

TENTOONSTELLING

35m³ jonge architectuur

noA.architecten

21.02.2008 – 22.03.2008

[Tentoonstelling](#) / [Exposition](#) / [Exhibition](#)

deSingel

Internationale Kunstcampus



INTRODUCTION



Over the three seasons from 2005 to 2008, deSingel and the Flanders Architecture Institute are together programming a series of exhibitions called '35m³ young architecture'. This title refers to the room (283 x 408 x 303 cm) in which a new generation of architects' current projects or visions on paper are presented.

Promising young architects are given the challenge of dealing creatively with the limitations of this exhibition space. They outline their motives, approach and practice on the basis of one or more completed projects, a statement, a vision, a theoretical reflection, an installation or whatever else they may choose.

The architectural firms that have been shown so far are: Office Kersten Geers David Van Severen (Brussels), Van Belle & Medina (Antwerp), Dessauvage & Mohammadi (Bruges), Kristoffel Boghaert (Ghent), Jo Taillieu (Gooik), De Vylder & Hofkens (Ghent), NU architectuurstudio (Ghent), noumenon (Brussels), D'haeseleer & Kimpe & Poelaert (Antwerp/Ghent), URA (Brussels) and BARAK (Ghent).

Moritz Küng / Katrien Vandermarliere

IN WORDS

You can talk endlessly about the purpose of exhibitions on the subject of architecture, deSingel, however, has reduced the focus on the problem to a minimum. It has invited architects to exhibit their works in a small closed box. Why? Let's show this box as a box. Inside we make a few alterations: a mirror to provide perspective, a colour on the wall, a drawing on the ground. We emphasise the place, here and now. Further on we leave the room empty. There are no photos, plans or models. This space is sufficient. We allow visitors to experience a room, but do they go into the box? Yet another clue. At the entrance we place an imaginary map. For our architecture, please go here. Go outside, experience the buildings in their reality, they are always there, in the open air.



noA came about by accident. I met Philippe during my studies in Gent and Jitse at my jobs in London. One day Philippe called us up and asked us to take part in a competition. So the three of us set to work and we won the competition. Then followed another competition and another prize. We did our building works and during the construction we were given another building assignment. And this is how it went on. We work together because we work well together.



I made a lot of drawings and sketches during and after my studies. And suddenly something happened. I went onto the worksite and I saw people out in the weather building walls, using my plans. A line I had drawn became a concrete façade. Something that started out on a piece of paper acquired a definitive and decisive form in space. The sketches became reality. This is when I understood the true nature of an architect, someone with responsibility.



Residential building Vetexsite, Kortrijk (2000 - 2001) **7**

We took part in a competition for a crematorium in Holsbeek. We travelled together to Stockholm to see the burial ground of Asplund and Lewerentz. It was a great experience. Minimalist buildings in harmony with trees and with a noble gesture towards the people who had to bury their nearest and dearest nearby. The architecture is comforting, offers strength and reaches out. Using few resources but with masterly application. Back home we worked on the Holsbeek site. Building for the dead was an intense experience, both physically as well as psychologically. We got a real-life experience of how buildings and feeling are strongly linked to one another. It's inevitable. It's the same with architecture for the living, where people will live or work – it too needs to exude emotions.



