

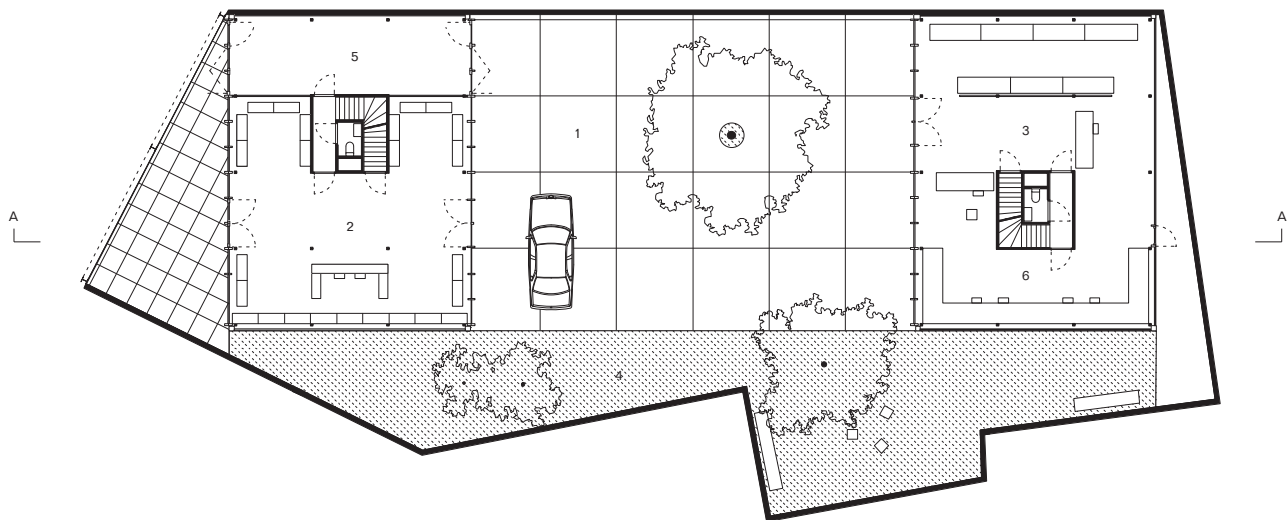
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# Computer Shop

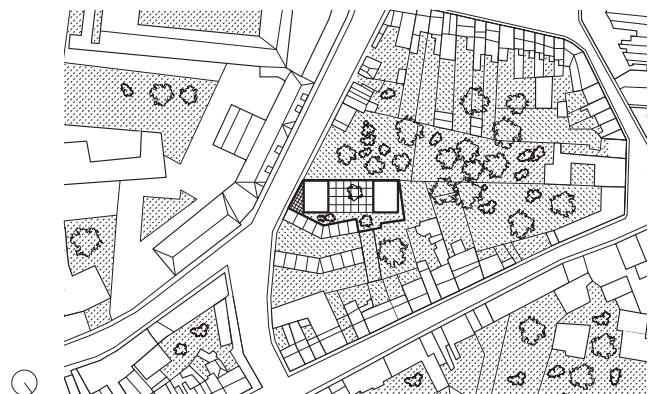
2007–2009 / Tielt, BE

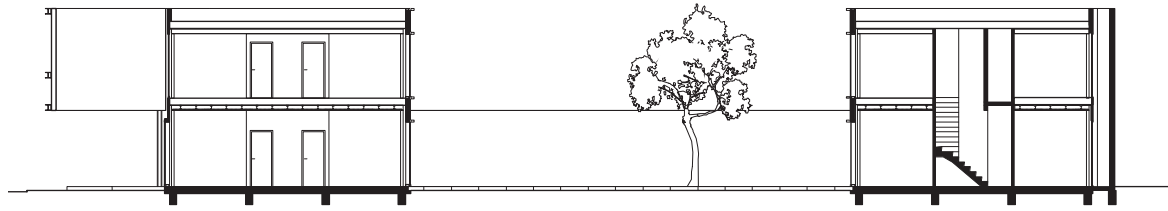
Two identical parallel volumes are pushed to either end of a brick wall that encloses an elongated lot in the town of Tielt. One is a computer shop incorporating a car passage, with living quarters on the upper floor, while the other serves as a maintenance and logistics area. The two boxes define a rectangular paved courtyard, ceding the margins of the irregular perimeter to a whimsical garden. They are constructed as typical industrial buildings, with slender steel posts and beams, steel decks and aluminium curtain walling. Whereas the front and the two facades looking onto the courtyard have glass infill and pronounced black mullions, the sides are clad with simple polycarbonate panels that are white, like the inner side of the encompassing brick wall. Portions of this wall rise up to wrap around the 7m-high volumes. Aligned with the street, a steelwork structure supports a raised section of the wall that forms a wide entrance patio, interrupting the continuity of the brick enclosure.



