

# Weiterbau: why and how?

three architectural positions and their underlying ideologies

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Research essay

# Introduction

## *Weiterbauen and the debate on old and new*

As Christoph Grafe and Tim Rieniets stated in *Umbaukultur*, cities and their buildings are caught up in an ongoing process of transformation, and consequently never really attain a final state. In an existing context, accepting decisions made by others at an earlier state is an inherent part of the design process. Architecture in such contexts partly consists of “editing” work: the architect further develops an existing narrative, also carefully deleting parts and pieces <sup>1, p.13</sup>. If the past is not aestheticised, more room is left for accumulation, beyond a contradiction of old and new <sup>2, p.280</sup>. *Weiterbauen*, literally meaning “to continue building”, is a design attitude appertaining to this concept. It is not based on the romanticism of the ruins of a building <sup>3, p.255</sup>, but on the anti-modern observation that nothing is ever completely finished. The architect can further develop the existing context and its narratives, stacking epochs upon or next to another, rather than creating stark contrasts or breaks between old and new elements <sup>4, p.15</sup>.

*Weiterbauen* in its most fanatical form may closely resemble the conservation practices of the French *Beaux Arts*, as Dirk Somers denoted. It could lead to restorations like those of Viollet-Le-Duc, transforming buildings into sublimated versions of the original, with wilful corrections of authentic elements <sup>2, p.280</sup>. In this most extreme interpretation, *Weiterbauen* seems to clash with the still very influential Venice Charter of 1964, a set of principles governing architectural conservation and restoration <sup>5, p.229</sup>. The charter states that replacements of missing parts (or, interpreted more freely, additions) must always be distinguishable from the original parts to prevent the falsification of artistic or historic evidence <sup>6</sup>. The Venice Charter still influences the way the existing context is dealt with in projects

today, all too often resulting in harsh contrasts between old and new, as a result of a one-sided reading of this very Charter <sup>7, p.49</sup>. However, article 12 and 13 of the Charter actually allow for more subtleties, as they state that replacements must integrate harmoniously, and that additions can be allowed as long as they do not detract from the interesting parts of the building and respect the balance of its composition and relation with its surroundings <sup>6</sup>. *Weiterbauen* can be seen as a search for this harmonious integration and respectful addition, thus operating within the principles established by the Charter. Thereby, the attitude of *Weiterbauen* can feed the debate around old and new, fostering design proposals that take the existing context into account and willingly adhere to it, enriching the spectre of architecture beyond the frequently applied approach of contrasting legibility <sup>7, p.49</sup>.

## *Weiterbauen in Bressoux*

The site of this year’s Urban Architecture studio, the neighbourhood of Bressoux in Liège, is (re)shaped by various alterations, demolitions and new additions. This has resulted in a city fabric with a substantial number of irregularities and exceptions, but also commonalities and typical characteristics. A new addition to this neighbourhood could draw inspiration from the existing context, in order to properly embed itself in the present fabric and tap into the exemplary characteristics of Bressoux. A further understanding of *Weiterbauen* can benefit the work on such a design proposal, as it demands careful reading of the context and a conscious consideration of how architecture deals with history. As such, this research will feed directly into the design proposal that is developed simultaneously in the Urban Architecture studio. However, since *Weiterbauen* is a design attitude rather

than a style, the applicability stretches beyond specific locations or conditions. A better understanding of Weiterbauen and different positions towards this attitude can thus not only help to develop more sensitivity towards this specific design assignment, but also to develop a personal position towards dealing with a pre-existing context in general.

### *Structure and research questions*

The aim of this research is to learn about diverse positions within the attitude of Weiterbauen, uncovering the underlying ideologies of different architects. To do this, three projects by three architects are selected: Hobbemakade Housing Block by Rapp+Rapp, House extension Mortsel by Bovenbouw Architectuur and Pension van Schoonhoven by BULK architecten. These case studies are selected as they portray subtly different positions, and as they are all part of everyday architecture: their contexts did not necessarily have distinguishing features or specific value in terms of heritage conservation, but the projects nevertheless show a sensitive, mindful continuation on this existing context. These three projects are studied in separate chapters, each focusing on the position of the architect and how it is reflected in the particular project, aiming to provide an answer to the main research question: "How do the different architectural positions of Rapp+Rapp, Bovenbouw Architectuur and BULK architecten relate to the attitude of Weiterbauen, and what are their supporting ideologies?"

Each chapter is structured in a similar way: interviews, essays and presentations by the architects are used to distil their

architectural position in relating to the existing context, followed by an analysis of the above-mentioned projects to test how said position is put to practice. The sub questions asked differ slightly, as they are determined per chapter to suit the specific project and position. At the end of each chapter, the answers to the sub questions and possible meaning and implications of the architects' positions are reflected upon.

These reflections lead towards an overarching conclusion where the positions of the three architects, distilled from the case studies, are compared on three scale levels: the urban scale, building scale and detail scale. Differences and similarities between the positions and the ideologies of the architects will be clarified, providing an answer to the main research question.



Figure 2, "Schöpferische Wiederherstellung" of the Alte Pinakothek by Hans Döllgast (Prewett Bizley, n.d.)

# Hobbemakade Housing Block

This chapter concerns the project "Hobbemakade Housing Block" by Rapp+Rapp. The five-storey building consists of ten apartments and an underground parking garage, and is completed in 2011. The building is tucked in between existing buildings on the Pieter de Hooghstraat and Hobbemakade in Amsterdam, and replaces a part of the adjacent Post and Telecommunications building completed in 1909<sup>8</sup>.

The aim of this chapter is to learn the position of Rapp+Rapp in building further upon the existing context. In order to do this, the Hobbemakade Housing block is analysed with specific attention to the research questions "What is continued upon and why?" and "How is this position applied in other projects?"

Christian Rapp, one of the two founders of architecture office Rapp+Rapp and current city architect of Antwerp, is a frequent user of the term "Weiterbauen". In his policy paper "Atypische stadsbouwmeester"<sup>9</sup>, he applies the term to the urban scale: Weiterbauen is explained by Rapp as an attitude that starts from the entirely unique and distinctive morphology of the streets, building blocks and buildings of the city, using Weiterbau to explain an attitude that affirms and continues on the city's unique grammar<sup>9, p.14</sup>. He explains that the term is originally used to describe an intelligent architectural strategy in dealing with existing monuments, but that it is applicable to the urban scale as well. Rapp's ideology of a city with facades that exude coherency, deliberately rejecting a pluriform architecture of niceties and fashions<sup>10</sup>, is reflected in this paper for his vision of Antwerp. According to Rapp, it is for example not the various classicistic details of canal houses that make the canals of Amsterdam appealing, but the craftsmanship and authenticity of the whole<sup>10</sup>.

