mentioned in the methodology, a photograph used to be a precious thing and all scenes, actions and compositions are carefully considered. A glimpse of the past is shown, highlighting the most valued traditions.

¹⁷ Dom Anselm Hoste o.s.b., *Het levensverhaal van Sint-Godelieve* (Roeselare: Huize Breughel, 1984)

¹⁸ The progress of the design project is described in the chapter «the adaptive reuse of the St. Godelieveabbey in Bruges on p. 65

¹⁹ Agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed, "Sint-Godelieveabdij, Inventaris Onroerend Erfgoed"

²⁰ Brugge Foundation, "De Sint-Godelieveabdij," http://www.bruggefoundation.be/de_sint_godelieveabdij

²¹ Agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed, "Delacenserie, Louis," <https://inventaris.onroerenderfgoed.be/dibe/persoon/7038>

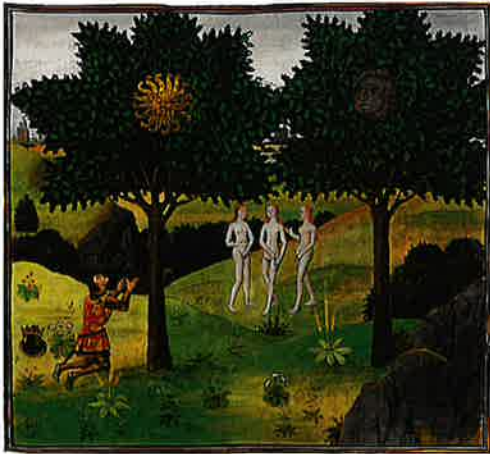
²² A Palimpsest is a piece of parchment or writing tablet that has been scraped clean and reused, where traces of the previous writing are still visible. The term is used as a metaphor for old buildings and was in that sense explored by Machado (1976).

²³ Spolia (Latin, meaning 'spoils') refers to the common practice in antiquity of reusing building parts for new constructions. Due to this pragmatic approach, fragments of much older buildings have survived embedded in the walls of more recent buildings. (Lionel Devlieger, "Rotor : Opalis" (lecture, Universiteit Hasselt, 19 September 2016)

²⁴ Jong Kristen Onthaal v.z.w., *De Sint-Godelieveabdij te Brugge* (Beernem: De Windroos, 1984)

CONFRONTATIONS OF DEPICTION

Three fields of interest were introduced on the previous pages. The research of these fields resulted in a large amount of relevant images. Through trial and error a selection was made. By placing them together these depictions gained a deeper meaning and intuitive connections were made. They serve as moulds to formulate ideas and concepts. Six themes will be addressed in this chapter and further explored through personal experiences and observations. As in the field of adaptive reuse, elements from the past can find a contemporary relevance.



RELIGIOUS ROOTS – A FRAGILE BALANCE

The silent procession through the gardens of the St. Godelieve abbey was captured with great care for composition and respect for the tradition. Is it a coincidence that a line of young fruit trees now marks the path? Are they a reminder of the past or a modern translation? Nature is overtaking the traditions and history of the St. Godelieve abbey, as was observed in the enclosed courtyard. Evergreen bushes are no longer trimmed and exceed their assigned boundaries. Wall climbers framing the crucified Christ take over the scene and add a new layer to the passion of the Christ. Is the vegetation out of control, or is it a merely using another grammar to retell the stories that linger there?

In the current society, religion is fading. Where it used to be one of the pillars, it is now overtaken by rationality and efficiency. Monasteries are abandoned, churches are drained and ceremonies are only half-heartedly

honoured. But in the hectic world people are again looking for stillness, quietness and peace. They often find it in nature. The interest in nature conservation and the renewed awareness of the health benefits of being outdoors can be regarded as a replacement for religion, where gardening serves as meditation and experiences are valued over possession. The appreciation for local produce and the almost magical process of growing food from seeds invites modesty.

Before Christianity was introduced in Western Europe, people worshiped nature and its phenomena, which they did not understand and therefore respected as a capricious divinity. Trees were dwellings for wisdom and were called upon for prophecies²⁵. To ensure a smooth transition to the new religion, many of these 'pagan' traditions were embedded and transformed to complete the Christian culture. The most well known example is

Christmas, the birth of Christ, which happens to be near the winter solstice, the longest night after which the light returns to the world.

Christian symbolism brims with references to nature and detailed allegorical biblical plant depictions are featured on many medieval religious artworks. Evergreen plants and trees represent immortality and fragrant trees such as pines were considered to be paradise trees. Spring flowers symbolise the continuous renewal and resurrection and medicinal plants represent the healing power of faith²⁶.

Where nature was respected out of fear, it is now respected out of a profound understanding of the fragile balance. Christian religion may no longer be prominent,

but its values and virtues are embedded in modern society, perhaps buried beneath the pressure of individualism and capitalism but slowly resurfacing as fresh sprouts.

The shadows of the nuns grew roots and leaf. They stand tall and strong, branches intertwined and connected. With the proper care, yearly produce is ensured. The fruits of their endured devotion are ready to be harvested by new believers.

²⁵ The depicted illumination is a part from 'Histoire d'Alexandre'. This manuscript tells of the adventures of Alexander the Great and originates in antiquity. Alexander is kneeling in front of the oracle of the trees of Sun and Moon.

²⁶ Hilde van Crombrugge and Paul Van den Brecht, *A miraculous garden. Flora on the Ghent Altarpiece* (Mariakerke, New Goff: 2016) 28



THRESHOLDS – THE DEMARCATION LINE

Divisions are made where worlds meet. To protect and secure, to keep outsiders at bay, to control the exchange: physical and mental walls are erected with a carefully controlled amount of openings to the other world. Inside and outside are connected through windows and doors: one can step through the door into the wide world and leave the protection of the interior behind. This stepping through, outside one realm and into the other can be clearly signified by a doorway, or more symbolically by columns, steps or a change in pavement.

On the other hand, windows create visions through the division but only the sight penetrates the other world. For sound, objects and people to travel through, the window must be opened, thereby slowing down the action and creating an additional obstacle similar to a door that must be opened. The window has long been the subject of fascination in art of which several

dimensions can be distinguished. Fundamentally it is a utilitarian architectural element providing light, fresh air and views in and out the interior. But when windows started to appear in the background of portrait paintings they served a higher purpose: to elaborate on an aspect of the portrayed. The window is always a conveyor of meaning; it frames a scene and defines the subject.

From the 15th century on the open window became a metaphor for painting and as such became a popular motif in art. The gridded structure became a tool for representation and provided compositional guidelines. Alberti described a drawing technique in his treatise *De Pictura* (1435) in which a *vellum* (frame with wires that form a grid) is placed in between the draughtsman and the subject, thus creating a two-dimensional image that is copied with the use of a grid on the paper²⁷.

In early Germanic and Nordic cultures, protective walls enclosed the interior with only openings for entering and for drawing out smoke. The small overhead opening was related with the divine: a place where ghosts and souls can enter. One example are ocular windows, a common motif in religious buildings and in the depiction of a saint's studiolo. In Mediterranean cultures sacred architecture often had limited openings to create focus by reducing the view²⁸.

Openings simultaneously create attraction and emphasize the boundaries. This tension intensifies the awareness of other worlds. The demarcation line can be drawn between physical worlds, between reality and imagination, between present and past. Manuscript illuminations show the scene through the framework of openings in walls. The selected illumination shows the offering of the manuscript to the purchaser and simultaneously the reality that is described in the manuscript, where God creates the world. It seems that

the audience of the ceremony can simply step into this mythical moment of creation. The real threshold lies within the manuscript that shows not only the present viewers a glimpse of other worlds, but also used to provide the long-gone owner looks into other worlds.

