

revive



HERITAGE

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Matthias Diependaele: 'Those who care for heritage care for society'

Vynckier at Ghent

An unmitigated heritage project

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foreword

- > Places with a past often offer the greatest potential for the most beautiful future. That's why Revive started as a specialist in brownfield development nearly 15 years ago. Contaminated industrial sites in urgent need of repurposing and reactivation—Re-use and Re-purpose, so to speak. We have already cleaned up a lot of so-called urban blight areas in Flanders and beyond, and breathed new life into them.

Whereas in our pioneering years, we focused primarily on the renovation and repurposing of inner-city industrial land, we soon realised that these valuable sites also often contain valuable buildings that deserve our full attention with a view to reuse and revalue. Because 'first use what has been used before' is still the basic principle in sustainable business, and in doing so, our starting point is always respecting the past. We always preserve and highlight the valuable heritage elements of the sites in our designs, e.g. our project Vynckier in Ghent (p. 18). Fortunately for everyone—yet perhaps a little unfortunate for us—there is less and less urban blight on the Flemish market.

This has led us to our dual development strategy: international expansion into Poland in Gdansk and Poznan (p. 8 and 12), as well as diversification from just pure brownfields to the reuse of existing buildings. The latter is a huge challenge to manage the complexity of these sometimes protected but in any case valuable buildings. Everyone has an opinion of what is and is not allowed, the sensitivity is enormous, but so is the technical constellation. We want to 'decarbonise' our old patrimony, renovate or restore it and make it ready for future generations.

It is not in our nature to shy away from a difficult path if it is for the good. Hence, we remain pertinently committed to these principles, and constantly seek technology and innovation to succeed in this less than easy mission. That's why we are problem-solving through creating the right partnerships.

Flemish Minister of Finance, Budget, Housing and Immovable Heritage Matthias Diependaele wants to be one of those partners. 'I am very happy that developers are working with heritage and frequently do so with heart and soul,' he states on page 4. 'That's also kind of why we switched our mindset from the Real Estate Agency: we want to cooperate.'

Nicolas Bearelle
Founder & Executive Chairman Revive

'Our
industrial
past
will have a
sustainable
future
thanks in
part to
Revive'



Matthias Diependaele

FLEMISH MINISTER OF FINANCE,
BUDGET, HOUSING AND
IMMOVABLE HERITAGE

'Heritage is about more than just looks; it needs to be experienced.' Flemish Minister of Finance, Budget, Housing and Immovable Heritage Matthias Diependaele resolutely chooses to give heritage a new role in our public space. Economic profitability and Flemish identity play an important role, he states. 'Because those who care for heritage care for society.'

Good afternoon, Minister. Let's start with a slightly tricky heritage issue: heritage and licensing are known to be somewhat fickle partners. What is your position on that?

'At the start of our legislature, we determined fairly quickly that there was a problem in that area. Slight changes had been put in place in the previous legislature. However, within the Agency for Real Estate Heritage, there was still too often a tendency to be a controller, to only point the finger at what was not allowed. We have tried to turn that around, successfully, I think, to an attitude where the agency is an employee, more of a consultant. Someone who helps think constructively about what direction a particular project should take to reconcile both in terms of economic profitability and heritage preservation. Since the last legislature, our opinion is only advisory and no longer binding outside of exceptional cases. As a result, we shifted our attitude to supportive rather than controlling.'

In the past, you sometimes talked about 'adaptive reuse' in the industry, advocating new functions for heritage assets rather than merely restoring them. Are you still a supporter of that idea?

'It is my conviction that heritage is more than something purely 'emotional,' purely for appearance. Heritage is not there just to be looked at; that is not enough. Heritage must also be experienced. With each generation, there should be a new layer of history added on top, so to speak. That means giving heritage a useful interpretation, a meaningful use. A new role in our public space. But it always starts with the original function of the heritage building.'

What do you mean by that?

'A historic farmstead still comes into its own when there is a farm in it. A church still has its most significant heritage appearance when it is still used for worship services. But with a lot of buildings today, that no longer works. No matter how hard you try, the reality is that we no longer need as many churches, so we look for other applications and other functions. Perhaps it could be set up as a quiet room, but is that economically feasible? Or a centre for a music organisation or a parish meeting centre? This is done on the basis of elimination. A prime example is the Delhaize in St. Anne's Church in Ghent. I totally understand that there is some resistance on an emotional level, but surely it is better to house a supermarket in a historic building than to just keep them closed, as they have been for the last 15 years. At least they will still be enjoyed.'

An example of one of our projects is the Manchester building on the Vynckier site in Ghent.

'Only the most innovative rezoning projects are still eligible within our policy. And the Manchester building on your Vynckier site is a great example of that. The jury was also unanimous on that. Our industrial past will have a sustainable future thanks in part to Revive. This project, where we went from textile factory to office spaces, has been tackled in a way that reinforces the importance of our Flemish heritage as well as our economic prosperity.'

