



University of Antwerp
| Faculty of Design Sciences

Inzicht in het naoorlogse erfgoed van Paul Felix Uitdagingen in de conservering

Studiedag: Erfgoed in goede handen - Naoorlogs erfgoed: bedreigd én geliefd

1/6/2026

Spreker: Warre Onnockx

Promotor: Prof. Dr. Yonca Erkan

Externe lezer: Prof. Dr. Uta Pottgiesser

Lezer: Philippe Lemineur

Overzicht

- **Introduction**
- **Methodology**
- **Literature review**
- **Case studies**
- **Conclusions**



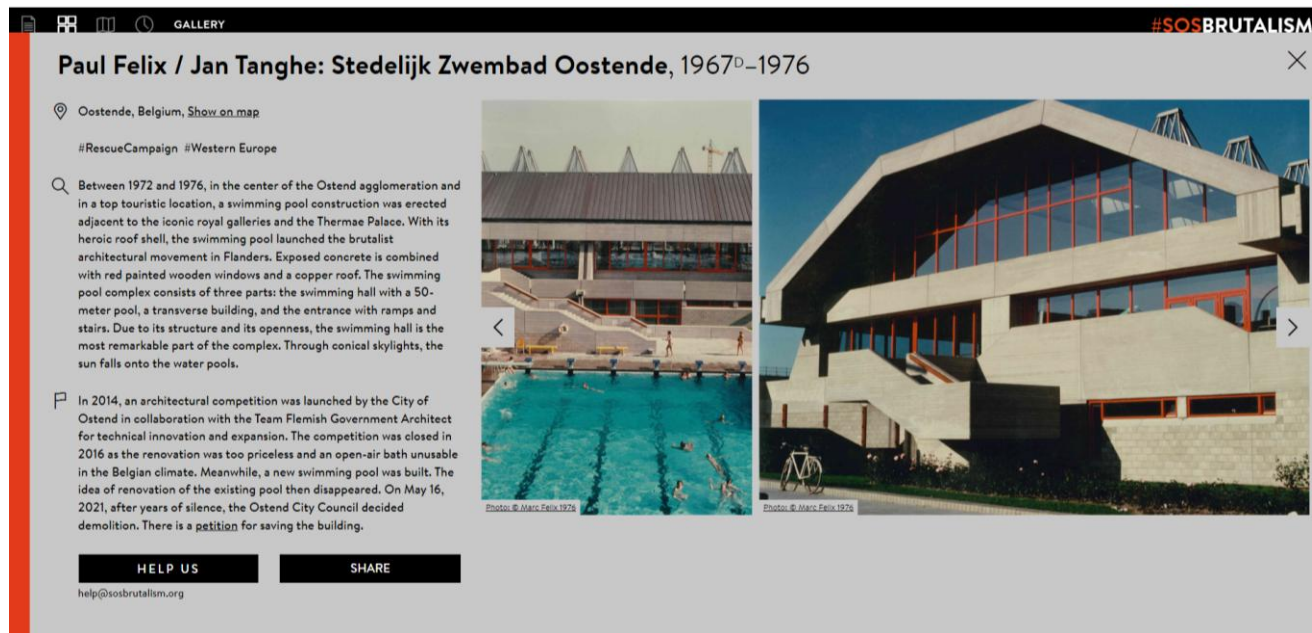
▪ Introduction

Waar gaat het onderzoek over?

- **Karakteristieken van naoorlogs gebouwd erfgoed in België**
- **Uitdagingen en benaderingen bij het behoud van naoorlogs erfgoed**
- **Belgische modernistische architect Paul Felix (1913-1981)**
- **Conservatiestatus van Paul Felix' oeuvre**
- **Evaluaties en suggesties**

▪ Introduction

Waarom is de thesis relevant?



‘Stedelijk Zwembad Oostende’, #SOSBRUTALISM, accessed 17, October 2023, <http://www.sosbrutalism.org/sixcms/detail.php?id=16817358>.

FOCUS | WTV

Nieuws

Sport

Tendens

Programma's

Nieuws 5 december | 16:30 Oostende

Afbraak oud zwembad Oostende volop bezig



Embed video

Bestel reportage

Net naast het Thermæ Palace Hotel in Oostende is een kraan gestart met de sloopwerken van het oud zwembad van Oostende. Er waren al weken voorbereidingswerken bezig.

Focus en WTV. ‘Afbraak oud zwembad Oostende volop bezig’, 5 December 2023. <https://focus-wtv.be/nieuws/afbraak-zwembad>.

▪ Introduction

Waarom is de thesis relevant?



▪ Introduction

Waarom is de thesis relevant?

5.2.6.2 Waarom prioriteit?

- Naoorlogs erfgoed werd slechts hoogst uitzonderlijk beschermd. Zelfs de meest unieke, meest representatieve getuigen van de recente architecturale geschiedenis van Vlaanderen genieten vandaag **zelden bescherming**.
- Naoorlogs erfgoed kwam amper in aanmerking voor opname in de Inventaris van het Bouwkundig Erfgoed. Daardoor is het een **blinde vlek in onze kennis van het Vlaamse erfgoed**. Recent werden er wel enkele pogingen ondernomen om aan dat hiaat te verhelpen: sociale woningbouw, architectenwoningen, de inventarisatie van naoorlogs erfgoed in de steden Gent en Antwerpen, en van de oeuvres van architecten als Renaat Braem, Léon Stynen en Willy van der Meeren.
- Het naoorlogse gebouwenpatrimonium is ongeveer 30 tot 80 jaar oud. De gebouwen worden meer en meer **ingrijpend gerenoveerd of zelfs gesloopt**, omwille van de hedendaagse eisen op vlak van comfort, veiligheid en duurzaamheid. We moeten nu beslissen welke gebouwen en interieurs we willen behouden.
- De inventarisatie van naoorlogs erfgoed vraagt zeer specifieke expertise. Voor lokale besturen, IOED's en erkende onroerenderfgoedgemeenten is het een enorme uitdaging om met dit type erfgoed om te gaan.
- Naoorlogs erfgoed is bij uitstek bovenlokaal, aangezien architecten, stedenbouwkundigen en opdrachtgevers zich niet lieten tegenhouden door gemeentegrenzen. Voor lokale besturen is

'rarely protected'

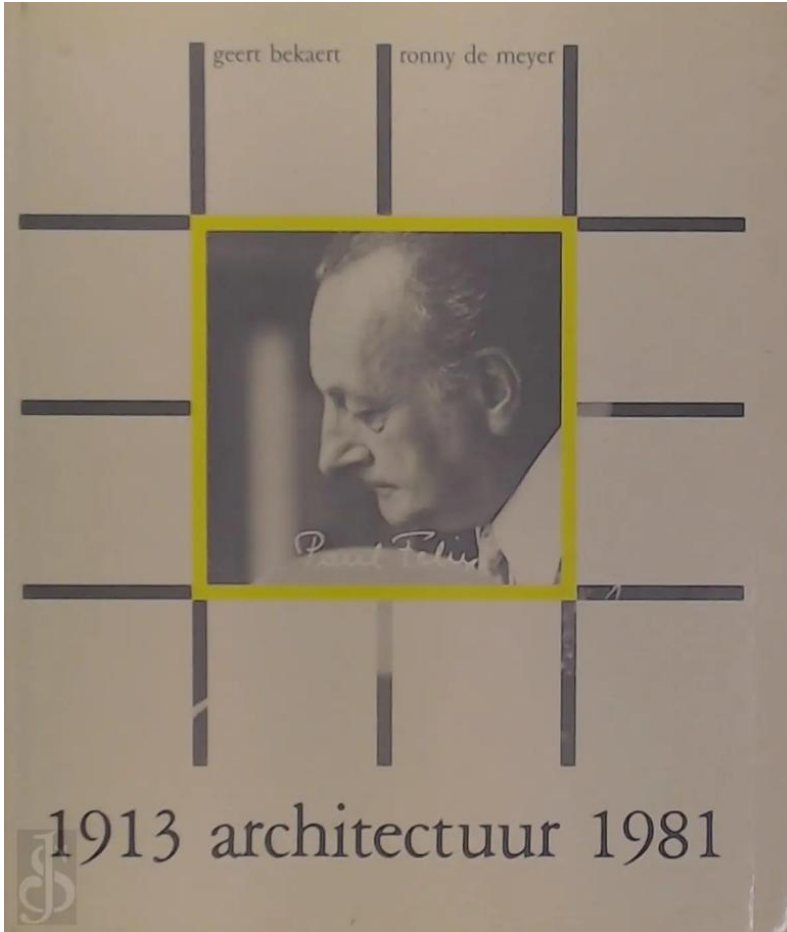
'Blind spot in the knowledge of Flanders built heritage'

'drastically renovated or demolished'

Jelle Lisson, 'Beschermd bouwkundig erfgoed in Vlaanderen. De afbakening van thematische onderzoekspakketten', Onderzoeksrapporten agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed, vol. 204 (Brussel: agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed, 28 October 2021), <https://doi.org/10.55465/QHVG7300>, 62.