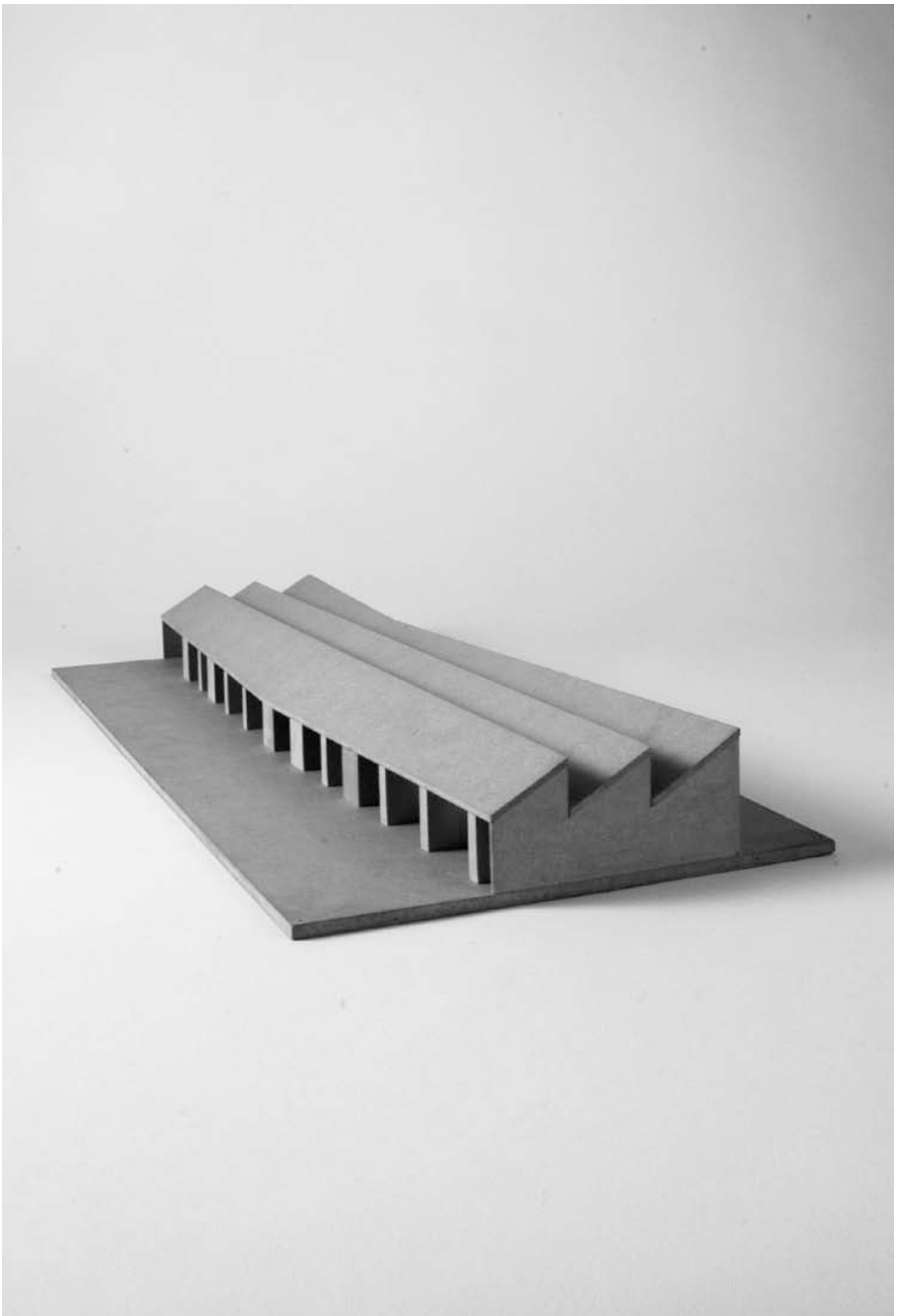
I saw a poster with the words no jazz on it. It appealed to me. You read no jazz and you know immediately that there is jazz on the agenda. That's why we wrote noA. First the name, then the story; architects today need to have a 'vision'. The capital letter A refers to the architect who feels like an artist: he creates self-consciously, and very obviously, to save himself. We like the lower case a, architecture that thinks about others. About the environment, people, the climate, time. The capital letter A stands out, it's point sticking out above other elements; it gets applause for its sparkling exterior. Lower case a has more feeling for structure, logic and clarity.



When taking on a building assignment we like to have a good understanding of what is being asked for. People ask us 'make a building for this purpose on that spot that should meet these demands and have these properties'. But behind this request there lurks confusion and doubt, many people don't quite know what they want to build even though they think they do. We reformulate the assignment again and again until the request is completely clear. Then the answer appears – as clear as daylight.