What if rezoning is impossible? Does declassification become a possibility?

'We are not declassifying when rezoning is impos-

sible. We are if we feel that certain heritage itself does not have enough heritage value for our contemporary standards. Declassification is a tool for us to keep the heritage value in Flanders high. So that's something completely different. If the heritage value is high, the building or monument will absolutely remain protected regardless of what rezoning it does or does not receive.'

In recent years, more responsibility has been placed on local governments. Why exactly?

'True, nowadays, local governments can decide to take more measures to protect local heritage. This makes sense because a particular chapel in Limburg may have a high value at the local level but not always at the Flemish level. We have implemented a quick screening method to see what still has sufficient heritage value and what does not. The protection system of past decades did not always work. Ministers have passed through the ranks and imposed targets on the administration, putting quantity before quality. That's not how it works.'

Can we consider a kind of 'heritage covenant' analogous to a brownfield covenant where special procedures apply, and derogations from certain regulations are possible in the public interest?

'I think it's a very interesting track to think about, but actually, in a sense, it already exists. In a brownfield covenant, the objective is to bring different parties together around the table to find a solution for a particular area. Remediation is then largely paid for by the government. When it comes to heritage, we also often sit down with all the necessary parties, such as the developer, the city council, the Heritage Agency ... and here, too, we co-fund. We account for 40% of heritage restoration, including buildings owned by private owners. Those premiums already exist. Deviations from the regulations is also not an option for brownfield covenants.'

How can property developers honour heritage even more?

'To be clear, I am very happy that developers are working with heritage and frequently do so with heart and soul. That is also why we have changed

our mindset; we want to partner with them. We want to cooperate. Did that used to be different? I think project developers may have previously been a bit underwhelmed by the added value that heritage can provide. But that has certainly changed. They also see that heritage in itself often adds value, especially since they are often gems situated in beautiful locations. People view it as unique to live there, and are willing to pay for it.'

What do you consider the most beautiful heritage in Flanders?

'The area I live in, of course, the Flemish Ardennes. I absolutely love it there. I love going to work in Brussels, but I much prefer coming home to the Flemish Ardennes. But if I really have to choose, I choose the historic medieval centre of Ghent. From the former guildhall, the Vleeshuis, across the Fish Market to the Korenmarkt ... The Gravensteen Castle, of course, Saint Bavo's Cathedral—all very unique, authentic. Heers Castle in Limburg is also worthwhile.'

How do you view heritage?

'I look at two things: the repurposing and the Flemish identity. We have already discussed the first one. The second is about heritage being more than just a pile of stones, metal and wood. Every piece of heritage tells a story. This can range from castles to farmsteads to the religious heritage of our church buildings that reflect our Judeo-Christian tradition. But also our sailing and industrial heritage that together represent our spirit of commerce in port areas. All these things together make up our Flemish identity. It's about who we are as Flemings. [pauses for thought] Because those who care for heritage care for our society.'

Innovation often intrudes when taking care of heritage, e.g. the modernisation of energy. In that area alone, the heritage sector faces an immense challenge ...

[Jumps in] 'That's certainly true, but you can never separate innovation in the heritage sector from innovation in the construction world. The construction industry is often seen as a rigid industry that doesn't shift quickly enough. I disagree. A lot of



‘When it comes to heritage, I look at two things: the repurposing and the Flemish identity’

innovative things have happened in recent years, including due to the challenge of the energy crisis. We are also making strides for heritage. Just think of solar panels incorporated into the roof tiles, like at City Library Het Predikheren in Mechelen.’

Yet ordinary citizens are still often convinced that the energy bills of heritage properties are immense due to heat flying out the windows and doors ...

‘You have to realise that a heritage building doesn’t always convert easily into a climate-neutral building. This is an observation that we should all be honest about. But, especially with the pressure of the energy crisis, a lot of efforts are happening and, we have become more flexible to allow certain things. For example, solar panels on a heritage roof used to be prohibited unless you received an exemption; now, it’s just the opposite. Refusal has become the exception, which is really good news.’



JADWIGA KOSIŃSKA (PROJECT DIRECTOR AT STOCZNIA CESARSKA DEVELOPMENT *) ON THE IMPERIAL SHIPYARD PROJECT IN GDANSK

(*a Polish joint venture between Revive and Ghent-based Alides)

‘This is where communism collapsed in Eastern Europe’

A turbulent history and a lasting inspiration for future generations. A new open and accessible urban district is emerging on the site of the Imperial Shipyard in Gdansk, Poland—a place where, for years, history was made and a real class struggle took place. Jadwiga Kosińska, Project Director at Stocznia Cesarska Development, a Polish collaboration between Revive and Alides: ‘We are about to write #newstories on this historic site.’

