INDESEM

BEYOND THE ECHO CHAMBER

beyond the echo chamber

international design seminar 2019

Renske de Meijer
Bart Vos
Alex Da Costa Gomez
Milou Klein
Koen Meijman
Maurane Gabriël
David van der Blonk
Guusje Enneking

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preface
by Renske de Meijer

Before you lies the bundled work of INDESEM 2019 – *Beyond the Echo Chamber.* It is the work of a year long journey that we as a board have made, the highlight of it being the design seminar itself, in which 63 students from 21 different countries have attended a weeklong workshop that discussed the position of the architect and especially their own. Inspired by lectures of architects, designers, sociologists, and urban planners with varying backgrounds and approaches, the students' goal was to compose their own manifesto of what architecture should be or evoke.

In a world with endless amounts of information available and unlimited possibilities; at a time in which globalisation and inequality are given facts; in that time, as an architect, it is important to know about this world and to position oneself. In that world, it is important not to stay within your own echo chamber, but to go beyond it. This great variety of students from architecture schools that all have their own way of educating, the reconciliation of them and their echo chambers creates a unique opportunity to make this possible: to go beyond.

We would like to thank all contributors for making the event possible. Without your contribution it would not have been possible to yet again organize such a successful edition of INDESEM. In special, Machiel van Dorst, for being of great help as with previous editions of INDESEM. His faith in the importance of this extracurricular event and his experience are indispensable for the continuity of the seminar.

It has been such a pleasure and honour to be involved in this process and we hope this book will give you a tiny impression of what is has been like.

We hope you enjoy reading it.

about indesem

INDESEM, International Design Seminar, is a biennial, founded by an independent group of students in 1962 and re-initiated in 1986 by Herman Hertzberger. The biennial is hosted at the faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of Delft University of Technology. INDESEM has had the honour of hosting internationally acclaimed architects such as Sou Fujimoto, Aldo van Eyck, Adriaan Geuze, Rem Koolhaas, Wiel Arets, Ben van Berkel, Winy Maas, Daan Roosegaarde, Jean Nouvel, Shigeru Ban, Steven Holl, Peter Cook and Renzo Piano and theorists such as Saskia Sassen, Bruno Latour, Anthony Vidler and Michael Speaks.

The programme of INDESEM consists of lectures, excursions, debates and a workshop all organized around a specific contemporary theme. Every edition of the seminar aims to raise awareness about this theme and its consequences for the architectural practice. During one week, students from all over the world, selected by an entry competition, will work on an accompanying design project. The seminar provides an environment in which students, tutors, architects and theorists engage in conversation and discussion about the current and future position of the architect within society.

theme
Beyond the Echo Chamber

Architects build a vocabulary by harvesting information in a multidisciplinary context. In recent days the amount of available knowledge becomes sheer endless. How to take a position here and how to share all different frames of reference with one another? By whom or what are you influenced as an architect? This defines your echo chamber and to what extent it is perforated or segregated.

Define your scope
Over the past decades, our way of living has changed dramatically and is still continuing to do so. We travel around the globe in less than 24 hours, we communicate when and with whomever we want, and consume more information than ever before. We have outgrown our confined communities and developped into a broadly connected society, where everything is within reach through telephone, laptop or tablet; everyone can go anywhere virtually at any time of the day. Architecture can be experienced without physically being present and can have an impact that goes beyond the immediate vicinity: the scope is no longer tied to the location; architects can respond to this. Would you choose global impact or local contribution?

Define your subject
Society also desires novelty and experiences nowadays. The current (social) media landscape calls for stars, strong personalities with a clear point of view. This has led to, among other things, the emergence of iconic buildings. Some might say these are empty shells, independent of their context, leading to a paradox: interchangeable cities are distinguished by interchangeable icons. Nevertheless, they are definitely a product of our current society and therefore just as much part of our culture. A response is visible, though: the search for local authenticity, participation and historical continuity. This involves a reinvigorated interest in bottom-up approaches and co-design. Here, the conviction prevails that the architect benefits from input from outside. It is the focus that differs in these approaches. The question that arises is with and for whom are you designing?

Define your source
Architects from the re-emerging 'weaving generation' are an example of architects that use site specific conditions in their design to enrich the existing local fabric. They try to create a broader perspective for architecture by respecting context, art and history. However, a duality in how to deal with existing architecture is noticeable. Architects are being asked to preserve what is already there, but at the same time we have to build for the future. Has society changed so much that new sources, methods and strategies are required to meet the needs of the future? Or does it need to be elaborated on the existing fabric?

Define your statement
The social developments mentioned lead to a dichotomy in the expressive quality of architecture. On the one hand extravagant (virtual) architecture is strongly visible, while a more modest architecture, on the other hand, is also on the rise. This division is equally noticeable in architectural representation, where artful collages are increasingly popular - replacing the trend of hyper realistic renders. Should one opt for exuberant expression or a more modest one?

INDESEM 2019 offers a platform where a new generation of designers will consider the position of the architect in a rapidly changing, (digitally) connected society. The event forms a stage to confront students with the echo chamber, their positioning within it, and to (re)define it, based on critical discussions.

structure

The book is divided into five chapters. The next four chapters will consecutively contain the lectures given, the interviews conducted, all the students' work done during the seminar, and the epilogue.

The first chapter, *Lectures*, contains the transcripts of all the lectures that were given during the seminar. The order is in line with the four day themes explained in the theme description: scope, subject, source and statement.

Chapter 2, *Interviews*, contains five interviews with a selection of the speakers, that were conducted during the seminar. These interviews were conducted by board members of INDESEM 2019.

This is followed by the chapter, *Results*, containing the work of the students participating in INDESEM 2019 – *Beyond the Echo Chamber*. During the seminar, the students were divided into groups of approximately three students, 20 groups in total. The chapter first explains the assignment and location of the assignment. Thereafter, an overview of some of the products of all groups is given: manifestos that the students have composed during the week and location drawings made during the drawing workshop with Momoyo Kaijima. Following this, all proposals, including a descriptive text, image and model per group are shown. The chapter ends with an overview of every group's final exhibition booth.

The final chapter, *Epilogue*, includes a reflection by jury member Mark Pimlott and a reflection by the board.

lectures

laurens jan ten kate
AHH

Laurens Jan Ten Kate studied architecture at the Faculty of Architecture and the Build Environment at the Technical University in Delft, from which he graduated in 1992. After his studies he started working for Herman Hertzberger, the critically acclaimed Dutch architect, famous for his influential work with the structuralist movement. Laurens was partner at Architectuurstudio Herman Hertzberger for 7 years, becoming co-owner in 2007. Since 2015 has been leading the studio. Besides practicing architecture Laurens has been teaching for over 20 years at the Academie van Bouwkunst Amsterdam. From 1998 to 2003 he served as the Head of Architecture at the Academie van Bouwkunst. More recently his teaching activities brought him to Spain where he is professor at the University of Navarra.

stefan metaal

Stefan Metaal is a sociologist who currently is studying the professionalisation of practitioners in architecture to shed light on long-term trends within the profession. In addition to this he has written a dissertation at the University of Amsterdam about urban, rural and suburban identity. He has conducted and supervised numerous studies on the process of renewal in pre-war and postwar urban areas, urban and suburban change in new towns, and the ripple-effects of gentrification on recently built areas around popular cities.

winy maas
MVRDV

Winy Maas is a co-founder and principal architect of MVRDV, an interdisciplinary studio that works at the intersection of architecture and urbanism. The award-winning Dutch practice was set up in 1993 and has established an international identity with a wide variety of buildings, cities and landscapes that are innovative, experimental, and theoretical. Besides he is a professor at the TU Delft and director of The Why Factory, a research institute for the future city. The Why Factory collaborates intensively with other academic institutes around the world. Maas is also guest editor of the Italian magazine Domus for 2019. He is also urban research curator of Manifesta 2020 Marseille, member of the urban committee Qianhai in Shenzhen and supervisor for the new eco-quarter of Bastide Niel Bordeaux.

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scope

alessandra covini & giovanni bellotti
Studio Ossidiana

Studio Ossidiana is a practice based in Rotterdam that works at the crossroads of architecture, visual art and design, led by Alessandra Covini and Giovanni Bellotti. Balancing research and fabrication, the practice explores innovative approaches in design, and is always in search of new material expressions to translate visions into tangible spaces and objects. In 2018, Studio Ossidiana was awarded the Dutch Prix de Rome, the most prestigious prize in the Netherlands for architects under the age of 35. Their work has been exhibited at the Dutch Design Week, Salone del Mobile, Jan Van Eyck Academy, het Nieuwe Instituut, the Kunsthal and the MAXXI Museum. In addition to this, their work has been published on Nai10 Publishers, Forum, Frame, De Architect, The Architectural Review, Domus, Harvard Design Magazine, Archdaily, AD Magazine, Landscape Architecture Frontiers and The New York Times Style Magazine among others.

[Giovanni]
Thank you for having us. We are very happy to be here, and we are actually very happy to present at the TU Delft, where Alessandra and I met when we were studying here.

Today we are going to show some of our projects, and maybe use them to discuss some of the themes we are interested in, and that we try to develop for our work. Our work is on the translation of narratives and ideas into tangible and physical expressive architectural objects. And we are particularly interested in objects and spaces that are somewhere between the domestic and the collective spheres. And in developing and working on materials and methods, which are between artisanal and industrial processes.

So most of our work and also the work we show today is about public space in a way, and on how it can be inclusive without becoming neutral, without becoming completely polished and generic. We think that public space can be richer when it speaks about diversity and not by homogenising the experience, but by welcoming friction and a traditional sense of adventure, perhaps even of danger, and maybe allows or requires a certain level of improvisation. So in our work we try to do this by designing spaces that foster interaction and encounters between different groups of people, but also between people and other species, animals and plants, but also minerals and climates.

Something that is essential in our work and in our working method is the work with materials, and especially the translations of materials in architecture. We think that there is a kind of a problem with material culture in architecture. Often it is architecture, but it is translated into materials. So we try to address this by establishing a close relation between the design and the production of things. Today we're going to show nine projects, which are mainly ongoing or developed in the past year, which we hope will show and articulate these themes and methods in the form of our work.

[Alessandra]
Petrified Carpets

The first project that we would like to show is very much related with this material experimentation and was actually the first project done as Studio Ossidiana. [1] The project is called Petrified Carpets and it is an installation of concrete elements, inspired by forms found in the Persian carpeting garden, and was initiated by Tomas Dirrix and me. So the project is an investigation into a repertoire of forms and symbols, typologies and natures that relate with the Persian carpet and the architecture of the garden. But it was also a material research on the expressive possibilities of concrete, which is a material that in the building industries progressively lost its expressive potential.

This project was a collaboration with a high end concrete factory, Hurks Prefab Beton, which is based in Veldhoven. With them we experimented with different techniques of casting, colouring and texturing concrete. We produced a lot of samples to achieve the desired shade of colour and mixture that could better translate and express the narrative behind each object. These [2, 3] are some images of the final elements and images of the production. So for example – this is the formwork for the wall, which was casted horizontally, with a band of metal plates in between each colour. Then we had to remove the metal plates all at once and by vibrating the concrete, the colours, which were independently, mixed. So all different recipes merged together.

One object was actually cast in a formwork made of earth, and with a liquid mixture of concrete we tried to reach the most dark and shiny effect as possible for the top surface to be reflective. [4] This is a niche with a view and is polished into a terrazzo surface on one side. [5] Here you can see the objects before being polished. So when concrete comes out of the mould it has always a thin film on the surface, which was then removed with a polishing machine, revealing the stones behind the mixture. While the other side was excavated by hand.

This platform [6] on the top was lightly sanded, so it is not as polished and shiny as the blue niche element, but it is more rough and more porous. Also in this case, the bottom part was sculpted by hand while the concrete was still wet, so we just had one hour after pouring to sculpt the bottom. It was quite an exciting project, also in terms of collaboration, because it was really a learning process, both for us and both for the makers, as we also brought in like our
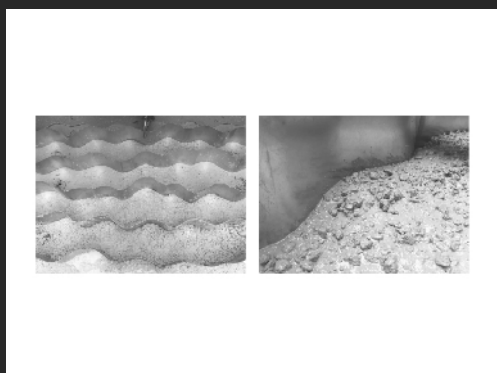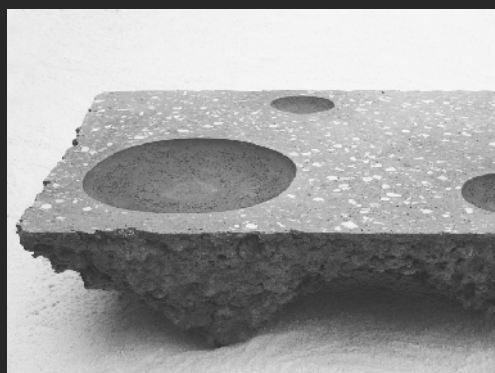
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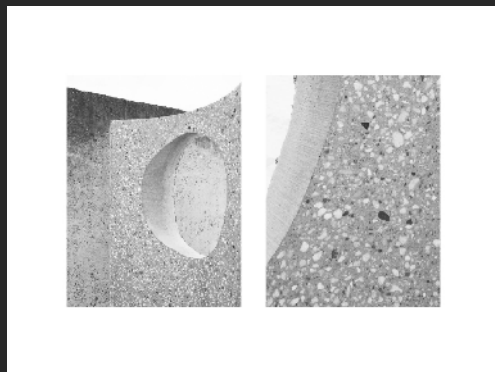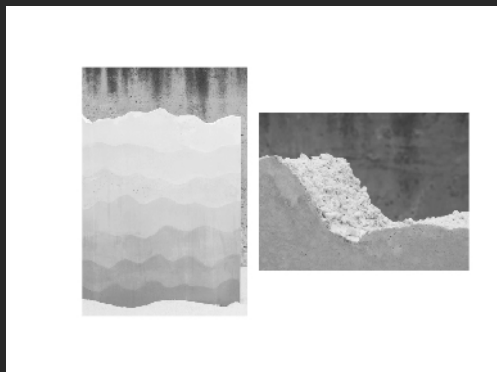
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own techniques, which were more tied to sculpture or model making, like making moulds out of earth, which also influenced the working method of the manufacturer.

This also taught us a lot about authorship and collaboration, and also how authorship changes in a project, as it moves across different scales, processes and artisan, from the drawing of the model to the finishing. It was actually a great lesson in working with others. The pieces were not fully designed and then left to be constructed, but they really came from the collaboration, the intelligence and the sensibility of the people we made them with, so like the team from Hurks in this case.

Then the Petrified Carpets travelled quite a bit. From the Dutch Design Week in 2016, to Milano Salone del Mobile in 2017, to Marres gardens in Maastricht. So in a way it became a sort of nomadic garden made by brutalist toys. So objects in which materials and forms become a way to tell narratives and to invite a new read to us. They can become an unexpected discovery in the city or inhabit a clearing like a hidden garden [7].

[Giovanni]
Horismos

This project is a project we are currently building [8]. It will be completed in September and it is the result of a competition we won to design an artwork for a public school in Vleuten, close to Utrecht. Our proposal actually uses this chance to design a playground. We wanted to design a place that wouldn't really dictate how to play, there wouldn't really be given toys or play elements, but rather would foster imagination and would allow for different possibilities of use. So there wouldn't be an explicit act of playing required, but rather something to invent. So it is more about the possibility of playing and they need to invent the rules and the story to do that.

It is a simple project. There are five parallel concrete walls and together they make a sort of landscape that hides children [9], which is a space to pass through and explore, to play between and across the walls. It will be used by different age groups, from four to twelve, so it is a place that children will see changing

as they grow and it offers surfaces to be touched or climbed, which go from shiny terrazzo surfaces to some elements cast on soil. For this project we are developing a specific mix of concrete, which goes across a gradient through the five walls. And for this project we are also using some fragments of rounded bricks and terracotta elements, which are materials that have a different lifespan as well, so finished materials that will wear and age differently. Some textures are made from casting on sand with pebbles to climb on and some with shiny terrazzo shapes.

[Alessandra]
Op het dak

The third project, which was also designed with Tomas Dirrix, is Op Het Dak. It is a bistro on a rooftop garden of a building block in Rotterdam. This project was built with a very little budget, so we did very simple operations. We realised the counter, some furniture and new openings in the facade. [10] The openings are these expressive holes, ambiguous and unfinished shapes, which while entering look like an open hole to the garden without a glass or a frame. The frame is actually placed on the outside wall, exhibiting the layers of the plaster brick and insulation. We casted the counter in concrete ourselves on site, where we added the niches that can be used for seeds and herbs found in the garden outside [11]. We realised some concrete tables, cast on earth in the garden, and in a way they bring inside a sort of petrified chalk of its soil.

[Giovanni]
Solar Gardens

Last summer, we were approached by Floris Alkemade, who is the Rijksbouwmeester of the Netherlands, to be part of a programme called Young Innovator Programme. We were asked to research solutions that could integrate solar energy in monuments in Moreelse, which is an area in Utrecht close to the central station. In particular, we were asked to work with the Sterrenhof buildings and its surroundings. Sterrenhof is a complex of three buildings and it is listed as a monument and they are also one of the few residential buildings in the area. So we actually began to look into solar panels, and one of the issues that we found beginning this research was how these panels are typically
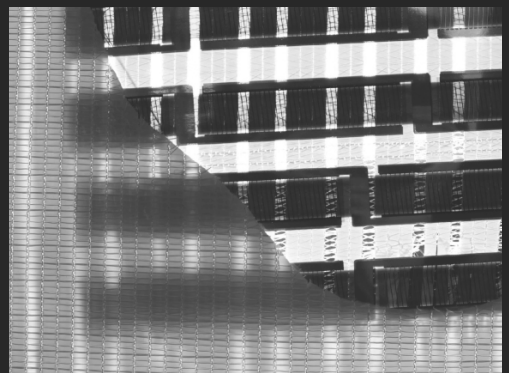
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parasitical. They are glazed panels with PV cells and then they are attached to roofs and façades and there is also a certain acceptance of ugliness when it comes to sustainability. Which, in this context, we were asked to address, because it's problematic when the preservation of the environment and historical preservation have to move together. So to us it seemed that the most we could do as architects would be to either design the support for ready-made solar panels or to find an ingenious way to hide them somewhere. So for us, in the scope of our work, in this case the interest was again in the material culture and in rethinking the PV as a material and starting from there and trying to draw a connection between the material, the technical culture behind it and the new possible relations between this culture and the historical site.

We developed two strategies, starting from materials and prototypes and one was a solar textile and one is a solar terrazzo. We started making prototypes in the office, first for the textile, using organic PV, which is printed on thin film, which is flexible, and agricultural textiles. We began to design it as something that could be used to store for example, garden equipment if placed outside of a building or to build different transparencies [12]. So in this way we began to look at the limitations of the material, and not just in terms of efficiency, but also in terms of possibility of expression and to have a hands-on understanding of the technology involved. So by combining different kinds of PV and stitching techniques, and different kinds of greenhouse textiles, we were playing with different kinds of transparency and different levels of efficiency [13]. So with this material, we began to think of the possibilities to design for this domestic monumentality of the Sterrenhof. We'll show a few of the strategies.

[14] One was this vast scale, house-scaled PV textile, which one could open completely when in, to maximise efficiency when out for work, or seal the house entirely if one is away for a weekend. Others were more subtle transformations for the interior of the homes, so it could appear as an art piece at this scale of the building or to introduce new textures, which could be applied to different historical buildings in the area [15].

We also proposed a series of vast curtains for the neighbouring square, which could follow the sun during the day, going from east to west, but leaves some ambiguity between what was done as a performance or for a public event, and what happened out of opportunity to actually gather more sunlight. We thought both parameters to be necessary, completely utilitarian and very true. It was also about an idea of sustainability, which would be more agricultural, where events would be tied to the time of day and to the season and one could know where the curtain would be at a certain hour [16].

[Alessandra]
Another strategy we developed was a solar terrazzo, a new mineral floor. We began working on material prototypes for a solar tile in collaboration with concrete manufacturer Tomaello, and also with TU Delft PV lab, who provided us colourful solar cells, which are the result of an ongoing research project of Olindo Isabella and Juan Lizcano and Solar Urban, who we also would like to thank. So some of them change colours according to the inclination.

So basically, like with these artificial stones, we composed a series of samples [17], working with the PV, selecting the stones and the pigments and these tests were made with other minerals to find the right combination of stones. This prototype is not usable yet in the open, also given that the coloured PV tiles are prototypes, so a few years from being commercially available, but the prototype was working. We are developing this by thinking of both natural and artificial stones as a combination, as a sort of new mineral floor that can be used for cities. This [18] one is one of the two one-to-one tiles we made.

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With this material, we then move to the public space around the monument the Vrouwe Justitiaplein square, where the furniture of solar terrazzo could create a sort of collection of solar characters [19], becoming an area where the sun is cultivated along plants, a sort of garden of solar energy and vegetation. We proposed ways in which this material could be imagined in the public space.

So this is still an ongoing research and we just recently presented the results to the city, and we actually hope to begin a collaboration with TU Delft to develop the solar tile and also other desires for the solar curtains. Both Petra Blaisse and Sheila Kennedy from MIT have been working on solar textiles and we are in touch with them for possible follow-ups of the project.

Through this, we also established a collaboration with municipalities, universities, manufacturers and designers and it also showed us how important it is to work, whenever possible, at a one-to-one scale, so through prototypes or fragments. For us working with material and prototypes is often the best way to get excited about a project, and also to get others excited as well.

[Giovanni]
Fire Dune

Fire Dune is a project we're currently working on and it is for Almere. It was commissioned by Strandlab, which is an association that works with the municipality. It is a commission for the design of a public fireplace on the beach of Almere. And of course in Almere everything, including the soil, is less than 60 years old. So it was open sea until the 30s and then it was reclaimed for a gigantic engineering effort in the last century. Now Almere and this beach face a sweet water lake.

For this, we were looking at different kinds of fire and thinking of a fireplace as a collective open ritual, but also as a domestic ritual, at the hearth of domestic life. I grew up in a house where the fireplace was also a room in itself, where you could sit inside, so in a way, after the threshold of a mantelpiece, you could sit with the fire a few steps away. We also had an ongoing fascination with the Russian stove, which is this large multifunctional object that brings together the stove,

the kitchen, and in winter times it can become a warm place to sleep. It is a huge object between small architecture and furniture which radiates heat.

Our proposal for Almere is a series of variations on the fireplace. One is a room, one is more of a kitchen, one is more of a scenography, and the crater on the top, with different orientations to protect it from the wind [20]. As it gets covered by sand, it becomes a sort of dune. Then the dune itself is heated by the fireplace, so it is a sort of Russian stove made of sand that heats the rooms and the sand itself, as the fires are lit and offers places to cook on the beach, or open fireplaces protected from the wind, a scenography lit by the fire.

So at night, it flickers with the light of different kinds of fireplaces, which are placed at different heights [21]. It is this sort of signalling to people and boats in the distance, this is the main fire on, which is a portal looking towards the water.

