

# THE CARTOGRAPHY OF ANNO

Interlocking design roles of  
the archaeologist,  
the scenographer, and  
the architect

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## INTRO

Since 2007, the studio 'aNNo architecten' has been dedicated to the preservation and renovation of historic buildings, heritage sites, and monuments. The call for contributions "Explorations and Cartographies" of the journal "In Practice" provided a welcome incentive to examine the evolution of the practice through a cartography. The paper adopts a processual cartographic perspective and confines itself to a brief exposition of the discovered conceptual framework. However, the project "Batterij Aachen" will be employed as a case study to illustrate the conceptual framework. The paper starts with a short reflection on heritage to contextualize the working field of the studio.

## CONTEXT

Since the late 18th century, when the Conservation Movement emerged, the focus has shifted from single monuments to entire locations, landscapes, and even entire cities (Jokiletho 2001, Glendinning 2013). Ever since Alois Riegl proposed the concept of cultural heritage value typologies in 1903, the number of heritage value typologies that are considered preservable has increased dramatically (Fredheim 2016). A preservation discourse on the basis of heritage value typologies has become dominant in academia and practice and it transformed monuments "from a vehicle of nation building to an instrument of 'world making', in terms of creating a global, cosmopolitan awareness and identity". (Salazar 2020:24). Selection criteria for heritage designation are also based on this widening concept of heritage value typologies, and

as such have resulted in an enormous profusion of all kinds of artefacts and buildings that are considered worth for preservation (image 1).

At the other end, global issues like climate change, energy and demographics are pressuring the field of architecture to shift its focus to urban resource management. In both urbanism and architecture *'reduce, reuse, and recycle'* (Petzet 2012) have become an important new paradigm. As such, sites are now approached as abundant reservoirs of preservable artefacts due to cultural or ecological motives.

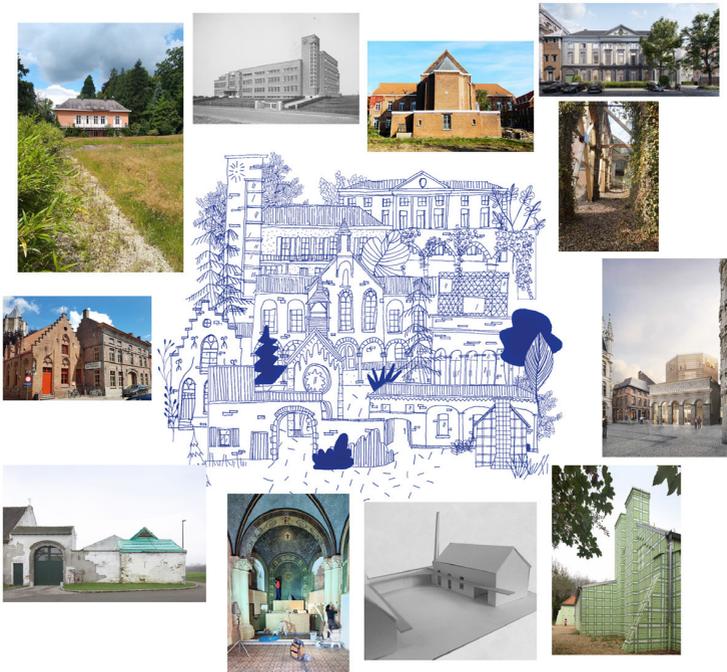


Image 1: Collage of the dispersed spatial and temporal territory of artefacts worth preserving. Collage of fragments of ongoing projects of aNNO, 2021. Starting at the top going clockwise: Hogere Zeevaartschool Antwerpen, Klooster Broeders van Liefde Leuven, Huis van Hamme Brugge, Kerkruïne Hulshout, Stadhuis Leuven, Museum Raversyde, Brouwerij Merchie, Kapel Robiano de Stolberg, Vierkantshoeve Bree-Eik, Schepenhuis Maldegem, Landhuis op site verdwenen Abdij Zevenbronnen. Source: aNNO architecten, by author

A simultaneous space or palimpsests (Machado, 1976) emerged as “a landscape chronicle of life and dwelling” (Adam, 1998:54) that can be characterized as a Tabula Plena (Roberts, 2016) or Tabula Scripta (Alkemade, 2021).

