



Es blitzt ein Tropfen Morgentau
Im Strahl des Sonnenlichts;
Ein Tag kann eine Perle sein
Und ein Jahrhundert nichts.

A drop of morning dew sparkles
In a ray of sunlight;
A day can be a pearl
And a century nothing.

Gottfried Keller



Condition The solitary tower(s) as shown on this panel are the result of 'moving villages'; a typical historical phenomenon in Zuidoost-Brabant, a sub-territory of the Dutch province Noord-Brabant. At the time not all land was reclaimed and cultivated yet, thus the villages were built on higher ground. Due to environmental, social and economic changes the villages moved from higher ground to lower situated banks, thus leaving their church behind in what would become the agricultural fields of the moved village. Once these churches were the blossoming middle of an entire community, only after the demolition of the nave they became solitary towers. What remains is a desolate, undefined, and mostly, crumbling memory of a grand past. These mystical and somehow forgotten objects rest on fertile and unspoiled ground, thus carrying great potential by means of revitalization. The plasticity and typological similarity is striking as can be observed by the selection of the three cases of the villages of Stiphout, Nederwetten and Oostelbeers.

Response What can concrete contribute to the observed condition within the constraints of elegance? How is it possible to add something new to these structures that have a great quality in itself already? This is best explained by the German approach of *Weiterbauen*, translated as 'building further' or 'building upon'. The first step is accepting what is there and the second is adding another layer to it. For the particular case of Nederwetten the tower has been transformed into an observation platform. The mass of the extension strengthening the silhouette, but in a new and distinct way, to make it relevant and retain its elegance once again. The concrete is put on top of the tower, so the tower itself and its rough edges serve as the mould, the tower becomes the mould. The plinth and body were already there, but now a parapet has been added giving the tower its presence back. The concrete is cast *in situ* and has the same direction as the masonry, this to demonstrate that the logic of the building is followed, the rough concrete joints create a rich tactile story, the sharp corners accentuate and strengthen the slender silhouette. The beams within the extension are slightly reduced in section at the end to emphasize the centre (referring to the 'axis mundi'; stairs, frame and symbol) and sense of direction. To conclude with the 'correction' of the poem of Keller: ein Tag kann eine Perle sein, aber Eleganz macht alles...