▪ Introduction

Waarom is de thesis relevant?



Bekaert, Geert, and Ronny de Meyer. *Paul Felix: Architectuur 1913-1981*. Tielt, Be: Lannoo Puba, 1981.

- 1 'oeuvre catalogue' uit 1981
- Conservatie? Bescherming? Erfgoed?

Marc: *There's a lack of recognition, and something needs to be done about it. That's why I need to keep pushing forward. The book by Bekaert is good, but it has mistakes, and it's somewhat outdated.*

Warre: *Yes, but if you're looking for source material, it's still the go-to work.*

Marc: *True, but even Bekaert makes an error at the end by attributing a project to my father that he had nothing to do with.*

▪ Introduction

Waarom is de thesis relevant?

Article

Concrete Monsters of the Welfare State: Discussions of Brutalist Architecture on Social Media

Max Holleran¹

Abstract

Brutalist architecture is an object of fascination on social media that has taken on new popularity in recent years. This article, drawing on 3,000 social media posts in Russian and English, argues that the buildings stand out for their arresting scale and their association with the expanding state in the 1960s and 1970s. In both North Atlantic and Eastern European contexts, the aesthetic was employed in publicly financed urban planning projects, creating imposing concrete structures for universities, libraries, and government offices. While some online social media users associate the style with the overreach of both socialist and capitalist governments, others are more nostalgic. They use Brutalist buildings as a means to start conversations about welfare state goals of social housing, free university, and other services. They also lament that many municipal governments no longer have the capacity or vision to take on large-scale projects of reworking the built environment to meet contemporary challenges.

Space and Culture

1–17

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DOI: 10.1177/12063312211019384

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‘Object of fascination’

‘Conversation starter about welfare state goals of social housing, free university, and other services.’

Max Holleran, ‘Concrete Monsters of the Welfare State: Discussions of Brutalist Architecture on Social Media’, *Space and Culture*, 30 June 2021, 12063312211019384, <https://doi.org/10.1177/12063312211019384>.

▪ Introduction

Waarom is de thesis relevant?



Can we change the negative narrative surrounding brutalism and urban renewal through an activist approach to architecture and historic preservation?

Fig. 1. Shoreline Apartments, Buffalo, New York, original site plan for Shoreline and Waterfront School, 1969. © The Estate of Paul Rudolph, The Paul Rudolph Heritage Foundation.

Why is the preservation of postwar architecture that falls under the brutalist lexicon so challenging? I asked this question and discussed its impacts on the preservation of brutalist buildings at a National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT) symposium in St. Louis, Missouri, in 2015:

“Questions of authenticity, the use of materials such as concrete panels and concrete block, the construction of new building types like public housing, the often-misunderstood social policies of urban renewal, and maintaining some of the most energy inefficient buildings ever built are some of the issues that impact its preservation.”¹ This paper looks at brutalist buildings and their preservation in Buffalo, Toronto, and Boston, which together amply demonstrate the complexity of saving and reusing these buildings in meaningful ways. This paper is based on the theme plenary entitled “Can We Redefine Brutalism, Post-War Architecture & Urban Renewal?” that was one of the three opening sessions at the APT Buffalo-Niagara 2018 Conference (Fig. 1).

‘Why is the preservation of postwar architecture falling under the brutalist lexicon so challenging?’

Authenticity? Material Use?

Social policies of urban renewal?

Most energy inefficient buildings ever built?

Barbara A. Campagna, ‘Redefining Brutalism’, APT Bulletin: The Journal of Preservation Technology 51, no. 1 (2020): 25–36, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26920641>, 25.

▪ Introduction

Waarom is de thesis relevant?

- Kantelpunt (sloop/renovatie/restauratie/adaptief hergebruik)
- Gebrek aan erkenning
- Gebrek aan overkoepelend onderzoek
- Bewustwording creëren over brutalistische architectuur

Kortom, het algemene doel van deze thesis is niet zozeer om de lezer alleen een selectie uit het werk van Paul Felix te bieden, maar veeleer om aan te tonen hoe zijn oeuvre momenteel bedreigd wordt en dreigt te verdwijnen. Het onderzoeken van alternatieve benaderingen voor de omgang met het naoorlogse erfgoed kan het perspectief verbreden, aangezien er in de Belgische context weinig academisch onderzoek op dit gebied bestaat.

How can we understand the challenges in preserving post-war modernist heritage, using Paul Felix as protagonist?

Hoe?

▪ **Introduction**

▪ Methodology ▪ Literature review ▪ Case studies ▪ Conclusions ▪ SWOT

Waar gaat de thesis over?

- Karakteristieken van naoorlogs gebouwd erfgoed in België
- Uitdagingen en benaderingen bij het behoud van naoorlogs erfgoed
- Belgische modernistische architect Paul Felix (1913-1981)
- Conservatiestatus van Paul Felix' oeuvre
- Evaluaties en suggesties



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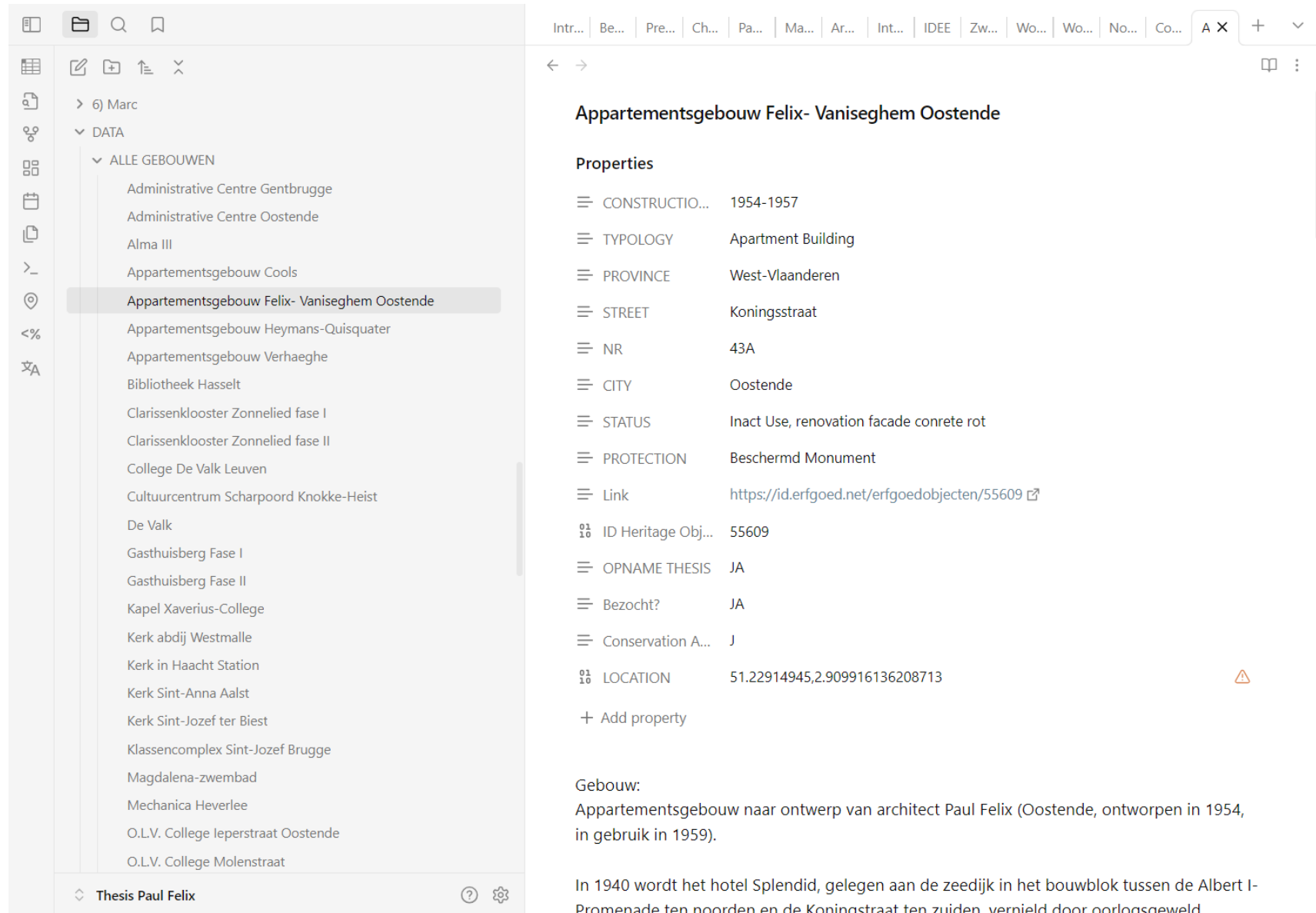
Hoe?