The middle picture shows a model of the Gruuthuse oratory²⁹. This domestic chapel bridges over the pathway between the private palace and the adjacent Church of Our Lady in Bruges. It creates a direct connection between the religious and the secular world, pointing up the presence of the nearby sacred place. Although the windows appear to be discrete, the façade inside the church is richly decorated with detailed ornamentation to emphasize the privileged status of the lords of Gruuthuse.³⁰

The image from one of the outdoor areas of the St. Godelieve Abbey gives an insight into the meaning of the place. The columns for example create a gate and

therefore demarcate the threshold between what seems to be the forecourt and the contemplative garden.

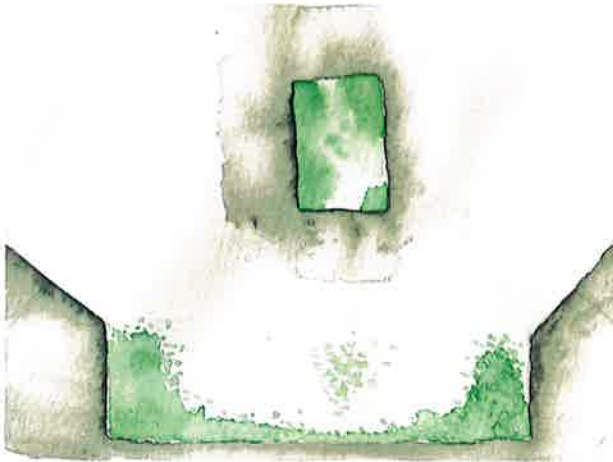
Photographs open windows into the past. This threshold cannot be stepped over; only sight can penetrate the other realm.

²⁷ Maria Müller-Schareck, “Fresh Widow: The Idea of the Window as a “Point of Departure”,” in *Fresh Widow: The Window in Art since Matisse and Duchamp*, edited by the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, 19-33. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012)

²⁸ Rolf Selbmann, “Views Out, In and Through: A Brief History of the Window up to the Modern Era,” in *Fresh Widow: The Window in Art since Matisse and Duchamp*, edited by the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, 35-45 (Germany, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012)

²⁹ The model was made in the context of the design project ‘Plus est en vous’ (sept.-nov. 2016)

³⁰ The palace wing including the oratory was built in 1472. The Gruuthuse buildings were extensively altered during later renovations but the oratory was sealed off and most of its original features have been preserved.



HORTUS CONCLUSUS – OUTDOOR INTERIOR

In the dense wilderness open spaces create a feeling of safety because they provide a system of overview. The clearance is an oasis within chaos, defined by the absence of threats. Religious communities retreat from the hassle of everyday life into secluded complexes. At the heart lies a room without roof, sheltered from the outside by buildings and walls. In this enclosed garden, the mind is aimed at the divine above. It is the negative room in between the buildings, a source of daylight in dense constructions.

Creating protection from outside influences is the archetypical function of settlements. Architecture originates from this requirement, resulting in a demarcation between inside and outside. The outdoor space surrounded by a wall is an important motif in medieval Christian culture introduced by the following passage in the biblical Song of Songs: “A garden enclosed

is my sister, my bride; a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up”.³¹ This has always been related to the Virgin Mary who is often depicted in an enclosed garden surrounded by so-called Mary flowers and -plants that symbolise virginity, humility and mercy³². In religious art this image is strongly related to the mystic capture of the unicorn³³ as is depicted in the selected illumination.

Medieval society knew a strict feudal hierarchy, which can be roughly summarized in three groups: nobility, commoners and clergy. Aben and de Wit apply this distinction to three types of enclosed gardens, resp. *Hortus Ludi*, *Hortus Catalogi* and *Hortus Contemplationis*, each with its own features and characteristics³⁴. The *Hortus Contemplationis* has four paths leading to a central fountain. This is the centre of the world and refers to the Garden of Eden from the book Genesis. In this central point the *axis mundi*³⁵

creates a direct connection between the sacred and the profane. Typically a cloister surrounds it that offers alternating views on the garden and its centrepiece, creating an infinite promenade. This is the embodiment of contemplation, offering a physical activity to induce meditation. In religious communities that gradually developed, the desired enclosing of the contemplative garden is only achieved after many phases of building. The completion of the St. Godelieve cloister was achieved in 1953 when the final east wing was constructed, over 300 years after the first settlement of the sisters in Bruges. The dual photograph shows this final addition.

In a society that is overflowing with visual and other input is like an unending rainfall of images that strips everything from meaning. Calvino states that there is a lack of substance in images, language and even in the world itself³⁶. Finding a sheltered space to regain confidence and consciousness is a challenging task when

the access point to the wide world and all its information is carried in the pocket and message signals are constantly tempting the phone user to dive in again. In this environment full of options and possibilities a central focus point could be appreciated: an enclosed space where no direct action or interaction is required, where being present is the main goal. Enclosed gardens are sheltering from distractions. Connecting with above, within or without.

³¹ Hortus conclusus soror mea, sponsa, hortus conclusus, fons signatus, Song of Songs 4:12, Bible

³² van Crombrugge and Van den Bremt, *A miraculous garden*. 28

³³ It was commonly believed that this fantastical creature had magical powers. It could only be captured by placing a young, beautiful maiden in the forest. The unicorn would lay its front legs on her knees and fall asleep. This image was interpreted as the body of Christ in the lap of the Virgin Mary.

³⁴ (Rob Aben and Saskia de Wit, Hortus conclusus (Amsterdam: 010, 2002) 22-59)

³⁵ as explained by Eliade (The Sacred and the Profane, 1959), all religions know of a central point or construction that creates a connection with the sacred. This (often symbolic) 'pole of the world' enables communication in both directions.

³⁶ Italo Calvino, *Six memos for the next millennium*, (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1988) 57



Qui fu hermand le conte de monco
 dient plusieurs liistoirez et plusieurs
 plusieurs roges. puer d'apuce.

Que qu'esto se par
 monuoir d'apuce
 qui fu als hermand
 et qui fu richard
 sa femme. Et li cont
 dist en son liistoire que il fu veay
 lior naturel et fil de sun des contes
 de monco et qui richard sa femme

fu dite contesse pour ce que elle q
 vint d'apuce et copulee par mariage
 au dit hermand. Et appar par les de
 d'idee d'apuce car il dit au comen
 comen de son cuer en telle ma
 niere. Apres la mort de hermand
 conte de monco richard sa femme
 se fut d'apuce la quelle vint contre
 la terre de la conte de l'apuce tant
 tant du droit de douce come pour
 la protection de ses enfans. La



Knowledge brings people
 together. Debate, study,
 reading and contemplation
 require different levels of sheltered
 areas. Fascinating interesting interiors

with dominant fireplaces require
 respectful additions to function
 contemporarily. The chapel bridges
 between worlds and must be
 enjoyed by all, guests and visitors



PERSPECTIVE - TRAVERSING SPACE AND TIME

From the 16th century on, plans were drawn from a semi-perspectival angle. Streets are depicted from an aerial point of view whereas buildings are drawn with a façade and roof. This yearning to break free from the flat surface can also be observed in the art of manuscript illuminations, where the search for realistic perspectives is preceding that of panel painters.

In the field of cartography reality is abstracted to create an overview but to relate the drawings to reality meaningful information such as the shape and volume of built structures and at least one façade is included. This cartographic drawing was made in 1572³⁷. In comparison to the Ferraris map, the most known cartographic representation of the former Austrian Netherlands (including what is now the kingdom of Belgium) that was completed in 1778 there was an evolution towards semi-flat, two-dimensional representation.

The reverse movement can be detected in the evolution of manuscript illumination where the visualisation of the written is limited to the window frame that is determined beforehand. Storytelling on a limited space requires several layers of meaning and a manipulation of realistic vision. Observations from different angles and knowledge of the artist are combined into a forced picture, traversing space and time. The manipulation of realistic vision, as if the artist moves his head to see all aspects and crams them into one image aims to support the story and to enhance the readers perception. As the medieval arts progressed, the background gained importance and was valued as a tool for adding information. To realistically depict the visual depth of the image experiments with perspective are undertaken by illuminators, closely followed by panel painters.

