

Tailored Architecture

Architecture by: 360 architects, 51N4E, a2o-architects, Alive architecture, ampe.trybou architects, architects de vylder vinck tailieu, Arian Schelstraete, Atelier Bow-Wow, Atelier Starzak Strebicki, Architecture studio Benoit Ottevaere, Architectuuratelier Dertien12, awg architects, BAUKUNST, Beel & Achtergael Architects, BEL Architects, BOB361 architects, buro voor vrije ruimte, Burobill, BUUR, Callebaut architects, Carl Bourgeois, Carton 123 architects, Cluster landscape and urban development, David Chipperfield

architects, De Gouden Linaal Architects, De Smet Vermeulen architects, Delmulle Delmulle Architects, Denis Dujardin, Dok Architects, Douma, evr-Architects, Floris Alkemade Architect, Frederic Vandoninck Wouter Willems architects, GAFPA, Gijs Van Vaerenbergh, Koen Matthys, Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architects, Kris Coremans, LAND landscape architects, Laura Muyldermans, Lezze Architects, Lieve Vermeiren and Johan De Coster, LOW architects, MikeViktorViktor architects, Moke architects, MSA, Nero archi-

tects, Ney & Partners, noA architects, NU architecture studio, OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen, Olivier Goethals, ONO architecture, osar architects, Philippe Van der Maren, poot architecture, Puls architects, Richard Venlet, Robbrecht and Daem architects, Stéphane Beel architects, Studiolo architecture, Taktyk, Tom Thys Architects, Tony Fretton Architects, URA Yves Malysse and Kiki Verbeeck, V+, Witherford Watson Mann Architects, XDGA Xaveer De Geyter Architects, Zampone architecture ...



Table of contents

The location of the projects	II	Add a little more.	126
Foreword	3	A new mannerism in recent Flemish architecture	
<i>Sven Gatz</i>		<i>Bart Verschaffel</i>	
<i>Minister of Culture, Media, Youth and Brussels Affairs</i>		Architecture as distortion	134
Introduction	5	<i>Audrey Contesse</i>	
<i>Tailored architecture</i>		Subversive elegance: propriety and transgression in two recent projects by Robbrecht and Daem	137
<i>Christoph Grafe and Bart Tritsmans</i>		<i>Christoph Grafe</i>	
		Project information <i>Form</i>	143
LIFE		PORTFOLIO	
Photographic essay	9	Mosaic	145
<i>Olmo Peeters</i>		State archives, Ghent	151
Forms of unusual habitation	23	<i>Robbrecht and Daem architects</i>	
<i>Sofie De Caigny</i>		De Lork care homes, Sint-Gillis	159
Architecture for use and appropriation: from ephemeral to permanent practices	27	<i>51N4E</i>	
<i>Els Vervloesem</i>		Municipal sports centre, Genk	167
Interactions	33	<i>BEL Architects and Ney & Partners</i>	
<i>Audrey Contesse</i>		L-berg service centre, Ledeborg	175
Project information <i>Life</i>	37	<i>architects de vylder vinck taillieu</i>	
		De Wijnpers agricultural college, Leuven	185
CITY		<i>OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen</i>	
Photographic essay	39	TID Tower, Tirana (AL)	191
<i>Anja Hellebaut</i>		<i>51N4E</i>	
Cornerstones	51	Restoration of the Maagdentoren, Zichem	197
<i>Philippe Viérin</i>		<i>De Smet Vermeulen architects with Studio Roma</i>	
Metropolis architecture: recent work by Xaveer De Geyter Architects	59	1:1 Model of the Mies van der Rohe golf clubhouse, Krefeld (D)	203
<i>Christophe Van Gerwey</i>		<i>Robbrecht and Daem architects</i>	
The school building as an urban project	63	Navez-Portaels social passive housing, Schaarbeek	209
Coupling — entity — type — fragment		<i>Temporary Association MSA / V+ architects de vylder vinck taillieu</i>	
<i>Maarten Van Den Driessche</i>		Wivina residential care facility, Groot-Bijgaarden	217
Project information <i>City</i>	71	<i>architects de vylder vinck taillieu</i>	
SCALE		De Locomotief revalidation centre, Ninove	225
Photographic essay	75	<i>URA Yves Malysse Kiki Verbeeck</i>	
<i>Anja Hellebaut</i>		GATE15 student services, Antwerpen	233
The urban enclave.	89	<i>BOB361 architects</i>	
From military hospital to green quarter		Clarenhof residential care facility, Hasselt	239
<i>Michiel Dehaene</i>		<i>a2o-architects</i>	
Making space for complexity.	93	Westkaai towers, Antwerp	245
Stratification, aesthetics and appropriation in urban public space		<i>David Chipperfield Architects and Tony Fretton Architects</i>	
<i>Bart Tritsmans</i>		Town hall and tourist office, Diksmuide	253
Village discourse.	101	<i>ONO architecture with Callebaut architects</i>	
The small-scale urban project as a whetstone for urban planning practice		City archives, Bordeaux (F)	259
<i>Ward Verbakel</i>		<i>Robbrecht and Daem architects</i>	
Project information <i>Scale</i>	106	Social services offices and serviced flats, Aarschot	267
FORM		<i>architects de vylder vinck taillieu</i>	
Photographic essay	109	Faculty of architecture library, Gent	275
<i>Olmo Peeters</i>		<i>OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen</i>	
The city as a collective work of art.	121	Metro station Maalbeek, Brussels	283
Inventive pragmatism and its application to heritage		<i>De Smet Vermeulen architects and Benoît Van Innis</i>	
<i>Sofie De Caigny</i>		Momento Mori in Maalbeek	
		<i>Koen Van Synghel</i>	
		The VAI and CVAA at work	289
		Contributors	IV
		Where to find the projects in the book	V
		Colophon	VI

