Preface
Why him, why us, why now
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Biography
The trajectory of an outsider architect
Young Marcel Raymaekers starts and stops architecture school, chooses art school instead; disgruntled with mainstream architecture and also with his own house designs, he discovers salvage; uses the license and expertise of Jos Wittera, architect, to kick off his practice; they assemble dozens of villas - eclectic, maximalist, decadent, virtuoso - across Belgium; he builds his own chateau of salvage, Queen of the South, a cultural and antiques hub, before tragedies and bankruptcy (of his own making) hollow out his empire
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Raymaekers’ architecture
A selection of projects
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Chapter 1
The spoils of modernization, or: Raymaekers’ building blocks
The historic, geological, and economic forces facilitating Raymaekers’ work; the materials and objects he worked with, and where he got them from; how their availability was the result of postwar modernization and its peculiar manifestations in the Flemish landscape; his paradoxical relationship with modernization
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Chapter 2
A museum where everything is for sale, or: Queen of the South
Building Europe’s finest salvage emporium - and a rural entertainment hub - where Belgium’s middle class and nouveaux riches could dream of nobility; how Queen of the South performed - feeding, flattering, and ravishing its visitors - and how it functioned as a household; how Raymaekers became a bankrupt tenant of his own empire
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Chapter 3
Ad hoc chateaux, or: Raymaekers’ design strategies
The rebellious roots of his eclecticism; how he used old materials to subvert modernism’s smoothness and reintroduce surprise, extravagance, and evidence of time and labor; how he embraced glitches and pushed materials to their limits; and the meaning of his fortress-palace-brothel design code
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Chapter 4
The improvising bouwmeester,* or: how Raymaekers’ buildings got built
*Master builder, from the middle ages, responsible for materials, design, construction, workforce, and client liaison. Raymaekers rejected the modern diminution of the architect’s role, embracing instead on-site conversation, empowering his contractors, evading planning regulations, and mobilizing his clients as salvagers and laborers, all the while seizing unforeseen design opportunities, whatever the consequences
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Epilogue
Learning from Raymaekers in the 21st Century
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List of known works
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Bibliography, colophon, list of images
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