The scope, scale, and purpose of preservable objects have expanded conceptually and practically, as was briefly discussed above. In consequence, several scholars argue the contemporary heritage paradigm, based upon heritage value typologies like it evolved since the eighteenth century, can be deemed complete in the light of the ecological and social situation on earth (Jokiletho 1999, Glendinning 2013, Bazelmans 2016).

Thus, how could a practicing architect position himself in a world where the past is ubiquitous? Paradoxically, on the one hand there is a growing need (culturally, sociologically, and environmentally) to develop an active engagement with existing architecture, and at the other hand the well known heterotopian heritage strategies founded on heritage value typologies seem no longer matching with the diverse, post-colonial and post-anthropocene world. As a result, the disciplinary gap between architecture and conservation that has emerged during the nineteenth century, which I refer to as the Curated Distance, is called into question.

How might a sensible attitude towards the host structures arise in order to realize culturally, sociologically, and environmentally appropriate presents? The study of the heritage studio aNNO could be a possible explorative entry to delve into such question and track down evolving

views on heritage as project and idea. As such the conceptual framework of the heritage practice by means of a cartography could be embedded within the ongoing international debates on the architecture of alteration (Scott 2008, Grafe 2020, Alkemade 2021).

### PROCESSUAL CARTHOGRAPHY

The seminal study 'Rethinking maps' (Kitchin & Dodge, 2007) proposes viewing cartography rather processual than representational. As such, cartography is described as a cyclical process that occurs between experienced or imagined reality and its depiction by a map, or vice versa. Furthermore, cartography has a "projective potential that allows greater connection with the earth itself, rendering apparent and vivid the terrain as it departs, as it may be both to the eye and to the thought" (Desimini & Waldheim, 2016:10). As such, the studio's cartography might be a representation built along several processual acts. The paper is guided along the three main processual actions that have contributed to the cartography: documenting and observing, reading and writing, speculating and discussing.

### DOCUMENTING AND OBSERVING

Documents, images, and plans from aNNo's archive were obtained. Projects that had attained the conceptual design stage or were part of architecture competition proposals have been chosen for further investigation. Project sketches and images, as well as raw archival data, were organized chronologically in digital folders. As a result, a digitally documented chronological record of the practice emerges as a starting point for further observations.