Jadwiga, you are working with Revive and Alides on the Imperial Shipyard project in Gdansk. Why is this area so important to Poland’s history?

‘For the residents of Poland, the shipyard is inextricably associated with political changes that began at this site. The shipyard is widely considered the birthplace of Solidarity, a social movement known throughout the world. The driving force behind the movement, Lech Wałęsa—who went on to become Poland’s first democratically elected president—began talks with the former director of the Gdansk Shipyard right here in our Dyrekcja building. Those negotiations eventually led to the signing of the Gdansk Agreement in August 1980, which, among

other things, enabled the establishment of trade unions and paved the way for political change. That is what makes this place so special. Although the shipyard is widely known to everyone, it was inaccessible until 2017; we changed that.’

So the decision to make Poland a democratic country participating in the market economy was made here?

‘Sweeping systemic changes like that also mean far-reaching political and economic reforms, although the liquidation of the shipyard as a factory was a political decision that lacked sufficient economic justification. On 29 October 1988, Mieczysław Rakowski, then Prime Minister of the Polish People’s Republic, decided

to liquidate the Gdansk Shipyard with effect from 1 December 1988. The wave of protests throughout Poland and the changing international situation eventually forced the authorities to hold talks. The talks were held during the ‘Round Table’ from 6 February to 5 April 1989, one of the most important events in Poland’s recent history. The signing of the agreement led to the collapse of the communist system and the first partially democratic elections in Poland on 4 June 1989.’

Revive acquired 16 hectares of post-shipyard land with Alides of Ghent in 2017. What are their plans with it for future generations?

‘The Imperial Shipyard project is aimed at revitalising, protecting and showcasing

the most valuable historic post-shipyard buildings while adapting them to new functions and complementing the historic fabric with new, attractive buildings suitable for a variety of uses. This development approach will both highlight the Gdansk Shipyard’s unique history and complement it with a new spatial and architectural quality. We are firm believers in this approach.’

Revive and Alides have already worked on two historic buildings, including the 1878 Dyrekcja, one of the oldest buildings in the shipyard. What work was done there?

‘In March 2019, the decision was made to begin the revitalisation of the site by undertaking the



first comprehensive renovation of this historic building in 150 years. The goal was to restore the beautiful architecture and rich interiors and complement them with new spatial values. The building celebrated its grand opening, welcomed its first new tenants and introduced the first-ever post-shipping workplace in September 2020. The Dyrekcja renovation received the European Property Award 2021 in the Office Building Architecture category. It was also awarded in the prestigious 'Well-Maintained Monument' competition organised by the National Heritage Institute and the Ministry of Culture.'

The former 1884 fire station was also given a completely new function.

'On the day we officially opened the Dyrekcja building, we received permission to renovate the former fire station, which had been abandoned since 1999. The building was in terrible condition, and we are glad we were able to breathe new life into it. We are also particularly proud that we were able to attract Robert Mielżyński, a renowned wine importer and gastronome who opened a restaurant and wine store there. This renovation and repurposing project also received recognition: we won the main prize in the Technical Monuments category of the 'Well-Maintained Monument' competition.'

What are the next steps for the project?

'We have shown respect



for the existing buildings; it is now time to create new ones. This is important from both an urban planning and economic perspective. We will soon enter a new chapter in the rich history of this unique area, entitled: #newstories.'

Good luck!

Mario Santana Quintero

PROFESSOR AT THE DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING, AS WELL AS AT THE AZRIELI SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE & URBANISM, CARLETON UNIVERSITY

‘The future of digital surveying for heritage lies in thermal and infrared photography’

We interviewed Professor Mario Santana Quintero, the leading authority on digital surveying techniques for historic buildings and an immense added value to our global heritage. He teaches about it in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, and is a guest lecturer at KU Leuven, affiliated with the renowned Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation.

Professor, you are an expert in digital surveying techniques for historic buildings. What does that entail, exactly?

‘Think of it as a visit to the dentist. If you go for a checkup once a year, the dentist will only have to take an X-ray, but if you only go once every ten years, more extensive work will be necessary. Most likely, the dentist will opt for an in-depth examination and may even have to pull one of the teeth and replace it with an artificial tooth; there is much more involved. What we do amounts to the same thing: we share information and advise people conducting historic preservation work. We determine the value of the buildings at each site. We map out exactly what

changes have been made and draft a report on that.’

How do you do that?

‘There are different methods and techniques. Today, we mainly work with drones to take exterior photos of the buildings, which we then use for photogrammetry. In other words, we deal with the interpretation and measurement of imagery. We can create a roof schematic that provides an analysis of the status of the roof. We cannot use drones inside the buildings for obvious reasons, so we use a 3D laser scanner to create a point cloud. We use the point cloud to make horizontal or vertical cross-sections. This tells us about the relationships between the various levels of the building. You

could compare it to what an architect does but in even more detail.’

