[Bibliography]

Addison, Nicholas. 'Who's Afraid of Signs and Significations? Defending Semiotics in the Secondary Art and Design Curriculum'. In *Art Education in a Postmodern World: Collected Essays*, edited by T. Hardy. Bristol: Intellect Books, 113–22. 2006.

Biedermann, Hans. *Dictionary of Symbolism: Cultural Icons and the Meanings Behind Them.* New York: Meridian Books, 1994.

Braeken, Jo. 'De Erfenis Van Een Sociaal Bewogen Architect - Renaat Braem En De Menselijke Stad'. *VMSW Woonwoord* (2010): 6-9. https://www.woonwoord.be/Portals/103/Objects/Zoeken/ww%2012/erfenis_renaat_braem_lente2010.pdf

Braeken, Jo. *Renaat Braem 1910–2001.* Brussels: ASA Publishers, Vlaams Instituut voor het Onroerend Erfgoed, 2010.

Braem, Renaat. *Het Schoonste Land Ter Wereld.* Leuven: Kritak, 1987.

Couchez, Elke. 'The Antwerp (Stair) Case: How a Modernist Architect Staged His Educational and Ideological Programme'. *Paedagogica Historica* 53, no. 6 (2017): 799–826.

DeVries, Willem A. 'Meaning and Interpretation in History'. *History and Theory* 22, no. 3 (1983): 253–63. https://doi.org/10.2307/2504983.

Hardy, Tom, ed. *Art Education in a Postmodern World: Collected Essays.* Bristol: Intellect, 2006.

Lonergan, Hamish. 'Meme, Memory or Critic: Revaluing Brutalism on Social Media'. In *Valuing Architecture: Heritage and the Economics of Culture*, edited by Ashley Paine, John MacArthur, and Susan Holden. Amsterdam: Valiz, 210-224. 2020.

Moors, Marie. 'Reviving Modernist Housing: Arena District of Renaat Braem'. Paper presented at the 16th Docomomo International Conference, Tokyo, Japan, 2021.

Moors, Marie, and Koenraad Van Cleempoel. 'The Living Heritage of Renaat Braem's Arena District'. Nordisk Arkitekturforskning (The Nordic Association of Architectural Research), Forthcoming.

Moors, Marie, and Bie Plevoets. 'Re-Reading the Visions of the Modernists of CIAM'. In *REHAB 2019 - The 4th International Conference on Preservation, Maintenance and Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings and Structures.* Guimaraes, Portugal: Green Lines Institute, 2019.

Pezolet, Nicola. 'Spectacles Plastiques: Reconstruction and the Debates on the "Synthesis of the Arts" in France, 1944–1962'. Ph.D. Diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2012.

Strauven, Francis. *Renaat Braem Architect.* Brussels: Archief voor moderne architectuur, 1983.

Strauven, Francis, and Renaat Braem. *Renaat Braem: De Dialectische Avonturen Van Een Vlaams Functionalist.* Brussels: Archief voor Moderne Architectuur, 1983.

Tresidder, Jack. *The Watkins Dictionary of Symbols.* Watkins Media, 2012.

Van Herck, Karina. 'Wooneenheid Kiel'. Agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed. https://inventaris.onroerenderfgoed.be/erfgoedobjecten/126553

Subtle acts of resistance
Contentious national heritage and adaptive reuse
N. Vande Keere . . . .

[1]   View of the Rotunda from the Parc du Cinquantenaire, Art and History Museum, 2019.

'In a very few hours I arrived in a city that always makes me think of a whited sepulchre. Prejudice no doubt. I had no difficulty in finding the Company's offices. It was the biggest thing in the town, and everybody I met was full of it. They were going to run an over-sea empire, and make no end of coin by trade'.
Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 1899[1]

In the context of the international debate about the removal of contentious historical statues and monuments in public spaces, renewed interest has emerged in the figure of King Leopold II and Belgium's colonial past. Following the 2018 reopening of the AfricaMuseum in Tervuren, the United Nations reported that the reorganisation of the museum did not go far enough with its decolonisation process. In addition, the UN demanded an apology for colonial atrocities in the Congo and questioned the symbolism of historical statues and monuments in the public sphere, linking them explicitly to recent forms of racism in Belgium.

Surely, the heroic representation of prominent figures from the period of King Leopold II is a far cry from the role they played in reality. As symptoms of the construction of national identity, however, these statues are merely the tip of the iceberg. The king was a prolific master builder and laid the basis for expansive public works that can also be regarded as contentious national heritage.

This article will reflect on some of the iconographic properties of the building projects developed under 'builder king' Leopold II. We will focus on the royal Art and History Museum [Fig. 1], located in the monumental Parc du Cinquantenaire, as one of the five national museums in and around Brussels initiated by the king. In addition, we will present a selection of research-by-design projects[2] that restaged the museum from within, all of which were designed between 2019 and 2020 by students in the International Master on Adaptive Reuse programme.[3] Beyond adapting the museum to current standards, the students addressed institutional representation and national symbolism in a subversive way, demonstrating the potential of adaptive reuse

to transform the meaning[4] of contentious heritage. The examples serve as subtle acts of resistance to the archaic and controversial character of the site, aiming to revive the Art and History Museum as a cultural landmark with a positive identity.