- **Literature review**
- **Quantitative**
 - Data collection using Obsidian
- **Qualitative**
 - Archival research (Archive Paul Felix, State Archives of Belgium, Local municipal archives,...)
 - Field trips
 - Interviews (mailing, zoom, real-life...)

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Hoe?



The screenshot shows a web application interface. On the left, a sidebar contains a list of buildings under the heading '6) Marc' and 'DATA'. The building 'Appartementsgebouw Felix- Vaniseghem Oostende' is selected and highlighted. The main content area displays the title 'Appartementsgebouw Felix- Vaniseghem Oostende' and a 'Properties' section with a table of attributes.

Properties	
CONSTRUCTIO...	1954-1957
TYPOLOGY	Apartment Building
PROVINCE	West-Vlaanderen
STREET	Koningsstraat
NR	43A
CITY	Oostende
STATUS	Inact Use, renovation facade concrete rot
PROTECTION	Beschermd Monument
Link	https://id.erfgoed.net/erfgoedobjecten/55609
ID Heritage Obj...	55609
OPNAME THESIS	JA
Bezocht?	JA
Conservation A...	J
LOCATION	51.22914945,2.909916136208713

Below the properties table, there is a section titled 'Gebouw:' followed by a paragraph: 'Appartementsgebouw naar ontwerp van architect Paul Felix (Oostende, ontworpen in 1954, in gebruik in 1959).'

At the bottom of the main content area, another paragraph reads: 'In 1940 wordt het hotel Splendid, gelegen aan de zeedijk in het bouwblok tussen de Albert I-Promenade ten noorden en de Koninastraat ten zuiden, vernield door oorlogsgeweld.'



Hoe?

Intr... | Be... | Pre... | Ch... | Pa... | Ma... | Ar... | Int... | IDEE | Zw... | Wo... | Wo... | No... | Co... | C X | + | -

→

📄 | ⋮

Query Tabel excel op locatie

```
```dataview
TABLE LOCATION AS "Locatie"
FROM "DATA/ALLE GEBOUWEN"
```
```

← | →

Query Tabel excel op locatie

| File (58) | Locatie |
|---|---|
| Administrative Centre Gentbrugge | 51.0363839,3.765546 |
| Administrative Centre Oostende | 51.22507367741687,2.9220813978121476 |
| Appartementsgebouw Cools | - |
| Appartementsgebouw Heymans-Quisquater | 51.32745285204754,3.1831476098499567 |
| Alma III | 50.86773190953072,4.685225277102392 |
| Appartementsgebouw Verhaeghe | 51.22557137278393,2.9117331486796316 |
| Appartementsgebouw Felix- Vaniseghem Oostende | 51.22914945,2.909916136208713 |
| Clarissenklooster Zonnellied fase I | 51.211673250000004,2.900453077348489 |
| Bibliotheek Hasselt | 50.9326833,5.3416730868889495 |
| Clarissenklooster Zonnellied fase II | - |
| Cultuurcentrum Scharpoord Knokke-Heist | 51.3436466,3.2800677691154427 |
| De Valk | 50.8779506,4.704818722188691 |
| College De Valk Leuven | 50.877973444733435
4.704697397289909 |
| Gasthuisberg Fase II | 50.8797737
4.6756415 |
| Gasthuisberg Fase I | 50.87987205,4.673798286801558 |
| Kapel Xaverius-College | 51.2131781971343,4.451483360903917 |
| Kerk in Haacht Station | 50.9623968,4.606500856872957 |
| Kerk abdij Westmalle | 51.284719550000005,4.656721360087846 |
| Kerk Sint-Anna Aalst | 50.941206699999995,4.009979812346181 |
| Kerk Sint-Jozef ter Biest | [50.87460710133426, 3.424978913073391] |
| Magdalena-zwembad | 50.82387595,3.251462839045667 |
| Klassencomplex Sint-Jozef Brugge | 51.20701832580431,3.221061112204014 |
| Mechanica Heverlee | 50.861245440375356,4.681168410299452 |
| O.L.V. College Ieperstraat Oostende | - |

Intr... X | Bedankt | Preface | Challen... | Paul Fe... | Magda... | Argum... | Interview | IDEE | Zwemb... | Wonin... | Wonin... | Nota's ... | Contex... | Zo... X | +

← | →

DATA / Zoektocht Lijst Conservatieproblemen

📄 | 🗖

Listing Conservation Problems Literature

- ! Questions of authenticity (p. 25) ⓘ #CP
- ! often-misunderstood social policies of urban renewal (p. 25) ⓘ #CP
- ! most energy inefficient buildings ever built (p. 25) ⓘ #CP
- ! There were no real architectural or structural reasons to demolish the buildings. The owner did not like them and thus purposely did not maintain them, using the self-fulfilling prophecy of demolition by neglect. (p. 28) ⓘ #CP
- ! There was leaking from the roofs and deteriorated concrete, which is not unusual for 50-year-old concrete buildings. (p. 28) ⓘ #CP
- ! ack of proper maintenance (such as typical elevator and electrical repairs) (p. 28) ⓘ #CP
- ! installation of aesthetically inappropriate windows with poor energy efficiency (p. 28) ⓘ #CP
- ! removal of graffiti (p. 28) ⓘ #CP
- ! lack of recognition and appreciation for historic concrete (p. A5) ⓘ #CP , #threat
- ! For example, in many exposed concrete brutalist buildings where surface finish contributes to significance, repairs may have an adverse impact if they do not blend in suitably with the original surface appearance (p. A5) ⓘ #CP
- ! loss of original material due to invasiveness of the most reliable concrete evaluation and repair methods (p. A5) ⓘ #CP
- ! workmanship, design (p. A17) ⓘ #CP
- ! selection of materials (p. A17) ⓘ #CP
- ! environmental factors (p. A17) ⓘ #CP
- ! lack of maintenance (p. A17) ⓘ #CP
- ! Net die rijkel "the knowledge made available" by research "design" is the economic construction of an "aesthetics" or "financial

```
Listing Conservation Problems Literature
```dataview
list without id
L.text
from "2) Articles/Notes Articles"
flatten file.lists as L
where contains(L.tags, "CP")
```
```



Hoe?

- **Literature review**
- **Quantitative**
 - Data collection using Obsidian
- **Qualitative**
 - Archival research (Archive Paul Felix, State Archives of Belgium, Local municipal archives,...)
 - Field trips
 - Interviews (mailing, zoom, real-life...)

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1.1. Defining the Period: Contextualising Paul Felix in Post-War Belgium

1.2. Challenges and Approaches in Preserving Post-War Heritage

1. Naoorlogse architectuur in België

1.1. Defining the Period: Contextualising Paul Felix in Post-War Belgium

- **Het gefragmenteerde landschap van naoorlogs modernisme**
- **Expo 58: Grenzeloos Optimisme**
- **De modernisatie van naoorlogse kerkarchitectuur in België**
- **De opkomst van het brutalisme**

Paul Felix, een belangrijke Belgische figuur uit die tijd, wist zich door deze woelige wateren te manoeuvreren en leverde een bijdrage aan de modernistische beweging, terwijl hij zich aanpaste aan de veranderende architectuurtaal van het midden van de twintigste eeuw.

Zijn carrière weerspiegelt de bredere thema's van het naoorlogse België, waaronder de invloed van het stedelijk beleid van de overheid, de impact van Expo 58, de vernieuwing van de kerkarchitectuur en de opkomst van het brutalisme.

1. Naoorlogse architectuur in België

1.2. Challenges and Approaches in Preserving Post-War Heritage

- **Naoorlogs erfgoed in Vlaanderen**
- **Verbreden van perceptie**
- **Duurzaamheidskwesties**
- **Materiaal-technische uitdagingen**

Zoals Macdonald stelt: **‘Bij monumentenzorg gaat het in de meeste gevallen over het omgaan met verandering op een manier die betekenis blijft geven.’** Dit kernidee is ook van toepassing op de uitdagingen bij het omgaan met naoorlogs erfgoed. Het is een veelzijdige uitdaging, die een delicaat evenwicht vereist tussen historische integriteit en het tegemoetkomen aan moderne eisen op het gebied van duurzaamheid en daarbuiten.

Door **duurzame praktijken te integreren met doordachte instandhoudingsinspanningen** kunnen we ervoor zorgen dat het naoorlogse erfgoed een **essentieel onderdeel van ons stedelijk landschap blijft**, dat bijdraagt aan zowel ons historisch verhaal als onze toekomstige ontwikkeling.

Susan Macdonald, ‘Modern Matters: Breaking the Barriers to Conserving Modern Heritage’ 28 (1 April 2013): 4–9, 8.