That involves a lot of technical skill, doesn't it?

‘In some cases, we use BIM, or Building Information Modelling. That means we create 3D models with a very high level of detail. We go a step further in our lab at the university, where we work with digital twins. That involves linking a 3D model to reality. You can compare it to home automation, only much more advanced: we adjust things in the digital file, which are also implemented in the real building. Doing this for historic buildings takes a lot of time and research. It also requires the right infrastructure because sensors must be placed everywhere.’

So this is pretty next-level innovation, then?

‘Absolutely. For example, we are working with GIS at an archaeological site in Paphos, Cyprus. GIS stands for Geographic Information Systems. Among other things, GIS enables us to determine the condition of mosaic tiles and even their importance. It is pretty sophisticated.’

How fast is technology evolving in your field?

‘When I started in Belgium years ago, we worked with a topographic surveying tool. It took years to measure something. With today's technology, you can do the same work in a few days. Data processing, on the other hand, still takes a long time: one month of measurement is roughly equivalent

to seven months of data processing. *[Thinks]* AI has the potential to change this—particularly in terms of software automation. The big question, of course, is the quality high enough? We don't know that at this point. We are already testing it today; for example, we are doing a study on the automatic recognition of stones. We feed as much data as possible into the system through deep learning.'

Are there any positive results yet?

'We have already commissioned a drone to take pictures, but it's not simple. Stones can often have different colours, which can also vary according to the time of day and the natural lighting conditions. Damage to the stones can also be difficult to map, as no two cracks are the same. On the positive side, new algorithms now allow us to read old measurements made with older equipment. What we haven't yet discussed—and where I believe the future of digital surveying lies—are non-destructive techniques. This is a particularly interesting field, as we would no longer have to tear down a wall to find out how the structure is put together. Non-destructive techniques include thermal and infrared photography. That's where I hope—and expect—a major evolution.'

In closing, why is it so important to preserve heritage?

'There are many more protected buildings in Belgium than in Canada. In Belgium, federal buildings are evaluated after 80 years. If they have historical value, they will be preserved, otherwise they will not. The political mentality around this is better in Europe. In North America and Canada, the demand comes more often from communities. They are often eager to get certain buildings protected. Heritage is important: it's not just about preserving bricks, it's also part of our DNA. We also have a great responsibility for the climate: buildings built years ago have already consumed their carbon footprint.'



Vynckier project utilises 3D technology

'We also opted for 3D technology to measure the cathedral, boiler room and Vynckier Tower at the Vynckier site [see p. 18],' says Frédéric Buyssens, Business Development & Commercial Manager at Revive. 'We worked with international company Bricsys, who have their headquarters in Ghent. They use LIDAR technology for scanning, and then load the point cloud into their software to turn it into highly accurate 2D and 3D schematics.'



AGNIESZKA JAWORSKA (REVIVE POLAND) AND **MICHAL ANDRZEJAK** (FORTIFICATIONS EXPERT, UHLAN OR POZNAN) ON THE CAVALLIA PROJECT* IN POZNAN

(*a joint venture between Revive and BPI Poland)

‘We bring people together and keep the stories alive’

You may have heard of Poznan. It is a city in Poland where Revive is building a new district under the Cavallia project. The 1868 barracks that housed elite Prussian soldiers and their horses are being repurposed as living and working spaces. The site is currently available for temporary use. ‘The Koszary Kultury project—which we initiated—was the first initiative of its kind in Poland,’ according to Agnieszka Jaworska, Marketing and Sales Manager at Revive Poland, and Michal Andrzejak, fortifications expert.

What could people do during the first Koszary Kultury project?

Agnieszka: ‘The event included workshops and cultural events for Poznan’s current residents and the future residents of the site. This offered them an opportunity to learn about the site and its military history. We also organised Koszary Kultury in the summer of 2022, so it is already a bit of a fixture.’

Is it important to have a clear military link at each event? After all, Cavallia was originally a barracks for elite soldiers and their horses.

Agnieszka: ‘Our events are not always about the history of the site, although we try to impart that as often as possible. Above all else, our goal is to bring people together and let them know that this part of the city belongs to them. We also organised a carving festival where people carve figures out of wood. It is a major international competition in which the mayor of Poznan is very closely involved and a fine example of a temporary use with no link to the past. The memory of the past is also important, of course, which is why we open our buildings to locals and invite schools to visit, for example. There is even a school named after the 15th Regiment, whose soldiers were the first Polish residents to stay in the barracks. Last

year, they celebrated their 60th anniversary in our stables. All the children and teachers and even the vice president of Poznan were in attendance.’