Contemporary iconoclasm

The current attention to contentious statues and monuments is not an isolated phenomenon. In many countries, national sites linked to colonialism, slavery, and totalitarianism pose critical challenges to heritage policy and management. The artistic or historical value of these sites is often eclipsed by the perception of their negative iconographic role in present-day society. Belgium had its fair share of historical developments due to colonial rule between 1885 and 1960, with consequences that have reverberated until the present day. The central figure – or 'villain'[5] – in this episode is the second king of Belgium, Leopold II [Fig. 2], who reigned between 1865 and 1909, ruling what was called the Congo Free State between 1885 and 1908 (today the Democratic Republic of Congo). Although historical research is not conclusive, forced labour, including the 'red rubber system' of his regime, caused a significant number of deaths.[6] The profits went primarily into his pockets, enabling the king to acquire large properties in Belgium and initiate nation-building projects.

Despite the early revelations of the atrocities in Congo – for example, the Casement Report[7], which dates back to 1904 – colonial monuments have resonated less with social and political realities in Belgium. Compared to other countries, their symbolic role seems to be felt less acutely here,

[2] Equestrian statue of Leopold II by Thomas Vinçotte (1926), Art and History Museum. Currently located in the Large Narthex of the museum, it is a less well-known copy of the statue in the Place du Trône, near the royal palace in Brussels, perhaps the most susceptible to vandalism in the context of iconoclasm.

Monuments in Belgium is worth mentioning. The author, Matthew Stanard, investigates the impact of the colonial era on Belgium after the independence of Congo in 1960. The book focuses on the colonial iconography of public monuments in Belgium as a testimony to the 'enduring presence of empire'.[8]

Architectural iconography at the turn of the 20th century

Stanard is reticent to select architectural sites in his book, apart from including the Arcade du Cinquantenaire and the obvious references to the AfricaMuseum. In addition, he partly disproves the often-used argument that most of the grand projects were financed by Leopold II with privately-obtained profits from the colony, dating the beginning of this practice to 1896 and noting the widespread spirit of large-scale building projects throughout Europe at the time.

Rather than reviewing the origins of these financial resources, we argue here for a continuous development based on the comparison of the iconological properties and the underlying significance of both campaigns. The statues can be assessed as tokens of the afterlife of colonialism and its deliberate contamination of nationalism in Belgium. The personal ambition of Leopold II regarding nation-building projects was no different. The megalomaniac character of the national projects in which he was involved, including plans that were not realised, prove this point *a fortiori*. As such, one could speak of an 'iconographic continuity' surpassing the reign of the king and becoming embedded in Belgian culture and politics for decades. As much as the contentious heritage of monuments or buildings is met with an attitude of (un-)conscious indifference by the Belgian population today, we believe their presence proves the hidden but lingering existence of deep and persistent ties to colonialism.

While the statues were built between the two world wars, with Congo continuing to be administered under Belgian rule,[9] the building projects were initiated earlier, during the second half of the 19th century. At the time, Brussels, the capital of the young nation of Belgium, was perceived as a thriving centre of European culture and politics, and its cosmopolitan character attracted famous avant-garde artists, writers, and alternative thinkers.[10] The author Joseph Conrad refers to the city as a significant in-between-stop for Marlow, the main character in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), before embarking on his 'colonial adventure'. The Second Industrial Revolution transformed the city substantially and was largely responsible for its growth,

with the exception of protests by the small Congolese diaspora or the clandestine actions of mostly 'fringe' organisations. Iconoclasm in Belgium has thus far remained limited, and most monuments in public spaces have stayed intact. Consequently, the government received the negative UN report with some surprise.

However, in spite of the limited vigour in the public sphere, the debate on the colonial era in Belgium is increasingly present, both in the academic and public domains. In June 2020, King Philippe of Belgium issued an apology. A month later, the Belgian parliament appointed a commission to investigate Belgium's relationship with the colonial past and make recommendations in this regard. In addition, several local authorities and organisations have taken the initiative to discuss the future of colonial monuments through working groups. In an academic context, the 2019 book *The Leopard, the Lion and the Cock: Colonial Memories and*

1 Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin Books, 2012 [1899]), 9. The main character in the book describes late 19th-century Brussels as a 'whited sepulchre', a Biblical reference to the traits of a hypocrite, hiding its malignant intentions behind a façade of dignity.
2 For the methodology of research-by-design, see the 'EAAE Charter on Architectural Research', European Association for Architectural Education, accessed 9

August 2020, http://www.eaae.be/about/ statutes-and-policy/eaae-charter-architectural-research/.
3 During the 2020–2021 academic year, the International Master on Adaptive Reuse programme also addressed the subject of contentious heritage in parallel with the Continuity in Architecture Atelier at the Manchester School of Architecture. More information on the design projects and texts summarising various lectures are

available at www.uhasselt.be/trace. Rodolfo Machado, 'Old Buildings as
4 Palimpsest: Toward a Theory of Remodeling', *Progressive Architecture* 11 (1976): 46–49, 49.
5 Architectural historian Johan Lagae used this term in his lecture 'Rethinking (Architectural) Heritage from Below?', given at Hasselt University on 20 February 2019, hinting at a lack of nuance in the description of the role of the king in Adam

Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost – A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1998).
6 Recent estimates range between 1 and 5 million. See Jean-Paul Sanderson, 'Van bevolkingsafname naar bevolkingsgroei: welke invloed had de kolonisatie op de Congolese demografie?', in *Koloniaal Congo – Een geschiedenis in vragen*, eds. Idesbald Goddeeris, Amandine Lauro, and Guy Vanthemsche (Kalmthout: Polis, 2020), 116.