Once the holy grail of perspectival depiction was uncovered and polished, individual artists, designers and complete movements ventured into other pictorial experiments resulting in the whole array of abstract arts. Thinking through drawing outside the limitations of perspectival drawing can enhance the designing process. Emphasizing the experience of a space and its stories rather than the space itself can have a liberating effect on the designer.³⁸

³⁷ Historical cartography of the Boeverie neighbourhood in Bruges was gathered in the context of the master project to support the study of the evolution of the St. Godelieve abbey and its surroundings. An overview of the results is attached.

³⁸ This method was explored during the design project 'Plus est en vous' (sept.-nov. 2016). The assignment to make a depiction of the project 'in the style of manuscript illuminations' resulted in a freer drawing technique that explored not only the building's characteristics but also the concept of the new program.



SHADOWS - A GLIMPSE OF THE PASSING OF TIME

Light can only be captured through shadows. The absence defines the presence and this contrast creates tension. Opposites give value to each other: the interior would not be appreciated as such if there were no exterior. A longing for the opposite is universal in everyday life. In a warm climate, heated temperatures evoke the hunt for shadows. In a cold climate, dark winters provoke a longing for the sun and shadows have become a metaphor for unpleasant, threatening things. However, shadows create depth, both visual and metaphorical³⁹.

Shadows indicate the passing of time. Ever-moving in accordance with the progress of the day they serve as a *memento mori*⁴⁰. The awareness of the transient nature of moments invites modesty and personal reflections on the purpose of life and objects. It may encourage taking action.

A look inside the private cells of a monk shows how time passes in the secluded world behind the monastery walls. Suddenly, the protective interior becomes a part of the outside world and the shadows are flooded with light. The contemplative cell becomes a showcase, the monk exhibited. The intrusion emphasizes the soberness of an undecorated life where everyday objects gain a functional beauty and ritual actions link the days. The passing of time can be read by the wear of the objects. These objects tell the tales of lost traditions and rituals.

In a monastic community the individual is absorbed in the whole and becomes a part of something greater. This anonymity is reflected in early manuscript illumination. When production and copying of the works took place in monastic settings, the hand that wrote and the hand that drew remained faceless and nameless. Only the original author of the writings would be mentioned⁴¹.

But the works speak for themselves since distinctive drawing styles could identify the artist⁴². The desired anonymity becomes undone by careful study of details. Style becomes an autograph that has been increasingly acknowledged. In contemporary art and design practice, the autograph is sometimes valued over the empirical quality of the work. It is put in front of a spotlight that chases away all shadows, all depth and all mystery as it is extensively analysed.

The drawing by Stephen Holl for the design of a lecture hall that is intended for a large audience is cloaked in shadows, emphasizing the narrow shafts of sunlight that address the world outside the building and that simultaneously refer to a sundial. The empty corridor of the St. Godelieve abbey indicates the presence of past or future users. Shadows walk the cloister at the slow pace

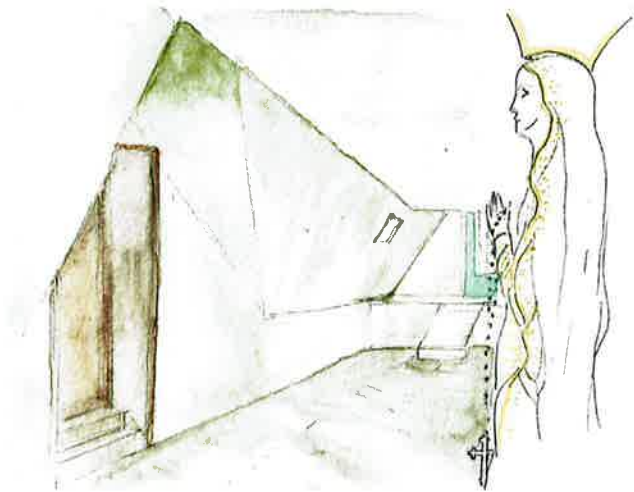
of the sun moving through the sky. In a world that is overflowing with visual noise, the stillness of a space where only shadows moves offers a welcome alternative. The beauty of the unadorned ordinary reminds of the austerity of monastic life. The desire to retreat from this demanding life is not reserved for religious people only.

³⁹ Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows* (Sedgwick: Leete's Island Books : 1977)

⁴⁰ *remember death*, a devised often used in medieval Christianity as a reminder of the temporality and transience of earthly possessions.

⁴¹ During the late middle ages, manuscript production became a mostly secular occupation and names of the artisans were often mentioned in commissions and payments.

⁴² This becomes a central theme in the novel *Ik heet Karmozijn* by Orhan Pamuk (De Arbeiderspers, 2011) where a crime must be solved in 16th century Istanbul. The murderer is a master illuminator who is identified by his distinctive drawing style.



PAUSING – PURSUEING MARY

Images capture moments. For a short or a longer time, time is halted and life is solidified. In digital times a simple press on the button suffices, to interrupt a movie or music without consequences or to pause the action and trap it in a photograph. This accessible photography seems to have resulted in an abundance of photographs and a proportional decline of the appreciation of these pictures.

Before digital photography was introduced the creation of an image required a certain skill. It took time to freeze time, thus the process was costly and meticulously planned. Topics, compositions and positions were carefully chosen. The sisters of St. Godelieve have consciously decided for this specific ritual moment, for this position in their cloister, for this sequence to be petrified in time. They have become statues in their own

corridors, looking into the distance or through the photograph, addressing the viewer.

In early manuscript illumination the main characters are often looking simultaneously at their own world and at the reader, as if they are aware of the curiosity of the onlooker. Especially in Byzantine illuminations, one eye is always aimed at the reader⁴³. Manuscript illuminations not only illustrate the writings but they tell stories of their own. They are not an exact depiction of what is written below, nor are they renders of moments or observations. The timeline is manipulated and folded together to fit into the frame. Consecutive scenes are depicted together as if they were happening simultaneously. In the selected illumination onlookers are invited to follow Mary, the main character through the story that depicts her life. Architectural elements

enhance the story and mark out the different moments. Stairs and pathways ensure the flow of the storyline.

The attic corridor that is drawn gave entry to the former Sister choir. It is run-down, its function forgotten. Only the wear of the hardwood flooring shows the importance of this passage. Mary, wearing a gilded cloak and glimmering crown seems to have been petrified in her wait for the sisters to leave their choir.

The layers that form a site are not arranged as flat sheets. The topography that marks out events creates a landscape that is subject to change with each new layer that is added. Hills are heightened and valleys are smoothed out. Ruptures in the fabric open gateways to the past, allowing dialogue between the past and the present. The folded timeline of illuminations simplistically illustrates this intuitive knowledge. Artefacts of the past can evoke memories and give meaning through their composition and placement.

⁴³ This observation is derived from an essay by Orhan Pamuk on the writing process of *Ik heet Karmozijn* (*De andere kleuren*, De Bezige Bij, p. 348-349).

CONCLUSIONS

INTERPRETATION OF CONFRONTATIONS

In the field of adaptive reuse, the challenge is to find a contemporary relevance for buildings that have lost their function. Their history and experience give important clues to discover a suitable reuse. Through modest or elaborate adaptations the building can be navigated into a new functionality.

The study of manuscript illuminations encourages a different way of looking. They yearn to break free from their flat surface and step over the threshold into reality. The manipulated timeline illustrates a layered history that is not flat or monotonous. It is a clutter of stories and meanings. Architectural elements are the connectors that link moments in history. They are signifiers of a linear progress, distorted to avoid obstacles and smoothed out afterwards.

The enclosed garden is the heart of a monastic site. It offers a protected outdoor interior, where disturbances from the outside world are left behind. With a step over the threshold one enters a room without a roof, a shelter from distractions. Religious heritage lingers here in an almost tactile form. The vegetation gains meaning from both the past contemplation and the present interpretations. The cloister as an embodiment of contemplation is cloaked in shadows. Visitors are drawn towards the consecutive projections of windows on the floor and walls. Time is measured in the growth of the plants and the silent shifting of the shadows. Views are created through a window, directed at the centrepiece of the Hortus Contemplationis and continued through the opposite window. Sight is reflected on the glass panes resulting in infinite vistas.