Why is this memory so important to you?

Michal: ‘It is absolutely crucial. The influence of the past on the present is often unknown or not considered, yet everything present in the city of Poznan today—the whole urbanisation the city has gone through—it all goes back to the time when this barracks was built. It is all intertwined. To this day, the main roads are based on the old military roads. The entire city was built on the west side of the river, as the Russian Empire was only 50 kilometres from the east side. People don’t know that anymore nowadays.’

Agnieszka: ‘Many events we have already organised on the site were in cooperation with the municipal council. They are really involved and support our temporary uses; so do the city’s residents—they are also very enthusiastic. You should have seen their faces when they first entered the stables. They had never seen the inside before!’

In addition to the stables, the site also housed a casino, a school, a riding school and more.



Agnieszka: 'It was unheard of in those days. This was the first 'modern' barracks. It had everything for humans and animals. They wanted everyone to feel good there, hence the green surroundings with the beautiful chestnut trees, which are still there today. One of the stables even included equipment for show jumpers. There were also actual riding schools; we currently use one of those buildings. The other has already been converted and renovated and is now a supermarket.'

What will happen to your riding school?

Agnieszka: 'It will be renovated in the third phase of our project under the supervision of the Conservatory Office. It will likely be turned into a large food hall with restaurants.'

How did soldiers actually live there in the past?

Agnieszka: 'It was quite a strict regime. We're talking about a real military district—a city within the city. Do we want to return to that city-in-the-city concept again? Absolutely not. Fifteen years ago, another part of the barracks was done that way by developers. They literally put up a big fence around their site and destroyed all the historical artefacts except the exterior walls. I can resolutely confirm to you: that is the opposite of what we

want. We want to develop a residential district where old, historic buildings are renovated; a residential district open to all. You won't see any fences or barriers here. We want the district and its history to be part of the city. Furthermore, we follow the instructions of the Conservatory Office when designing the site. The result is modern buildings, not monuments, which enhances its historical value.'

You do that in part with your temporary uses, but how will you really let people experience the site's history?

Agnieszka: 'To be clear, we are not looking to open a museum. We want to create an atmosphere of the past. Everyone who visits our site is shocked at how many historical elements we have preserved, and that, after more than 150 years, they are still in good condition. The saddle racks are still there, for example, which is really good news. We intend to repurpose those as well.'

You also restore buildings that have been mismanaged by previous owners.

Agnieszka: 'Yes. The previous owner of the riding hall, where the riding school was located, destroyed large parts of the building, such as

Real Estates Impactor Award 2022

'Koszary Kultury is the first temporary use case organised in Poland. Like in Belgium, the fresh approach was received warmly in the Polish market. The national press picked up the concept of temporary use. We even received an award from Rzeczpospolita, a national magazine specialising in entrepreneurship, finance and law. Every year, they present the Real Estate Impactor Award to governments, businesses and others who shape public space in an impactful way. Together with our joint venture partner BPI, we received the Real Estate Impactor Award 2022 in the category 'Value-added object'. We are very proud of that.'



the original gates, during the Communist era. He turned it into garages for big cars. Our goal, in cooperation with the Conservatory Office, is to restore everything as well as possible.'

Old elements versus new techniques: can they be combined?

Agnieszka: 'We are currently in discussion with the Conservatory Office about the old stables. The upper floors, which used to serve as granaries, are not tall enough, so they need to be modified.'

The how and what is still unclear at this point; that will be determined in the third stage. What is already clear is that the old stables—like the riding halls—will not have a residential function. The plan is to incorporate cafes, restaurants and even open offices.'

Are there other buildings that will be used for non-residential purposes?

Agnieszka: 'The headquarters where the second deputy commander worked, the kitchen where food was prepared for up to 650 people every day, the squadron commander's office and the squadron chief's office, as well as regular soldiers' quarters—i.e., communal, multi-person rooms—will all be turned into office space. Some adjustments will have to be made inside, especially the ceiling height, which requires us to take the wooden structure into account; we can raise it a little but will otherwise leave it alone. We will renovate the interior doors and the floors while the facade walls will remain untouched—there is no question about that.'

Hospitality, offices, housing—will Cavallia still have room for what the site was all about years ago: horses?

Michał: 'Since 1986, I have also been organising Uhlan Days—in reference to the pre-war holiday of the 15th Poznan Uhlan Regiment—in the most faithful form possible in Poznan. The idea is to have cavalymen back on the streets in their original uniforms. April 23 is also St George's Day; St George is the patron saint of the cavalry. We take great care to preserve the ceremonial military elements. Since 2012, cavalry competitions have been held on the occasion of the regimental holiday, with participation by cavalymen from Poland, Germany, Great Britain, Switzerland, Sweden, the Netherlands and even the US.'