ts, NU archi-
ers David Van
rchitecture,
Maren, poot
hard Venlet,
éphane Beel
Taktyk, Tom
hitects, URA
, Witherford
Xaveer De
hitecture ...



A new mannerism in recent Flemish architecture

Bart Verschaffel

*'It is a crucial challenge for our times to destroy the form. (...) The new, energetic architecture should rely on everything our lives contain, and not leave out certain conditions based on some single arbitrary aesthetic preferences. Who could dare, today, to impose rules?'*¹ — Josef Frank, 1931

The first and most direct answer to the question 'what is architecture?' is usually an image or a photograph. The question of architecture is distilled into the question of what a building should look like. In such cases, one commonly seeks or demands a justifiable form, one that is backed up by reason, and is thus a sort of necessity. A form that, in a certain sense, is 'obvious'. The basis of what makes it self-evident might be a tradition — classical or vernacular — that indicates 'how it should be'. The form can be deduced from its principles with almost mathematical certainty, or it adheres to the rules and, on this basis, becomes plausible or even incontestable. Or else the form may be very closely related to the building's programme or use, in other words with a typology or a purpose: 'form follows function'. Or else the form expresses some of the architecture's essential truths: revealing the structure, showing the forces at work in the materials and in the construction. In all these various ways, a form can become as good as 'natural': obvious and essential at the same time. Over the last few decades, creating a building has become increasingly technical and complex, while also subject to escalating demands in terms of urban planning, energy, ecology, economy, safety and accessibility. The designer-architect's participation in the construction is almost relegated to that of a coordinator: the person responsible for managing the various specialisations involved in the completion of the building, and in devising a form that fits

all of the demands and limitations. In the meantime, enough standard solutions of acceptable quality have been developed to meet these requirements, and to create a clear and simple, tested and familiar architecture that fulfils expectations. This results in an architecture that is rather predictable, sober and modest, but sound and 'perfectly in order' — although not very exciting.

