

Lorette Convent

Reconversion of a historical site

Mechelen, Belgium 2014

By provoking action and reaction between past and present through the application of contemporary architecture, the remodelling of this entire block of buildings – including landmark buildings such as Hooghuyts and the former Lorette convent – adheres to this evolutionary principle.

The new development, Melano, is located between Hooghuyts and Sweert. This apartment building deliberately leans towards Sweert and distances from Hooghuyts, with a specific tension created by the cantilever on the first floor. The white brick architecture is a response to the partly lime-washed, partly plastered facade of Hooghuyts and the classic uniform gables of Sweert. Covered terraces create a dialogue with the two-dimensionality of the historic facades on Drabstraat. In turn, integrated vertical lighting strips not only draw attention to the contemporary facade and, therefore, celebrate modern life, they also light the street and thereby dispense a contemporary idea of interaction with the public space.

This building is also key to the restructuring of the site. As water finds its meandering way through the landscape, this project is devoted to the penetrable. The new building provides passage, by means of a raised point of contact with Hooghuyts, for an alley that runs into the rear courtyard. The re-purposed garden is a nod to the formerly sizeable Hooghuyts garden, which reached Begijnenstraat and therefore provided access to the market square. Three centuries later, however, this area of greenery was closed off from Begijnenstraat by the L-shaped Lorette convent and girls' school. The Neo-Gothic building highlights the impact of a closed and withdrawn religious community on a town. This voluminous wall is now broken through on the ground level to allow access to the Fish Market through a semi-public area that succeeds the playground that was once the Hooghuyts garden. City dwellers are drawn into a place of alleys and squares.