Figure it out

'It may not seem an obvious choice in today's real estate industry, but reusing existing structures is the most respectful way of doing things. It is not just about preserving open space and heritage for future generations, but also to use scarce raw materials with care, thus reducing the industry's carbon footprint.

Unfortunately, the most sustainable path is never the easiest. When we began our mission fourteen years ago, the primary focus was on rehabilitating and upgrading land already in use. That was an intense, pioneering role, and we are proud to add 100% land reuse (including 40% re-created urban nature!) to our list of business achievements.

However, the realisation gradually set in that the dimension above ground is as valuable as the ground itself; everything ever built—be it 10 or 1,000 years ago—contains a wealth of carbon, raw materials and energy. Reusing those resources permeated our modus operandi and became one of four key objectives to which our organisation is committed,

the other three being reorganising spatial planning, reuniting all communities, and restoring the disturbed natural balance. These four objectives are inseparable and even reinforce each other to achieve an even higher impact.

We are extremely proud that we will be comprehensively upcycling our most recent purchase, a building with an excellent central location on Nervierslaan in the heart of Brussels. We are changing it from office space to sustainable accommodation, with 100% preservation of the existing structure.

In other words, we have definitively and thoroughly embarked on the path of

reuse and repurposing and will explicitly express this in our ESG ambitions and reporting in the years to come. In addition to reusing property with the aim to improve space, we will translate this into CO2 recovery in reuse and CO2 reduction in production. This will help us prepare for our path to a net-zero future, both in production and in use of everything we create.'

100%
preservation of existing structure in new project in Brussels

Step by step

0%	'In our first projects—and we readily admit this—reuse of existing real estate was minimal, down to 0%.'
14%	'Our office at the Watt site in Ghent consists of mixed residential and professional use and demonstrated what we are capable of for the first time. 14% of the existing buildings were structurally and economically worth preserving. The Watt project has more than succeeded in that, both architecturally and functionally.'
70%	'At our Marie Thumas project in Leuven we plan to retain 9,500 m2 of the 14,000 m2 of structures. That amounts to two football fields, four stories high. Percentage wise, it amounts to almost 70%.'
100%	'As mentioned above, we achieved 100% reuse in the 'Nerviens' project; our further developments extend to systemically searching for 100% reusable real estate, often repurposing it and preparing it for a sustainable second life.'

EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY



‘Barrels from 50-year-old Vandenheuvvel Brewery now in our interior ’

‘Half a century ago, Molenbeek based Vandenheuvvel Brewery was one of the largest breweries in Belgium. We are realising our Tannat project with 79 sustainable flats on the site of this former brewery. During demolition work there, we discovered a hidden cellar with several old beer barrels. Unfortunately, they were empty, but we noticed something on one of the barrels. It had a stamp that came from one of our other sites, KOMET in Mechelen, which used to house a barrel manufacturer, among others. To complete the circle: two of these barrels are now part of the interior of WaTT The Firms, the creative and innovative hotspot for the future, where our offices are also located.’

'Before construction on our RUTE project along the Schelde River in Ghentbrugge started in 2018, BAAC, an agency for archaeology and building history, examined the site. This followed a preliminary investigation that suggested medieval artefacts might be found there. And the suspicions were confirmed. The findings included a skeleton and an iron, which we donated to the black box of the city of Ghent. And we discovered that RUTE has a history that extends beyond the Middle Ages, possibly even into prehistory. Because we consider the public disclosure of stories linked to our sites important, we invited the whole neighbourhood to join us in discovering RUTE's history. A huge success!'

'Letting the neighbourhood enjoy medieval artefacts'





Project Developer
ISABELLE VERHAERT

PROJECT VYNCKIER

THE TEXTBOOK EXAMPLE OF AN UNMITIGATED HERITAGE PROJECT: VYNCKIER IN GHEENT

‘This is where the great waves of industrialisation converge’

If you say Vynckier, you probably think of the Manchester buildings. And that in itself conjures dreams, doesn't it? Because the historic building at this Revive site in Ghent – named after the British city – is definitely heritage. An original chimney with a boiler house, a laboratory by the Vynckier brothers and a unique flat roof, the very first of its kind. These are just a few examples of the building's unique historic character. Project manager Isabelle Verhaert told us about the restoration and redevelopment of the former industrial building.

Industrial past

‘The Vynckier site has several storylines intersecting and following one another,’ according to Isabelle Verhaert. ‘First of all, there is the story of a city growing beyond

its walls. The toll at the city gates was abolished in 1860, allowing industry to establish itself outside the city walls where there was more space. It didn't take long for the first buildings to appear along the new ‘connecting canal’. The textile mill of Parmentier, Van Hoegaerden and Cie was one of the first buildings to spring up in the northern attenuated ramparts, and it was nicknamed ‘the grass factory’. The typology of the Manchester buildings that facilitated the textile industry had arrived in Ghent. For a time, major manufacturers made it their home: Indiënnerie-Teinturerie Gand-Zele-Tubize, Usines Cotonnières Belgique and Spinnery Pipyn built the

Manchester building that Revive will transform into a place where technology companies will support and improve production systems through innovation and digital transformation, in 1923.’