One can, however, point to a significant counter-current in the history of architecture that does not seek to establish and naturalise form, but assumes, rather, that it is essentially irrational and can never be accounted for. Ultimately, the form is always the outcome of an arbitrary decision, and in the first place demonstrates the maker's freedom and *maniera*. Indeed, mannerism is not a stylistic period in art and architectural history. It is a specific, widespread, anti-classical design strategy that brings to the fore the affectedness of the form and the inventiveness of the design, while also making a theme of its latitude and randomness. Mannerism does not go for a 'natural' form that clearly enunciates what things are, or which shows up function or usability, and nor does it aim for an entirely self-sufficient form that only adds ornament. It seeks, instead, a form which itself becomes the *meaning* of the architecture. The art of mannerism in architecture consists in making this self-assured form, as such, do (part of) the work. The 'work' is: making the presence of the architecture palpable, making the architecture effective in the world.

RHETORIC AND SYNTAX

It appears that a 'new mannerism' has developed in architecture in Flanders after a period that was identified, within the architectural discourse at least, and whether rightly or wrongly, with a pared-down modernism, with sobriety and modesty, or with a 'new simplicity'. On the one hand, this new approach differs from the way in which certain architects employ the elementary resources of architecture to establish a 'difference' in (and counter to) the world. In the work of Stéphane Beel it is done in a somewhat haughty, silent and withdrawn manner, or in the work of OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen, with panache and a greater degree of provocation. On the other hand, it differs from the vague, post-modern way of introducing complexity and contradiction into architecture, either by creating a powerful image and/or by loading up architectural narrative using references and associations, as Willem Jan Neutelings has done. The new mannerism has been noticeable for some time, and can now be identified in the work of several firms, many of them young. But above all, it is most recently seen in the oeuvre of architects de vylder vinck taillieu and, more specifically still, in a series of projects, large and small, which are nearing completion at roughly the same time.

The mannerist design strategy is essentially rhetorical: everything revolves around the particular 'way of expression'. The devices used in rhetoric are primarily stylistic. Tropes are the dif-

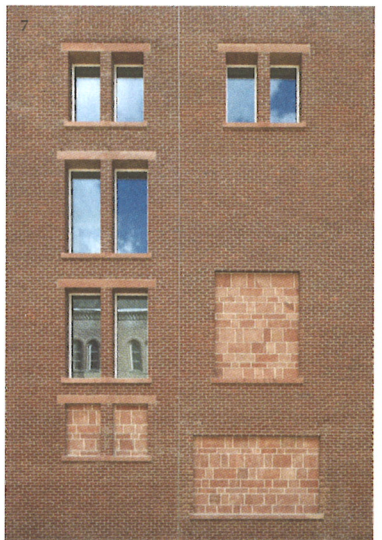
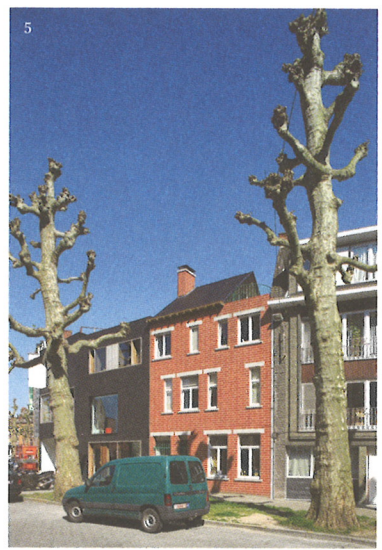


ferent ways through which one can say something by means of something else, and which can be formulated in a somewhat enigmatic and artificial way. In architecture, the extreme form of indirect speech is the masked truth of the *trompe l'oeil*. De vylder vinck taillieu use this utterly non-modernist technique — modernist architecture must after all be 'true' and 'real', or at least be well reasoned — in various ways. They sometimes do it radically, by using wall panels or even façade elements that turn out to be doors and passageways (Twiggy boutique, Ghent)¹, or with a column that, upon close inspection, turns out to be a ventilation duct; or by using mirrors to hide construction elements and by mixing up real and illusory spaces and views. See, for example, the hall of the Wivina residential care center, the apse of the ceremonial hall at the rear of the L-berg social service centre, or the bath in the Huik house. Another trope is the transposition of 'real' and 'unreal', such as in the transformation of a double house into a 1:1 scale model by sticking it onto a big, flat concrete slab, with an entirely redundant, topsy-turvy piece of fence around the rim (the N16 Installation). Or by making what is structural and 'unfinished' indistinguishable from what is 'finished' and 'definitive': the aesthetics of the *non finite*. A milder variation on the same strategy is the sculpting of the central concrete supporting structure of a house to resemble the trunk and main branches of a tree, taking as its example the beech trees around the house (Bernheimbeuk house), or the addition of an extension to a shed in the form of a small wooden house set on a flat roof (Uragov home extension). Nothing is simply, or entirely, what it seems.