7 This report was commissioned by the British government and written by Roger Casement, the British Consul in the Congo at the time. It confirmed the allegations of systematic abuse in the Congo Free State.
8 Matthew G. Stanard, *The Leopard, the Lion and the Cock: Colonial Memories and Monuments in Belgium* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2019).
9 Due to the scandal in the Congo Free State, Belgium 'inherited' the colony in

1908. However, this shift did not lead to a major overhaul in governance. The state maintained most of the colonial structures and heralded the deceased Leopold II for his 'humanitarian' actions in the territory.
10 E.g., Auguste Rodin, James Ensor, Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels. See also: Eric Min, *De eeuw van Brussel – Biografie van een wereldstad (1850–1914)* (Antwerp: De Bezige Bij, 2013).

urban structure, and image as we know it today. As his reign very much coincided with this period (1865–1909), King Leopold II played an instrumental role in the urban development.

Referring to the same period, architectural historian Richard Krautheimer observes a tendency of (Western) architectural iconography to evolve towards formal reproduction or imitation at the turn of the 20th century:

> A gradual process of draining the edifice of its 'content' seems to begin. It is by no means a continuous development and is constantly interrupted by counter movements, but it grows stronger and reaches its peak in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Architectural patterns are then used regardless of their original signifi-cance, a Greek Temple for a Customs House …, a Gothic cathedral for an office building …, a thermal room for a railway station …. The mod-ern copy with all its exactness in reproducing the whole building and with its striving towards ab-solute faithfulness, definitely omits the elements which were important to the Middle Ages: the content and the significance of the building.[11]

The architectural legacy of Leopold II is no excep-tion. While his infrastructural and urban ambitions for Brussels could be characterised as innovative (sometimes even labelled visionary[12]), his architec-tural taste was rather traditional or, at best, eclec-tic. Inspired by foreign, often French, architecture, the monarch favoured Neo-Classicism for national and royal institutions.[13] As was common among the ruling class in Europe and further abroad, this monumental style was considered the most likely to impress and instil the population with a sense of national identity (and is still popular among auto-cratic rulers today). Due to the emergence of large-scale industrial reproduction, it can be considered the first globalist architectural style [Fig. 3].
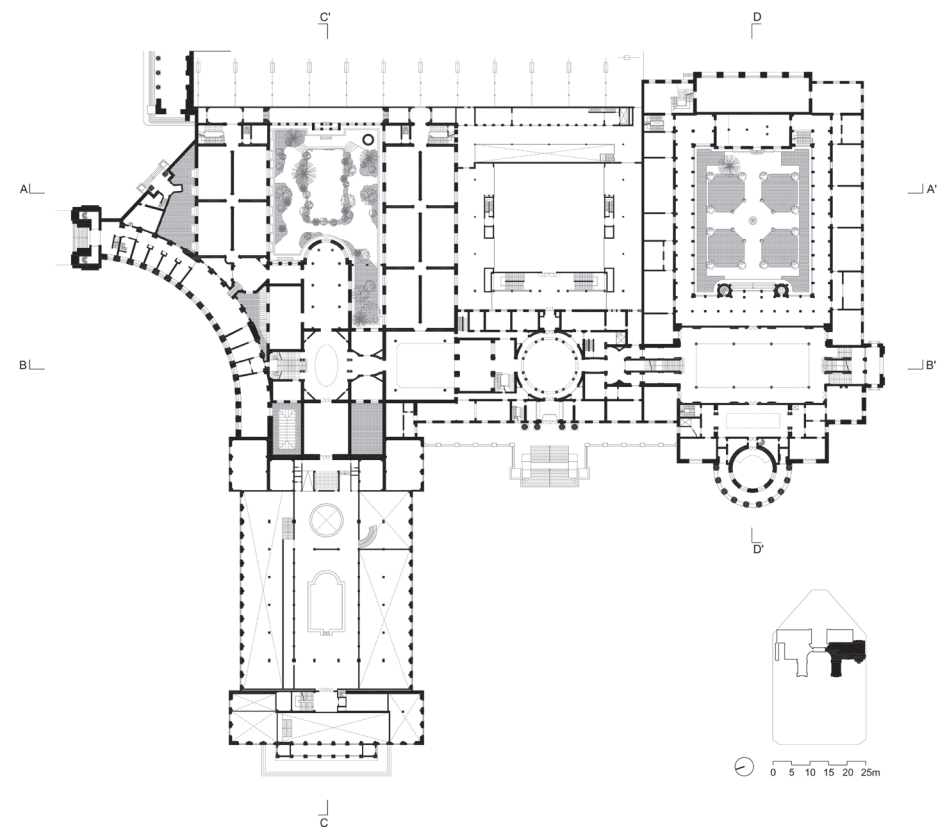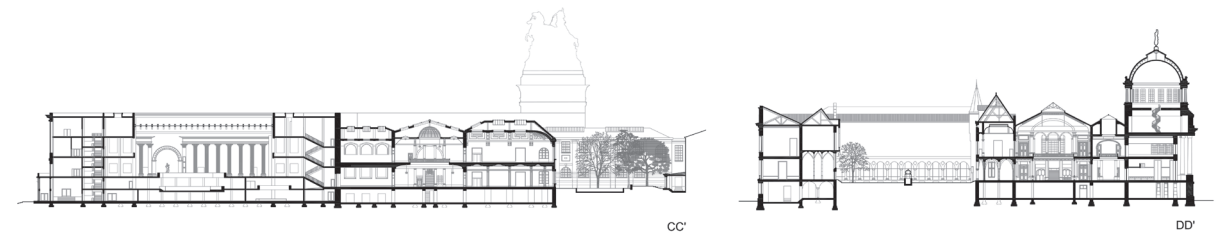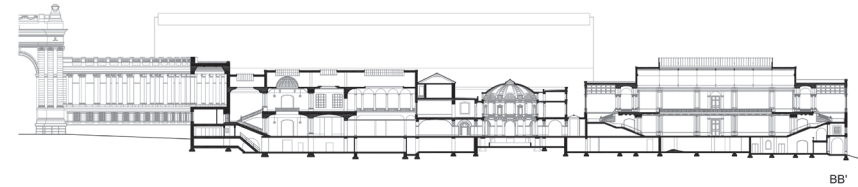
Re-staging the national museum from within