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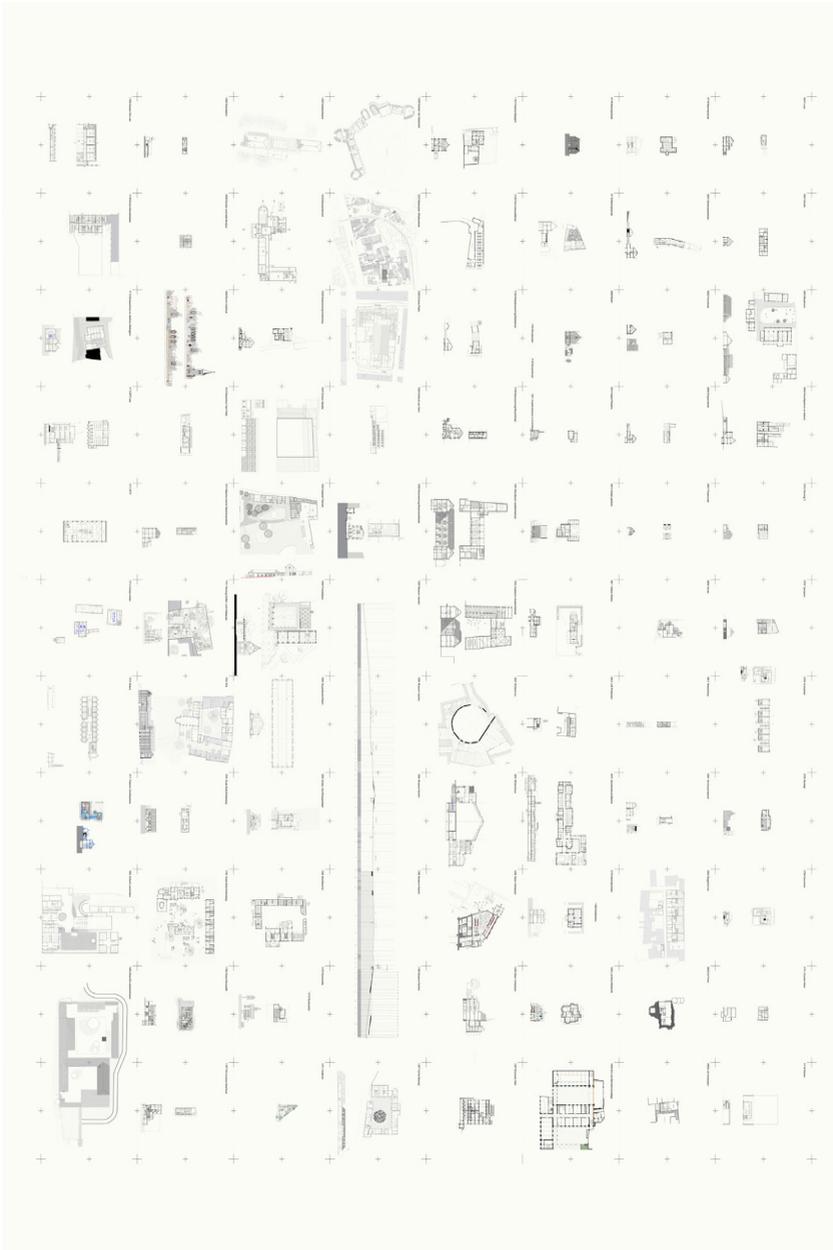


Image 2: Project drawings aNNo 2006-2020, sheet 1/3. Format: A0 poster. Source: aNNo architekten, by author

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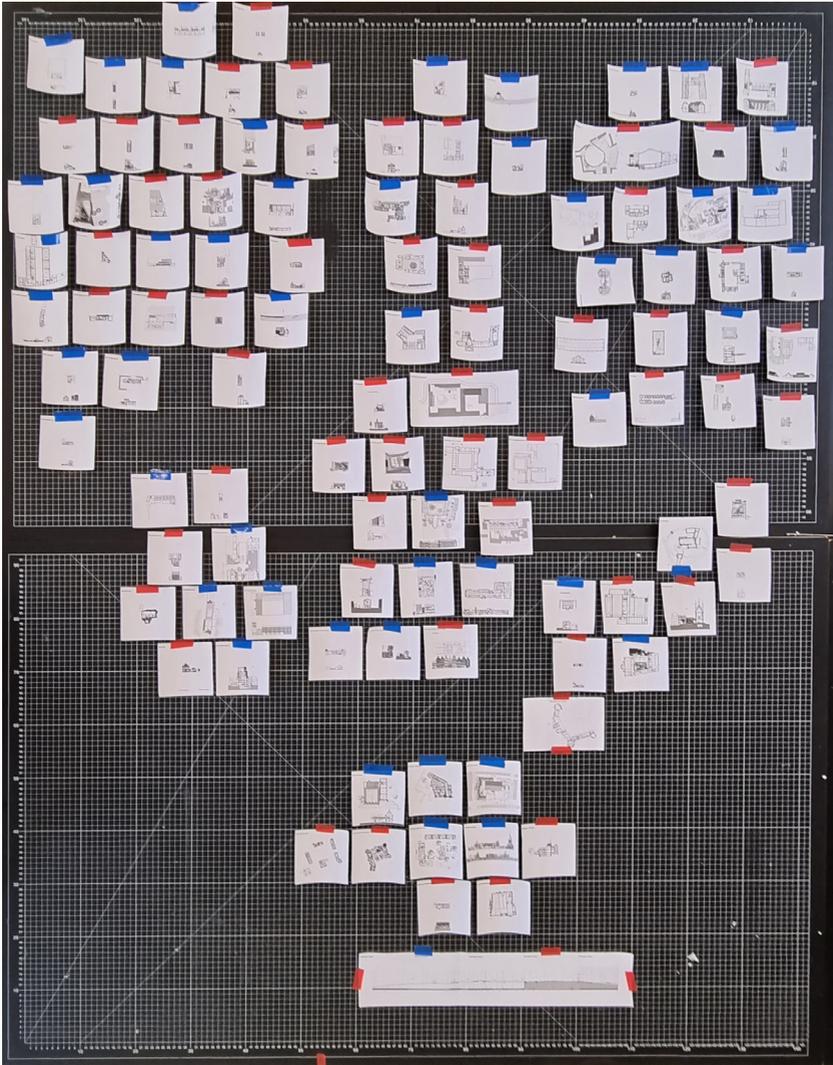