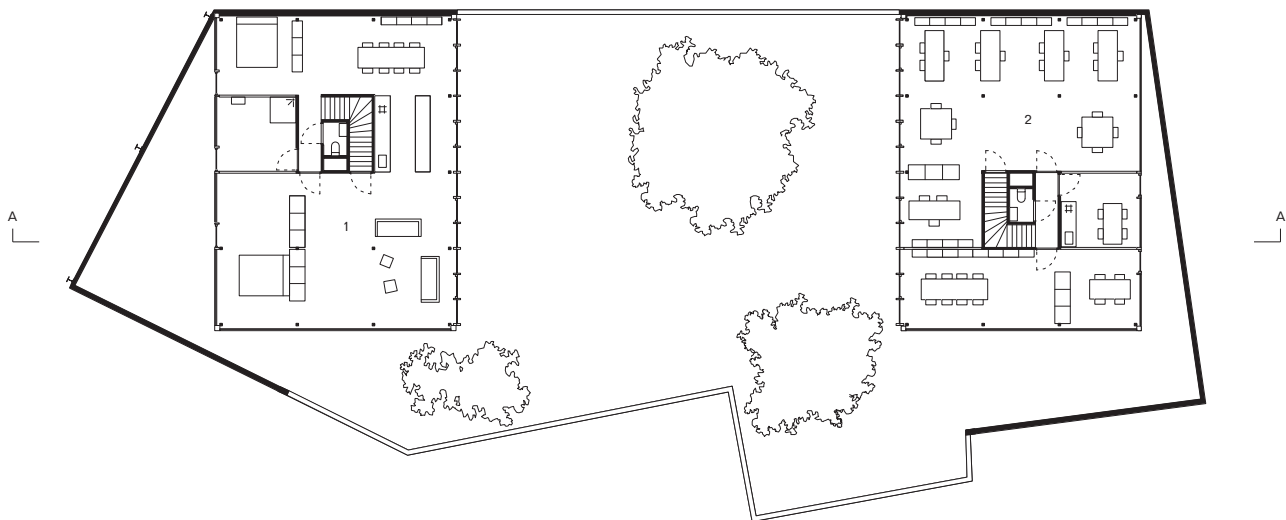
Ground floor plan

- 1 Inner courtyard as parking and entrance zone
- 2 Computer store and reception
- 3 Logistic spaces
- 4 Garden
- 5 Passage
- 6 Atelier





