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In 2016, the Brussels-Capital Region launched its "Programme Régional en Economie Circulaire", enthusiastically embracing the concept of a "circular" economy. Like in many other European cities, a not so distant future is envisioned where material resources are utilised in "closed loops". It is a strategy that would allow infinite reusability and recyclability of materials without any loss of quality. The ambition is to create local employment while reducing environmental footprint.

The dominant manifestation of these ideas comes in abstract diagrams. An abundance of arrows is used to represent the yet to be developed business models, professions and social practices. In other words, the tangible social and material qualities of the circular economy and its rough patches remain to be seen. In *Life under a cherry tree*, Rotor investigates the practicalities of the circular economy concept with particular regards to the building industry. The exhibition takes its title from a passage in *Cradle to Cradle* (2002), referring to a vision of an industry based on a system of "lifecycle development".

There are multiple reasons why a material is difficult to reuse. Over the past century, an almost unmanageable diversification of materials and elements has flooded the built environment. From planned obsolescence to legal regulations, and from evolving aesthetics to changing use patterns, there are many kinds of problems that make certain materials difficult to salvage, that create this inertia, and it is frequently unclear which problems are the most significant. Often the recovery of very cheap materials like particle boards, aggregates concrete or simple cellular concrete blocks for DIY is more expensive and complex than the manufacturing of the new product. Other substances are banned from the European market because of their toxic, harmful contents or, as with carcinogenic asbestos, leave only the possibility of complete superstructure. But also the changed aesthetic perception and socio-cultural changes make materials obsolete; a psychological barrier prevents the reuse of toilets, bidets appear obsolete due to the popularization of toilet paper, certain colours and shapes of the 70s and 80s are out of fashion and no longer popular, or the concept of open offices bans ceiling suspensions and glass partitions. In many office buildings, the cladding such as coverings and dividing walls are often complex building products. Paradoxically, these elements are also the first to be removed when the building is transformed. These problems highlight the very uncertainties and contingencies a viable reuse economy must learn to cope with.

At La Loge, Rotor creates a trail through a situation that is reminiscent of a construction site. Across the spaces, materials are stacked, piled and heaped awaiting an unknown future. Rather dramatically, these materials have been staged by bright construction spotlights, moved into focus and thus loaded with an apparent value, a special presence. Everything seems to be

ready for construction, expansion or actual integration into the rooms of La Loge but the situation remains inert: construction has paused and with it notions of progress, development and innovation.

The materials that make up this exhibition will be available for free pick-up during the demount to anyone interested in prolonging their use. Takers will be responsible for disassembling and packaging the materials they wish to take.

### **about Rotor**

Rotor is a cooperative design practice consisting of a group of architects, designers and other professionals interested in material flows in industry and construction, particularly in relation to resources, waste, use and reuse. Rotor disseminates creative strategies for salvage and waste reduction through research and design, and also produces exhibitions, books, economic models and policy proposals. Rotor's approach consistently – and very often visually – emphasizes the effects of human planning, oversight, and extended use on the built environment. Material flows serve as a way to study how humans behave towards each other on a societal scale. In parallel with these exhibition projects, Rotor continued to realize various design projects, often interventions in existing architecture. This work has its equivalent in a growing series of deconstruction projects in which Rotor oversees the dismantling of building components in buildings slated for demolition, for reuse purposes. These dismantlings and the associated reselling activities are conducted under the heading of Rotor Deconstruction, a separate, spin-off entity created in 2014.

Rotor represented Belgium's French Community at the 12th International Architecture Exhibition of the Biennale di Venezia. The exhibition *Usus/Usures* occupied the Belgian pavilion at the Giardini. The project explored wear as a reaction to use in architecture. For the Prada Foundation, Milan, they curated *ex limbo*, a recollection of the material history of all Prada catwalks. The same year, 2011, they curated and designed the OMA/Progress show in the Barbican Art Gallery in London, an overview of the work of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, while in 2013 they curated the Oslo Architecture Triennale titled *Behind the Green Door*, including a vast exhibition on the challenges facing 'sustainable' architecture today. In 2018, Rotor participated in *Manifesta 12* Palermo with Monte Gallo offering new points of view on the relationship between man and landscape. *Life under a cherry tree* is the first solo exhibition of Rotor in Brussels, where the collective is based.

## **thank you**

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With support from:

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Vedett supports the opening evening of the exhibition.

## **the team of La Loge**

Laura Herman and Sophie Fitze  
Visual identity: Antoine Begon, Boy Vereecken  
Photography: Lola Perkowsky  
Translations: Nadia Guerrioui, Maarten Mertens

## **opening hours**

Thursday - Friday - Saturday

12:00 to 18:00

Free entrance

Visit our website for more details about our program and events.

## **La Loge**

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La Loge is a privately initiated non-profit association founded by architect Philippe Rotthier. La Loge is supported by Philippe Rotthier Foundation, Flanders State of the Art, and First Sight, La Loge's community of engaged individuals and organisations.