



## **Stories that resists, ethics that persist: A. J. Lode Janssens' living experiment in 1970s suburban Belgium**

Downloaded from: <https://research.chalmers.se>, 2024-05-01 09:00 UTC

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Doucet, I. (2023). Stories that resists, ethics that persist: A. J. Lode Janssens' living experiment in 1970s suburban Belgium. *Journal of Architecture*, 28(5): 805-824.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2023.2282679>

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

## Stories that resists, ethics that persist: A. J. Lode Janssens' living experiment in 1970s suburban Belgium

Isabelle Doucet

**To cite this article:** Isabelle Doucet (2023) Stories that resists, ethics that persist: A. J. Lode Janssens' living experiment in 1970s suburban Belgium, *The Journal of Architecture*, 28:5, 805-824, DOI: [10.1080/13602365.2023.2282679](https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2023.2282679)

**To link to this article:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2023.2282679>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 03 Jan 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 90



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

# Stories that resists, ethics that persist: A. J. Lode Janssens' living experiment in 1970s suburban Belgium

In 1973, Belgian architect A. J. Lode Janssens embarked on a ten-year-long countercultural living experiment together with his young family in the outskirts of Brussels. A fascinating adventure began, taking the remarkable shape of a series of bedroom capsules on stilts, akin to moon-landers, connected through an overarching transparent dome. Very little has been published about the work until, in 2022, an exhibition and catalogue publication were dedicated to the project. Confronted with a project whose maker has shunned publicity for decades, I will take this paper's own history as an opportunity to reflect on the ethical dilemmas that occur when studying architectural projects from the recent past that seem to resist publicity through scholarship. I will discuss Janssens' living experiment as a fascinating countercultural effort and seemingly paradoxical attempt to make an anti-architectural position *in and through* architecture, and contextualise the project within the wider context of Belgian architecture in the 1970s and 80s.

**Isabelle Doucet** 

*Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering, Chalmers University of Technology  
Gothenburg, Sweden  
isabelle.doucet@chalmers.se*

ORCID [0000-0001-9711-7050](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9711-7050)

In 1973, in a small village in the outskirts of Brussels, Belgium, architect A. J. Lode Janssens began a living experiment with the stated purpose: 'to think and act, over a continuous period of ten years, about a conscious way of living, and to design and execute the physical environmental conditions that would support and allow for this to happen'.<sup>1</sup> In both his own notes and the building permit documentation, Janssens named the experiment 'Symbiose & Symbicle'. Preparations had begun already in 1969, including the purchase of a 30-by-40-metre overgrown plot of land hidden behind a group of houses. Surrounded by the tranquillity of the Flemish suburbanised landscape, the architect set out to create an evolutive and organically grown milieu for his young family: 'a gently guided piece of nature that would offer maximal freedom of evolution and growth and the necessary metabolic attendance to the life of a family'.<sup>2</sup>

© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.



Figure 1.  
'0420. F kindertent '76', exterior  
view of the children's quarters,  
connected to the main dome,  
1976, courtesy of A. J. Lode  
Janssens



Intended and authorised to last just 10 years (it was dismantled in 1982) and taking the shape of a large pneumatic dome with tent-like annexes, the project was unconventional in both its setup and appearance (Fig. 1).

Fast forward to 2015. Together with Nel Janssens, daughter of Lode, herself an architect, urban planner, and associate professor at KU Leuven in Belgium, we began writing a paper about this intriguing project. We presented the research at the 2016 Society of Architectural Historians annual conference held in Pasadena, and later submitted a paper with this journal. Until then, the project had only been discussed in passing namely as one project amid a longer list of architectural works, in published interviews with the architect, or in the architect's own writings. For example, it was one of nearly sixty projects shown in an exhibition dedicated to Belgian architecture held at the Royal Institute of British Architects in London in 1980, and it was one of the projects discussed in a thematic issue on 'Alternative Living?' ['*Anders Wonen?*'] in the Belgian architecture periodical *A Plus*.<sup>3</sup> The project had featured in the same periodical already in 1974, when the editors had visited and photographed a selection of private homes on the occasion of the annual design trade fair called 'Interieur', held in Kortrijk, Belgium.<sup>4</sup> In 1979, Toon Van Severen published an interview with Janssens in the popular Belgian general interest magazine *Knack*, where Van Severen empathetically called the Janssens residence 'a balloon for living'.<sup>5</sup> And in 1980, Janssens himself published a richly illustrated essay on the project in the annual report of the International Laboratory of Architecture and Urban Design (ILA&UD), founded by Giancarlo De Carlo in 1974.<sup>6</sup> In more recent years, the project featured in anthologies on Belgian architecture, including Marc Dubois's *Belgio Architettura Gli Ultimi Vent'Anni* (1993), Anne Van Loo's *Repertorium van de Architectuur in België van 1830 tot Heden* (2003), and Mil De Kooning's *Architectuur sinds de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (2008),<sup>7</sup> and in a small number of published interviews with the architect.<sup>8</sup>

Notwithstanding these coverages, a detailed history of Janssens' work remained to be written when we embarked on our research. Nel and I felt that the project deserved to be brought into the limelight, not the least because we observed the project's influence on Belgian architecture where Janssens' living experiment seemed to have been known among architects and students who, throughout the 1970s, learned about the project largely through word of mouth or through their architectural studies.<sup>9</sup> Its allure travelled onwards through Janssens' later career as an educator and dean of the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture in Brussels — today known as the KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture, Campus Sint-Lucas Brussels and Ghent.

An in-depth study of the project became possible thanks to Nel's consultation of her father's private archives and the opportunity to jointly interview the architect who, over the years, had become secluded. Instrumental in this effort was the availability of recently digitised images from the architect's archives and an extensive unpublished report with title *Symbiose & Symbicle – een authentiek en/of wereldvreemd verhaal: 1969/1973–1983/1986* that Janssens compiled on the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of the project.<sup>10</sup> Amid these developments, difficult ethical questions were to be addressed. How to reclaim a project that has remained understudied, in part because the architect *himself* consistently seemed to shun publicity? What does it mean to place at the centre of attention a project that was a deeply personal journey of a family — a living experiment guided by an architect/husband/father who did not see the point of theorising the project as a work of architecture? The ongoing struggle with such ethical questions did not just slow down the process towards publication; it eventually resulted in Nel, herself a former inhabitant of the project, to withdraw her authorship from this paper. Staying on as an author would ultimately have made her feel complicit to giving voice to a project that did not want to be heard, particularly in an academic context. My own ethical hesitations were overcome when the project no longer seemed to resist the limelight. Between 10 December 2021 and 27 March 2022, the CIVA Foundation in Brussels dedicated an exhibition to the project, with title 'A.J. Lode Janssens: A Balloon Home', curated by architect Peter Swinnen and the CIVA's artistic director Nikolaus Hirsch. The exhibition catalogue, *A.J. Lode Janssens. 1.47 mbar*, included an interview with Janssens and also an English translation of the earlier-mentioned *Symbiose & Symbicle* report.<sup>11</sup> This renewed attention for the project did not just prompt me to return to the paper and reconsider its publication; I took it as an invitation to elaborate on ethical considerations when writing about the recent past. When researching important yet understudied projects by architects who are still alive, ethical questions arise not only related to visibility — the researcher's desire to give voice to overlooked work — but also related to *invisibility* — when the persons and projects we study would prefer to remain silent. Ethical dilemmas also point to a researcher's quest for unearthing new histories and uncovering new knowledge. While rooted in commendable ambitions to empower overlooked, forgotten, or oppressed historical voices, can such quests originate also in competitive knowledge traditions, and desires for recognition and

career progressions? Recognising such dilemmas invites honest appraisals of the struggles that drive, or obstruct, our writings. This paper is no exception; amid ethical reflections, unlucky timings, and interruptions posed by work, life, and more, this publication was enthused, then stalled, and eventually reconsidered.<sup>12</sup>

This paper works in two parts focusing on the 'Symbiose & Symbicle' project and research ethics, respectively. Truthful to the original ambitions of this paper and drawing from the research carried out together with Nel, I will, in the first part of the paper, offer a discussion of 'Symbiose & Symbicle' as a living experiment and its creator's seemingly paradoxical attempt to make an anti-architectural position *in and through* architecture. I will also contextualise the project within the broader context of Belgian postmodernism. In the second part I will take this paper's own history as an opportunity to elaborate on the ethical considerations of writing about the recent past.