Contemplation is not strictly reserved for religion. A desire to retreat from everyday hassle is universal. The unadorned anonymous ordinary of the past invites modesty. The contrast with the contemporary restless society enforces the appreciation for relics of the past that induce calm and quiet atmospheres. These artefacts, architectural, functional, pictural or ornamental will always have a modern relevance. They serve not only as a reminder of the past, but they are access points to a different way of life, windows that create an attraction by reminding the onlooker of the contrast. Opposites give value to each other.

TOOLS FOR ADAPTIVE REUSE

When working with an existing building there is always a presence of the past. In the field of adaptive reuse the challenge consists of changing the building to allow a new use without erasing this past. To do so in a sensible way requires profound knowledge of the history and the site. Objective research based on traceable facts proves to be insufficient to grasp the full content and possibilities of a site. There is more to be found. The objective research forms a first level of information that must be deepened.

The approach to amplify the level of understanding that is discussed in this thesis is rather subjective and based on personal experiences. By exploiting all senses a more profound impression of the site and the building is acquired. It proves to be a valuable method to discover hidden meanings and to open up the potential. These intangible observations can be communicated through field notes. The intuitive combination of images that

originate from different fields results in new concepts that provide insight in the site and contribute to the development of the project. By involving other disciplines the viewpoint is widened and unthought-of notions present themselves.

This system to transcend the past also illustrates the importance of the tools that are used. The comparison of old and recent photographs, drawing on site and making models to communicate a specific atmosphere: each of these tools uncovers a new layer of information. It is therefore essential to supplement the toolbox of objective research with the necessary equipment to look beyond the apparent facts.

The observations that were discussed in the previous chapters mainly relate to religious heritage, due to the religious nature of the adjoining masters project.

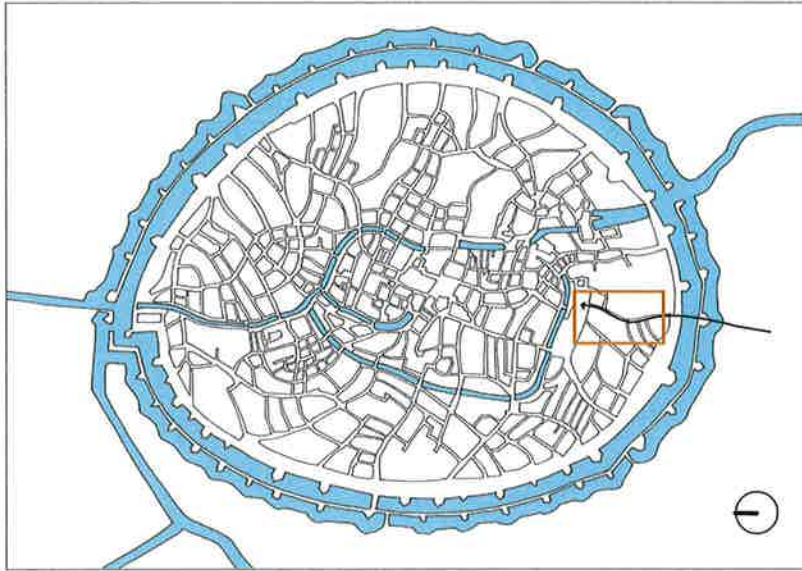
Additionally the field of illuminated manuscripts is intertwined with religious symbolism, since Christianity was one of the pillars of medieval society and strongly influenced all forms of art. However the presented approach is not based on the religious nature of heritage but on the realisation that all adaptive reuse projects could benefit from a multidisciplinary and sensory approach due to their complexly layered nature. That is the crucial element of this approach. It forms a first stepping-stone towards a successful adaptive reuse project.

The strength of an interior architect lies in the awareness of atmosphere and traces of the past. The application and enhancement of these sensitive observations on several levels ensures the completeness of an adaptive reuse project. Therefore the relevance of this research methodology is not limited to religious heritage only. It investigates a method to present subjective observations in a substantiated and credible way.

THE ADAPTIVE REUSE OF THE ST. GODELIEVE ABBEY IN BRUGES

The context of the master's project was introduced in the chapter *context and depiction – master's project* on p. 29. The research on the history of the St. Godelieveabbey formed an essential starting point for this thesis. This research intertwines with the design process, which will be briefly explained in this chapter. The site was analysed through site visits, schematic drawings and literature study. All images in this chapter were made by the author.

SITE ANALYSIS

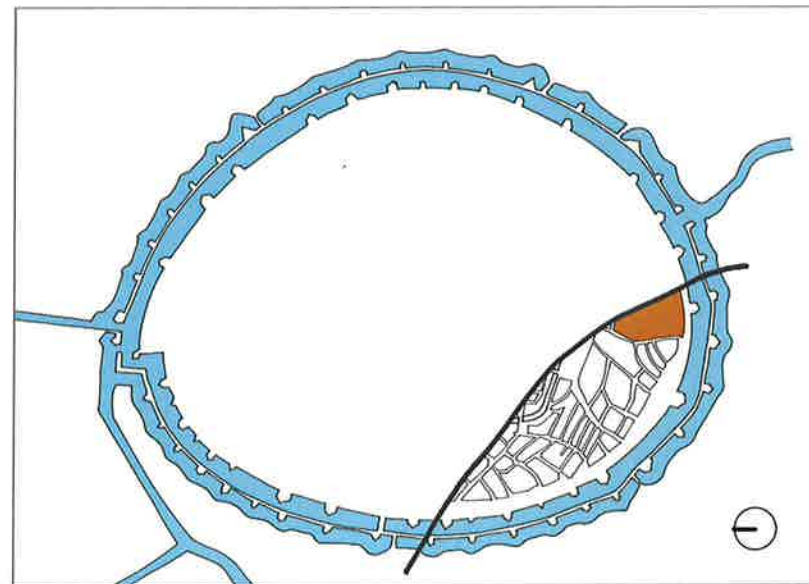


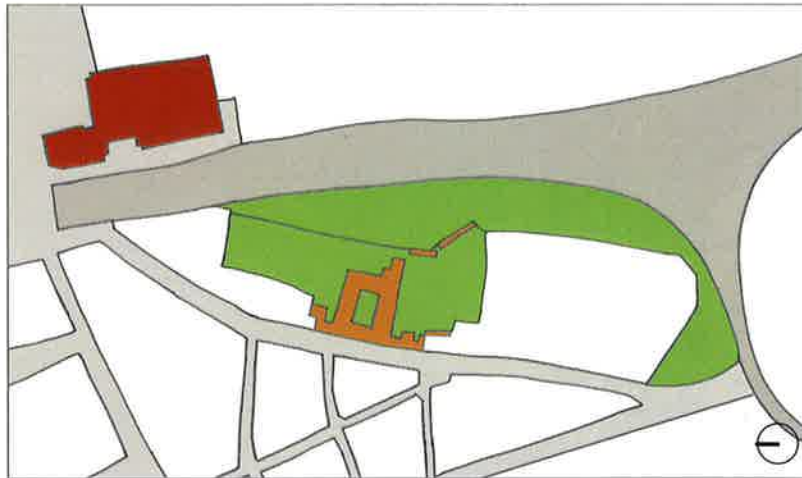
The sisters of St. Godelieve had to flee their pillaged abbey in Gistel and sought refuge in Bruges. Its former city ramparts define the historical centre of Bruges. These fortifications confined the centre in an egg-like shape. Access to the city was controlled by the limited amount of gateways. The sisters acquired in 1623 a house in the Boeveriestreet. This was one of the main access roads that connected the Boeveriegate with the *Vrijdagmarkt*, a livestock market square. Through donations, the neighbouring houses were added to the site and remodelled into a chapel.