Pipyn struggled after the 1929 stock market crash, and Vynckier, a manufacturer of bakelite products, bought the Manchester. In the years that followed, Vynckier bought up the three surrounding textile mills. And it's that history that permeates the building. ‘Special and quite unique about this site: it's a place where the three great waves of industrialisation converge, and maybe in the future the fourth.’

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Future: industrial engineering

The buildings on the Vynckier site, which used to function almost exclusively as weaving and spinning mills, will soon be repurposed as offices. 'It will be a workplace, there will be no housing but also no industrial activities. Strangely enough, the buildings aren't suitable for heavy industry today; the floor cannot support that. That's why we're considering offices and a form between office and industry called industrial engineering.

These days, industry and craft go hand in hand, and maybe that's where the answer lies. There are a lot of intermediate forms as a lot of people combine manufacturing and craft. They work partly on the com-

puter but also in a lab or production space.' With this repurposing, consideration is given both to the future and the valuable buildings and their limitations.

Heritage gem with a unique story

One of those valuable buildings on the site is undoubtedly one of the three Manchester buildings. The fantastic building takes its name from the city of Manchester in England, where this architecture was first used to realise the spinning mills and weaving mills that made the term 'Manchester building' a common one. 'But why exactly is the Manchester building on our site such a heritage gem? I have a very simple answer to that: it has a unique story attached to it.



'Manchester buildings used to be built with a pitched roof. This was the very first Manchester building in the world to have a flat roof, almost revolutionary at the time,' Isabelle said. 'The flat roof was only possible because people were testing a new way of construction in 1923. People built with materials that consisted of a combination of porous or unreinforced concrete and steel beams - like I-profiles. Unfortunately, this method of construction meant that the floor could handle smaller loads than previously estimated. This is quite surprising, especially considering that this building was full of machinery. But,

and we researched this too, the weaving mills of those days apparently weighed a lot less as they were powered by steam and, of course, safety measures in construction were more limited than today.'

Preserving the original philosophy

It goes without saying: the Manchester building carries a lot of history. And yet ... What looks like a simple building from afar is quickly refuted when you get closer. Everything has been laboriously detailed, and you can even recognise different time periods.

'The clever thing about the Manchester is that the ceilings are 5 metres high, and it has plateaus of about 5,000 square metres, which give it an incredibly spacious feeling. We want to realise the entrance in the former engine room. This was also the heart of the building at the time of the textile factory. A large wheel was set in motion by the steam engine, driving the many spinning and weaving machines distributed throughout the factory with cables and belts. Where once these cables

and belts ran across the different floors, the large staircases and corridors in the future office building will take people to the different floors.

In this way, we are preserving the original philosophy of the building in the best way we can.'

By the way, the building still features the typical steel factory windows of yesterday. 'Because we are dealing with a listed building, we are not allowed to simply modify things on the outside façade with, for example, sun blinds. We will install a second wall along the inside so we can still meet the current EPB standards and comfort,' Isabelle concluded.





Heritage building vs. valuable building

What's in a name ... A valuable building is not always a heritage building. There is a clear distinction between the two.

The Manchester building is an example of protected heritage. It has a clear and recognised status. For this kind of building, there are grants available from the government for both study and construction. And rest assured, any modifications are always very strictly monitored.

Valuable buildings are not always listed but are considered valuable by a group of people because of their history, the stories or the connotation given to them. Modifications are usually possible with these kinds of buildings.

And then there are inventory buildings. These are properties that fall between heritage buildings and valuable buildings. They are on the 'Building Heritage Inventory'. An example of one of these is the Vynckier Tower. The entire Vynckier site is on this inventory list.

© Rafaël Balrak



Tiny Triumph

SOPHIE FOUACHE PROJECT MARKETEER AT REVIVE

‘We are literally bringing history to the surface here, piece by piece’

‘Sophie Fouache’s Tiny Triumph is a podcast she created. The podcast was inspired by the rich history of the Minerve site including the bombings that took place in Mortsel over 80 years ago. One word best describes what happened that day in downtown Mortsel: horror. Pure horror. An American plane missed its intended target, the ERLA factory. The bombs landed on a residential area and only partially hit the nearby industrial area, resulting in 936 deaths. It was a chilling event that had an enormous impact on the site and should not be forgotten.

‘A lot has happened on this site; from industrial enterprise to the bombings in which a lot of people lost their lives. That should be known and must certainly never be forgotten. We also believe that respecting the past today can create a closer connection. That’s also the reason behind this podcast.’