2. Over Felix

1. Post-War Architecture in Belgium

1.1. Defining the Period: Contextualising Paul Felix in Post-War Belgium

1.2. Challenges and Approaches in Preserving Post-War Heritage

2. Addressing Felix

2.1. Paul Felix: A Modernist Belgian Architect

2.2. Conservation Status of Paul Felix's Oeuvre

3. Evaluation and suggestions

3.1. Five Cases of Adaptive-Reuse

3.2. Interview with Marc Felix

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2. Over Felix

2.2. Conservation Status of Paul Felix's Oeuvre

400 design
projects

56
projects

22 cases

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Watertower Melle |
| 2 | Apartment building Felix-Vaniseghem |
| 3 | Oostendse Haard Social Housing |
| 4 | Poor Clares Cloister Zonneliel |
| 5 | Mechanica Institute Heverlee |
| 6 | Chapel Xaverius-College |
| 7 | Alma III |
| 8 | Church Haacht Station |
| 9 | Our Lady's College Gistel |
| 10 | Westmalle Abbey Church |
| 11 | Social Housing Den Elst |
| 12 | Church Saint Joseph Ter Biest |
| 13 | Church Saint-Anne Aalst |
| 14 | Ostend Swimming Pool |
| 15 | Cultural Centre Scharpoord Knokke-Heist |
| 16 | Hasselt Library |
| 17 | Ostend Administrative Centre |
| A | Pedagogie Pius X Student Housing |
| B | Magdalena Swimming Pool |
| C | Pastoral and Theologic Centre Antwerp |
| D | Centre for Youth, Art and Creation Destelheide |
| E | Administrative Centre Gentbrugge |



1| WATERTOWER MELLE [1950-1953]

LOCATION: GERAARDSBERGSESTEENWEG, MELLE
LEGAL STATUS: RECOGNISED HERITAGE (ID36250)

BUILDING

The water tower in Melle, a hyperstatic structure standing 53 meters tall, stirred quite a bit of controversy at the time, significantly contributing to the project's notoriety. After a contest issued by T.M.V.W. in 1950, Felix's design was chosen.¹⁵⁵ Located near the railway line Ghent-Brussels, its bold, modern design with a sleek form immediately captures attention.¹⁵⁶

The tower's square substructure consists of six levels, with its concrete skeletal framework fully visible, showcasing a clear and functional approach to its components. The cylindrical superstructure is cantilevered, resting on robust concrete beams, emphasising the distinct separation between what supports and what is supported. At the top, a strip of glass wraps around the structure, adding a refined touch to the design, as if it was an observation deck. The exposed skeleton contrasts with the strict, clean infill walls, while the concrete water tank, capable of holding 506 cubic liters, sits atop the tower, covered by a domed concrete roof. The tower was renovated in 1999.¹⁵⁷

CONSERVATION STATUS

The water tower is generally speaking still in a good condition and continues to serve its original purpose as a water storage facility. The tower itself is closed to the public due to safety concerns, primarily to safeguard the quality of the drinking water.

The tower's exterior has seen some maintenance, with the concrete structure receiving a protective finishing layer of paint. While the overall exterior concrete structure is fairly sound, there are specific areas, particularly at the level of the water tank, underneath the superstructure, where deterioration has occurred. The tower's substructure, which consists of six levels of a visible concrete skeletal framework, remains largely intact, though some areas exhibit signs of concrete deterioration.

The on-site formworked and poured central staircase is in good condition. Certain parts of the infill brickwork have been affected by salt efflorescence, a sign of moisture infiltration. Openings have been made in the brickwork at the top section of the tower to accommodate antennas and pipes, reflecting the ongoing use and adaptation of the structure.

Inside the superstructure, with its cylindrical design cantilevered over concrete beams, one can see visible signs of wear. Parts of the exterior of the concrete tank have undergone multiple repairs, but issues such as concrete scaling and exposed reinforcement continue to require attention. Repairwork has been done but despite these efforts, signs of concrete rot, cracks, and scaling persist, especially in areas where the original material has been patched with repair mortar. The presence of moss and biological growth in the basin space indicates the humid conditions within the structure, which can accelerate the decay of the concrete. Plans are on the table to replace the (non-original) windows in the top section of the tower. Regular water quality checks are conducted every month, but also monitoring and maintenance for the building should be checked on a regular basis.

¹⁵⁵ Jan Olsen, 'De Watertoren Te Melle: 50 Kaarsjes Uitblazen', *De Gonde*, 2003.

¹⁵⁶ 'Watertoren', 20 June 2023, <https://inventaris.onroerenderfgoed.be/erfgoedobjecten/36250>.

¹⁵⁷ Olsen.

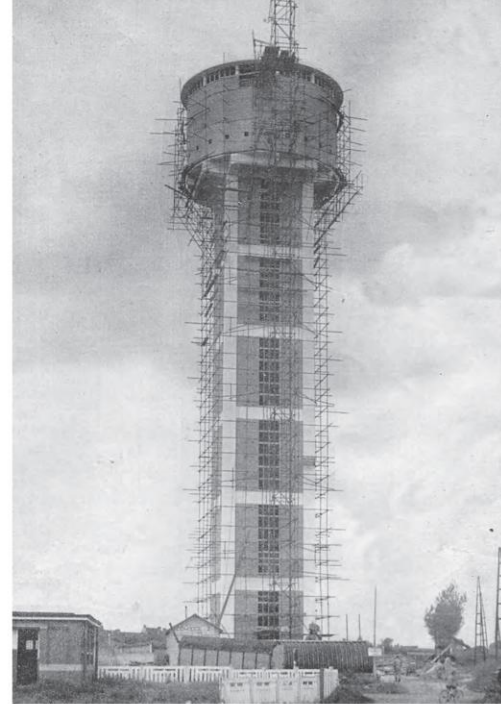


Fig 1: The 1953 construction site of the watertower.

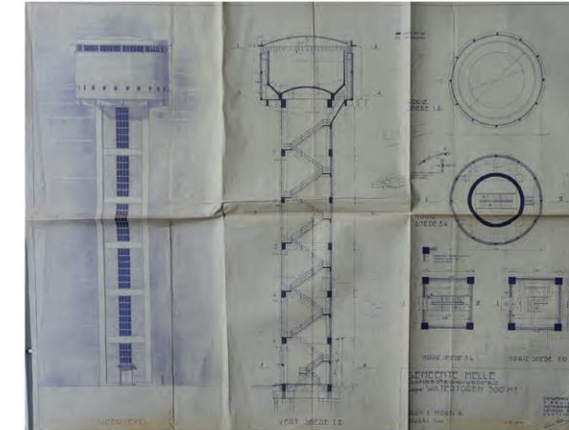


Fig 2: Original plans of the design.



Fig 3: Aerial view showing the tower in 1965.



Fig 4: Spalling of concrete at the back façade, caused by the the larger volume of the corroding steel.



Fig 6: The repairwork on the tank and mantle inside the superstructure.



Fig 8: Effluorescence showing the present of salts due to moisture transport. Its presence is most prominent in horizontal strokes near the concrete, indicating a transport of salts from the concrete to the brickwork where it subsequently dries out.



Fig 5: Interior staircase with a total of 237 steps.



Fig 7: Outside view on the tower.

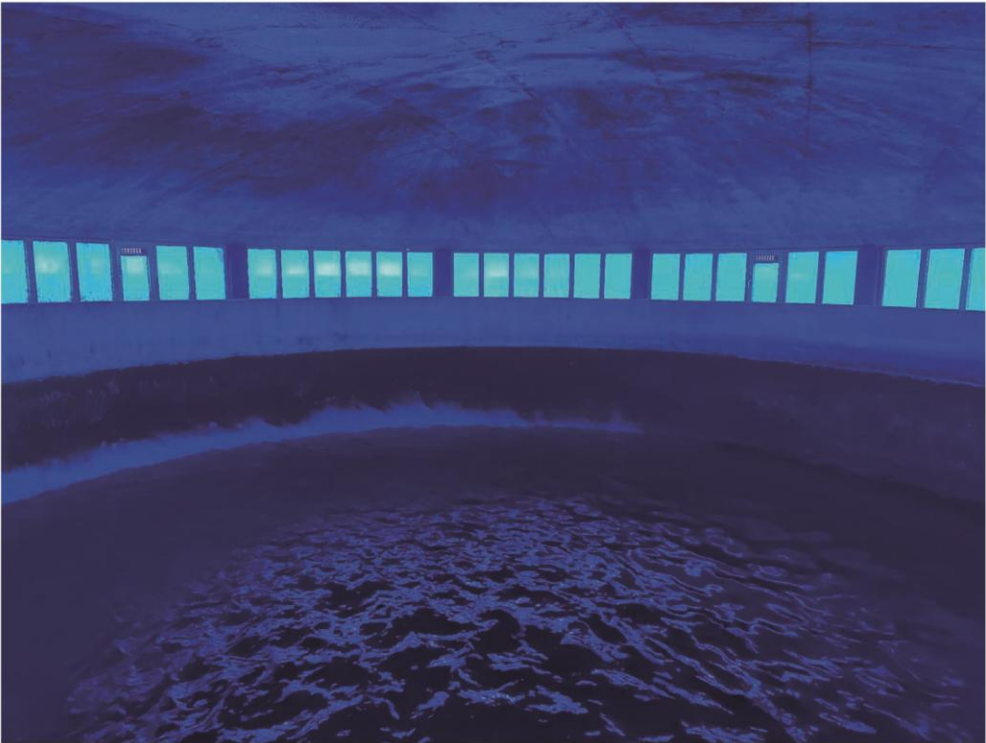


Fig 9: The humid environment of the watertank posing risks for rapid concrete deterioration. The blue tinted windows are meant to filter sunlight, preventing excessive bacteria growth. The space is covered with algae.