### Anti-architecture/long live the earth

Much in the spirit of May 68, the 'Symbiose & Symbicle' project resonated with the growing preoccupation among architects with the social and environmental responsibilities of their profession. While Janssens was familiar with the radical proposals by Archigram, Frei Otto, and Hans Hollein, among others, it was his work experience at Atelier Alpha in Belgium that left a marked impression. Atelier Alpha was a design research office founded in 1964 by Willy Van der Meeren, a socially committed architect who experimented with industrialised, affordable construction systems for (mass) housing and who, together with Lucien Kroll, had been instrumental in the introduction of John Habraken's SAR system in Belgium.<sup>13</sup> Already in the mid-1950s, Van Der Meeren had developed, together with Léon Palm, an industrialised and affordable mass housing system called 'The E.C.S.C House' (in reference to the commissioner, the European Coal and Steel Community) and in Belgium better known through its French and Dutch acronyms: the 'Maison C.E.C.A.' [Communauté Européenne de Charbon et de l'Acier] or 'E.G.K.S Woning' [Europese Gemeenschap van Kolen en Staal].<sup>14</sup> When working at Atelier Alpha between 1964 and 1967, Janssens designed experimental solutions for the tent structure under which the Atelier Alpha offices were housed (the office space consisted of a partly self-build box covered by an open tent structure). Without the help of computer-aided calculation programs, Janssens instead used a simple physical structural model, a hands-on way of working that would have a profound impact on the later work on his own house (Fig. 2).<sup>15</sup>

This experimental self-build approach was intertwined with Janssens's anti-attitude vis-à-vis an architectural profession that in his view uncritically stimulated capitalism. He criticised the creation of real-estate spaces rather than living environments while, at the same time, architects still made normative claims about the forms these living environments should have. Janssens described his discontent as a 'retching' sensation, resulting in an anti-architectural stance, a refusal to make architecture. His use of various antagonistic

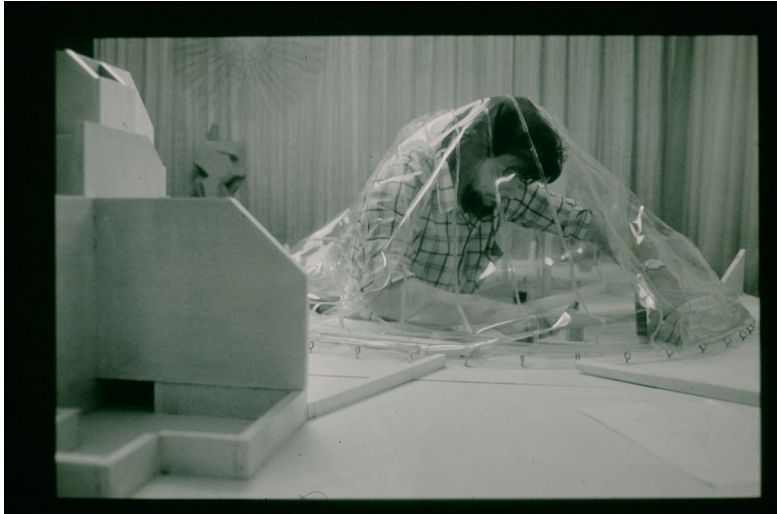


Figure 2.  
'0161. F model 10% '74', testing of  
model at the scale of 1:10, 1974,  
courtesy of A. J. Lode Janssens

descriptors, such as notably 'anti-architectural retching', including 'anti-habitat culture', 'anti-nostalgia', and 'anti-functionalism', are suggestive of the intensity of Janssens's feelings of professional discontent.<sup>16</sup> And yet, somewhat paradoxically, he chose to express such anti-architectural position *in and through* architecture. During our conversation, Janssens observed that the desire to make something that is not architecture was in fact motivated by the importance of architecture.<sup>17</sup> The proposed way forward was a real-life experiment that he considered 'a form of therapy',<sup>18</sup> spurred by the desire to live with nature rather than creating 'buildings that parasitise on "sacred" earth'.<sup>19</sup> This vision materialised — in the experimental footsteps of Atelier Alpha — into a non-permanent pneumatic multifunctional space in transparent PVC membrane. This large (14-metre diameter) but ultra-thin (0.4 mm) construction aimed at leaving as little boundary as possible between interior and exterior. Not walls but nature here demarcated the living space. In line with Van Severen's reference to 'a balloon for living', Nel and Lode Janssens can, still today, be found speaking of *de ballon* [the balloon]; but among themselves, they more often refer to the project in terms of *de koepel* [the dome].<sup>20</sup>

The temporary and ever-changing nature of this membrane ('it moves constantly, shrinks and expands')<sup>21</sup> did not just express the architect's refusal to capitalise on earth; it articulated his belief that humans and nature are symbiotic, and that, because humans are originally nomads, it is unnatural to settle permanently.<sup>22</sup> The enclosed, overgrown terrain that Janssens had purchased offered the perfect haven for such symbiotic relationship with free and 'wild' nature, further inspired by the philosophy of Dutch anarchist gardener Louis Le Roy, who was known in Belgium for his belief that nature should be allowed to grow spontaneously rather than being controlled.<sup>23</sup>

The connection with nature and the cosmos became an important design principle. It was translated into the transparent 'balloon' and four smaller,



Figure 3.  
'0134. D montage '73', model of  
the project viewed from above,  
1973, courtesy of A. J. Lode  
Janssens

