DIRTY PRES-ERVA-TION

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2025
Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering
Supervisor: Naima Callenberg

Dirty Preservation
An Experimental Counterpractice

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Thank you,

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Daniel,
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ABSTRACT

Due to pressure of economic growth and a drive towards newness, the built environment is suffering from an accelerated process of **breaking, going out of style, and being replaced by something new** – a broken system which will result in the demolition of 2 billion square meters of built space in Europe by 2050 (HouseEurope!, 2025). This thesis departs from a frustration with the destructive cycles of redevelopment and takes the stance that even dirty and overlooked buildings must be preserved. This statement requires a profound **shift within the preservation practice**, which usually includes objects of undisputed cultural and historical significance. The question is then, what happens when we declare an "insignificant" building to be an object worthy of preservation, care and affection?

To test out an alternative method of preservation, an abandoned boiler plant from the 1950s, located in a Stockholm suburb, was chosen as subject of interest for this thesis. The building awaits demolition and shows apparent signs of neglect and decay. **Elevating the building and looking at it as a cultural heritage object**, conventional methods of monument documentation and evaluation are applied. The process is driven forward by smudging the conventional practice with critical theory, messing with its norms and expected outcomes, all with the aim to develop a **morphed and dirty preservation method** which can generate new perspectives on value, as well as new modes to preserve.

Acting as dirty preservationists, our objective has not been to reprogram or transform the building, but to remain with the uncertainty of evaluation and care. By applying preservation methods typically reserved for undisputed heritage to a neglected boiler plant, we question what qualifies as worth preserving. The resulting instructions – based on repair, reconstruction, and site-sourced materials – are **shaped by care rather than economic gain**. This thesis argues for a broader, more inclusive understanding of heritage, one that treats the overlooked as valuable and preservation as a creative, reparative force rather than a conservative one.

Key words: *Preservation, demolition, heritage, care, architecture, reuse, obsolescence, value, repair*

Research Questions

I: **How can we expand the practice of preservation in order to reassess (and care for) non-heritage buildings?**

II: **What comes out of practicing care as a form of resistance against the conventional role of the architect?**

Aim

As a reaction to destructive cycles of economic growth, our aim is to foster a counterpractice which holds the power to reassess, shift value and care for the existing built environment. The objective is to challenge and converse on what we do, and do not preserve – essentially to expand the boundaries of preservation. The project is not only concerned with the building itself, but uses it as a vehicle for addressing a larger phenomena.

Delimitations

This thesis is not a transformation project, and therefore does not aim to determine the future function or design of the building. Neither does it concern itself with architectural judgement of beauty and form. Though it is an important part of discourse, this thesis does not aim to solve complex factors contributing to the destructive cycles of the building industry, rather it intends to question and encourage resistance.

THESIS Q's

DISCOURSE
PROBLEM DEFINITION, CRITICAL THEORY,
PRESERVATION BACKGROUND

METHOD OF DIRTY PRESERVATION
LEARNING FROM MONUMENT CARE

INFORMED BY RESEARCH TRIP TO ROME

SITUATING
THROUGH SITE EXCURSIONS TO
BAGARMOSSEN, STOCKHOLM

INSTRUCTIONS
BASED ON EXPERIMENTS AND LEARNINGS
WITHIN THE BUILDING

CONVERSATION
DEFINING AND REFLECTING ON THE ROLE
OF THE DIRTY PRESERVATIONIST

That a living organism must die is an obvious truth. But buildings, often assumed to have "life", are frequently considered obsolete long before they have reached their full potential life span. Their premature death and subsequent demolition may be preceded with descriptions such as dirty, ill fitting, run down or beyond saving. Anthropologist Mary Douglas' famed statement that "Dirt is matter out of place" (Douglas 1966, via Frichot, 2019) can be applied to the built environment, which constantly faces the threat of going out of style and being replaced by something new, glossy and clean.

01 DISCOURSE

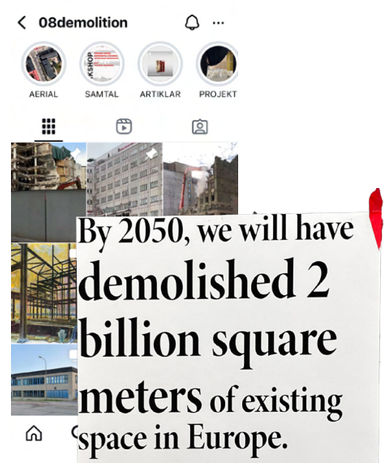
01.1 **The Demolition Drama**

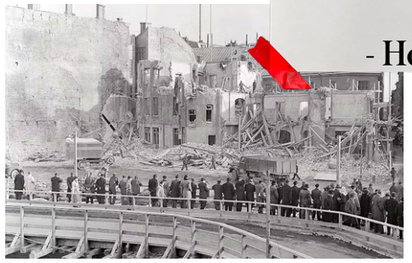
The seduction of financial gain can certainly make the architect an accomplice to the destructive forces of the building industry. In attractive areas, the value of the land may exceed the value of the existing property itself, leading to land speculation that prompts property owners to make way for denser or more modern constructions that promise higher financial returns. Due to tax incentives favouring new construction, it might even be more profitable to demolish and rebuild than to renovate the existing property (HouseEurope!, 2025). Gentrification and the drive for change can lead to historical or culturally significant buildings being torn down to be replaced with new development that cater to a wealthier demographic, pushing up property values and rents at the expense of long standing communities and businesses. A ruthless process resulting in countless buildings left in a state of vacancy and ruin, until demolished and replaced, generating nearly 40% of total waste generated worldwide (Boverket, 2025). If this continues, we will have demolished 2 billion square meters of built space in Europe by 2050 (HouseEurope!, 2025).

Swedish based associations and networks like 08 demolition, ACAN Sverige and Föreningen FASAD are working to raise awareness to buildings affected by the process of devaluation and demolition. Their mappings and documentation make visible the decision-making processes which are often hidden behind vague project descriptions promising sustainable urban development (08 demolition, 2025). On a larger scale, the initiative HouseEurope! argues that we must recognize the value of existing buildings, which, if preserved and renovated, presents enormous potential that directly contributes to reaching the EU's energy and climate goals (HouseEurope!, 2025).

The demolition drama provides countless examples of built history being lost, too many to make justice in this introduction, but will concern itself with two brief examples. A recent story of the planning and eventual demolition of the culturally diverse area of Kvillebäcken in Gothenburg is narrated in the book Den Urbana Fronten (Despotovic & Thörn, 2015). The authors critically investigate the process by collecting stories from the people whose lives and livelihoods are anchored in the area and contrast them with statements from the City Planning Department, claiming that the area "gives a dirty and disorganized impression" and hence needs to be cleaned up. (Stadsbyggnadskontoret via Despotovic & Thörn, 2015).

A similar language was already in place decades ago, used to motivate the demolitions of Klarakvarteren in Stockholm. As one of the most extensive urban transformations carried out in post-war Europe, a so-called sanitation was carried out to clean up the city and enforce modern ideals, resulting in irreparable loss of built history and community (Olgarsson, 2009).





f1: Akbar Chark in Kvillebäcken, 2015. Now demolished. *f2:* Screen prints of 08 demolition website and instagram *f3:* Quote from HouseEurope! on poster
f4: Demolition of Klarakvarteren

One reason why the large-scale demolitions could be carried through with little objection was that many buildings had been badly maintained and left in a state of decay. It was then easy for decision makers to call them slum-like, prompting for sanitation (Olgarsson, 2009). This language is common practice for many politicians and officials, as it distances the receiver and motivates demolition.

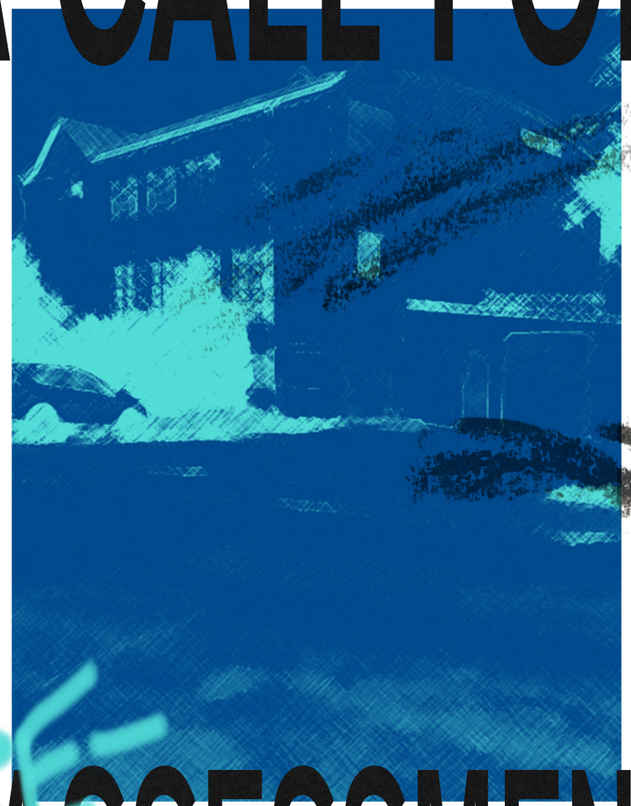
DISPOSABLE

EVERY BUILDING IS UP FOR DEMOLITION?

BUILDINGS

DISPOSABLE

A CALL FOR



RE-ASSESSMENT

“Urban destruction, devastation, de-generation, de-modernization and annihilation haunt dreams of urban modernity and development.”

Stephen Graham 2004, via Cairns & Jacobs 2014, 5

01.2 **Disposable Buildings**

The drive to demolish is not only an economic pursuit, but one of ideology – in search of something grander, newer, more modern. The architectural notion of “tabula rasa” (latin, meaning white paper, eds note) signifies the opportunity of the clean slate, where every trace of the past is wiped away in order for the architect to place their mark (Agnost, 2022). Though popularized in the modernist movement, it is still readily accessible in the architect tool box, as it assures effective implementation and measurability.

Daniel M. Abramson investigates the notion of architectural obsolescence (see dictionary, eds note), noting that most writings on the subject of obsolescence include consumer goods with no mention of the built environment (Abramson, 2016). Rather, the term “planned obsolescence” is frequently used when addressing technology, such as phones made to break after a number of years of use. If our electronics did not go out of date, how would the companies make a profit? The system itself is held up by continued consumption, where the idea that the new outperforms the old helps people come to terms with modernity and capitalism’s fast-paced change. Abramson argues that this applies not only to goods, but to the built environment, which is subject to the same cycle of going out of style, breaking, and being replaced by something new (Abramson, 2016).

The rapid cycle of renewal is referred to by HouseEurope as “perceived modernity” HouseEurope!, 2025), while Cairns & Jacobs (2014) names it “perversion of modernity”. It points to the idea that concepts of modernity shift over time, a question of perception rather than fixed value. Why then, should we accept the ruthless drive for modernity and the waste pile it leaves behind?

f5: Demolition of Sahlgrenska, 2025

01.4 **Expanding Preservation**

The objects that are considered worth preserving may seem objective, however preservation and a canon of cultural objects are at the core of every cultural institution (Otero-Pailos et al., 2016). Arrhenius (2012) writes that collective heritage is an old idea, although strengthened during the French Revolution, and suggests a common, single heritage upheld by the state. Preservationists, too, have always played an active role in choosing and co-creating cultural objects, even though they and the work they perform seeks to remain invisible (Otero-Pailos et al., 2016). Tayfun Serttaş argues there is no cultural heritage, only political heritage, and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger portray preservation as a deceitful manipulation of the past – as a trick claiming its truthfulness, in the service of insidious interests (see Otero-Pailos et al., 2016). Choosing and preserving other objects can therefore be an act of resistance.

Preservation is a (dirty) science and the practice calls for a specific set of methods and techniques, so as to safeguard the integrity of a heritage object subject to preservation. UNESCO urges a scientific approach when developing preservation strategies, worked out on the basis of previous material experiments with good results (UNESCO, 1972). But, preservation can never really be scientific; unable to be repeatable, verifiable and tested in controlled environments. Every preservation is a singular happening.