6| CHAPEL XAVERIUS COLLEGE [1960-1965]

LOCATION: COLLEGELAAN 36, BORGERHOUT
IN COLLABORATION WITH: E. DENEKENS AND HERMAN DENEKENS
LEGAL STATUS: PROTECTED MONUMENT (ID200494)

BUILDING

Built in 1963, this building is a striking example of the combination of concrete and brick architecture with a strong emphasis on brutalist materials like reinforced concrete, brick, glass, and unfinished surfaces.¹⁶⁸ The chapel is used by the Xavierius College secondary school and as a parish church for the neighbourhood. The structure is defined by four massive pillars that support a high ring beam, which shapes the central nave. Beams laying on top of the ring beam, are carrying the roof, allowing natural light to filter through the spaces in between them.¹⁶⁹ Light plays a crucial role in the building's design, particularly in the altar area, where a tall light cap, oriented eastwards, draws in the morning light. The interior is minimalist, featuring simple wooden benches and a natural stone (Norwegian quartz) floor, emphasising the building's serene and contemplative atmosphere.¹⁷⁰ The building has two entrances—one facing the road and another leading to the school site—creating a seamless connection between the church and the surrounding community.

CONSERVATION STATUS

The chapel is currently in a poor state of conservation, presenting a neglected appearance that raises concerns about its future existence. The building's exterior and interior both exhibit significant signs of deterioration, which require immediate attention to prevent further damage. The exterior of the chapel shows clear evidence of extensive deterioration, particularly in the form of concrete decay. In several areas, concrete spalling is visible, with exposed reinforcement mesh, flaking, and rust spots. This damage is primarily due to inadequate concrete coverage, which has failed to protect the reinforcement.¹⁷¹ Additionally, both fine hairline cracks and larger fissures can be seen across the concrete surfaces.

The bricks at the chapel's basement are moist, a problem likely caused by the absence of a proper roof overhang to protect them from rainwater. In several locations, the bricks have undergone significant degradation, displaying efflorescence, indicating an already prolonged exposure to moisture. The chapel's original woodwork, though mostly intact, is in poor condition due to bad maintenance. The windows on the south side have deteriorated significantly, likely due to UV-exposure. In 2018, repairs were made to the roof, but leakages continue to persist. Asbestos-containing drainage pipes have been replaced.

The interior of the chapel also suffers from neglect. The once-exposed concrete and brick walls have been painted with a yellowish colour, which undermines the original design intent of exposed materials. Water leaks in the past have caused damage to the wooden ceiling panels. In the rear corners, diagonal cracks in the masonry can be observed, indicating potential stability issues. One of the roof domes is completely overgrown, while others show signs of condensation problems, suggesting issues with ventilation and moisture control. Despite these problems, some original features have been well-conserved, such as the stone flooring and simple wooden benches. The confessionals, designed as rectangular boxes in white formica with narrow strip windows, are also still intact.

The chapel's outdated technical systems are also a concern, with persistent pressure loss. The challenge of re-purposing is delayed due to the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including the school, parish, and youth groups.

¹⁶⁸ 'Xaveriuscollege en -kerk', 28 October 1999, <https://inventaris.onroerendgoed.be/erfgoedobjecten/200494>.

¹⁶⁹ Geert Bekaert and Ronny de Meyer, *Paul Felix: Architectuur 1913-1981* (Tiel: Lannoo Pupa, 1981), 64.

¹⁷⁰ 'Eglise Du Collège St-Xavier à Borgerhout', *Architecture* 71/72 (July-August 1966): 399.

¹⁷¹ Jozef Petit, 'BOUWKUNDIGE INSPECTIE MONUMENTENWACHT - Xaveriuskapel' (Monumentenwacht Antwerpen, 2024), 20.

¹⁷² 'Alma 3', 8 October 2021, <https://>



Fig 50: The chapel and playground of the Xavierius secondary school.



Fig 51: The altarpiece and shed-like lantern.



Fig 52: The altar, wooden furniture and play of beams.

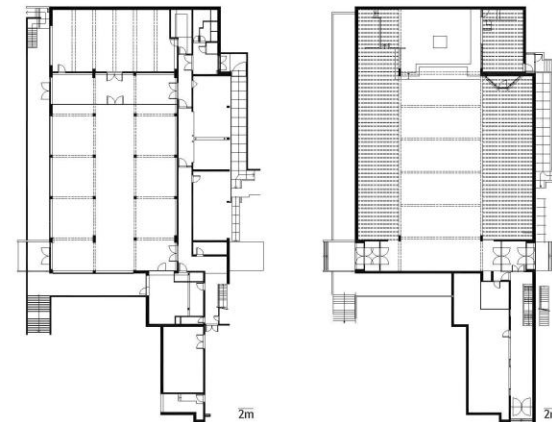


Fig 54: Current day -1 and 0 level plans.



Fig 53: The side aisle.



Fig 55: Chapel exterior showing exfoliation of vapour proof paintlayer. Moist bricks due to absence of a sufficient roof overhang.



Fig 56: Flaking, scaling and cracking due to concrete carbonation. The corrosion of reinforcement leaving stains.



Fig 63: Altar and original flooring. In the background on the right, the original confessionals.



Fig 64: Chapel interior showing the painted beams and walls. Original wooden benches.



Fig 62: Overgrown skylight



Fig 57: Northern entrance facade showing moist bricks at the top and concrete deterioration. Biological growth on the light cap.



Fig 65: Degradation due to moisture.



Fig 66: Outdated heating system

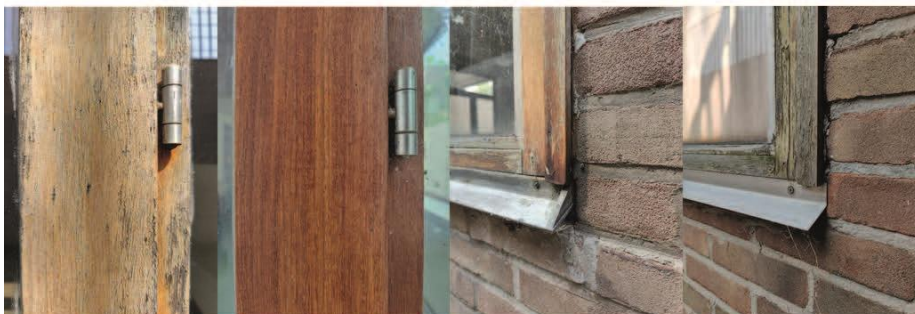


Fig 58: Frame exposed to UV. **Fig 59:** Frame sheltered from UV. **Fig 60:** Original dripping element. **Fig 61:** Replaced dripping element



Fig 67: Diagonal cracking in corner, indicating stability issues, vertical settlements.

11| SOCIAL HOUSING DEN ELST [1963-1972]

LOCATION: TILDONKSESTEENWEG, HERENT
LEGAL STATUS: RECOGNISED HERITAGE (ID302482)

BUILDING

Den Elst was established by the social housing association *Volkswoningbouw* (now called *Woonstads*) and consists of 48 houses and 36 garages, all completed in a single phase.¹⁸² For the design of the neighbourhood, Felix drew inspiration from his villa architecture, however adapting the design principles to a smaller scale in order to create a cohesive ensemble. Unlike earlier projects, such as the 1955 social housing in Oostende where Felix made use of distinct strips of units, this neighbourhood demonstrates a more clear and urbanist coherence in its layout and design.

The homes are designed as patio houses, where private spaces are distinctly defined. Within these boundaries, each home is arranged with an open living area that overlooks a private patio and a more enclosed sleeping area. The houses are organised in straight rows along low-traffic roads, which run perpendicular to the busier Tildonksesteenweg. Several pathways lead along the houses and streets.

There are two types of units in the neighbourhood: patio houses (type I) with a single-story and similar houses with an additional room on the upper floor (type II). The urban layout creates a closed atmosphere with a Mediterranean character that brings a sense of mystery and intimacy back to the homes and their interiors.¹⁸³

CONSERVATION STATUS

Originally designed with a strong sense of uniformity and coherence, the neighbourhood faces significant challenges. Over the years, numerous modifications have been made by residents (both tenants and homeowners), which have gradually altered the area's original character. In 2014, the previously dead-end streets were extended to connect with Tweebruggenstraat and Wittevrouwestraat, impacting the original street layout.