[Alessandra]
Paper Gardens

We were recently asked by the New York Times style magazine, which is called T Magazine, to create a scenography for their annual Salone del Mobile celebration, which happens every year in the gardens of Villa Necchi Campiglio. Villa Necchi is really a unique place in Milan, it is a villa right in the centre of the city, minutes away from the Duomo and it is a masterpiece of architecture designed by Italian architect Piero Portaluppi in the 30s, which has become a museum in the 90s. Portaluppi was a peculiar architect in the 30s. His architecture is very joyful and inventive. There are motives and recurrent shapes in his work, like nautical holes and the stars recalling navigation and astrology, recurrent patterns, little obsessions that keep appearing in different forms.

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We wanted this to be a light-hearted project. The installation was meant to last only a day. Our intention then was to turn the grounds of the villa for a day into a celebration marking the beginning of spring and to reflect the springtime rituals around seeds and flowers that you can see across different cultures. We also wanted to work between the scale of the villa and that of the object, so the two contexts in a way, the villa, the architecture of the place, and the Salone del Mobile.

So we did a series of installations [22], inspired by elements of the garden in a scale between large architectural models and miniature buildings with which guests could interact. This is our flower pavilion, where guests could pick a bouquet inside a pink room filled with alliums and lilies among other flowers [23]. It was a sort of surreal field of flowers from the world of agricultural, ornamental and spontaneous plants. The guests' view within the pavilion is at flower height, so it is like a raised field, and some effort is needed to pick the furthest and rarest flowers. The pavilion from the outside looks like an elevated crown or a sort of huge skirt, only revealing the legs of people within, a sort of human flower camera [24]. A few openings frame elements of the garden and the villa, as if they emerge from a flower field in the spring. Some guests described it as a strange animal inhabiting the garden about to run away.

We were also asked to design a sort of step and repeat to photograph the procession of VIP guests at the entrance of the villa. We didn't want to just to do a wall with logos, so we turned it into another installation, with which guests could interact while taking photos. The installation was made with three silhouettes between hedges and distant hills, which created the temporary façades of Villa Necchi Campiglio, visible through the gate, basically becoming the new entrance of the villa on the street. Holes and clearings between the walls opened up to elements of the villa and the garden while heaps of minerals emerge between the walls [25]. In a way it was also a chance to test the one-to-one elements of our work playground that we showed before. We also worked with an Italian light designer, and thanks to him the pavilion transformed overnight during the party.

The photo wall allows for conventional photos as well as unexpected ones, and it actually worked quite well. The official photographers were quite sceptical in the beginning, because generally the photos of this event are quite the same, more a display of beautiful clothes. But the guests began to peak through the openings or emerge from the walls [26]. Over the evening, it became a bit of a playground for adults, a game between vanity and interaction with the piece.

We also designed, in collaboration with Dedar, an Italian textile company from the Como area, an array of curtains blowing with the wind, which created the scenography for the party. Another part of the design was a series of piñatas, which was asked for by the editor in chief of T Magazine as a sort of interactive installation for the guests. We imagined them as colourful off-scale models between silos and heaps [27]. These were produced in our studio in Rotterdam and were shaped like otherworldly farm buildings and were filled with pebbles, seeds, expanded clay, different kinds of soils, and surprise gifts. Some were hanging like blown-up pollen or surreal seeds others were composed around the garden like miniature planets. They were all handmade and we never used papier-mâché before.

And we also exhibited another project of ours. Amsterdam Allegories, that we will show you in a bit, which was exhibited in one of the most beautiful rooms of the house, which is a greenhouse room facing the garden. In a way, it worked a bit like the map of the installations playing with the scale of the objects outdoors and those in the model.
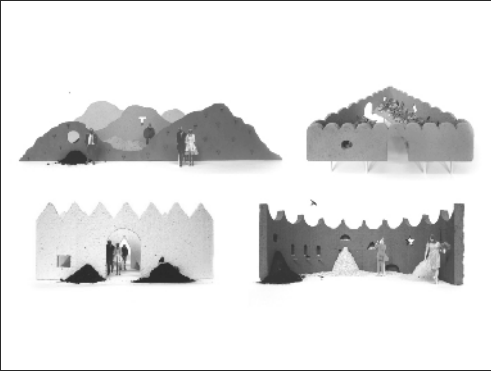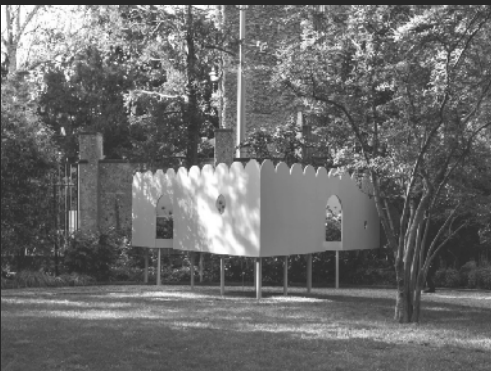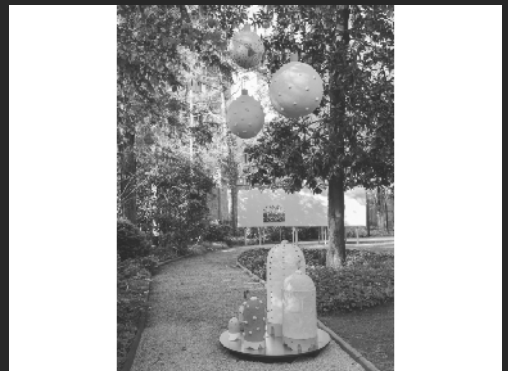
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[Giovanni]
Geese Gottos

And this is a project we're working on for Kutlug Ataman, who is a Turkish film director and artist. We are doing this for his farm and atelier in Erzincan, in eastern Turkey for the farming of Lind geese, about 1500 Lind geese. This is a project about three small pavilions, but in a way we think of it as a large-scaled project. It is quite simple, it is three structures, each measures about 12 metres in length and they are partially buried in soil to protect birds from the wind.

[28] They will be built in concrete and they will be sort of visible across the landscape as three thin strokes, which emerge from the topography of the fields. But they're also defining a much larger area circling with a low-mound what will be the territory of the geese. So I think of them actually more as tools in a landscape and almost as an agricultural more than an architectural project, because their mass is very small, but in a way they are the hard points to determine the moments of large volumes of soil.

[29] The geese will actually only use the spaces for a few months a year. It is not meant for them to live in. They live free in the field, it is only for them to get in, lay the eggs and get out. But over time, the animals will transform the landscape around it completely. They will graze everything and will transform the composition of the soils for years to come, long after shelters are removed. So the project is for the geese, but it is also for the farmer, and the roof is a terrace populated by all the necessities, like the chimneys for natural ventilation, which also work as furniture. So they are places for the farmer to rest and to oversee the flock. This project should be done over the summer in July before the land freezes in October.

[Alessandra]
The Civic Roof

Last October, Studio Ossidiana won after a two-phase competition the Dutch Prix de Rome, which is the oldest architecture competition in the Netherlands. Officially I was awarded the Prix de Rome, since Giovanni was abroad, but we did both phases of the project together. The Prix de Rome traditionally asks for daring and experimental proposals more than problem-solving projects. So this is not meant to be immediately implemented, but it is more to offer new visions for the future. The Prix de Rome in the Netherlands, comes under the form of an open competition in two rounds and the first phase was in the region of Groningen, and the theme was low pressure. The focus was in a place with a lack of services and population because of the earthquakes due to gas extraction.

[Giovanni]
In the area, the traditional brick buildings were not built to last, to resist the earthquakes, so the earthquakes have basically turned the whole region into a working site. And with this kind of geological pressure also come a lot of economic and social pressures. As we began to work on this, we thought that as architects we couldn't really solve the geological problem, but we could question and work on what the earthquake meant for the people that were living there, what it meant for the villages, for the region, how it affected daily life and so on. We started thinking of the earthquake itself as a phenomenon, this kind of intangible presence. You cannot see it, or hear it, it is only revealed in the interaction with things, the buildings, the soils. So it is more in the lamps that shake and the dishes that fall from the wall. It is also in having to leave the house at any time during the day or the night, and then with the fear of leaving, the fear that the house might collapse and the preoccupation that the property is losing value, losing economic value.

So we took this project as a chance to work on new spaces and meeting places, which wouldn't be for the earthquake as an emergency, but would be more broadly for situations of isolation and lack of services. The project proposed a system of new civic forms across the territory, across the areas, which were not conceived as emergency solutions, but mainly as new civic spaces. The idea behind it was that the earthquake of course is something that destroys the homes, but at the same time it is something that was creating new moments of encounter between people, it was creating meetings and gatherings. It was also producing a sense of agency and an idea of community across the region. Sort of a new territory.

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[29]

[Alessandra]
The project proposed a series of large roofs to become new civic spaces for both domestic and public activities [30]. Each roof would be a shelter with a school and a kindergarten for those who were affected by the earthquake, but also a place for events, markets and workshops. The roof itself was thought of as a vast public terrace overlooking the region, a viewpoint to see and be seen by others and together the roofs form a constellation with a common language across different villages. So each roof became the space for one village, a space both domestic and intimate, but also very public.

Amsterdam Allegories

So Civic Roof was the first phase of the competition, through which four teams were selected. Now we will show you the last project Amsterdam Allegories, which was our proposal for the second round of the Prix de Rome. The project responded to the theme of high pressure and a site in Amsterdam North, where raising land values and a growing city are greatly affecting the life of the people and cost of housing and so on. Both the site and the theme were given by the jury. The north of Amsterdam today is rapidly becoming the hip part of the city, a bit removed from the tourist flow, with more opportunities for housing and work. In this context, we were asked to do a non-consumptive programme in Sixhaven, just opposite Amsterdam central station.

As we started, it became clear how today the city is in a moment of crucial transformation. Amsterdam has been the city on the Amstel for centuries, while today the city is looking north for its future. From the city on the Amstel river, Amsterdam is becoming the city along the IJ. So we began to think of the river itself as this new centre and as Piet Blom once said, the IJ will be the grand canal of Amsterdam.

[Giovanni]
We began to read the river itself as the point of encounter of different natures of the city. A place where different waters come together, the waters of the IJ, the waters of the Noord Holland Kanaal and the waters of the Amstel. But also a place where different kinds of Amsterdam could come together, and by this we mean the historical city on the Amstel with the decadence and eccentricity of today, but also that of

the Golden Age when Amsterdam was known as the most liberal city of Europe. And then the Amsterdam of the north, with the memory of the industrial shipyards, that kind of blue collar working class character of the garden cities, a different relation to the countryside. And then the Amsterdam of the port, which has a globalised, industrial and economic character, with the chimneys and the factories and the heaps of coal and metal scraps and the smell of cereal storage facilities, distribution centres and so on. So we read this as a moment of change for the city and as an opportunity for it to reimagine its identity and think of new forms and spaces that could represent and can give dignity to this transformation. So our project was a call to look for a new physical vocabulary for its architecture and its public domain that could represent Amsterdam as the city on the IJ. So not Amsterdam north, not Amsterdam south, but the city as a whole.

Sixhaven is at the very centre of the city. It is a triangular site, which is a sort of wedge separating the waters. It is an iconic form which is legible at the scale of the city and it is almost the geographical centre of where we imagine the city to grow if we place the IJ at the centre. We thought of this as an opportunity to talk a bit about the territory around which the different characters of the city can gravitate, a sort of table for the city to redraw itself and to experiment.

[Alessandra]
Amsterdam Allegories is a project about translating the suggestions, the stories, forms and typologies of Amsterdam's expanded territory into a repertoire of expressive and material architecture and public spaces, which could form a new surreal and experimental public domain on water [31]. A place that could be an alternative to the contemporary globalised vocabulary of polished waterfronts, towers with a view, architectural icons, fancy marinas and so on.

The project proposes a new typology, a walled harbour to host a fleet of 21 floating islands, which we wanted to be a new type of public domain, with sensory experiences and discoveries, where the islands could make us wonder and could surprise us, at times frighten us.

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Places that enhance discovery and adventure and the unpredictability of the encounter. And we proposed to place this herd of urban life. The islands are only accessible by boat and this is because we see water as a democratic surface, not as a retreat. In a way, an unknown territory for everybody where there are no beaten paths, where traces disappear. Water enhances encounters, on water we're closer to others, we help each other in moments of danger. Then the islands themselves, more than being defined by a programme, are different worlds that offer possibilities for uses, misuses and encounter.

[Giovanni]
So we began to design, to think, and build models of these islands in our office, each island in a way became a project in itself. And the project became a process of composing their stories, so about the architecture and the ideas of nature, which as we preceded also began to communicate between each other and to suggest new encounters. There is the shore island, which is ideally made with the soil displaced by the IJ tunnel. It is a sort of tribute to the Dutch coast and it is about the relation between the city and the territory, but also about the relation between leisure and fear. It reflects both on coastal erosion, on sea level rise, but also to conveys a certain optimism. It is a vast sandpit from which roofs and chimneys emerge, which can be dug, excavated, buried or hidden by use, but it's mainly a place where soil can actually be made, so a sort of sand garden.
This [32] was a house for collective barbecues, which was made by 14 independent fireplace rooms that would build a parameter of a sort of big conical collective room. It is a place where one could rest in a warm room during the winter or dry up after a swim in the water.

There is a black mountain, which was a sort of floating embassy to the cold peaks of the port's downstream, a site for barbecues and campfires. A sundial, which was all about celebrating the view of the IJ and marking the time on Sixhaven as its own shadow. A sunken orangerie that is floating half submerged and was created of its own mass micro-climate. A palace of water [33], which was dedicated to swimming in the IJ, which was also a memory of the Obeit bathhouse, which was an open-air pool which used to be on the north shore of the IJ. This becomes a place where one can swim along the fishes and plants.

A floating Turkish bath, which is heated by the collective effort of seven independent fires. Then a garden, or many gardens, for agricultural, spontaneous and ornamental plants and for their intersections, both cultural and botanical. Inspired by the Lusthofs. A palace of metals, which was about elevating recycling and thinking of it as a civic ritual. A brittle floating square, which would slowly decompose and sink in the water, because of the paradoxically balancing high pH in the waters in the IJ. A floating aviary [34], which was to reflect and think about the cultural categories we use to approach animals, the evasive, the native, the feral and so on. So an aviary about the intersection between zoology and politics. A forest of poplars, which is about the Dutch countryside, which is both bucolic and industrial at the same time. Three pastoral islands, which are really inhabited by sheep and are herded by boat from one island to the next and then transforming grassland into lawns. And bird perches, which would confuse themselves with the masts of sailing boats. Finally a lock portal, which is at the tip of Sixhaven, celebrating the encounter of the waters of the IJ and those of the Noord Holland Kanaal.

[Alessandra]
Through those, we imagine Sixhaven as a place of smell, the smell of earth and fermenting cereals that are mixed with the fumes of barbecues, while birds fish along humans, and other animals share the shore with locals and tourists. Mountains of dark soil create a skyline along with the mast of the sailing boats and the sky-scraping perches from migratory birds. The orangerie floats have submerged and the canopies appear just above the waterline, from the deck of a boat one may glance inside or pick an orange from the wall [35]. Barbecuing becomes a year-long activity, celebrating the ritual of cooking on live flames, collecting firewood and sitting by the fire at night. In the Amsterdam skyline, the collective smoke of the fireplaces communicates with the fumes of the distant industrial chimneys. The collective hot tub, which acquires an ambiguous scale between the size of a domestic chimney and the collective scale of the island.

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We thought of the islands as places, where the very least different social groups can cross paths, share space. But also as places where Amsterdam citizens meet other species, a place to cultivate a more nuanced relation with nature. A place that offers possibilities of encounter between humans and other animals, plants and minerals. Where the citizens of Amsterdam would meet embassies of the territory they inhabit, the fluxus of water, the migratory birds, the heaps of materials on the shores and where one could meet some lost or forgotten elements of the city architecture. The islands also bring back lost atmospheres of the city, for example darkness, that today can only be regained through design. These [36] are three underground rooms emerging from the water, to protect from the city lights and those of the countryside. Besides being harboured in Sixhaven, the islands could move around the city, creating new unexpected, estranging or familiar encounters with other figures of the landscape, and propose new forms of sublime underwaters across Amsterdam territory. While high pressure is typically translated in high density, with Amsterdam Allegories, we wanted to reimagine Sixhaven as an intense, rather dense space. A celebration of the messiness of the shore over the sanitised bleakness of the waterfront. The unpredictability of the encounter over the vanity of the architectural statement.

The ambition through this and other projects is to reimagine public space. So the great fortune of architecture for us, is that even when done with private money, it has a public dimension. There is a chance, and we think a need to reimagine public space as a place where leisure can become an action, literally recreation, that can enform new kinds of beauty and discovery, and that can enhance encounters between humans and other species and help us reflect on how multicultural cities can produce new and exciting ways of being in a city and being a citizen. Where the citizen will no longer be seen as a user or consumer, but as a sailor, a gardener, a farmer, a collector, a cartographer or an explorer.

Thank you

[36]

alun jones
Dow Jones Architects

Alun Jones studied architecture at the University of Bath, and at the University of Cambridge and wrote an MPhil on reconstruction of Alberti's Church of San Sebastiano in Mantua. In 1992 he qualified and has since worked on a wide range of museum, gallery and heritage projects. At Caruso St John Architects he worked as project architect for the New Art Gallery, Walsall, before establishing Dow Jones Architects with Biba Dow. He was project director for the Garden Museum phase 1 and 2, and has designed two exhibitions for Tate Britain. He delivered the Peter von Kant Gallery in Deptford and also the East Central Gallery in Clerkenwell. He has a wealth of experience of dealing with large and complex client bodies and on projects which have complex statutory approvals. In addition to practicing architecture he has taught at a number of schools of architecture in the UK and Ireland, is an RIBA external examiner at the University of Leicester, is a Civic Trust Award assessor and sits on the South Downs National Parks Design Review Committee.

An Idea About Being Local

What I am going to do is talk very briefly about some ideas and an attitude towards ideas and then I am going to talk about three projects, which hopefully compose an attitude to working with those ideas but also working with ideas about the city.

One of the things as architects that we talk about a lot is space and one of the things that I find slightly interesting about space is that space is a completely abstract concept. We only know space through the things which define it. Boundaries. So space is very much like light. This is a piece by James Turrell [1]. This is made up purely of light, but light, like space is completely immaterial, and space and light are the things we as architects spend an awful lot of time talking about.

As a way of contrasting that, there is a line by Heidegger in his essay 'the origins of the work of art' where he says 'stoneness of stone reveals the lightness of light'. What I think is interesting about that is how light, like space, which is immaterial, begins to have a presence through the materials that it falls on and is defined by. So that end seems to raise questions about how we as architects do and make things, and why do we make things out of the things we make things out of. What might those materials start to begin to talk about the deeper cultural understanding of architecture.

The word material, as you probably know, comes to us from matter which is derived from mater or mother. So what I think is fascinating, is that an idea of materiality is speaking directly about the ground which arguably is talking about place. So when we start to put things together as architects we gather up materials, we make form, we begin to make buildings, we put buildings together and we begin to make cities.

[2] This is an image by an Italian artist, Barbieri, and it's of the Palio in Siena. You are probably familiar with the Palio, but what is fascinating about this, is that this is describing a city acting out a ritual and the city has effectively put itself into what would be described as festive time. What is fascinating about this, is that you can go there the following day and buy vegetables and it is the same place but something totally different is happening. What I think is valuable about that is the capacity for architecture to make cities, and cities to be a backdrop for festivity and how that might say something about what the role of architecture is in a deeper cultural life.

[3] This is Breugel's fight between carnival and lent. It is the sort of flip side of the painting by Barbieri, where that city was in a highly specific horizon of time, this arguably is just everyday life. What is fascinating about this painting is the way that the city becomes this framework where the whole of human activity and the whole of human life is being played out. And it is these attitudes of generosity, of what the city can provide and how architecture forms the components of this, which is something that we are fascinated by and it is something that we work with.

[4] Finally, this is a photograph that I took about 20 years ago in a place called Dungeness, which is on the south east corner of England. It is a very flat bank of stone, which then becomes the sea. What is fascinating about this, is the presence of that thing in the middle. There are many ways of looking at that thing. Obviously it is a hearth, it is a fire, it is a focus, there is a chimney, and in a way it is sort of talking about dwelling, but what always fascinated me is: where is the house? Did they make that bit, and not bother with the house or did they make the house and time and weather have taken the house away from us, just leaving that one piece. But in respective of that, what is significant about this, is how it is a very definite and specific statement of humankind making a thing, which is talking about our presence on the earth, or if you like, talking about dwelling on the earth. Heidegger talks about this idea. He says something along the lines of 'architecture gives direction to nature' where he riffs on an idea of Aristotle. What I like about this, is that if you took that thing away, you would just have a bit of nature. The presence of that thing is giving direction to nature, and is marking out us as human beings, having made a mark on the world. It is the questions that surround the decisions that have been made about making that, and what it looks like, what it does. But how it speaks to our memories about inhabitation, I think is particularly interesting.
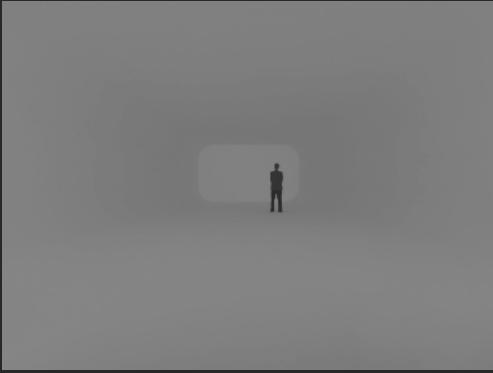
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So I guess what this sort of introduction is about, is what I think is at stake when as an architect you decide to put things together and you decide to engage with culture and you decide to engage with nature. So I am going to talk about three buildings, all of which have a very particular relationship to the city or nature.

The Garden Museum

The first building I am going to talk about is a museum that we made. It is called the garden museum and it is on the banks of the river Thames. This building was a design competition that we won about ten years ago and the museum was housed in this old church and it was operating in a very contentious manner. They wanted to make gallery space, temporary gallery space and permanent gallery space, and they wanted to expand their programme of how they would interact with the city and with a potential audience. [5] So the way that we approached the design of the project was through this painting which is by an artist called Antonello Da Messina and it is of Saint Jerome and his study. The reason why we looked at this painting was the fact that Saint Jerome is sitting inside, what looks like a little timber world. It is like a little timber cabinet. That timber cabinet is sitting inside this stone building. The interesting thing about this, is the relationship of the one to the other, and how the thing which is about the activity seems to be made of something which is different from the building, as this inclosure that's holding it. All of this is going on with relation to the windows and the view out of the windows with nature. [6] The other thing that we were looking at, were the Vauxhall pleasure gardens, an 18th century garden very near to where the garden museum is. The thing that we were interested in was the building which was called the orchestra, it was a belvedere. The reason why we were looking at that, was that we were thinking about how we could contain the programme required by the museum, in a building that would have a relevance to the world of garden design and landscape and that would also have a relevance to working with this old church building.

Basically what we proposed was that we would make a timber building that would sit inside the west end of the church. That building would be made out of cross laminated timber and we would make the building such that it had the appearance of a little city that sat within the church. So we made this model of it, [7] where the church is made out of roughly cut MDF and then the Balsawood is the thing that we inserted into the church. [8] So this is what we built. The cross laminated timber we used when we did this ten years ago, was one of the sort of early projects with cross laminated timber in Britain. Not many people were using it at that time, but we wanted to use it, because it was very lightweight, it was very strong and it was very quick to use. Also it would enable us to make this conversation between the thing that we would put into the church and the church itself. It would also enable to start building these layers between old and new, between found and what we were putting into the building.