Even more numerous and impor-



tant are the rhetorical figures of speech, or the different ways in which one can embellish the means of expression by playing with the syntax. After all, unusual and complicated formulations and the breaking away from axiality, symmetry and regularity, draws constant attention to the form. The most important figures used are: omission and addition (the floor in the Twiggy boutique, the half-roof on the Tichel parcel house,¹¹ the rolling glass roof of the rear building of House 43); shifting and overlapping (the combination of brick and sandstone in the façade of the Wivina residential care centre, the circulation and intermediate zones in the houses, between inside and outside and between the floors); twisting and reversals (the numerous diagonal lines and triangles, '7 houses for 1 house', the roof of the Alexis house); disjunction and interweaving, duplication and



mirroring (the *enfilade* of doors and passageways alongside the arcade in the Famous office building and the Vos house), repetition and variation, exaggeration (enlargement and diminution) and breaks in scale. The essential thing here is the departure from the 'normal', no-nonsense way of speaking and the gratuitous, excessive and surprising nature of the form: thus demonstrating the freedom of the latter. When it works

7 — Wivina residential care facility, Groot-Bijgaarden
1-7 architects de vylder vinck taillieu
© Filip Dujardin

4 — Uragov house extension, Gentbrugge, 2012
5 — Tichel parcel house, Ghent, 2012
6 — House 43, Ghent, 2005

1 — Twiggy boutique Ghent, 2012
2 — N16 installation, 2013
3 — Bernheimbeuk house, Schaarbeek, 2012



effortlessly, with *hexis* and bravura, the artificiality becomes a quality that can be appreciated in its own right. Not only is it evidence of talent and virtuosity, but it also makes clear that, above all, speech — in this case architecture — is a *fine art*.

AKZIDENTISMUS AS STRATEGY

A large part of the strong and interesting recent architecture produced in Flanders, and the majority of the projects by architects de vylder vinck taillieu, consist of conversions. Existing situations impose limitations. In the meantime, younger generations of architects have learnt how to deal with this and use it to their advantage. The good standard conversion, of which there are many examples in Flanders and Brussels, usually comes down to the successful clearance of a piece of Flemish chaos: stripping away that which is untidy and worn out, demolish-

ing accumulated extensions and sheds, until what remains is a more or less a clean 'architectural object', and then adding or fitting in well-reasoned new components and elements; opening up, simplifying, clarifying. However, all in all, it is the tried and tested design tradition for all conversions that is applied, and primarily the aesthetics developed for the restoration and renovation of historical monuments in accordance with the basic rules of the Charter of Venice. The core of this Charter is that the distinction between the historical and the contemporary must be unambiguously and immediately clear, and that a conversion must be reversible so that the original situation can be restored: so one can add things, but not transform. This has led to a design tradition with an aesthetics based on contrast, which — so it turns out — not only still dominates restoration practice today, but is also applied, almost automatically, to a great many ordinary renovation and conversion projects. Contrasting materials: the timeless combination of smooth concrete, steel and glass is played off against the bare rough stone, weathered brick and ancient wood of the stripped basic structure.