One of the main issues however, is the inconsistency in the materials used for renovations. As residents sought to improve their homes, various finishing materials were chosen, ranging from slate and plaster to wooden shingles and different types of paint in assorted colours. Moreover, many patios, once integral to the design, have sometimes been entirely built over. This has led to the risk of losing the uniformity and integrity of the neighbourhood. Additionally, some houses have been retrofitted with insulation and the replacement of asbestos air ducts. Some homes are also effected by rising damp, further complicating conservation efforts.

Despite these challenges, there are positive aspects to note. The overall urban planning and the volumetric consistency of the neighbourhood have largely been conserved. However, the absence of specific heritage guidelines means there is no formal framework to protect the houses architectural integrity, putting the neighbourhood at risk of further alterations that could erode its original design qualities.

*'Wijk Den Elst', in Kijk Op Herent
1970-2020 50 Jaar Heemkundige Kring
(Herent: Genootschap voor Heemkunde
Herent, 2023), 32-33.*

183
Geert Bekaert and Ronny de Meyer,
Paul Felix: Architectuur 1913-1981 (Tielt,
Be: Lannoo Puba, 1981), 60.

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Fig 107: Construction of Den Elst ca. 1966.



Fig 108: Low-traffic street of Den Elst and patio unit type I.



Fig 109: Patio unit of type II including an extra volume on top.

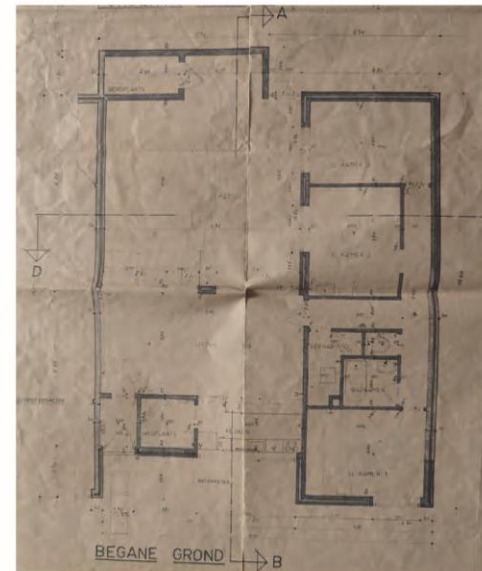


Fig 110: Original plan of a single story patio unit type I.



Fig 111: Numbers 45 and 48 are among the most original units remaining. Including original single-glazed windows and front door in typical blue.



Fig 112: In many houses the original cabinet divider between kitchen and living room (visible on the left) has disappeared.



Fig 114: Low-traffic street showing the multiple different new facade finishings and roofs. Some of the bricks of the original façades are showing deterioration.



Fig 113: The patio's were also provided with additional storage space and shelter.



Fig 115: Shingles on a type II unit.



Fig 116: Sequence of different doors, façades and front gardens.

8| CHURCH HAACHT STATION [1962]

LOCATION: TUINWIJK, HAACHT

IN COLLABORATION WITH: JAN TANGHE, MICHEL MARTENS, ROGER BONDUEL

BUILDING

Designed in collaboration with Jan Tanghe, the church of Haacht Station is an example of architectural precision and functional design. Its location and surrounding neighbourhood exemplify the chaotic urbanisation of rural areas in 1960s Belgium. At first glance, it appears as no more than a simple orthogonal box, but this apparent simplicity belies the architectural and engineering skill required to create such a structure.¹⁷⁶ Built in response to a limited competition held in 1957, the church can accommodate 500 people.

The building's concrete skeletal structure, with infill-brick both inside and out, emphasises pure proportions and an abstract aesthetic. The roof, with a 22-meter span and a pleated structure just 20 cm thick, showcases the radical focus on construction.¹⁷⁷ A glass strip, going all around the church, makes the roof float. The stained glass by Michel Martens (unfortunately no longer present) and metalwork by Roger Bonduel further enhanced the church's distinct character. At the front of the church, a freestanding bell tower, shaped like a concrete column, marks the place of prayer. In 1995-1996, the church was renovated.

CONSERVATION STATUS

The conservation status of the church reveals a number of significant alterations and challenges, both on the exterior and interior of the building.

Externally, the roofs of the entrance and communal spaces have been insulated and fitted with new roofing, resulting in a noticeable increase in the roof profile. The original concrete gargoyles have been replaced with steel ones and numerous additional air ducts, chimneys, lampposts, and rainwater drainage systems have been installed, altering the façades original aesthetic. A south-eastern annex building has also been added. The bell tower has not undergone many modifications, apart from new climbing hardware.

Inside the church, the cement tile flooring has suffered noticeable degradation and chipping, especially in high-traffic areas. The side aisle gallery on the right has been closed off from the main church, and the original glass-in-concrete windows by Michel Martens have been replaced by stained glass by Daniël Theys, with PVC windows added on the exterior for protection. The benches are no longer the original furniture. Recently, an extra volume made of hempcrete has been placed inside the church on the right, intended for children's activities.

The interior has been further altered by the installation of industrial heating appliances and air ducts, which have been mounted around the walls, disrupting the church's original design. The once bare concrete pleated roof structure has been painted. At the ceiling, there is also a concerning black deposit, primarily in the folds of the roof, possibly indicating mould formation due to condensation issues. Moisture damage is also evident in the corner of the balcony, possibly caused by a leak or condensation due to thermal bridging. Lastly, some of the wooden frames at the entrance are showing cracks and are in need of repair.

¹⁷⁶Visit: Liturgical Renewal & Modern Architecture after Vatican II « Docomomo Belgium », accessed 18 August 2024, <https://docomomo.be/liturgical-modern-architecture/>.

¹⁷⁷'Eglise de Wespelaar', *Architecture* 71/72 (August 1966): 396.

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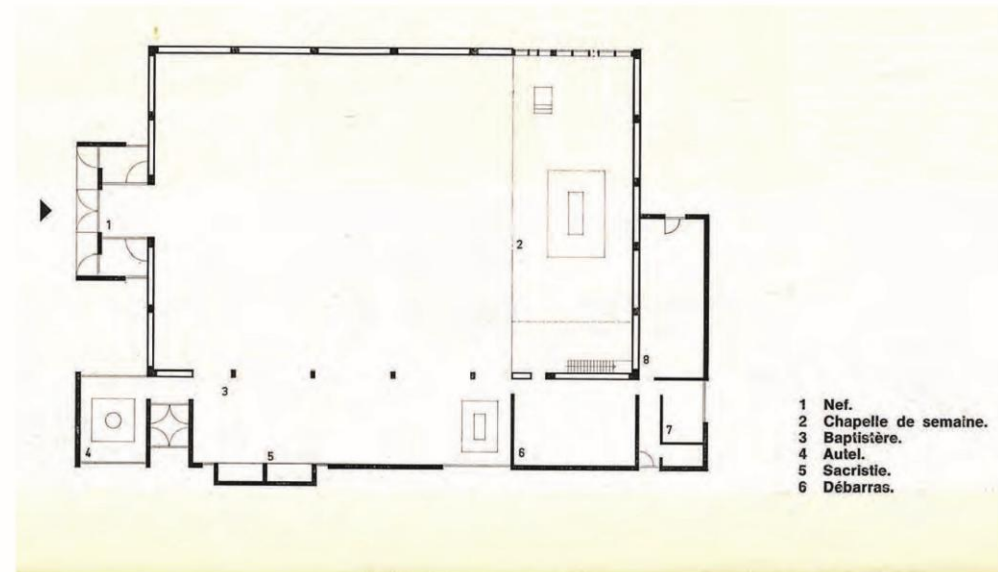
Fig 79: The church after its construction.



Fig 80: Model.



Fig 81: Church interior with original stained windows and gallery.



- 1 Nef.
- 2 Chapelle de semaine.
- 3 Baptistère.
- 4 Autel.
- 5 Sacristie.
- 6 Débarras.

Fig 82: Original plan with 1 Nave, 2 Chapel, 3 Baptistry, 4 Altar, 5 Sacristy and 6 Storage.



Fig 83: Bell tower and church entrance.
Difference in roof height at the eave of the lower volumes due to insulation.



Fig 85: Bell tower and replacement of the concrete gargoyles with steel ones.



Fig 84: Numerous additions like heating outlets, air ducts, chimneys, rainwater drainage.
Annex building in white.



Fig 86: Church interior showing hanging industrial heaters and the addition of the hempcrete volume.

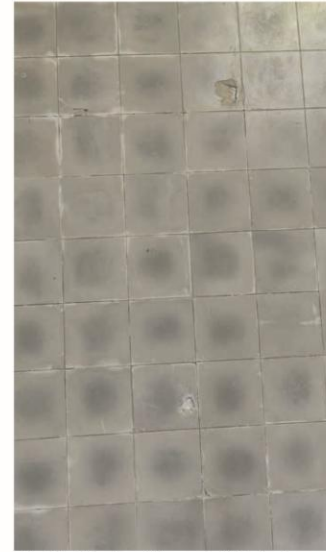


Fig 87: Chipping of the cement tile flooring.