The most obvious example of Leopold II's ambitions and the corresponding architectural translation can be found in the development of the Parc du Cinquantenaire in Brussels. Developed for various exhibitive functions on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Belgium (1880), the site houses a monumental ensemble of buildings joined together in a symmetric structure. Due to a lack of funding, large parts of the complex were built later, such as the central, triumphal arch, symbolising the east-ern gate to the capital (finalised in 1905 with profits from the Congo). The buildings are adorned with

[3]   The Pavilion of Human Passions in the Parc du Cinquantenaire. Designed by the young Victor Horta, a pupil of Alphonse Balat, in a Neo-Classicist style of the early 1890s, with some details that signify his shift to Art Nouveau in the following years. As such, it forms a notable exception that proves the rule. The little temple is part of the Art and History Museum and serves as a shelter for an impressive and controversial bas-relief by sculptor Jef Lambeaux depicting human passions (1890).[14]

elements glorifying the nation (e.g., the allegorical mosaics in the colonnade by a group of artists led by the symbolist painter Jean Delville, which were com-pleted in the 1920s under the reign of king Albert I). There have been many changes to the buildings during the lifetime of the site, but the various func-tions remain subordinate to the urban composition. Today, it forms a singular but pompous, monumen-tal *gesamtkunstwerk*, referring to an artificially con-structed heroic past, seemingly ignored by a signif-icant percentage of local inhabitants, migrants and the ex-pat community, who simply enjoy the park.

After studying the Cinquantenaire and other sites linked to Leopold II in the research seminar *Genius Loci*, the students of the International Master on

11 Richard Krautheimer, 'Introduction to an 'Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942), 20. Krautheimer wrote this seminal text in response to the mod-ern principles on iconography proposed by Erwin Panofsky in the field of visual arts. His planned study of Western architectural iconography through the ages unfortunate-ly remained unfinished.

12 Liane Ranieri, *Léopold II Urbaniste* (Brussel: Hayez, 1973).
13 The list of architects and planners who worked for the king is long. Some examples include Gédéon Bordiau (BE), municipal architect of Brussels and main designer of the buildings in the Parc du Cinquan-tenaire; Charles Girault (FR), responsible for the Royal Galleries in Ostend, the AfricaMuseum and the final Arcade du

Cinquantenaire; Alphonse Balat (BE), who is known for the steel construction of the Royal Greenhouses, part of the Royal Palace in Laeken; and Alexandre Marcel (FR), responsible for the Royal Race Track in Ostend and the orientalist Japanese Tower and Chinese Pavilion in Laeken.
14 For a detailed analysis of the pavilion and its content, see Werner Adriaenssens, André Demesmaeker, and Claudine

[4]   Art and History Museum, current ground floor plan and sections.

Adaptive Reuse focused in the Design Studio on the Art and History Museum, situated in the south wing of the complex since 1889 [Fig.]. A comparison with national museums in surrounding countries reveals a structural backlog, and the yearly number of visitors is only a fraction of equivalent museums abroad. Partly due to the lack of national sentiment, it is relatively unknown among the Belgian population. Its collection comprises objects from Prehistoric times to today, including Antiquity, European decorative arts and non-European civilisations, of which only a small part is currently on display. The 19th-century museum is character-ised by a multitude of exhibition rooms. It has a variety of potentially qualitative spaces (both indoor and outdoor) but lacks clarity – the organisation of the interior has grown organically, with offices and libraries scattered throughout the complex. Most (exhibition) spaces have a stuffy and old-fashioned character, while large parts are either underused or leftover space.