Contrasting forms: straight and measured, restrained and decisive forms are set against those that are bent and cracked, or which have been grown and accumulated by time and chance. New monochrome and shine in contrast to discolouration and shadow. And so on. And all of this is cold and hard, clearly separated, without transitions or in-between pieces, set both in and against each other. This design strategy undoubtedly yields an exciting, dramatic and at the same time eminently intelligible whole that is organised upon the basis of a single contrast. Contrast — and thus a form of complexity, but as

a tension held in balance — yet without contradiction and without ambivalence. This design approach combines a small dose of 'ruin aesthetics', and the evocation of essential duration and natural time, with a modernist feeling of spatiality and freedom. The most successful recent Flemish example of the renovation of an important historical building using this approach is undoubtedly the remarkable restoration of the Maagdentoren \square in Zichem by De Smet Vermeulen architects in association with Studio Roma.

The architecture of de vylder vinck taillieu is also at its strongest and most interesting in conversions. But their approach is utterly different from this balanced 'traditional' strategy. After all, the nature of their conversions is that they do not rely upon the metaphysical contrasts between past and present,



13



time and architecture, and nature and culture. They do not try to grasp the individuality or spirit of a place, but look for usable *contingencies* in the many histories that have accumulated therein. They pick out a single detail that may serve as a starting point, 'that one can do something with'. This leads to design decisions that are accidental, and which always feel arbitrary. Half a century ago, Josef Frank used the term *Akzidentismus* for this strategy, and its aim is lively, energetic architecture. A form that simply and without reason ties in what has come about by chance does not achieve great significance, nor does it pretend to express any essential truths. But in this, one does 'speak' in a surprising manner, unpredictably and in a way that catches the attention.

In addition to stylistic devices there are also principles of composition. Unlike modular systems, where the clarity and definition of the basic ideal or rule ensures order and homogeneity, and unlike the classical principles of composition that are intended to lead to a closed, orderly and harmonious whole, mannerism concentrates on parts. It gives the part or the fragment primacy over the whole. The design does not aim for transparency or clarity, and nor towards a constructed, unified space in which things and activities are able to find an obvious, stable place. In the work of de vylder vinck taillieu this is apparent in the overall composition, which is always compound and heterogeneous, and where the various parts are pulled apart — especially the roof, whose synthesising and unifying effect is systematically counteracted. It is also apparent in their façade designs: it is impossible to predict where typical elements such as doors and windows will make an appearance, and the front façade does not tell us what the

side will look like, or vice versa. And it ensues from the way in which the interior spaces are divided up and how the views in, through and out are handled. The result is always a somewhat disorderly building and a non-centred, mobile internal space, governed by the 'conjunctions': in-between zones full of surprising and unpredictable twists and turns. The buildings by de vylder vinck taillieu are no less usable or functional than others. Cooking and eating and washing and sleeping are just as easy in these houses as elsewhere, and working or living perhaps even easier. The design does not revolve exclusively around use or comfort, but strives to create 'surroundings', or what might also be deemed 'ambiance'. In other words, that intangible quality that one hardly thinks about on a day-to-day basis but which is nevertheless felt on a subconscious level, and most often in moments of idleness.

In all of their projects, de vylder vinck taillieu give a privileged position to the 'transitions' and the 'in-between time': the way in which the rooms and spaces — the corridors and passageways, staircases, windows and doors, through-views and view-holes — link up and run into each other. As a result of which, each place has 'somewhere else' within reach or in sight. The in-between zones are emphasised and stretched out, the transitions broadened and tempered. For example, by placing 'boxes' in front of the windows and doorways, thereby making the walls and partitions thicker; by encasing buildings, by putting houses inside houses and rooms within rooms, but twisted so that residual spaces are formed, and via diagonal lines, irregular triangles and irregular surfaces. The lines of movement and sightlines are systematically pulled apart and uncoupled, the circulation becomes complex, and through-views are obstructed and fragmented. In this way space is created, but it is no longer a matter of clarity and transparency. Large glass walls offer a panoramic view and establish a direct relationship between inside and outside, although this is occasionally disrupted: heavy, segmented window structures both frame and divide up the vista, so that every time one looks outside one also continues to see and become aware of the architecture. See, for example, the extension of the Wilmot house (the so-called 'waterfall house'), the alley and patio at the Social services offices and serviced flats in Aarschot, \square the loggias at the Wivina residential care centre \square and the group medical practice in Kalken.