Fig 90: Tearing of the wood at the front door.



Fig 88: Possible mould formation in the pleats of the painted concrete roof structure



Fig 89: Additional volume set-up in hempcrete.



Fig 91: The flashy heaters used to warm up the church.

- Structural
- Building Physics
- Material decay
- Authenticity
- Aesthetic
- Annexes

| Main Category | Specific Problem | 1 | A | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | B | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | C | D | 13 | E | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|---|---|----|---|----|----|----|----|
| Structural problems | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Load induced deformation | | | | | | | x | | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Structural integrity | | | | | | | | x | | | x | | | | | | | x | x | | x | |
| | Differential settlements | | | | | x | | | x | | | x | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| | Shallow Foundation | | | | | x | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Concrete fatigue | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | x | | | |
| Building Physics | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Lack of insulation | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| | Condensation | | | | | x | | x | x | | x | x | | x | | x | | | | x | | | |
| | Ventilation | | | | | | | x | x | | | | | x | | x | | | | x | | | x |
| | Glazing | | x | x | | x | | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x | x | x | | | x | | x | x |
| | Thermal Bridging | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Material Decay | Excessive solar gains | | | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Pollutants | | x | x | | x | x | | x | | | x | | x | x | x | | x | | | | x | x |
| | Mechanical damage (general) | | | x | | x | x | | x | x | | x | | x | | | | x | | | | | x |
| | Biological growth | x | x | x | | x | x | | x | | | | | x | x | x | x | x | | x | | | x |
| | Corrosion | x | x | x | | | | | | | | | | | x | | x | x | | x | | x | x |
| | Erosion | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | x | | | |
| | Brickwork salts | x | x | | | | | x | x | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| | Brickwork efflorescence | x | x | | | | | x | x | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| | Carbonation of concrete | x | | x | | x | | x | x | x | | | | | x | x | x | | x | x | | x | |
| | Concrete scaling (schel af) | | | x | | x | x | | x | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Concrete spalling (due reinf) | x | | x | | x | x | | x | | | | | | x | | x | x | | | | x | x |
| | Wood rotting | | | | | x | x | | x | | | x | | x | | x | | x | | | | | x |
| | Galvanic corrosion | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | UV-radiation | | | | | x | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | x |
| | Exfoliation (Delamination) | | | | | | | | x | | | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| | Cracks (non-/connected) | | x | x | | x | x | | x | x | | x | | x | x | x | | x | | x | x | x | x |
| | Cracks (connected) | x | | | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Moisture induced decay | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x | | x | x | | x | | x | x |
| | Rising damp | | | | | | | | | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| Authenticity | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Floors and tiles removal | | | | | x | | x | | x | | x | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Replacement of windows | x | x | | x | x | | x | | | x | x | | x | x | | x | x | x | | x | x | |
| | Material change | x | x | x | x | x | | | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x | | x | x | x |
| | Change in ceiling | | | | | | x | | x | x | x | x | x | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Aesthetic | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Loss Structural expression | | | | | | x | | x | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| | Loss of sculptural quality | | | | | | | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Surface finishing | x | | | | | | | x | | | x | | | x | | | | | | x | | x |
| | Change in landscape | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Annexes | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Additions | x | x | | x | | x | | | | x | x | x | x | | x | | | x | | | x | |
| | (parts) Demolished | | | | x | | | | | | | x | | | | | | | | x | | | |

3. Evaluatie en suggesties

3.1. Five Cases of Adaptive-Reuse

3.2. Interview with Marc Felix

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Watertower Melle |
| 2 | Apartment building Felix-Vaniseghem |
| 3 | Oostendse Haard Social Housing |
| 4 | Poor Clares Cloister Zonneliel |
| 5 | Mechanica Institute Heverlee |
| 6 | Chapel Xaverius-College |
| 7 | Alma III |
| 8 | Church Haacht Station |
| 9 | Our Lady's College Gistel |
| 10 | Westmalle Abbey Church |
| 11 | Social Housing Den Elst |
| 12 | Church Saint Joseph Ter Biest |
| 13 | Church Saint-Anne Aalst |
| 14 | Ostend Swimming Pool |
| 15 | Cultural Centre Scharpoord Knokke-Heist |
| 16 | Hasselt Library |
| 17 | Ostend Administrative Centre |
| | |
| A | Pedagogie Pius X Student Housing |
| B | Magdalena Swimming Pool |
| C | Pastoral and Theologic Centre Antwerp |
| D | Centre for Youth, Art and Creation Destelheide |
| E | Administrative Centre Gentbrugge |



A| PEDAGOGIE PIUS X STUDENT HOUSING [1952-1955]

LOCATION: TERVUURSEVEST 103, HEVERLEE
IN COLLABORATION WITH: GEORGES PEPERMANS

BUILDING

The construction of the Pius X Pedagogy, along with the development of the university campus in the northern part of Arenberg Park, represents the first major commission for architects and professors Georges Pepermans and Paul Felix, who were also faculty members at the architecture department of the Catholic University of Leuven. For both, this project marked their launch into the Belgian architectural scene, with the chapel being exemplary of the beginning of Paul Felix's illustrious career.²¹³

The Pius X Pedagogy, is seen as one of the first modernist university buildings in Flanders and a significant milestone in the history of Belgian post-war architecture.²¹⁴ This pioneering project, marks a crucial pinnacle in the career of Paul Felix. The building does not only show an innovative architectural vision but is also a symbol of post-war modernisation in religious art and architecture.²¹⁵ The chapel, the key feature of the Pius X complex, is widely recognised as the starting point of this modernist, church revival movement. Its design introduced several groundbreaking elements, including a cubic space, a striking glazed wall, and a side-lit altar that serves as the focal point of the chapel. These innovations embody a new belief in the potential of contemporary architecture.²¹⁶

During this project, Felix and Pepermans also collaborated with the renowned artists Michel Martens, who contributed stained glass and concrete glasswork, and sculptor Roger Bonduel.

ADAPTIVE REUSE OF THE CHAPEL

The western wing of the building, where the chapel is located, deviates from the other wings, which were primarily designed to house students. A transparent, covered gallery connects the northern wing to the chapel, creating a visual link between the complex and the surrounding park. The design, characterised by a prominently cantilevered flat roof, invites the natural beauty of the park into the courtyard, establishing a harmonious relationship between architecture and the landscape.

The chapel itself, stands radically in the total context of the project as a solemn structure, asserting its independence as a tall monolithic block from the rest of the complex. Sparse light openings are turned away from the main building. This sense of seclusion is further emphasised by its distance from the student quarters, creating a contemplative and spiritual environment.

Despite its generally enclosed character, the chapel features a wall facing the park that is opened up with large glass panels. This creates a striking contrast with the otherwise closed structure, allowing natural light to filter into the sacred space while maintaining a connection to the surrounding landscape.

The choir of the chapel is aligned to the west, marked by a solid façade. Access to the chapel is provided from the inner courtyard. Inside, the chapel's design incorporates pilotis, where they separate a single-story side aisle on the southern side from the double-height main nave.

213
Geert Bekaert and Ronny de Meyer,
Paul Felix: *Architectuur 1913-1981* (Tielt,
Be: Lannoo Puba, 1981), 46.

214
Iris De Feijter, 'Modernistisch op kot:
de studententijd van toen', Weekend, 8
October 2019, <https://weekend.knack.be/lifestyle/design/modernistisch-op-kot-de-studententijd-van-toen/>.

215
Zsuzsanna Böröcz, 'Zonnelied Het
Clarissenklooster van Paul Felix', in
Vernieling En Wederopbouw Oostende
1944-1958 (Oostende: Stad Oostende,
n.d.), 148-59, 149.

'Studentenhuus en kapel Pius
X', 8 October 2021, <https://inventaris.onroerenderfgoed.be/erfgoedobjecten/201406>.



The northern side of the chapel contrasts with the southern side by offering a more open character, featuring four large rectangular windows. These windows are divided into sections by steel profiles, and the glass itself is characterized by an abstract play of lines. The interior consists of a floor of rough, gray natural stone. The chapel is also connected to the southern wing of the complex through a corridor that provides access to both the sacristy and a storage area.

Currently the KU Leuven has plans on making an annex, an air lock, at the southern façade to adapt the chapel to a new function as multi-functional space. As part of this conversion, an opening will be created along the previously closed southern facade of the chapel. A new entry volume will be added, connected to the chapel through a glass link, which will alter the spatial integrity and proportions of the existing structure.

The adaptation of the chapel, would also involve insulating the chapel's roof and/or walls, concealing the original concrete roof construction and masonry, impacting the materiality of the chapel.

Additionally, the introduction of the new entry volume may obscure two of Michel Martens windows, making them visible only within this added space. These changes will significantly affect the chapel's appearance as a monolithic block.