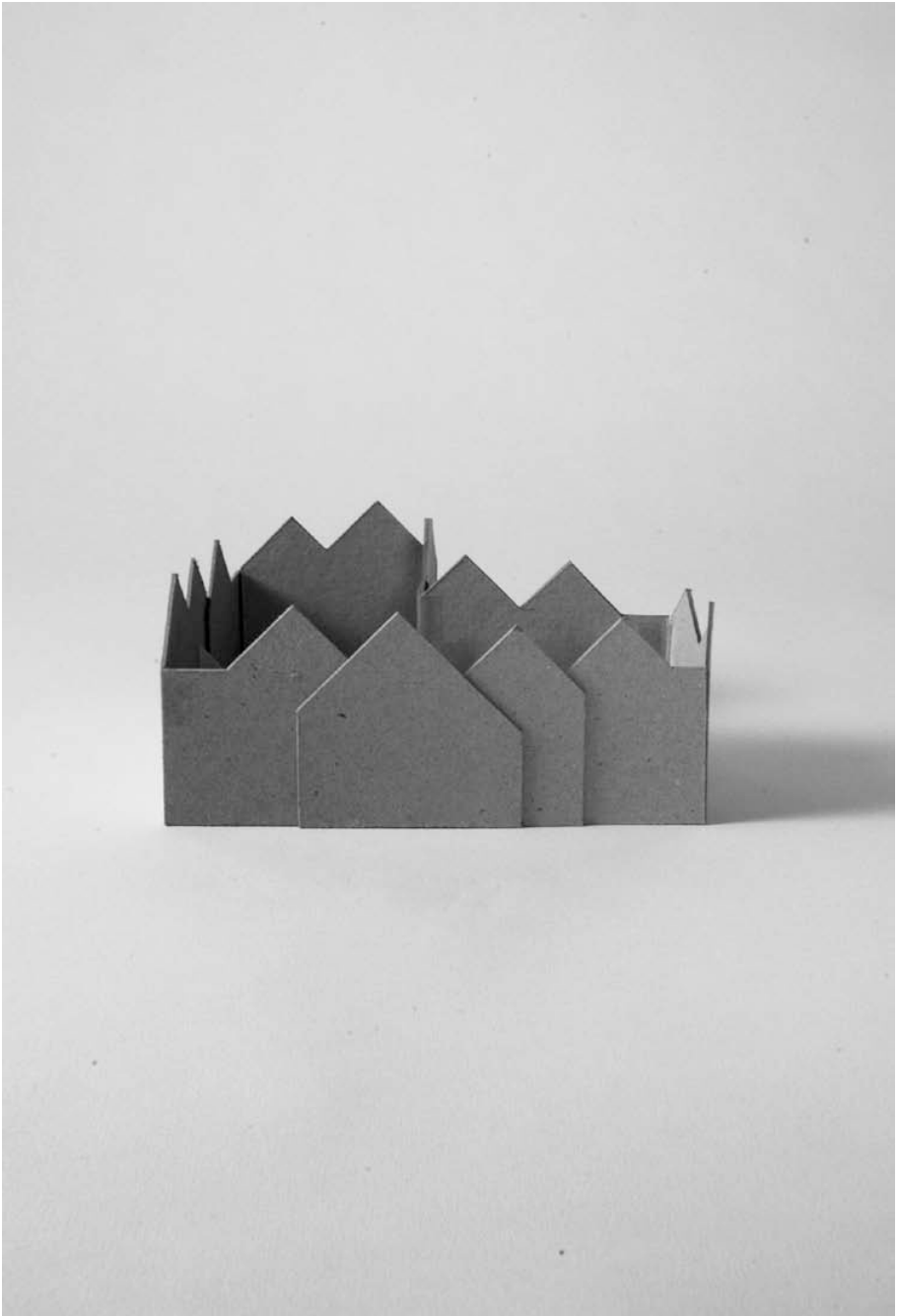


I like the expression “in spite of”. A key expression in our work, and one that definitely applies to the town hall project of Kortrijk. The town made a purchase, an office building dating back to the sixties. The ground floor that was once a bank had to be transformed into a town hall. The immense surface area contained one dominating marble hall with dozens of counters all around where no daylight came in. Walls and ceilings, everything was false. And then we started working on it. We opened a façade out onto the street, we made openings in the ceiling and put in velux windows, we knocked the central area right back to the structure. And what appeared? A large space full of light, beautiful beams, a slender structure. So “in spite of” the fact that we started from an office building that was lacking in beauty, we were successful. Since then the grass has grown on the roof.