L-BERG AND HUIK

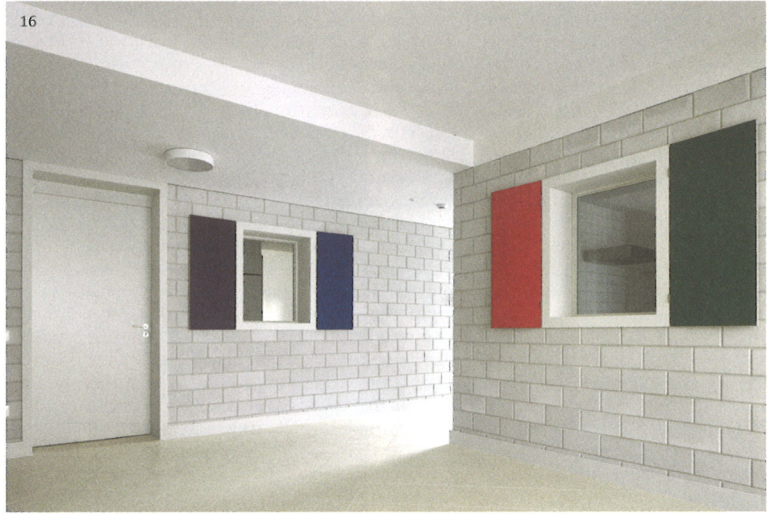
This 'new mannerism' is at work throughout the oeuvre of de vylder vinck taillieu, but in two recent projects

\square Maagdentoren: p. 197–202
 \square Social services: p. 105, 267–274
 \square Wivina: p. 217 – 224

12 & 13 — Restoration of the Maagdentoren, Zichem
 De Smet Vermeulen architects in collaboration with Studio Roma
 © Filip Dujardin

it becomes radical and exemplary: the L-berg service centre in Ledeborg (Ghent) □ and the Huik house in Antwerp. In both cases the core of the design assignment was not so much found in the programme but in the exceptional nature of the existing situation, and in both cases the importance and significance of the project lies in the forms chosen.

The broad, stately and monumental nineteenth-century façade of the former court and town hall in Ledeborg sits along one side of the market square, adjacent to the church. The rear façade is enclosed within the street block and is surrounded, like everywhere else in Flanders, by the backs of dull and shabby urban houses with their extensions and small gardens, and in the middle of the area sit rows of lock-up garages, small industrial buildings and so on. De vylder vinck taillieu have hardly touched the street façade. From a certain distance, one can see discrete triangular cut outs in the roof that enter into a subtle interplay with the classical fronton, and which indicate that the interior of the complex has been thoroughly renovated. The central section contains offices for the municipal administration and a ceremonial room on the ground floor. A multifunctional reception hall on the first floor occupies the full width of the building, while the municipal police are housed in a large



office space under the roof. The *piano nobile*, with its reception hall, and the attic floor are kept free by locating all of the service and circulation spaces in four separate volumes added to the back. These extensions look like drawers that have been pulled out of a cabinet. Unlike the street façade, these additional basic geometric volumes are not segmented or decorated, but have large open areas of glass and singular blank sides clad with glossy black roof-tiles. At various heights they project out of the rear of the building, stand, lean or hang, and one block juts out just above the apse of the ceremonial room. All of this makes for a spectacular rear façade, which is also reminiscent of the D-4 Haus that the rebellious Josef Frank designed for his niece, Dagmar Grill. In its architectural idiom and execution, the rear, which morphologically fits in perfectly with the chaos and bare and unarticulated backs of the buildings in the inner area, is the reverse of the historical street façade on the market square. The difference surprises and astounds, but does not become a contrast or a contradic-



tion, because they are never both seen at the same time and are not involved with each other. They exist in parallel.