In a time where the view of the past is broadening, space is provided to look at heritage from diverse perspectives (Arrhenius, 2012). Arguably, there is a need to expand what is deemed "worthy" of preservation to include overlooked objects and engage with other stories and heritage. Furthermore, there is certainly potential in the curatorial aspect of preservation; to choose an object is to recognize it, appropriate it, touch it both physically and mentally, give it identity. To alter it, even non-invasively and reversibly as is the practice of preservation work, is to modify its form and meaning (Otero-Pailos et al., 2016).

"Sometimes we need to take hold of the story, entirely reorient it, and tell it again from an entirely other point of view; take it from a point of view otherwise obscured, purposively shoved down in the dirt. Recover it, restore its value."

Hélène Frichot, 2019, 24

01.5 **Following the Dirt**

When applying preservation to a non-heritage or obsolete building, 'following the dirt' becomes a relevant concept. "Dirty" can certainly be used to describe these overlooked buildings, that reside in the margins of architecture and must be pushed to the centre rather than shied away from: "This is an imperative for coping with our dirty defiled world, to think with it, not against it" (Frichot, 2019, 5).

Frichot insists that dirt can possess value and potential which may not be apparent at first glance. In order to deal with the dirt, to trouble architecture, to undo exclusions and inclusions, Frichot refers to Donna Haraway, who calls on us to 'stay with the trouble' of our dirty world (Frichot, 2019, 26). Following the dirt, getting dirty, is also a call to morphe disciplines and make inappropriate interpretations. Frichot describes that this action can be a creative movement and urges us to appropriate, and critically, knowingly: misappropriate (2019). Study the material, follow the tracks and traces to observe where it came from and the direction that it appears to be taking (Frichot, 2019). This iterative process of thinking-making does not aim for sensational outcomes –it is an act of care towards used, soiled, failing objects (Frichot, 2019).

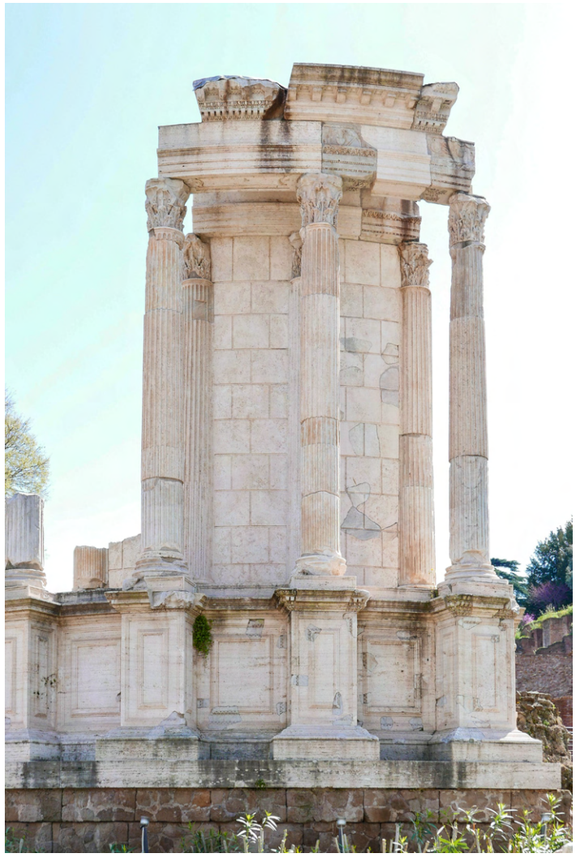
To us, 'staying with the trouble' has meant entering this thesis with a critical and caring mindset, imagining a world where all spaces are allowed to exist without the need to divide architecture into binary categories where one is privileged over the other. In our interpretation, following the dirt urges us to preserve and care for the reality of buildings that reside in the margins of built space.

01.3 **A Brief Account of the History of Preservation**

Preservation is a well established practice within architecture and is applied to objects of undisputed cultural and historical significance (Otero-Pailos et al., 2016). Two branches in preservation theory can be identified and are commonly represented by two leitmotifs; architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879) representing the restoration-approach, and art historian John Ruskin (1819-1900), representing the conservation-approach. Through literature studies, this thesis has identified how 'preserving' is a term used when referring to safeguarding heritage and projecting it into the future. However, the two theory branches will be presented briefly as a background to our method (see chapter 2).

Restoration seeks to reverse time to an original state; to restore authenticity through physical intervention on the heritage object (Viollet-le-Duc, 1875). The ambition of restoration is to reinstate the "ideal origin" of the building; how it should have been built under ideal circumstances (Arrhenius, 2012). Ruskin on the other hand argues for historical authenticity and minimal intervention. According to Ruskin, the truth of the building lies in its patina accumulated through age (Arrhenius, 2012).

In regards to authenticity it is fitting to discuss heritage objects as artifacts that contain or produce knowledge. From an antiquarian perspective any kind of restoration is a threat, undermining the heritage object as an artefact that 'preserves' history – whereas a lack of restoration threatens the object's very existence (Arrhenius, 2012). Both Viollet-le-Duc's and Ruskins opposing ideas about authenticity are self- contradictory. Further, within the modernist intellectual tradition of preservation, criticism is directed at the historicizing aspect of preservation (Otero-Pailos et al., 2016). The answer to how we should preserve might be found somewhere in-between.



f6: Pedestals and columns at the Forum Romanum

ORGANIZATIONS SAFEGUARDING HERITAGE

UNESCO, founded in 1945, is an agency dedicated to promote education, science, culture, and communication. UNESCO administers the World Heritage List, which defines cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value.

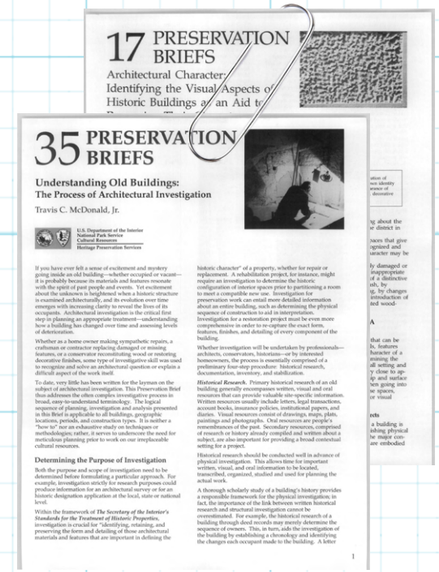
ICOMOS was founded in 1956 and provides counsel to the World Heritage Committee. The council is the publisher of one of the most important documents within preservation, the Venice Charter (1964), which defines basic preservation principles.

The National Park Service cares for the more than 400 national parks in the U.S. NPS's instructional Preservation Briefs, that provide information on preserving, rehabilitating, and restoring historic buildings, have served as guidelines in our documentational work.

02 METHOD

02.1 **Learning from Monument Care:** Documentation and Analysis

Relevant methods for documenting, analyzing and making interventions are extracted from frameworks set by UNESCO, ICCOMOS and NPS - organizations which have a long history of safeguarding built heritage.



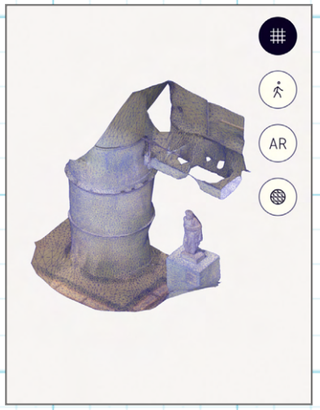
f7: NPS Preservation Briefs on surveying a building

Survey

“A preliminary architectural and photographic survey of the building in its present state is necessary to obtain data on its general design, structural details and general condition.”

Piero Sanpaolesi via UNESCO, 1972

A survey is the first part in the process of determining how to preserve the monument. This includes a thorough investigation of all relevant material available on history and context, before visiting the site. The U.S. National Parks Service provides preservation Briefs with information on preserving, rehabilitating, and restoring historic buildings (NPS, 2025). As well as creating documentation of the current state before any interventions are made.



f8: Photogrammetry of a roman statue at Centrale Montemartini, Rome.

Photography & Photogrammetry

“photographic documentation should be followed by measured drawings or by photogrammetry.”

Piero Sanpaolesi via UNESCO, 1972

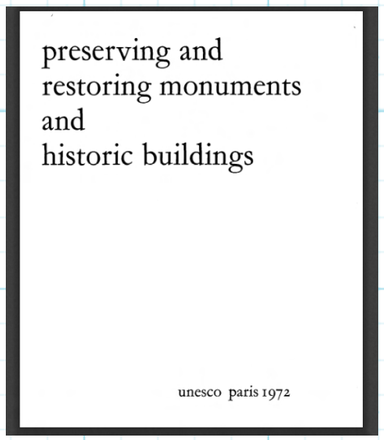
As early as in the nineteenth century, Viollet-le-Duc underlined the potential of photographic documentation in restoration work. “Photography, which assumes every day a more important phase in scientific studies seems to have appeared for the very purpose of aiding this grand work of restoration” (Arrhenius, 2012). The idea of photogrammetry, a method of approximating a three-dimensional structure using two dimensional images, was first mentioned in the 1850s but not successfully applied until 50 years later (UNESCO, 1972). Today’s sophistication of photogrammetry has been greatly aided by digital tools and made it an integral part of the architectural survey of a monument.

Latex Cast

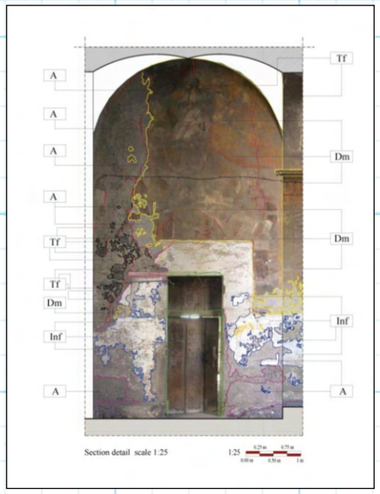
“Casts can be taken to reproduce the shape, position and surface of mosaics, frescoes, epigraphs or of any section whose surface and structure is to be studied.”

Piero Sanpaolesi via UNESCO, 1972

The use of latex in restoration practice non invasively cleans a surface of dust and dirt. The church of Notre Dame is a recent example, which after the 2021 fire was subject to major restoration work which included applying and removing latex to clean the facing of bare masonry (Rebatir Notre Dame, n.d.).



f9: Preserving and restoring monuments and historic buildings, UNESCO, 1972



f10: Deterioration pattern on a wall, Monastery of Zoccolanti, Naples

Deterioration Pattern

The Illustrated Glossary on Stone Deterioration Patterns combines an international framework for analyzing the state of stone monuments. Deterioration patterns are the visible consequences of the impact of environmental factors on the monument, such as discoloration, detachment, deformation and material loss (ICOMOS-ISCS, 2016). An analysis of the deterioration pattern can be used in order to determine need for care, repair and reconstruction.

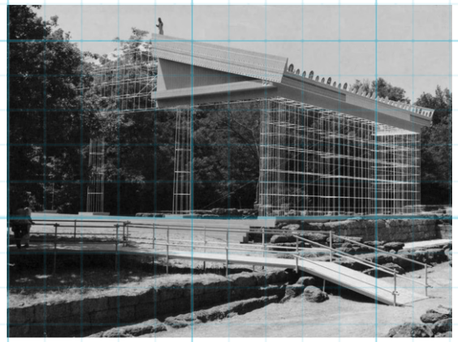
Reconstruction

”Reconstruction demands a detailed study of any data on the monument recorded prior to its destruction (either by accidental causes or by deliberate demolition with a view to reconstruction); or else the methodical analysis and experimental assembling of surviving elements a proceeding of questionable validity unless based on sufficiently precise data. Vast reconstruction projects have, nevertheless, been carried out, often on the basis of archaeological excavations and finds. The Roman forum is a well-known example.”