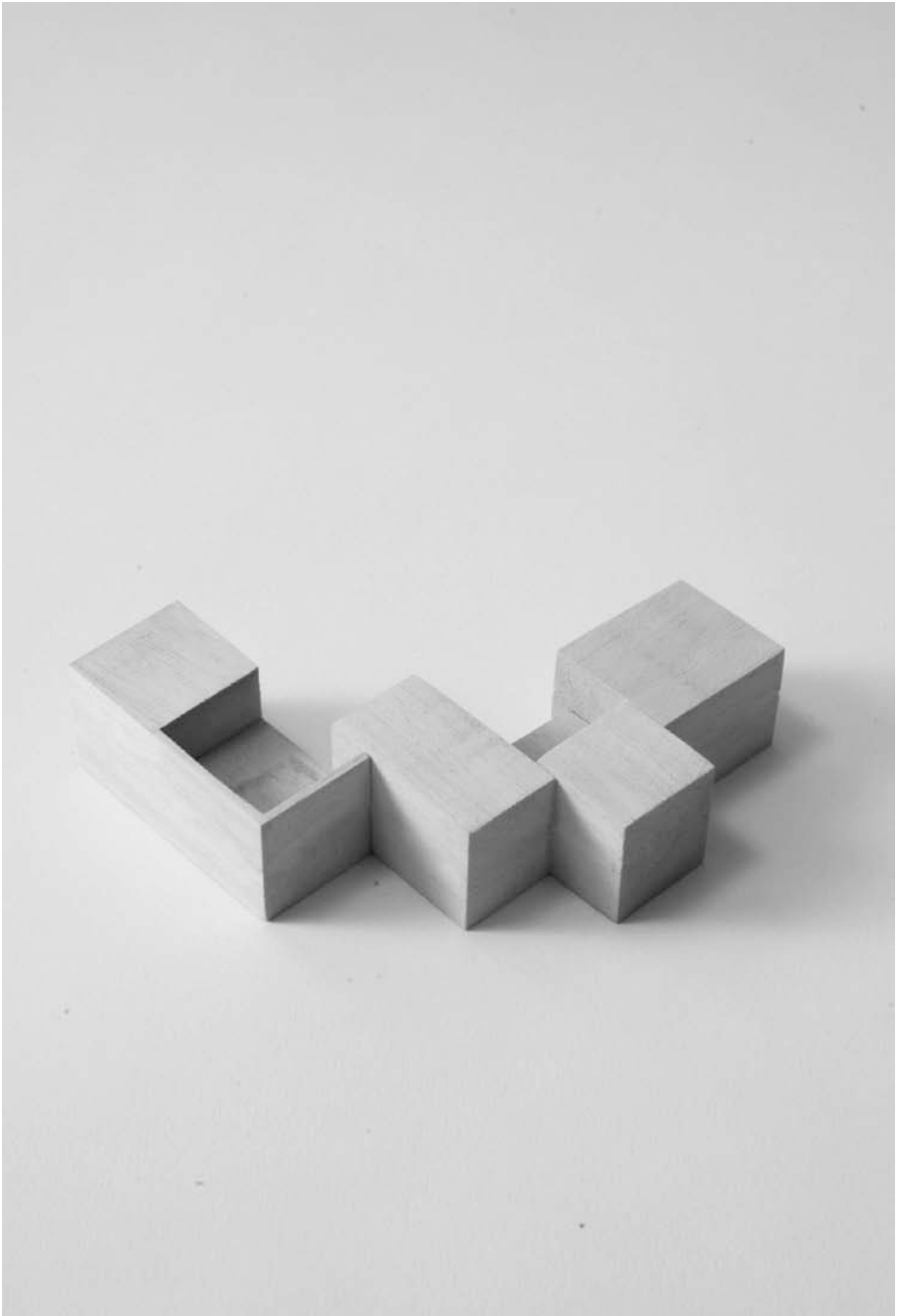


Residential building Vetexsite, Kortrijk (2000-2001) **15**

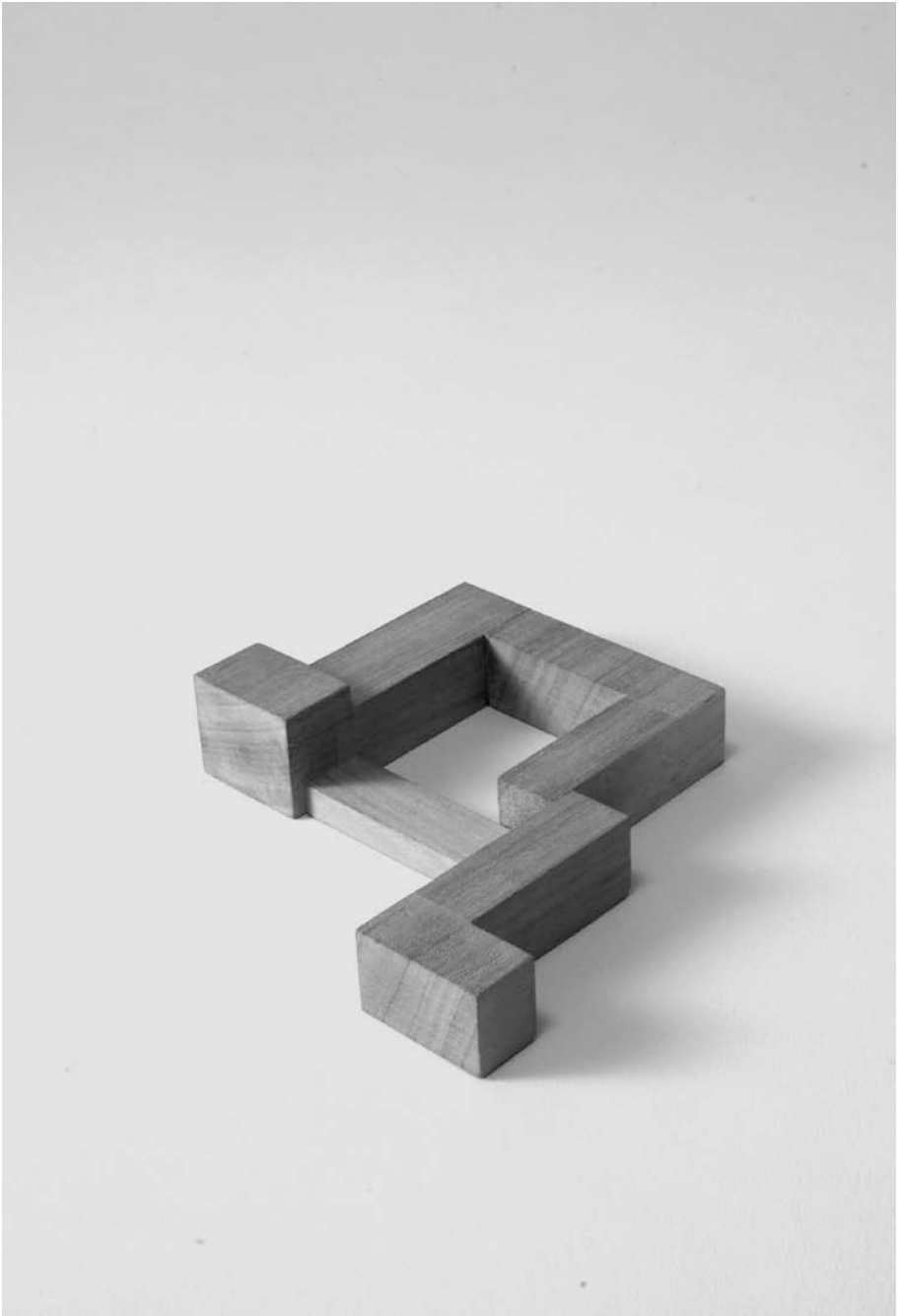
Carl Andre and Donald Judd made a strong impression on me. What a gesture, look and see the art of a brick on the ground. If a brick is sufficient to create beauty, then a stack of bricks – that make up a building, must be able to preserve that strength. I love art that remains close to the matter. Some jazz does that too. John Zorn plays notes like raw materials.