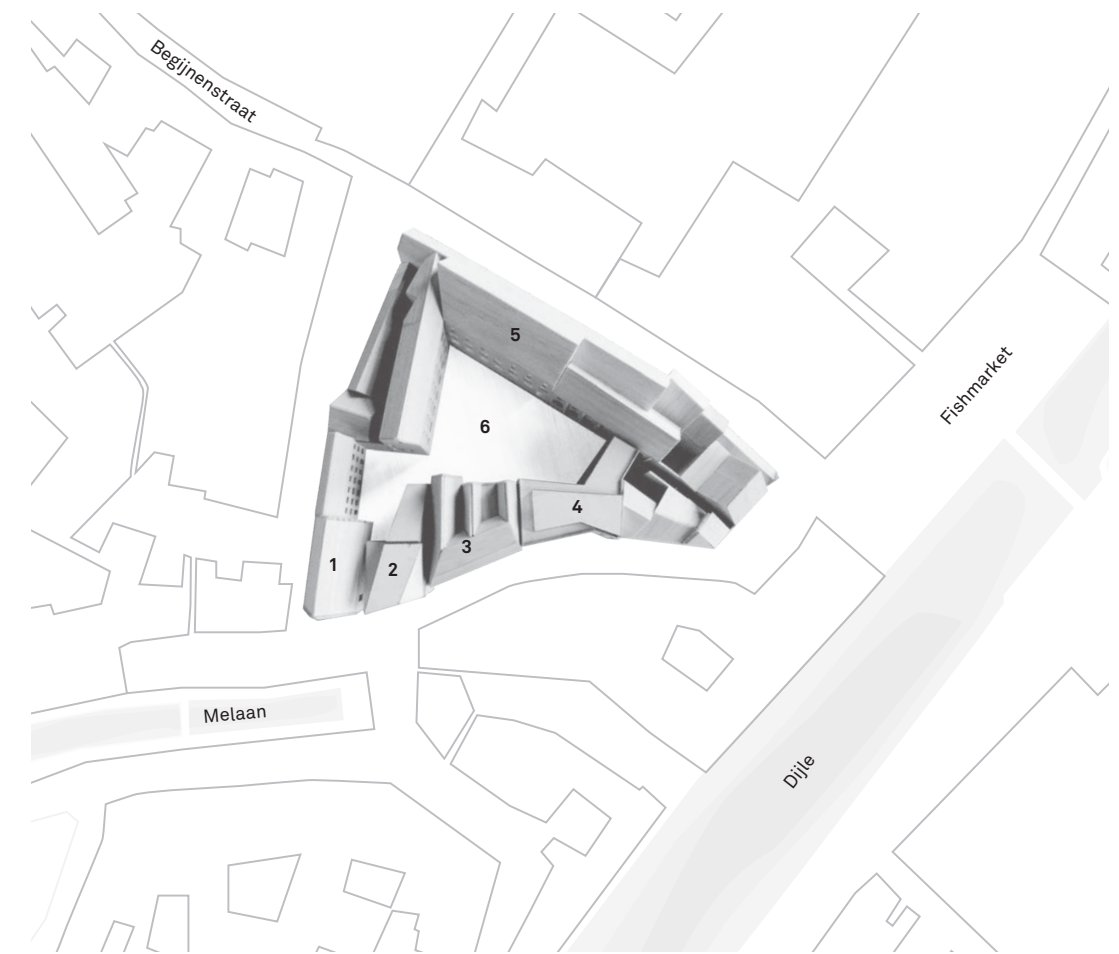


courtyard with from left to right: Lorette convent, Lorette, 't Sweert and Melano.



courtyard Melano/Hooghuis

- »» interdisciplinary collaboration project
- »» reconversion of the historical site Lorette Convent, 't Sweert & Hooghuis
- »» urban renewal between Drabstraat & the Melaan in the center of Mechelen



- 1. Hooghuis
- 2. Melano
- 3. 't Sweert
- 4. Lorette
- 5. Lorette convent
- 6. Courtyard



BEFORE

- »» **polluted & uniform facades**
- »» **valuable historical buildings (Lorette convent) were hidden**
- »» **enclosed convent garden**



AFTER

- »» **restoration Hooghuys & 't Sweert**
- »» **demolition of the building between Hooghuys & 't Sweert**
 - › **replaced by the new building Melano**
 - › **interruption of the uniformity**
- »» **transformation of the convent garden into semi-public space**