Piero Sanpaolesi via UNESCO, 1972

As previously mentioned, reconstruction methods have been subject to discussion within preservation. Sanpaolesi writes that correcting ‘errors’ without historical or critical reason can not be justified, nor is it justifiable to leave a monument in ruins, even if reconstruction inevitably entails certain alterations (Sanpaolesi via Connally et al., 1972). Reconstruction can follow two primary approaches: replication and differentiation. Replication involves recreating missing elements to match the original as closely as possible while differentiation emphasizes the distinction between original and new elements, ensuring that additions are clearly identifiable to viewers. (Sanpaolesi via Connally et al., 1972)

f11: Reconstructed archway at Villa Adriana in Tivoli. The reconstruction follows the principle of differentiation. Authors’ photograph.



f12: Reconstruction of Santuario di Portonaccio

The reconstruction of the Etruscan Santuario di Portonaccio where large marble fragments of the original structure are elevated on modern metal supports. The reconstruction, proposed in 1993 by archaeologists Giovanni Colonna and Germano Foglia, presents a square structure divided into a pronaos with two columns and three adjacent cells at the back (Stevens, 2009). The use of metal structures to elevate the marble pieces alludes to the temple’s original layout without attempting a complete reconstruction.

Care and Repair

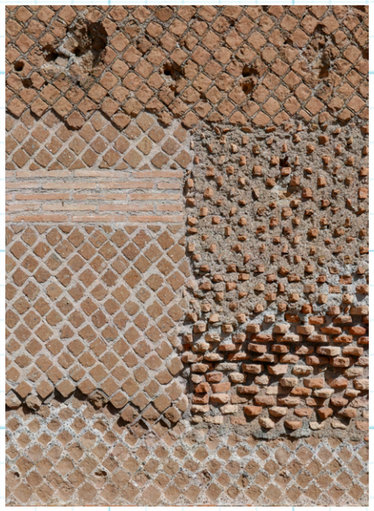
“The best means of preservation will not be through hasty ad hoc restoration but by continuous and careful maintenance, so that damaged and worn parts can be cared for before they become serious. ”

Piero Sanpaolesi via UNESCO, 1972

Repairs and infills are established practices in restoration, caring interventions that aim to extend the life of a structure without erasing its age or material history. As in reconstruction, repairs may follow principles of either replication or differentiation.

Sanpaolesi argues for the latter: that no attempt should be made to reproduce missing parts or conceal repairs, but instead allow them to remain visible and in harmony with the whole (UNESCO, 1972). As a material suited to this approach, he names resin, long used in both art and architectural restoration.

f13: Cleaning and repair work in progress as seen by the entrance of a stone house in central Rome. Authors’ photograph.

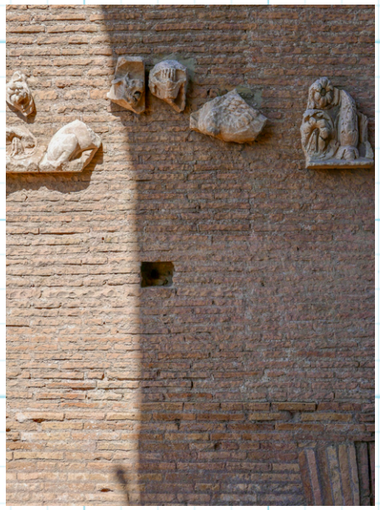


f14: Remains of ancient brick and cocciopesto in Hadrianus Villa, Tivoli. Author’s photograph

In the late 19th century, ‘The Dutch method’–developed by Nicolaas and Willem Hopman–used natural resins such as dammar or mastic to consolidate flaking paint, protect surfaces, and ensure reversibility (Oudheusden, 2014). In architecture, synthetic resins like epoxies and acrylics are used for their adhesion and durability, applied in gap-filling, surface stabilization, and the preservation of materials like stone and wood. An even more durable repair material is opus signinum–or cocciopesto in modern Italian–a Roman mortar composed of crushed ceramic fragments like amphorae, roof tiles, and bricks. Its use produced resilient structures, with the mortar often outlasting the masonry it held together, demonstrating the material’s impressive durability.

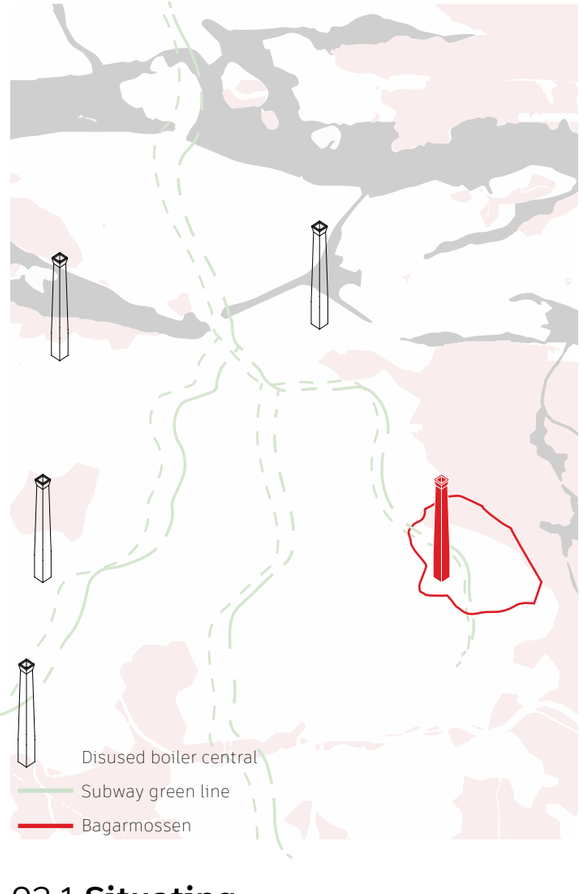
Spolia

Spolia (latin for spoils) is the re-use of architectural fragments as structural elements or as ornament (UNESCO, n.d.). Even though it is not mentioned in ’Preserving and restoring historical buildings and monuments’ (1972) as a preservation method, many ancient structures have unintentionally preserved historical fragments by using spolia due to scarcity of material.



f15: Spolia, Forum Romanum. Author’s photograph

03
SITUATING



03.1 **Situating**

To test out alternative methods of dirty preservation, this chapter situates itself within an abandoned boiler plant from the 1950s. The property owners are planning to demolish it in order to build housing.

03.2 **The Boiler Plant**

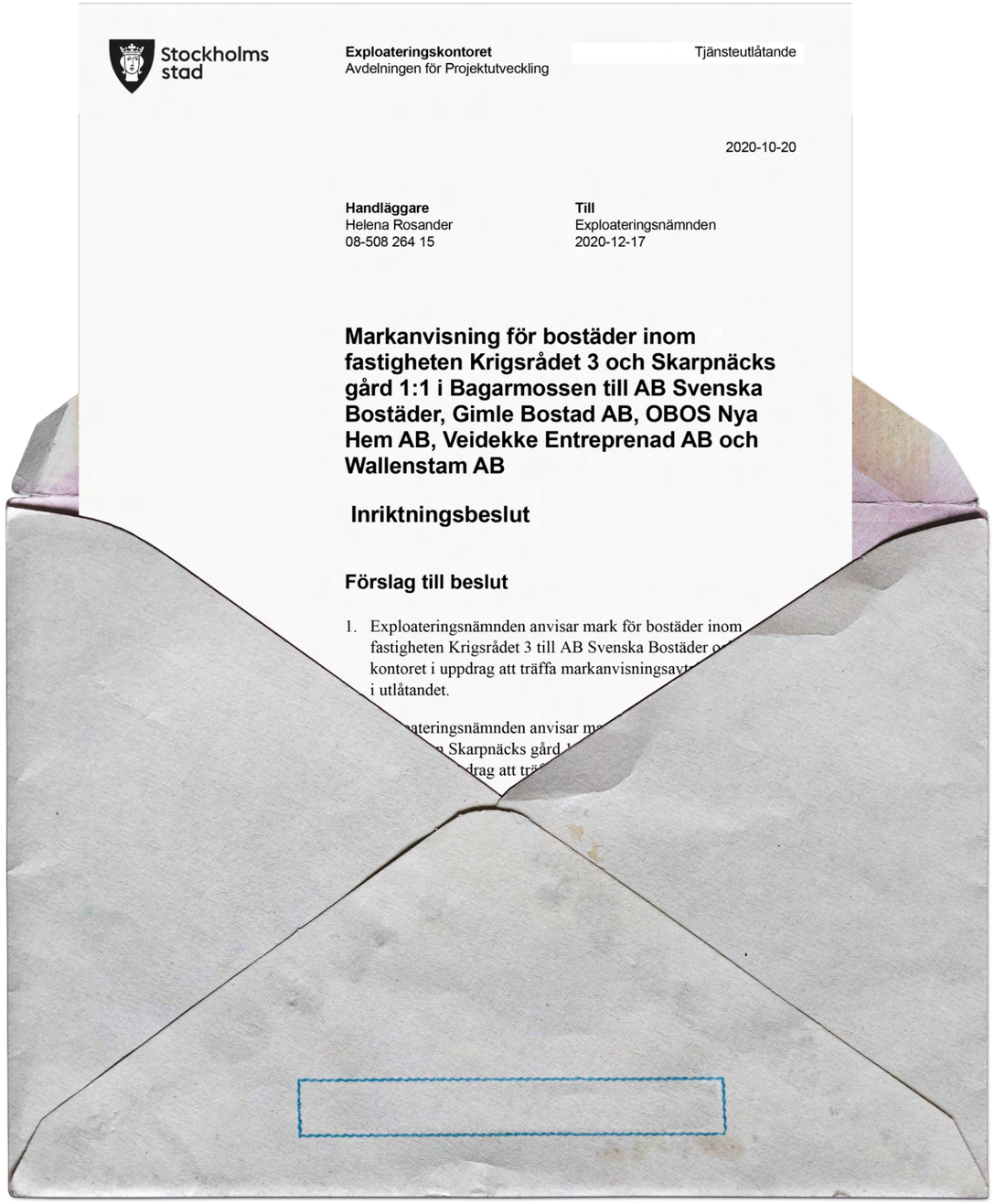
The emerging of boiler plants in the late 1930s shows how urban development evolved in post-war Sweden, with an idea of higher living standards for all citizens, including rationalized heating methods (Anderberg & Wilund, 2016). This period between the 1920s and 1950s is known as Folkhemsbygget (the Building of the People's Home, eds note). Folkhemmet (the People's Home, eds note) is a metaphor that was based on a series of social reforms with the intention of building a socially and economically secure welfare state for all citizens (Stockholms läns museum, 2025).

The boiler plant was a central heating facility where coal or oil was burnt to provide the surrounding households with heat and warm water. Originally built as small outhouses with the capacity to heat a block of housing, the free standing boiler plant, like the one studied in Bagarmossen, emerged during the 1950s (Rönn & Sundvall, 2013). The free standing plants could supply entire neighbourhoods and were often combined with functions such as laundry rooms or community centers; making the boiler plant a provider in the sense of heat as well as a communal space.

This new typology became a challenge for architects, and free forms of expression could be explored. An unmistakable landmark with its high chimney, the boiler plant was sometimes likened to a parish church. (Rönn & Sundvall, 2013) Walking around any given suburb in Stockholm at the time, one could be sure to spot a few chimneys bellowing steam in the distance. However, as district heating grew more efficient and could be outsourced, boiler plants of small scale became obsolete.

03.3 **Bagarmossen**

The area of Bagarmossen is a well-preserved 1950s suburb of Stockholm built during the expansion of the subway (Stockholms Stadsmuseum, 1998). The area's layout is characteristic for the ABC-city, a concept developed in urban development during Folkhemmet. ABC being an abbreviation of Arbete (work) – Bostad (dwelling) – Centrum (center), it was a collected city where the inhabitants within a short distance should have access to these services (Stockholms läns museum, 2025).