Image 3: Arranging and interpreting the chronicle on the model table of aNNo (two table of size A0). The A0 mappings were cut with scissors in 10x10cm squares. In this image the 10x10 cm project squares are thematically arranged according to design positions. Top left tends to architecture, top right tends to archeology and the bottom tends to scenography. Projects in between these corners tend to mix these activities. Format: 2x A0 cutter board. Source: aNNo architecten, by author

## READING AND WRITING

The second step envisages a gradual shift from reading the record towards writing new insights. The gradual shift is characterised by processes of abstraction, generalization, symbolisation and schematization.

### Abstraction

To begin, all of the selected projects are diagrammatically synthesised by portraying them in the same manner. Every project is represented by a plan and one matching section on the same representational scale in a 10x10cm grid. All plans and sections use the same graphic code: black solid hatches for walls, only black and grey for lines, and all lines are 0.1mm thick. The operations produce three A0-DIN-pages of built and unbuilt projects (image 2). The A0-grid displays the projects in a very exact, similar, and detailed manner. The graphical representation abstracts the projects into illustrative figures or diagrams. It decontextualizes them. The diagrams are devoid of representational differences and maintain spatial accuracy, with the ability to make generalizing statements. Additionally, the abstraction demonstrates effort. The intentional pursuit of abstraction also introduces distance, seeking to shift the architect from insider to outsider in reference to his own designs in order to strengthen the rigour and validity of subsequent observations.

### Generalization

Projects were clustered in generalizing combinations by using scissors, tape, and our model table (image 3).

The process explored several themes such as scale, collaborations, typology, built or unbuilt, historic periods, location, topography, budget, materials, surface. More relevant, three interconnected generalising design activities were extracted out of the mingling, labelling and tagging. To varied degrees, projects appear to demonstrate the combination of the following activities: ‘deep site learning’, ‘exploration’, and ‘crafting’. Each activity has its proper methods and, off course, were iteratively combined during the design process of the examined projects.

- *Deep site learning* (see image 4 and case-study) revisits the simultaneous space like archaeologists whom “unfolds lives and times of predecessors who, over the generations, have moved around in it and played their parts in its transformation. To perceive the landscape is therefore to carry out an act of remembrance” (Ingold, 2013:189). Deep site learning uses methods such as building surveys, archival research, iconographic comparison studies, pathology mapping, photographing, sketching and recording oral history sources by interviewing. The goal is to compose an iconographic record of the site.

The word deep refers to in-depth observations that involves direct, one-on-one engagement with the site based on something one has seen, heard, or noticed (qualitative data collection method). The variety of sources generates a stratified reading of the site’s history and current state.

- *Exploration* (see case study), as I approach it, wants to create an interpretation that draws on both the physical and meta-physical features of the site. It employs more



personal imaginings and are used as meaning-making and world-shaping devices” (Salazar, 2012: 864). The word scenographic, in my opinion, ties imaginaries to architecture and as such gives imaginaries a qualification like in “spatial” (scene), in “staged” (scenario) or also in “temporal” (stages).

- Next, these narrative explorations are materialised by means of *crafting* (image 5) to decide how the final project will look and feel. In other word, we look at the architecture project as a thoughtful crafting of artefacts with a documented identity (deep site learning) and a projected narrative (exploration). Crafting is characterised by reflection in action (Schön, 2011) and employs communicative and inquisitive processes such as sketching, drawing, drafting, model making, comparing, criticizing.