The first floor is conceived as a spacious, almost palatial hall with a row of traditional windows that offer a fine view of the market square. A new structure has been inserted to support the reception hall and office storey. But de vylder vinck taillieu does not disguise this supporting structure. On the contrary, they let it protrude and use it in various ways to achieve unusual effects of form and view. In this way, the official architecture of the former town hall, routinely based on the classical principles of geometry, axiality, sym-



□ L-berg, p. 134, 175–184

18 — D-Haus, Josef Frank (watercolour)
Collection Susanne Eisenkoll
© Albertina Vienna

16 & 17 — Social services offices and serviced flats, Aarschot
architects de vylder vinck taillieu in collaboration with DRDH
14-17 © Filip Dujardin

14 — House Wilmot, Brussels, 2010
15 — Group medical centre, Kalken, 2011
14 & 15 architects de vylder vinck taillieu

metry, proportion and harmony, is continually hindered or disrupted by the new constructional elements. They are deliberately made to look heavy — or so it appears. The supporting structure is set just inside the outer facades, in a way that means it does not conform to the rhythm of the existing building nor keep open the existing view and circulation, but, on the contrary, hinders and divides them, which makes the added structure even more visible. In the ceremonial room, for example, the very similar shaft of a classical ornamental column and a new supporting pillar stand emphatically next to each other. The supporting pillar naturally has no base or capital, whereby the similarity to the shaft of the column shifts into a difference, but the close resemblance prevents any dramatic contrast. And a few metres away, the massive head of a supporting steel beam protrudes into a door opening.

The attic floor is also remarkable. In the cut outs in the roof on both sides of the attic space, triangular recesses with terraces are inserted, all in glass and mirrors. The sequence of these incisions creates a zigzag route through the long office attic, while on both sides one continues to look simultaneously straight through recessed outdoor terraces and through the views of the market square and the inner area, which are reflected in the glass walls of the terraces; and the same again at the next recess, and so on. In this way, the offices for the police, in the space on top of a theatre and reception hall offering a classic perspective view, are given a kaleidoscopic and completely fragmented outlook onto the world. The way vistas are repeatedly cut off, filled in and fragmented here, like elsewhere in the oeuvre of de vylder vinck taillieu, is entirely in keeping with the basic principles of the mannerist visual space.

The observed space simultaneously loses and gains an illusory depth, so that it can no longer be comprehended and precisely construed, and thus surprises or astounds. (The attic space at L-berg is essentially a big viewing machine, just as the various viewing boxes in the design by de vylder vinck taillieu architects and Bravoure for the Venice Biennale are small devices that, in the first place, demonstrate a way of

looking — and are themselves 'architecture' — much more so than showing architectural projects by others.)

The Huik house in Antwerp is at least as radical. De vylder vinck taillieu have built a complex house and B&B on a small, enclosed and irregular plot with an angled building line that reformulates the problem of vertical organisation in a small area into a solution. The constituent elements of the building are separately articulated, but not separated. The ground floor, with the entrance to the B&B and the house, is an

open space across the whole complex, initially intended as a garage but now fitted out as a workroom. On the first floor there are two guestrooms with a terrace at the back. A volume has been built above these two storeys on the broad half of the plot, with an attic floor that projects above the brick street façade like a separate little house. Behind this street façade, on the second, narrower part of the building, there is a terrace garden with two trees whose tops extend above the street/garden façade. At the back of the house, a spiral stair-

20



21



case and ordinary staircase connect the various floors: dining room and kitchen on the second, bedroom and bathroom on the third, a children's room, study and music room on the fourth, and a sitting room and living room with a terrace on the fifth. The stairwell and spiral staircase inside the house and the enclosed terrace garden, combined with the arrangement of the internal spaces, create a maximal, exceptionally complex space in a small area. In-between spaces and corners with no specific function are to be found just as much, if not more, and are as important as the table or the bed. The lines of circulation, the sightlines, a number of constructional elements and the trees simultaneously point in different and intersecting directions. This means the house has no middle, no central point where movement naturally comes to a standstill. Each place touches on other places, here and elsewhere. At no point do inside and outside form a hard contrast, since each place is a mixture of the two.