Stockholms stad

Exploateringskontoret
Avdelningen för Projektutveckling

Tjänsteutlåtande

2020-10-20

Handläggare
Helena Rosander
08-508 264 15

Till
Exploateringsnämnden
2020-12-17

Markanvisning för bostäder inom fastigheten Krigsrådet 3 och Skarpnäcks gård 1:1 i Bagarmossen till AB Svenska Bostäder, Gimle Bostad AB, OBOS Nya Hem AB, Veidekke Entreprenad AB och Wallenstam AB

Inriktningsbeslut

Förslag till beslut

1. Exploateringsnämnden anvisar mark för bostäder inom
fastigheten Krigsrådet 3 till AB Svenska Bostäder o
kontoret i uppdrag att träffa markanvisningsavt
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ateringsnämnden anvisar m
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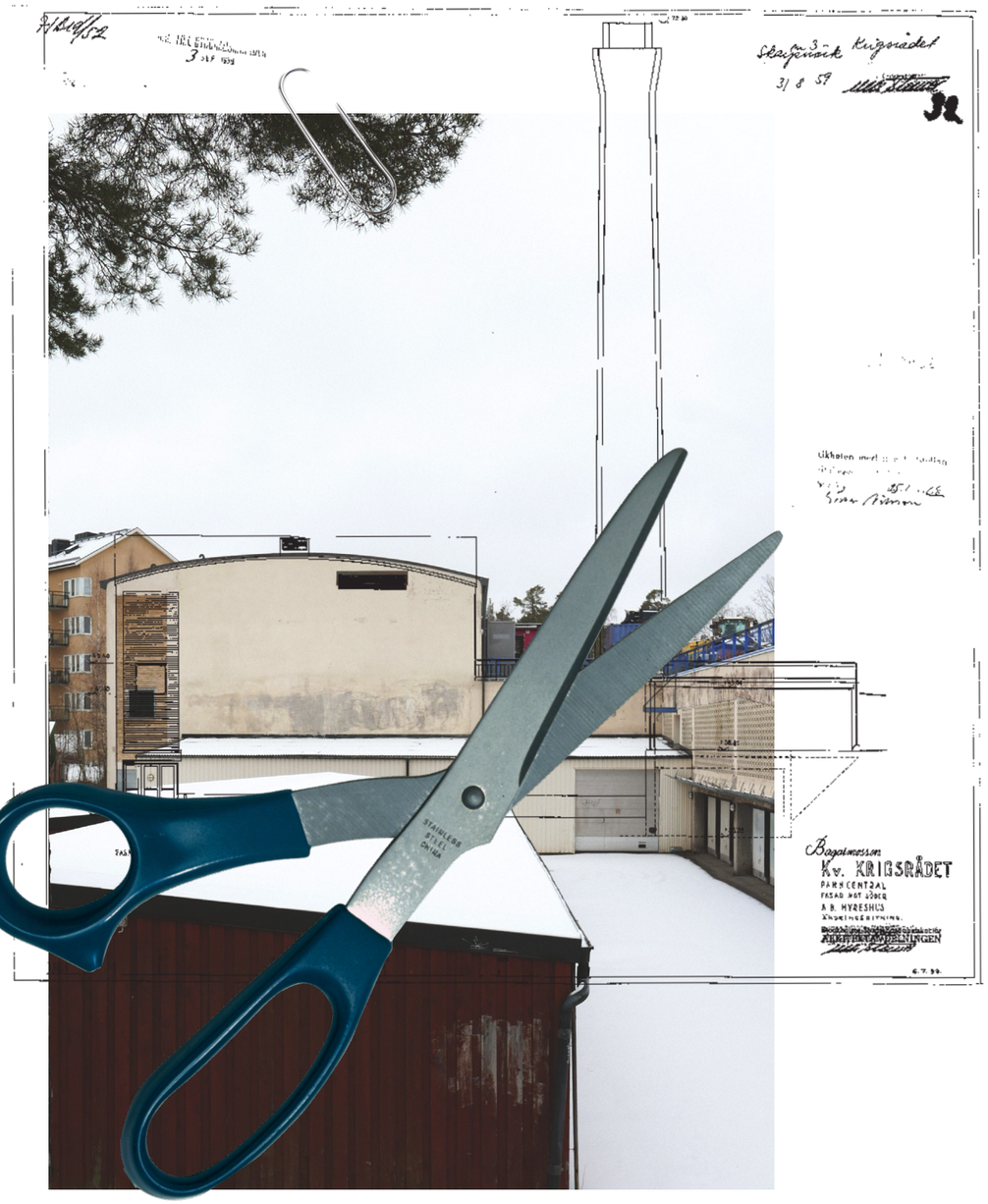


03.4 **Obsolete Function**

The boiler plant in Bagarmossen on the plot of Krigsrådet 3 was built in the early 1950s based on drawings by architect Nils Sterner. Despite some modifications, the building retains most of its original architecture. Characterized by its yellow brick facade and large sprayed windows, it is typical of “Folkhem”-architecture. Interestingly, care was evidently taken as this banal building was designed. Visiting the boiler plant, one is struck by the vast spatiality of the rooms, the care in the coloring and the movement through the building created by the three stairs.

The large silo, evident in plan and section but underwhelming when visiting the building, was filled with coal through the loading gate in the east facade. The coal could then be emptied into the boiler room on the ground floor and burned in the three large burners placed there – producing thermal energy and heating up the water in the district heating system. The water was then pumped into the district heating network and further into the heating systems of surrounding properties. In the pump room on the first floor, adjacent to the boiler room, pumps and expansion vessels were placed. The three floors are connected by a staircase in the south western corner, but another spiral staircase connects the pump room with the corridor on the top floor.

Such is the realm in which architectural infrastructures operate – edited out of the plan, never intended for the modern individual to dwell on, the essence of infrastructe being that it should function without having to be thought about.

Hélène Frichot et al., 2022

03.5 **Deliberate Neglect**

The property was bought by Svenska Bostäder (SB) about 10 years ago, and the building has been empty since. With the intention of demolishing the boiler plant to develop new housing on the site, the building has been left unattended to by SB. This has resulted in decay and various destruction, such as graffiti and broken windows left unrepaired – further hastening the deterioration. Despite its green culture classification by the Swedish National Heritage Board (Riksantikvarieämnetet, 2005), which states that boiler plants are typical features of 1950s neighborhoods and serve as important historical documents, SB’s plans for demolition have been approved. These plans have partly been set in motion by demolishing the chimney, a previous landmark in the district.

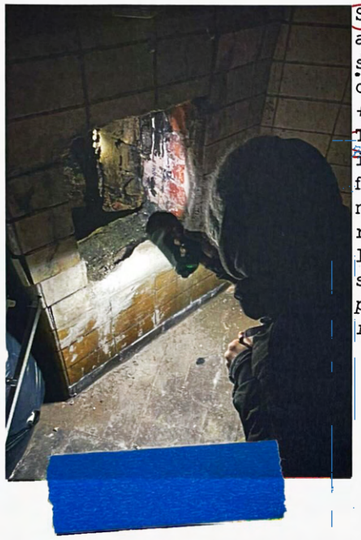
The process that the boiler plant in Bagarmossen is subject to is not an isolated incident. Architectural infrastructure has been pushed to the margins of architecture, the essence of infrastructure being that it should function without having to be thought about. Frichot et al. (2022) describe that in the development of the modern utopia, which was set to become a tranquil place for the development of the modern individual, infrastructure was edited out of the plan. Returning to Douglas’ remark that dirt is matter out of place, these dirty buildings offended against the order that was modernism. The result is that we have forgotten about infrastructures (or rather, we weren’t supposed to think about them in the first place), rendering them obsolete the moment their function disappears – their decay and demolition an almost guaranteed destiny (Frichot et al., 2022). Many of these buildings have been demolished, and many more are at risk if we do not reevaluate this large building stock and create strategies to care for them.

03.6 **Findings**

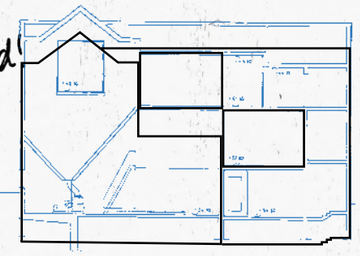
SITE SURVEY.

SITE: KRIGSRÅDET 3
DATE: 4/2-25
DIRTY PRESERVATIONISTS: WERA & ELIN

Taking notes from the NPS Preservation Brief #17 and #35, we will approach the building through three different phases.
First, stepping back and identifying overall visual aspects such as setting, building shape, openings, damages. *Photograph every facade on 35 mm, sketch, count inventory such as doors and windows.*

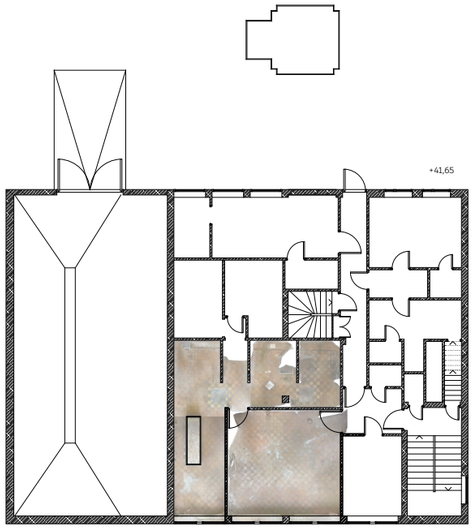


Secondly identifying the visual character at an arm's length in order to take note of material surface qualities and evidence of age and craftsmanship. *touch, photograph, scan, cast clay + latex, collection of artefacts, raking light.*
Third, identify the visual character of the interior spaces, features, and finishes. This final step deals with a building's interior and necessitates the careful inspection of individual rooms, as well as making notes of the general layout and floor plan, taking care to consider how spaces connect and relate to one another. *notes on printed floor plan, notes on connections, 3d scan rooms, room elevation photography*

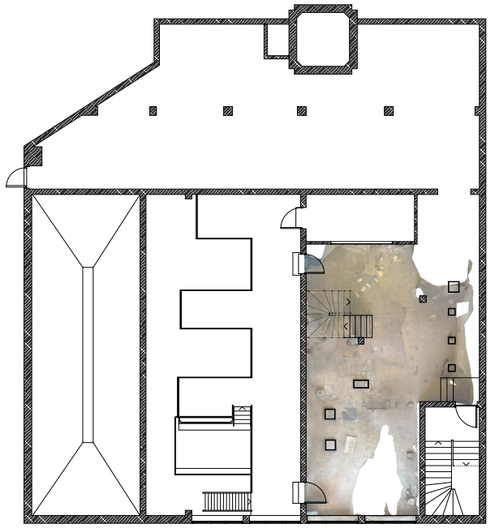


what to bring: notebook + pens, tape measure, printed plans, camera, battery powered lamp, phone for 3d scan, material scanner, latex, paint brush, artefact box, roller, screw driver, tape, sketching paper
warm clothes!
thermos: tea/coffee

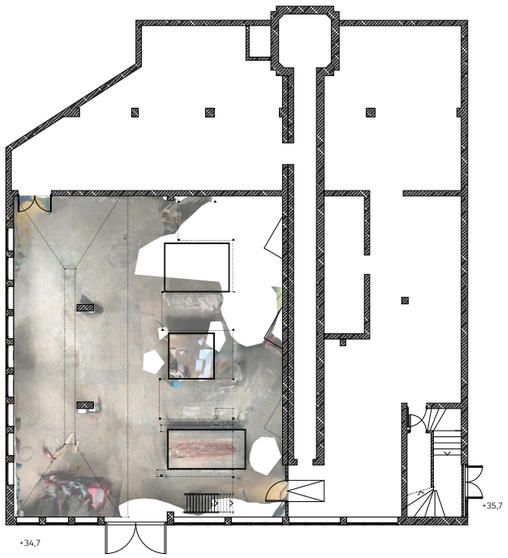
Getting dirty!! We pledge to not be afraid of the dirt - to even engage with it. While surveying the building we will look for a place with dirt and signs of use that will be preserved through a latex cast. We will need time and precision, in order to apply several layers and to let it dry between each.