In a discussion on building with brick, mediated by architect Hans van der Heijden, Rapp also explains what Weiterbauen entails on the scale of a building, clarifying the "intelligent architectural strategy"<sup>11</sup>. In his (unexecuted) proposal for the repurposing of former psychiatric clinic Meerenberg in Bloemendaal, built by architect J.D. Zocher, Rapp proposes to bring back the complex to its original set-up. Numerous annexes had to be demolished, and resulting wounds would be healed with the use of the principles of Weiterbau<sup>11</sup>. Rapp explained that this principle was frequently used in Germany to repair buildings that were scarred by bombings, using walls of brick and concrete with abstracted details that were based on the original, ornamented natural stone facades<sup>11</sup>. With this explanation, he is presumably referring to the "Schöpferische Wiederherstellung" or "Creative reconstruction" by Hans Döllgast, with the Alte Pinakothek in Munich (figure 2) as the best-known example.



Figure 3, facade drawing of Hobbemakade Housing Block and adjacent PTT office (own work)

Rapp's views of Weiterbau are recognisable in the office's project Hobbemakade Housing Block. The facades of the housing block are constructed of red brick like its neighbours, and according to the architects, fit right into the adjacent context due to their height, design and detailing<sup>8</sup>. By relating to the neighbouring buildings in these respects, the project can be seen as an example of the coherency in the city Rapp strives for. The building relates first and foremost to the adjacent former Post and Telecommunications (PTT) office: as can be seen in the drawing in figure 3, the housing block by Rapp+Rapp (in red) takes over numerous characteristics of the PTT office (in black), for instance its bay width, rhythm, accentuated horizontals and the placement, proportions and subdivisions of the windows.

The specificity of the project is in the way numerous characteristic details of the existing PTT office are taken over and reinterpreted in brick, a choice of material that might not be surprising since Christian Rapp was trained as a bricklayer and reportedly calls himself "the greatest brick artist of the Netherlands"<sup>11</sup>. The architects say they have a strong preference for masonry, as it exudes solidity and can be varied with to a great extent<sup>10</sup>. The reinterpretation of the PTT office's characteristic details into brick equivalents by Rapp+Rapp shows how they implemented Weiterbau on an architectural scale in Hobbemakade Housing Block, in close relation to Döllgasts "Creative reconstruction". A selection of the PTT office's details and their brick reinterpretations in the housing block is redrawn and examined in figure 4-6.

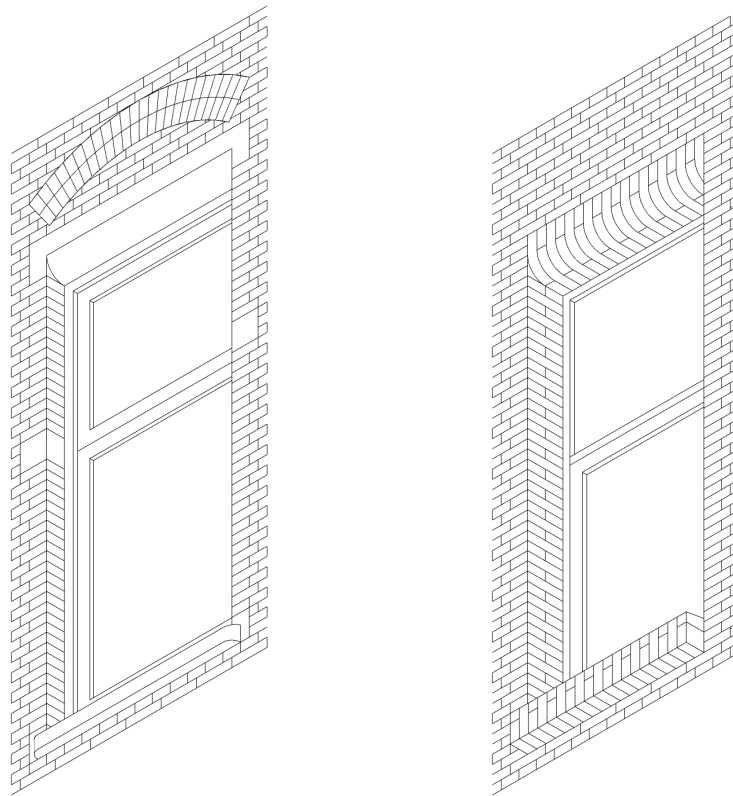


Figure 4, drawing of first floor windows of the PTT office (left) and Hobbemakade Housing Block (right) (own work)

The dimensions of the windows on the first floor of the PTT office (figure 4, left) are taken over precisely in the new building (right). The subdivision of the existing window is also followed, but without the natural stone markings on the sides. The natural stone window sill is replaced by a brickwork equivalent, as well as the lintel, where special curved bricks are used to mimic the natural stone element of the PTT office with almost identical dimensions.

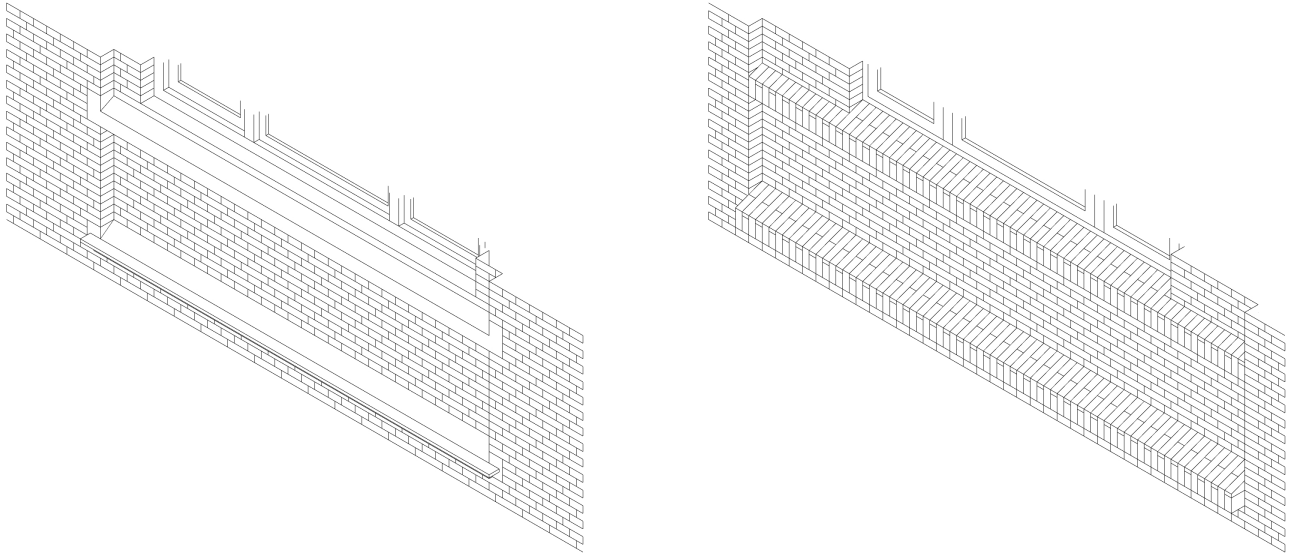


Figure 5, drawing of window sills of the PTT office (left) and Hobbemakade Housing Block (right) (own work)