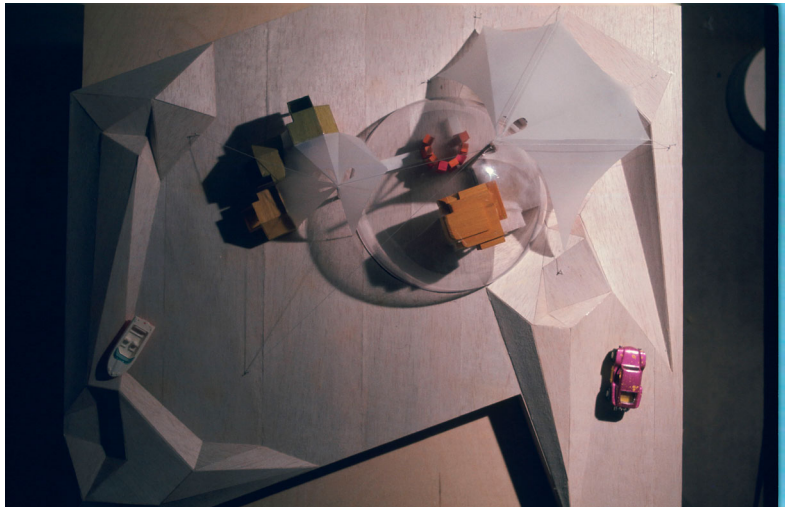


Figure 4.  
'0592. D binnennatuur', interior  
view of the living area under the  
dome, with Nel Janssens playing,  
ca. 1975, courtesy of A. J. Lode  
Janssens



closed units, constructed in steel and wood, and coated with PUR: the bedrooms of the family members. Within the dome-shaped space, everything was oriented towards the ground (the earth, the place) and the existing grassland became the indoor carpet (Figs. 3 and 4). Also, three existing oak trees had been integrated into the original design of the 'living nature interior', but, due to a miscommunication with the construction workers (who had assumed the trees were a drawing mistake), only one tree could still be rescued. The dome contained the parents' sleeping unit in the shape of a LEM-like 'moon lander' on stilts that could be easily moved if necessary. Together, the dome and moon lander represented a womb or oer [primeval] form of inhabitation, from which





the children, who slept in bedroom units adjacent to, but outside of, the balloon, would eventually emancipate. Until then, the children's units were connected to the 'womb' through a tent structure that offered a space for free development and unlimited play (Figs. 5 and 6).

This 'Symbiose' ensemble of dome, tent, and sleeping units was complemented with a fully mobile component called 'Symbicle'. Conceived as a mobile unit built on an existing car chassis, the Symbicle provided fixed utilities combined with another inflatable, transparent pneumatic bubble. Had it been realised, this mobile unit would have supported the family's nomadic ambitions, providing a temporary home when on the road and a mobile office for the architect when visiting construction sites (Fig. 7).

### Architecture or dwelling?

In addition to reinforcing connections with nature, the absence of walls in Janssens' 'balloon' house also prevented any possibility for the interior to mirror established cultural patterns or the façade to reflect status symbols. Janssens saw the project as a response to a living problem, not an architectural one. He claimed: 'the architectural aspect was given no consideration at all but was fully subordinate to life and developments therein'.<sup>24</sup> Janssens indeed believed that, unless it can accommodate for metabolic changes, 'one does not need a house'.<sup>25</sup> Consciously avoiding images or style elements from the architectural world, many of the form-giving inspirations, like the moon-lander, were external to architecture.

This critique of cultural norms can also be found in a fascinating unrealised counterproposal developed by the Sint-Lukasarchief [Sint-Lukas Archives] members Jan Apers, Alfons Hoppenbrouwers, and Jos Vandenbreeden,

Figure 5.  
'0182. F(LG) symbiose & symbicle  
'75', view of the 'Moon-lander',  
1975, courtesy of A. J. Lode  
Janssens

Figure 6.  
'0479. D kinderunits', interior,  
threshold zone to the children's  
units, ca. 1977, courtesy of  
A. J. Lode Janssens

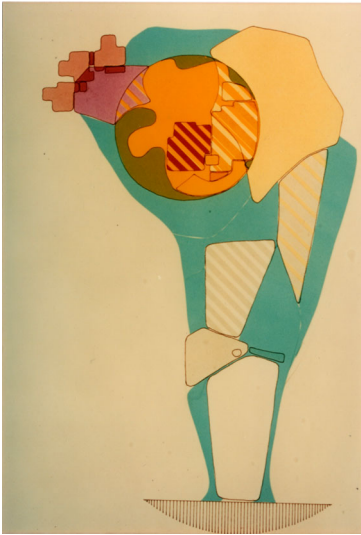


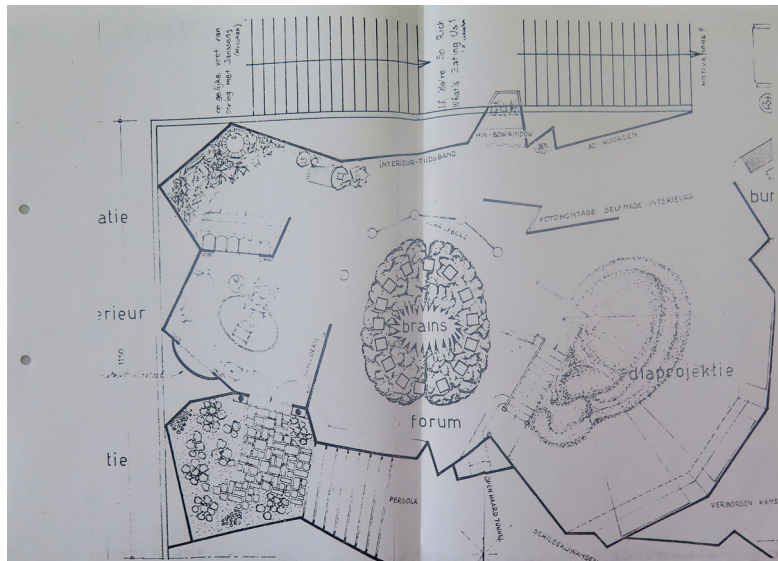
Figure 7.  
'0118. A Drempelgebieden',  
masterplan, threshold zones, ca.  
1970, courtesy of A. J. Lode  
Janssens

together with Lode Janssens, for the fourth edition of the interior design biennial called 'Interieur 74' held in Kortrijk, Belgium, between 17 and 27 October 1974.<sup>26</sup> The Sint-Lukasarchief, which was founded in Brussels in 1969, together with the Archives d'Architecture Moderne (AAM), also founded in 1969, today counts among the most important architecture archives in Belgium (today both archives are housed within the CIVA Foundation).

With their project called 'The *Other* Interior 74' [Het *Andere* Interieur 74], the group proposed a counter-project to the conventional trade booth of design fairs. Instead of promoting and selling 'good taste' through design products, they offered instead a space for stimulation, reflection, and discussion; the centre of the drawing is notably occupied by an oversized brain (Figs. 8 and 9).<sup>27</sup> The slick design of trade booths here made place for a more informal and eclectic environment, combining an exhibition space, sitting areas, and slide shows. To draw the visitor's attention to matters of waste and recycling, no new design products were displayed, but instead a bricolage of salvaged materials, old doors, chimneys, even plants and sand were on show. To encourage debate, theatre students would be mobilised to provoke and animate the visitor. Free play was encouraged here as children were allowed to explore without restrictions and were even encouraged to climb onto things or play hide and seek.

All these interventions demonstrate the main ambition of 'The *Other* Interior 74' — to forge a dialogue between design and use. This involved triggering a 'confrontation between the interior of the designer and the interior of the people'<sup>28</sup> to challenge how designers, rather than users, set the norms for good taste and good living, and drive users towards consumerism and status anxiety. Inspired by Geert Bekaert, the architects aimed at 'demystifying' the design objects that are typically promoted at such fairs by placing them into everyday environments.<sup>29</sup> As was the case with Janssens' house, here living and dwelling were closely intertwined.<sup>30</sup> A slide show would show examples of self-made spaces and 'spontaneously developed everyday interiors' (including the 'interiors of students, artists and eccentrics'), with the aim to demonstrate the creative potential of all people (not just designers). By including also outdoor and natural areas as well as the non-domestic interiors of offices and restaurants, the slides would offer an expanded reading of 'the interior' and actively bring environmental themes into the mix.