The Laundry Room,
Second Floor



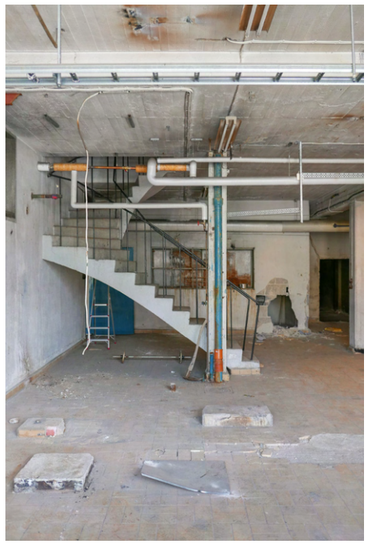
The Pump Room,
First Floor

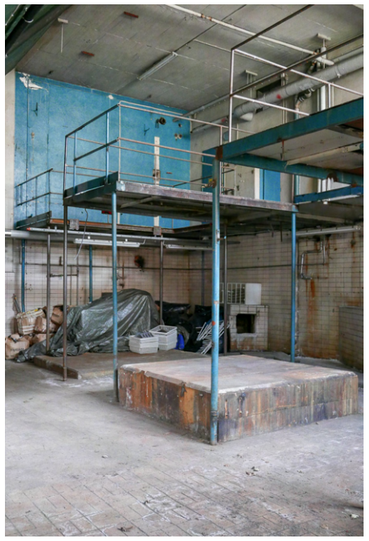


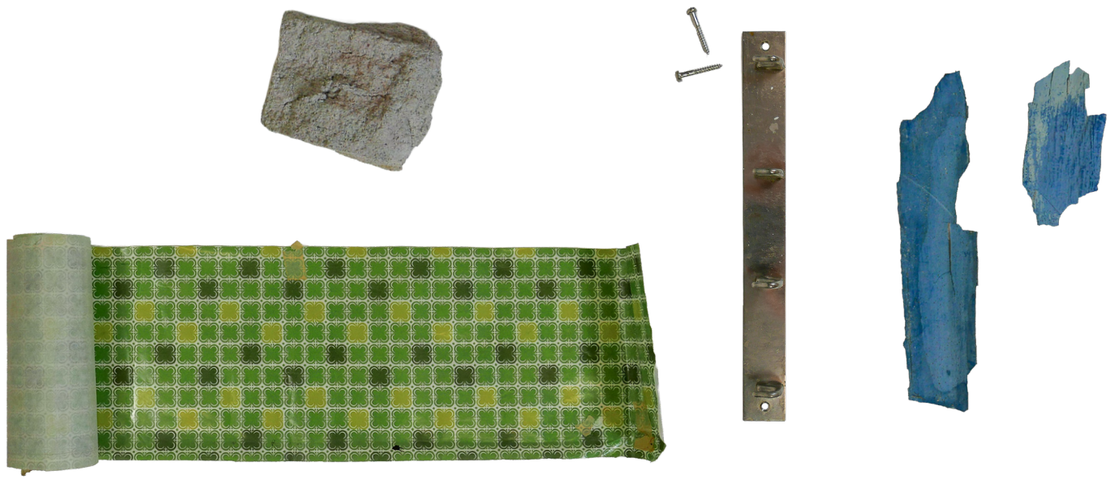
The Boiler Room,
Ground Floor

As Found

Photogrammetry, photography and measured drawing are used to document the ”as found” state of the building, meaning that nothing is polished from its current state. Our efforts are focused on three rooms central to the building’s past function; the laundry, the pump room and the boiler room.

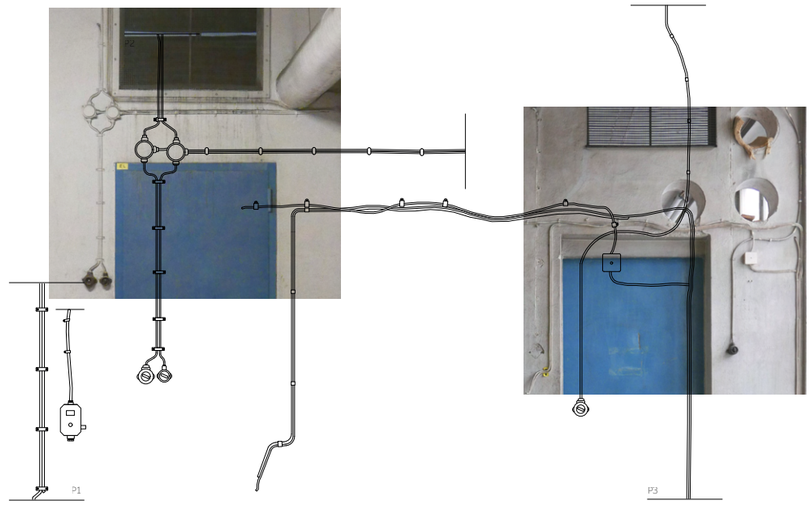


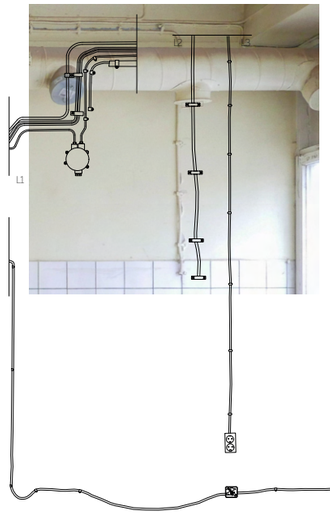


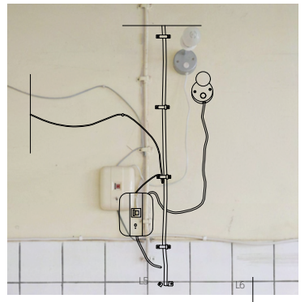


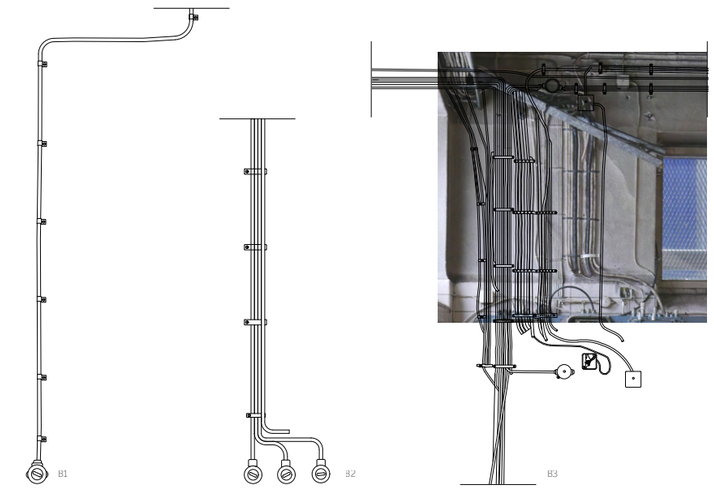
Collected Artifacts

The task to document the building involves the collection of seemingly insignificant objects, such as electric wiring, switches, fragments of material. These are considered artifacts worthy of documentation and preservation.







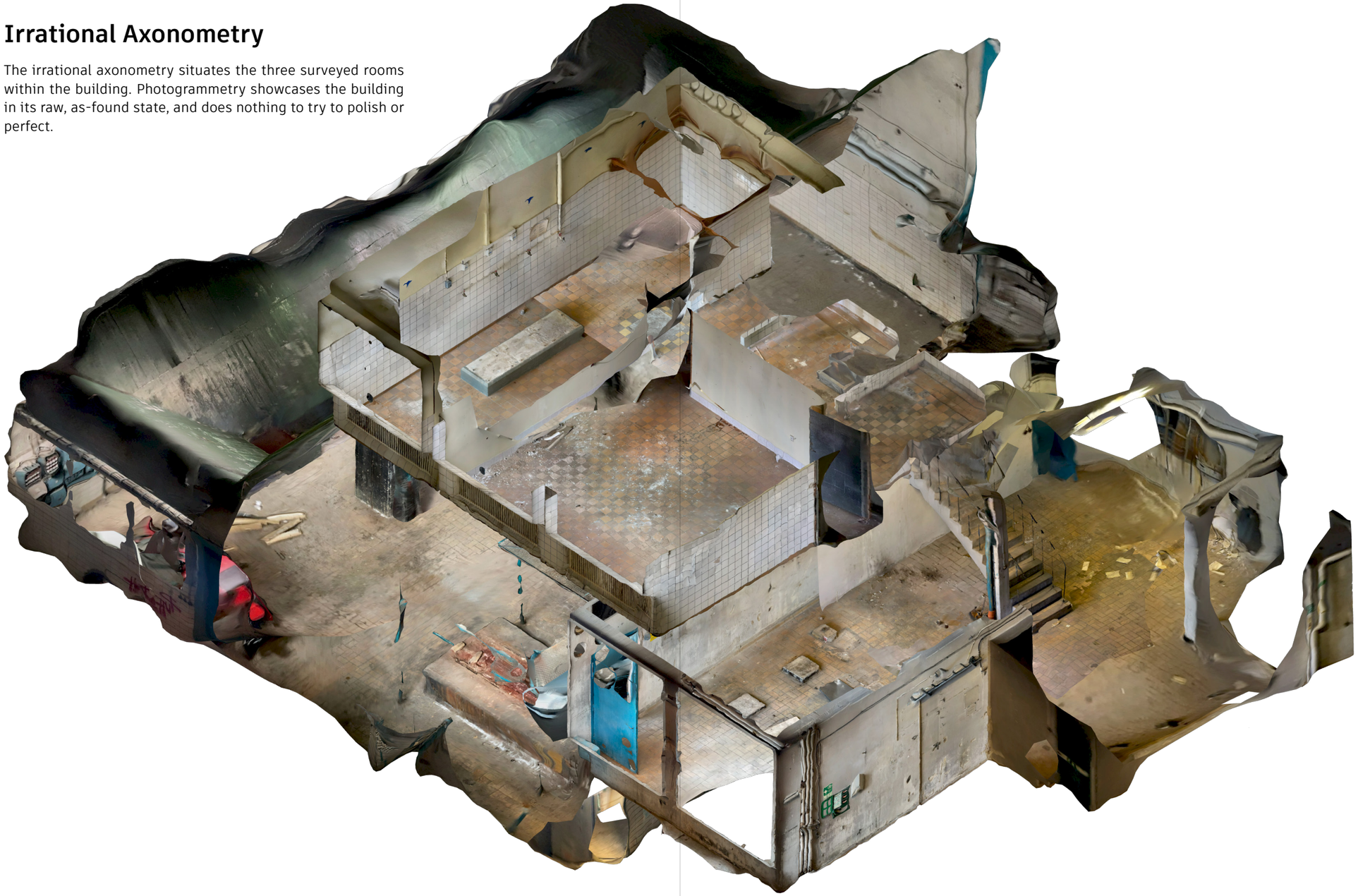


Later wall addition in the laundry room

Deterioration of wall and window in the pump room

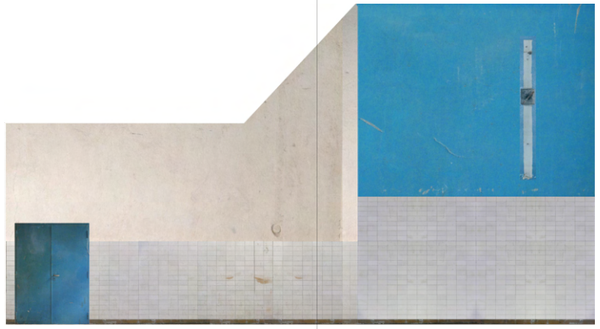
Irrational Axonometry

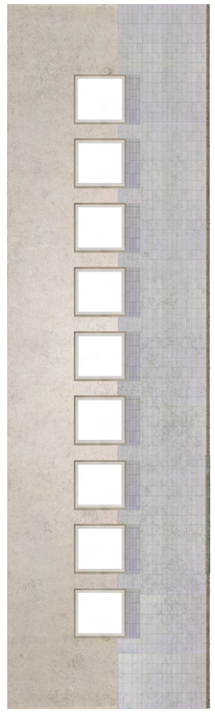
The irrational axonometry situates the three surveyed rooms within the building. Photogrammetry showcases the building in its raw, as-found state, and does nothing to try to polish or perfect.