Below, we investigate the potential role of architec-tural and museological iconography in transforming the meaning of the national museum. Inspired by the students' work, we synthesise the different approaches into three spatial layers, which is typical for a 19th-century national museum: 'architectural space', 'scenographic space', and 'object space'. For the purposes of illustration, we present some strategies as a result of the research-by-design done by students in the Design Studio.[15]

The assignment was 1) to counter the possible decline of the museum and reanimate it through its transformation into a contemporary and sustainable exhibition site, generating broader use and more public relevance, and 2) to look critically at the future role of the royal museum and its contentious position as a national institute. Instead of emulating the monumental or Neo-Classicist style or resorting to large-scale transformations, the students were to develop ideas and concepts through surgical interventions in the existing situation. Rather than react to the contentious properties directly, the proposals attempt to tackle what one could call 'iconographic voids', spaces that are empty in a literal or metaphorical sense, an analogy to Krautheimer's description of the lack of content or significance in 19th-century architecture. The exam-ples range from the transformation of the exterior appearance to the development of a personal and topical perspective on the meaning and role of the historical collection.
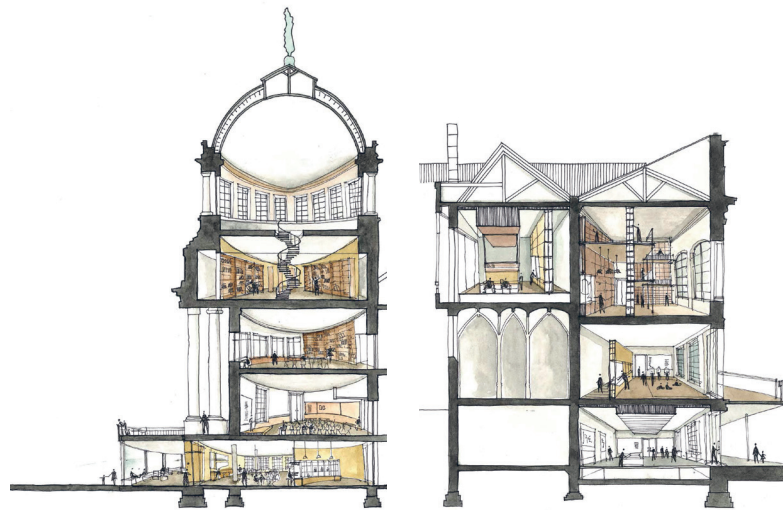
[5]   Shailja Patel and Mathilde Winkin. De-monumentalising the museum.

The project focuses on the architectural appearance and use of the southern wing of the museum. It counters the institutional, overly monumental character of the façades (see also Fig. 1) by creating a relationship between the interior and exterior. The proposal offers two equal faces at the front and back of the building, with new ground floor entrances and (re)introduces public functions in the adjacent, underused spaces. The hand-drawn impressions illustrate the various new activities in the design. In front, facing the park, the Rotunda is extended with a new ambulatory space that includes an easily accessible café and restaurant. The higher floors are used as a library and conference spaces. Behind the building, staff parking is transformed into a public square. The spaces facing the square are reactivated as a new arts and crafts academy, interacting with the adjacent plaster cast workshop. An added terrace on the first floor serves as a shelter for the back entrance. The new entrances make independent use of the wing possible and offer an inviting and human scale on the outside.

Houbart, '60. De Menselijke Driften', in *Brussel, Stad van Kunst en Geschiedenis* (Brussels: urban.brussels/Bety Waknine, 2021).
[15] The assignment in the Design Studio started with a division of the museum into four zones (corresponding to the main wings of the building), allowing the students to focus on specific interventions rather than creating a master plan. Simi-larly, we chose to illustrate the iconograph-ic approach with a selection of student

[16] interventions.This is comparable to the 1748 Nolli map of Rome, using the same technique on an urban scale.
[17] This split between an architecture to look through and an architecture to hide in cut an unbridgeable gap dividing commodity from delight, utility from beauty, and function from form'. Robin Evans, 'Figures, Doors and Passages 1978', in *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays* (London: Janet Evens and Architectural

Association Publications, 1997), 74. This inspiring essay addressed similar themes in domestic architecture (e.g., the emergence of servant circulation in the late 16th century).

Architectural space

The Neo-Classicist museum is expressed through an architectural hierarchy within the organisational scheme of the Parc du Cinquantenaire, charac-terised by an imposing symmetry, clear axis, and fixed perspectives. The various entrances, public circulation, and different functions of the museum are arranged in accordance with the urban layout. Outside, the architectural hierarchy is translated into the front and back façades, the division of the façade into a base, main, and top part, with public and service entrances.

Inside, one could characterise the architectural concept of the museum as an iconographical divi-sion into positive and negative spaces. The positive spaces have a public character and can be perceived as a chain of chambers or rooms (like the typical *enfilade* in a domestic context), iconographically charged and programmed as exhibition spaces, an entrance lobby, a restaurant and similar public functions. The museological sequence of public interiors choreographs the visit, moving from one set piece to another. The negative space can be considered the sum of service rooms, thickened scenographic wall constructions, basement and attic, storage and alternative circulation for staff, without iconographic meaning of itself and in sup-port of the positive spaces. As non-public interiors, they can be drawn in black in architectural draw-ings[16] to indicate that they are 'outside' of the legible architectural realm and connected to the positive spaces in elaborate and often hidden ways (for interventions in the architectural space, see Fig. 5 and 6).[17]

[6]   Elien Vandesande and Vincent Bergiers. Undermining the museum.