A similar 'replacement' is applied to the window sills of the bigger windows on the second floor (figure 5), where sloped bricks are used as a substitute to the natural stone lintels. The alcove is widened and the bottom lintel is protruded slightly further, accentuating the depth of the facade.



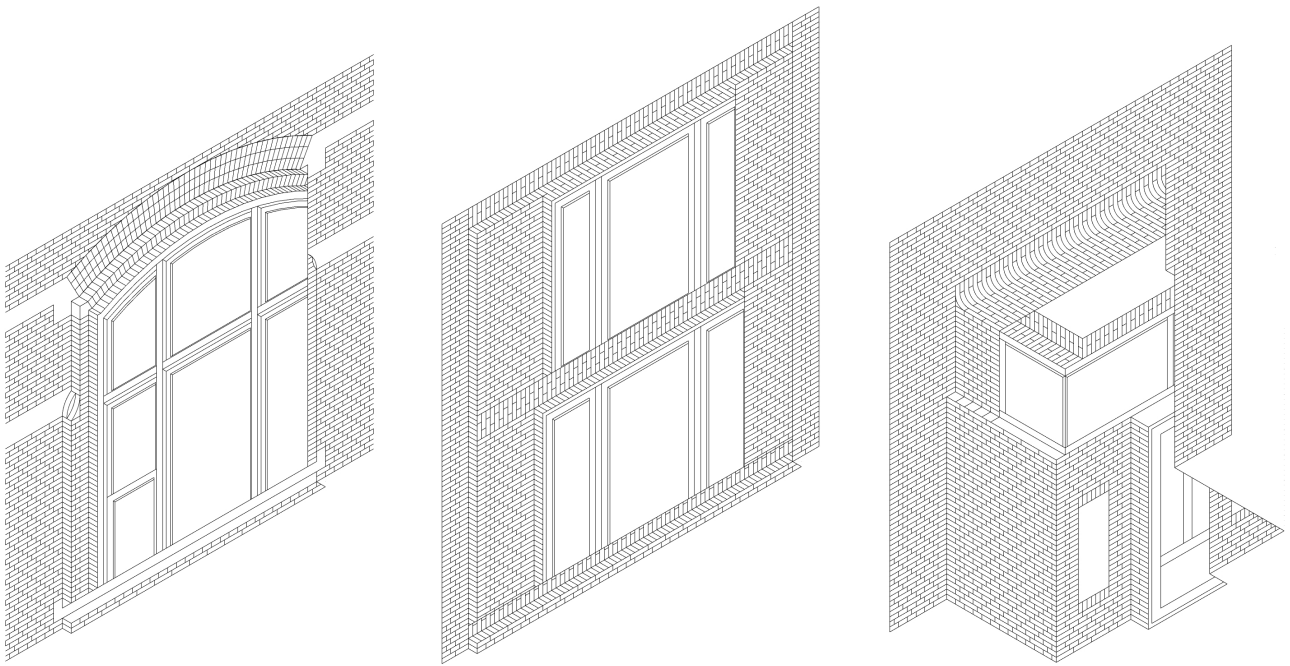


Figure 6, drawing of large windows and entrance of the PTT office and Hobbemakade Housing Block (own work)

The bigger windows marked the large, double-height hall of the PTT office and articulate the higher ceiling of the top floor, where telephone operators used to connect callers <sup>12</sup>. The vertical window division, marked by an alternating stone band, is recreated with a brick roll layer and slightly thickened in the building by Rapp+Rapp. This allowed for a floor slab to be placed behind the horizontal, splitting the top level in two. The bottom window is one stretcher wider than the top window, in reference to the indentation at the natural stone band in the PTT office. This indentation is then reproduced in the entrances of the housing block, along with the curved brick lintel of the other windows.



Figure 7, City Hall Niel front facade (Rapp+Rapp, n.d.-c)



Figure 8, City Hall Niel side facade (Rapp+Rapp, n.d.-d)

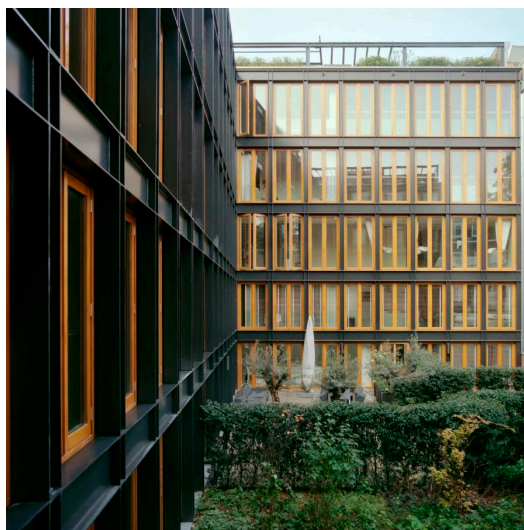


Figure 9, courtyard facades of Hobbemakade Housing Block (Rapp+Rapp, n.d.-e)

This stress on the reinterpretation of existing details is no unfamiliar approach for Rapp+Rapp. Their project of the redevelopment of the town hall of Niel (2009) expresses a similar attitude, thematising various architectural features of the existing building and implementing them in the addition. The project can be seen in the light of Döllgasts "Creative reconstruction" as well, although Rapp+Rapp allow themselves quite some freedom in the translation of the context's characteristic traits. The new front facade of the city hall is a quite modest continuation of the existing city hall, with bricks in a similar colour tone, corresponding window proportions and divisions, dormer windows, and natural stone detailing above the windows (figure 7). But every time the building turns the corner, the facade motif becomes more independent and abstract<sup>13</sup>. This incremental abstraction continues to the point that the facade of the new addition has become so different from the ornament-free side wall of the city hall that they are separated with a glass joint, a measure usually avoided with *Weiterbauen* (figure 8). This measure shows that Rapp+Rapp have made a clear choice in which parts of the existing context they want to relate to: the ornamented front facade is referenced and continued, but the banal side wall is rejected. The playful use of natural stone on the side facade does raise questions about Christian Rapp's statement that "niceties and fashions" should be avoided, as this facade is not necessarily a portrayal of the restraint he advocates.