Section AA



Level +1 floor plan

- 1 Apartment
- 2 Offices





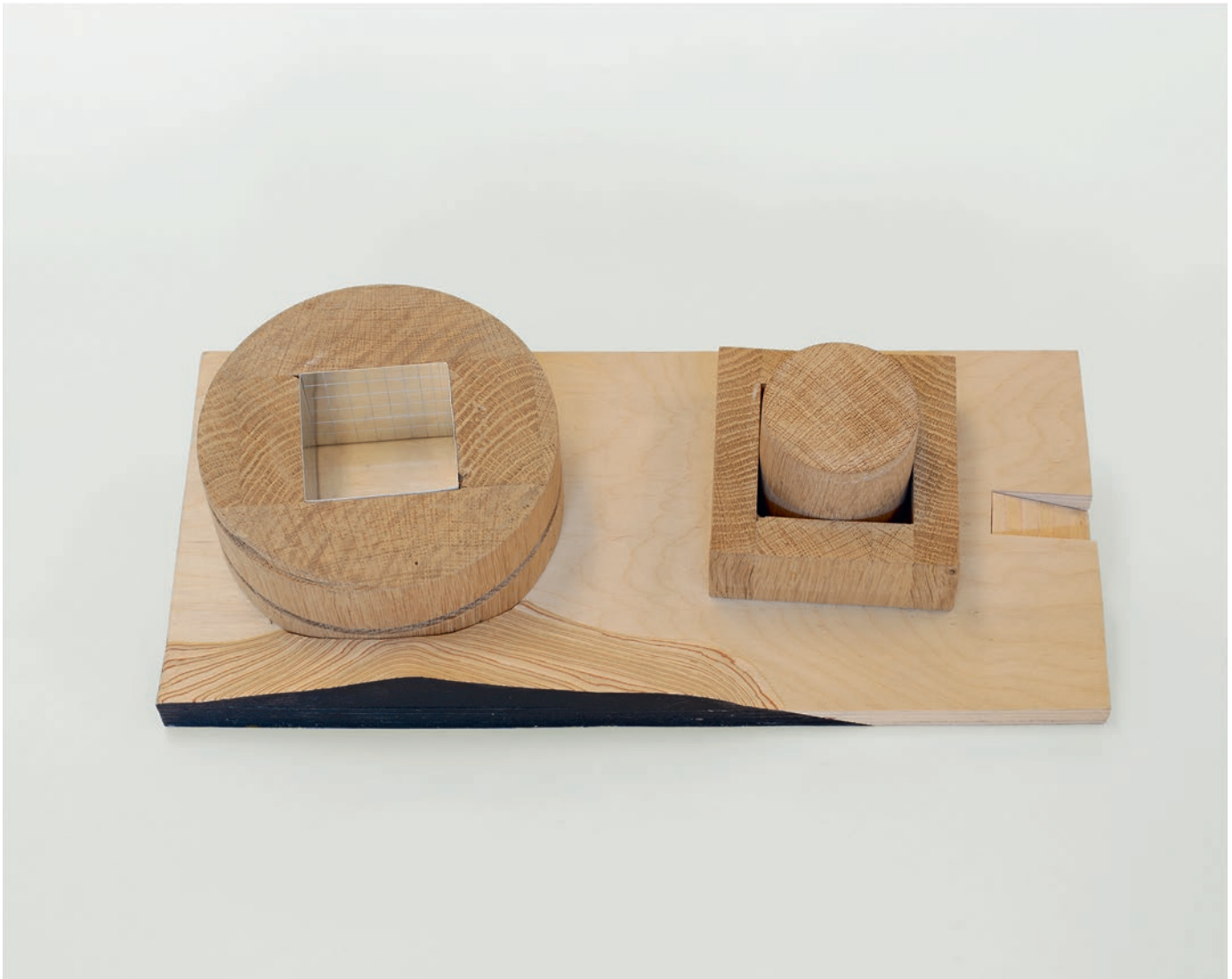






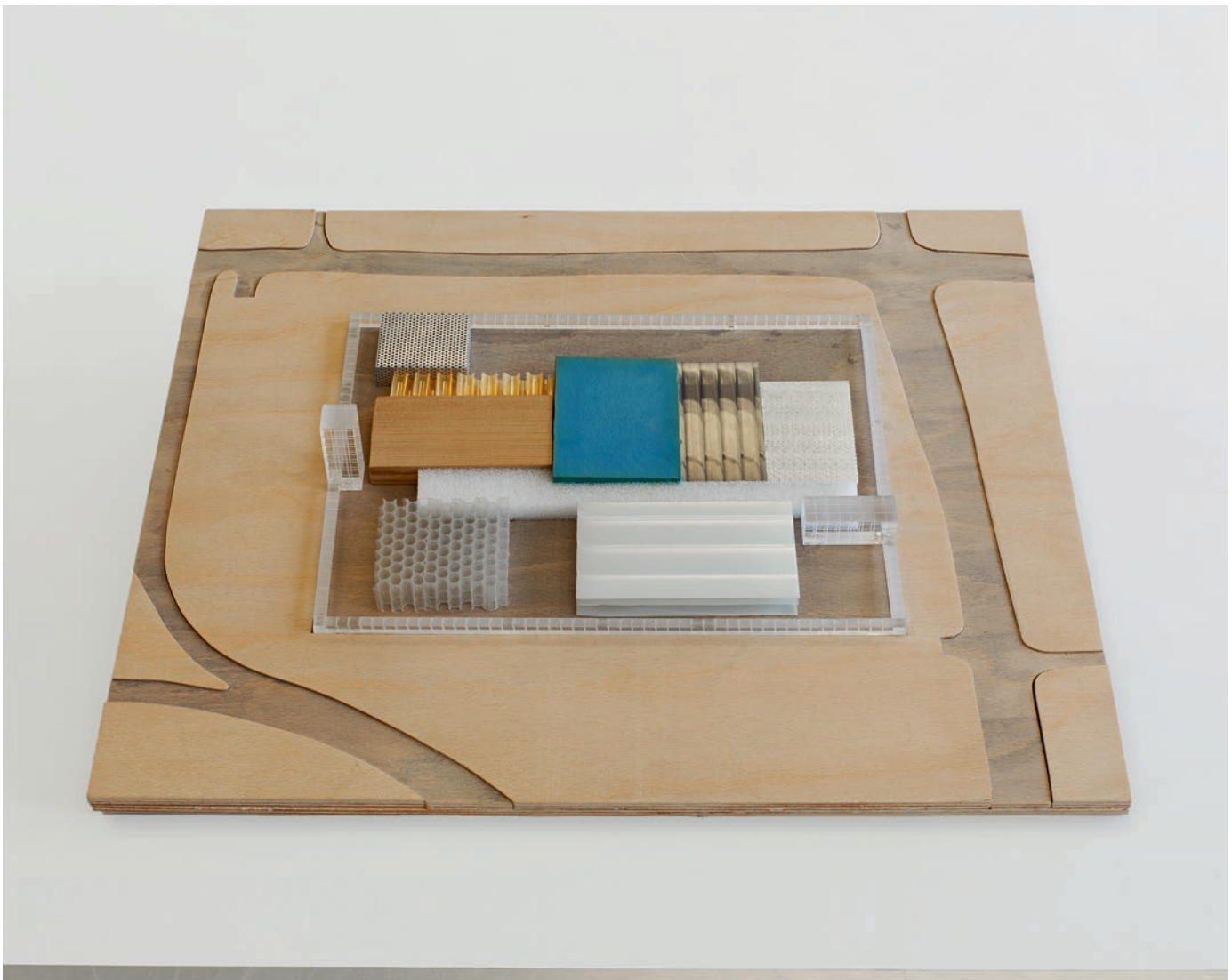


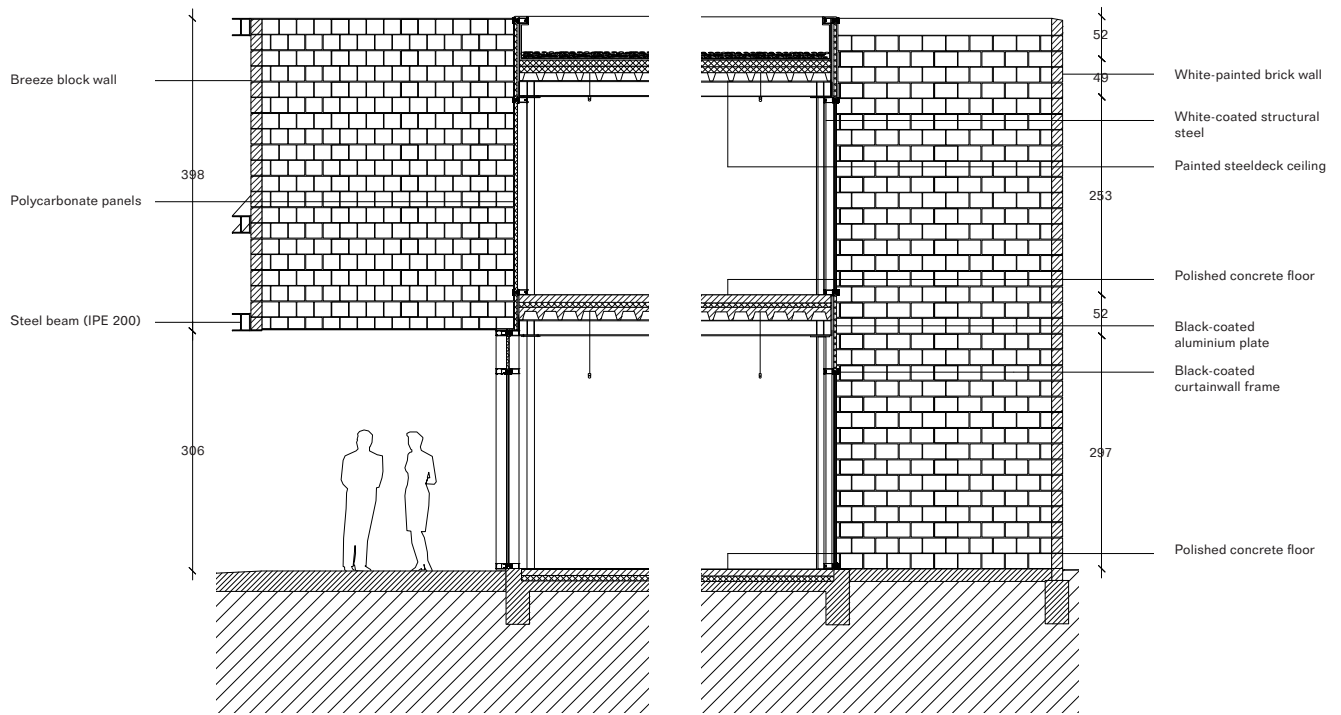


















#### Bowery Savings Computer Shop – Pier Paolo Tamburelli

Bowery Savings Bank is a building by McKim, Mead & White. Completed in 1895, it stands in Lower Manhattan, between Little Italy and Chinatown, with facades onto both Bowery and Grand. For McKim, Mead & White the construction was an occasion to carefully measure the distorted geometry of the plot – an irregular L-shape. A square and a rectangle are inserted into this area to provide the two main spaces (the banking room and the waiting area), expressed in the Roman Revival style. The remaining spaces, in between these two rooms and the borders of the plot, form a series of leftovers that are not wasted. On the contrary, the architects devote the utmost attention – far more than they do to the main rooms – to the patient scrutiny and re-composition of the accidents of the cadastral map. The borders of the property are mapped and annotated by means of different types of columns and