The project proposes to break the Neo-Classicist order by reorganising the access points and internal circulation – moving the original architectural entrance on the *piano nobile* to the ground floor, currently used as negative storage space – and extending the positive exhibition space. The rendered images show some design impressions of the refurbished ground floor. The new entrance provides easy access from the park and leads to a covered atrium courtyard with a central position in the museum complex. The top-lit atrium offers an uncluttered overview and a direct connection to the different activities and exhibition spaces. Echoing the rough and unfinished quality of the base level, the project maintains this character as a deconstruction of the Neo-Classicist interior and in contrast to the existing museum levels. The proposal succeeds in creating a new and contemporary experience for the visitor while enhancing the surface, organisation, and readability of exhibition spaces.

Scenographic space

The museum can also be read as a scenographic device. The architectural emphasis and sequence of positive spaces are elaborated in the development of various settings, each representing a component of the building or a specific part of the collection. The monumental exterior of the building complex defines the urban scenography, befitting the institutional character of the museum and aiming to impress passers-by. The interior scenography of the museum consists of an eclectic summation of set pieces or stylistic reproductions or inventions, e.g., a Gothic revival cloister, a Japanese garden, or an ancient Greek temple front.

The scenographic interior is a means to re-enact the historical and geographical context of the collection and evoke its atmosphere and assemble complementary objects. Where architectural space emphasises the connection of the various exhibition rooms, scenographic space defines the difference between them. The scenographic space has an imaginary or fictitious character and is used to stimulate a sensory experience, theatrically rendering its intended effect. As such, 19th-century exterior and interior spaces were to be experienced similarly (for interventions in the scenographic space, see Fig. 7 and 8).

Object space

In this perspective, the museum experience is mainly defined by the collection of exhibited objects, a variety of artefacts with a historical character that represent various cultures from around the world. Each piece on display has its genesis and narrative, which we could define as object space. De-contextualised and reappearing in a museological context, the original object space is isolated, fractured, and to a certain extent, redefined. The museum thus generates a new object space with a specific significance or a (curated) interpretation of its original or intended meaning. Various pieces are thematically selected and assembled to be exhibited in one room or scenographic setting (as mentioned above). This categorical approach, often supported by research on the collection itself, is typical for the 19th-century national museum. Classified as a place of scientific expertise, the museum can also be defined as an institute of knowledge, claiming objectivity despite the manipulation of its collection.[18] Beyond de-contextualisation, this also potentially suppresses an artistic quality or deviating interpretation of the content or the object space in favour of an artificially (re-)constructed context (for interventions in the object space, see Fig. 8 and 9).[19]

[7]   Lisa Battaline and Alexia Di Carlantonio.
       Uncovering the scenography.

The project evaluates and reveals the various, often contradictory, transformation phases of the building over time and the oddly shaped leftover spaces that result, see scheme on the top. In addition to deliberately countering the monumental structure with a specific programme, e.g., a creative workshop for children in the curved part of the building with an outdoor playground on the gallery above, it opens up adjacent spaces to confront the different atmospheric settings and exhibitive intentions. By transforming indoor into outdoor spaces and introducing green, it brings in natural light and reactivates some of the enclosed spaces as gardens, now closed to the public. Small deconstructions or the removal of ornamented parts lay bare the artificial scenographic layers and unexpected see-throughs; see the montage on the bottom. Together with surprising connections, they betray the original and often absurd representational intentions and offer the visitor a warranted and fresh glimpse behind the scenes.
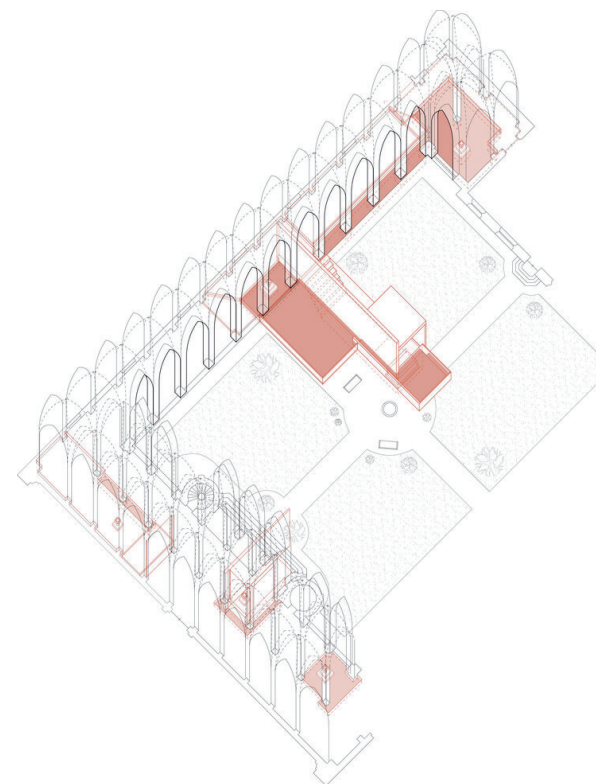
[8]   Matthew Moskal. Transforming the scenography.