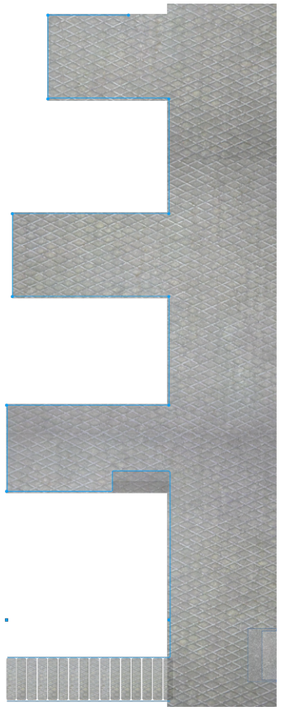


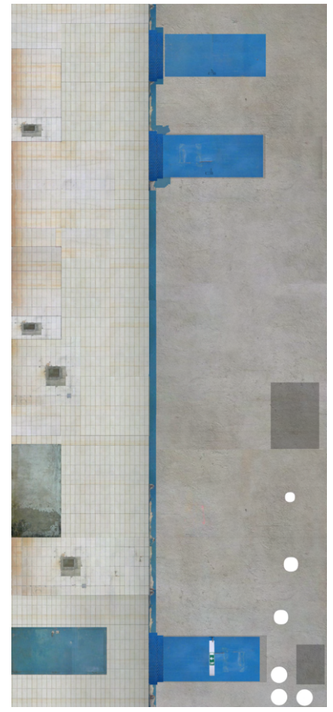
Folded Out Room

The boiler room in its ”as found” state. Its past function is narrated through dirt and burns on walls and floors, pedestals where boilers once stood, furnace remains, a massive green silo and a mezzanine floor connecting to the pump room.









A very dirty part of the boiler room wall, subject to staining and burns, before the application of latex.

Dirt Cast

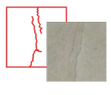
This intervention is made in a dirty corner of the boiler room. The use of latex is commonly used in preservation when cleaning monuments. The latex and dirt that is pulled away with it is usually discarded, but here the cast is displayed as a work of preservation in itself. The dirt is valued as traces of age and previous activities.

Stills from video showing the process of applying and removing the latex cast.

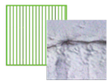
Hole in the wall as seen from the pump room, previously connecting pipes from the boilers to the pumps. The visible burn marks and material loss is most likely due to heat and impact damage.

Deterioration Mapping
of Pump Room Wall

The deterioration mapping is done on two sides of a wall dividing the boiler room and pump room, in accordance with ICOMOS-ISCS Illustrated glossary on stone deterioration patterns. The glossary constitutes a common language among conservators and practitioners.

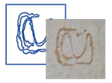

Crack

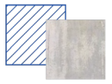

Peeling

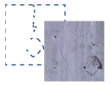

Material loss

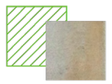

Graffiti

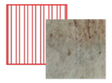

Mechanical damage

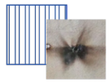

Deposit


Bleaching


Ghost


Staining


Soiling


Soiling, burn

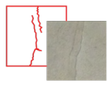
Note: The categories of the glossary are sourced from ICCOMOS except for "ghost". This is our own addition, meaning visible traces from a previous structure.

Corrosion of iron elements has resulted in bursting, and has, perhaps with the combination of impact damage, resulted in missing parts.

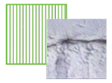
Material loss around a hole in the wall, previously leding pipes from the boiler room to the pump room. Causes of material loss may be impact damage and heat emitted from the pipes (see burn marks around the corresponding hole in the pump room).

Deterioration Mapping
of Boiler Room Wall

The deterioration mapping is done on two sides of a wall dividing the boiler room and pump room, in accordance with ICOMOS-ISCS Illustrated glossary on stone deterioration patterns. The glossary constitutes a common language among conservators and practitioners.

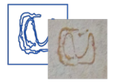

Crack

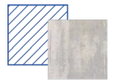

Peeling

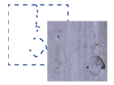

Material loss


Graffiti

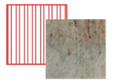

Mechanical damage

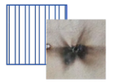

Deposit


Bleaching

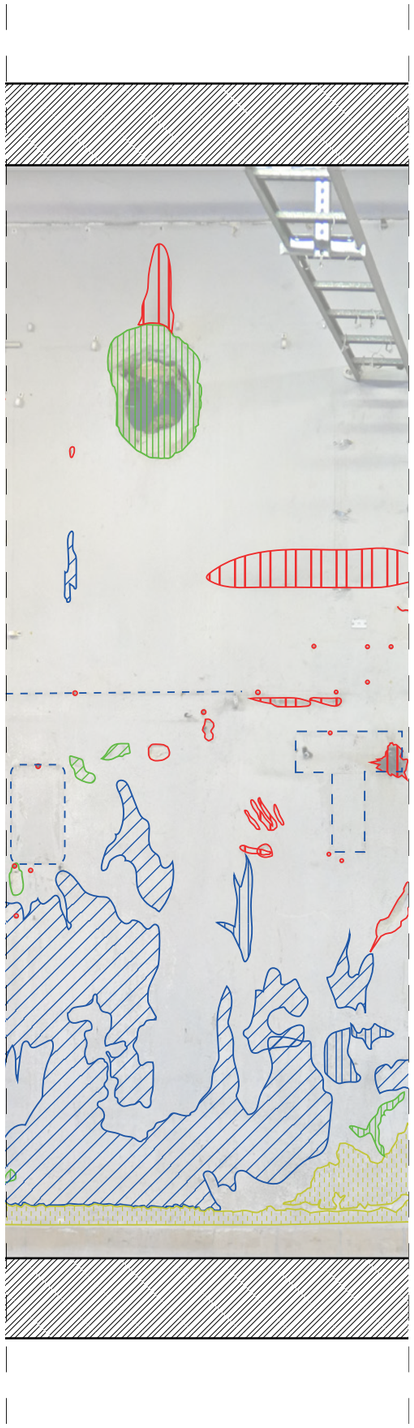

Ghost


Staining


Soiling


Soiling, burn

Note: The categories of the glossary are sourced from ICCOMOS except for "ghost". This is our own addition, meaning visible traces from a previous structure.



Traces of Past Use

The mapping reveals layers of dirt and damage. Although these layers may appear to be of no value at first sight, they carry information about past use - some may even be essential to the building's history. Findings include hand prints, "ghosts" of previous structures, impact damage and burns from the boilers.

04
INSTRUCTIONS

Instructions for Dirty Preservation

With the help of our findings, the following instructions are formulated for the future safeguarding of the building. They act as a guiding document, with the aim of taking past stories into account while addressing future stakeholders; urging them to carry out dirty preservation when reprogramming the building for the future.

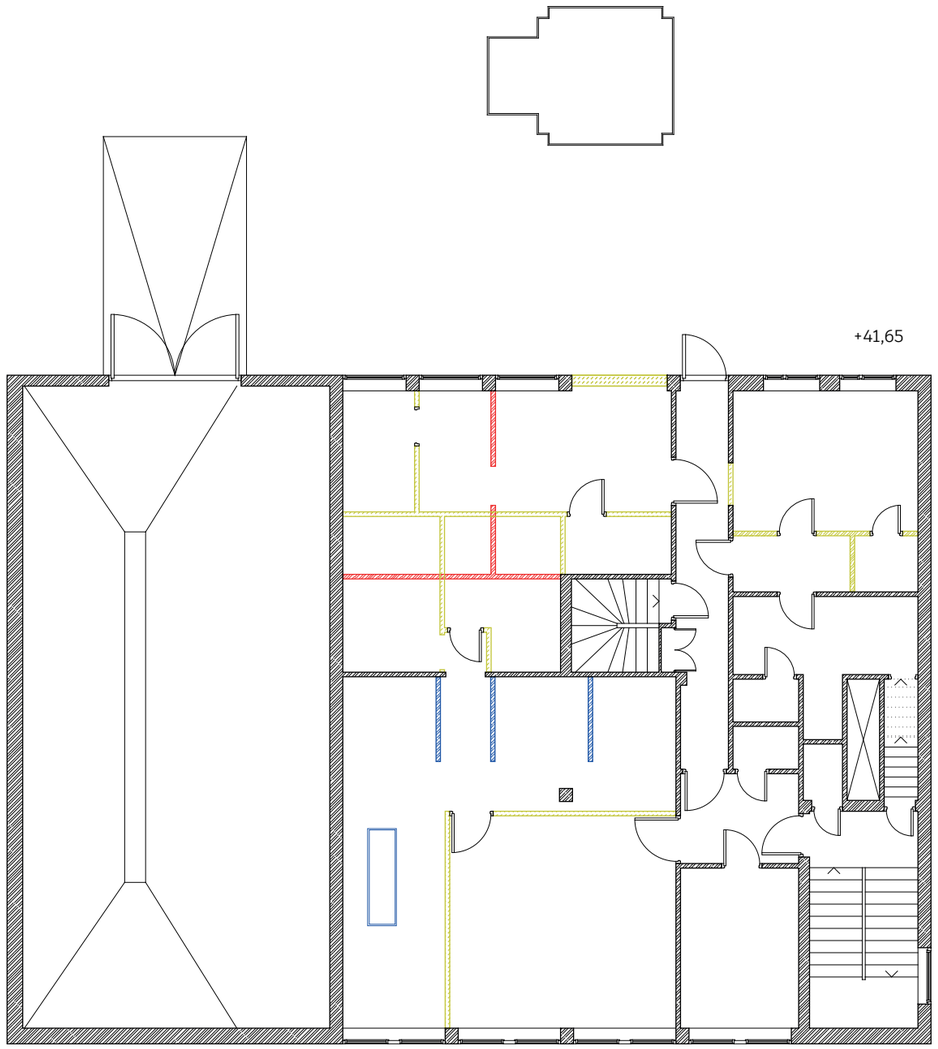


fig. A
Second Floor
1:100 (A3)

Original, preserve in place

Preserve/reuse element within building

Original, possible change

Reuse material within building

Later addition, possible change

Possible addition

INSTRUCTION TO RE-CONFIGURE

Follow the preservation floor plans (figure A-C) and elevation maps (figure D-E) as your operational guide. The building has been evaluated – your task is to reconfigure with care and creativity.

Preserve in place elements that retain spatial relationships and materiality essential to the building's story. **Disassemble and reuse** elements and materials that serve the building better in new configurations. **Add and dismantle** with the aim of enabling multiple functions and coexisting activities.

On surfaces, **preserve** marks that retain historical importance to the building and past activity, such as graffiti and burn marks. **Clean** stains, soilings and other signs of neglect. Repaint where marked necessary. **Repair** damaged areas using recommended techniques (see: Instruction to Repair).

Read together with: Figure A-E

About: This instruction concerns the general structure and layout of the building. All changes do not have to be done at once or follow a specific order. The aim is to create well functioning rooms and allow for multiple functions and activities to coexist in the building at once. The instruction is further clarified through an elevation map, illustrating the wall dividing the boiler room and pump room. It instructs on what to preserve and how to counteract neglect through care and repair.