pilasters, and by subtle variations in the distance separating columns from walls. This silent game of variations emerges politely on the facades: while the portico with four columns on Grand rests perpendicular to the wall of the banking hall, the entrance with the two freestanding Corinthian columns on Bowery follows the orientation of the street, thus diverging some ten degrees from the orientation of the waiting room. This faint misalignment (a surprising Lewerentz or Siza moment in the otherwise rather robust production of McKim, Mead & White) arises because the arch framed by the two columns is extruded following the internal geometry, thus exposing one side of the bank vault on the Bowery facade. This light, bleak cut in the impeccable classical pattern of the facade appears as a promise of imperfection. The masterful organisation of the plan seems to be entirely devoted to preserving the random nature of the subdivision of the land. Before the architects came along, there was a project here, even if only in the form of an abstract property line on a piece of paper signed by a notary. The city was already here. The city always comes first. In the one account that we have of a 'debate' among Roman architects (Cassius Dio, *Historiae romanae*, LXIX, 4, 3), we hear Apollodorus of Damascus criticise the emperor Hadrian on the grounds that he had neglected the possibility of using the basement of his Temple of Venus and Rome as a scenery store for the nearby Colosseum. This criticism (which according to Cassius Dio spelled first exile and later death for Apollodorus) is surprising and telling: the only discussion among Roman architects that has come down to us is about *storage* space! And yet this debate about *storage* space could also be seen, quite simply, as an enthusiastic eulogy for space. Architecture is about space, all space. And so storage has to be treated as an intellectual problem. To Apollodorus *space is always precious*. The Computer Shop in Tiel uses the same trick as the Bowery Savings Bank. The upper part of the facade follows the street while the lower part discovers the different geometry of the new blocks. The two regular volumes are placed into the plot to generate a *figure of leftover space*. Some bushes and a blind wall – this is what matters and what we love.