‘The podcast will consist of four episodes, each highlighting a part of the Minerve site’s history. We bought up the area in 2016. We

Each quarter, this column offers the back story of a ‘tiny triumph’—an achievement that may seem fussy at first glance, but which has major and, above all, positive implications, both socially and sustainably. In this edition, we let Sophie Fouache, Project Marketeer at Revive, do the talking. She created a podcast about the history of the Minerve site. This Tiny Triumph delves further into the second episode of the podcast, which is about the bombing on 5 April 1943 that took place in Mortsel and the then ERLA factory, now the location of Revive’s Minerve site.

find it is incredibly important not to hijack history on the site where 330 residential units will be located,’ says Sophie.

From Minerva to Agfa Gevaert

The idea of the podcast grew spontaneously—almost organically. ‘During our work here, we occasionally recovered hubcaps and steering wheels, items that likely pre-date World War II. During the remediation phase, we even conducted bomb detection surveys in certain areas. We are literally bringing history to the surface here, little by little.’

The Minerve site was also known in Antwerp and the surrounding area during World War I. Because of the Minerva factory—operated by a car manufacturer of the same name at the time—it was one of the largest industrial sites on the outskirts of Antwerp. At its peak, the company had 6,500 employees, which is huge today but was even more impressive back then.

The podcast will cover three other topics in addition to the episode on the bombing. ‘We will talk about the story of Minerva, the car factory, and we are dedicating an episode to Agfa-Gevaert, Lieven Gevaert’s company. The final episode will also involve the current residents. We have noticed that people are very preoccupied with this history. We let them dictate a lot of the narrative, because this is their story, too.’

Minerve Project

The Minerve site will be completed in at least three phases. The first phase, involving the construction of 16 residential units and 60 apartments, has now been completed. The structural part of the second phase has already been largely completed: 125 homes have been built, and the rest will follow in 2024. The third and final phase involves the delivery of 54 apartments and is still being designed.

© Photo Pieter Serrien, author of ‘Tranen over Mortsel’.

Listen to the podcast here (Dutch)



'Heritage architecture is like trying to lay a Chinese puzzle'

© Gelieve Séverin



Guest speaker

JAN DE MOFFARTS / ALTSTADT

Designing something innovative in a valuable context is particularly interesting to me, and that is precisely what heritage architecture is all about. When working with old structures, you always run into things that do not meet all contemporary standards and requirements. But honestly, that is what makes it interesting. The goal is to preserve the valuable heritage while preparing it for the future, although it may not always be quite that simple; it may require high-tech solutions and new restoration techniques. And yes, we sometimes struggle with preconditions in heritage. But look at it this way: heritage architecture is like trying to lay a Chinese puzzle. Whether you like it or not, there is a dialogue between the old and the new. One example is the energy standards we have to meet today, even in heritage restorations.

Are you familiar with vacuum glass? We use it on various projects, and that's no coincidence. It is an answer to the energy problems in many heritage buildings. It is not the classic, old-fashioned glass but a special kind of glass that is just thin enough to fit into the original frames while offering better insulation than triple glazing. It is a textbook example of how to retain heritage

value while preparing the building for the next generation. Also, as paradoxical as it may sound, this makes the restoration sector a trigger for innovation.

We looked for innovative solutions like this for Gare Maritime, the project on the famous Tour & Taxis site in Brussels that I am particularly proud of. The building was transformed into a public space with possibilities for retail, offices, events, and more. Many requirements had to be seriously considered in the process, such as the strict conditions around insulation, light, ventilation, etc. The challenge lay in meeting those requirements without ignoring the great heritage value. Inventiveness is the key. For example, we added motorised openings in the building to prevent overheating. This allowed us to create air circulation through facade and roof openings.

This is just one example, but perhaps our corporate slogan best summarises the valuable context of heritage: 'Standing on the shoulders of giants'. The idea behind it is simple: the giants represent history; we, on the other hand, are the little people, the dwarves who get to look on from the

shoulders of those giants. Achieving success in 2023 requires a smart and respectful examination of heritage. Only by trying to grasp and understand history can we make great strides forward. Why was that building put in exactly that spot? What was its functionality? Who commissioned the building? What has happened to it over time? Only by understanding the past can you be ready for the future.

How amazing is it that we could look into the original client's archives for a historic building like Gare Maritime. We found literally everything we needed. That information was key to restoring—and even enhancing—the grandeur of yesteryear.

And then comes the ever-recurring question: is heritage restoration profitable? Admittedly, renovation is usually more expensive, especially in a professional context. Reusing certain materials, for example, can be difficult and costly. But rest assured, you get something priceless in return: a place with soul, something you cannot match when you tear down valuable history to erect something entirely new on top of it.

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