On the occasion of 'Interieur 74', the Belgian architecture periodical *A+* published a roundtable discussion with designers, industrial partners, and other stakeholders, and a photographic report of their private homes, which the editors had visited on this occasion.<sup>31</sup> The editors also visited Janssens' home, which they highlighted as 'where the surprise was the greatest', and that, in their opinion, 'deserves a separate discussion'.<sup>32</sup> In the roundtable discussion published in the journal, Janssens' 'anti-architecture' sentiments are undeniable. He explains how, despite people knowing quite well what they want and being creative enough to realise that themselves, it is in the designers' interest — in order to justify their existence — to make people believe otherwise.<sup>33</sup> In the realisation of his family home, Janssens indeed acted as a self-builder more



so than an architect. Instead of designing the project from drawings to building, Janssens approached the project as a full-scale experiment. For example, he developed a structural model at the scale 1:10 that would be large enough to accurately simulate structural workings. The translation from this model to the 'building' then happened in the manufacturing hall where, unable to rely on engineers (who deemed this way of working too risky), Janssens himself drew the pattern of the different pieces onto the fabric of the future building.

### Historicising the Janssens home as architecture?

With its anti-architectural stance, its focus on dwelling in connection with nature, and its experimental self-build approach, theorising the Janssens home as *architecture* is difficult. As I have suggested above, and as is evinced also by the contributions to the 2022 exhibition catalogue *A.J. Lode Janssens. 1.47 mbar*, the work can be approached from multiple angles: countercultures, pneumatic architecture, utopian design, high tech architecture, self-building, metabolism, ecology and design with nature, anti-capitalism, experimental research-by-design, and participatory design. Janssens was also inspired by Aldo Van Eyck's work on the 'threshold', which features throughout the Janssens house,<sup>34</sup> and by Giancarlo De Carlo, whom Janssens met at the International Laboratory of Architecture and Urban Design (ILA&UD).<sup>35</sup> Janssens' house can, moreover, be discussed within the emergent postmodernism in Belgian architecture. For example, between 8 and 24 January 1980, the Sint-Lukasarchief, represented by Alfons Hoppenbrouwers, Jos Vandenbreeden, and Jan Apers (with assistance from Oda Goossens, Linda Van Santvoort,

Figure 8.  
Sketch for floorplan 'Het Andere  
Interieur 74', 1974, courtesy of  
CIVA Collections, Brussels

Figure 9.  
Interior view sketch of 'Het Andere  
Interieur 74', 1974, courtesy of  
CIVA Collections, Brussels

and André and Rosemarie Loits), organised the exhibition, 'Belgian Architecture 1960–1980', held at the Royal Institute of British Architecture (RIBA) in London.<sup>36</sup> In addition to providing historical context going back to 1800, the exhibition showcased a diversity of projects through no less than 56 works. Projects ranged from heritage conservation projects, such as: Raymond Lemaire's celebrated renovation of the Leuven Beguinage; the urban grassroots activism of the Atelier de Recherche et d'Action Urbaines (ARAU) in Brussels; the social-political architectures of Renaat Braem and Luc Deleu; participatory architecture with Lucien Kroll's famed *La Mémé* as a case in point; the countercultural/environmental work by Marcel Raymaekers and Luc Schuiten; up to the more stylistically focused works of, for example, Georges Baines, Robbrecht en Daem Architecten, and Bruno Albert. The exhibition also included two projects by A.J. Lode Janssens: his own home and the Vande Steen House in St Denijs Westeren (1975–1976).<sup>37</sup> In contrast to the inflatable membrane of his own house, the Vande Steen House was built in concrete bricks, inspired by then-influential Dutch architect Herman Hertzberger. Notwithstanding their material differences, both houses expressed the architect's ambitions towards an affordable architecture that is highly centred on the needs of its users. The project was discussed in *A Plus* (March–April 1980) as part of a series that aimed to show that, in contrast to the mainstream, often-expensive, architecture in Belgium, also a more modest, high quality yet affordable architecture of individual and collective housing exists.<sup>38</sup> These two projects, one in transparent membrane and the other in concrete bricks, seem to confirm what Belgian architectural critic Marc Dubois described as the productive struggle among post-1968 architects to find formalistic responses to the revolutionary ideas of the 1960s.<sup>39</sup>

It is tempting to try and locate Janssens' work within the early theorisations of postmodernism, such as by Pierre Puttemans, who during his talk at the RIBA, placed the diversity of works between the two opposite ends of neoclassical geometric work and countercultural, or dropout, work.<sup>40</sup> While it may be difficult, and also unnecessary, to locate Janssens' work in these categorisations, it is interesting to consider what the curators of the 'Belgian Architecture 1960–1980' exhibition called the fertile ground for experimentation offered by Belgian architecture.<sup>41</sup> A landscape of one on one private, individual commissions, the majority of which for single family homes, resulted, according to the curators, in each house acting like a new prototype.<sup>42</sup> Janssens' house with its highly individualised, trial-and-error experimentation, informed by the architect's experience working at Atelier Alpha (as described earlier in this paper), seems to fit this description rather neatly.

### Historiographical and ethical challenges

Ever since [the living experiment], Lode Janssens, no longer exhibits. He hardly kept archives and lives in an unknown location wherefrom still rises the anarchistic spirit of a man who did everything for the sake of freedom and experiment.<sup>43</sup>

After eight years of living in the 'balloon', the Janssens family moved into a timber structure, which they had built on the same site, to eventually move away altogether.<sup>44</sup> True to the project's original ideals, the site, including its remaining structures, had, according to Janssens, been sold for the price of the land (thus not generating real estate surplus value). Despite its remarkable features, Lode Janssens looked at this experiment as an ordinary place for living. In an interview already in 1979, he recalled: 'Well, what else is happening here than a Belgian who has built his house with garden?'.<sup>45</sup> When lecturing about the project, Janssens often stated that it was never his intention to set an example or present the project as a 'best practice'. If the project mattered, it would become known, so he believed. Indeed, through word of mouth, the project attracted many visitors, mostly architects and students, sometimes challenging not just the family's privacy but also the project itself. The architect recalls how visitors would come and go (the entrance door was usually unlocked) and sometimes forgot to properly close the door upon leaving, causing the family to return to a slowly deflating home.<sup>46</sup>

In this final part of the paper, I will address questions of ethics related to the study of countercultural efforts.<sup>47</sup> Considering its refusal to be theorised as *architecture* or to serve as a best practice, should one not refrain from writing about the home of the Janssens family altogether? There are, of course, many good reasons to write about this project. Not only does it speak to the growing international scholarship dedicated to the countercultural architectures of the 1960s and 1970s,<sup>48</sup> it also shows, as a real-life experiment, the on-the-ground struggles of architectural counteractions. The project, and its experimental approach, moreover, lived on in the pedagogical setting of Sint-Lucas Schools in Brussels, where Janssens started teaching in 1968. Janssens became head of the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture between 1991 and 2003 where he stimulated an education fostering explorative and experimental design, and co-founded, with sociologist Evert Lagrou in 1979, the academic design office called Sint-Lucas Werkgemeenschap, which was envisioned in dialogue with the ILA&UD and offered a test ground for what would become known as research-by-design.<sup>49</sup> For those, and other, reasons, it seems impossible *not* to speak about this project. Peter Swinnen, who recently exhibited and published the work, seems to agree: 'Sometimes architecture is so authentic and brutally honest that it simply cannot remain concealed'.<sup>50</sup>