## Acknowledgments

Jelena Pančević, Giovanna Borasi, Christophe Van Gerrewey, Enrique Walker, Milica Topalović, Andrea Zanderigo, Martino Tattara, Pier Vittorio Aureli, Éric Lapierre, Pier Paolo Tamburelli, Wilfried Kuehn, Emanuel Christ, Moritz Küng, Pamela Johnston, Sarah Handelman, Ellis Woodman, Franz König, Honoré Geers, Maria Schauwvlieghe, Marij De Brabandere, Maarten Van Severen, Martina Björn, Ambra Fabi, Aslı Çiçek, Bas Princen, Stefano Graziani, Dirk Braeckman, Joris Kritis, Terry Kritis, Steven Bosmans, Jan Lenaerts, Bert Rogiers, Richard Venlet, Dan Budik, Wonne Ickx, Dries Van De Velde, Rolf Vansteenwegen, Roland Maes, Joachim Declerck, Lieven De Cauter, Dieter Delbare, Bart Verschaffel, Bureau Goddeeris, Patrick 't Hooft, Bas Smets,

Jan De Clerq, Jan Mannaerts, Kris Buyse, Greet Houben, Hans Westerveld, Jan Boeykens, Greet Klaps, Peter Gaillard, Dirk Snauwaert, Daan Bauwens, Wim Vaes, Stephan Van Den Langenbergh, Saskia Verbeeren, Saskia Soete De Boosere, An De Sauter, Willy De Sauter, Ai Weiwei, Herzog & deMeuron, Ordos Jiang Yuan Water Engineering Co. Ltd., Keywan Tadjkarimi, Trees Saerens, Peter Swinnen, Freek Persyn, Michael Smith, Iwan Strauven, Stefan Devoldere, Salomon Frausto, deSingel International Arts Centre, Universiteit Gent, Kunstacademie Maastricht, Wiels Centre for Contemporary Art, BOZAR, Vlaams Bouwmeester, Rotterdam Biennale, Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art

## Colophon

	Volume 1: 2–56
Editors	Kersten Geers, David Van Severen, Bas Princen, Joris Kritis
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Coordination	Steven Bosmans, Ronan Murray
Drawing editors	Giovanni Lazzareschi Sergiusti, Ronan Murray
Graphic design	Joris Kritis (with Terry Kritis)
Lithography	Marc Gijzen
Print	Die Keure
Published by	Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Köln Ehrenstr. 4, 50672 Köln

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek  
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at [dnb.d-nb.de](http://dnb.d-nb.de).

Printed in Belgium

Distribution Germany, Austria, Switzerland / Europe  
Buchhandlung Walther König, Köln  
Ehrenstr. 4  
D-50672 Köln  
T +49 (0) 221 / 20 59 6-53  
[verlag@buchhandlung-walther-koenig.de](mailto:verlag@buchhandlung-walther-koenig.de)

UK & Ireland  
Cornerhouse Publications Ltd. – HOME  
2 Tony Wilson Place  
UK – Manchester M154FN  
T +44 (0) 161 2123466  
[publications@cornerhouse.org](mailto:publications@cornerhouse.org)

Outside Europe  
D.A.P., Distributed Art Publishers  
75 Broad Street, Suite 630  
USA-New York, NY 10004  
T +1 (0) 212 627 1999  
[elshowitz@dapinc.com](mailto:elshowitz@dapinc.com)

ISBN 978-3-86335-924-9

© 2017 OFFICE Kersten Geers  
David Van Severen, the authors,  
the photographers and Verlag der  
Buchhandlung Walther König.

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