Six years ago the museum then ran a second competition for a much larger project where they wanted to more than double the amount of gallery space, but they also wanted to provide better back of house facilities. And so what that meant was making a building that would come out into the church yard. This was the competition winning model [9] and the idea for this model was that we cast the ground of the site in plaster and then the existing church building is made of oak and the new intervention is being made of copper. The idea behind this model was that the site of the church is incredibly significant, not only is it a graveyard, there are 36.000 bodies under the ground, but there are a number of significant tombs and listed structures and protected trees. So what our project became about was the grain or the texture of the ground as this landscape, which is why we casted in that plaster in order that we could begin to explore the qualities of that.

So as the project developed we made a diagram. As I mentioned there are bodies a metre below the ground, there are protected tombs and the trees around the perimeter are all protected. There is also a protected view of the building behind it. So we made this diagram, which was effectively to establish the parameters of where we could and could not make our building. Having established that and effectively got permission from the authorities to work within that envelope, we then started thinking about a strategy of how we could make architecture in and around what's actually quite a banal diagram. So we were looking at Morandi [10], and his still lives. What's interesting
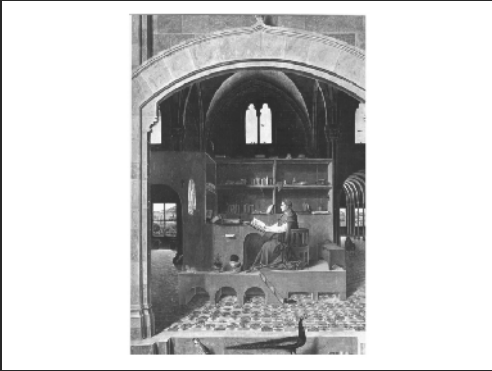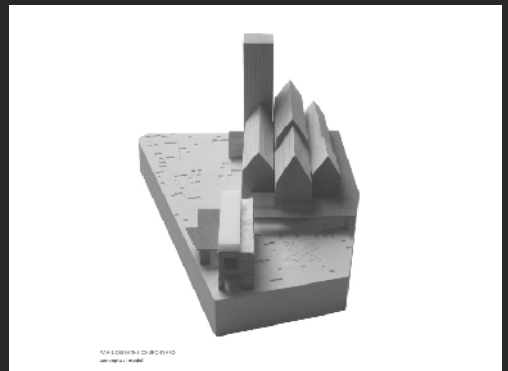
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about these paintings, is that the spaces between the objects are painted with as much intensity as the objects themselves. So it seemed to be speaking about a way of how we could begin to organize things on the site that would bring the spaces between buildings to the foreground.

So this [11] was then a sketch that we did. On the left is the bit that we built originally and then in the middle of the drawing is the extension to that, which is then beginning to intensify the idea of the building in the building as being a little city. The structures in the garden, which you see on the right, which are in the churchyard then become read as three pavilions which sit around a cloister garden.

So this [12] is a 1:20 model that we made, which was enormous. This model started off as a way of looking at the tectonic relationship between solid and void, and roof, light and window and how the building would address the street and how the street would then be talking to the cloister garden in the middle. Then the model was remade as a way of investigating how we could clad the building and then it was remade as a way of further refining as a formal relationship that would begin to set up this relationship between the found and the new. So this [13] is a photograph of the building, here you see one of the listed tombs, it contains the remains of a very famous 17th century very English explorer.

So a lot of what this project is trying to do, is to make a very specific relationship between the complexity of the existing site as a way of foregrounding these found objects and making a kind of clear but deeply layered relationship between the city and these objects, amusing the garden as one of the sort of principal tools of doing that. One of the things that this building was also having to do, from a conservation or heritage point of view, it had to be quite quiet, because the site was incredibly sensitive, but one of the things that the museum wanted to do was, being hidden inside a church, being present on the street. They wanted to have a way of talking to the city. So a lot of what the pavilions were trying to do was to give them that, and to give them this present on the street and if you like to give them a public face.

The idea for the cladding was derived from the plane trees, which surround the site. As you know, plane trees have extraordinary bark that flakes off in great big plates of different coloured material. So at an early stage, we began making different samples [14] of how we could use a very thin sheet metal as a way of making a direct relationship with the plane tree bark to clad the building. So in drawings that we made for the builders we would look at minimizing the number of different sorts of tiles we needed to use. The copper or bronze tiles are then deployed to wrap the pavilions, so when you are inside the pavilion there is a relationship between the inside and the outside. When you are in the cloister you feel as if you are in the garden. Where the building meets the existing building, we used that opportunity to drop natural light in. So there's this clear relationship between the old and new, which is mediated through natural light.

And then back inside the church [15] you can see how we extended the cross laminated timber structure around inside the building, as a way of making it feel like a city square. One of the ideas for the building always was that the nave of the church would be understood as a market square. So if you think back of the Bruegel painting I showed you earlier, then you begin to see where that idea is coming from and that the components of the existing building are then used to frame and to compose these elements that we have organized within that space as this little virtual city.
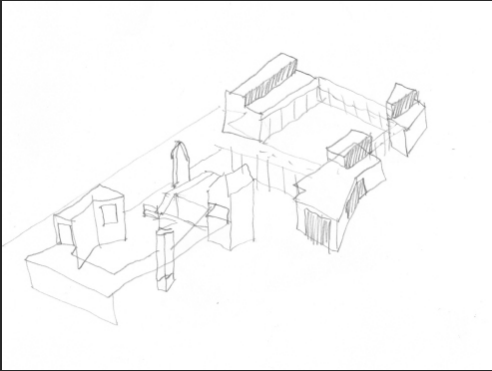
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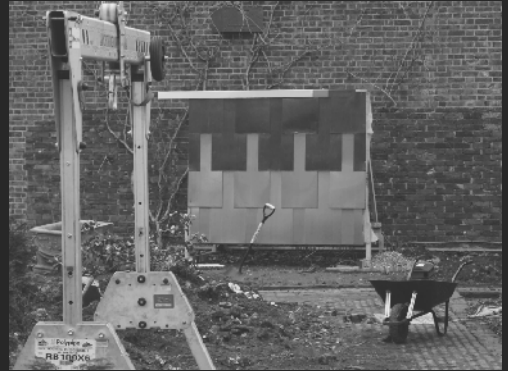
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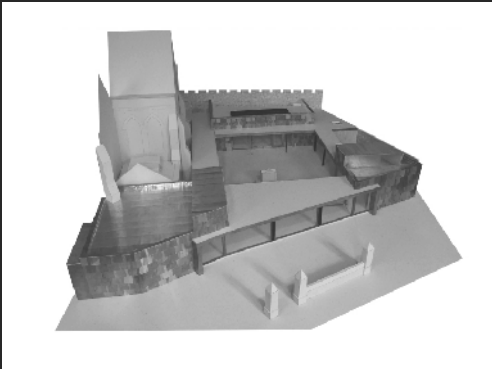
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Maggie's Centre

The next building I want to talk about is the Maggie's Centre that we've just finished in Cardiff. Maggie is a cancer charity in Britain, and they make small buildings that provide people with cancer and their friends and family with psychological support. So it's not a clinical building, it's a support building. The brief from Maggie centre is that it should be like a house, and it should have a very domestic homely feeling, because the heart of any Maggie centre is the kitchen table. This is where a lot of the conversation, and a lot of the therapy takes place. So our Maggie Centre is in Cardiff, which is in south Wales. One of the things that we were trying to do with this project is to make a very concrete relationship between our building and an idea of the local landscape. This site was quite unusual for us, because it was quite unlike any site we've worked with before. It was incredibly bleak, it was effectively a car park, with very little immediate context to get traction on. But the one thing about the site, the one redeeming feature is on one side, where there was a stand of trees, not very nice trees, but trees nonetheless. So the idea for the project was to try to find things, or a way in which we could make a building that would respond to the local topography, and to a local way of thinking about building.

[16] So on the left you see the hills just north of Cardiff and in the middle that's called Pen y Fan, a large hill that everybody in Wales knows. On the right is a picture of a local farm, one of the things that fascinated us about this, is that in the hills of south wales corrugated metal has become a sort of indigenous vernacular material. They use corrugated metal to fix the roof, to make the barn, to make fences, they use it to make closures to keep sheep in. So when you walk around the hills of south Wales, you very often come across these very homemade structures, but made of corrugated steel.

The other thing that south Wales is famous for is industry, and historically there has been a lot of coal mining and steel works, and many sorts of heavy industry [17]. One of the things that we were interested in is how these industrial buildings have their own momentum. They have quite a particular way in making form, but they also have a rather ad hoc or agglomerative quality.

Back to the hills [18]. One of the other things that the hills of south Wales are noted for, is that they're covered in bracken or ferns, and in the winter the ferns die and they go orange and so a lot of the hills have this very particular form and they're mostly orange. When we started working on the design of the project, we were contacted by a Welsh artist, Osi Rhys Osmond, who makes psycho geographical paintings. He had cancer and he was being treated and using the Maggie Centre in Swansey. When he discovered that we were making a Maggie Centre in Cardiff, we began a dialogue with him about making a piece of work for our building, engaged in this creative dialogue with him about his art and our architecture. This [19] is the piece that he started making for our centre, but unfortunately he died before he completed it. But this piece of art is a sort of significant moment within how we organized the building.

One of the other ideas that's in this building, derived from a fireplace in the medieval farmhouse. In Welsh there is this word cwtch, and a cwtch is like a cuddle, but it's also a sort of small space where you retreat to. So when you are a kid, and your mom tells you off, you will go and hide in the cwtch. So what we were thinking, was that our building needed to have a Cwtch, because we felt that it kind of summarizes what Maggie's as an organization did.

So this [20] was one of the early drawings of our building, where you would enter the building in the top via a garden, where the middle of the building would be organized by these three or four objects of wood and those would then make spaces between themselves, make rooms between themselves, but would then focus your attention on nature through the trees to the north. This sketch [21] then took that idea further. The idea was that we would make our little building, and it would look like a little mountain range. We would cover the building, the walls, the roof everything in rusty corrugated steel, so it would have the formal qualities of the mountain range, it would have the tonal and colour qualities of the mountain range, and it would be structured between the courtyard in the foreground and the trees behind it.
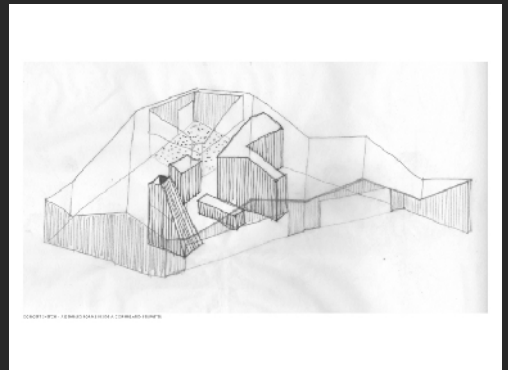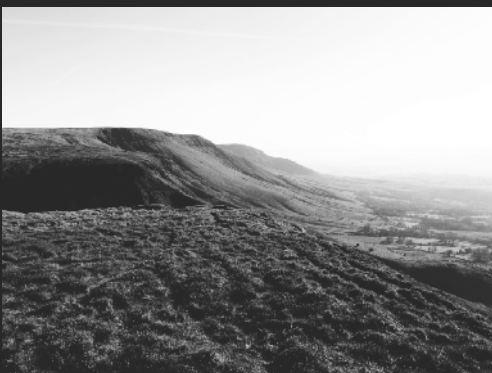
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The roof of the building would be perpendicular to the hypotenuse of the triangular site, so when you cut the building, the perimeter you would have this sort of rather exaggerated jagged mountain range.

This plan [22] is showing how you enter. You are then met by these objects of wood, the principal axis through the building is organized by Osi's painting, and then as you move into the building you're presented with a view of the trees. The focus of the building is to nature. So having been at this sort of horrible bleak car park, you go into a space which is intensely about nature, and then you go into the building and you see the garden.

One of the other things that we were doing with this project is working very closely with a number of artists. An artist called Linde Florence, made the tiles for the hearth of the building, and which then became a design for the window manifestations. Then an American ceramicist who made a range of crockery for the building this is all based on brutalist architecture and so the repetition and stacking [23]. And also Osi as I have discussed.

[24] So this is the building. The bollads were made by Antony Gormley and it's a threshold between the world of the car and then our rusty little mountain range. It is showing this sort of correspondence between the idea of the building and how it's sort of relating back to the topography, but it's also relating to this industrial landscape that south Wales is. Having entered the building, you then get this view through the building and you see the side of the Cwtch. [25] The art is then structuring how you move into the building. [26] And this is the Cwtch.

Another part of the art collaboration was the fabrics within the building. There's a special way of weaving wool and fabric in Wales, where it is double woven you get one pattern on the back you get the reverse bit on the other side. So we used that throughout the building, and you also saw that in Florence's design for the Hearth.

The building is organized around an idea of intense domesticity, and trying to establish the situation whereby people can have incredible serious conversations about their illnesses. Also, like at the garden museum, what's in play at this building, is that it's deeply layered and so rooms share light from other rooms and they share views through other spaces.

A London Church

The last building I am going to talk about is a project that is nearly completed. This is a project again making a contemporary extension to a protected church. It is situated in London and it is next to the canal, very near to Paddington station in the north west corner of London. [27] This was what it looked like in the 1950s and it was a very typical bit of urban London. After the second world war they decided to demolish all of the houses and so the church now is effectively trapped on an island, caused by modernism. One of the side effects of that, is that nobody goes to this church anymore. The congregation of this church is about 25 people and their average age is about 70. So ten years ago the church got together with a local development trust, and they set about a project whereby they could convert part of the use of the church over to the public, so it will still operate as a church but the undercroft or the crypt of the building will become available as a public venue. In order to do that, they wanted to make a little building that would connect the street to the undercroft of the church. So this was another design competition that we won. The site for the building is very small. What the building needs to do is to effectively make a load of connections between different bits of topography and different bits of strata of society and culture.

So the nave of the church is above street level, and the playground next to the church on the left is a school. The school uses the church. Behind the church is the canal and there is a park at the canal side. So what this building is doing, is connecting the street to the park, and the street to the church, and the school to the church. What's interesting about the church is that the inside of it is incredibly ornate for an English Victorian Gothic church. The interior is quite interesting. There is a lot of marble, there is a lot of gilded sculpture and there is a lot of cast and modelled clay and the ceiling of the building was incredibly ornately painted.
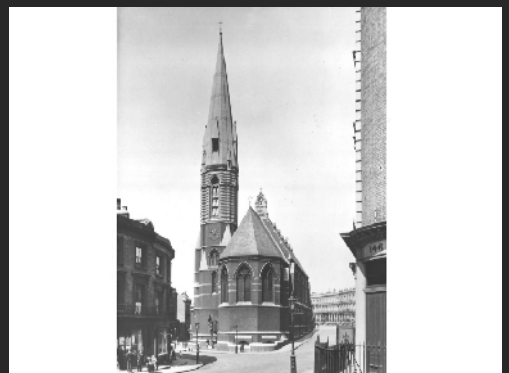
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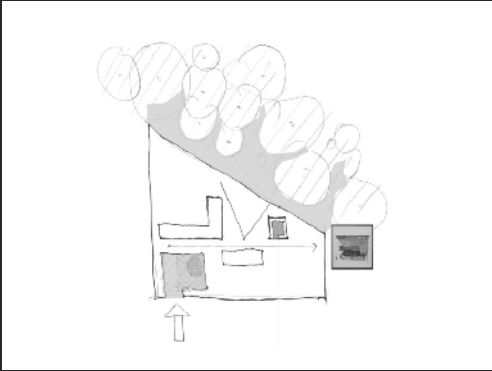
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So our idea for this building was the way this church is organized [28]. You can see that from the roof up, the tower is incredibly ornately decorated, from the roof down it's incredibly plain. So when you see this building from afar, it's very ornate, but as you get closer to that, you lose it. What we were interested in is as an idea, is if we could take the intensity of the decorative scheme of the interior and bring that to the exterior as a way of organizing this new building, that the building itself would effectively be about reconciling these directive bits of topography. What our building contains is a cafe, education rooms, a bar and a way of opening up the church which currently is underused to this new public and a wider and more diverse community. The other thing that needs to be said, is that the piece of land where this church is, is now predominantly Muslim. So one of the things that the building was trying to do was to make a contemporary addition that was explicitly not dealing with Christian Iconography, as a way of making it more accessible and more open and more generous to a wider community.

So having established these parameters; what we were trying to do, what we were connecting to what, and what we brought in to play in terms of an attitude towards making it. We then began to look at how we could use form as a way of organizing and structuring how the building would operate. One of the things that we did was carry out a proportional study of the existing building, which we then used as a means to designing our building. It was also a way of getting planning permission. Getting planning permission in Britain working with a listed church like this is incredibly complicated. Their default position is that you should just do something which is a pastiche of the existing building.

So trying not to do that, you need to have a concrete justification for it, and so we used the proportional system of the existing church as a way of organizing our building. [29] The idea for the facade was that we would make it out of faience, which is glazed terracotta, and that we would mould the faience in a way that would generate a pattern that would reflect the light, that would then begin to talk about the relationship between the Victorian interior and our new piece.

We made a drawing of the tiled floor of the existing church. We then used that tile design of the existing building as a way of organizing and structuring this three dimensional Frieze that would run around our building. So what we were trying to do was to take the decorative idea of the existing building, and to transform it into a contemporary way that we could reuse it. So the terracotta we used has got a very highly metallic lustrous faience and so the colour of it is a sort of golden bronze colour. Depending on how you look at it, it reflects the light and it looks purple or brown.

[30] This shows how the morphology of the building and this twisted corner tower is responding to our very little tower. Our little tower is then in conversation with the spire of the building, which is this principle decorative element on the existing building.

[31] Then down in the undercroft of the church, there is this extraordinary north wall, which is effectively a retaining wall, which is holding up the whole of the canal. So it has got this incredibly specific morphology. [32] The other thing that is fascinating about the undercroft is that it was built in 1875 and all of that vaulting is very early concrete. So this is the undercroft space, which is now used as a community space and an event space. [33] Inside the church we carried out the restoration of the church, the largest component of which was cleaning the ceiling.

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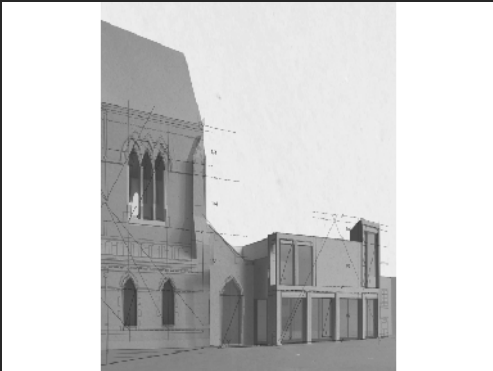
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So to wrap up, one of the main things that we are trying to address in our work is making very specific connections between things and mostly things concerning themselves with the site. What we are very interested in is an idea of context. The word context comes from weaving. So we've always thought about our architecture as trying to extract very particular elements from what we found on the site, and then weaving an architecture back into the city.

This [34] is La Tourette by Le Corbusier. There is an amazing line by Le Corbusier, which I think is sort of something that sustains me when I'm sitting there with my pencil wood. He said that the purpose of architecture is to move you.

Thank you

[34]

kees kaan

KAAN Architecten

From 1988 until 2013, Kees Kaan was the founding partner of Claus en Kaan Architecten. Kaan graduated at the Faculty of Architecture TU Delft in 1987. Since 2006 he has been professor of Architectural Design at TU Delft and initiator of the Complex Projects Chair, launched in 2012. The Chair's research focuses on large-scale projects that characterize this era of rapid global urbanization. In 2019 Kaan was appointed Chairman of the Architecture Department. Moreover, he has been Principal Investigator at Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Metropolitan Solutions (AMS) since 2016. Kees Kaan is a lecturer and member of various juries and boards, both in the Netherlands and abroad. Numerous books and exhibitions have been dedicated to his body of work.

From Master Builder to Master Narrator

Thank you for inviting me over and allowing me to talk about your topic: 'Beyond the Echo Chamber'. At least that is what I will try to do. I received the invitation and read the summary and the themes that you will be studying this week. I was wondering what kind of design topics you would take out of that. But I understood that you are doing a kind of installation in Rotterdam and that all the installations together will form an exhibition of the topic of 'Beyond the Echo Chamber'. I have never heard of the phenomenon the 'echo chamber', though I felt that the phenomenon must have existed. Yesterday, I read on www.nu.nl about research that was done on the news and on social media, which also revolved around this topic. Because the echo chamber is something that we create ourselves, based on the connections we make, mostly through the internet. Maybe you don't agree, but this is how I understand it. And it could amplify our beliefs but it could also function as a confirmation bias. In other words, the filter bubbles we create, define the kind of news we get.

[1] A couple of years ago this article appeared in The Economist. It was called 'Staging serendipity', and it already pointed out this aspect of 'surfing the internet'. The writer Ian Leslie described the 19th century way of people who ´flaneur´ - walk and wander through the city, as if they browse the city to get inspiration, and how there are high expectations that the internet would give us the same effect. Namely, that we would find unexpected things. But because of how search engines are perfected, it does not work like that. It gives us exactly the things we are looking for, and not the unexpected information. So, no serendipity and none of the things we were not looking for. He describes examples of different scientists like Marie Curie and Louis Pasteur that made their discoveries through serendipity. But also, of the person who invented the microwave, who was visiting Radion, a radar factory. This guy was standing in front of a radar with a bar of chocolate in his pocket and felt something warm in his pocket when the radar was on. The chocolate was melting and he linked that to the magnetic field that was caused by the radar. And that is how he got the idea to develop the microwave. That is Leslie's explanation of serendipity, and his criticism of the web.

That it might take away these serendipitous occasions, because it is too precise and points out exactly what we want, when we are searching for something.

[2] I started looking back a little when I got your request to think about the echo chamber. I understood it was not just about the internet, not just about social media, and not just about the computer. I was trying to see how I was personally related to it. The web was invented between the 1980s and the 1990s. In the Netherlands actually, the first connection at the science centre for mathematics in Amsterdam happened in 1988. So, we had one connection to the internet in 1988. Between 1990 and 2000, it expanded and by 1993, the first citizens could go online. That is not so long ago. In 2000, when more people were using it. If we wanted to use the internet, we had to use a telephone to dial in to the internet. You would hear some bleeps, and then you'd get a very slow connection. It wasn't really a useful tool for work, and it just wasn't that active yet. [3] Then between 2000 and 2008 it started booming. It started growing, and became better and better. In 2008, the App Store opened. That was just over 10 years ago! That's shorter than most of our projects take to get designed and built. In 2010 we got fibre optics, and the average speed in 2017 was 15Mb/s. This is the average, since the top speed can go up to 60Mb/s if you had a very good connection. Apple launched the iPhone in 2007, when the network was still 2G. Then the Apple store opened in 2008. It had 500 Apps, while now there are over 2.000.000. Another very important factor is Google, of course, because we browse a lot on the web. It was founded in 1998 and Gmail started in 2004. Googling became a verb in the Merriam-Webster dictionary in 2006. In the same recent past, we started flying more, because companies were enabling us to move around the world in a much cheaper way. Of course, now we also know the negative consequences of this. An example is EasyJet, founded in '95, which grew into moving 90 million people around the world in less than 20 years. Our mobility, our ability to visit places, is also contributing to our echo chamber.