### Symbolization

- Three archetypes

In short, I represent the aforementioned interlocking activities by their archetype: the archaeologist, the scenographer, and the architect. From this combined perspective the preservationist can put emphasis on an intellectual and philosophical engagement with the existing site in the world.

Rather than ensuring an archaeological stewardship of the past from a technical preservation perspective. In this sense, heritage can be seen of as a conceptualized idea that is cooperatively built in place and time. A viewpoint that is in a similar form also present amongst Experimental Preservationists. This emphasis is significant

because it calls into question the dominant discourse (in western conservation paradigms) with very strong focus on the enduring and complete material preservation of the artefact as found (l' objet trouvé). The theorization of the collaborative archetypes could allow for a more fluid approach towards heritage. Prior to initiating the cartography, the aforementioned roles were implicit and unstated. By theorizing them, new transdisciplinary alliances with some other disciplines may develop over time i(n the context of the practice).

- Discursive-turn projects

Following personal reflections and discussions with the studio staff, peers and colleagues it appeared discursive-turn projects could be identified in the life of the practice. In retrospect, these projects called into question our methodology or approaches, and provided new insights or directions for the practice.

A further elaborate discussion of these discursive-turn projects and description would lead beyond the scope of this short paper. Although, the sequence of the selected discursive-turn projects suggests the practice slowly is shifting from a small scale technical preservation architecture practice towards a maturing interdisciplinary heritage-design studio, where critical thinking about one's own discipline is an emerging topic.

Schematization of the framework

- An open-ended expanding spiral (image 6)

The reading of the practice as a sequence of selected



discursive-turn projects could be schematized as an open-ended expanding spiral along the design activities and archetypes. The variable thickness of the blue lines shows the lack or presence of the indicated activities or archetypes in the identified discursive-turn-projects. The growing length of the segments in the tripartite spiral schematizes the practice's overall growing experience.

- Iconographies of the practice

Around the spiral, the iconographies for each of the three design activities are symbolised. The iconographies are composed by using 3 x 19 important images such as schemes, drawings, plans, reference books. These images are, currently, both memorial and referential to the studio. The iconographies are a source for new projects, but they also offer critical reflections on projects that have already been done. The iconographies are not fixed, but the image selection evolves throughout time..

- Communities of the practice

In retrospect, certain collaborations have had a significant impact on our design processes or projects. The communities' exterior influence adds collaboration to the discursive-turn projects. Not just with architects, but also with other disciplines such as artists, photographers, landscape architects, craftspeople, historicists, specific clientele, and many more. The heterogeneous group is referred to as the communities of practice.

CASE STUDY: MUSEUM PROJECT BATTERY “AACHEN”.

The artillery battery “Aachen” is a listed monument an part of the Atlantic Wall museum in Raversyde (Ostend). It is the only German First World War coastal battery of which enough structures have survived to obtain a fine, comprehensive picture of the coastal defences in 1914-18. aNNo was comissioned to restore its remaines, and rethink the scenography. In retrospect the projects embodies, for the first time, the conceptual framework in its completeness (deep learning, exploration and crafting). As such it could be considered as a discursive-turn project.

**The archaeologist.** Deep site learning involved the survey of the heritage artifacts (bunkers, structures, pathology) and futher the intersiciplinary recording of the site (biological landscape, the visitors’ experiences, historic stratifications, the apllied materials, the disappeared objects and so on). We also looked at old military techniques such as the razzle dazzle camouflage (image 24). Further, we excavated the



Image 7: project plan for “Batterij Aachen” depicting sea, beach, dunes, routing and artefacts. Project zone indicated by black line, an landscape area of roughly 80.000m2. Credit: aNNo..