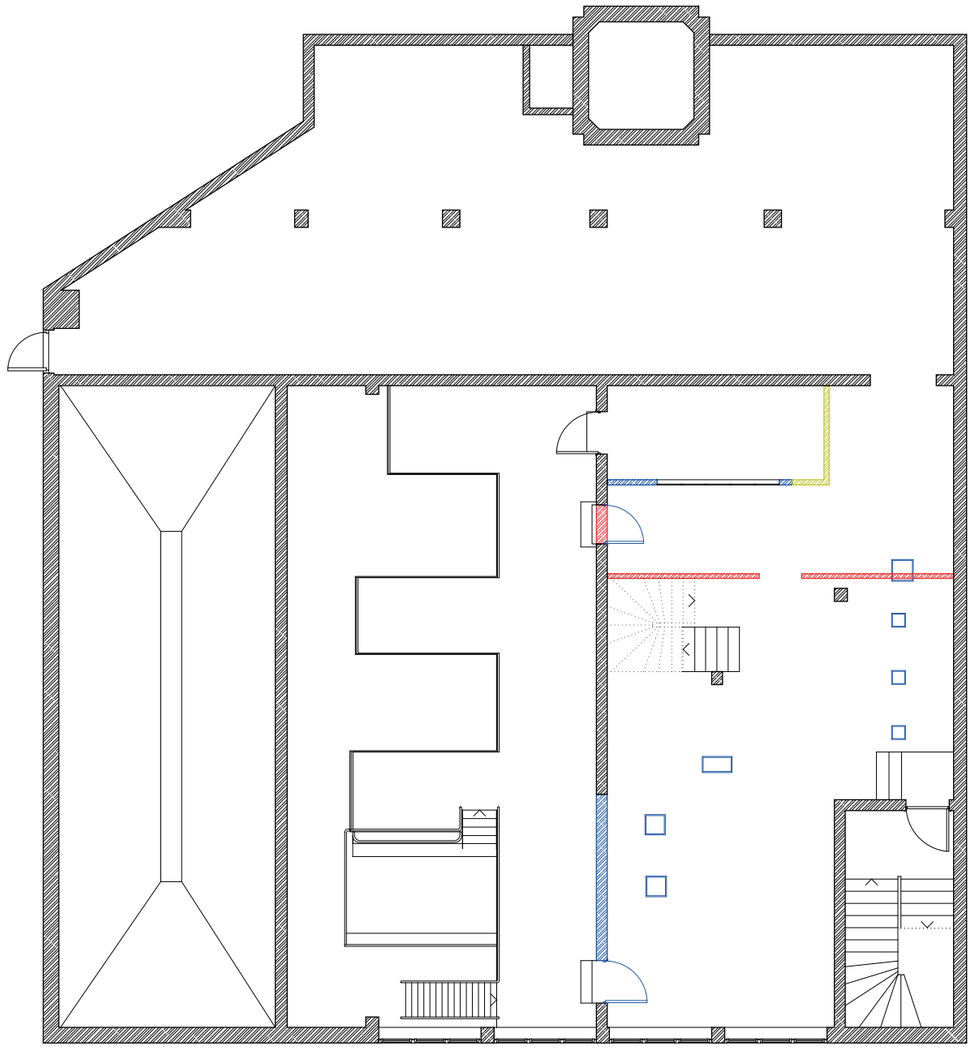


fig. B
First Floor
1:100 (A3)

Original, preserve in place

Original, possible change

Later addition, possible change

Preserve/reuse element within building

Reuse material within building

Possible addition

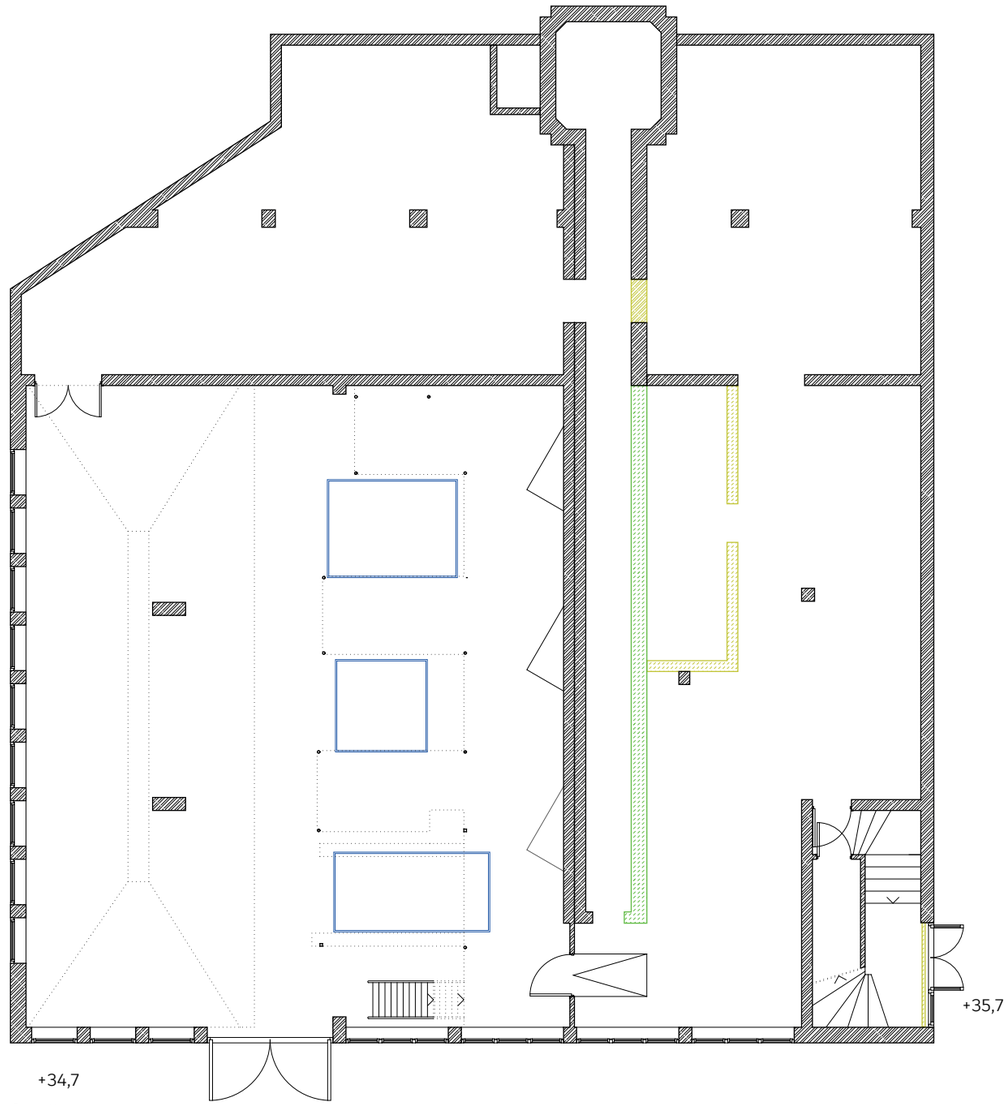


fig. C
Ground Floor
1:100 (A3)

5 m

fig. D

Elevation Map
of Pump Room Wall

In the elevation map, findings from the deterioration map are transformed into action. Burns from the previous infrastructure are preserved, while stains are cleaned and peeling paint is repainted. The holes from the previous pipes are important to decode the connection between the boiler room and pump room, and are therefor preserved in place and repaired. An assigned section of the wall below can be removed from its original placement, but should be preserved within the building due to the high grade of traces.

Preserve in place

Repair, infill

Preserve element within building

Repair, paint

Clean

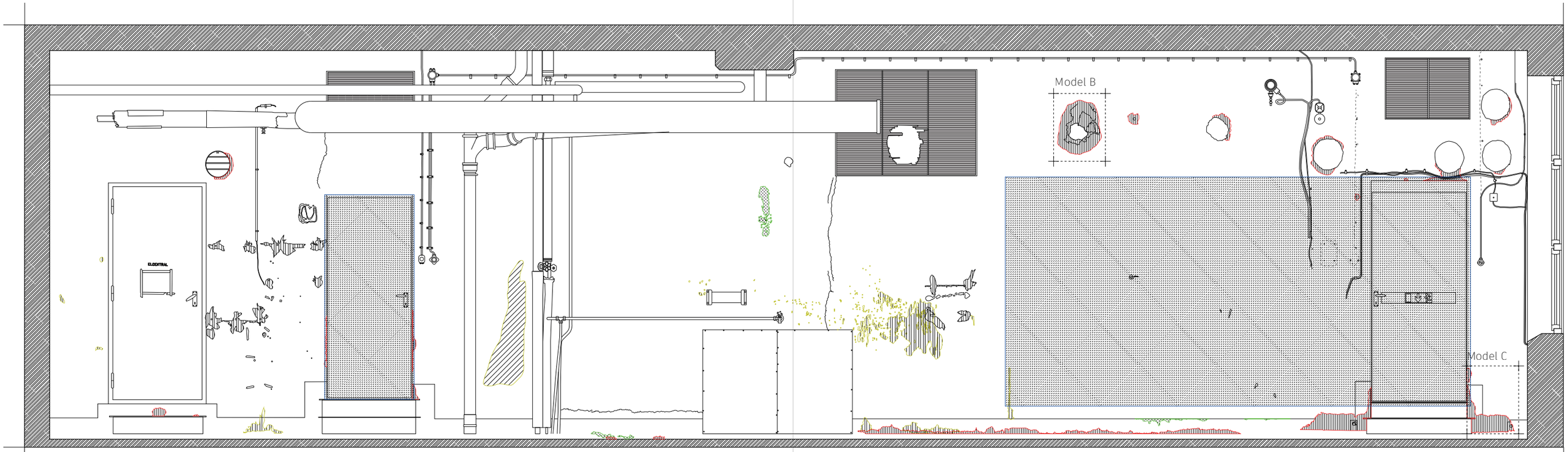


fig. E

Elevation Map
of Boiler Room Wall

In the elevation map, findings from the deterioration map are transformed into action. Burns from the previous infrastructure are preserved, while stains are cleaned and peeling paint is repainted. The holes from the previous pipes are important to decode the connection between the boiler room and pump room, and are therefor preserved in place and repaired. An assigned section of the wall below can be removed from its original placement, but should be preserved within the building due to the high grade of traces.

Preserve in place

Repair, infill

Preserve element within building

Repair, paint

Clean

fig. F
Care and repair of boiler room wall in progress.

INSTRUCTION TO RE-PAIR

When practicing repairs, make sure their legibility by using the method of differentiation. Do not conceal damage or attempt to mimic the original. Each intervention should declare itself, while remaining materially and aesthetically in dialogue with its context.

Apply resin to smaller areas of material loss where subtle repair is needed, such as door frames, fine joinery, fractured edges. Let the translucency signal the intervention.

Use cocciopesto to fill larger voids, and damaged areas of wall and floor. The mix must include crushed material such as brick sourced from the building. The rough texture and color will contrast with the

---

Read together with: Figure F, Model A-C

About: The aim of this instruction is not to advocate newness, however, a well-kept material, maintained through cautious repairs and careful refreshes, will prevent neglect – whereas a lack of maintenance will result in complete decay and eventually demolition. Maintenance is a mode of care – consistent, visible, and deliberate. The goal is not to restore the building to a former state, but to extend its life with honesty and respect for its existing material condition.

Model B

Model A-B. The hole in its broken condition. (see situation in its context in elevation map, fig. E)

Materials for Repair: Cocciopesto

The model shows a material exploration of how a hole in a wall can be repaired using cocciopesto, a durable Roman material made from crushed fragments like brick and tile. The material is sourced from the site, in this case brick and stone from the boiler room. The rough texture and distinct color clearly mark the intervention.

Model C. The door frame in its damaged condition. (see situation in its context in elevation map, fig E)

Model C

Materials for Repair: Resin

The model shows a material exploration of how a repair using translucent resin can be made on a door frame. Long used in both art and architectural conservation, resins like epoxy provide strong adhesion and durability. Here, the resin fills the material loss precisely, allowing the damage to remain visible.