We always look for simple solutions. This was explicit in the town house of Menen. We took part in the competition, drew up the plans, visited the site several times. And on the way we found one single solution: a plan that was very obvious. We restored all the rooms with historical value and brought them all together into one whole. A plain blank light reigns in the different rooms. In the middle, in the courtyard we added a new monumental piece that barely affected the older buildings. A skeleton with big windows and slender columns, a transparent central area. This screen links the levels, organises, lights, creates space, and makes everything transparent. We hardly touched the town hall, the work we did looks invisible. While drawing up these plans, we thought, this is so obvious, 'all the participants in the competition will come up with this solution'. But we were surprised at the differences.



As an architect you don't make your drawings on a blank sheet of paper. You get a sheet full of signs with the question 'make a nice drawing'. On the sheet, you see the traces of buildings, roads, and boundaries. Then you take your pen: pinpoint lines, add comments, put a cross through drawings and make corrections, create open spaces. And finally your plan looks like a drawing made on a blank sheet of paper.



It's normal to build on sites that you are not familiar with: a plot alongside a motorway, a lot in a residential district, a building in a historic centre. We head off there, get to know the district, discover all the nooks and crannies. "Stones speak. Towns speak. Ruins and skylines: a story of people. Survival speaks. The city is a voice, a spoken language", writes Simon Vinkenoog. So we listen. Some voices sound loud, others quiet. A centuries old building speaks a clear language, but a piece of ground in no-mans land is still looking for words. In Baasrode we were entrusted with the restoration of the shipyard district. The beautiful building dating back to the eighteenth century spoke to us, so we build today in dialogue with yesterday. But elsewhere there is confusion of tongues. In Liedekerke we built a police station. On a first visit, the GPS took us to a surprising place between office buildings on a busy road and small family homes lost at the back. We started looking for traces here, learning to orientate ourselves. We created a volume with different heights, lower on the side of the houses, higher on the busy road. There are even indirect leaps and differences of levels. Large windows, spread out broadly over the facades are inviting. A building that wants to arbitrate in all directions, makes the neighbourhood mature and says "let's get started".



Conversion of 's Hertogenmolens, Aarschot (2003) **23**

The media and education sector make great efforts to promote originality as the important facet of the arts. That's very romantic; look at the artist who as an individual, discovers a new language something original and heroic. As a student I put a lot of effort into coming up with new forms, clever ideas, original thoughts. But since then I found that there's actually not much point to this. I started believing more in the typology of architecture, in the logic behind buildings that respond to laws thousands of years old, in a language that gradually evolves. I acquired an eye for the anonymous architecture of farms, castles, bridges, cloisters, hangars, towers, etc. Architecture without architect where builders went to work and put up buildings that remained standing the next day. So I was able to start worrying less about originality.



We live in a time of functionality where everything has to serve a purpose. What is being built today? Factories, shopping centres, offices. Areas with a practical purpose. That translates into exteriors, you see what you see. We are currently building a high building on the banks of the Schelde – a power station. Inside are machines but the outside remains closed. Passers-by might wonder “strange, what is this?” It is a silent building, a puzzle. Stones can hold mysteries.



Biografie

An Fonteyne

Born in 1971 in Ostend. Completed her studies in 1994 at the University of Gent. After completing her studies worked for DKV Architecten in Rotterdam and David Chipperfield Architects in London.

Taught architectural design at St. Luke's in Brussels in 2005-2006.

Jitse van den Berg

Born in 1971 in Nijmegen. Studied at the TU Berlin and TU Delft. During and after completing studies worked for Sauerbruch Hutton Architekten in Berlin and David Chipperfield Architects in London and Berlin.