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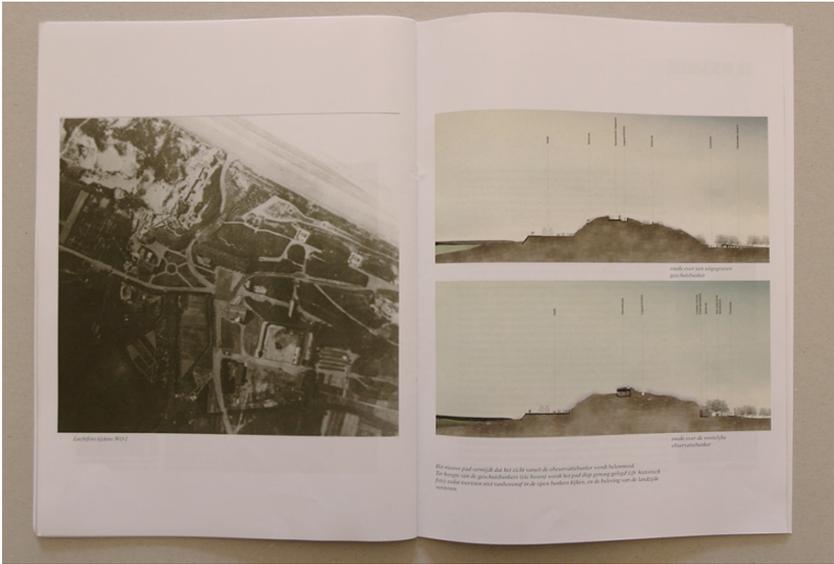


Image 8, left: aerial reconnaissance photograph, 1916. Credit: museum Ravensyde.

Image 8, right: study of the pathways in section on the basis of aerial photograph. Collage. Credit: aNNo.

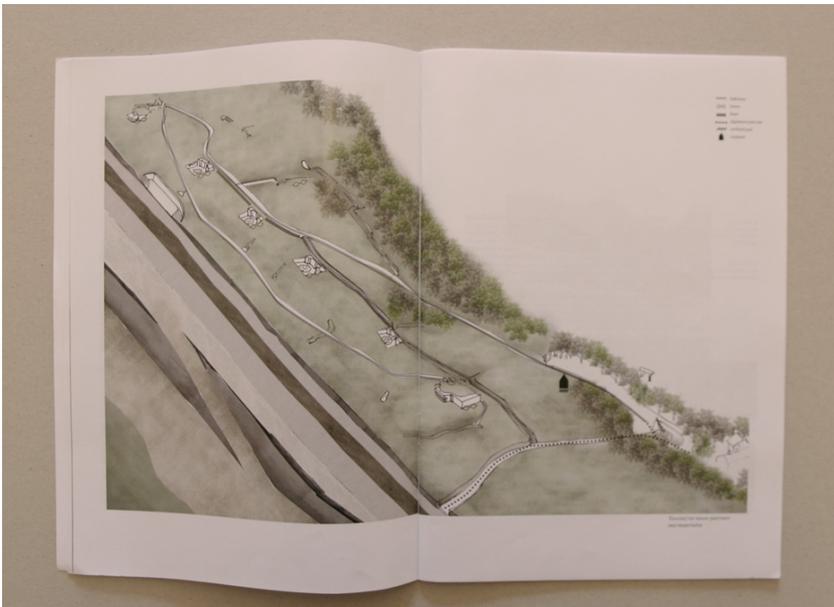


Image 9: study of the pathways, bunkers and artillery emplacements by sketching. Credit: aNNo.