[2]

[1]

[3]

[4] Now about me. I studied between 1980 and 1987. As I just showed you, there was practically no internet available for us at that time. Then in '87 we founded Claus en Kaan and we worked on our first projects. In 2001 we published our first monograph, and in it I wrote a short text called 'Being there'. All of this happened before we had any access to the internet or any possibility to fly with cheap tickets etc. So how did we get our information? How did we construct our echo chamber? How did we get familiar with architecture and with ideas of other architects and with what they were doing? There was television, but there was no architectural television. Maybe a little bit of culture and art, but very little as well. Maybe like 20 minutes per week on the 2 or 3 channels that were available. There were newspapers that, now and then, wrote a critical article on architecture and projects mostly. And there were, of course, magazines. The magazines were quite okay. You could go to the library to read them, but most of them were full of writings and essays, with only a few images. So we had to resort to books, because books on architecture were available. Because of this, I started collecting architecture books. My echo chamber, thus, are basically my books. At home, and at the office. It is where the feedback comes from. And also from the people that I work with.

When the first monograph was published, in 2001, our position expressed in it was completely based on information and echoes coming largely from books, and from our experiences of walking through the city, mainly Amsterdam at that moment. Every time we discussed a topic and we did not agree, we would go out and walk through the city. It would always make us see something that gave us an idea on how to explain and understand the differences between our opinions. It helped us overcome these differences. We were also inspired by the story 'Being There' of Jerzy Kosiński, for our intro to this monograph. It is very funny. It revolves around a guy who is a gardener in a Villa and his echo chamber is the garden. He is described as a person who has never in his entire life left that garden. He was never in contact with the outside world, not for a minute. Then one day his boss got into an accident, and the outside world got into his small world and everything changed. Everything he knew was based on what he had learned in that garden. The seasons, the plants, all his knowledge was based on that. When the outside world entered his world, people started asking him questions, because he was a very peculiar person, as you can imagine. He gave wise answers which were all 100% true because they were all based on his knowledge of the garden. Anyway, in the book he becomes the personal advisor of the president of the United States, because of his enormous wisdom. He reached this position with only the garden as his echo chamber.

[5] In 2001, based on what we had learned from doing our first projects, we were discussing what kind of architects we wanted to be. How do we want to continue with this profession, and what is it that we are looking for? We compared ourselves with this gardener, our 'being there'. We had our garden, which was our world with our architecture books, our ideas about it and we had our work to which we were completely dedicated. We said: "The only thing we'll do now, is focus on making buildings; making our projects. Let's not focus on anything else. [6] Let's not try to have any externality to develop any position in that sense. Let's try to make only buildings, to do that as good as possible, with everything we know, and maybe out of that some architecture may emerge." So that is what we did.

In 2008 I ended up back here in Delft, doing my inaugural lecture. This introduction lecture basically expanded on that topic. It continued this idea of 'being there', but it was enriched with a notion that the quest of what architecture is seems to be a journey. Something that is not limited to your books, but that is open and that is enriched every day. Every day that you work. The focus was still on doing the projects and to build, so trying to find architecture in building. The medium was architecture itself. Since then, and even today, and in all the conversations I have with you as students, this comes up very often. Because there is not one way to be an architect. [7] There are thousands of different ways to be an architect. So you have to find your own destiny, I would say. You must find your own way of doing it. Perhaps that sounds a bit easy and like I'm avoiding the question, but I would like to explain it better by following your topics and how I position myself in relation to them.

Kees Kaan
1980-1987 study
1987-1997 claus en kaan
2001 Building monography
2001 Being there

[4]

We accept our condition, our being there.

[5]

One can only build.
Then maybe architecture can emerge.

[6]

How do I see myself as an architect now.
Architecture is a journey.

[7]

[8] I don't know if they all deliberately start with an 'S', but I liked it very much. Scope, Subject, Source, Statement. You asked me to refer to scope, and whether I operate on a global or a local one. Since I thought that question was a bit to limiting, I will simply discuss all four of them. The topic of global and local is a very interesting one. Our first international project was the Embassy in Maputo for the Dutch state. Is this a global or a local project? You couldn't have a more Dutch client, since the Dutch foreign affairs are very 'Dutch' and they want to keep that 'Dutchness' abroad. We were confronted with the context, which was Africa. What we tried to do there was merge. It was an opportunity, because we were able to use local crafts, materials and possibilities that were totally inaccessible in The Netherlands. But we had to do the project with a certain Dutch precision. It had to be explained to and approved by everybody. So, it was a very interesting fusion of local and global. When we wrote our report on it, we made a little book on the project where we characterized it as a journey. [9] As a journey to find the essence of building. It was exactly the mixture of working with African labour and craft, but with the required precision and laws of The Netherlands (because the embassy had to comply to the Dutch building code in Africa). That made it seem as an adventurous journey. And not the journey up and down, which I did 25 times from Johannesburg to Maputo, to visit the site. It was the journey of the project itself, which then I translated into the journey of the profession.

In the same period that we were doing this project, the office developed. People started doing Erasmus exchanges, using EasyJet and other cheap airlines. People within Europe started working abroad. So, all of a sudden, we had French people in the office, and this was in the beginning of 2000. French, Italian, German; all different nationalities. At the moment, this is our mix of nationalities and gender. [10] As you can see it is quite international, about 20 different languages. Sometimes, people in the office come to me and say: 'We have a very nice competition in our country, can we do it?' Then we send over a portfolio and we can enter. And this is basically how it happened in the past. Then I had some French people in the office who said, 'Okay, let's try a competition in France.' Belgium was different, because we kind of saw it as our own backyard, but our Brazilian office is only there because there was a Brazilian woman

working in our office and she wanted to go back. I said: 'Okay, let's try to get a project there. Maybe it is interesting, maybe it can work.' There is no big strategy or scenario behind it. It all happened by total coincidence, but based on intuition and on finding interesting projects for us to do. Not only for me, but for everybody in the office, since we work in teams. As a process this started to emerge. We started doing more things internationally, not many and not that far away, with no presupposed strategy. I guess the one-liner of this week in The Economist, applies very well to our condition in that sense. [11]
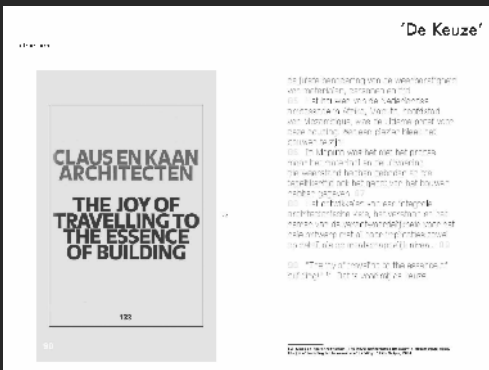
[12] And the next one, on Subject. With whom and for whom. That's what you are asking yourself. With whom is not so difficult, because you always work with a client. I saw in Alun's project there was a community with a lot of different stakeholders that had to be convinced, like beauty committees. When we do a project, it is contextualised so much, not only in terms of the physical context, but also the whole political, social, and economic context. Because we always work with people when we do projects. Projects that are supposed to be built, of course. And also, for the users, because these same people, these same communities, will use the buildings that we work on. So that question is quite obvious, unless you only do theoretical projects, which is also a way of doing architecture. Though the fact that we always have to explain our work, that we always have to work together with clients and other stakeholders, has taught us that architecture is more about strategy and communication. It is very much about explaining our work to people over, and over, and over again. It is very much about having a strategy to get what you want, on one hand, while doing all these explanations on the other. And it is very much about using whatever you can, whatever skills you have to explain. Whether it is sketches, whether it is references to art or history, diagrams, or texts. We do everything we can get our hands on as architects, to explain our work, to get it step by step closer to a sort of physical reality. This way of explaining our projects has become something that is more elaborate. As the projects become larger, more people get involved, these are stakeholders with a certain interest in the project. And we go to the table to discuss it. Once, a client's project manager on the first big project I did, explained to
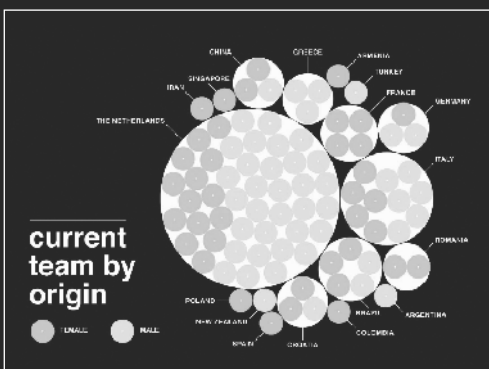
Scope
Subject
Source
Statement

[8]

"I rarely end up where I
was intending to go, but
often I end up somewhere
I needed to be."

Douglas Adams

[11]

'De Keuze'

CLAUS EN KAAN
ARCHITECTEN

THE JOY OF
TRAVELLING TO
THE ESSENCE
OF BUILDING

[9]

Subject

with whom
for whom

[12]

current
team by
origin

[10]

me the 'dog story'. He said: "After a meeting we all go home, and everybody has agreed that we are going to make a dog. But everyone went home with a different dog in their mind. We must make sure that this happens as little as possible, because it causes a lot of confusion in a project. It is your task to make sure that everybody goes home with the same dog in mind." Is this a matter of negotiation, or a matter of communication? Is the architect in the centre or does he have to organise the dialogue between all these different stakeholders? This is super important. [13] Actually from this moment on, I started understanding that we are not designing the projects, but we are designing the communication around the projects. And through this communication, and through these conversations, the projects develop. It is the design that grows out of our dialogues. Of course, with a little bit of steering, and with defining the ambition. In the end of that process, we have designed them. But what we are basically doing is constantly balancing between communicating design and designing the project itself. That's why, in this moment in our office, on the largest projects, we've stopped designing. We only make presentations; we don't design anymore. For Schiphol we have four presentations a week with I don't know how many people, we have no time to design, we only make presentations. And through the presentations the project evolves. Of course, we have to define a lot of things, we have to find the idea, we have to find detailed solutions with impressions, we have to look for references. And all of those elements evolve around the idea which we want to achieve.

[14] The next one, the source. Literally, what to keep and what to make. What if you design for the future, what do we want to keep and what do we have to make new? How do we understand change and how do we understand current change? As seen in the introduction; the last 10 years, changes have probably been larger than ever before in history. Of course, as architects we are interested in change. This is driving our profession. Change is the driving force behind innovation. But I think that it is very difficult to look into the future. I could not have imagined 15 years ago, the future we are in today. But what we can do, is to try understanding the past and the present, and to try understanding it so well, that we know what is worth keeping. When you have a good understanding of this, it is much easier to work towards the future. So it's an open door to show this. [15] This works,

it's already there for 300 years, and there are now maybe too many tourists, but it is still working, still functioning. So why not try understanding why it works, why it functions so well. By doing that, we can design the future, as opposed to not understanding, and trying to guess the future. To follow this strategy we also need to understand time. We need to understand time better than we do. I have a big frustration with this, because I don't understand time. I tried by making a diagram. [16] I found this diagram about animals, the relative speed and size of animals compared. An elephant is quite fast for its size. And a snail is very tiny but is also very slow. You would imagine smaller lighter animals would be very fast. With projects, it's the same. Some are quicker, while some are very slow and take longer.

For instance, this next project. It is a museum in Antwerp. It is in our office almost as long as an urban plan for the entire south side of Rotterdam. It is taking more than 20 years. We also try to identify the different faces in it to understand it better. Because for me it's really difficult to imagine the future and to talk about this. We just said that the Apple store exists only for 10 years. While we've been working for 20 years on a building. [17] When I started doing that project my phone looked like this, and that is already an old fashioned one. It is really important to have an awareness of time. [18] This is the project I'm referring to, the one in Antwerp. In 2003, we proposed a concept in a competition to make a museum inside a museum, but with two buildings that don't know each other. They are completely disconnected, but they are complementary, you could say. It is finally under construction; in two years it will be finished. But at that moment, we had to understand very well what to keep and what to change. That was the base of the winning entry; deciding what to keep and what to change, and we were aware that it would take a long time. But I was never aware that it would take so extremely long, and it is still not finished.
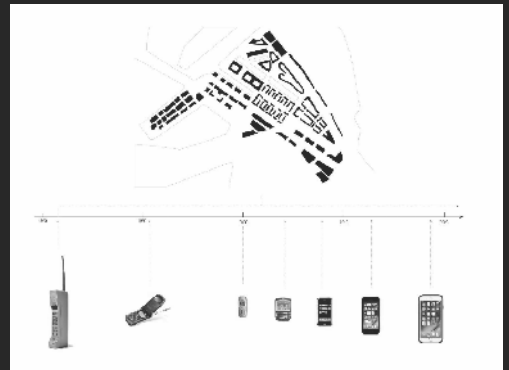
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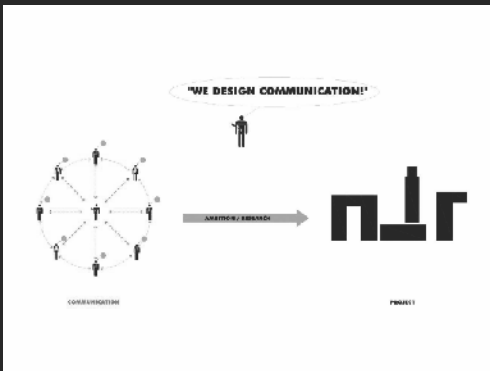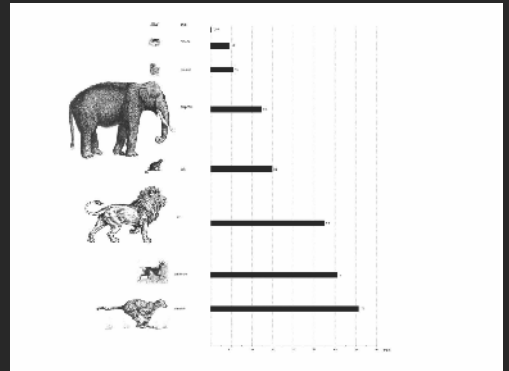
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The last one. Statement, exuberant or modest. I don't know [19]. I don't know if this [20] is exuberant or modest? One could argue it is modest, because the materials are very serene, quiet and inexpensive, but the space is very generous and so it's not particularly modest in that sense, and it's just a corridor. It's also exuberant in terms of space. What I do know, is that our work is about the everyday.

[21] Each day, we work on the everyday. On the things that are normal, on buildings that facilitate the everyday. Normal buildings, they don't have to be crazy or special. They can even look normal and still be very special, especially for the community that wants to erect them and is going to use them. But not only for that, of course we are forced to make them outstanding, it is unavoidable. We need to, my wife is stressing me. She says: "You have to make your projects 'instagrammable' otherwise you won't get new work". You need to get pictures you know. So yes, we need that, but it is a trap. I promise you; it is a trap. So, keep it in the back of your mind, make it 'instagrammable' but don't make that the main objective. Another very important issue in the project, is our private interest that has to be mediated with, let's say, common values. When Rotterdam wanted to build a 200-meter tower, I was lucky to be the architect that was asked to do, what they called, the low rise. Two towers of 70 meters next to it. And in the low-rise project many problems that the bigger tower brings along had to be solved. Meaning that all the parking spaces, storage, and the technical stuff is solved in the lower project, that tries to take everything and work its way very carefully around it. So, towards the public space, towards the street and the park, there are big windows where the people live; there are no blind facades. It's a nice and friendly project for the neighbourhood. It's carefully made with attention to detail, so it serves as a plinth to support the big tower. I don't mind working on projects like that. Actually, for me it's the purpose of our profession. The purpose is to find this balance between the public and the private interest. The private refers to the future users of the project. But our job is always to balance interest of the new users with the existing context. From detail to city, and backwards. I always feel a sort of comfort when something is done properly and beautifully. Because it makes you feel like: "Okay not everything in the world is terrible, you know. Now and then, there is also

something nice to enjoy." [22] So in that sense beauty is a function in architecture. Beauty is not to be taken for granted. It is something we must try to achieve, but it cannot be the only thing. It is something we are simply responsible to offer and to make, and it can be achieved with precision and care. I am now showing marble and beautiful stone, but Alun showed the same sort of care and precision with wood and other materials. In that sense this is what the joy of the work is, that we can do these kinds of things. That we can unpack a pile of stone, give them all a number, and organise them in such a way that together they form something as a whole too.

Then the last point of this topic is finding the proper physiognomy, which for me means that trying to find the right expression of the character that the project should have. It's not about the fancy idea or the nicest beautiful expression, but the right one. Depending on the character you want to achieve with the project. So that is about every day, the everyday. What about today, and about looking forward? Then again, we also have to look a little bit backwards. You could say that in the nineteenth century, a lot of change in architecture occurred because of the emergence of the metropolis and with its many inventions, like engines, trains, telephones, elevators... It was all invented in the nineteenth century. And it became attractive to make Eiffel Towers and big projects to show what we could make. The twentieth century was all about developing this further, but also about the arrival of the car, upcoming middle class, urbanisation, prefabrication and building with concrete. But it was still very much about making stuff. You could say that currently our projects, our buildings, are becoming more and more like products. There are so many techniques entering the building process at the moment. More than 50 percent of the project is about installations. [23] So the design of the building is becoming more like a product design. This also means that what we ask of a building is not so much the relation of form and function. It's much more about how it performs its functionalities, how it works. We are not that interested, or impressed anymore by amazing forms and structures, but much more impressed when something works really well. I think this is marking a shift in the intentions that we as architects should have. How it works. I don't just mean how it works internally, for the people who are in the building; the climate, the comfort and all that

Statement

exuberant or modest?

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Beauty is a function.

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**Building
Form
Function
Functionalities
How it works.**

[23]

**Every
day
the
everyday.**

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stuff. But also, how it works in the city, in the context and in relation to the total. I will browse quickly through some projects, that were all based on this notion, on the shifting emphasis on how the project really works. How it works in its context, what it does, what it gives back to its context, how its organisation works , and how can these two conditions be connected and how can synergy be found in it. [24] I like this project very much in the context of how it works, and what it does. It is Chambre de Métiers in Lille, and this Chambre de Métiers used to be in the centre of the city. It became very important for the entire region, so the site for the new building was chosen in the suburbs, near the motorway. This choice of site became our inspiration for the design in terms of using the stratification, the viaduct and the scale of this peripheral zone, to develop the building and the program, and to solve apparent contradictions of users' interests in the building. It is a school for teenagers who want to learn how to cook, it is a hotel school, but it is also a building where people who start a business, come for advice. So, it is a very weird mixture of programs, but that is a usual occurrence in France. It is a building that has an important function or program for the city of Lille, but also for the entire region around it. That generated the fundamental idea of doing this big square building, with such a particular section. One floor extends to the neighbourhood and the local square, while the other connects to the motorway on a higher level. Then there's a cut, with one slab on top of it, where all the offices are situated.

Another project I want to show you is the Schiphol terminal. This project shifts the notion of how the project works within the site and with the program. I think putting a lot of attention on that, made us win this competition. Basically, we presented it like this. [25] We talked about squares, public space, how does the public space of the airport connect to the project. We talked about the address of the terminal and how it is linked to the entire system. We talked about stratification, all the heights of the different floors that are already there and how they could be embedded. We talked about flows of passengers through it and then the demarcation based on an existing building that we had to build over. So that gave us already a sort of line between landside and airside. Which is a very important mark when you're doing an airport building. Because the landside and

the airside are two different worlds, you have to keep them strictly apart. And then 'one space', which facilitates the whole process of moving from landside to airside, under a big roof carried only by the facade and the cores. We also had a strategy for growth, and we explained this machine, this integration of all technology, situated in the roof. It was designed like a product [26]. We did the competition, and we won. We are working on it now. It has become clear to me, when you're working on a project like this, 150 people in a joint venture with two engineering companies and other architects, you not only have to explain the project to 7 stakeholder groups, a board, a supervisory board, a design team, but also internally. More so than ever, the whole process is not about the design itself, but about explaining. Constantly explaining the design over, and over, and over again. All with the objective to use the everyone's combined knowledge to find the solutions. Now I come to the point where I think what has changed in the last ten years, is the fact that we currently have access to means and tools that we didn't have before. Because before that, the project manager had a spreadsheet and was always faster than the architects with their drawings and their stuff and their slides. But now we, the designers, have the BIM model, we know how to do infographics, we know how to make very good presentations very quickly. We are totally back in control, because engineers don't know how to do that. They also don't know how to explain their ideas as well as we do. They know how to calculate and say there is only one solution. We as architects are used to getting kicked around. We are used to getting criticised. We are used to everyone saying: "Oh, yeah, you're just the architect''. So, we are used to explaining possibilities. I think that this is what new technologies offer us. They reinstate us as architects, as the leaders of the entire design effort of projects.
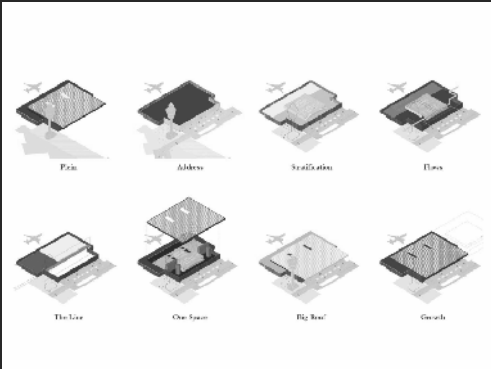
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The building as a product.

Concurrent design.

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I will show you an example, not of a great roof design, but simply of how a presentation of roof design looks like and how this dialogue is facilitated. Not only for engineers, but also for stakeholders and other people that have no time for in depth study. They have to look at it very quickly, understand it, and be able to take part in the discussion and the decision making. This [27, 28] is about integration of technique and structure, and finally about the way the roof will look like. But it could also be about other topics. What you see in the end is all the drawings simplified back into infographics and that's how we manage the whole project. This looks a bit like it's not architecture, but this is architecture, because this gave us back the control of design. Since we have the BIM model, it allows us to immediately extract the renders from the model, if it is set up in a proper way. Even animated renders. We can control this process, inform engineers, the client, everybody, and that allows us to, hopefully, get what we want. Because all the explanations so far were super clear and understandable, I think we will get what we want here, and it will be done. Peeling down the process of what happened over the recent years of fast development with digital technology, you could say we designers went from master builders to master explainers. And so the architect is back [29, 30].
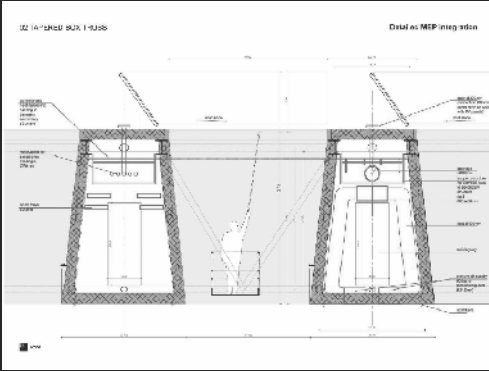
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The architect
is back.

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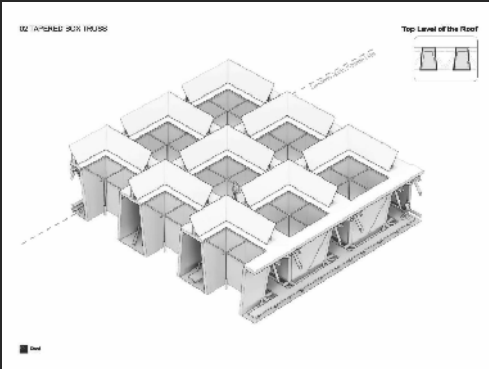
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From
master builder
to
master explainer.