The sisters lived a retreated life and the busy traffic, which often included livestock, was a nuisance for their private prayers. A new wing was built in 1642 that shifted the main functions of monastic life towards the quiet farmlands on the eastside, away from the street. The graveyard was located in the corner between the new wing and the houses next to the street.

This graveyard was transformed into a semi-enclosed garden when the north wing was erected in 1885. It was only when the east wing was built in 1953 that the enclosing of this Hortus Contemplationis was completed and surrounded by the cloister⁴⁴.

The rounded shape of Bruges city centre was ruptured when the first train station was built in 1838. It was located on the *Vrijdagmarkt* square and the railway cut straight through the historic fabric. The neighbourhood of West-Bruges, including the Boeveriestreet, was effectively disconnected from the city centre. With the mechanical marvel steaming through their backyard and the Boeveriestreet lessened in importance, the organization of the abbey slightly shifted. The garden wall doubled in height to protect the sisters from the curious eyes of train passengers.





The train station was relocated outside the historical centre in 1937. The former trajectory of the railway became an important access road for motorised traffic. A wedge of public space lies in between this road and the wall of the abbey's gardens. The pathways that run through are mainly used by local cyclists and pedestrians. It is part of the route from the train station to the centre, but most visitors of Bruges use another route on the opposite side of the road. This wedge has a strong slope towards the road, putting a geographical barrier between the traffic and the abbey site.

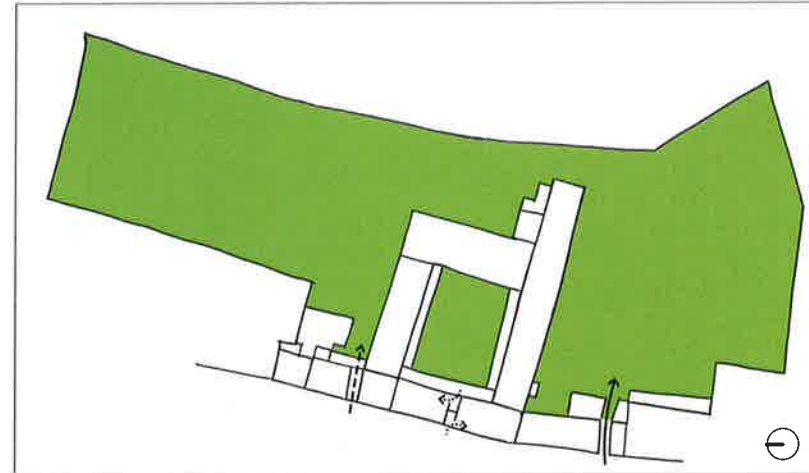
On the market square, the scars of the former station were redesigned into a public space and park. A design contest was held to revive this area by adding a concert hall. The winning design by Robbrecht & Daem was completed in 2002. It is a sculptural monolith that refers to the diversified interplay of roofs in the historical city. The modern architecture cladded in brick-coloured tiles is a landmark in the historiated city fabric and converses

with the three medieval towers that define the city landscape.⁴⁵

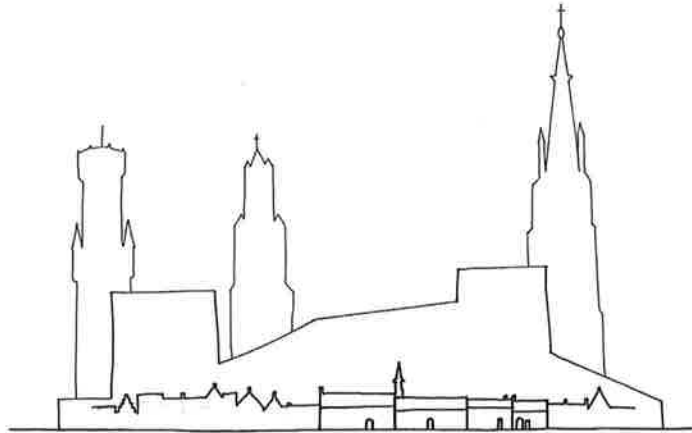
There are three main access points from the Boeveriestreet to the St. Godelieveabbey. The main entrance to the abbey is located in the entrance building, which is the north part of the west wing. This formal gate gives access to the consultation room and was controlled by a gatekeeper. In the south part of the west wing a gateway perforates the building, giving direct access to the orchard and garden that lies behind. The chapel is located in the middle of this wing. A doorway allows visitors to participate in the service. Although the sisters can enter the chapel from the cloister, there is no direct connection with the street.

⁴⁴ Jong Kristen Onthaal v.z.w., De Sint-Godelieveabdij te Brugge (Beernem: De Windroos, 1984)

⁴⁵ Steve Demulder (ed). & Brigitte Beernaert, 't Nieuw Zand; Heraanleg 't Zand en Vrijdagmarkt (Oostkamp: PurePrint, 2016)



NEW PROGRAM



The new program for the St. Godelieveabbey in Bruges aims to be an added value for the neighbourhood. Inspired by the strong presence of the Concert Hall, a program was developed that counterbalances this solemn cultural entity. Where the concert hall relates to the historical towers of Bruges, the St. Godelieve site relates to the housing fabric of the city. Blending in the streetscape it has a distinctive humble and closed feeling.

Inspired by the Brussels organization ART BASICS for CHILDREN (ABC vzw), the former abbey will function as a centre for education based on artistic expression by encouraging creative freedom⁴⁶. This includes creative ateliers and theatre workshops. The religious identity of the site allows to retreat in 'quiet zones' and encourages contemplation. The art-educational program provides a prolonged stay for school groups.

These school excursions can include workshops on arts, self-expression, mediation, personal growth and nature- and farming experiences. The urban context of Bruges is an added value for school groups from a rural context. The facilities allow among other things after-hours and holiday workshops for children from the neighbourhood. The cultural function is open for families of Bruges through theatre and performances aimed at children

The outdoor spaces of the site are currently withheld from the neighbourhood. The green public spaces that are present in the area are mainly elaborate strips of greenery with passages that connect the train station with the centre. They are less generous towards temporary stays, for example a family pick-nick on a sunny afternoon. To provide in this need, the outdoor spaces of the St. Godelieveabbey will be partially opened for the public. A small-scale farming organisation operated as a sheltered workplace will occupy the other part of the outdoor area.

“ABC vzw (npo) is situated on the border of art and education: it is a laboratory for aesthetic experiences, creative development and artistic awareness.”

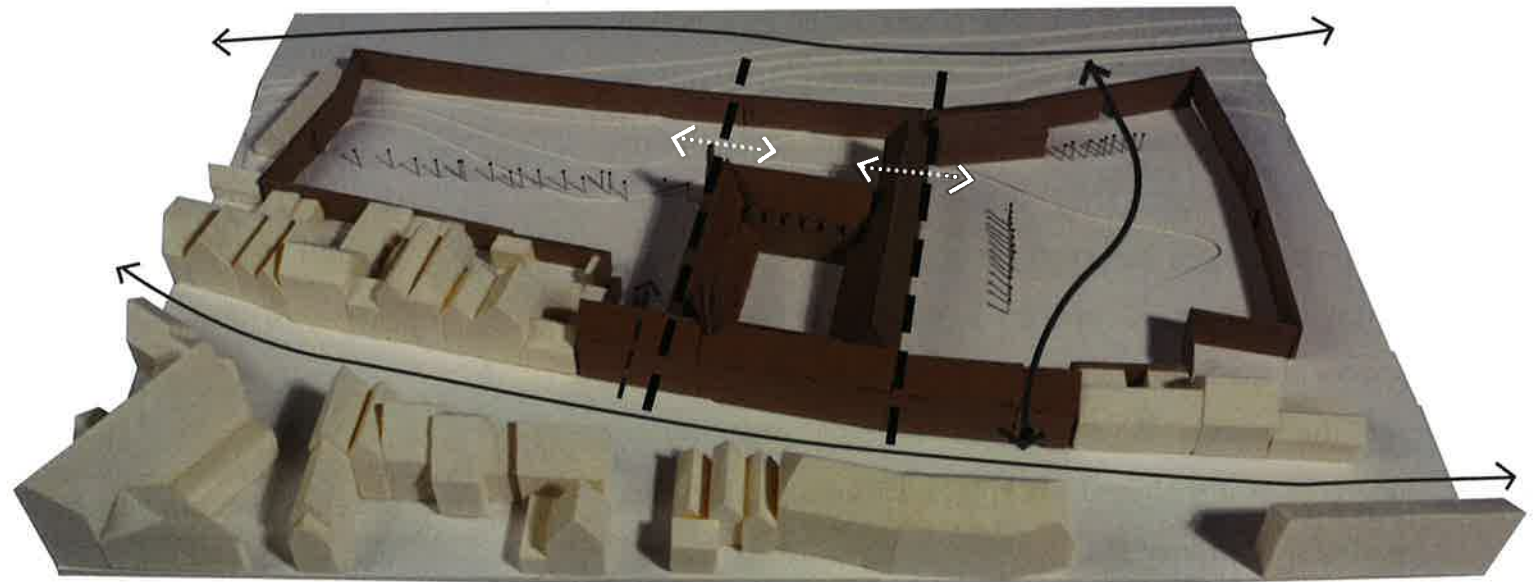
main goals:

- integrating art and culture in society
- offering an aesthetic experience in a sophisticated spatial context
- encouraging play and playful learning / developing talents
- learning to look, listen, live with curiosity
- inciting citizenship, empathy, tolerance

⁴⁶ Art Basics for Children, « What is ABC ? » <http://www.art-basics-for-children-abcvzw/?lang=en>

MASTERPLAN

The proposed masterplan divides the site in three zones that each have their own identity and level of openness. The interaction between the zones is crucial for the functionality of the complete site and its individual aspects. The abbey complex will mainly house the art-educational program. The organisation of this zone will be explained in the following chapter. These wings form a barrier between the two outdoor zones, interacting with both outdoor areas.



INFORMAL ENTRY

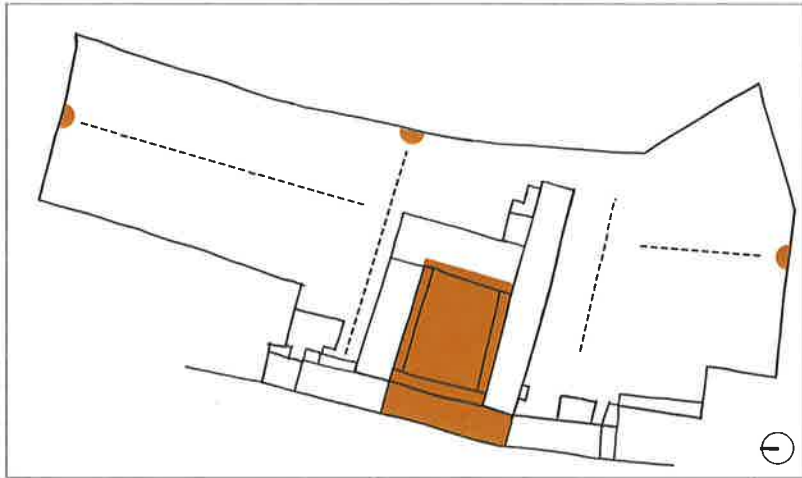
The first outdoor zone consists of the former orchard, situated south of the abbey complex. This generous outdoor area has the potential to be integrated in the public sphere. It has a distinctive informal appearance, which includes the gateway that once the doors are opened allows direct access. The park is embraced by the monastery walls and buildings and offers a protected outdoor environment without motorised traffic. In order to achieve complete accessibility, the east wall will be respectfully punctured to connect the park with the green wedge.



FORMAL ENTRY

The second outdoor zone is located north of the complex. The formal entrance building controls access. This sheltered environment will be used for small-scale farming, employing 4-5 workers who have difficulties with finding a job on the regular job market. The produce will be sold on a weekly basis.





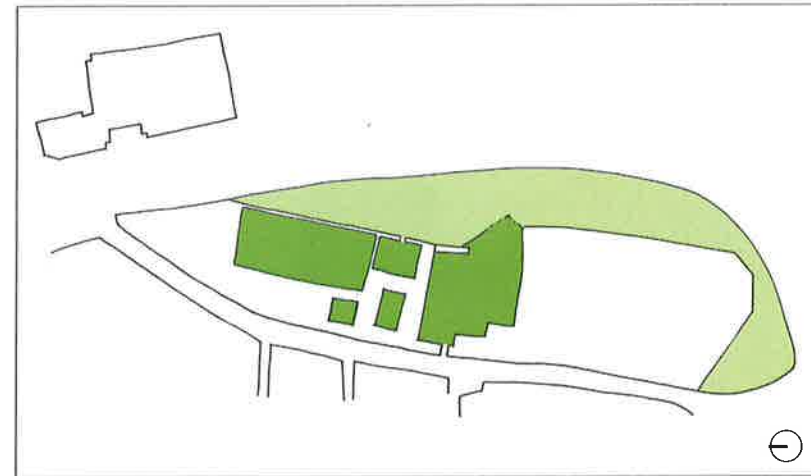
SPIRITUALITY

Once a year, the worship of St. Godelieve reaches its peak during the St. Godelieve Celebrations. To encourage this upholding of tradition, the chapel will be preserved as a quiet zone, reserved for contemplation in both religious and profane context. During the day it is freely accessible for those who seek a quiet environment. Occasional performances, events or exhibitions can take place here, provided they do not interfere with the contemplative identity of the chapel. This functionality and identity is prolonged in the enclosed garden and the surrounding cloister.

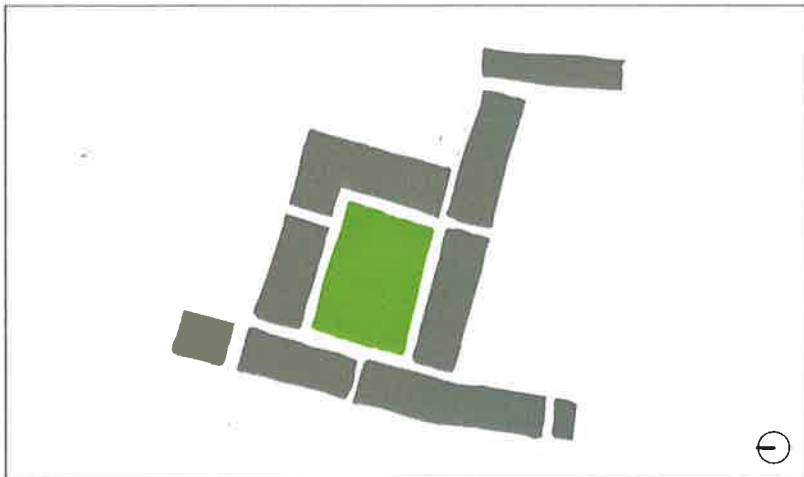
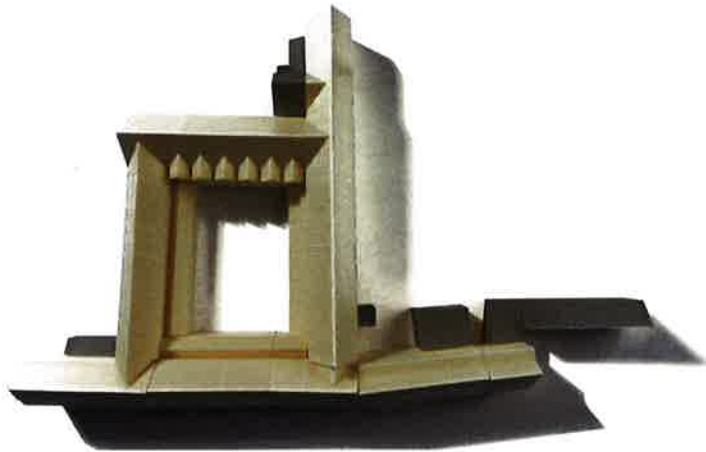
The site has several distinctive contemplative areas. The landscape and vegetation is orientated towards these focal points. The ceremonial routing expanding the cloister's embodiment of contemplation will be preserved and encouraged.

