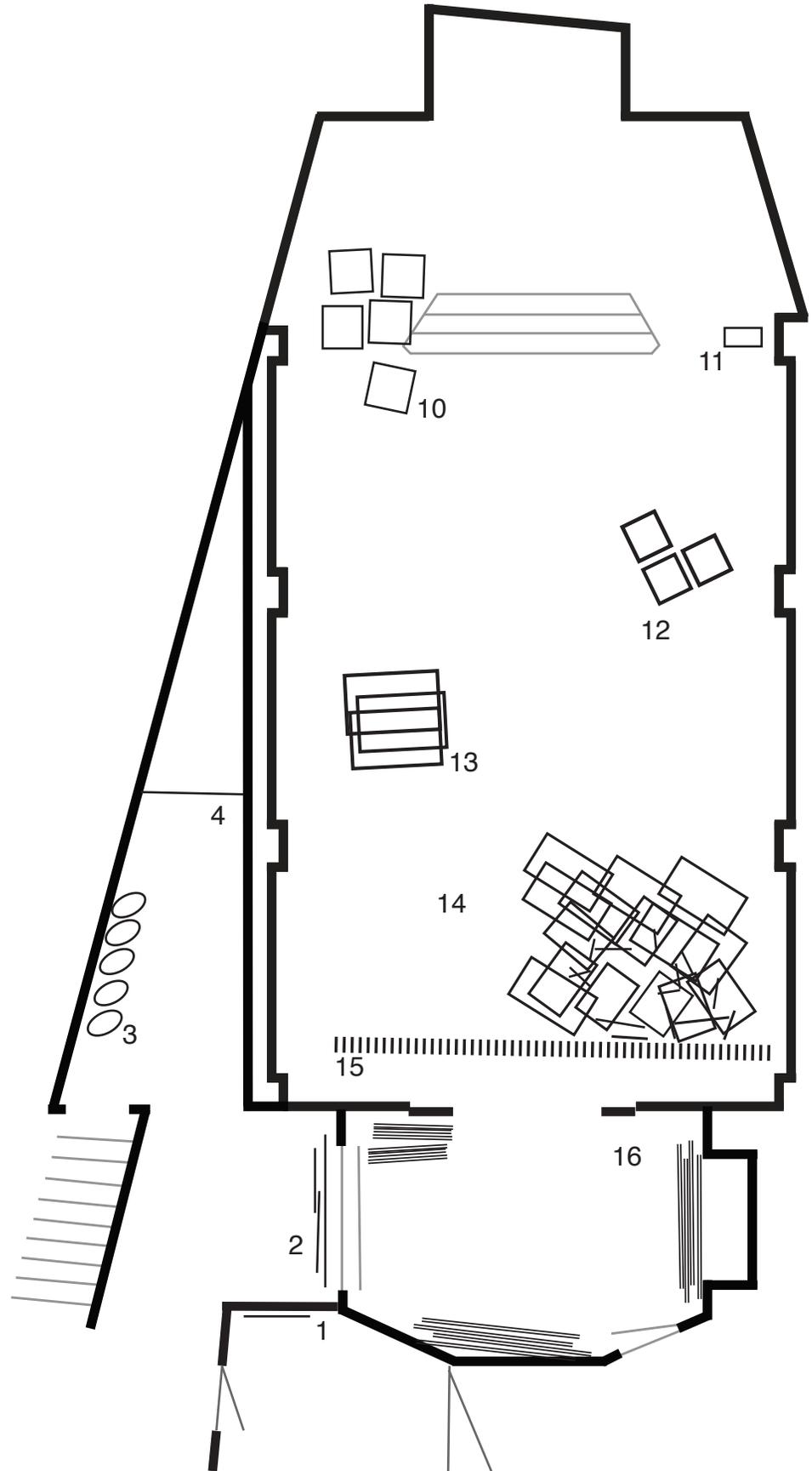
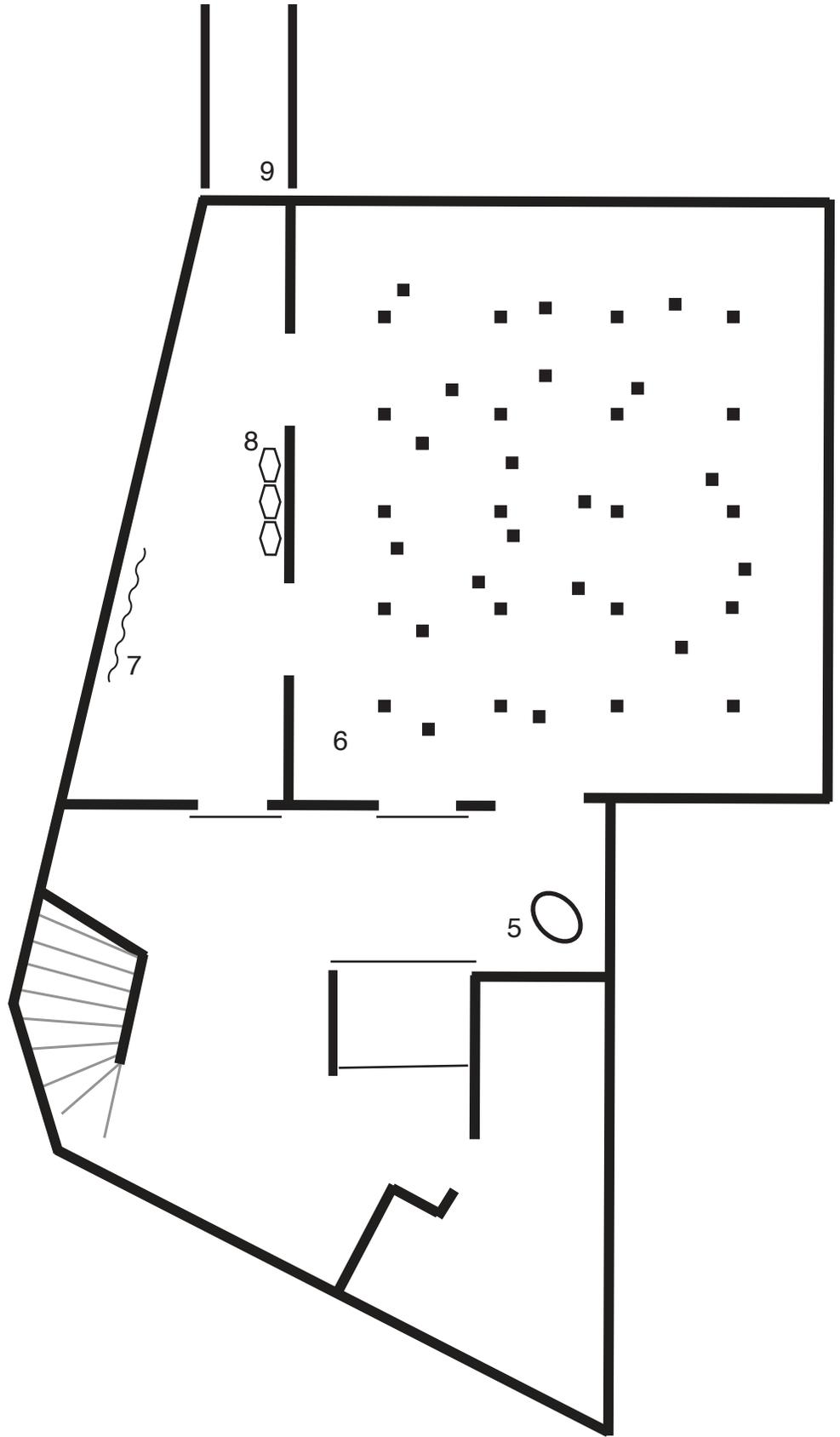