The strong focus on refined details and a skilful use of brick in the street facades of Hobbemakade Housing Block is very consistent with Rapp's vision of coherence in the street. There is however a great difference between these outer facades and the projects' inner facades (figure 9). The inner facades are composed of numerous French doors, fixed in a grid of black steel profiles, to achieve an open character, contrasting with the more closed outer facades<sup>8</sup>. While it is not necessarily

unfavourable for a street facade and a courtyard facade to tell a different story, this does suggest that *Weiterbauen* is mostly regarded as a means to fit into the street in this project. The major difference between the two sides of the building raises questions: do the facades need to be this different or could they be a more coherent whole? And isn't the street facade degraded to a representative mask in this project, at odds with Rapp's statement that "a facade is not just a shell that is draped around a building"? Although the authenticity of the facade in relation to the building behind it might be questionable, Rapp+Rapp do show how *Weiterbauen* could be applied not only on an architectural scale, paying tribute to neighbouring buildings by reinterpreting their characteristic details, but also how it can contribute to the image of a coherent city on an urban scale.



Figure 10, House extension Mortsel seen from the garden (Borghouts, n.d.)

# House extension Mortsel

This chapter deals with the project "House extension Mortsel" by Bovenbouw Architectuur. The project, completed in 2012, embodies the extension and reorganisation of a typical terraced house in Mortsel, just outside Antwerp.

The aim of this chapter is to learn the position of Bovenbouw Architectuur in relating to and continuing upon the existing built context. To do this, House extension Mortsel is regarded with special attention to the research questions "What is continued upon and why?" and "What is the role of the readability of old and new?"

The approach of Bovenbouw, as explained by its manager and head designer Dirk Somers, is to make contemporary interpretations of historical references <sup>14</sup>, p.137. Aside from seeking connections to the direct physical context of a project, the bureau continues upon ideas or well-known references as well. These well-known references are called "commonplace" by Somers in his essay "Gemeenplaats en Classicisme". The word "commonplace" is derived from a text by architecture critic Geert Bekaert from 1987, where he used the term to denote the Flemish architecture tradition as an elevation of mundane, clichéd and humbled activities through the use of architecture <sup>15</sup>. In his essay, Somers extends this definition with the terms "mimetic form", "mythical representation" and "sublimated building" to reconstruct the seemingly modest tradition as a form of classical architecture <sup>16</sup>, p.177.

With "sublimated building", Somers places the emphasis on the careful craftsmanship of building, which is not just about making solid or elegant buildings. Sublimated building is, according to Somers, a search for elevating the act of contemporary building into compositions <sup>16</sup>, p.189.

"Mythical representation" is then explained as a search for a historical or lost quality, beyond pragmatic solutions for a problem. The "mimetic form" is explained by Somers as an architecture that is at one hand representing the familiar, but at the other hand also transforms it into something new <sup>14</sup>, p.141. Somers stresses that the complexity of such project is not in provocation, but in keeping a feeling of familiarity while creating a contemporary composition of ordinariness <sup>16</sup>, p.181.



Figure 11, model showing connections and similarities between the front and back house in Mortsel (Bovenbouw Architectuur, n.d.-b)

The term “mimetic form” seems most applicable to the house extension in Mortsel: a familiar, commonplace reference, in this case the banal Flemish rear-extension of a house, is reworked into a contemporary, innovative interpretation. Instead of building a stereotypical addition to the existing house, the extension in Mortsel is designed as a reflection of the front house: it has a similar, archetypal shape of a house, with tiled sloped roofs and executed in brick, taking the form of a fully-fledged second house<sup>17</sup>. The use of domestic elements like a staircase and a fireplace in the middle of the back house supports this idea of a second house. The model in figure 11 is made by Bovenbouw, and shows how the back house is presented as a reflection of the existing front house, with emphasis on the similarities and connections between the two, such as the stairwells.



Figure 12, facade drawing of the side wall of house extension Mortsel with its collage of bricks and bonds (own work)

The striking side wall of the back house is composed of a number of surfaces with different types of brick in various bonds, drawn in figure 12. These surfaces are used on both sides of the wall, and form a reflection of the back house's cross section: the chimney articulates a void in the middle of the house, and each adjacent surface represents a room laying behind, with roll layers of brick at the levels of the floors. Windows are placed where the wall folds inwards to allow light to enter the front

house. The wall is painted white, unifying the surfaces and creating an abstract collage of textures <sup>17</sup>, inspired by a photo by Karin Borghouts in her series "rooilijn" <sup>18, p.127</sup>, seen in figure 13. The way in which Bovenbouw translated a side wall into a collage-like composition, showing how the house is built by reflecting the cross-section, can be seen as an expression of the "sublimated building" Somers presented in his essay.