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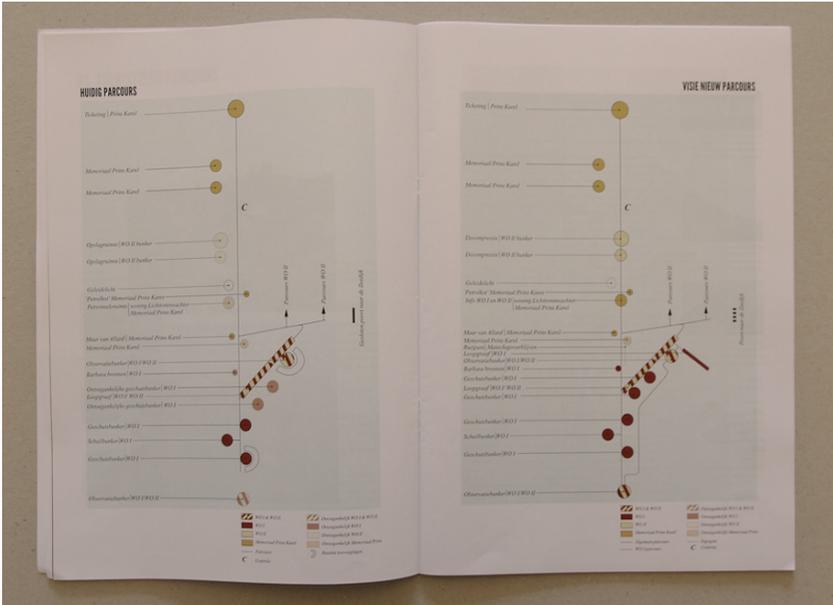


Image 10: scenography. A cabinet of curiosities, linking routing with objects, experiences and stories. Scheme before and after. Credit: aNNO.



Image 11: crafting the new pathways by means of a model (300cm x 90cm).. Navigating between topography, historical references (image 9), scenography (image 11), documentation about fauna and flora and accessibility conditions. Credit: aNNO.



Image 12, left: scenographic installation inside bunker n°4, credit Filip Dujardin 2021.



Image 13, right: scenographic installation of personnel barracks, credit Filip Dujardin 2021.

memories that were concealed in the location. We found out a fascinating pré-war history (such as the history of the royal holiday villa which had been present on the site, image 29) and an peculiar post-war use of the site by the cultural milieus of Prince-Regent Karel and painter Bastien (image 26) who lived and dwelled on the site.

> See as examples images 8, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26.

**The scenographer.** The deep site research created a context to explore the site's time and memory. We selected the post-war cultural and ecological refuge as idea to develop the project (narrative). From this vantage point, the scattered remnants may be viewed as a cabinet of curiosities that could be rearranged, perpetuated, and staged within the landscape. This viewpoint transgresses the common understanding of the site as a military structure, and broadens its origins and potentials. In meanwhile, the project demonstrates a gradient in the exploration of heritage as physical (tangible) objects towards metaphysical (intangible) concepts. The following verbs, based upon Alkemade 2021, demonstrate and classify possible steps in this fluid gradient :

- *To copy*: the material reconstruction of an object, such as a canon in micro-concrete, based on a postcard.

> see image 20-21.

- *To reimagine*: the material interpretation of the former personnel barracks resulted in an imaginary design without direct historical reference to its original typology.

> see image 13-22-23

- *To eliminate*: create by removing. The historic villa is transformed into a blind brick canvas for an artist intervention, inspired on the WWI Razzle Dazzle camouflage

technique, by removing parts of the building such as the complete interior, old windows and doors. The application, of a green table cloth painting, by artist Lilly Van der Stokken, introduces the family lives (household) into the military landscape. Further, the intervention revebrates the cultural milieus of painter Bastien (oral history) and the military camouflage techniques of the first World War.

> see image 24-25-26-27

- *To abstain*: reconstruction of an idea (metaphysical). The royal family's 19th century wooden holiday villa was removed during the war. The royal villa is now mentally *restored* by means of the concrete bench. The villa remains unbuilt.

> see image 28-29

**The architect.** We crafted new pathways by navigating the recorded context of historical references, topography, documentation about fauna and flora and accesibility conditions. Our interpretation of military tracks was reimagined into a closed museal landscape loop.

> see image 7-8-9-10-11

Next, a thoughtful sculpting of existing artifacts by adding, removing, expanding and overlaying accompanied the new landscape route.

> see image 19-21-23-27-29

As a result, a cultural hybrid emerges. The project echoes our belief that heritage preservation is neither neutral or objective, but can be based on interpretation and a conceptual framework of thought. Furthermore, the project highlights how archaeological discoveries can completely shift our perception of a site

> see image 24-26-28

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Image 14: preserved shelter of 1914, credit Filip Dujardin 2021.