# Life under a cherry tree

by Rotor



ground floor



basement

1. *Astro facade*  
Double glazed panel coated with 'Stopray' solar-control coating. produced by Thermobel, ca.1970, retrieved from Astrotower

2. *Partition glass*  
Partitions in tempered glass, ca. 1990-2015, retrieved from various office demolition sites around Brussels

Tempered glass is a type of safety glass that when broken is reduced to granular fragments instead of splintering into jagged shards. As these granular fragments are less likely to cause injury, the use of safety glass is mandatory for many architectural applications. In the manufacturing process the panes are first cut to size before they are treated thermally. They cannot be cut or adjusted after this initial treatment.

3. *Toilet bowls*  
Suspended toilet bowls in porcelain, produced by various manufacturers, ca. 2010

Contemporary toilet bowls consists of various chambers which perform different roles. While hard to clean by hand, they can be cleaned and disinfected in chemical baths and brought back to a state close to new. However at a similar price most clients prefer new bowls for perceived reasons of hygiene and sanitation.

4. *Cradle to Cradle's quote*  
"Consider the cherry tree: thousands of blossoms create fruit for birds, humans, and other animals, in order that one pit might eventually fall onto the ground, take root, and grow. ... The tree makes copious blossoms and fruit without depleting its environment. Once they fall on the ground, their materials decompose and break down into nutrients that nourish microorganisms, insects, plants, animals, and soil. Although the tree actually makes more of its product than it needs for its own success in an ecosystem, this abundance has evolved (through millions of years of success and failure or, in business terms, R&D), to serve rich and varied purposes. In fact, the tree's fecundity nourishes just about everything around it. What might the human built world look like if the cherry tree had produced it?"

Michael Braungart and William McDonough,  
*Cradle to Cradle*  
(London: Vintage, 2009).

5. *Bidet*  
Series of 3 bidets, various manufacturers, ca. 1950-1970

The manufacturing of new bidets has plummeted in Western Europe since the 1980s as they are no longer a staple of most domestic or hotel bathrooms. The bidet, used primarily to wash the genitals and anus has become obsolete under the influence of changing cultural customs. The popularisation of toilet paper from the 1960s onwards will have also played a significant role in this disinterest.