What does it mean, however, to dedicate scholarly attention to a project that seems to avoid historical attention? Highlighting such (hi)stories comes with ethical responsibilities. This is always the case when reconstructing historical events through the consultation of published and archival records, and through conversations with protagonists and witnesses. Studying projects such as the Janssens residence, however, prompts us to be attentive to the possibility that some voices, while agreeing to speak, would rather remain silent. Considering that historians and theorists often strive precisely to uncover overlooked voices and events, opting for silence may feel counterintuitive. For example, in the paper 'Silence in Noisy Archives: Reflections on Judith Allen's "Evidence and Silence – feminism and the Limits of History (1968)" in



the Era of Mass Digitisation', Kathryn M. Hunter discusses, building on Allen's work, mechanisms that contribute to the silencing of historical voices.<sup>51</sup> Hunter discusses in detail how such silencing is located at the moment of the creation of records, the building and organising of archival collections, the construction of narratives, and the allocation of meaning and importance retrospectively — all factors that can send certain voices into silence. But Hunter also points to a silencing that is deliberate, namely 'when historical actors themselves choose to be silent in the records' and when actors have 'compelling reasons to avoid historical mention'.<sup>52</sup> Closer to architecture, Janina Gosseye describes, in her introduction to the edited volume *Speaking of Buildings: Oral History in Architectural Research*, the 'history of silence' that is part of architectural historiography. Gosseye places the silencing of voices in tendencies towards canonising and value allocation, and presents oral history as one way for bringing back overlooked voices. While encouraging researchers to recover those silenced voices, Gosseye also draws attention to those who write up the stories (researchers).<sup>53</sup> In reference to Donald A. Ritchie's discussions on oral history, Gosseye observes that history writing ought to be a collaboration between many voices that tell and re-tell stories, and that for stories to escape from the silence and actually be heard, we have, as researchers, to learn to listen.<sup>54</sup> Helena Mattsson draws explicit attention to this and calls for making 'narratives of the obscure, the unseen, and the mute'<sup>55</sup> enter into history and does so, for example, together with Meike Schalk and Sara Brolund Carvalho, through the creation of 'action archives': a form of 'participatory history writing' that, through interviews, witness seminars, exhibitions, and mapping exercises, aims to address the gaps in official archives.<sup>56</sup>

Such considerations are particularly pressing in the historiography of the recent past. As is demonstrated in *Doing Recent History*, edited by Renee C. Romano and Claire Bond Potter, historians writing about recent events often find themselves being accused of lacking in objective judgment because of their own positionality within the histories they themselves still inhabit thus lacking critical distance to their study period, insufficient comparison with existing historiographies (some of which are few and far between), or relatively little access to appropriate historical sources, i.e. archives.<sup>57</sup> Rather than obsessing about objectivity and the uncovering of ultimate and singular 'truths' about a situation, Romano asks whether it is not better to embrace the specificities of studying the recent past: the manipulations and power mechanisms at work in interviews with witnesses, and the ways in which also witnesses themselves rewrite and curate histories when revisiting their memories of the events.<sup>58</sup> Romano and Potter point to 'the difficulties of crafting narratives in the absence of any clear moments of closure'.<sup>59</sup> Working with sources that 'talk back', rather than compromising 'scholarly detachment', can indeed offer new insights.<sup>60</sup> As Romano puts it: 'trying to uncover the "truth" of the past is not only impossible but also not useful' and once this quest for truth is abandoned one can instead strive to 'make the past legible to those who seek to learn something about it'.<sup>61</sup> And yet, as I learned in my research on the Janssens home, there are difficult relationalities to account for when



becoming 'enmeshed' in the situations one studies.<sup>62</sup> In providing ethical reflections about doing oral histories of feminist activists of the 1960s, Potter asks pertinent questions regarding the impact and effect of written histories: 'Is it written in a language that they can accept and understand? Does it represent them honestly?'.<sup>63</sup> Potter argues that subjects can be sensitive to how they are being represented, for example, because the causes they fought for still matter to them or, reversely, because they would rather not rekindle with some of their actions in the past. Potter, therefore, argues: 'Taking on these topics represents a substantial ethical commitment to real people as well as to writing good history'.<sup>64</sup> This prompts the difficult question: Is it ever all right to write about actors and projects that avoid historical mention?

### Whose silence to break?

What does it mean 'to listen to', and to respect, a silence that is there by choice? The curators of the 2022 exhibition 'A. J. Lode Janssens: A Balloon Home' chose, in this respect, an approach of 'gentle pressure'. Swinnen acknowledges that 'there are many reasons why not to publish on Janssens and his spatial work, the foremost reason being that [Lode Janssens] himself has always actively resisted any form of "publicity"'.<sup>65</sup> He, therefore, asks: 'So why not grant Janssens the anonymity and serenity he so aspires to have?'.<sup>66</sup> This is the very question Nel and I have been wrestling with. According to Swinnen, Lode Janssens had always wanted to share his insights from this experimental project but 'only after the experiment had ended', and considering that this never happened, Swinnen considered the publication and exhibition a 'first post-factum commons on the project'.<sup>67</sup> Swinnen's honest disclosure to have 'received a part of [Janssens'] archives' completes the picture of an architect who is now more willing to open up his work for display (and research).<sup>68</sup> And yet, in my interactions with Lode and Nel Janssens, I could never fully shake off a sense of reluctance to publish about this project. An exhibition and book publication later, it is worth asking: Was this reluctance an overinterpretation on my part? Or has the architect's resistance simply waned over time? Kate Eichhorn reminds us that privileged dips into personal collections (as opposed to archives) do not necessary authorise that knowledge as being public. In the 2013 book, *The Archival Turn in Feminism*, Eichhorn argues: 'to label a personal collection an "archive", and more significantly, to place a personal collection in an established archive remains a powerful authorizing act'.<sup>69</sup> Vice versa, does the fact that Janssens's archives have remained in private hands not send a message about its reluctance to become public knowledge? And do I sense some of that reluctance in Lode Janssens asking the interviewer/curator: 'Are you sure you want go through with this — the exhibition, the book, the documentary, this conversation?'.<sup>70</sup>

The different ways in which researchers pick up on such vibes, questions, and hesitations are rarely discussed as part of scholarship. One could argue that, considering the protocols of informed consent, it is not our task to further complicate the process. Others would argue that, independent of research ethics

regulations, one should always tread carefully when placing the stories of others into the narratives produced by the researcher. As Potter argues, the ethics of the relationship that researchers enter with their subjects may prompt them to ‘speak with’ rather than ‘speak for’; while ‘historians need to explore how the parts form a whole, we must also be vigilant that the whole does not emerge at the expense of the parts’.<sup>71</sup> To work through such complex ethical considerations, I take further inspiration from Jane Rendell’s 2020 paper ‘Hotspots or Touchstones: From Critical to Ethical Spatial Practice’.<sup>72</sup> Rendell encourages researchers to recognise their own positions because these are always unavoidably ‘influenced by dynamics of power and knowledge, and inform conditions of trust’.<sup>73</sup> This prompts us to ask: How to make space for the multiple positionalities, subjectivities, and expectations that come with each encounter? Rendell offers an inspiring response in her suggestion to approach ethics itself as a practice that takes place over long periods of time and is always collaborative: ‘ethics is understood as a practice, a way of negotiating relations between selves and others’.<sup>74</sup> For Rendell, such ethics contains two related components: ethical ‘hotspots’ and ‘touchstones’. Rendell argues: ‘While a hotspot might be a solitary moment in which an individual experiences ethical awareness, touchstones can emerge through the critical reflection and creative practice undertaken together in response’.<sup>75</sup>