This project focuses on the scenographic set-up of the cloister and the idealised Gothic revival part of the southern wing. The intervention is based on a detailed study of the artificially constructed monastic space through various sketches and analytical drawings, see sketch on the bottom. Inspired by the attempt to create a spiritual context or mystical atmosphere, the design nevertheless 'modernises' this 19th-century fiction by redefining the object space for the baptisteries, exhibited before as theatrical props, dysfunctional and alienated from their original religious environment. As shown in the isometric drawing, the project proposes carving out parts of the cloister floor to introduce a silent water surface, mirroring fragments of the staged environment. By delicately contradicting the surrounding corridor, intruding on the cloister garden and repositioning the old baptisteries, the interventions create an innovative new scenography that breaks with the static movement in the cloister, urging visitors to engage with the original reconstruction of this traditional space and reflect on its purpose in the museum.
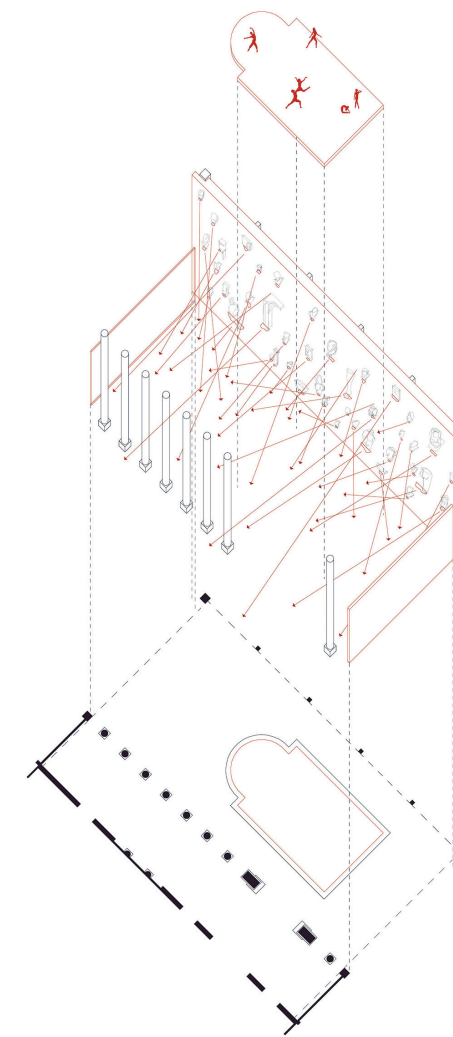
[9]   Matthew Moskal. Engaging with the collection.

This project draws inspiration from the overwhelming and provocative bas-relief of Human Passions by Jef Lambeaux (see Fig. 3). It manipulates the obligatory collection of ancient and foreign civilisations as a typical feature in a national museum to create the setting for a more compelling exhibition. The conceptual isometry of the proposal demonstrates the reuse of the atrium space of the renewed western wing of 1966 to set the stage for more direct and physical interactions. By elevating the old Syrian central floor mosaic, depicting various hunting rituals, it constructs a podium for experimental live dance performances. The montage gives an impression of the huge sidewall defining a new object space or background canvas for a multitude of strategically relocated ancient sculptures. The choreography of the dancers is to enter into a dialogue with the immobile, broken, but sensually sculpted body parts of Greek and Roman antiquity. The design replaces the classic museological point of view with an intensely personal gaze, unsettling the common and distant perception and encouraging visitors to immerse themselves and become part of the 'spectacle'.
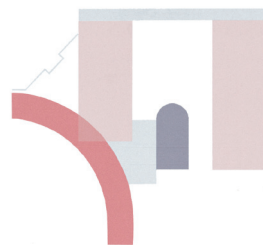
18   The ambiguity of representation and control is captured well by Thordis Arrhenius, who traced it back to the concept of the museum after the French Revolution: 'The chronological order unfolding within the didactic space of the museum restored the 'vandalised' monuments to their proper place in history – at the very same instant that this chronology was the efficient device that destroyed the symbolic power of the monument'. See

Thordis Arrhenius, 'The Space of Conservation', in *The Fragile Monument: On Conservation and Modernity* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2011), 31.
19   An important example of a counter-interpretation of object space is 'Mining the Museum' (1992) by artist Fred Wilson. The project, which challenges the classic narrative of the museum, is an intervention at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore, Maryland (US) based on the

unsettling juxtaposition of objects in the museum. See also Fred Wilson and Howard Halle, 'Mining the Museum', *Grand Street*, no. 44 (1993).
20   For an interesting reflection on the broader meaning of decolonisation in the cultural field, see Amzat Boukari-Yabara, António Pinto Ribeiro, António Sousa Ribeiro, Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, Cécile Bourne-Farrell, Christine Bluard, Bruno Verbergt, et al., *Europa Oxalá – Essays*, eds. Ana Rebelo

Decolonising Belgium

The debate regarding decolonisation in Belgium is embedded in an international context with various perspectives on this term, which has become central in a discourse going beyond the mere historical aftermath of colonisation, identifying a wider process of emancipation as a reaction to colonialism.[20] In the context of this paper, it signals the need for a profound reflection on the contemporary meaning and (re-)use of contentious national heritage. While most of the academic discussions regarding the topic are being held in the fields of history, museology, and cultural theory, our contribution develops a designerly approach. We reference the art historical discipline of iconography to investigate some aspects of the architectural legacy of Leopold II, in this case, the Art and History Museum in the Parc du Cinquantenaire. We have tried to define the first steps of a methodology to analyse the typical national museum in this respect. Rather than attempt to transform the museum top-down by creating an overarching or ideological perspective, we suggest a more measured and tailored approach, contributing with separate pieces of the sophisticated puzzle to decolonise. First, we acknowledge the relative position of the design project as such; second, we allow the students to experiment on a more tangible level.