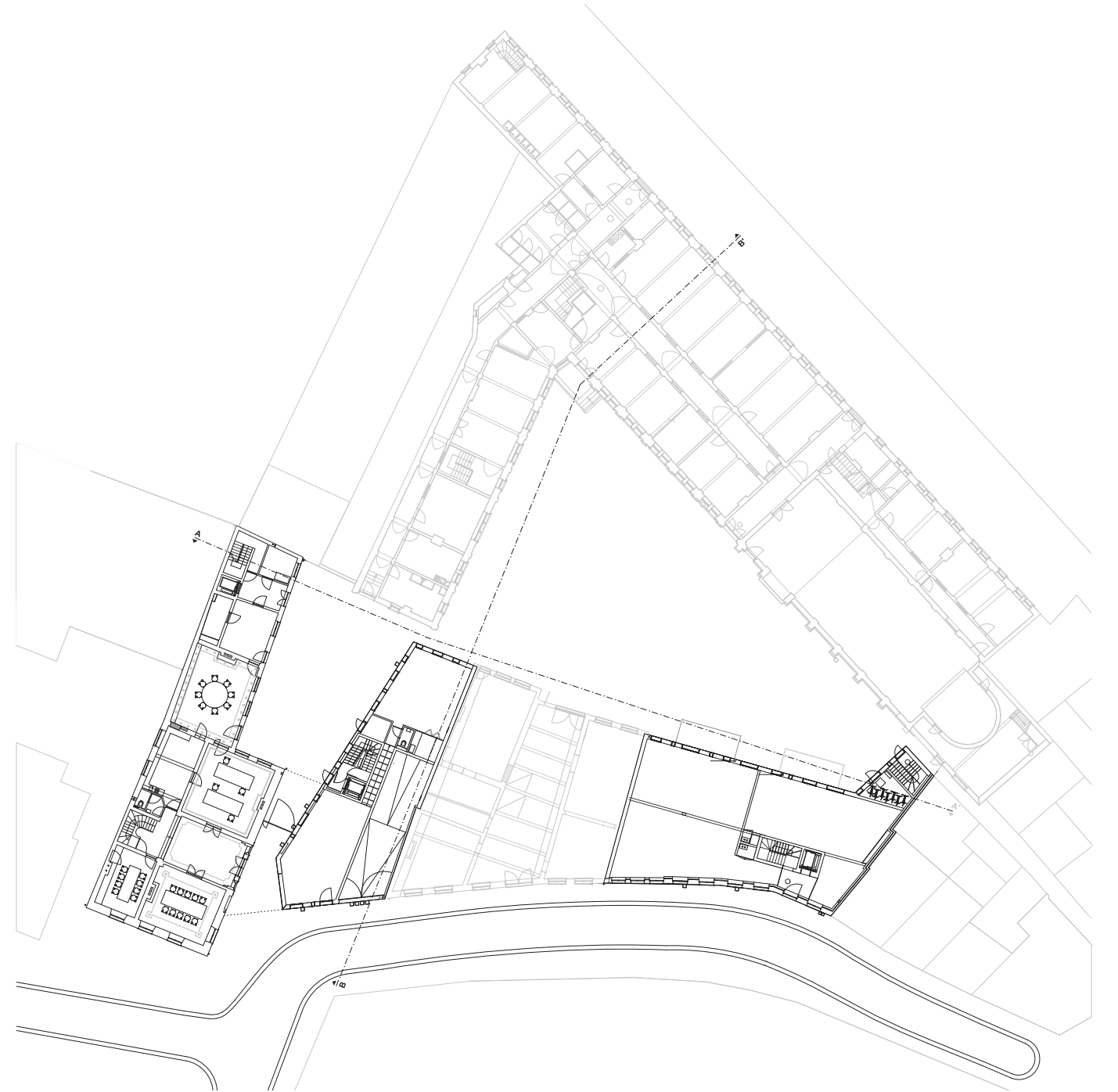




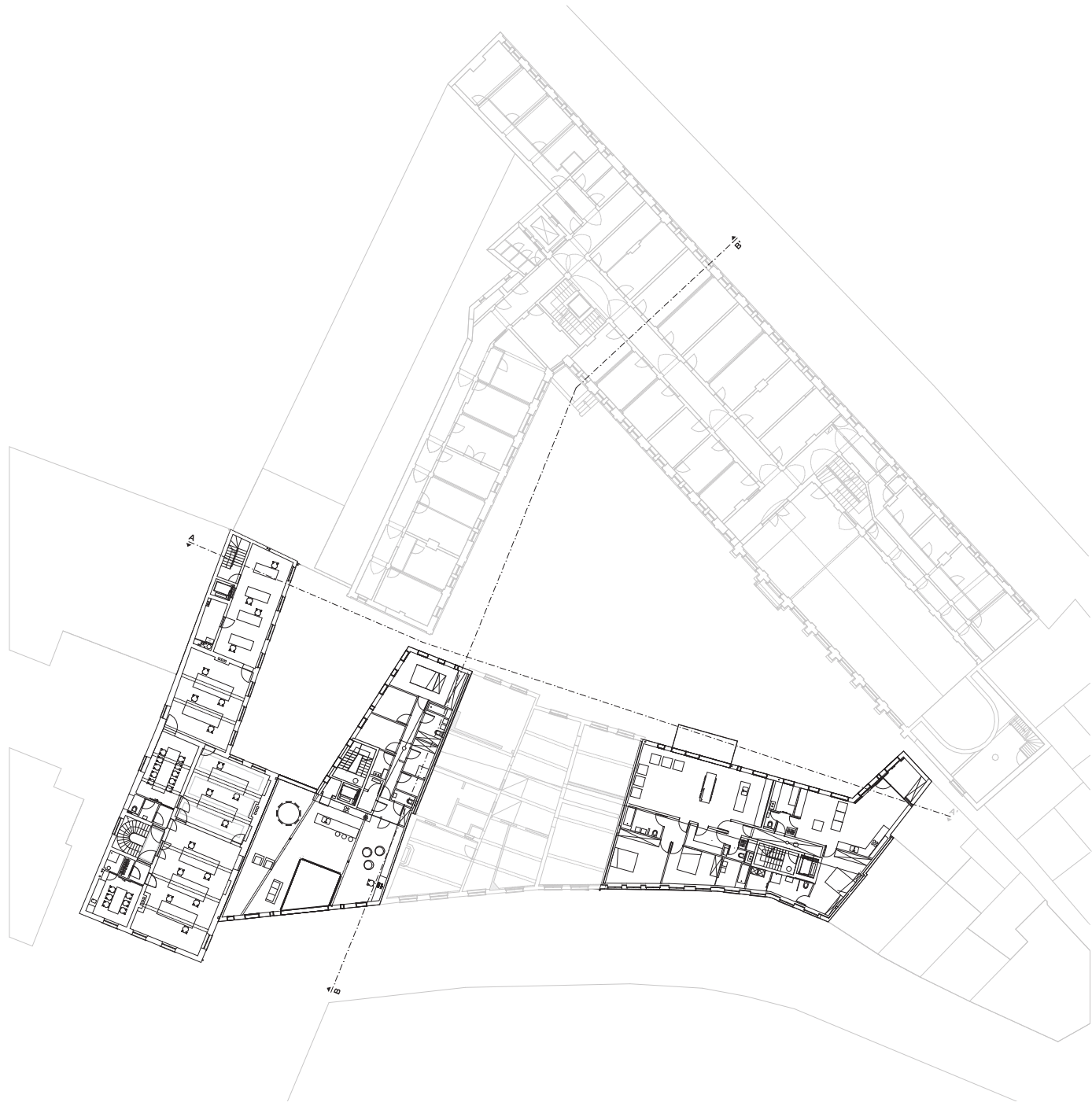


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