

Iconopolis

in search of a meaningful sign for Leuven

ssa/s5

wedstrijd op uitnodiging Van Eyck Akademie
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publieke presentatie in STUK Leuven, december 2003
ontwerpers: ssa/xx & tv. laberius



leuven had just itself to offer

INSERT for "which magazine" RECTO
ssa/xx & tv laberius, dec. 2003

a thing is a hole in a thing it is not



now it provides for an outline

INSERT for "which magazine" VERSO
ssa/xx & tv laberius, dec. 2003

the matter of speaking.

It has been said that language is like an old city: a labyrinth of streets and squares, with new dwellings and old houses transformed or extended at different times, with surroundings organized along straight roads bordered by uniform residences.

The analogy was reversed and it was pointed out that the use of the city is like the practice of language. A course proceeds along places, a path articulates a series of figures. Likewise a map unfolds the topoi and tropes of all possible courses.

The correspondence between map and enunciation reminds us of the fact that words were often derived from physical things and that elaborated objects have discursive qualities.

If language is built, cities are written.

the city-map was an icon.

Once, the city was the habitat of a community. Walls enclosed and protected it. The planimetric shape of the city was recognized as a figure. This figure was on hand to be laden with symbolic meaning. It became an icon representing such notions as the excellence and the dignity of the community.

Leuven was built in a depression, a basin surrounded by low hills. The topography and perhaps also the desire for a beautiful scheme produced a planimetric shape that verges on the perfection of a circle: precisely the most potent figure of the cities idealizations.

the city-centre is an index.

In the course of the last two centuries cities have changed. Now, people live elsewhere; urban life is spread out over an extended territory. Old cities maintain themselves as centres providing for facilities and staging the remains of communal life.

The circular shape of Leuven city-centre has been corroborated by the infrastructure. Thus, while its figure is confirmed, the icon has been reversed. It has lost any similarity with the habitat. As a figure it traces the only definite outskirts of the urban field. As a sign it indicates the necessary contiguity of the urban area with the remnant of its cause.

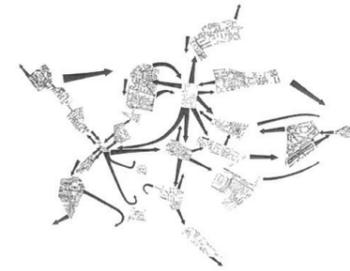
a thing is a hole in a thing it is not.

The proposed promotion page for Leuven is a recto-verso insert for "which magazine." The resilience of the figure and the inversion of the sign -from icon to index- are represented by the elliptical cut-out in the salver.

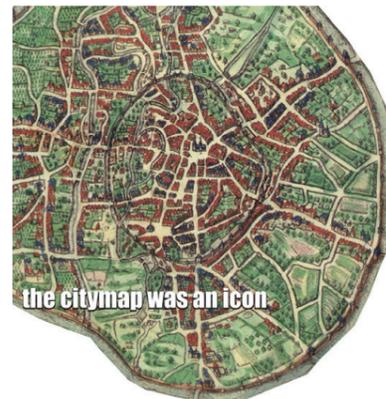
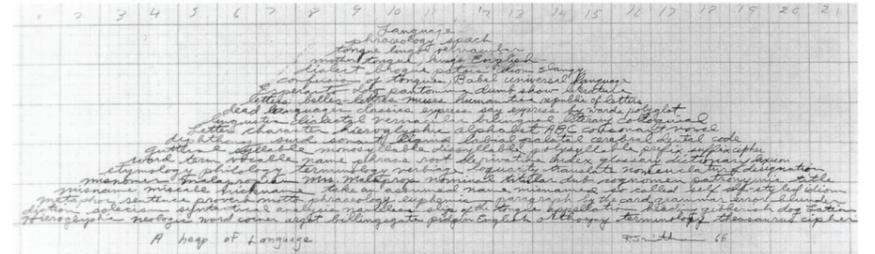
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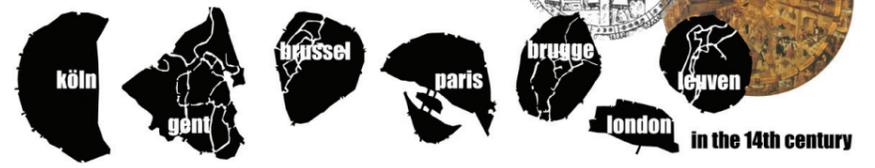
publicatie:
- Iwan Strauven, " Beeldmerk voor Leuven" in *de Architect*, januari 2004.



the matter of speaking



the citymap was an icon



in the 14th century



the citycentre is an index