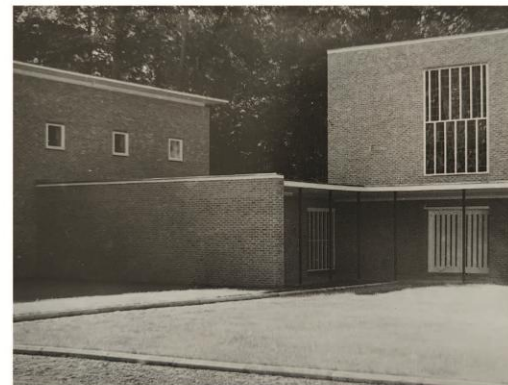


Fig 207: The chapel.



Fig 208: Southern façade.

PERABOGIE PUR X
PERABOGIE - LEUVEN
(Jm. & PERABOGIE)
has 64 pages

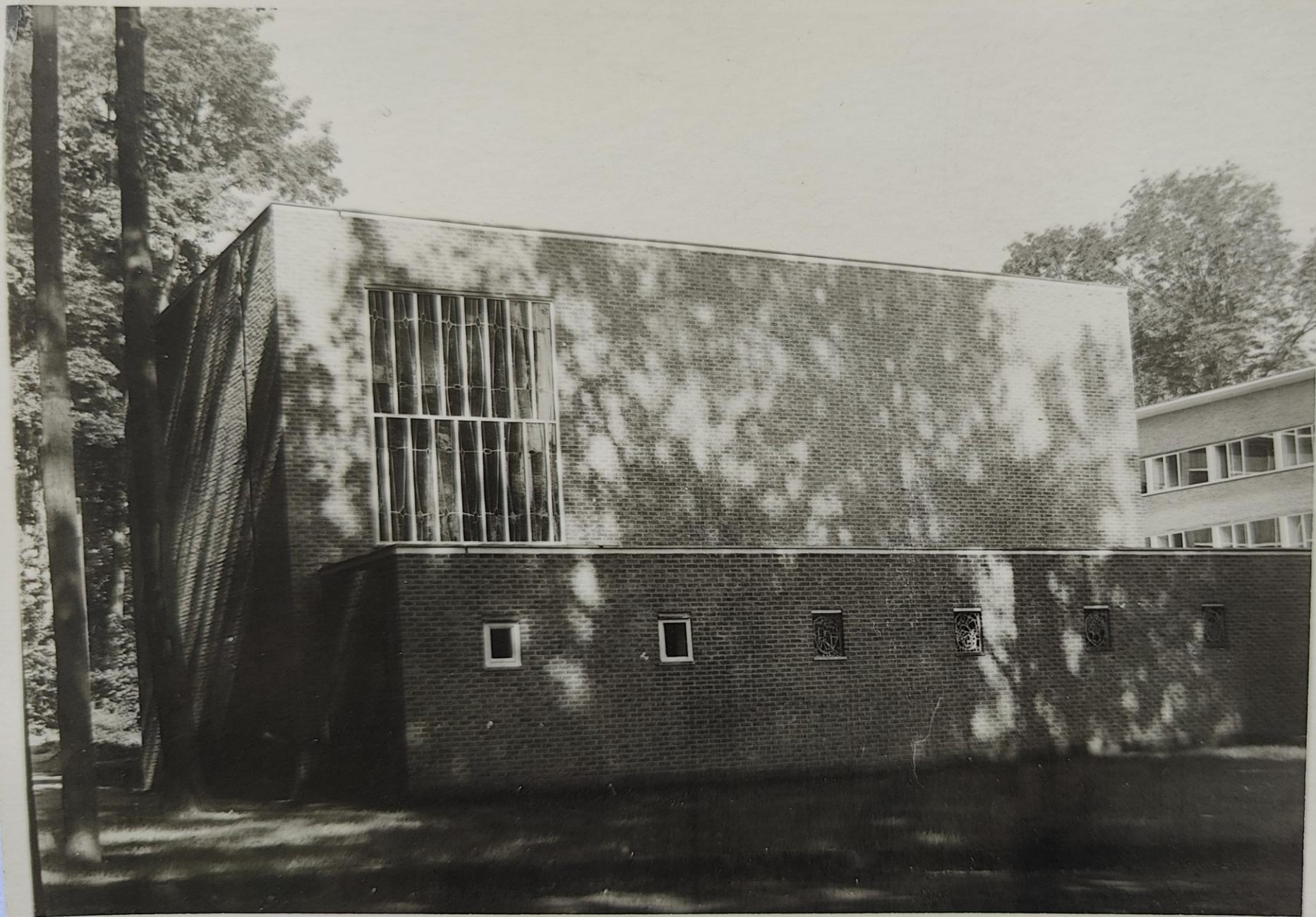
1952-56



D64

D64





The Pius X Chapel possesses however several heritage values:

Architectural value and innovation: Noted for being one of the first modernist university buildings in Flanders, it represents a significant shift in architectural style and approach during the post-war period.

Historical value: The project is a landmark in Belgian post-war architecture, marking the beginning of Paul Felix's career and highlighting the evolution of architectural practices in Belgium.

Significance in context of Modernist Church Revival: The chapel is recognised as a pivotal example of modernist revival in church architecture, showcasing groundbreaking design elements such as the cubic space, the striking glazed wall, and a side-lit altar.

Artistic value: The project involved collaboration with renowned artists Michel Martens, who created stained glass and concrete glasswork, and the sculptor Roger Bonduel, integrating their artistic contributions into the architectural design.

Environmental value: The design of the chapel and its surroundings has a harmonious relationship with the Arenberg Park, incorporating a transparent gallery and cantilevered roof that connect the building to the natural landscape.

Spatial value: The chapel's design features distinctive elements such as a monolithic block structure with sparse light openings, a contrast between open and closed facades, and the use of pilotis to separate different spatial functions.

Spiritual Value: The chapel's layout, including its alignment, access points, and internal features like the separation of aisles and nave, reflects its dual role as both a functional space within the complex and a spiritual retreat.

Aesthetic value: The use of red brick, flat roof, large rectangular windows with abstract glass patterns, and rough gray natural stone flooring contribute to the chapel's modernist aesthetic and material expression.

Based on these values, the addition of a volume on the southern façade would, is not feasible, as it would ignore these values.

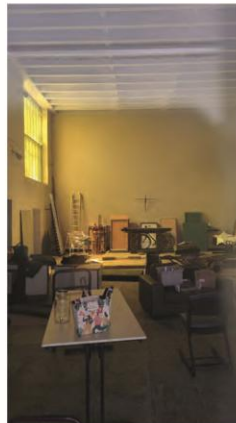


Fig 210: Interior of the chapel, currently used as storage space.



Fig 209: View underneath the outside canopy, leading to the chapel.



Fig 211: The monolithic block of the chapel.

3. Evaluatie en suggesties

3. Evaluation and suggestions

3.1. Five Cases of Adaptive-Reuse

3.2. Interview with Marc Felix

3. Evaluatie en suggesties

3.2. Interview with Marc Felix

- *The important thing is to respect the original ideas while giving the building a new life.*

3. Evaluatie en suggesties

3.2. Interview with Marc Felix

- *There's still work to be done. It's not just about my father; there's a general lack of studies on the entire post-war generation of modernists. Have you seen a book on Roger Bastin in Wallonia? Not really, right? There's very little written about many of them. Sure, there are books about Gaston Eysselinck and the Antwerp architect Leon Steynen—that first generation—but there's hardly anything on the second generation.*

3. Evaluatie en suggesties

3.2. Interview with Marc Felix

- *Yes, with the Clarissenklooster, if you see a few centimeters of raised insulation on the roof edge, you have to accept that. You can't prioritize formality over livability. There's always something, but yes, it's really difficult. It's a very complex issue to save modernism.*

- De gesignaleerde uitdagingen laten zien hoe **delicaat het evenwicht is bij het behoud van het gebouwd erfgoed uit het recente verleden**. Deze uitdagingen komen ook naar voren in het oeuvre van Felix.
- Deze thesis heeft de noodzaak benadrukt van **op maat gemaakte restauratiestrategieën**, die de unieke kenmerken van elk gebouw respecteren en er tegelijkertijd voor zorgen dat ze voldoen aan de moderne normen op het gebied van **comfort en functionaliteit**.
- Bij restauratie-inspanningen moet altijd rekening worden gehouden met **de integriteit** van Felix' ontwerpen, die **diep geworteld zijn in een mensgerichte architectuur en materiële eerlijkheid**.
- Er is behoefte aan **verder onderzoek naar de historische, sociale en materiële aspecten van het werk van Felix**, evenals aan bredere studies over de instandhouding en het **adaptief hergebruik van naoorlogse architectuur**.
- Het **aanpassingsvermogen en de veerkracht** van zijn ontwerpen bieden talrijke **mogelijkheden voor toekomstig gebruik**, maar vereisen ook **zorgvuldige en weloverwogen besluitvorming**.



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**Integratie-architectuur in Brugge en in België, een
cartografie van posities en controverses, 1970-1989**

Project



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