### **Whose voice to be heard?**

When returning to the ‘balloon’ now, it seems fair to say that the lengthy considerations around this paper can be seen as a series of hotspots and touchstones, or also what Karen Burns called ‘Ethical Histories’, which involves the trust-building between all involved, the desire to publish, and the ethical decisions ‘about how the material is reproduced and circulated’.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, after an initial enthusiasm to write about the project, numerous individual reflections followed (within myself, eager to write about this project, and within Nel, as a researcher, daughter, and former inhabitant of the house) as well as dialogues between myself, Nel, and Lode Janssens, who seemed to look back at his own experiment fondly yet conflicted. When I started studying the ‘balloon’, I felt excited to have the unique opportunity to write what Romano calls a ‘first “draft” of history’ about this project.<sup>77</sup> Having access to previously inaccessible source material — materials from private archives and conversations with an otherwise secluded architect — was exhilarating. I had myself studied architecture, in the second half of the 1990s, under Janssens’ deanship, and was excited to be able to meet and talk about his work. Over time, for ethical reasons but also due to other circumstances — some within and others beyond my control — the project got delayed and the prospect of a ‘first draft’ began slipping away. It was impossible to not feel disappointed even if this setback eventually brought an opportunity to reflect on the ethics and troubles of giving voice to historical blind spots. Mattsson draws attention to the disappointments and emotions that can be triggered when uncovering new material: ‘the desires, frustrations, vindictiveness, joy, thirst for power,

and so forth, that drive the author as historian in the creation of the historical scene'.<sup>78</sup> Creating room in scholarly work for the circumstances and emotions that impact research, albeit without the temptation to seek excuses for unwanted consequences, could become an important component of writing histories in a more situated manner. Judith M. Bennett, in the book *History Matters. Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism*, calls for writing histories through historical continuation, including ongoing injustices and struggles, rather than through a focus on breakage points and radical change alone. Bennett argues that this also allows for an understanding of women's conditions beyond a focus on either 'victimization' or 'agency' alone.<sup>79</sup> This meandering between struggle and agency, thrill and disappointment, can in my view be extended to scholars as a way of accounting for the circumstances, privileges, emotions, and sensibilities that always inform one's work. This also offers an opportunity to push to reflect upon whether the obsession with 'new' knowledge and 'turns' itself is not symptomatic of what has been called extractive knowledge cultures, as Lauren Tynan argued in her appraisal of Indigenous knowledge. Tynan states: 'Extractivism can seep into research practices, often in the quest to produce "original research"'.<sup>80</sup> Indigenous knowledge and research, by contrast, so Tynan argues, is relational and continuous, 'a process of nurturing and caretaking relations' and it is 'attentive to ethical processes of *respecting*'.<sup>81</sup>

After lengthy discussions, reflections, and interruptions, this story of the 'balloon' has now finally landed. It has become a single-authored story that does insufficient justice to the polyphony that is at the heart of this research. Both Nel and Lode Janssens ultimately preferred not to write this story themselves, but their voices are foundational to this paper. And Nel's presence and input remain deeply felt throughout. I can only regret that, within the context of this academic paper, we have not found a better way to acknowledge that. But I am also grateful because it is precisely because this is a story that resists, questions of ethics could persist.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the generosity of Nel and Lode Janssens throughout the lengthy process leading to this paper, including conversations, sharing of archival material, and feedback on writings, and especially Nel for co-authoring an early draft of this paper with me. Travel support for consultations of libraries and archives in Belgium was made possible thanks to a Visiting Research Fellowship at the Brussels Centre for Urban Studies (BCUS) in 2015 and research support from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts (2016–2017). In the context of the BCUS, I would like to thank Bas van Heur, Inge Bertels, and Stephanie Van de Voorde for their hospitality and discussions. I thank Jos Vandenbreenen at the CIVA Collections, Brussels — Architecture Archive — Sint-Lukasarchief VZW, for his most generous support with my consultations of the collection and his assistance with locating relevant sources. I thank Véronique Patteeuw and Léa-Catherine Szacka, session organ-

isers at the 2016 Society of Architectural Historians conference in Pasadena, where an early version of this study was first presented. I thank the anonymous reviewers of this paper for most insightful comments and suggestions. Part of the research was produced before 2019, when I was based at The University of Manchester, UK. This work was supported by the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and the Brussels Centre for Urban Studies Visiting Researcher Fellowship.

## Notes and references

1. Lode Janssens, *Symbiose & Symbicle – een authentiek en/of wereldvreemd verhaal: 1969/1973–1983/1986*, unpublished report, dated 2016, available in the Janssens private archives, translated by the author.
2. Janssens, *Symbiose & Symbicle*.
3. The Janssens residence is discussed as one of five examples in the section without named author, but presumably Jef Van den Broeck, who wrote the editorial for this thematic issue; 'Mensen zoeken naar betere oplossingen' ['People Are Looking for Better Solutions'], *A Plus*, 68 (January/February 1981), 13–15 (p. 15).
4. 'Dossier: Interieur', *A+*, 11 (September 1974), 16–42; *A+* is the same periodical, albeit with different spelling, as the earlier mentioned *A Plus*.
5. Toon Van Severen, 'Een ballon om in te leven' ['A Balloon for Living'], *Knack*, 14 March 1979, pp. 17–22. The project was also mentioned as an example of 'alternative lifestyles' in the 1980 first annual activity report of the Sint Lukas Werkgemeenschap, which had been co-founded by Janssens. CIVA Collections, Brussels — Fonds Architecture Archive — Sint-Lukasarchief vzw.
6. A. J. Lode Janssens, 'Experimenting as a Form of Therapy', in *ILA&UD Annual Report Urbino 1980* (Urbino: ILA&UD, 1980), pp. 58–65.
7. See Marc Dubois, *Belgio Architettura Gli Ultimi Vent'Anni* [Belgium Architecture The Last Twenty Years] (Milan: Electa, 1993), pp. 90–1; Anne Van Loo, *Repertorium van de Architectuur in België van 1830 tot Heden* [Directory of Architecture in Belgium from 1830 to the Present] (Antwerpen: Mercatorfonds, 2003), p. 372; and Christophe Van Gerrewey and Mil De Kooning, 'Verstrooiend, amusant, of vrolijk. De Belgische architectuur in dertien duo's' ['Diverting, Amusing, or Cheerful. Belgian Architecture in Thirteen Duos'], in *Architectuur sinds de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, ed. by Mil De Kooning, Ronald De Meyer, Christophe Van Gerrewey, and Koen Verswijver (Brussels: Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest, 2008), pp. 37–61.
8. See Laurens De Keyser, 'Interview with Lode Janssens', in *Afscheid Nemen* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2004), pp. 100–111; and Luc Binst and Luk Lambrecht, *Crepain Binst Architecture X: Reflectie* (Antwerp: Ludion, 2010), pp. 39–43. Janssens was also interviewed on 17 May 2013 in the context of a master thesis on tent structures at Faculty of Languages and Humanities, Art Studies and Archaeology; see Loes Gerits, *Creativiteit, innovatie, en experiment. Een architectuurhistorisch onderzoek naar 20ste eeuwse tentstructuren en actoren betrokken in het Belgische ontwerp- en bouwproces* (Brussels: VUB, 2013).
9. One visit, in 1978, by architecture engineering students of Geert Bekaert is related in Pieter Uyttenhove, 'Living and Building with Air', in *A. J. Lode Janssens. 1.47 mbar*, ed. by Peter Swinnen and Nikolaus Hirsch (Leipzig and Brussels: Spector Books and CIVA, 2022), pp. 159–69. The project was also regularly mentioned in conversations I had with architects as part of my ongoing research on intercultural architecture in 1970s Belgium.
10. Janssens, *Symbiose & Symbicle*.