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Society also desires novelty and experiences nowadays. The current (social) media landscape calls for stars, strong personalities with a clear point of view. This has led to, among other things, the emergence of iconic buildings. Some might say these are empty shells, independent of their context, leading to a paradox: interchangeable cities are distinguished by interchangeable icons. Nevertheless, they are definitely a product of our current society and therefore just as much a part of our culture. A response is visible, though: the search for local authenticity, participation and historical continuity. This involves a reinvigorated interest in bottom-up approaches and co-design. Here, the conviction prevails that the architect benefits from input from the outside. It is the focus that differs in these approaches. The question that arises is with and for whom are you designing?

subject

reinier de graaf
OMA

Reinier de Graaf (1964, Schiedam) is a Dutch architect and writer. He is a partner in the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), where he leads projects in Europe, Russia and the Middle East. His recent built work includes the nhow Amsterdam RAI hotel; the Norra Tornen residential towers in Stockholm; the new Timmerhuis, a mixed-use project in Rotterdam; and G-Star Raw's corporate and design headquarters in Amsterdam. Reinier is the co-founder of OMA's think-tank AMO and Sir Arthur Marshall Visiting Professor of Urban Design at the Department of Architecture of the University of Cambridge. He is the author of the book Four Walls and a Roof: The Complex Nature of a Simple Profession.

The Value of Architecture

I have named my talk for this afternoon The Value of Architecture. There are of course two ways you can read that title. You can read it the way probably most architects would read it, namely that architecture is something valuable in cultural terms, something worthwhile. But you can also apply a more cynical reading. What is architecture worth? And more specifically, what is it worth in economic terms? Because in as much if not more than its artistic pretensions, architecture is strongly driven by economic imperatives. And I'm not just talking about cost cuts. I'm also talking about architecture as a way of earning money, which is increasingly prevalent, and increasingly determining architectural form.

Let's look at our profession, the way we work. This is the atelier of Antonio Gaudi in Barcelona in the 19th century [1]. And this the office of BIG in Copenhagen [2]. Once you turn these pictures into black and white like the first. Then the question as to whether our profession has evolved over the years can be answered very briefly, in that it hasn't. Although we perhaps make a different type of architecture, the way of working is roughly the same. And this is interesting, given that in the rest of the world the whole notion of work is transforming radically.

This is the design department of Eni, an Italian multinational oil and gas company, in the 1950s [3]. A condition probably most of us will associate with an early form of bureaucratic slave labour. Nevertheless, from the drawing boards in the back you can see signs of creative labour taking place. Creative labour today, in one of the headquarters of one of the many digital tech companies in New York, looks more like a billiard room. And the creative process of today can be reduced to writing a cliché on a post-it, sticking it on a wall, and waiting for creativity to emerge as the sum total of all clichés combined.

There was a youth magazine from the 1950s called Boys' Own. The purpose of this magazine was to preach the Christian faith, through the promotion of leisure activities. And that kind of evangelical character is also eerily present at Google. The Google headquarters in Dublin is a bit like an interiorised campground. It is a strange echo nonetheless. Then there is the famous Facebook wall, on which every employee is invited to write an idea, which they mainly use to send messages to each other. Of course this equation of work to leisure can only be part of the story. For when we come to where the real work of creative tech companies takes place, we find data centres where hard labour happens largely in the absence of humans [4]. And if you compare a black and white photograph of that interior to the office of Eni, you see that there's an eerie similarity between the two.

This type of labour in a way still exists. And labour in these conditions still goes on. This is a data centre in Jersey City [5]. And this is our office in Rotterdam [6]. Note again the similarity. What work looks like in our office, I guess is not that different neither from Eni nor from BIG. It is essentially an open environment, and a very international environment. To the point that I think we have, out of over 300 staff, 45 nationalities. In our Rotterdam office, the Dutch are a minority. In our Hong Kong office, the Chinese are a minority. In our New York office, the Americans are a minority. And in our Middle Eastern office, simply everybody is a minority. This means that, in our creative process, there isn't a 'Dutch way' of doing things. There isn't a dominant way of doing things at all, because there is no majority. There are in fact only minorities, which means that the creative process is a sort of permanent bashing of heads. An ongoing cultural clash, with a lot of trial and error, interrogation, and at times failure.

There are many disadvantages to this way of working, in that it takes a long time, and that it takes a lot more work than you would otherwise need to get things done. But the main advantage is that once a product sees the light of day it tends to be quite robust, because it is impossible to ask a question outside that hasn't already been asked inside. So this means also that a lot of the work comes with a great amount of discourse, simply as a result of the internal discussion.

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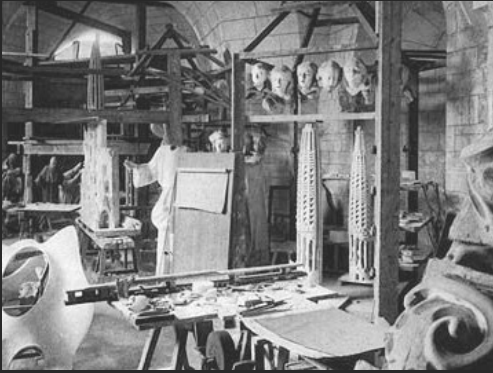
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This is our biggest building to date, the China Central Television Headquarters [7]. It was supposed to be ready in 2008 for the Chinese Olympics, but in the end it wasn't ready till 2012. That's an indication of just how slow the process of architecture can be. And then of course, just as it was almost ready, one of the two buildings went up in flames. So the work of nearly ten years disappeared in the course of a few hours. Which illustrates a paradox in our work. That it is at once incredibly slow, incredibly heavy, and incredibly dense, but can be just as incredibly fleeting.

This is a random list of all the projects that we have done in our office, with the project numbers and the dates [8]. And this is everything, in the red, that didn't happen. By far the majority of projects never get built. I think we have an average of about one in five, which is not bad for an architecture office. Which means here that the red projects are in a way virtual efforts. They are efforts that never materialised. They are efforts that consume a lot of thinking, but then never see the light of day. You can see this to some extent as indicative of our profession, which is for the most part dedicated to failed attempts. Failures from which the lessons are never learned. So you might see the length of this list as a sign of the weakness of architecture. As a sign of the weak position of our profession.

However, while we are in an age in which the architectural manifesto has more or less disappeared, the language of architecture is at the same time more prevalent than ever. If you look at the same tech companies I showed in the beginning, all of them use terms like pantheon, platform, stage, construct, framework, theatre, blueprint. They're all essentially architectural terms. So while we may be in a weak position, our glossary, our vocabulary, is omnipresent, and plays an important role in almost every single modern domain of labour. You could say that there is Architecture and 'architecture' between quotation marks. That there is on the one hand the heavy, physical, slow kind of labour that involves building a building. But there is also another type of architecture which is a form of thinking, a form of design thinking, a form of planning, a form of conceptualising, which you can also call 'architecture.'

This is an image from 1925 of Le Corbusier, who wanted to demolish the centre of Paris to build a better one [9]. A plan we rightly regard in hindsight as criminal, as a sign of utter hubris. But something similar is going on in the domain of technology. This is the city of the future not drawn by an architect, but by a company like Cisco [10]. It's an image of the smart city. It's not just Cisco, it's practically every tech company today that has a department dedicated to the city. And just like architects at the beginning of the last century, these companies write manifestos. And these manifestos make some interesting and rather grandiose claims. Let's look at three of them: Siemens, Cisco and IBM. This is from the Smart and Connected Communities of Cisco: "We live in a time of economic turmoil, climate change, ageing population, and rapid urbanisation. But we have the potential to address these issues that challenge every city." It continues. "Urbanisation, population growth, climate change and dwindling resources. IT and automation will provide the full potential for urban infrastructure." So if you add all of these claims up, it would appear that tech companies profess to have the solution to every single issue that is threatening us to date. To the point that it almost acquires a kind of evangelical dimension. Some of the language in these documents is suspiciously like the language in another document. "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the Earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The Sun shall be turned into darkness, and the Moon into blood, before the coming great and awesome Day of the Lord, and it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the Name of the LORD shall be saved." [Joel 2:30-32]

The sales formula for the tech sector is suspiciously biblical. They predict the apocalypse in order to offer us redemption. Which to some extent represents a totalising solution to all ills. IBM deal with social services, education, public safety, health care, airports, energy, etc; Cisco deal with water, public services, and mobilities; and Siemens in public administration, healthcare again, transport, security, energy, water, and public infrastructure. If you look at all of the things they claim to do and you make a list of it, you essentially have a list of tasks which were once executed by the public sector, by our elected governments. However the tech companies claim to be able to do each of these things better, and to be able to do it more efficiently.
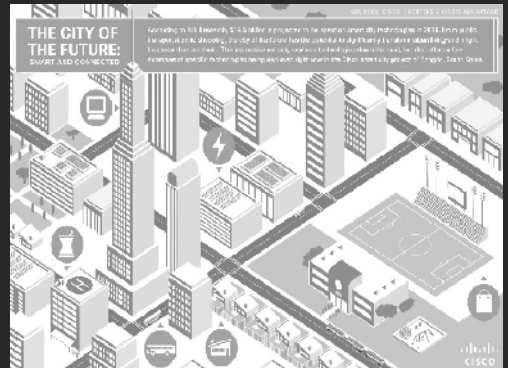
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It renders the whole notion of public services redundant. It's a kind of hidden privatisation program. The real motive behind these things is business and the erosion of the public sector.

In the 1950s for instance, the metropolis, was a western and often a rich phenomenon. Today the largest cities are neither in western nor wealthy countries. They are often of an enormous size, bigger than countries in fact. Which is of course something that has prompted the likes of Benjamin Barber to speculate whether the world would be better governed by the mayors of major cities than by the heads of states. Sao Paulo and Mexico City, two mega cities, both trump countries in terms of their financial size for instance.

If we look at another scale, global corporations, WalMart and Shell for instance trump even the size of cities. The largest economic identities are neither cities nor countries, but global corporations. And we're used to a situation like this: to the left in red are countries, in the middle are cities, and to the right are corporations [11]. Our brain is trained to think that countries are bigger than cities, and that cities are bigger than corporations. But if you eliminate the categories from the list and arrange it based on size, a very interesting form of scale confusion emerges. You can see that Walmart is bigger than Norway, and BP is bigger than Greece. Even the economic size of Cisco is larger than that of Lebanon, and Ford is bigger than Morocco. The relation of the geo-political to the corporate world, is as David to Goliath in type. One could just as easily define the world as an archipelago of corporate interests, than as a form of nation states. The more footloose corporations become, the bigger they become, and the less loyalty they need pay to a particular place. A simple survey of the news shows all of that. "Amazon faces European tax avoidance investigation." "The British won't stop Starbucks from dodging taxes. It won't work." And this one I think is priceless: "Google chairman Eric Schmidt defends tax dodge. He says it's called capitalism."

One could analyse this shift, and the ménage à trois between counties, cities, and corporations. But another triangulation is taking place, between the world, corporations, and nations. Where previously one could assume a certain amount of corporate loyalty to a particular place, or to a particular nation,

what we now have is loyalty to the world as a whole. At this point nations and political systems become consumer items for big businesses looking to buy into 'place'. All of this happens in cities, and has ultimately a very important effect on our own profession of architecture – which after this long introduction I want to get to.

There exists somewhere something like a list of the best countries in which to buy citizenship. In 2014 the global rich spent an estimated two billion dollars on acquiring nationalities. Which means in effect being from somewhere, whilst buying being from somewhere else. Most of the time this happens because they invest in real estate, they invest in property, in buildings in other countries. In Hungary there was even an outlet for what was called 'golden passports' for foreign investors. By buying up property in bulk, above a certain amount of money spent, investors could effectively become Hungarian. And that is ironic when you consider that during the Syrian refugee crisis, the country least willing to accept immigrants was Hungary. There are other examples of course. There's Oleg Deripaska, a Russian oligarch who became a Cypriot. There's Rami Makhlouf, a very wealthy Syrian business man who is now Austrian. There's Peter Thiel, the founder of PayPal, who has become a New Zealander. And then we have Manuel Vicente, the former vice president of Angola, who is today Portuguese – voluntarily assuming the nationality of his former coloniser.

The effect of this trend on cities is phenomenal. Thirty percent of condos in Big Manhattan went to foreign investors. Non-residents own between ten and twenty percent of the housing stock built in Perth after 2016. One-third of Vancouver's real estate market is owned by Chinese buyers. Most of whom simply buy there, without living there. Ten percent of houses for sale in Vienna are bought by foreign investors. And even in a place like Amsterdam, an enormous amount of property is sold to foreign investors. This drives up the price incredibly. Sixteen million for the most expensive penthouse, a price previously unheard of, and for a single apartment. But again this is nothing compared to what goes on in other places.

Nick Candy paid 160 million pounds for a single apartment on the corner of Hyde Park in London, interestingly from himself. He did that to set the

[11]

precedent of a record sale, in the hope that there would be other record sales following suit. So the transaction was placed purely to maximise the profitability of his own development. In New York, the record set so far is Michael Dell, CEO of Dell Technologies, who spent 100 million dollars on a penthouse in the One57 tower. But the tower with the largest number of record sales in New York is 432 Park Avenue. It is a very interesting building. A good piece of architecture. But there is something strange about it. You see, some people appear to have their lights on, but in an unusually structured way. It's as though there's an agreement amongst the tenants, that only every seventh floor is allowed to switch on their lights. At first you might wonder, is it an effort in sustainability? An effort into some kind of electricity saving of the superrich? But then you go up and you see that the parts that are lit are actually the ventilation spaces – the plant rooms which occur every seven floors. The apartments themselves are empty.

The apartments are empty, but the trade of those apartments takes on incredible proportions. A Qatari businessman paid 16.2 million dollars for a three-bedroom condominium. A Saudi retailer bought a top penthouse for about 80 million. Jennifer Lopez and Alex Rodriguez made a highly publicised real estate purchase in the same building. This is paradoxically an ideal outcome. When everybody buys but doesn't live there, you have absent neighbours. But if you have one apartment per floor you don't notice the absence. This favours a typology with fewer apartments per floor. The thinner the better. And so they become thinner and thinner. If you're building for people who don't live there, if you're building for tenants who never go there, then you can even wonder whether a building needs any function at all, whether it ought to be anything more than a concrete sculpture that is traded on the stock exchange [12].

It is possibly hyperbole, but there are cities in the world today where the proposed functions of buildings merely serve as an alibi to build something. This is the Monument of the Constitution [13]. It's in Turkmenistan, which is a dictatorship. The same city also houses the "World's largest Ferris wheel." You wonder why a large Ferris wheel needs a home, but I guess the alibi is as good as any. This is the Palace of Happiness [14]. Again a very tenuous relation between the form of the building and its function. In fact the "form follows function" line is increasingly problematised. This is the House of Free Creativity, built literally in the shape of an open book [15]. But this creativity, that is purported to be free, is supposed to exist in a kind of Stalinist modelled dictatorship.

This city has the largest collection of marble-clad buildings in the world [16]. But the city as a whole stands empty. It has empty roads flanked by empty buildings. It has a transport network of driverless vehicles, which have no passenger either. Empty vehicles connect empty buildings. Now this is a very abject case. But the funny thing is that it isn't Ashkhabad, it's Vancouver. And there's a strong correlation. You probably all know the lists that are being made by the Economist, and Mercer for instance, of the world's 'most liveable' cities. Out of the ten cities that were declared most liveable in 2018, six of them are also among the cities with the largest amount of vacant real estate. So it would appear that cities are most liveable when nobody lives there, which is an interesting contradiction in terms.

And cities with a lot of vacancy, cities where nobody lives, are invariably into placemaking. Placemaking is a horrible word, I hear it more and more in my own practice. I nod politely, but I don't know what it means. And I have the feeling that many people who use the word do not know what it means either. "Placemaking is an innate ability that we all have," says Fred Kent. That is the kind of unspoken consensus characteristic of what counts as 'good urbanism' today. This is what placemaking looks like: childish activities in Sydney, inhabited puppet homes, probably flanked again by uninhabited real estate [17]. Vancouver has the same thing. And Toronto as well. The same childish activities, a general abandon, clowning around, all purporting to a 'sense of community.'

The most liveable cities, referring back to the same list from earlier, are invariably also rich cities. But more than rich cities, they are expensive cities. And in fact they are for the most part more expensive than they are rich. If a home is generally two and a half times your annual income, and you take a loan from the bank, that is what qualifies as an affordable home. So if you apply the same arithmetic on the

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most liveable cities list, in the most liveable city the average inhabitant can afford 15 square meters [18]. Now how much is 15 square meters? It's three by five. That's per person. Three by five is slightly bigger than a maximum security prison cell. It's slightly bigger than a Jayco caravan. It's about the size of a parking space, and just shy of the micro apartment. It is in fact smaller than what once was defined as the absolute existenzminimum by the early modernists of the 20th century. It is exactly the size of a container, which is probably also why building with containers is gaining increasing popularity in our major cities.

This model was for an exhibition at the Bauhaus to celebrate the centenary of its having been founded [19]. For me there is a very powerful symbolic charge to this image, in the sense that we have downsized. We have fallen short even of the socialist ideals that defined the minimum. We have embraced instead the market economy, assuming it would make all of us rich, only for us to be squeezed into ever smaller lodgings [20].

In grey you see average income development in the Western World since 1950 [21]. The horizontal red line is what the bank is prepared to lend you on the basis of your income, which is always a multiple of it. It varies depending on the economic tide. The white shows house prices. From this we can see that on or about the early 1990s, after the collapse of communism and the global embrace of the market, we get richer. But we also see that the cost of things rises faster, and home ownership is made increasingly elusive. The banks consequently have to lend ever more money which, as we have learned, leads to a mortgage crisis. The crisis in question culminated about 15 years later, and started in America, where homes were repossessed but became unsellable. This led to an abundance of empty neighbourhoods. And it's by no means limited to the United States. In Ireland, more empty things. In England, in Spain, in Morocco. And in Angola also, where a city of a million homes was built by the Chinese [21]. Nobody could afford it, and like a giant model imagined by Le Corbusier it stands empty in the field. Many of these developments are called 'ghost towns' but this isn't strictly the case. A 'ghost town' is a town that is at first inhabited, before people leave it empty. But these buildings were built empty, and stayed that way. People couldn't afford them when they were first built,

when they were brand new. It is a totally surrealist spectacle, and by now this mismatch between supply and demand in terms of real estate is a global phenomenon.

My point is that modern architecture plays a fundamentally different role in the 21th century than it did in the 20th. This is Beirut [23]. To the left is the Holiday Inn, which was completed in the 1970s, and then essentially became a bulwark for snipers in Lebanese civil war. It has since remained empty despite various redevelopment plans. To the right is the project of Herzog & de Meuron, a luxury residential project. It's about the same size. You could say it is about the same architecture. It has 90 degree angles, it has exposed concrete, it has a lot of glass, etc. Like the building next door, it is also empty. But while the emptiness to the left represents a trauma, a scar from the civil war, the emptiness on the right represents an enormous economic success. The apartments are empty but they are all owned, and were each sold for a record price. There is something very ambiguous about the building. As a piece of architecture I guess it's good. I guess it's admirable. But as an instrument in the social fabric of Beirut, it has very negative effects. Now of course the architectural press rave about it. "A world class icon, in the heart of one of the Middle East's most vibrant cities..." Blah blah blah. But the daily press complains about gentrification, driving up the prices, and driving regular Beirutis out of their homes. And for me the juxtaposition of the two buildings on either side of the street symbolises the shifted role of modern architecture in the two centuries.

Size of Affordable Home (sqm)

01.	Vienna	15
02.	Melbourne	17
03.	Osaka	19
04.	Calgary	26
05.	Sydney	21
06.	Vancouver	22
07.	Tokyo	22
08.	Toronto	24
09.	Copenhagen	34
10.	Adelaide	37

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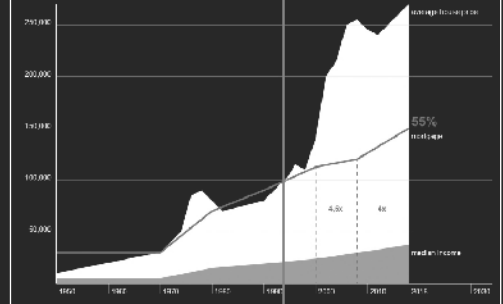
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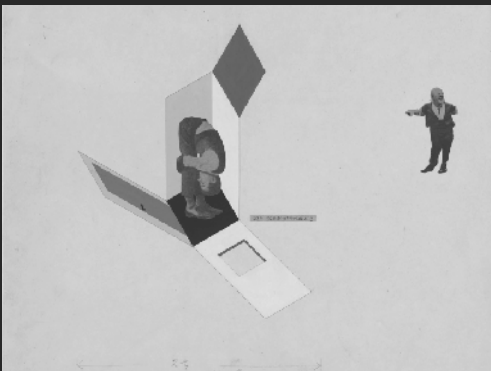
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The 21st century is in many ways the 20th century in reverse. In 1968 there were protests in Paris, but today there are protests in Paris also. There was the club of Rome, the first attempt to tackle climate change in the early 1970s, and today we have Trump. One wonders what can be done. I mean what underpins the system? What underpins that mechanism? If you look at money and if you look at the financial issues which dominate the world, the interesting thing is that real estate is the largest economic asset class. More than all the oil reserves combined. More than gold. More than cryptocurrencies. More than anything else, it's real estate [24]. The largest asset class underpinning the financial system is real estate, and seventy-five percent of that is residential development. Which means that curiously what we do as architects, what we design, is at the heart of the global financial system. And often architects are the least aware of the role their buildings play in this process.

An example is the Gherkin in London. Since it was finished in 2004, it has changed hands three times. In the 15 years since it was completed, its value, from 350 million pounds, is now one billion pounds. Which is of course an incredibly sharp rise. We did a little bit of arithmetic. The architect is Norman Foster. We don't have the data because it's confidential, but let's assume he's a good negotiator and that he manages to get five percent of the total construction cost. This means that his fee must have been about seven million pounds, give or take. 720 million is the amount of money that the building has increased in value since it was completed. That is a hundred times the fee of the architect, the person who designed it. This is of course very curious, and more than a little depressing. "It is only after men have raised themselves above the rank of animals, and their labour has been socialised, that a state of things arises in which the surplus-labour of the one becomes a condition of existence for the other." That was Marx. And of course one wonders what role architects play in this. I mean, do you comply with that system? Do you content yourself with what morsels that system actually hands out to you? Or is there something architects can actually do to undermine the system? To that last point we have at least devoted a little bit of thinking.