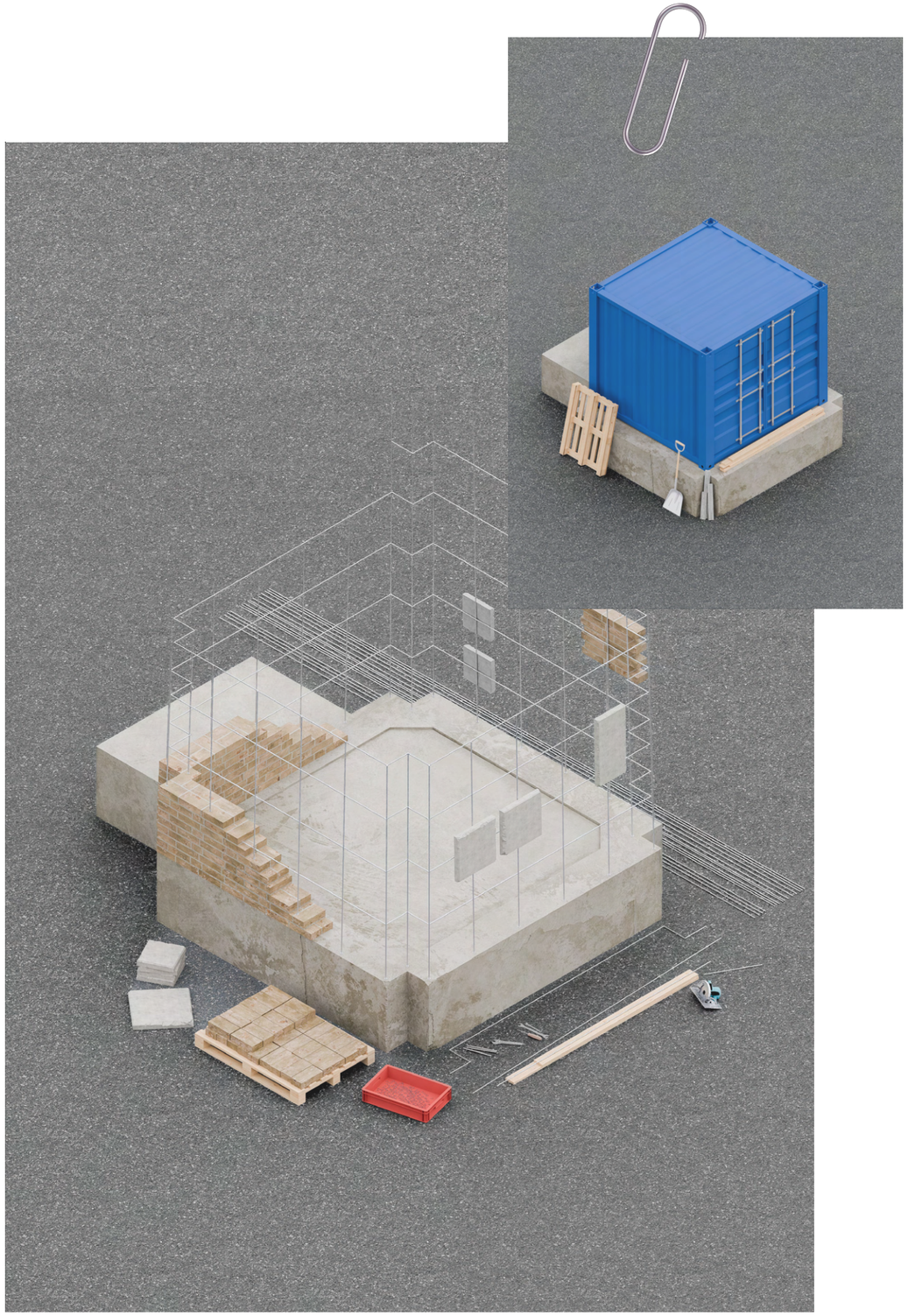


fig. G
Current state (right) of the chimney base. Reconstruction (left) in progress.

INSTRUCTION TO RE-CONSTRUCT

Reconstruct the chimney to restore a lost context. Use a metal framework to elevate fragments and materials found within the building, such as brick and pedestals. This alludes to the former shape while not replicating it. See the framework as a canvas for spolia.

Read together with: Figure G

About: This instruction aims to reinstate the boiler plant's lost context – that is the chimney that also served as a landmark in the neighbourhood. Without it, the boiler plant's emergence, life and death is inaccessible to a passer by. The instruction combines the method of reconstruction with an experimental approach where material can be freely sourced from the building and displayed ontop the framework.

fig. H
Assembly of electrical artifacts in the laundry room in progress. The previous wall dividing the room has been removed, leaving a visible trace in the wall and ceiling.

INSTRUCTION TO RE-ASSEMBLE

Carefully **dismantle and collect electrical artifacts** from within the building that are no longer functioning, or obstruct new installations and reconfigurations.

Reassemble them on the assigned canvas; the ceiling of the previous laundry room. The assembly should consider the wound created from the dismantling of the unoriginal wall, as well as original lamp fixtures in the laundry room.

Read together with: Figure H

About: In the laundry room, one of the building's main rooms, the unoriginal wall is taken down as it is ad-hoc and haphazard and obstructs light. Within this room, the collection of dismantled electrical artifacts are displayed. Celebrating past activity, they are exhibited as important artifacts from the infrastructure; that were used daily and touched countless times.

INSTRUCTION TO RE-PAIR

When practicing repairs, make sure their legibility by using the method of differentiation. Do not conceal damage or attempt to mimic the original. Each intervention should declare itself, while remaining materially and aesthetically in dialogue with its context.

Apply resin to smaller areas of material loss where subtle repair is needed, such as door frames, fine joinery, fractured edges. Let the translucency signal the intervention.

Use cocciopesto to fill larger voids, and damaged areas of wall and floor. The mix must include crushed material such as brick sourced from the building. The rough texture and color will contrast with the

Read together with: Figure F, Model A-C

About: The aim of this instruction is not to advocate newness, however, a well-kept material, maintained through cautious repairs and careful refreshes, will prevent neglect – whereas a lack of maintenance will result in complete decay and eventually demolition. Maintenance is a mode of care – consistent, visible, and deliberate. The goal is not to restore the building to a former state, but to extend its life with honesty and respect for its existing material condition.

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INSTRUCTION TO RE-CONFIGURE

Follow the preservation floor plans (figure A-C) and elevation maps (figure D-E) as your operational guide. The building has been evaluated – your task is to reconfigure with care and creativity.

Preserve in place elements that retain spatial relationships and materiality essential to the building's story. **Disassemble and reuse** elements and materials that serve the building better in new configurations. **Add and dismantle** with the aim of enabling multiple functions and coexisting activities.

On surfaces, **preserve** marks that retain historical importance to the building and past activity, such as graffiti and burn marks. **Clean** stains, sollings and other signs of neglect. Repaint where marked necessary. **Repair** damaged areas using recommended techniques (see: Instruction to Repair).

Read together with: Figure A-E

About: This instruction concerns the general structure and layout of the building. All changes do not have to be done at once or follow a specific order. The aim is to create well functioning rooms and allow for multiple functions and activities to coexist in the building at once. The instruction is further clarified through an elevation map, illustrating the wall dividing the boiler room and pump room. It instructs on what to preserve and how to counteract neglect through care and repair.

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When practicing repairs, make sure their legibility by using the method of differentiation. Do not conceal damage or attempt to mimic the original. Each intervention should declare itself, while remaining materially and aesthetically in dialogue with its context.

Apply resin to smaller areas of material loss where subtle repair is needed, such as door frames, fine joinery, fractured edges. Let the translucency signal the intervention.

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05 CONVERSATION

05.1 **Transcript**

Two Dirty Preservationists in Dialogue

Dirty Preservationist 1: Now that we’re reaching the end of the project, tying ends together, making sense of it all, I feel like we have been drawing the outlines of a whole new role – the dirty preservationist.

Dirty Preservationist 2: Actually, every decision we have taken throughout the process has been through the position of the dirty preservationist – one who is not afraid to mess with the status quo of things, who follows the dirt, and considers the possibility of anything being regarded as heritage.

DP1: Like when we decided that this obsolete building, the boiler plant, has to be preserved and cared for, we were deliberately challenging the usual way of things.

DP2: And when sifting through the dirt, through our documentation and interventions, we’ve uncovered value even in the most mundane traces of activity in the boiler plant; traces of work, maintenance, care, of people being present. Traces that we regard as heritage, and that have helped us understand the building’s life, its function, and its failures.

DP1: To destroy the building would be to erase those stories completely.

DP2: And more than that – it’s valuable simply because it already exists. We can’t justify tearing down more built space in favour of endless redevelopment. But of course, caring for our built environment takes time and work, and we’ve got to get creative. Seeing the building as a collage and assembly of parts and processes, and urging for their preservation, we challenge the usual ways of transformation that entails strategies of either refreshment or aestheticization of patina – strategies that ultimately aim for a commodification of buildings.

DP1: That being said, what is really the approach of the dirty preservationist?

DP2: The approach is neither a quick clean-up job, nor the aestheticization of grit and decay. I mean, our point is not to preserve it in a stagnant state, as a ‘do not touch’ monument, like a conservationist would do. With that approach it stays obsolete and unused.

DP1: Isn’t it really all about practicing care? We urge a holistic and sustainable approach towards the built environment, refusing to ignore what’s already there. Care is a process that follows the dirt: the materials, decoding soilings and traces, observing where it came from and putting in the effort of safeguarding it into the future.

DP2: For me, practicing care has meant critically engaging with the process of development and redevelopment. We have challenged how and when we as architects interact with the project.

DP1: Usually the preservationist evaluates the building and creates action plans, and the architect adjusts the material to the market, developer or user. We have made a point of staying within the process.

DP2: While morphing and messing with preservation methods.

DP1: We’ve come to realize that care isn’t just a gentle gesture; it’s about resisting forces of planned obsolescence, destruction and commodification, while developing new models and methods. And that’s just what dirty preservation is all about.

05.2 **Closing Statement**

We loathe the sellable architecture which puts revenue before all other values, architecture as image that promotes only itself, sensational architecture that profits those who always profit and leaves destruction in its wake. This is a fundamental flaw with the profession we have chosen: there is always a financier, a stakeholder with the money and the power, and what we have been taught to design as architects is a product that can be sold to the likes. In the wake of this frustration, the position we have taken is one of the dirty preservationist. This role positions itself in the center of the development process, not just looking at the end product, but rather the process of evaluation before a transformation is made. The dirty preservationist refuses to stay in a locked position, instead reaching both backwards and forwards in the process; connecting to latent histories as well as addresses future architects and developers; urging questions of 'how?' and 'why?', rather than 'what?' and 'for whom?'. The dirty preservationist sifts through the dirt, working with the existing, but is at the same time not afraid to move and reassemble parts in new configurations. In the case of this thesis, the work of the dirty preservationist is compiled into a set of instructions, to be regarded as a zoning plan or a culture-classification. The instructions are then handed to a future stakeholder in order for them to practice dirty preservation, which can generate new modes to preserve as well as new perspectives on heritage.

However, advancing this project has sometimes been troublesome. We have questioned if we are romanticizing the dust and grime, if we are developing the dirt into a gritty aesthetic – a tool often used in gentrification and commodification, which works with the dirt, aestheticizing it (Frichot, 2019). Even within preservation, the age value of the monument or fragment – the aesthetics and romanticizing of the ruin – is a factor that contributes to its survival. On the other hand, a failure to preserve and maintain results in disrepair, and demands for quick clean-up jobs – revitalization supported by the perceived economic benefits of redevelopment and gentrification (Frichot, 2019).

This is where care as a critical concept of reorientation comes into play, and the possibilities it opens up in regards to engaging with overlooked objects. Joan Tronto defines care as an "activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible" (Fischer & Tronto, 1990). Caring for that which is deemed dirty and obsolete generates alternative ways of practicing architecture: as a reparative force, challenging destructive cycles of economic growth. In that sense, recognizing the need for care of an overlooked building is an act of defiance. It requires time, effort, even slowness, which makes it easier for a future developer to demolish the building altogether instead of putting in the work and money to preserve.

This is the unfortunate reality for many buildings, the boiler plant included. Further, creative possibilities are opened up when caring for the existing: stay with the dirt, get dirty, get inspired, mess with it even more.

Working within the realm of preservation, and pronouncing the boiler plant as worthy of this, has allowed us to engage with overlooked traces and create caring actions for their safeguarding. Through experimenting with conventional methods of preservation we have found that they hold vast potential when allowed to be smudged and applied to the "wrong" things. Otero-Pailos describes how the experimental preservationist tests objects' potential of being considered heritage, thus offering friction against definitions made by heritage organizations and cultural institutions (Otero-Pailos et al., 2016). In doing so, we ask ourselves: If we look closely enough, can anything be heritage?

We might not agree on the answer, but we, the dirty preservationists, urge for the preservation of all buildings. Engaging with other heritage has been a mode that has allowed us to challenge binary categories used to describe buildings and motivate renewal: valuable–obsolete, modern–unmodern and demolish–preserve. Contemporary theory has offered progressive models that have aided us in challenging 'business as usual', but how do we combine theory and practice, as well as develop our architectural thinking, into new modes of practicing? Through a combination of conventional and experimental practices a morphed preservation method as well as instructions have been developed. The aim of the instructions is not to produce commodified results but to address, through making, bigger issues as well as explore the preservation practice, considering that which is preserved as a continuous projection into the future.

The significance lies not in the instructions themselves, but in the ethos behind them – an ethos that embraces preservation as a critical form of resistance, and that dares to imagine an architectural discipline as a reparative force rather than a destructive one.

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