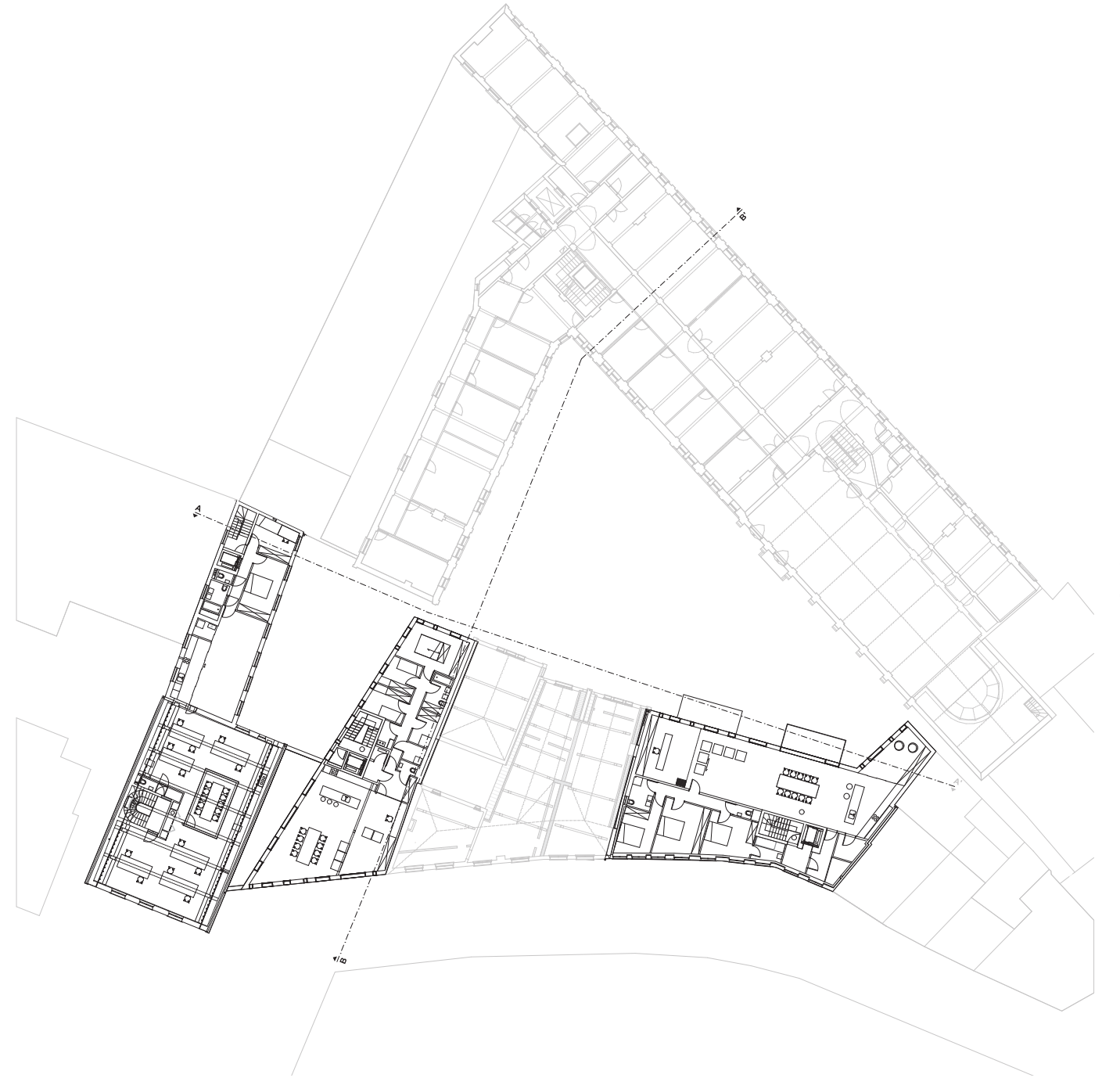
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