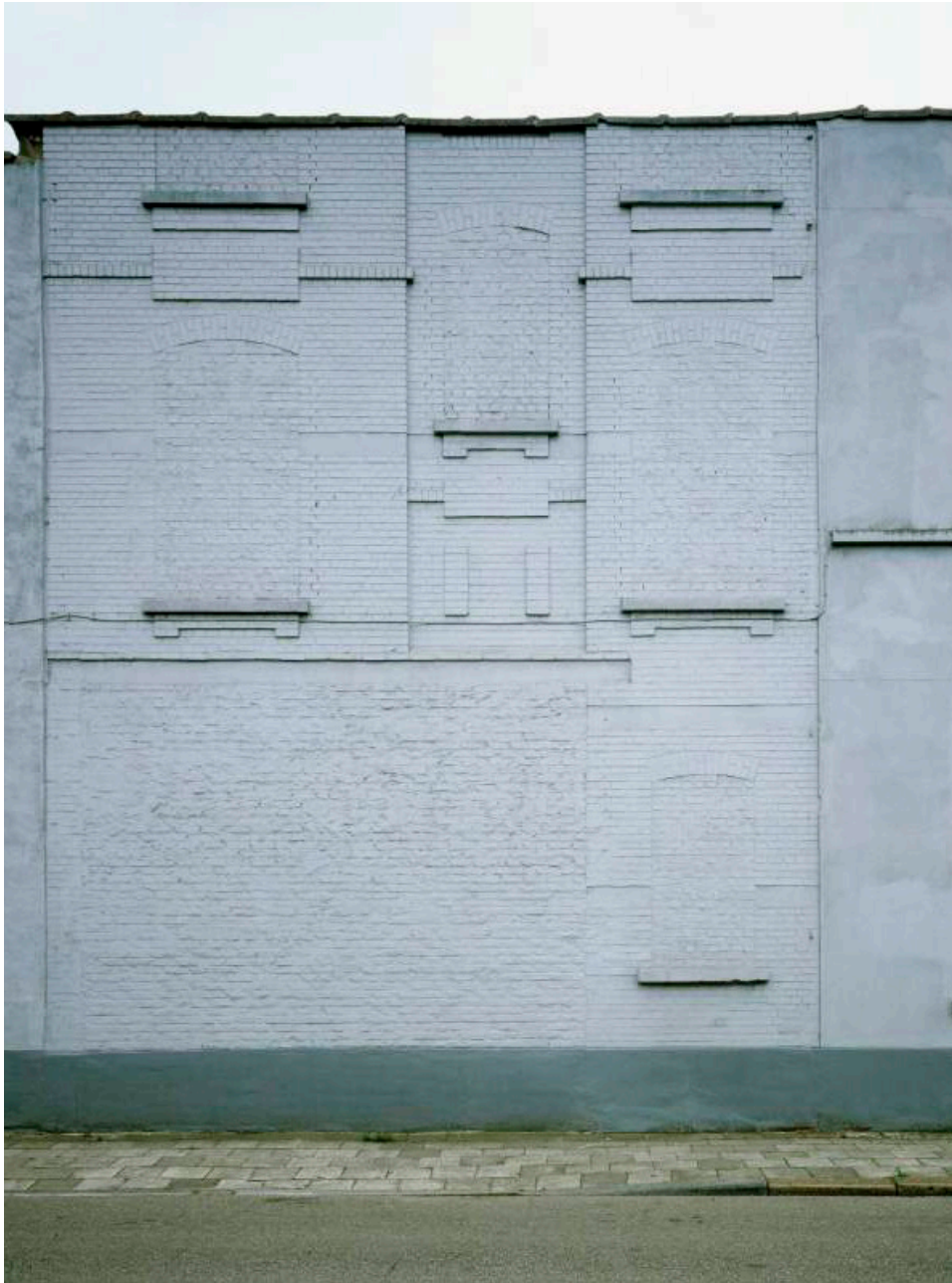


Figure 13, facade photo in the series 'rooilijn' (Borghouts, 2003)



By making unique and contemporary interpretations of historical references, Somers seeks a way to refer to a location's DNA with continuity. This approach might in some cases trouble the readability of old and new, as was demanded in the Venice Charter, but this legibility seems to be not that important to Somers. He substantiates his position with the example of a gothic cathedral, a building that is often adapted through the centuries and where the illegibility of exact modifications does not form an issue either <sup>14, p.137</sup>. By accepting that a building is never in its final state, with Somers being quite outspoken in waving away the importance of the legibility of exact modifications, a door is kept open to allow for future adaptation.

The approach of Bovenbouw in this project, relating to well-known ideas and references instead of a physical context, offers opportunities as well. Somers brings forward the concept of commonplace to offer an alternative to contextual or vernacular architecture, when those terms aren't applicable. He states that Flanders (but architecture in general) has been affected by the erosion of the contextual and vernacular, and that architecture has to fall back on something else <sup>16, p.179</sup>. The commonplace is presented as a remaining constant in the city, and thus provides a starting point for new architecture: if the context of the city no longer instructs the architecture, solutions can be found in new and unique interpretations of the familiar and the everyday.



Figure 14, front facade of Pension van Schoonhoven (Claeskens, n.d.)

# Pension van Schoonhoven

This chapter concerns the project “Pension van Schoonhoven” by BULK architecten, a day and night shelter for the homeless in Antwerp, completed in 2018. The building consists of two existing mansions and a new building that replaces two former buildings that used to accommodate the shelter.

The aim of this chapter is to learn the position of BULK architecten in relating to and continuing upon the existing built context. In order to do this, their project Pension van Schoonhoven is analysed with specific attention to the research questions “What is continued upon and why?” and “What is removed or replaced of the existing context to facilitate the Weiterbau?”

BULK seems to search for a kind of abstract consistency in the city with their architecture. In the mission statement on their website, a comparison with the surrealistic technique “cadavre exquis” or “exquisite corpse” is made: “As with the cadavre exquis, where a head, torso, legs and feet drawn by different authors are joined together by means of folds in a piece of paper, so will unintentional fairy-tale characters with a curious coherence hopefully emerge in the city.”<sup>19</sup> But where authors aren’t aware of preceding work in the case of cadavre exquis, architects are well-aware of existing constructions. Future changes to the built environment however are for the most part unknown, and this is what BULK also refers to with their analogy: not only relating to what is already there is important, but also anticipating on what might happen next. This requires a certain amount of confidence in the authors of subsequent developments, but BULK also leaves quite some room with the “fairy-tale characters with a curious coherence”:

although they favour a certain consistency in the architecture of the city, they don’t prescribe in what way, and it doesn’t have to be obvious or self-evident.

In the case of Pension van Schoonhoven, a first connection with the context is sought in the plot width. The original plot structure of the street is heavily affected and corrupted, with original buildings replaced by a coarser grain, resulting in clumsy and antisocial buildings<sup>20</sup>, with anonymous facades that could have belonged to a parking garage<sup>21</sup>. BULK wanted to avoid falling in this trap with their design, and wanted to shape the building as a collection of domestic dwellings, rather than as an institutional complex<sup>20</sup>. Two existing houses were preserved, and three “houses” with a uniform facade were added. A carriage gate to the back garden is placed in the plinth of the heightened, rightmost new house, creating a central nave to the building, as shown in figure 14 and 15. The readability of the “separate houses” is then strengthened by the use of full-height indentations with drainpipes in between the bays of the building. This way, BULK created a building where a number of pretending-to-be-separate-houses are merged into one, inspired by John Soane’s house in London<sup>20</sup>. Such conglomerates of houses into one building are called an “assembled city castle” by Koen van Bockstal, architect-director of BULK: a typology in between an apartment building and a battery of terraced houses, where the whole presents itself to be bigger than the sum of the parts. “At best, the houses form a kind of urban palace, as part of a larger building block”, he explains

<sup>22</sup>, p.18.