6. *Connectivity columns*  
Aluminium cable gutter column with power and network plugs, ca. 2000

The connectivity column is used to transport power and utilities from the main distribution network above a suspended ceiling to the workstations below. As reusable elements they are adaptable, easy to dismantle and priced below a tenth of the equivalent for new. Technological uncertainties relating to their function and a lack of product guarantees mean that however many become available they are not reused.

7. *Asbestos*  
Roof cover in asbestos-fibre cement, presumably by Eternit SA, ca. 1960, retrieved from a defunct warehouse in Maaseik

Post second world war, cheap asbestos-cement boards were popularised as a non-degrading and everlasting material. Millions of square meters of panels and other asbestos containing products were manufactured by companies such as Eternit in Kapelle-op-den-bos.

When inhaled, asbestos fibers cause lung cancer. Its use in common building materials was finally phased out by legislators in 1989.

Large quantities of this dangerous material is still present across the existing building stock. From expansion joints and kitchen tops to fire-insulation and wall-covers, its pervasive presence greatly complicates salvage operations.

8. *Halogen pomo lamps*  
Wall light 'Moonlight' by Pierre Lallemand/ Art& Build, ca. 1995, retrieved from the interior of a large law firm

From the 1980s onwards, architectural offices such as Art & Build, Jaspers and Atelier de Genval, built a significant number of large corporate buildings across Brussels. Their architecture was a distinct blend of post-modern neoclassicism.

As corporations today try to portray themselves as young and innovative their appetite for this formal architectural language has run out. Simultaneously, the lack of demand for these materials on the private 'vintage' market condemns many elements of this style to landfill.

9. *Jaspers quote*

"We will then demolish our current buildings, that will have become obsolete, without regret.

Such an evolution will undoubtedly be a radical answer to another developmental need. The excavators of today and tomorrow will replace what fires, earthquakes or wars did in the past."

Michel Jaspers, architect, translated from journal *Bâtiment*, May-June 2005

10. *Carpet tiles*  
Carpet tiles 'Model' by ABC ca. 1234, presumably Desso, ca. 2000

Carpet tiles are easier to maintain than wall-to-wall carpets, offering greater flexibility in case of wear or dirt. Individual tiles can be removed and replaced without the need for changing entire floors. Theoretically this makes them good candidates for salvage and reuse. However in practice their abundant availability is not matched by their demand. A lack of precedent for their use in domestic settings, concerns over their hygiene and changes in fashion and taste are just a few factors that heavily impedes their reuse.

11. *TL lights*  
Fixture for fluorescent tubes, presumably Philips, ca. 2005

In an attempt to curb rising energy demands, EU legislation imposes energy efficiency standards for lighting devices. Only a decade ago, the T5 fluorescent tube was a state-of-the-art fixture used extensively in office buildings. Now with the arrival of LED technology it has almost become obsolete. The economic gains of reducing energy consumption outweighs the cost of investing in these new LED fixtures, making the installation of a T5 light a bad investment, even if the fixture would have been obtained for free.

12. *Exposed aggregate concrete pavers*  
Exposed aggregate concrete pavers, unknown producer, ca. 1975, obtained at the WTC 1 & 2 demolition site

Low cost concrete pavers are typically used in large quantities for external terracing or as ballast on large flat roofs. They are usually installed without mortar and simply rest on plastic cones. This method allows for easy removal if works are needed on the underlying roof.

As part of various green building certification schemes, owners of buildings set for demolition or renovation have frequently tried to give away these pavers. To date only small quantities of material have effectively been reused.

13. *Autoclaved aerated concrete*  
Building blocks in autoclaved aerated concrete, produced by Ytong, ca. 2018, retrieved from a temporary installation

The cement-based mortar routinely used between concrete building blocks is often stronger than the material itself. As a result, blocks are often difficult to dismantle in a form suitable for reuse.

14. *Rockwool*  
Mineral insulation wool 'Rocksono', produced by Rockwool ca. 2000, retrieved from office partition walls in WTC1

The characteristics of mineral wool do not change over time. If the material stays clean, dry and without vermin it should be a reasonable candidate for reuse.

However this rarely happens in practice. Mineral wool causes skin and lung irritation. Extensive protection is required for its handling and installation, making it a less appealing candidate for salvage operations.

Without the original specification it is often difficult to determine specific technical characteristics. Local authorities often reject the use of second hand insulation in qualifying for subsidies and grants.

15. *Suspended chrome ceilings*  
Suspended ceiling in chromed steel, unknown manufacturer, ca. 1980, deconstructed in 2019

Small batches of high quality materials often become available during demolition. For such limited quantity this chromed ceiling is too insignificant to invest time finding out the availability of spare parts, its fire rating and other technical data a professional client might require.

16. *Particle Boards*  
Laminated particle board with suspension hooks, produced by Beddeleem ca. 2000, retrieved from WTC1