11. A. J. Lode Janssens, 'Symbiosis & Symbicle: A Retrospective', in *A. J. Lode Janssens*, ed. by Swinnen and Hirsch, pp. 18–32. This newer, and shorter, version, in English, was dated 5 July 2021. In this paper I am citing from the 2016 unpublished version of the report, translated from Dutch by Nel Janssens and myself. I should here note that, while I consulted the exhibition catalogue, I did not visit the exhibition itself.
12. Personal circumstances forced me, for example, to decline the invitation to contribute to the catalogue of the 'A. J. Lode Janssens. 1.47 mbar' exhibition.
13. Willy Van Der Meeren, *Wonen [Living/Dwelling]* (Brussels: VUB Press, 1993).
14. Mil De Kooning, 'Een Huis voor de Prijs van een Ford. De Saga van de EGKS-woning' ['A House for the Price of a Ford: The Saga of the ECSC-house'], in *Wonen in Welvaart. Woningbouw en Wooncultuur in Vlaanderen, 1948–1973*, ed. by Karina Van Herck and Tom Avermaete (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers/vai/cvaa, 2006), pp. 165–78.
15. From conversations with Nel Janssens, I deduce that Lode himself placed his residence within the legacy of Van der Meeren's Atelier Alpha.
16. Janssens, 'Experimenting as a Form of Therapy', p. 63.
17. Lode Janssens interviewed by Nel Janssens and Isabelle Doucet, 28 September 2015, Ghent, Belgium.
18. Janssens, 'Experimenting as a Form of Therapy'.
19. Janssens, *Symbiose & Symbicle*.
20. Van Severen, 'Een ballon om in te leven' and conversation with Nel Janssens, March 2021. In the published translation of *Symbiosis & Symbicle*, Janssens appears to prefer speaking of 'the dome' (not a balloon, as it later became called); see Janssens, 'Symbiosis & Symbicle: A Retrospective', pp. 26–7.
21. Janssens, *Symbiose & Symbicle*.
22. See Janssens, *Symbiose & Symbicle*; and Janssens, 'Experimenting as a Form of Therapy', pp. 62–3.
23. Janssens mentioned a talk by Le Roy that had made an impact on him. I presumed this to be Le Roy's lecture at the Internationaal Cultureel Centrum (ICC) in Antwerp in 1973, related to his book publication Louis Le Roy, *Natuur Uitschakelen – Natuur Inschakelen [Switch Off Nature – Switch On Nature]* (Deventer: Ankh-Hermes, 1973). But in recent statements, Janssens referred to Le Roy's talk at the Design Biennale Interieur Kortrijk in 1970; see Peter Swinnen and A. J. Lode Janssens, 'A Temporary Datum', in *A. J. Lode Janssens*, ed. by Swinnen and Hirsch, pp. 49–67 (p. 59).
24. Janssens, 'Experimenting as a Form of Therapy', p. 64.
25. Janssens interviewed by Nel Janssens and Doucet, 28 September 2015.
26. The exact nature of Lode Janssens's involvement with the activities of the Sint-Lukasarchief at that time is unclear to me from the conversations I have had with witnesses. In the case of this counterproposal, the documents I consulted were signed by Jan Apers, Alfons Hoppenbrouwers, Lode Janssens, and Jos Vandenbreeden (in that order), so I work on the assumption of joint authorship.
27. Unless stated otherwise, the discussion of the project draws from Jan Apers, Alfons Hoppenbrouwers, Lode Janssens, and Jos Vandenbreeden, 'Het Andere Interieur 74' (unpublished proposal in the shape of a booklet, consulted at the CIVA Collections, Brussels—Fonds Architecture Archive — Sint-Lukasarchief vzw, Curriculum, 1974).
28. Apers, Hoppenbrouwers, Janssens, and Vandenbreeden, 'Het Andere Interieur 74', p. 3, quote translated by the author.
29. Geert Bekaert was an influential Belgian architecture critic, theorist, and historian.
30. In handwritten (preparatory) notes accompanying the proposal, they state 'without limiting living to dwelling, one could argue that dwelling is an expression of living'.

31. The roundtable discussion included Janssens and was published as 'Rondetafel' ['Roundtable'], A+, 11 (September 1974), 17–32.
32. Ibid., cover page, quotes translated by the author.
33. Ibid., p. 20.
34. Janssens' interest in 'threshold' is evidenced at the level of the staged entrance to the site (behind other houses and reachable only through a 40 m long driveway), the organisation of the house itself (a series of careful transitions between open and closed, communal and individual space), and the transparent dome (a threshold between indoor and outdoor).
35. Janssens published about his home in the ILA&UD Annual report of 1980, but he was mentioned as a participant already in 1979; see Janssens, 'Experimenting as a Form of Therapy'.
36. CIVA Collections, Brussels — Fonds Architecture Archive — Sint-Lukasarchief vzw, Curriculum, 1980. Thanks to the guidance of Jos Vandenbreeden, I consulted a collection of loose pages with photographs of the exhibited works that form an unpublished (albeit incomplete) catalogue record of the exhibition. All photos were by Pol De Prins. According to sources found in the Fonds Architecture Archive — Sint-Lukasarchief vzw, the exhibition travelled in 1981 to Louvain-La-Neuve, Belgium, titled 'Modernism and Postmodernism in Belgian Architecture'.
37. I follow the spelling as it appears on the loose pages with photographs of the exhibited works.
38. According to the series editors, Jan Bruggemans and Danielle Neys, 'Naar een nieuwe plan-typology?' ['Towards a New Typology of the Plan?'], *A Plus*, 63 (March/April 1980), p. 9. The St. Denijs-Westrem House by Lode Janssens is discussed on p. 16.
39. Conversation between Marc Dubois and the author, 18 December 2015, Brussels. Marc Dubois is a Belgian architectural critic who published extensively about Belgian architecture; see Dubois, *Belgio Architettura Gli Ultimi Vent'Anni*.
40. Highlighting the influence of 1968 countercultures, citizen movements, and participatory efforts, Belgian architect, planner, and historian Pierre Puttemans referred to neoclassical geometric work (e.g. Jaques Sequaris, Charles Vandenhove, and Bob Van Reeth) and countercultural/dropout work (e.g. Marcel Raymaekers, Luc Schuiten, and André Loits). The talk was published as Pierre Puttemans, 'Belgium Revival', *RIBA Journal*, March 1980, pp. 46–51. In a communiqué sent out by the RIBA (dated 7 January 1980, and presumably written by the curators), Belgian postmodernism was indeed presented in terms of: 'strictly Palladio-inspired projects, "architecture without architects" dwellers' architecture, up to the hybrid architecture combining recycled materials and soft energy'; see CIVA Collections, Brussels — Fonds Architecture Archive — Sint-Lukasarchief vzw, Curriculum, 1980. In 1981, the exhibition travelled to Louvain-la-Neuve in Belgium, this time with the title: 'L'Architecture en Belgique 1970–1980'. On this occasion, architecture historian Francis Strauven published the book *L'Architecture en Belgique 1970–1980* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Centre de Recherche en Architecture, 1981), based on an essay Strauven had already written in 1978. These were consulted at the library of the CIVA Collections, Brussels, Sint-Lukasarchief.
41. With reference to a communiqué sent out by the RIBA about the exhibition (dated 7 January 1980)
42. Reviews of the exhibition highlighted the highly individualised architectural culture manifest through a broad range of aesthetic expressions through private housing commissions (with comparably little public commissions) that seemed hardly regulated, especially when compared to, for example, the United Kingdom. See review by Martin Spring, 'Art Out of Belgium', *Building*, 18 January 1980, p. 26; and the review published in the *Architects Journal*, 16 January 1980. These were consulted at the CIVA Collections, Brussels — Fonds Architecture Archive — Sint-Lukasarchief vzw, Curriculum, 1980.