HORTUS CONCLUSUS

The notion of *Hortus Conclusus* was elaborately discussed in the previous chapters. It is the heart of a monastery and can be regarded as an interior without a roof. By turning the site inside out and considering the outdoor areas as rooms, a clear organisation presents itself. The central enclosed garden, the *Hortus Contemplationis* is an area for contemplation. A second courtyard manifests itself in the armpit of the east- and south wing. This *Hortus Ludi* is a place for gathering and enjoyment, fitting in the art-educational program that occupies the building. This joyful garden is repeated on a larger scale and for a broader public in the south park. North of the buildings, a *Hortus Catalogi* materialises. This clearly structured garden is aimed at produce. The vegetable garden meets public life on the small courtyard that communicates the transition from public to private. A new structure will stress this division and create the infrastructure to sell the produce and support the farmworkers.



ORGANISATION



The organic, phased evolution of the site resulted in a cluttered complex. To analyse the structure, a basic model was made where every structure was made as a separate foam block. This allowed experimenting with different configurations. Keeping the new program in mind, illogical additions that detract the historical and architectural value were removed.

In a similar thought process, the ground floor plan was traced with elimination of the circulation areas. The resulting blocks show the circulation in an uncluttered way. The routing stresses the cloister surrounding the enclosed garden. All rooms are connected with this central axis. Contact between the outdoor areas and the enclosed outdoor room is limited.

The general outlines of organisation are based on the heritage value of the buildings, the former functions and the identity of zones. On the side of the Boeveriestreet the contemplative atmosphere of the chapel forms a buffer between the everyday and the site. This calm atmosphere is represented in the general nature of the functions that become louder and more active towards the backside (east) of the complex.



The main (south) wing is the oldest. It historically houses practical functions such as the abbesses' office, the refectory, the kitchen and the washing room. On the first floor the traditional sleeping cells have been extremely well preserved. This wing can easily be transformed with minimal interventions to house contemporary basic needs. A respectful handling of the historical interiors is required.





The north wing has a certain heritage value, which is mainly present on the ground floor. However, extensive renovations have been hard on the historic property. The archive, library and chapter hall are located on the ground floor. This wing has a distinct capacity for self-enrichment through study and reading. This fits in the new program as the wing for ateliers and quiet reading and storytelling areas.



The most recent east wing has hardly any heritage value. Its main quality is the enclosure of the contemplative garden and the completion of the cloister. It is the connection between the practical needs and the self-enrichment and is therefore destined for gathering and communication. Due to its central location, it is a welcoming area for visitors and guests. The theatre is located in this wing, which can be opened for the public. Extensive additions can be made in this wing, on the condition that it does not affect the identity of the enclosed garden.

The Boeveriewing is not part of the art-educational program, although its functions are often incorporated in the workshops. The north part contains the formal entrance building. It houses functions related to the exterior of the site: a museum on the history of the abbey, a controlled gate and the housing of a concierge. The chapel and the enclosed garden have been and will always be contemplative zones. The south part forms an appendix of the complex, having housed boarding accommodations for girls and including the informal gateway. There is no direct passage between the abbey complex and these buildings. The street facades have preserved their distinctive character. The annexes in the back will be removed and the buildings will be made available for neighbourhood initiatives that function independently, benefiting from the public park that lies behind the gate.



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LIST OF IMAGES

Cover image: Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017. St. Godelieveabbey, Bruges.

Page 34:



“Alexander consults the oracle of the trees of Sun and Moon”

Master of the Alexandre of Wauquelin, 1448

Histoire d'Alexandre. Paris. BNF, ms. fr. 9342, f. 164r.

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Overgrown Crucifix in the enclosed garden

Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017

St. Godelieveabbey, Bruges



Confrontation at the South wing

Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017

St. Godelieveabbey, Bruges

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Page 38:



“Jean Du Quesne presents his book to Louis of Gruuthuse; God creates the world”

Brunetto Latini, ca. 1470-1480

Livre du trésor. Paris. BNF, ms. fr. 191, f. 1r.

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View into model of the Gruuthuse Oratory, 1:50

Linde Van Den Bosch, 2016

Gruuthusemuseum, Bruges



“view into the garden of the St. Godelieveabbey in the Boeveriestraat”

A. Brusselle, 1930

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“Hunt of the Unicorn Annunciation”

Unknown, Utrecht, ca. 1500

Book of Hours. New York, ms. G.0005, f. 18v-19.

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Hortus Conclusus

Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017



Confrontation in the enclosed garden

Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017

St. Godelieveabbey, Bruges

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Page 46:



“Philip the Good visits Wauquelin in his workplace”

Unknown, Utrecht, ca. 1500

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Illumination drawn to support the design process

Linde Van Den Bosch, 2016

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Page 50:



“Jan van Leeuwen in his kitchen and writing in his monastery cell”

Jan van Leeuwen, ca. 1400

Vanden tien gheboden Gods. Brussels, KBR, ms. Il 138, f. 2r.

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Watercolor study for the Higgins hall insertion.

Steven Holl Architects, 2005

Pratt Institute, New York

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Study of shadows in the cloister

Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017

St. Godelieveabbey, Bruges

Page 54:



“Annunciation, birth and education of Mary”

Jean Mansel, ca. 1450-1458

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Corridor leading to the former entrance of the sister choir

Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017

St. Godelieveabbey, Bruges



“Statio”

unknown, ca. 1972-1980

St. Godelieveabbey, Bruges

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APPENDICES

REMAKES OF HISTORICAL IMAGES

SOURCES

- 1a. South cloister (anno 1643). Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017. Sint-Godelieveabbey, Bruges.
- 1b. Confrontation in the South Cloister. Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017. Sint-Godelieveabbey, Bruges.
- 1c. Statio. Jong Kristen Onthaal voor Toerisme v.z.w.. *De Sint-Godelieveabdij te Brugge*. (Beernem: De Windroos, 1984) p 8.

- 2a. North Cloister (anno 1885). Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017. Sint-Godelieveabbey, Bruges.
- 2b. Confrontation in the North Cloister. Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017. Sint-Godelieveabbey, Bruges.
- 2c. "view into the St. Godelieveabbey in the Boeveriestraat". A. Brusselle, 1930. St. Godelieveabbey, Bruges. Erfgoed Brugge, Beeldbank. <https://zoeken.erfgoedbrugge.be/detail.php?id=322491974>.

- 3a. South cloister (anno 1643). Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017. Sint-Godelieveabbey, Bruges.
- 3b. Confrontation in the South Cloister. Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017. Sint-Godelieveabbey, Bruges.
- 3c. "View into the St. Godelieveabbey in the Boeveriestraat". s.n., s.d. Digital Archive Bruges.

- 4a. view at the east garden wall. Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017. Sint-Godelieveabbey, Bruges.
- 4b. Confrontation near the north wing. Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017. Sint-Godelieveabbey, Bruges.
- 4c. "view into the garden of the St. Godelieveabbey in the Boeveriestraat." A. Brusselle, 1930. St. Godelieveabbey, Bruges. Erfgoed Brugge, Beeldbank. https://zoeken.erfgoedbrugge.be/detail.php?nav_id=0-1&id=322456154&index=46.

5a. View into the west cloister (partially anno 1722-1726 and partially anno 1928). Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017. Sint-Godelieveabbey, Bruges.

5b. Confrontation in the west cloister. Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017. Sint-Godelieveabbey, Bruges.

5c. "View into the St. Godelieveabbey in the Boeveriestraat". s.n., s.d. Digital Archive Bruges.