Figure 15, facade drawing of Pension van Schoonhoven with the new construction and existing houses (own work)

The facade drawing in figure 15 also shows some compositional differences between the existing and newly added parts of this assembled city castle. In the bays of the new building, each story has two windows, while the existing mansions have three (or, on the first floor, two windows and one set of doors with a balcony). This difference reveals a dichotomy in the plan of the building: the existing mansions are occupied by apartments with the width of a full bay, and the new building houses smaller bedrooms for the night shelter, two in every bay, each with its own window. The belle-*etage* of the new building is emphasized by its different material use and has significantly bigger windows: this way, a distinction is made between the shared spaces of the

belle-*etage* and the more private bedrooms above. By articulating the spaces behind in the facade, BULK creates slight differences between parts of the facade, resulting in a less direct conformity with the existing buildings, whilst still very much engaging in a dialogue with them.

In order to highlight what features of the existing buildings BULK continues upon with their new building and to learn how they contribute to a “curious coherence” in the city on a smaller scale, a selection of details is made of both the incorporated mansions and their counterparts in the new building. These details are redrawn and examined in figures 16-18.

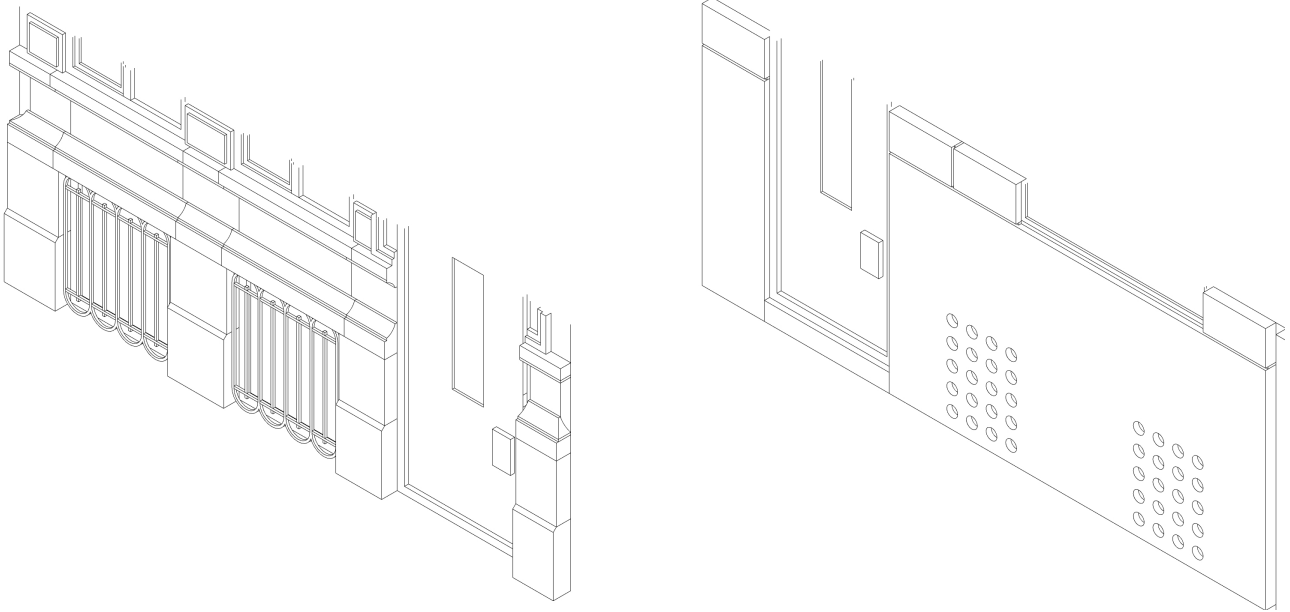


Figure 16, drawings of the plinths of the existing mansions (left) and new building (right) of Pension van Schoonhoven (own work)

The belle-*etage* level of the existing mansions is situated at almost two metres above street level, and is articulated in the facade with a classicist plinth of natural stone. In the new building, BULK continues with this floor level. Aside from accessibility reasons <sup>23</sup>, this also raises the polyvalent space above street level, granting the users with more privacy while still using large windows. The hardstone plinths of the existing mansions are referenced with an equivalent of sanded concrete, and sets of round perforations in the concrete are applied as an abstract translation of the barred windows in the original plinths.

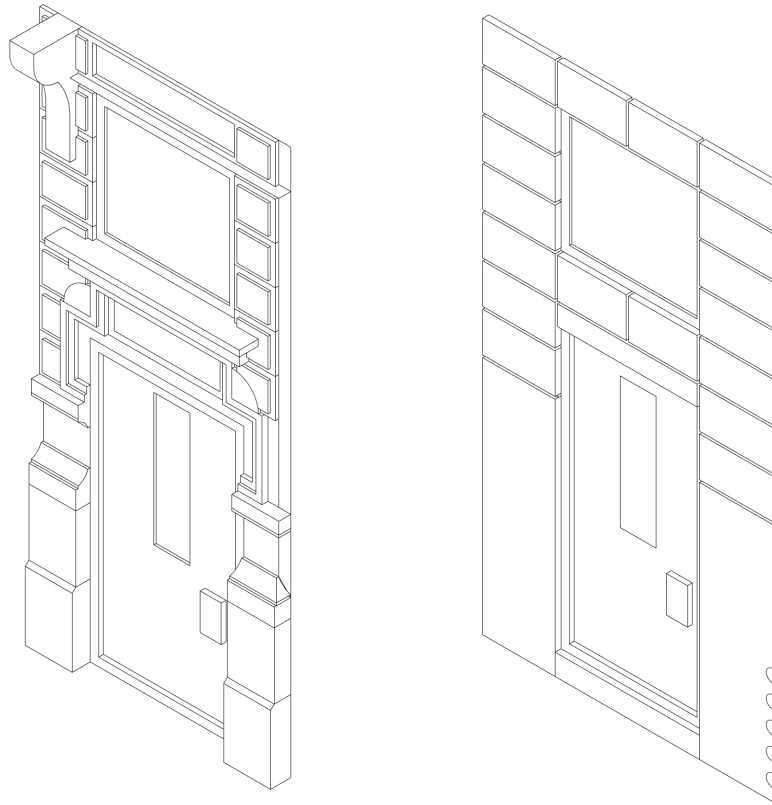


Figure 17, front doors of the existing houses (left) and new building (right) of Pension van Schoonhoven (own work)

The Pension has a number of entrances: a carriage gate in the middle, leading to the garden and day centre, two existing front doors in the mansions, used for the offices, a central entrance to the reception and a new front door for the users of the night shelter. Providing the users with their own front door, apart from the reception, reduces the feeling of entering an institute<sup>24</sup> and contributes to the appearance of a series of houses. The front doors of the existing mansions are replaced, and are now similar to the new one of the night shelter, as is drawn in figure 17. A window is placed above this new front door, identical to the ones above the existing front doors, allowing light into the stairwell behind it.