Philippe Vierin

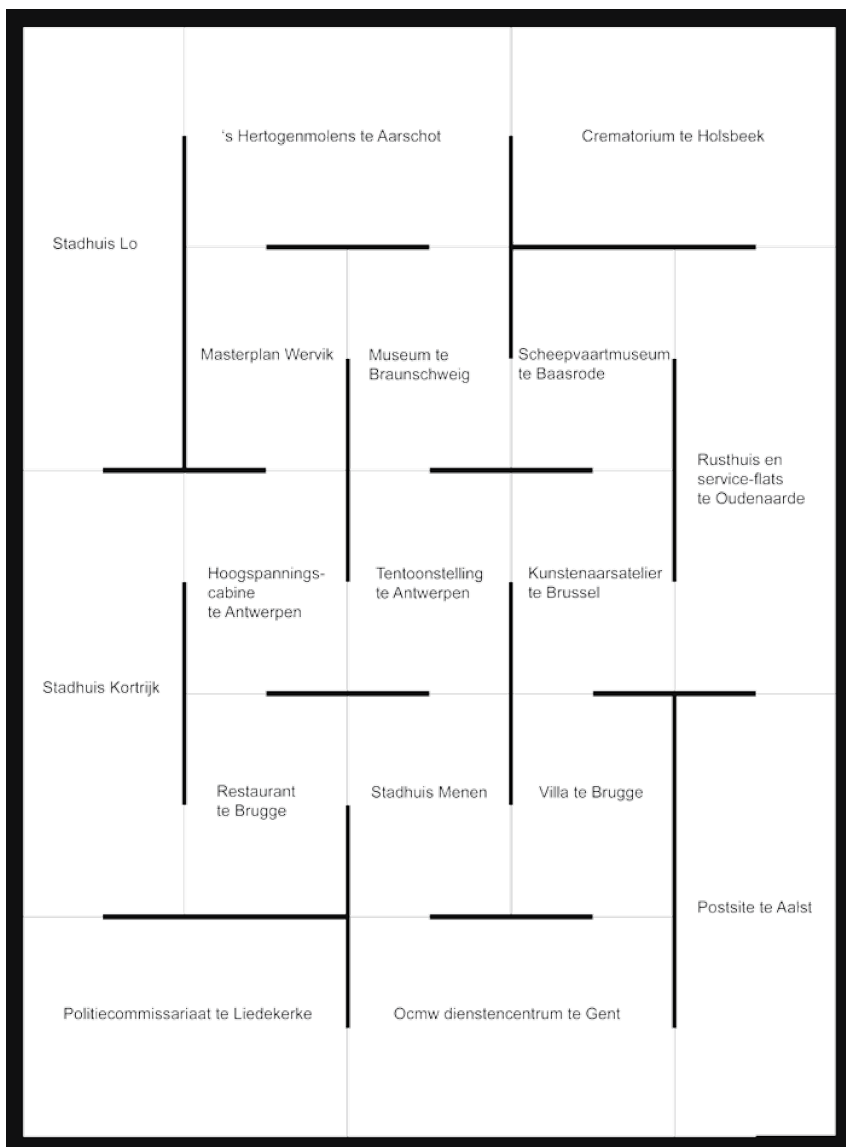
Born in 1969 in Bruges. Completed his studies at the University of Gent in 1992. After his studies he went to work together with the architect Stephane Beel in Bruges and KCAP in Rotterdam.

In addition to the noA partnership he also has an architects' practice in Bruges under the name Vierin Architecten.