These are the three criteria that underlie architecture [25]. This is Vitruvius, according to whom architecture must be based on durability, use, and beauty. That was formulated around 30 to 15 BC, but essentially the ethos hasn't changed. The ethos of Alberti is roughly along the same lines. He pleas for a design that is "more capable, more eternal, more dignified, more joyful." Ruskin again talks about buildings lasting multiple generations. Even a contemporary icon like Frank Gehry talks about timelessness as the essential value for architecture. But just how true is that? If you analyse the durability of architecture over the centuries, a very interesting pattern emerges [26]. Palais de Tuileries in Paris lasted for about 300 years. It was built in 1564. Three centuries later, Les Halles lasted for about 150 years. Then in the 20th century, Penn Station in New York lasted for about a hundred years. The Bijlmer sort of survived for about 50 years. And of course our very own project in The Hague did not even last 25 years. So it's not unthinkable that at some point in the future buildings will acquire a negative lifespan. Rather than planning the construction of a building, you have to build it and plan for its eventual disappearance. That will become an integral part of architecture. So instead of firmitas, utilitas, and venustas, we go to a situation of brevitas, flexibilitas, and humilitas [27]. Temporariness, flexibility, and digression. A building should not be built for the place in which it is built. It should not be used for what was intended. And first and foremost you should be able to take it away in a second. That is a re-appreciation of value in architecture. A transvaluation of value, after Nietzsche.

Another example. This is a Plattenbau in former East Germany for which, after the collapse of the East German state, there was no longer any obvious use or desire [28]. Since it was constructed in a very systematic way, from parts, you could imagine watching its construction in reverse, like a film played backwards. Something that is easy to assemble can be understood as something easy to disassemble also. The ruins from demolition are adapted as spare parts, and find their way into a new modern architecture in the pastures of Brandenburg nearby. For instance a house like this is entirely built out of those panels [29]. And if you can recycle buildings into smaller buildings, you could also start moving buildings. You can start moving entire churches for instance.
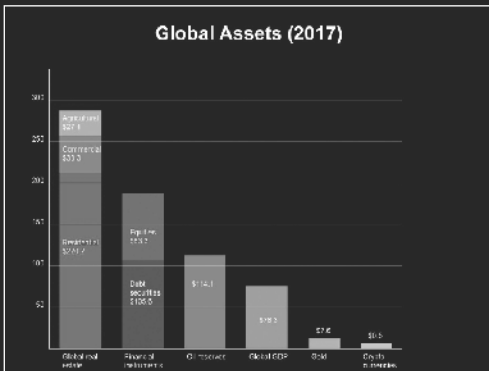
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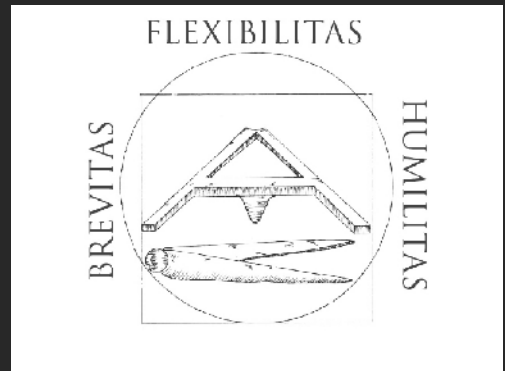
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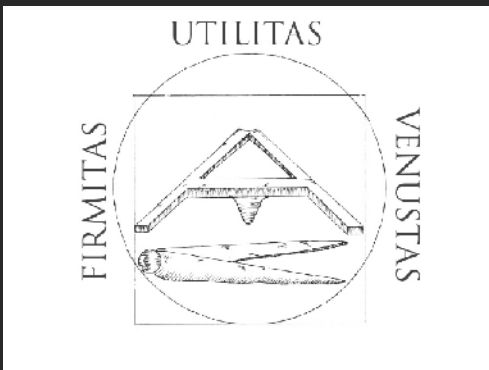
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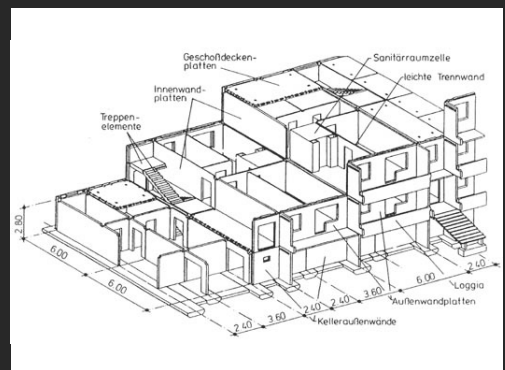
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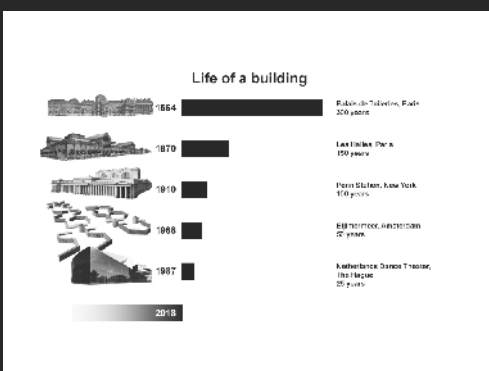
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Once you start moving buildings, perhaps it is no longer necessary to distinguish between the vehicle of transport and the actual object to which you are being transported. Maybe the vehicle of transport becomes the real estate object. A floating house in Chile, a walking house in London, and maybe even entire walking cities [30]. This was the fantasy of Ron Herron, as old as the 1960s. The point I am coming to, and the Dutch word is beautiful for this, is that once you think of buildings in those terms, then vastgoed [immovable asset] becomes losgoed [movable asset]. The value of the good is reversed. It can then take the normal depreciation of value similar to computers, cars and everything. And it can become a decent part of the economic cycle once again. And it also means that a particular class who live off the trade of buildings, could disappear and be banished from our profession – free to perish.
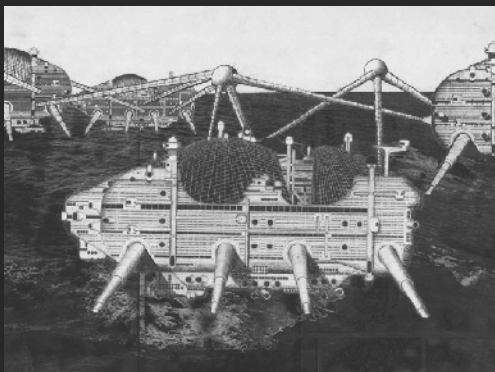
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donna van milligen bielke
Studio DVMB

Donna van Milligen Bielke graduated in 2012 at the Amsterdam Academy of Architecture with her bold design Reversed Boogie Woogie, a new building replacing the Amsterdam Stopera with an open and inviting urban structure. When she won the Prix de Rome for her design 'Cabinet of Curiosities' in 2014 she quit her job at Powerhouse Company and started her own office. In 2017 she won her first tender for a small apartment tower in Amsterdam. Recently she won two interesting competitions: for a cultural centre in Utrecht and a theatre complex in Groningen, using the theatre programme to create a series of public gardens and squares. Her work is described as 'shaping, connecting and reacting to urban tissues'. She takes inspiration from classical archetypes like the Forum Romanum – 'not as a political, but as a spatial reference.' Another example is Nolli's famous 'reversed' plan of the city, in which he put the public spaces central instead of the buildings.

Defining Space Between Architecture and Urbanism

Hello, my name is Donna Van Milligen Bielke and I have had my own studio since 2014, just after I won the Prix de Rome. INDESEM 2019 raises the question of how I position myself as an architect. I heard that is also your assignment this week to find that out. I suppose I don't position myself as an architect, I just do what I like to do and I work very intuitively. I create things that people want to place somewhere which gives me a position in the field. Furthermore I see myself as a classical architect who is mainly designing space.

Since I am taking a certain position as an architect I tried to make a consistent story about it.
Although I am not really trying it, it's just working out this way because I think I work very intuitively.

I will start with some of my fascinations and afterwards some projects are shown where you can see how these fascinations will always be a part of my projects. I found out that it does not matter what kind of project I do, there is always a certain 'logic' in the project. It can also be an interior project, but this 'logic' is somewhere in between architecture and urbanism, always on the border of that. So I suppose I am not exactly designing buildings but more a space definer; defining space by placing special borders.

This [1] is the Noli map, my favourite reference. What I like about this map is that it does not only show the urban tissue, like we can see it, but also the interiors because that is actually the complete picture of the urban tissue. The city is shown as a sequence of spaces and there is no difference between inside or outside space. In that sense you can see all the closed program, the private program, as a whole for the public space. For me designing architecture is mostly about how you will continue the urban tissue in the project.

Another one of my favorite references is this drawing of Piranesi [2] of the Forum Romanum. This drawing is different from the other one because there are no borders, there is no difference between inside and outside. The whole city is just one big system.

I have a fascination for how you can reorganize the hierarchy in an urban plan [3]. For instance this plan of Haussmann. He adds this new structure which changes the whole city completely and the way you feel it.

Another fascination is this square in Madrid [4], Plaza Mayor. This square has always been a big square, historically, which has sort of this proportions but at a certain point in time they decided to add a thin layer, like a whole building, which is just one room deep, around the square to strengthen the space. This thin layer defines the space better. Actually this layer is like an inverted building because it has one façade but it's a building that shapes the public space.

This [5] is another reference from Fernand Pouillon called Climat de France. What I like about this is that it is one intervention; it is a building that not only withholds housing and a square but also a lot of other public functions. In this case it is interesting that this one building also contains a square which makes it a sort of autonomous city.

I have chosen four projects to show how these references are used in my work. The first two are research projects, one of which is my graduation project and the other is the plan I did for the Prix de Rome which is also in Rotterdam, like your assignment for this week. Lots of questions are asked about these projects because people wonder how they can be materialized into an actual building. Therefore I will also show two projects we are currently working on, I do that together with Ard de Vries. One project is in Leidsche Rijn and the other one in Groningen.

This [6] is my graduation project. It was an important project for me because it was the first time that I had this amount of time to spend on one project. It gives you the opportunity to find out what really drives you the most in architecture. I preferred to do something big and public and also something personal. I studied in Amsterdam at the academy and decided to make a new design or the city hall which is across the academy. This subject was interesting because it is big, public and it is a sort of a hybrid building because it houses the city hall but also a subway station and the opera house. I had a personal frustration as well

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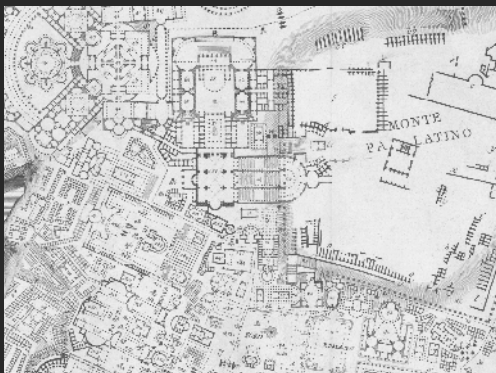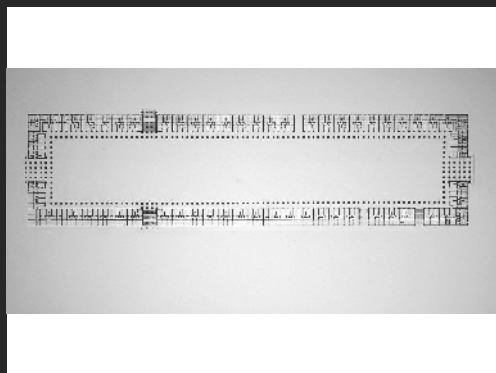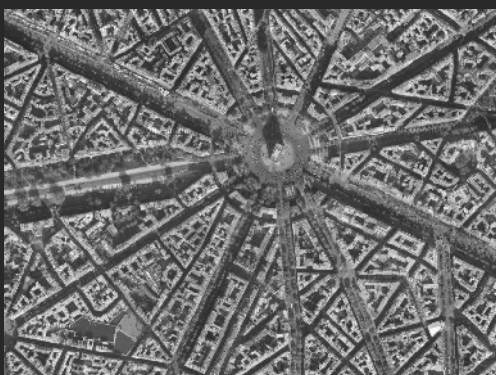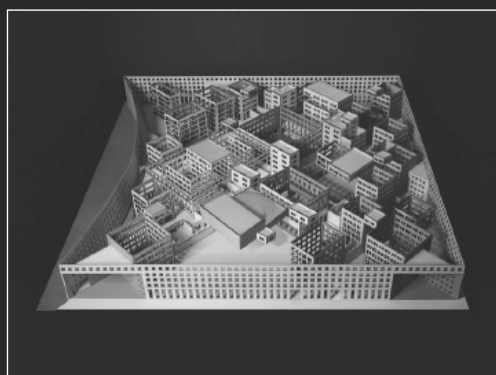
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with this building because I would always come from this street and I had to cycle all around this huge building to get here (at the academy). The existing plan of the Stopera has three functions, and while it is a hybrid building, they actually function as three separate buildings. There is nothing happening in between those programs. There is an internal public route running through the building but it is not connecting to the city so it is not really working as an actual street. At last there is a lot of public space around the building but it is not really held in any kind of way, I felt that this public space could be more than just scattered space.

The first step for me was to acknowledge the scale of the building because people tend to make big buildings look small and try to make it look fragmented and more fitting to its context. But I thought well it is a big program so we should not deny it we just make it big. I even proposed to make it bigger by moving all the private (closed) program to the boundaries of the plot. All the public space would fit in the plot. In this way you can design and define the public space much more. Then I figured that the human scale could be found in the interior of the building which is mainly public so this public network would give it a smaller scale. It has this typology of a fortress with a strong façade on the outside, big openings and an internal network with some specific program inside of it. And although the building might look very rigid and monumental, I think that is much more fitting to the program and the status of the city hall. At the edges of the building it has really sharp urban boundaries. It's representation appropriate for the functions but it is also a strong and independent shape which shows the importance of the building. In the inside of the building the borders are much softer and permeable. [7] Because I pushed all the closed (black in the image is closed) program to the edges, the deeper you go into the building the more public and open it is. So there is a gradient in accessibility.

This [8] is a model of the public network. It becomes obvious that this public network is built as a sequence of public spaces with all different climatological conditions. There are open squares which are outside, there are spaces next to it that are sort of forecourts and it is a transition between inside and outside.

But the public route also has public interior spaces, the so called in-between spaces. In this way it is a building with program, rooms and inside spaces but it is a city as well due to public network and squares.

One of the public squares inside is shown, The opera square [9]. Next to the squares there are the forecourts [10] and thirdly the in-between spaces [11]. The in-between spaces have a street status, they are actually public and from these rooms you can look into the functions of the city hall. The internal network is as a street within the building [12], a sequence of different spaces. You don't get lost in this network because there are two main routes which connect to the surrounding streets and it does not matter which route you take, one always passes by the city hall square. From this square you can enter all the public functions that are inside the city hall.

From a distance you never see a huge building which it actually is but you always see a gate because it connects the surrounding streets. Behind these gates you see this square so you know it is public and you can enter this building. Once standing very close you can see it is a huge, strong and important building. Personally this was good to find out what my fascinations were and how you can make a really big public programme which has a big scale but also found a way to implement the smaller scale.
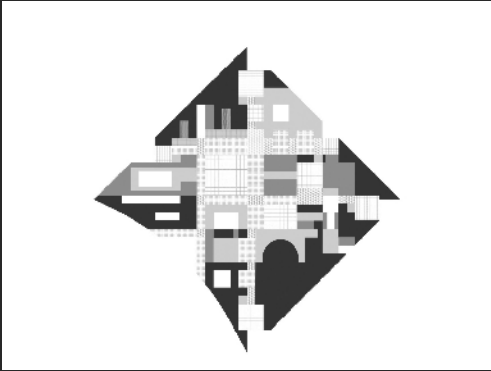
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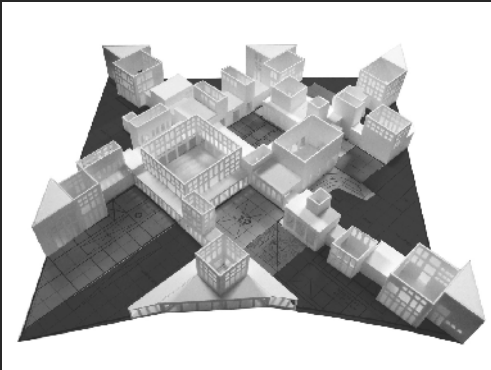
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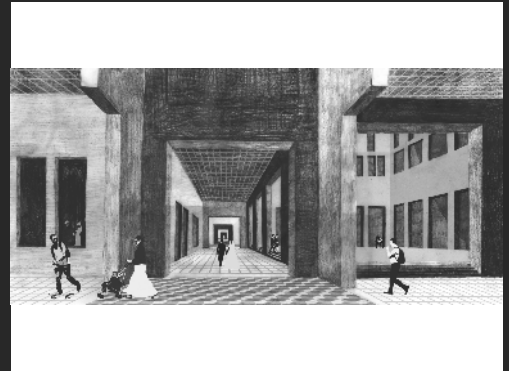
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This [13] is my admission for the Prix de Rome, in Rotterdam, which is also a fictional project (research project). This is the historical centre of Rotterdam, or what used to be the historical centre. And here is the Binnenrotte and you see the Markthal here. The objective was to make a lively city street and a link to the history. The assignment was very open.

Here you see Rotterdam [14]. I will shortly go through it's history. It once was like a regular Dutch medieval city, it looks like Amsterdam when you see it like this. But during the WO II it was heavily bombed. After the war there were modern urbanists who had certain thoughts about what a city should look like. This is how Rotterdam became a city of big gestures, separated functions and a lot of space. Nowadays, Rotterdam is really a tough and unpolished city and it is not really about coziness but more about progress. In contradiction, Rotterdam has reached a certain turning point that they are turning this city centre, which was mainly an employment and shopping area, more into a residential area again. Because this emptiness that was once seen as modern and generous is now mainly experienced as soulless, huge and inhumane. The built fabric of Rotterdam is characterized by these exceptional large buildings and they stand isolated in this empty space. Combining with the soulless space between the objects it is not a monumental effect but is quite alienating. The site of the intervention is the crossing of two old axes [15]. So you have here the Binnenrotte and the Hoogstraat. The Binnenrotte used to be the river Rotte along which the whole city grew. Later this became the railway track which passed above the ground. Nowadays the railway is running underground which results in the fact that the Binnenrotte area can no longer be developed because a tunnel is underneath it.

The other axis is the Hoogstraat. It used to be a real axis but now the modernists cut it up in different pieces, to try to connect the city to the river. This results in a lot of vague spaces which they call 'terrain vague'. These are spaces that don't have a clear purpose anymore which gives them a vague and intangible character. They are in a permanent state of transition. They are stranded somewhere between decline and renewal.

I tried to make cohesion in this city of these individual gestures without losing the sense of space. Also without leaping into nostalgia or removing the whole thing again and starting with a new tabula rasa. I designed a plan which is more about ordering the urban space, and I do this by defining more clear edges and in this way you can differentiate all the space. It is also a plan where the big buildings play a central role. In this design the size of the space is reduced and the significance of the space strengthened. What makes Rotterdam really unique is that it has this collection of exceptional solitary buildings. They are all very specific because they resemble a specific time, a certain spirit. An architectural spirit from a certain time. But all these buildings don't claim the space around them. They just stand there in the emptiness. In this proposal [16] the fragmented urban fabric of Rotterdam is ordered without demolishing. But also without a sort of future promise. It is more about cherishing Rotterdam's curiosities by embracing the existing buildings with a strong urban architecture.

In the design new layers are added to order the space which also isolates and exhibits these displayed icons [17]. At the same time the urban structure is strengthened and the objects are given the opportunity to excel from these frames but also merge with the city. Cabinet of curiosities, that is the name of the plan. These were encyclopedic collections of objects whose categorical boundaries were yet to be defined. So I thought this is what we should do, we should give them a place so one understands what they mean. In this way you can give all the different places a different atmosphere, a different space.

These big urban frames engage with another by their openings, which create a more fine mesh structure. The urban interiors within these frames [18] are quite sober and neutral. The object that sits inside will be the focus of attention. But at the same time they sort of absorb the atmosphere that is coming from the object inside of it. The object appropriates the surrounding space, making it from an undefined space into a distinctive space.
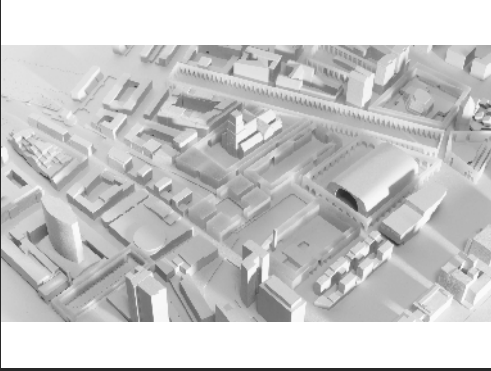
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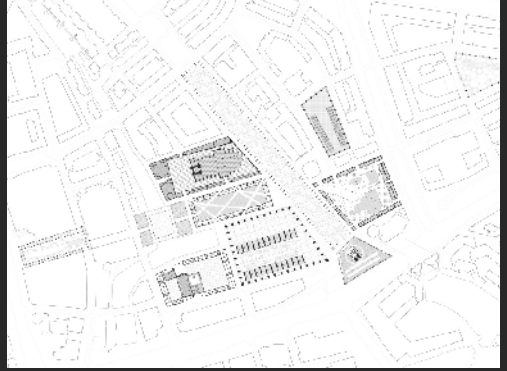
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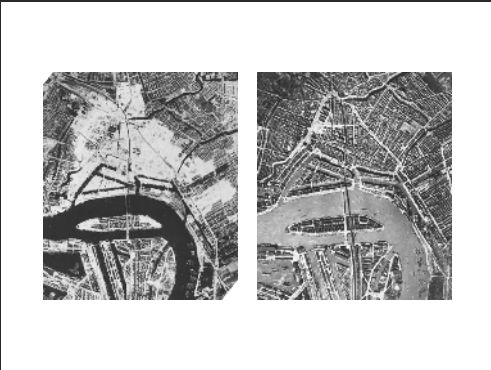
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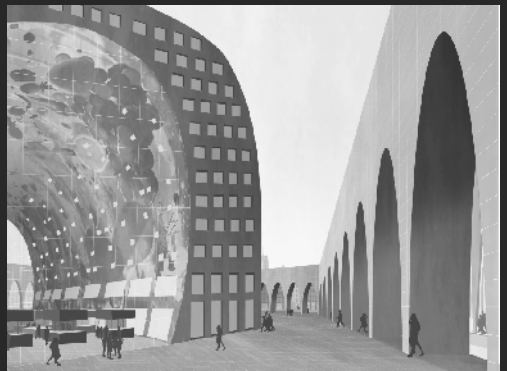
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Sometimes it also provides clarity how people can use and behave in this space, or the function. There are also frames that confirm the emptiness. Which is the case in this frame, the Binnenrotte [19]. The porous frame clearly marks the urban edges. So that even when there is nothing happening here you can still feel that it is a strong square. It is the biggest empty space in Rotterdam and also a monument to its city origins.

The next plan is non-fictional. I designed this together with Ard de Vries. It was a competition which we won for a large cultural building in Leidsche Rijn. It was quite a difficult program because they wanted it to be a big cultural building but it should also be a maker space(a workshop space for artists). And this means mostly private studio's for artists. The difficulty was that we had to design something but also we should make something that would be possible that artists can work on it themselves so the building will grow on itself. So we had to design a bottom up strategy. The thing about maker spaces (because this is how we know them) is that they are mostly big halls which are empty, vacant, and people see their opportunities and build their ateliers/studio's in it. Actually they just want cheap rent and a lot of space, that is the program for the artists. We thought this process is almost like a hermit crab, they find a shell to live in and they appropriate themselves to the shell. But that does not mean in evolution that the crab is also now adapted to the shell but they can pick any house they want. It is the same with the artists they just pick a building which had a strong purpose, it was a factory or a church or anything. They transform it into a working space. The question was what will the typology look like when you start from nothing?