DEMONSTRATION OF ELBOW ROOM

Generally speaking, it is true to say that there is a more conspicuous play on form and colour in the new architecture in Flanders today. See for example the bold choice of colours for the Faculty of Architecture Library  at Ghent University and the refined Arbor timber drying shed  by OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen, the elegance and grace of the Golf and Country Club  in Sint-Joris-Winge by Robbrecht and Daem, and the flamboyant golden crown on the roof of the Texture Museum  in Kortrijk by noA architects. But there are more projects where both young and more established firms have, to a greater or lesser degree, actively designed in a mannerist way in recent years. These include light and smaller-scale projects such as the interior of a staff room at a school in Anderlecht by Lezze Architects, and the staircase in a small office building in Tienen by Lava architects, but also larger and more substantial projects such as the corner houses in Kleine Kerkstraat  in Ledeborg by Tijn Vanmeirhaeghe and Carl Bourgeois in association with Kris Coremans, and the notable De Lork care houses  in Sint-Gillis by 51N4E. In all cases, these are projects in which the form is relatively free, which easily distance themselves from the (late-) modernist clarity and minimalism, and which use this freedom to solve design problems by means of the form. This significantly raises the stakes. After all, it is not easy to exaggerate appropriately, or to go too far to just the right extent, and in any case, it always elicits rejection (amongst other things). The basic accusation of groundlessness and frivolity is unavoidable and also impossible to con-

test. This architecture can never prove that it is right *on principle*: whether it is right or not depends on the way each new individual project succeeds or fails. And this success probably has something to do with the fact that the arbitrary form, in *this* specific case at least, nevertheless does what it has to do. As a consequence, it may seem that the stakes in this deviant and free architecture are limited. Mannerism does not after all formulate any principles or grand ideals, it has no plan for the world or proposal for where architecture should be heading. Yet essentially it is about nothing other than architecture itself, and the *making* of architecture. Not about 'autonomy', because it does not impose any rules on itself. It seems, rather, to be more a matter of a demonstration, a sort of *performance*: the provocative exploitation and thereby at the same time the open display of architecture's room for movement, and the architect's elbow room.

22



23









24



25



 Texture Museum: p. 123-124
 Corner house on Kleine Kerkstraat: p. 52-53
 De Lork care houses: p. 134, 159-166

 Library: p. 275-282
 Arbor timber drying shed: p. 135-136
 Golf & Country Club: p. 138-141

22-25 — Huijk house, Antwerp
 architects de vylde vinck taillieu
 © Filip Dujardin



(According to Sigmund Freud, a number of important figures of style and composition in rhetoric are not merely embellishments, but also a route by which the subconscious can express itself indirectly. Which perhaps makes it understandable that 'embellishment', including that in architecture, appears not solely as light and arbitrary but, in an odd, indefinable way, is also experienced as intense and meaningful: as if something were *happening* there.)

I
Frank, Josef, "Zerstörung der Form", in *Architektur als Symbol*, 1931. Original German: *"Es ist aber eine wesentliche Aufgabe unserer Zeit, die Form zu zerstören. (...) die neue lebenskräftige Baukunst kann als Grundlage nur sämtliche Bedingungen unseres Lebens haben und nicht einzelne willkürlich-ästhetisch ausschalten. Aber wer könnte es heute wagen, Regeln auszustellen?"*

II
Flanders Architectural Review No. 11, Embedded Architectures, Antwerp, Flanders Architecture Institute, 2014.

III
Flanders Architectural Review No. 11, Embedded Architectures, Antwerp, Flanders Architecture Institute, 2014.



30 — De Lork care homes, Sint-Gillis 51N4E © Filip Dujardin

29 — Texture Museum, Kortrijk noAarchitects © Filip Dujardin

28 — Arbor timber drying shed, Herselt OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen © Bas Princen

27 — Golf & Country Club Sint-Joris-Winge Robbrecht and Daem architects © Filip Dujardin

26 — Faculty of Architecture library, Ghent OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen © Bas Princen