43. Binst and Lambrecht, *Crepain Binst Architecture X*, p. 40, quote translated from Dutch by the author.
44. Belgian architect Luc Binst purchased the site and built his private residence on it; this time to last.
45. Janssens cited in Van Severen, 'Een ballon om in te leven', p. 17, quote translated from Dutch by the author.
46. I am reminded that the editors of the earlier mentioned *A+*, who had visited the Janssens house as part of their special on 'Interieur 74', had both encouraged their readers to visit Janssens' house and kindly advised visitors to contact the architect beforehand. See *A+*, 11 (September 1974), front cover.
47. Some of the readings in support of my discussions on ethics of the study of the recent past came to me, outside the framework of this paper, via friends and peers including the 'Eichhorn text' via Helena Mattsson, the 'Bennett text' via Malin Nordvall, and the 'Tynan text' via Hélène Frichot.
48. See for example, Felicity Scott, *Architecture or Techno-utopia: Politics after Modernism* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010); special issue of *Architectural Design*, 'The 1970s is Here and Now a Memory of Possibilities', ed. by Samantha Hardingham, 75.2 (2005), 12–19; Andrew Blauvelt, *Hippie Modernism: The Struggle for Utopia* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, 2015); Caroline Maniaque-Benton, *French Encounters with the American Counterculture 1960–1980* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); and Lee Stickells, 'Negotiating Off-Grid: Counterculture, Conflict and Autonomous Architecture in Australia's Rainbow Region', *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand*, 'Fabrications', 25.1 (2015), 104–29.
49. Lode Janssens, 'Sint-Lucas 150-Evaluatie van het laatste Sint-Lucas Decennium 2002–2012: van een Sint Lucas Architectuuropleiding (later departement architectuur) naar de Faculteit Architectuur in de KU Leuven. Sint Lucas ... na 15.11.2012' (unpublished report, private archives Janssens, 2014), pp. 30–45. See also the text on Janssens' pedagogy by Elke Couchez, 'Education Between Thought and Action', in *A. J. Lode Janssens*, ed. by Swinnen and Hirsch, pp. 150–8.
50. Peter Swinnen, 'For a Gentle Pressure', in *ibid.*, pp. 6–9, 7.
51. Kathryn M. Hunter, 'Silence in Noisy Archives: Reflections on Judith Allen's "Evidence and Silence: Feminism and the Limits of History (1968)" in the Era of Mass Digitisation', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 32.91/92 (2017), 202–12.
52. Hunter, 'Silence in Noisy Archives', p. 209.
53. Janina Gosseye, 'A Short History of Silence: The Epistemological Politics of Architectural Historiography', in *Speaking of Buildings: Oral History in Architectural Research*, ed. by Janina Gosseye, Naomi Stead, and Deborah van der Plaats (Hudson, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 2019), pp. 9–23.
54. Gosseye, 'A Short History of Silence', p. 19.
55. Helena Mattsson, 'A Critical Historiography, Again: Sounds from a Mute History', in: *Architecture in Effect, vol 2 – After Effects: Theories and Methodologies in Architectural Research*, ed. by Hélène Frichot, Gunnar Sandin, and Bettina Schwalm (New York, NY and Barcelona: Actar, 2020), pp. 26–37 (p. 28).
56. See *ibid.*, pp. 30–1; and Helena Mattsson and Meike Schalk, 'Action Archive: Oral History as Performance', in *Speaking of Buildings*, ed. by Gosseye, Stead, and Van der Plaats, pp. 94–113.
57. Renee C. Romano and Claire Bond Potter, 'Just over Our Shoulder: The Pleasures and Perils of Writing the Recent Past', in *Doing Recent History: On Privacy, Copyright, Video Games, Institutional Review Boards, Activist Scholarship, and History That Talks Back*, ed. by Renee C. Romano and Claire Bond Potter (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012), pp. 1–

19. I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers of this paper who suggested this reference. See also Jaap Den Hollander, 'Contemporary History and the Art of Self-Distancing', *History and Theory*, 50.4 (2011), 51–67.
58. Renee C. Romano, 'Not Dead Yet: My Identity Crisis as a Historian of the Recent Past', in *Doing Recent History*, ed. by Romano and Potter, pp. 23–44.
59. Romano and Potter, 'Just over Our Shoulder', p. 5.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
61. Romano, 'Not Dead Yet', p. 32.
62. Written with reference to Clifford Geertz, see Claire Bond Potter, 'When Radical Feminism Talks Back: Taking an Ethnographic Turn in the Living Past', in *Doing Recent History*, ed. by Romano and Potter, pp. 155–82 (p. 170).
63. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
64. *Ibid.*
65. Swinnen, 'For a Gentle Pressure', p. 7.
66. *Ibid.*
67. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
68. Swinnen and Janssens, 'A Temporary Datum', p. 52.
69. Kate Eichhorn, 'Introduction', in *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2013), pp. 1–23 (p. 15).
70. Swinnen and Janssens, 'A Temporary Datum', p. 49.
71. Potter, 'When Radical Feminism Talks Back', pp. 160, 171.
72. Jane Rendell, 'Hotspots or Touchstones: From Critical to Ethical Spatial Practice', *Architecture and Culture*, 8.3/4 (2020), 407–19.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 414.
74. *Ibid.* In the paper, Jane Rendell recognises that the insight to approach ethics as a practice grew through various research collaborations initiated at The Bartlett, where Rendell is based, and which is discussed in detail in the paper.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 416.
76. Karen Burns, 'Oral History as Activism: The Public Politics of Spoken Memory', in *Speaking of Buildings*, ed. by Gosseye, Stead, and Van der Plaat, pp. 118–34 (p. 128).
77. Romano 'Not Dead Yet', p. 34.
78. Mattsson, 'A Critical Historiography, Again', p. 27.
79. Judith M. Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 76.
80. Lauren Tynan, 'What is relationality? Indigenous Knowledges, Practices and Responsibilities with Kin', *Cultural Geographies*, 28.4 (2021), 597–610 (p. 598).
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 165, 167, italics in the original.