6a. the east wing (anno 1953) and the south wing (anno 1643) as seen from the cloister garden. Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017. Sint-Godelieveabbey, Bruges

6b. confrontation in the enclosed garden. Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017. Sint-Godelieveabbey, Bruges

6c. "View into the garden of the St. Godelieveabbey in the Boeveriestraat". s.n., s.d. Digital Archive Bruges.

7a. south wing (anno 1643) as seen from the orchard. Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017. Sint-Godelieveabbey, Bruges

7b. confrontation at the south wing. Linde Van Den Bosch, 2017. Sint-Godelieveabbey, Bruges

7c. "procession in the garden of the St. Godelieveabbey in the Boeveriestraat". A. Brusselle, 1930. St. Godelieveabbey, Bruges. Erfgoed Brugge, Beeldbank. <https://zoeken.erfgoedbrugge.be/detail.php?id=322836688>.





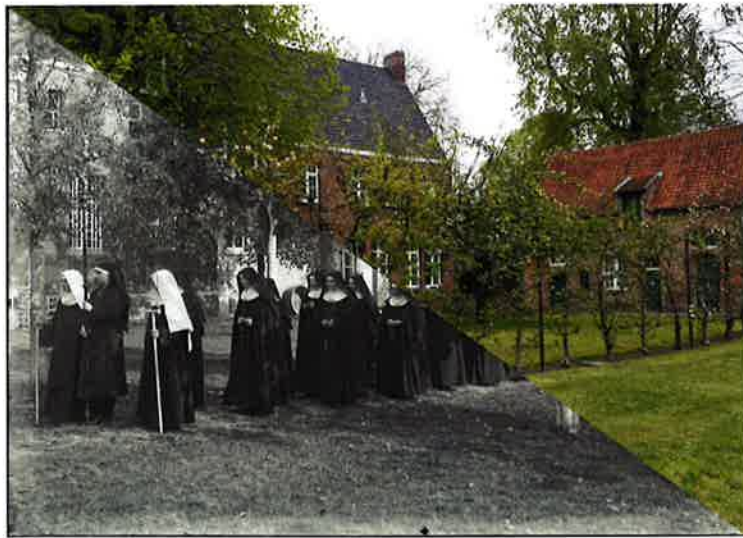




Abbaye des Bénédictines de la
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Q. Detail of “Nouveau plan de Bruges”

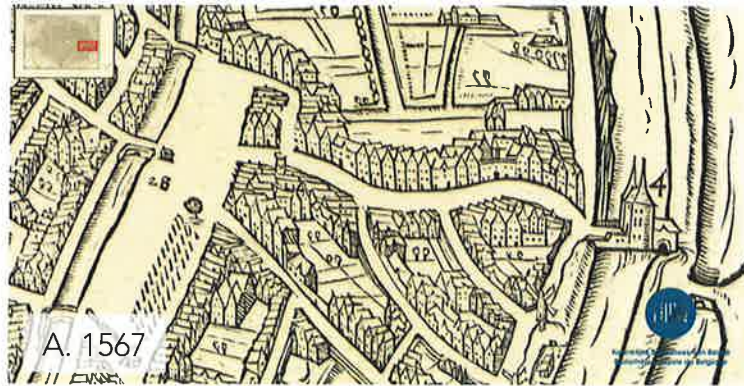
Bruges : gravé et imprimé par les Etablissements G.
Geûens-Willaert, eds. 1921.

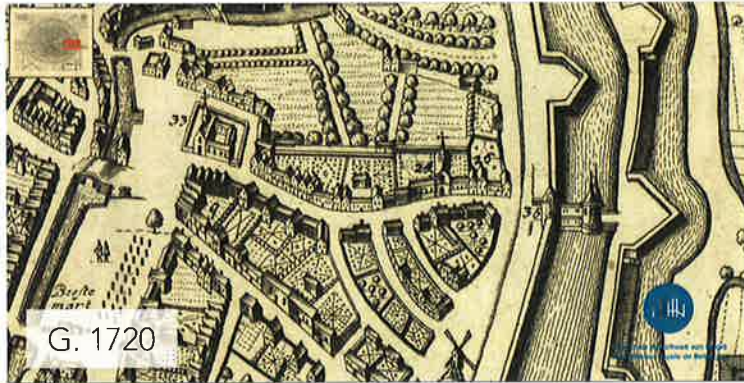
*Nouveau plan de Bruges / dressé par G. Geûens-Willaert,
imprimeur-éditeur, 5, Place St. Jean, 5, Bruges.* KBR
2137565.

Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België. Nouveau plan de Bruges / dressé
par G. Geûens-Willaert, imprimeur-éditeur, 5, Place St. Jean, 5, Bruges.
<http://uurl.kbr.be/1046884>.

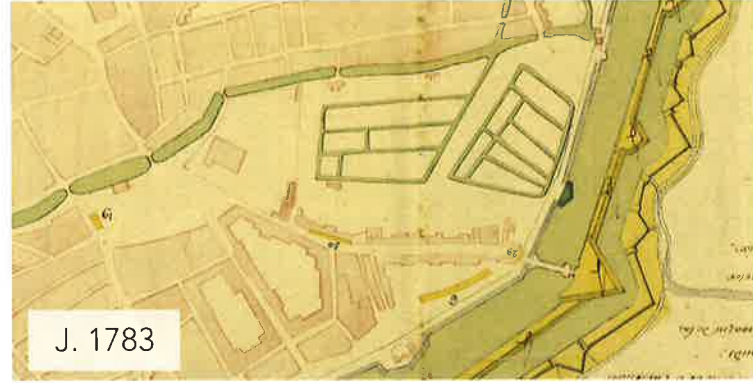
R. Detail of “Topografische kaarten Ministerie van
Openbare Werken en Wederopbouw (1950-1970)”

Geopunt. >Kaarten en Plaatsen>Historische kaarten> Topografische
kaarten Ministerie van Openbare Werken en Wederopbouw (1950-
1970). www.geopunt.be.

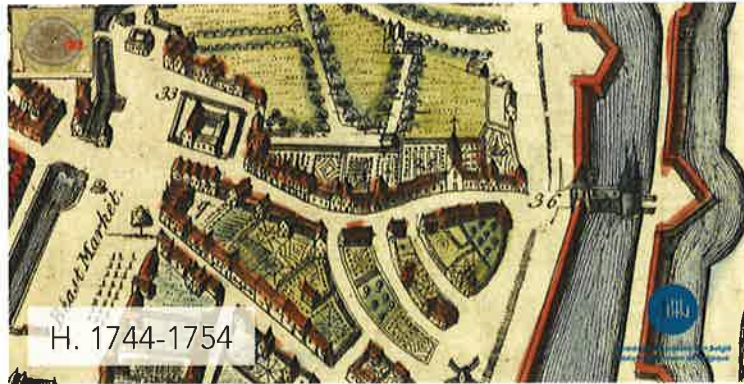




G. 1720



J. 1783



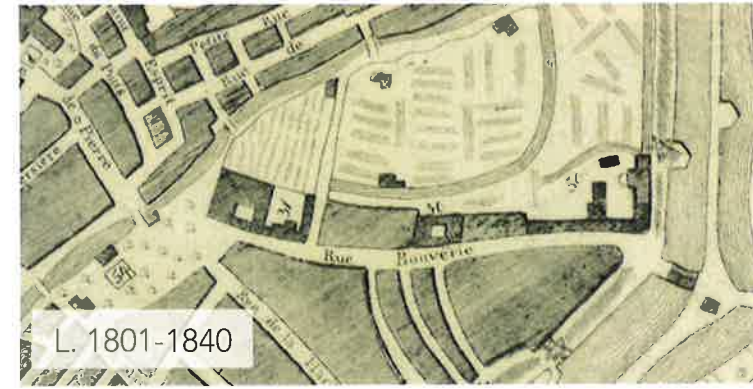
H. 1744-1754



K. 1795-1834



I. 1771-1778



L. 1801-1840