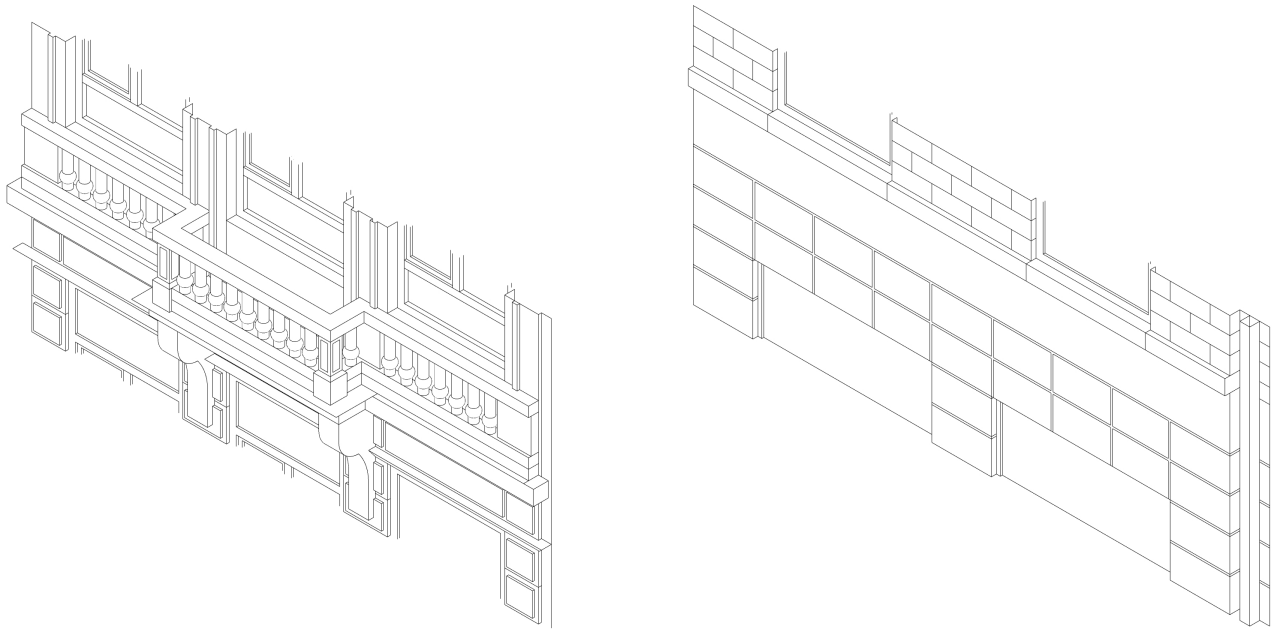


Figure 18, a section of the facades of the existing houses (left) and new building (right) of Pension van Schoonhoven (own work)

The horizontal line of the balconies of the existing houses is continued in the new building by BULK, albeit with a sanded concrete lintel instead of a balcony, marking the border between the shared facilities underneath and the bedrooms above. Simple light grey concrete bricks in a stretcher bond are used for the top floors, next to the white plastered brickwork of the existing houses. The plastered cassette facades on the belle-*etage* of the existing mansions are reworked with standard paving stones on the facade of the new building, mimicking the pattern of the cassettes with a material well-known to the users of the shelter <sup>25</sup>.

This selection of details shows how BULK connects to the context of the building: quite some features of the neighbouring buildings are taken and reworked, not necessarily in a very direct way but with some adaptations, whilst still remaining recognisable. Perhaps this makes Pension van Schoonhoven an example of the coherence van Bockstal mentioned, although this one is not too curious.



Figure 19, Street View image of Pension van Schoonhoven during construction (Google Maps, 2017)

On their website, BULK places quite some emphasis on the two preserved mansions, and explains how their new building is nestled in between these mansions and the other neighbour. The first sentence of the design explanation is a bit distorting here: "We start from a clear structure in the longitudinal section: two existing houses transforming into five" <sup>20</sup>. The fact that two existing buildings that previously housed the shelter were completely demolished to "start" again is not mentioned here. What is not mentioned as well, is that the two existing houses were only partly preserved: apart from the facades and the belle-*etage*, everything was torn down, as became visible in archival images from Google Maps (figure 19).