We figured we had to make more of a strategy and some invisible rules to organize the plot. This [20] is Burning Man, a festival in the desert where there is nothing until all the people arrive. They build the city while there is a sort of structure that they need to not make it into a chaos. A similar situation applies for the plan of the world expo in Paris. An urban tissue is created without the buildings - just some shared program or toilets and stuff - but mainly borders are defined. We figured that what we wanted to do is find a way to continue the cultural axis within the plot.

At the same time we also want to adapt it to the new city structure. This grid [21] is the new city structure that is lying on top of the old one. Within this structure there is a little farm which has a different direction. We made the new grid fit into the old grid and in this way you can continue the cultural axis which fits into the new structure. We copied all the arcades because the whole centre is filled with public floor plans containing arcades. We gave them their own direction to make it a city in itself. Some rules needed to be developed, we freed some space to make sure it stayed connected to the city and to make sure not to build it full. Another difficulty was that this should be a really generic plan so the artists can build whatever they want in it. At the same time it should also have some specific spaces which challenge the artists to do something special in these places. We divided the plot into two halves also to make a new street to connect the cultural axis [22]. Then you could say there are already two halves so you can make a difference between the two halves. Some meeting places were as well part of the program which said there should be a formal one, a big one, where events can happen or be organized, but also an informal one where the neighbourhood and the artists can meet each other. We found that it needs some flesh - something that holds the space - where the artists can have their own studios. We are not really designing a building, we are presenting a plan where a building could grow. This could be the image of that.

So we made an atlas with all the wishes of all the makers. An inventory was made to see how we could fit everything in and to see what the possibilities are. This [23] is the formal meeting space, the big hall. And this [24] is the more open, local living room. Which should be transparent and multifunctional. And then there are the big halls with some private spaces but also some shared spaces or workshops. The front can be much more formal because it faces the big Berlin square.

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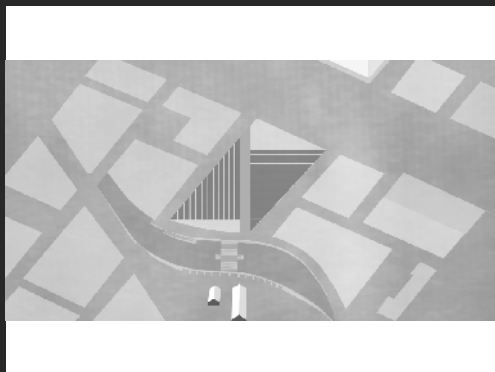
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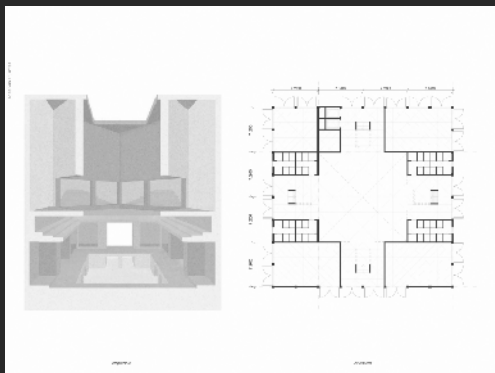
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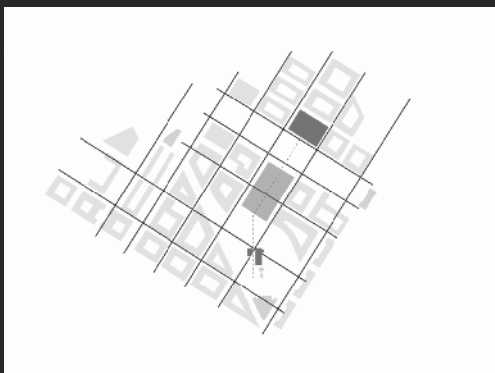
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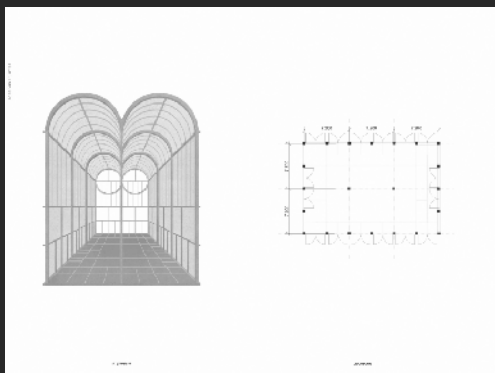
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The back side can be much more open and fragmented (open and accessible) [25]. So it is a long progress and we just finished the sketch design and there are a lot of people involved. But for now, people are already starting to display the grid and they are trying placemaking to see if they can find some support from the community and the municipality. What we liked about it is that it could be a real iconic building but at the same time it is a collection of buildings. It is actually also a city.

[26] The last project is also together with Ard de Vries. With this we are a little bit further, we just handed everything in and got the permit. It is a permanent accommodation for four theatre and dance companies in Groningen. It is located just outside of the city centre of Groningen. It is a former industrial gas area and this whole area is now in development. The program that was asked for did not fit the given envelope, because the dance and theater companies need certain proportions for their dance rehearsals and that did not fit in here. Furthermore the envelope is pushed in between monuments that also need to have a place in this new plan. We figured it did not fit in the given shape so we made some rules that we thought were important. We thought that we shouldn't just make a – because there was asked for a small courtyard - a light yard, but we thought it should be a more public space which had more quality. Something you can really adapt to the existing urban fabric and you can continue the city in. Also, I thought it would be nice if all the dance and theatre companies have their own entity but also it is a whole together.

The building next to the plot is an old machine factory and there is already a big theatre group that works there. What we liked was how it is one volume but it actually is a lot of different volumes. But it also has some certain rules that hold everything together. We made some choices, we decided to fragment the whole building to get more public space in it. One of the villa's that is already here gets a central position in the plan. To do this we had to stack all the volumes higher than we were supposed to do [27]. What I like about this is that I feel like it has a sort of Forum Romanum link with all these different arcades and spaces put together. What we thought was important was to not just place separate buildings but also to make it one entity.

We decided to place an arcade around the project that would define the plot [28]. In this way this could be an announcement for the gardens that are behind the buildings but it is also an easy way to relate to the existing monuments. The envelope was pushed against it and we gave it more space so now it has its own space. But to make it fit we really had to intertwine all these companies which all want their own entrance at street level. Upstairs all the rooms are sort of puzzled into each other. This project is really about continuing a historical wall that was already there. In this way it becomes a whole cultural cluster together with the existing buildings. The wall we used as an organizing element. So sometimes there is a building in it, sometimes it is just a wall and sometimes it is just an arcade that defines where the public space of the cultural building starts.

Here you see the villa [29] that we gave a central position and the arcade that marks the plot. We also made some gates, a typical thing that happens in Groningen, but we thought it is a good way to show there is a public space, everyone can just walk in. At the same time you are a guest, because it is actually the property of the companies. By doing this we realized that we should make them active gates and put a lot of open program next to the gates. A references that we thought was fitting, was the Hortus Conclusus (the enclosed garden) which is a public domain but you are still a guest. Also the gardens of St Germain, which shows a sequence of different gardens. We thought that would be a good way to continue the urban fabric – that consists of all these kinds of public spaces – within our plot. There is a contrast between the actual open space and the public space that you are allowed to use while you are on someone else's property. We liked that in the floorplan it all came down in a really relaxed manner around the existing buildings with different gardens between the buildings [30]. We figured it would also be good if the entrances for all the different companies and rehearsal rooms have their own identity and their own relation to the city. Because there are four companies which are all focused on the courtyards, these courtyards become the meeting place for them, but also a place where the city meets these companies. The budget was quite limited so we decided to make the interior where the construction is leading for the way it looks so they are quite raw interiors but we all give them their own character.
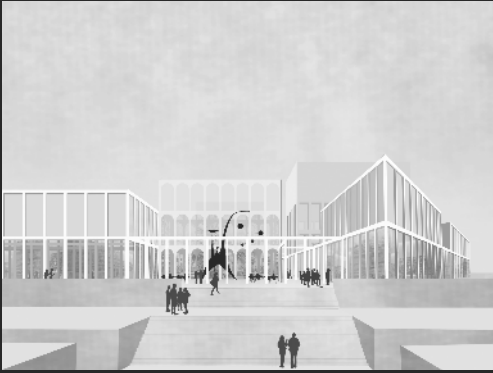
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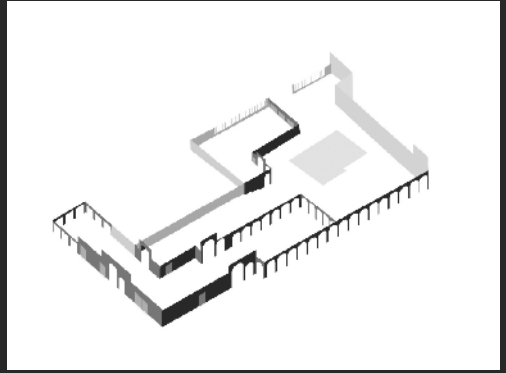
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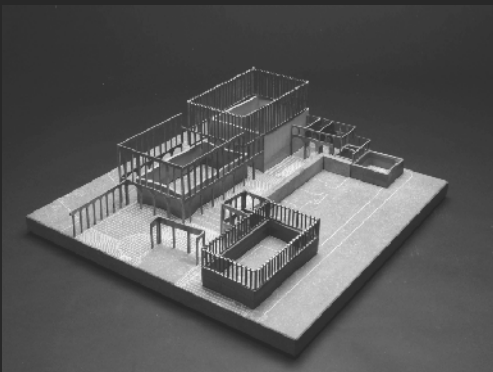
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And I must say this was our proposal but they are all a bit more alike due to the construction. We also made in the middle of this plan an amphitheatre and it was not really the plan that there was actual theatre happening but it is more like how the theatre meets the city and also it is a nice way to come together. It is linked through this historical reference, Sebastianio Serlio's theatre scenery [31]. I like this image because it is a sort of false perspective and we thought we could also make some kind of perspective from our arena. This [32] is then a true perspective but it is based on this false perspective. We just finished all the models and this is a mock up [33].

So about how I position myself as an architect. I think it helps when other people reflect on what you do. But I also found out that I am now really more about defining space than designing space. And for me it is really the border – it can be open or closed – that is the tool for me to work with in architecture.

Thank you
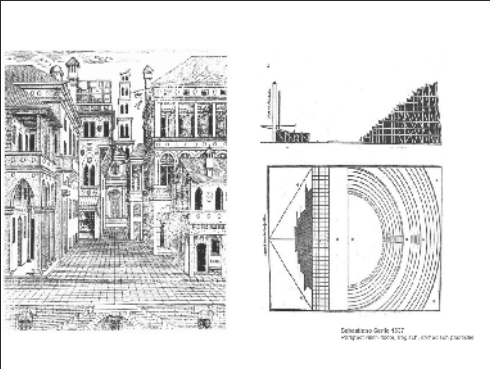
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kristian koreman
ZUS

Kristian Koreman studied Landscape Architecture at Larenstein University and Philosophy at the Erasmus University. In 2001 he co-founded ZUS (Zones Urbaines Sensibles) together with Elma van Boxel. The practice has since been pushing the boundaries between architecture, urban planning, and landscape design. In addition to this he regularly teaches and lectures at universities worldwide. The work of ZUS has been widely exhibited, including the Guggenheim, New York, the Venice Biennial, the V&A, London, and the Istanbul Modern. Their unsolicited advice and interdisciplinary work led to them winning the 2007 Maaskant Prize for Young Architects, being named Architect of the Year in 2012, receiving the Urban Intervention Award Berlin, being finalists for the European Prize for Public Space in 2016, and being nominated for the Mies van der Rohe Award in 2017.

City of Permanent Temporality

It is an honour to be here at INDESEM, a renowned event with renowned speakers. I hope to have a worthy contribution to this year's edition. I'm starting to say that Elma should have been here, but currently it is a bit busy at the office, and Elma is responsible for some projects which simply had to be finished tomorrow.

We have been working as a duo already for 18 years since we met during landscape architecture school, while at the same time we also fell in love. We decided to stay in love but also come up with a business plan; during our studies we had the idea to start our own practice. And all of a sudden we got a commission so we could simply start working at the age of 21.

We have never had this experience of working in offices so we just had to imagine what a practice would be like. How to work was not told to us and maybe that's one of the reasons we are not following the regular practice of an architect's office. Also, as I said in my introduction, we were taught as landscape architects but in the business plan was a rejection for the limited role of landscape architects: just being asked to do some nice greenery around well positioned blocks by urbanists with architects doing the façades. Which is to some extent still reality nowadays.

The business plan stated: yes, we are going to answer the questions of the market. On the other hand we didn't want to take this reality as a given thing, so the business plan was also a refusal, to come up with our own ideas. Extremely loud and incredibly close we called it, and we've been looking from that moment onwards to not look at obvious architectural examples of work. We were not like in the 90s with coming up with new digital techniques, flashy forms and so on, but we were actually looking more at the era of the 60s and the 70s where artists claimed their own agenda and their own right. Especially the refusal of Team X to follow the path of all the modernists but instead to break beyond, was very inspiring for us.

Meanwhile we're not alone anymore, we have an office of 30 people from all over the world. In the business plan, we rejected the idea of being just landscape architects. For which Elma started to study urbanism and architecture and I started to study philosophy. In order to carry out a truly interdisciplinary approach we do this from the scale of big landscapes and urbanism such as in Almere-Duin, where we're creating a new dune landscape with 3000 houses. Moreover we're currently transforming an old industrial site in Amersfoort where we basically work with the materials we find and try to also bring some order in these scales. Not too much though, we like chaos.

Currently we are furthermore working on the Central Station of Eindhoven. We won this competition together with Powerhouse, to make a truly super interactive square. But actually I'm not going to talk about these projects, I'm going to talk about this project [1].

Which is actually not a project but almost like a life work because we worked on it for the last 18 years. It all started in that building over there, which we spotted in 2000.

Just to tell you a bit about Rotterdam [2]; Rotterdam is a laboratory, in terms of realised projects, but it's also a laboratory for unrealised proposals [3]. There's no such city with so many proposals per sqm, especially for the city centre after it's been bombed. This could have been Rotterdam as well, a kind of cosmopolitan dream. Or this could have been Rotterdam, when in the 70s kind of picturesque structuralism could take place, then there would be no high rise, only kind of Kasbah reinterpretations [4].

Then the reality as we find it today is a mix of those [5]. It has both the kind of small urban fabric but also the kind of cosmopolitan dream. In this fabric we were very much attracted to this blind spot in the middle where rain tracks are running but also the Coolsingel is ending. Looking back at the last 18 years we divided our work in a few chapters.

The first chapter is an episode starting in the year 2000 when we entered this building and when Rotterdam was not 'hot' yet [6]. It was actually an AAA location according to the real estate agents but the building was empty, among 100.00 other square metres of office space.

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Rotterdam was celebrating its public space making beaches and programming public parties but at the same time there were a lot of restrictions and safety issues. You would always find pleasure but also boundaries to keep it a bit safe and orderly. There had always been this tension of wanting to be a city but also wanting to be very safe and cosy.

What we experienced in the building, looking downwards when we were working late, were all these clubs with different subcultures dancing, but also having a lot of riots down the street. We were simply wondering; is it possible to design this site for the better or will it not really change anything.

Therefore we initiated a magazine, that was actually Elma's graduation project, in which we tried to question what could be the real role of architecture in society. Posing these questions led towards an approach where we would use architectural propositions in order to trigger debate. For instance, for this square of West 8 [7] where nothing really happens, we said there's so much segregation and xenophobia in the city; let's make an open air mosque so all these tensions, culturally, could express themselves on the square.

In the block where we were, we found a lot of different clubs, nightclubs, which were all having their own party, defined by partition walls. Looking out we were imagining X-ray facades so they could all dance together, a very idealistic idea [8]. But you will see now, 10-15 years later it starts to finally become a reality.

Looking out on the other side of our office we saw a big square called Hofplein, well actually not a square but a big traffic junction, and we imagined this could be our Dam, just like in Amsterdam. A place where people celebrate, which now only happens rarely, when Feyenoord becomes champion. However the roundabout's design is not made as such.

All these unsolicited proposals we put out, we started to negotiate and discuss with people on the streets.. Just like Socrates did in his agora, starting, igniting a debate. A debate about what's truthfully necessary in Rotterdam.

We also went back in history to understand the place where we are, because it used to be the CBD of Rotterdam, a busy city centre, and currently it looks like this [9]. So something really went wrong, and we started an investigation; what is it, what happened here, what our colleagues have done to this place that it functions like this. It's not just our colleagues though it's also the bombing devastating the whole urban fabric. They could've chosen, just like Dresden did, to rebuild according to the former urban fabric, but eventually it came down to modernist proposals with big boulevards and big blocks.

Only for our little block, the Schieblock, it was still uncertain whether it wanted to be this grand scale neighbourhood or plot by plot development. Time is for us an essential material when we are designing cities or buildings or landscapes. Here [10] you can see what was then the first take on the city. Meanwhile we are already getting rid of some of the infrastructure again, like on the Coolsingel. This big scale infrastructure led to big scale speculations. Here [11] you can see Texaco, Shell and Mercedes, but also a reindeer camp. This exemplifies Rotterdam in its best contrast. Wanting to be cosmopolitan but at the same time wanting to be cosy.

But that didn't back off all colleagues, developers or architects to still make proposals. Imagine that at that time, 2006-2007, there was 100.000 square metres of empty office space, and then they projected another 240.000 square metres that was needed. Something truly was disconnected when we look at the real demands of the city and what we project upon that city. We then went into all the plans. There were about 200 documents, talking about what the city should be like, how we should connect it, how we should make green roofs. These [12] were the masterplans that were superimposed on this urban existing fabric. And you can tell from the image without too much context, it was a cloud of imagination, but we also showed the reality. In between we proposed a few strategies to finally take those ambitions and bring those to the public, do something, and not keeping the distance.

We took this very literally, when we started to protest against demolition of our office, since these masterplans proposed demolition of the whole urban fabric. It helps that at that moment we had the opportunity to write a book for the Maaskant prize and
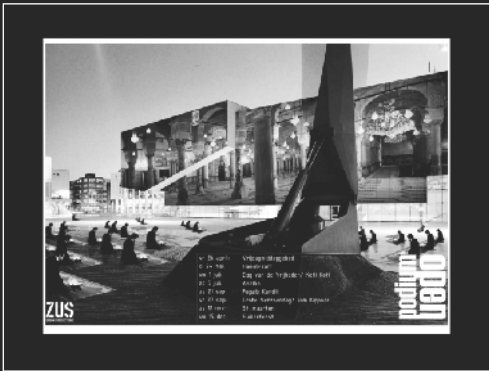
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this became our manifesto in which we campaigned for making things really public, political. Normally as an architect, with clients, it is hard to do something political. However if you do it yourself you can politicise things.

One of the theories proposed is we no longer should believe in instant urbanism, where we propose a plan for the future, then making construction sites and then the proposal is realised. On the contrary, we have to invest in understanding the existing urban fabric and then build from there and continue it [13].

Also understanding the economical logics; if these big scale developments are coming, you have to understand the global and high market involved, whereas we also need more human scaled urban fabric, which has another set of dimensions. You can really tell this difference from two developments taken place after the war. Learning how to make a city from different components instead of having one owner; the city is always containing both.

In order to protest against the plans of the developers we started to make brutal sketches in which we showed, it's possible to make these big buildings, but also don't forget what's beneath there. There is an existing reality you can take advantage of. From these kind [14] of graffiti style things, we also did renderings in 2006, speaking the language of the developers. While doing this political fieldwork we came to the conclusion there were basically three main languages. One is the language of architects; it is autocad. Secondly, the language of politicians; it is the word. And then there's excel for the developers. What we have tried to do is find common ground in these different kinds of software and this kind of thinking about reality.

Our second episode, action. Because you can talk and talk and write and write forever but eventually you have to do things. We started on the corner of the building which didn't look exactly fantastic and just in three weeks time we were managing to open it up [15], through architectural deduction of facade elements. All of a sudden we had a beautiful modern façade. Then we started to programme the space [16]. Because ultimately we can design nice spaces but if they're not used, then they're just nice spaces. Both the software and the hardware came together

and we invited a lot of different parties in the city and started to activate something which was truly dead. We imagined a restaurant there, but of course we didn't have any permits, so we came up with a diner club idea where you could become a member and if you are a member then it's just a closed venue, so we had a restaurant without having a permit.

Sometimes you have to change the way you look at the world. We also thought of what could we do with the existing space, can't it be a little bit more productive on this AAA location we're at? Do we really have to tear the whole thing down, or can we start placemaking? It's one of those ugly buzzwords but nobody really knows what it means. So we said maybe it means something which is already there that you just have to make a bit more lively or more attractive. So why don't we pull down some of these ambitions from all the ambition documents and apply them on the building. So green roofs, mix of functions, lively plinths and so on. Let's just do that. Make a test case out of this building, as a prototype for future development.

This [17] became our excel sheet. We had to merge autocad and excel. The black spaces were market rate rent and we changed them into studios. The white was more public space. And just like real estate agents we went into the city and hung posters everywhere; there were a lot of people looking for space. Our gallery then became an info centre in which we invited a lot of people to meet their space; we had space dates organised so you could meet your future space. When people had enough drinks and went up they would claim 7, 14 or 21m2. We put some tape on the ground, and then two weeks later the walls were in place and you would get your keys. It was horror of making plans there, because it was a live Tetris game with conflicting demands.

Even though it was an interesting way of planning a building like that, it also resulted in very strange and not useful voids. It was quite useful for some, but in the end it was quite impractical to have 21m2 and then 14m2 next to each other. Ultimately, it resulted in some kind of laboratory of all types of different spaces   [18]. We would have never been able to design if we wouldn't have known what people actually want. So we were finally able to reframe the whole hull building and ultimately with the elder men,

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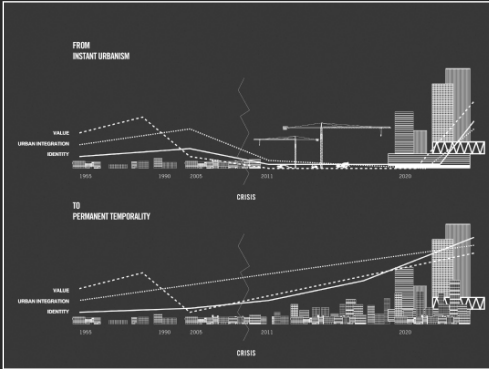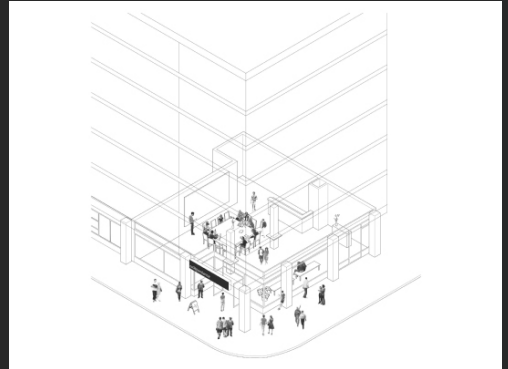
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politicians, the developer and us, opening up the urban laboratory Schieblock for just 5 years, because after that they would demolish the whole building anyway.