Image 15: paths in the landscape with at the back bunker n°1, credit Filip Dujardin 2021.



Image 16: paths in the landscape with in front an information model in gray concrete, credit Filip Dujardin 2021.



Image 17: landscape view from bunker n°1, photo credit Filip Dujardin.

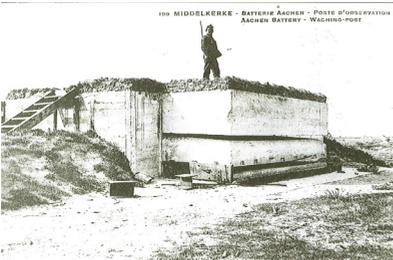


Image 18: postcard bunker n°1, credit Museum Raversyde.



Image 19: addition in bricks bunker n°1, credit Filip Dujardin 2021.



Image 20: historic photo artillery emplacement n°2, period 1914-1918, credit Museum Raversyde.



Image 21: canon in gray concrete artillery emplacement n°2, credit Filip Dujardin 2021.

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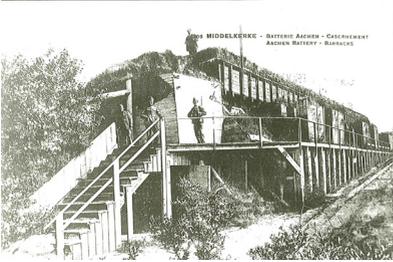


Image 22: postcard of the barracks 1916, credit Museum Raversyde.



Image 23: interpretation of the barracks in the landscape, credit Filip Dujardin 2021.

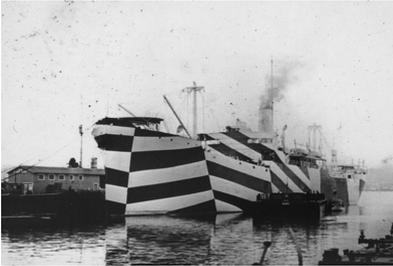


Image 24: photo of the razzle dazzle painting technique on a ship. WWI. Credit museum Raversyde.



Image 25: transforming the villa into a canvas, credit aNNo, 2015.



Image 26: villa bastien periode in the 1970's. Credit museum Raversyde.



Image 27: villa bastien transformed into a museal paviljon, credit Filip Dujardin 2021.



Image 28: royal family members in front of the villa. Credit museum Raversyde, 1912.



Image 29: the restored villa by means of its bench, credit Filip Dujardin 2021.

## DISCUSSING AND SPECULATING AS FORM OF CONCLUSION

The cartography articulates the framework of the heritage studio aNNo. It suggests mixing design roles across disciplinary boundaries of the archaeologist, the scenographer and the architect. The three archetypes depict a broad approach towards heritage and possible cross-disciplinary relations. Further, they represent corresponding design methodologies in which the studio navigates. By mixing these transitory and relational design activities, heritage discourse could perhaps be broadened to an integrating cultural and creative practice.

Conversations with aNNo team members (image 30) were as important as the cartography itself in terms of the applied processual methodology. The process of building the cartography, in retrospect, represents the distinctive design activities in itself. And might be a promising discursive turn in the life and dwelling of the practice.



Image 30: team discussion on the cartography. June 2021. Source: aNNo architecten, by author

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Batterij Aachen  
Project Information

- Adress: Nieuwpoortsesteenweg 636, 8400 Ostend, Belgium
- Client: Domein Atlantikwall Raversyde Province of West-Flanders
- Architect and design lead: aNNo architecten
- Artist: Lilly van der Stokken (Villa Bastien)
- Curator: Exponanza
- Engineers: Lime bv (stability) and Studie10 bv (electronics, building physics)
- Expert advice: Lodewijk Baljon (landscape), Westkans (accessibility), Sam de Decker (archaeologist), Aagje van Wallegem (heritage permits), DOVO (old ammunitions), ABG (WWI concrete), Ann Goemaere (project lead client), and Mathieu de Meyer (conservator of the museum).
- Photographer: Filip Dujardin
- Studies and realisation: 2013-2020

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