Considering adaptive reuse more than simply reprogramming or defining a new function, we investigate how to generate new meanings for existing places by adapting the spatial iconography. By using the informal environment of the Design Studio, we were able to balance the appropriation of the existing architecture with conceptual interventions and to develop and compare various design strategies. The results shown here are deliberate fragments, trying to reveal, break up or disturb the contentious 19th-century narrative of the Neo-Classicist museum as a symbol for national identity (or Stanard's 'empire'). The interventions have an implicit rather than explicit character, aiming for a rhetorical instead of a literal 'deconstruction of monumental insincerity'.[21] Rather than creating an anti-monument or an overly moralistic reaction to the outdated memorial value of the museum, they remain contextual and sufficiently indeterminate, avoiding a false sense of closure and trying to take into account the actual time needed for more comprehensive change.

[Bibliography]

Adriaenssens, Werner, André Demesmaeker, and Claudine Houbart. '60. De Menselijke Driften'. In *Brussel, Stad van Kunst en Geschiedenis*. Brussels: urban.brussels/Bety Waknine, 2021.

Aronsson, Peter. 'National Museums Negotiating the Past for a Desired Future'. In *Museums in an Age of Migrations*, edited by Luca Basso Peressut and Clelia Pozzi, 67–76. Milan: Mela Books Politecnico di Milano, 2012.

Arrhenius, Thordis. *The Fragile Monument: On Conservation and Modernity*. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2011.

Bodenstein, Felicity. 'National Museums in Belgium'. *EuNaMus. European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen*, edited by Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius, 47–68. Bologna: Linköping University Electronic Press, 2011.

Boukari-Yabara, Amzat, António Pinto Ribeiro, António Sousa Ribeiro, Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, Cécile Bourne-Farrell, Christine Bluard, Bruno Verbergt, et al. *Europa Oxalá – Essays*. Edited by Ana Rebelo Correia and Margarida Calafate Ribeiro. Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2021.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. London: Penguin Books, 2012 [1899].

European Association for Architectural Education. 'EAAE Charter on Architectural Research'. Accessed 9 August 2020. http://www.eaae.be/about/statutes-and-policy/eaae-charter-architectural-research/.

Evans, Robin. *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays*. London: Janet Evens and Architectural Association Publications, 1997.

Feld, Liz. 'Museum Hegemony, Postcolonial Collections and the Scars of the Colonial Process'. *Academia Letters*, Article 867 (2021). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.20935/AL867.

Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Boston: Mariner Books, 1998.

Krautheimer, Richard. 'Introduction to an "Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture"'. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942): 1–33. https://doi.org/10.2307/750446.

Machado, Rodolfo. 'Old Buildings as Palimpsest. Toward a Theory of Remodeling'. *Progressive Architecture* 11 (1976): 46–49.

Min, Eric. *De Eeuw Van Brussel – Biografie Van Een Wereldstad (1850–1914)*. Antwerp: De Bezige Bij, 2013.

Procter, Alice. *The Whole Picture: The Colonial Story of the Art in Our Museums & Why We Need to Talk About It*. London: Octopus Publishing Group, 2020.

Ranieri, Liane. *Léopold II Urbaniste*. Brussels: Hayez, 1973.

Sanderson, Jean-Paul. 'Van bevolkingsafname naar bevolkingsgroei: welke invloed had de kolonisatie op de Congolese demografie?'. In *Koloniaal Congo – Een geschiedenis in vragen*, edited by Idesbald Goddeeris, Amandine Lauro, and Guy Vanthemsche, 107–17. Kalmthout: Polis, 2020.

Stanard, Matthew G. *The Leopard, the Lion and the Cock: Colonial Memories and Monuments in Belgium*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2019.

Wassenaar, Steven. 'The Beauty of Transience: The Palais De Tokyo in Paris'. *Archis* Archis is Africa, no. 1 (2002): 93–99.

Wilson, Fred, and Howard Halle. 'Mining the Museum'. *Grand Street*, no. 44 (1993): 151–72. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2307/25007622.

Correia and Margarida Calafate Ribeiro (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2021) and the accompanying exhibition. For example, António Pinto Ribeiro used the expression 'the decolonisation of the arts and the "mind"', (borrowed in part from Kenyan author Ngugu wa Thiong'o's literary work); Christine Bluard and Bruno Verbergt of the AfricaMuseum acknowledged the complex process of decolonisation taking place over time by referring to the need for doubt to avoid repeating mistakes (referring to the 'work-in-progress' of artist Aimé Mpane in the large rotunda of the museum).

21 We borrow this phrase from Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal, architects of the remodelled Palais de Tokyo, originally built for the World Exhibition in Paris in 1937 as a Neo-Classicist museum for modern art. The designers used this description to suggest a contentious stylistic alliance with the pavilions of Nazi Germany and communist Russia, feeding their argument for a complete 'ruination' of the interior. Steven Wassenaar, 'The Beauty of Transience: The Palais de Tokyo in Paris', *Archis* Archis is Africa, no. 1 (2002): 93–99, 96.