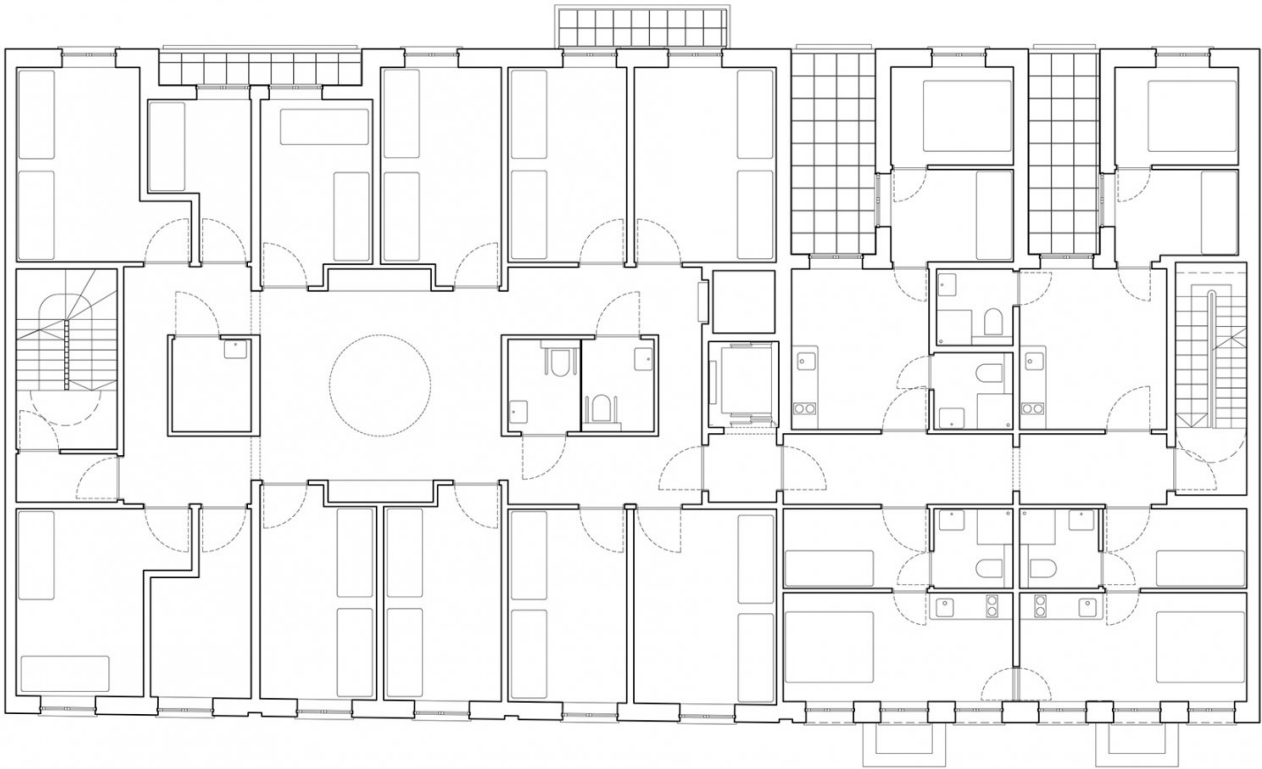


Figure 20, first level floor plan of Pension van Schoonhoven (BULK architecten, ca. 2019)

The new floor plans of the building are based on the preserved part of the existing building <sup>23</sup>, as is also visible in figure 20. The plan shows a readable series of houses, where the two existing ones seem to be original at first glance. BULK did this in a quite convincing way: when asked about the building during a site visit, staff of the Pension repeatedly stated that some features of the plan were perhaps not ideal, but that this was fine because, as they said, "it is an existing building after all" <sup>26</sup>.

The picture of the construction site raises questions about the way the existing houses are incorporated. Is it legitimate to call the way these houses are used preservation, like BULK does? And how much of a building can be demolished and replaced without losing its character? The act of preserving a facade and constructing a new building behind it may result in facadism, where an alien building is constructed behind an established facade, and the symbiotic relationship between the building's interior and exterior is compromised <sup>27</sup>. When applied

more sensitively however, like BULK did with Pension van Schoonhoven, it can certainly be more than facadism. BULK tried their best to continue upon the building parts that were kept, and by basing the new floor plans of the "preserved" mansions on the actually preserved floors and facades, they have reinstated the relationship between the representative facade and the new building behind it. The legibility of old and new might not be clear to a layman, as was demonstrated by the building's staff, but this can also mean that BULK did in fact credibly continue upon what was left. Perhaps Pension van Schoonhoven is an example of what *Weiterbauen* can look like, not only in the facade, as BULK's numerous abstracted and retranslated details show, but also in plan. The office's vision of continuing on the context, as compared to the *cadavre exquis*, leaves room for different interpretations: a certain consistency if favoured, but it can be a bit curious.

# Conclusion

In this chapter, the three found positions of Rapp+Rapp, Bovenbouw and BULK will be compared on three scale levels: the urban scale, building scale and detail scale. The aim of this chapter is not to conduct a value assessment on the projects and positions, but to compare them in such a way that differences and similarities are clarified.

## *The urban scale*

The positions the architects take on an urban scale are quite different. Christian Rapp rejects a pluriform architecture of niceties and fashions, and favours a city that shows coherency in its facades. In his policy paper for Antwerp, he states that *Weiterbauen* on an urban scale entails the affirmation and continuation of the city's unique grammar. At the same time, Dirk Somers suggests that the city does not instruct the architecture anymore, and seeks refuge in referring to and retranslating "commonplaces". According to his essay "Gemeenplaats en classicisme", the vernacular is eroding, and the notion of context seems hardly applicable when harmony and unanimity systematically dissolve into disorder and confusion. These two perspectives are fairly different, as one states that the context should be continued and the other that this very context is hardly applicable anymore. Perhaps Rapp attempts to find coherency in the plurality of the Flemish city, whereas Somers sees more value in a more abstract reference to the well-known commonplaces.

BULK seems to partly embrace the plurality of the Flemish context and seeks for some coherence, albeit a surprising one: in an analogy with "cadavre exquis", they explain that they search for a balance between continuing on the existing and anticipating on the future, resulting in a curious coherence.

## *The building scale*

On the building scale, BULK engages in a dialogue with the adjacent context, but makes some clear distinctions between the facades. These distinctions are a result of the articulation of spaces behind the facade: making these spaces readable in the facade seems to be more important to BULK than creating a one-on-one interpretation of the context. Great attention is spent on creating floor plans that continue on the existing buildings, to the point where the difference between existing and new isn't legible to the users of the building.

The focus in the project of Rapp+Rapp lies on the continuation of the existing facades: seen from the street, their building almost looks like a part of the pre-existing adjacent building. As a result of this elaborate continuation, the facades mostly pay tribute to the existing building, and do not articulate what happens behind them, with seemingly independent plans. The building's courtyard facades are also fairly different from the ones on the street, and seem to suggest that *Weiterbauen* is mostly regarded as a way to fit into the street in this project.

The building by Bovenbouw demonstrates a reinterpreted commonplace: a familiar reference, the banal Flemish rear-extension of a house, is reworked into a contemporary interpretation. The way Bovenbouw reworks a commonplace like this is very location- and program-specific, as this reference is based on the rear-extension typical for the program of extra living space in such contexts.

### *The detail scale*

In detailing, the approach of Bovenbouw is an expression of the "sublimated building" Somers mentions. The side wall of the building is reworked into a collage-like composition, serving as a tool to portray the cross-section of the house. This way, the detailing serves as a way to give the building more specificity while at the same time explaining its spatial configuration, elevating the project and its everyday commonplace to a higher level.

In the project of Hobbemakade, Rapp+Rapp shows a very clear focus on the detailing of the facade. Characteristic details of the adjacent building are taken over and reinterpreted in brick equivalents, in fashion of Döllgast's creative reconstruction. This reinterpretation of details is not unfamiliar in the work of Rapp+Rapp, and has resulted in very specific details that show a strong appreciation for masonry in Hobbemakade. The detailing of BULK's Pension van Schoonhoven shows a coherency with the two existing mansions that were integrated: many of its details are an abstract interpretation of the existing mansions detailing. BULK uses contemporary material in their new building to relate to the existing details, and mimics it in a less direct way than Rapp+Rapp does, resulting in what is perhaps an example of the curious coherence BULK mentions.

Although the positions of the architects seem quite divergent or at some points even contradictory, they are also related in a number of areas. Their different ideologies have become more apparent in this research, and together with their application in the examined case studies, have provided a base for a personal position towards dealing with a pre-existing context, as well as forming an answer to the main research question "How do the different architectural positions of Rapp+Rapp, Bovenbouw Architectuur and BULK architecten relate to the attitude of Weiterbauen, and what are their supporting ideologies?":

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