Colleagues since 2002 Danny Dezutter, Christophe van Boxtel, Gert Somers, Stijn Thomas, Freyke Hartemink, Tim Wallyn, Peter Verstraete, Michiel Pauwels, David Claus, Rendel Van Eyck, Simon Vermote, Kim Pecheur, Maarten Franssens, David Niville

Projects (selection)

- 2007 Conversion of Romanesque church and parsonage, Ettelgem – master plan
Conversion of paper factory into studios and flats in Brussels, completion
- 2008 New town hall in Klooster, Lo – feasibility study
Interior design Brasserie bij De Karmeliet, Bruges, completion 2008
Restoration historic town hall, Kortrijk, completion 2008
Development town hall site, Kortrijk – feasibility study
- 2006 't Regenboogje Primary School, Brussels, completion 2009
City development site Vredegerecht St-Pol, Wervik – master plan
- 2005 150/15 kV Petrol substation, Antwerp, completion 2008
Museum development of former shipyard Baasrode – master plan
- 2004 Police station Zone TARL, Liedekerke, in co-operation with Hans Verstuyft
Architecten – new building, completed 2007
Shipping Museum, Baasrode – 1st phase completed 2006
OCMW service centre, Gent, completion 2009
Concert hall De Kreun, Kortrijk
Private residence, Bruges in co-operation with architect Peter-Jan Scherpereel, completed 2007
Conversion Pfizer site into flats, Brussels – feasibility study



- 2003 's Hertogenmolens, Aarschot – restoration, extension and conversion of a 16th century mill complex into a hotel and brasserie, completion 2009
- 2002 Town hall Menen – restoration, renovation and new building, completed 2007
Detached home, Ostend, completed 2004
Living and nursing centre, Oudenaarde in co-operation with architect Adinda Van Geystelen, 1st phase completed 2007, completion phase 2 2009
Extension of a terraced house, Gent, completed 2003
- 2001 Town hall Kortrijk – renovation and restoration of existing bank building, completed 2003

Requests for estimates (selection)

- 2008 11th architectural biennial Venice 2008
- 2007 Conversion Post site into Administrative Centre, Aalst, Open call for tenders by the Flemish Government Architect for home construction De Ham, Oudenaarde
- 2006 Crematorium Hofheide, Holsbeek, Open call for tenders by the Flemish Government Architect
- 2005 Business complex, Lochristi, Open call for tenders by the Flemish Government Architect
shelter for tram stop Heizel, Brussels
- 2003 Willebroek – redesign of the Watertoren – Station axis, in co-operation with architects Gert Somers and Jonas Lindekens, 2nd prize
Conversion of the Hertogenmolens, Aarschot, Open call for tenders by the Flemish Government Architect, 1st prize
- 2002 Town hall Menen, Open call for tenders by the Flemish Government Architect, 1st prize
Living and nursing centre, Oudenaarde, Open call for tenders by the Flemish Government Architect, 1st prize in co-operation with Adinda van Geystelen
- 2001 Conversion of former bank building into town hall, Kortrijk, 1st prize
Residential building Nieuwe Molens, Bruges, 2nd prize
- 2000 Restoration industrial Vetex site with 25 apartments, Kortrijk, shared 1st prize.
Cultural Centre Merelbeke, 2nd prize
- 1999 Restoration Meulestede Noord with 60 council flats, Gent, 1st prize
Extension Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, Germany

Publications (selection)

- 2008 Town hall Menen, Architectural Yearbook Flanders 06 07, vai, 2008
Town hall Menen, A+ 210
Town hall Kortrijk, Shipping Museum Baasrode, Phaidon Atlas of the 21st Century Architecture
- 2007 Police station TARK, Liedekerke, New Belgian Architecture 4
- 2006 Town hall Kortrijk, Construire en béton - Bauen in Beton - Bouwen met beton – Building with Concrete

- 2005 Ruwe openheid – Extension of the town hall of Kortrijk in the former bank building by noA.architecten, de Architect, March 2005
- 2004 Town hall Kortrijk, Architectural Yearbook Flanders 02 03, vai, 2004
Midden de mensen, NAC Kortrijk, A+ 188
Belgitudes, noA in Kortrijk, Frame, July-August 2004
Town hall Kortrijk, Background 02, vai, October 2004

Exhibitions

- 2008 35m³ young architecture, deSingel International Art Campus, Antwerp
- 2001 Young architects in Flanders, deSingel International Art Campus, Antwerp

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Author

Jan Florizoone (Brussels) regularly writes articles about the visual arts. When noA asked him to write something for this book, he asked them 'How should one write about architecture?'

Photographer

Herman Sorgeloos

COLOPHON

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