So with a small intervention we had this beautiful modernist building alive again, and more importantly it became the working space of 80 young entrepreneurs which now finally could do business or creative stuff in the middle of the city for an affordable rent. The average rent in Rotterdam was about €170,- per square metres and we had half of that. So it was also disrupting the market, which was anyway not realistic in terms of price levels. Meanwhile we were in the years of crisis but we kept on just proposing other things to counter this depressive mode in which nothing is happening. The studio for unsolicited architecture and the NAi moved in and we were making more and more venue space in order to attract people and finally have people on the streets again. And that was basically our aim; rethinking the 30s when there were still people on the streets.

We also had the honour that our neighbour Rem Koolhaas called and asked if he could do his pre-biennale exposition in our building. You can not tell the impact of hanging empty toilet pots on the roofs. Ultimately, the deal was that he could use the space but also participate in a debate for free [19]. Again this was contributing to a new audience for the area. So what to do with all the people in the streets? We could ask the municipality for benches or trees but it would take ages so we set up our own factory in which we worked together with local makers to produce our own urban furniture [20] .

These were bottom-up interventions but there's always a misunderstanding of that what we do is bottom-up; since we have quite a top-down framework in what we're doing. Because building cities deals with at least a century and not just a period of a week or so. We like to look at the city as a whole, as a living organism, but really also understanding the larger scope. We were dealing with the central district in which we were, quite detached from the surrounding neighbourhoods. This [21] was from a masterplan showing the people, like confetti, would massively move towards our area but one can really wonder how they would get there

and what they're going to do. So we drew our own very simple plans [22] and actually concluded that around this beautiful Hofplein nobody really walks because there are all these dead-end streets coming from everywhere. So what can we do in order to knit those things together? Maybe we could use some simpler techniques in order to create a kind of ring park around Rotterdam but also connecting it with the former railway tracks and then making it into a green structure which then could also be the new structure for the urban transformation.

We were then appointed curator for the International Architecture Biennial. We got the question to make an exhibition about the things that we were doing and exhibit it in a museum. But actually that doesn't make sense cause the people we want to talk to and negotiate with are not coming to museums. We imagined an alternative alliance, with all the institutions in the area to make a new proposal for the area; basically to declare the whole area to be a test site, so the exhibition is actually the city itself.

The whole idea behind it is that we make nice foam models at 1:500 but at the same time we have to use a 1:1 scale, that is often forgotten. Then it became the idea that we can do 1:1 interventions which then lead to the adaptation of the larger masterplan and therefore becoming an operational way of thinking about planning. That gave birth to this idea of the test site. Doing these interventions in a planned way, 24 of them as a kind of acupuncture, would idealistically result in a holistic strategy which would change the area dramatically. Making places, making routings, densify, local economy and all these things together led to a masterplan or framework in which we activated existing buildings, existing empty public spaces so they would bind together in a bigger whole.

You can see here [23] the connecting footbridge we imagined in order to cross all these barriers leading into the city; the railway tracks but also the big boulevard. So imagining how we could start this process by first of all, crossing the Schiekade. We imagined this bridge could be temporary, made of wood and if we divided it into 17.000 planks we could easily build what we could fund [24].

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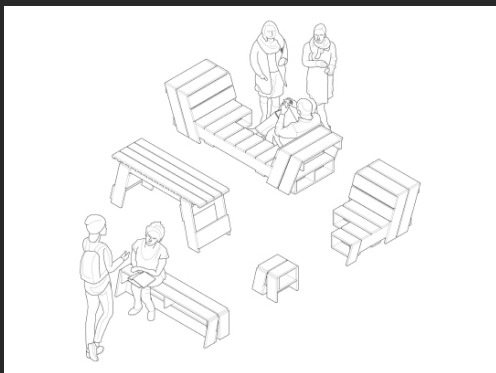
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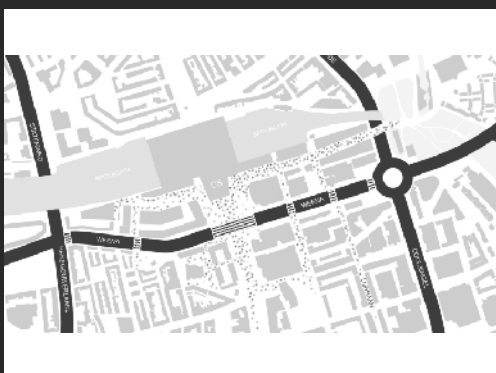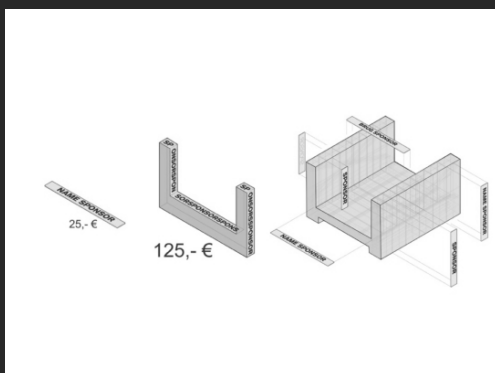
And our eldermen from their own pocket money bought the first plank. Afterwards we initiated the platform, I Make Rotterdam. Whereas unlike iAmsterdam or I Love NY you really have to do something to make this city great. Within a few months we already had €100.000 of money coming in.

We could imagine this could really be a realistic idea to make the footbridge in a way that the bridge was more than just a connection but also a space in which you can have activities [25]. We started to fantasize about all the empty roofs, since obviously there was also 100.00 square metres of empty roofs. So why don't you make those more productive and climate adaptive and so on and so forth. All these ambitions were already in the majority of the ambition documents, but so far nobody really produced a green roof.

We also imagined that you could program the roofs and then the old railway track could be discovered as a potential site. Luckily there was a coincidence of politics and innovation where citizens would get the right to think of a budget of four million Euros to spend on public amenities / infrastructure. We made it until the last round which made us campaign for our initiative. Basically nobody knew anything about the district, it was empty, unowned you could say. Our campaign worked because we attracted people from the neighbourhood to become ambassadors. We set up a polling system in which people would be arrested from their bikes in order to vote in front of the office; the building thus became one big advert. Also official advertisers were willing to help us [26]. Most remarkable was when our whole office went into catsuits in the middle of the night doing flash mobs to get people to vote for their project. Kind of the furthest out of our comfort zone as you could imagine.

Eventually, it worked and we got four million Euros to construct the project. As we said we would build the bridge as far as we could fund so we would have to wait for a long time for the money to come in. So from our own money we already started to build the first part of the bridge and there it was in a kind of perfect isolation for a few months [27]. It started a lot of debate though; what was this IKEA thing doing there, is this worth four million Euros and so on. More important than this discussion, and also a lot of negativity on Twitter, is that all of a sudden these kinds of urban projects became a political issue. That part you could hardly say is reality today, it is still between politicians and developers and architects can play a bit of a role in that. But to make urbanism truly public that is at least what this project did and is still doing.

Here [28] we continued to make a gap into the building. It became a bit of a trojan horse because we were just renting the building for 5 years and we knew if we build a bridge in it is harder to get rid of the building because the bridge would then also need to be demolished. We of course never told the developer. Also this 1:1 model caused us to start to paint zebra crossings all over the city, at almost 700m of painting on our knees in the middle of the night. All of a sudden we had the paving of the confetti of the masterplan shown earlier.

All of a sudden we introduced new types of scale into this quite robust and big scale city block. But it feels a bit more human and opens up the possibilities of thinking of the courtyards not as a backside but as a front side. This is what basically happened. This [29] is where the mayor was on the opening of this test site and he said I have actually never been here while the city hall is just 400 metres away. It is an interesting notion that cities are just raw material. You can constantly intervene in them and you can just change the whole map of the city just through these little interventions.

This is why I refuse to say this is bottom up because you have to have a big thought, a big plan, in mind and then you know exactly what the precise interventions are that you have to do in order to get there and not wait until you can make the big gesture because that will take maybe more than a lifetime. Here [30] you can see the bridge going up through the building, the ornament of the bridge consisting of all the crowdfunded planks. This was a step more than just infrastructure, since we knew this was the most sunny spot of the whole district so this would be definitely something people would use.

Also the parking place, which was normally the only function you would have at the backside, we imagined to be a front-side place to go to. We had the opportunity to have some trees which were left from redoing the boulevard next doors and to declare this

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side as a tree bank. Extra advantage was that there no longer were fences around it.

The steps leading downwards were imagined not only as just steps but also a place where you could have a fantastic Biergarten [31] because you could make a lot of noise since we were next to the railway tracks. The interesting thing is that this Biergarten idea was just one of the 24 projects but became one of the most representative projects and activators of the area.

Step by step, every year it was getting bigger and bigger and you can see how all the temporary structures grow into more permanent structures and the permanent structures become even more permanent. In a way, you can read the transition from temporality to permanence. In the urban fabric, and that we think is fascinating to talk about, people experience steel and wood as materials differently. Wood is definitely more ephemeral but as soon as you start to construct it in steel, people take it more for granted.

Here [32] you can see after the Biergarten, Annabel, an inside pop stage, was being flipped outside including a bar and a tree. The roof of the Schieblock we imagined being more productive. The house of the former landlord we transformed into a restaurant and all of a sudden in this kind of brutal environment of backsides and glass and steel we could imagine crops growing, real pumpkins on the roof, beehives and again this kind of new environment attracted a lot of new use for the area.

Here [33] you can see the prototype as we imagined, connecting different districts making a mix of use, green use, lively plinths all these ambitions which were drawn out of these ambition documents. We continued to extend the bridge over the railway tracks over the highways and basically introducing a new type of infrastructure into the city more meant for people than for cars and trains.

Funnily enough, the first segment was actually over the railway tracks, which seemed to be the easiest to deal with. All the other places were the property of different owners and they had big trouble imagining this could be an advantage for their respective companies. Here [34] you can see in full effect where

it is again connecting following the existing urban fabric of the pre-war situation. The main strategy behind this is that this tiny infrastructure could change the meaning and significance of the buildings. The Shell HQ was empty for 20 years and now all of a sudden we are opening up this façade. It is currently happening, we are cutting a kind of James Bond door in the travertine wall which will open up the first two floors which will be a café. Here this brutal and beautiful modernist building has now two entrances and is then connected to the smaller urban fabric we are now introducing.

On the very point where there used to be the junction we made a kind of small Hofplein, a roundabout for people and not for cars. On the place where nothing has been for years, we imagined a place where people from the neighbourhood could meet in choreography. In the neighbourhood we made a whole park to turn into a new park for the neighbourhood.

Here [35] we are back in the Biergarten and you can see what the previous image of the parking place now has become because it is now all of a sudden a place where people actually want to gather and where people want to hang out. You can see how we made full use of the old beam structures in order to create a new reality between the inside and outside. Here all things come together and in order to activate the former railway station, we worked together with a theatre group called Wunderbar to create this arena which slowly opens up during its theatre play.

Currently we are developing this roof as being a public park with event space but also a space for urban gardening. Because of limitations in budget we just kept a lot of the artefacts of the railway station and changed it into lighting objects and also paving. Again attracting people doing yoga, people watching movies or people just having a break. After this episode there was an episode of fall.

Fall, in the sense that we were no longer basically responsible or we could not help with all the things we were doing, because the municipality wanted to take over the bridge and take over the Schieblock. Strangely enough it caused a public ownership by the use of social media; the municipality did not know how to handle the infrastructure well.
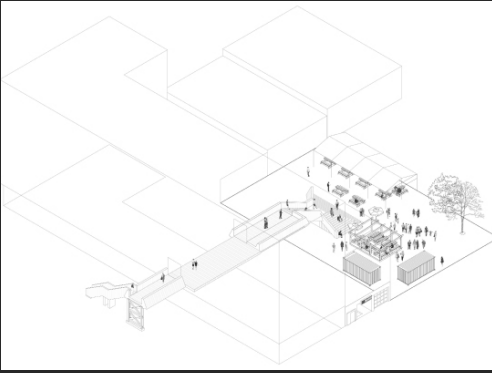
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Because we were getting so fed up with all these talks about maintenance we chose to do it ourselves. In one day we had the whole studio working on painting the bridge again. Meanwhile all kinds of brands took it as their identity strangely enough [36], while at the other time it was getting less and less maintained which for some brands could maybe be sign of being urban.

We were also discovered by all these hot lists and that caused again a new kind of public occupation in a massive way. All these activities now have driven speculations to a new height [37]. Together with the municipality we have been working to think about a true densification based on the existing urban fabric. Then, we were accused of having a double agenda. On the one hand we were planning for the future, on the other hand we were advocating for the existing situation. We are writing this book about all this activities and we thought this is not a nice end to conclude the book. So in order to have a truly nice ending of the book we imagined a new chapter, which is now happening. We called it: future.

It started with writing a letter to the mayor and saying it cannot be true that all the efforts that have been done the last 10-15 years are now just neglected and real estate agents or developers and politicians are taking over. That cannot be true, so please help us think how we can change that course of history. In order to do so we opened up a gallery, and called it deliberately 'Incomplete and Unfinished' because basically that's the nature of our city [38]. It's always in the making. This gallery was meant to influence all the politicians which were about to decide on the future of this area. In a kind of TV studio setting we invited all the politicians and all the council members and confronted them with their own speech about the future or the current situation of the block. Taking this guy [39] from the populist party, right wing: 'well all these artists doing all these things there they can go somewhere else doing their creative stuff, they didn't pay rent anyway'. It took us two hours to convince him that actually we are also deeply involved in making a local economy there but also thinking about a cultural heritage continuation of things which have been built there since the war.

We were showing these [40] maps of all the rental prices of the city. In order to explain them in simple words what gentrification actually does; simply making the whole inner city unaffordable for normal people. Many other parties came along. In order to challenge them, that we are not that bottom up, we proposed a tower next to our Schieblock, because there was a business case of €52mio for the area and they had to earn it back. We calculated that if we build one tower of 230m high it could already create a kind of normal neutral business case for them. So that could liberate the rest of the area from all the speculative projects. Also we imagined that all the cultural parties which had come to the area for the last 10 years we could organise in a new building which would be next to the railway and these [41] became the different components with which we tried to influence all the politicians and decision makers. Ultimately every politician leaving that gallery was slowly becoming more enthusiastic about what has happened and what the possibilities are, and without having this great depth on our business case, they put their remarks and all of a sudden they thought differently about the future of the area.

What we have done the past 18 years is not making an alternative masterplan but have an alternative approach about how you can deal with urbanism and planning. In a way that we use time in our benefit and these are the different strategies we've applied and in different stages intervening in existing fabric. Up till now it has turned into 70 different projects which all together now lead to this urban transformation. We believe this kind of urban strategy is more resilient for any crises to come, because it is not relying anymore on huge investments and big scale implementations. So all these lessons we've drawn we have written and visualised in a book. And also to tell our story and educate new people dealing with these kinds of political and urban situations. We set up a school, Independent School for the City, together with Crimson, where you will be taught and trained autonomous and as independent as possible, despite always being attached to money and restrictions.

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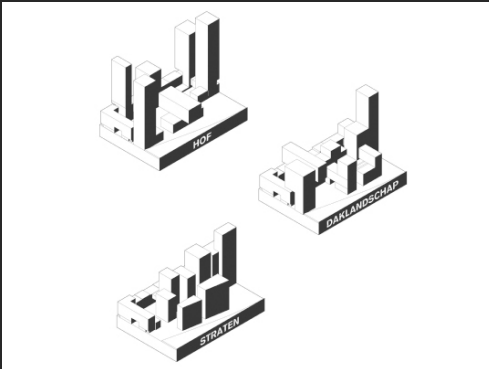
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Architects from the re-emerging 'weaving generation' are an example of architects that use site specific conditions in their design to enrich the existing local fabric. They try to create a broader perspective for architecture by respecting context, art and history. However, a duality in how to deal with existing architecture is noticeable. We are being asked to preserve what is already there, but at the same time we have to build for the future. Has society changed so much that new sources, methods and strategies are required to meet the needs of the future? Or does it need to be elaborated on the existing fabric?

source

erik rietveld & david habets
RAAAF

Erik Rietveld is Socrates Professor in Philosophy and Partner of RAAAF, which he co-founded in 2006. RAAAF operates at the crossroads of visual art, architecture and philosophy. David Habets has a background in applied physics and landscape architecture at the Applied University Eindhoven and Academy of Architecture Amsterdam. David has been a member of RAAAF's core team since 2011. RAAAF makes location- and context specific work. Their projects have been exhibited at biennales such as those of São Paulo, Istanbul, Chicago and Venice. The studio has won several prestigious awards, including the Prix de Rome and the Architectural Review Award, the European Prize of Architecture. In 2013 RAAAF earned the title of New Radical and Dutch Architect of the Year. The various juries emphasize the ability of the studio to cross and stretch the disciplinary borders of architecture, philosophy and visual art. In 2016 Ronald & Erik Rietveld have been invited to become members of the Society of Arts at the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW).

Hardcore Heritage

[Erik]
We were asked to tell a bit about our fascinations. I think in general we are fascinated by what is possible and meaningful in human life, and to explore what is possible and to reflect on what is possible, both in text and in work. A lot of the projects that we do are more large scale art installations, but always so big that we need the architectural skills to realize them. One of the branches of research and work that we do, we have called hardcore heritage. And this is what we want to focus on today. The studio was co-founded in 2006 with my brother. Some of the fascinations come from where we grew up, which is in the Dutch lowlands. [1] So we like openness and we also like places where there is just emptiness, which is quite rare in the Netherlands.

Bunker 599 - New Dutch Waterline

Many of you will know Bunker 599. This is an art installation which we made together with Atelier de Lyon. It is part of the New Dutch Waterline [2] which is UNESCO nominated world heritage and consists of many different concrete objects, fortresses and bunkers. [3] One of these bunkers we cut, we sliced it open. When we want to make something, we first make an image that shows clearly what the idea is and what the experience will be. In this case, with Bunker 599, we made an image to basically convince people that we should cut the bunker. Now you can imagine that convincing monument authorities to cut a bunker is not the easiest thing to do. It was at that moment already a municipal monument and later it became a national monument and UNESCO nominated. It took 5 years to realize mainly because of this bureaucratic aspect of it. We used a diamond saw and it took one month to get through it. [4] What is special about it, is that it opens up a new perspective on how to deal with heritage. Normally heritage is preserved. It is put on a pedestal in a museum where you cannot touch it.[5] Here, by slicing it open, we opened up a new perspective on the object, but also on how we could deal with monuments in a more imaginative way. By transforming it into an art installation the object speaks to the imagination of more people than it did before. It also opens up a new perspective on materiality. [6] The concrete inside is beautiful. You see the reinforcement steel and you see the spaces where people would be hiding in times of war. We chose the location very specifically. There are several of these bunkers and we picked one next to the main highway so people can see it from the highway.

This way of thinking about hardcore heritage is trying to find a new way of connecting history, the future and current experience of people. We try to develop a new way of thinking about how to deal with cultural heritage. Part of it is deliberate destruction or changing the context of the object that we're working with. Making very site specific interventions that bring out the most interesting qualities and layers of meaning of the object that we're working with.

I mentioned that philosophy is also involved in the studio. Basically, I am a philosopher working at the University of Amsterdam and Twente. The philosophy I'm working on is called 'embodied cognitive science'. It is about the importance of the role that the environment and the surroundings play if you want to understand behaviour. One of the central notions philosophical research is called affordances. These are basically the possibilities for actions that the environment offers, like the place you are seated now offers the possibility to sit, but the stairs also offer the possibility to walk on or jump off and to have a meeting for instance.

One example is about a guy who is about to sit on a chair. He is responding to the possibility the chair offers to move it, but also responding to the possibility of the chair to sit on it. And he's moving it to an appropriate distance from the chair next to it. So in our engagement with the action possibilities that the environment offers, we coordinate with multiple affordances simultaneously. Just like some of you are currently sketching or making notes, and listening to me, and responding to the possibility of sitting on the stairs. That's basically the central way in which we engage with the environment, this coordination with multiple affordances simultaneously.

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New Dutch Waterline 1940

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[7] So affordances are the possibilities for action that the environment offers. And there are also social possibilities for action, social affordances, like an extended hand for shaking. An affordance for sociability could also be a campfire for instance, which is a way of bringing people together. If you want to increase the possibility that people from different social backgrounds meet, creating a campfire is a possibility for that, because anyone can value that.

If you want to understand behaviour, you have to think of the individual and the environment as one coupled and integrated system, where people are basically responding to the action possibilities that the environment offers and coordinating with multiple action possibilities.

The End of Sitting - Outstanding Landscape of Affordances

We made a project that makes this way of engaging with the environment very clear. It shows that if you radically change the affordances available, you will be able to generate behavioural change. That project was titled 'The End of Sitting' and it was basically trying to imagine what a world without chairs would look like. A world without chairs and benches. Like you are seated now, we often assume that we should sit, but of course there is no need to do that. We could change that practice if we would radically change the environment. But that is not how it is today. We sit all the time. We sit in public spaces, in public transport, in educational settings and we actually teach children from a young age that standing is like a punishment [8].

When we do projects we always start with historical research. A lot of the inspiration of the work that we make comes from investigating the history. In the case of 'The End of Sitting' we've been doing investigations on how it would be like to work in non-seated ways in history. The notion of office comes from officium. In ancient times, people were offering their services on the market square, for instance, and they were more hanging around than being seated. Then when the printing press was invented, you see work spaces that are far more active than the workspaces in which people behave today. With standardization everyone overtime became seated and locked into their own little spaces to sit in. Now to imagine how we could live differently, how we could work for instance not seated but by means of ways of supported standing, we started creating what we call material playgrounds. These are one to one experiments to find out how you could do things differently. So basically these are models, scale models, playing with the environment and the surroundings in order to find out on a scale one to one what would feel good for the body if you would want to work not seated but in a different way. [9] By playing around and exploring these affordances that the environment offers, you bump into things that work and we collected those as they were. We materialized them and brought them with us to the big installation that we were making.

For example David tested an optimal position for reading in a supported standing way. That angle was then also brought into the big installation. [10, 11] The end result was a large installation that we made together with visual artist Barbara Visser in an art space in Amsterdam. [12] This is an entirely new vision on how we could work in 2025 when we start to take seriously that being seated all the time is not necessary and that we could create places where people move around more often. As I said, we always make site specific work. The installation was very much attuned to the space in which we were working. The installation goes from low to high, so that people from different body sizes can find optimal positions to work standing. All the positions in it are only temporarily comfortable, so that after a certain period of time, people's muscles would get tired and they would be motivated intrinsically to move to another position.

This is a way how, by radically changing the available affordances, you can contribute to the generation of new kinds of behaviours. So if you radically change the landscape of affordances around you, you will be able to generate behavioural change. But it also makes people aware of their habitual sitting behaviour. So, what such an art installation does: it invites reflection on the way that you normally behave, on the way that you are always seated. It also questions the way we build our interiors, the way we build our living environment. It shows that we could do it differently, and also makes it tangible and experiential for people that we could live entirely different. There are also spaces underneath the installation.
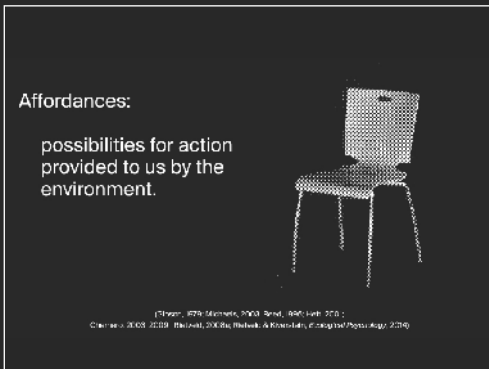
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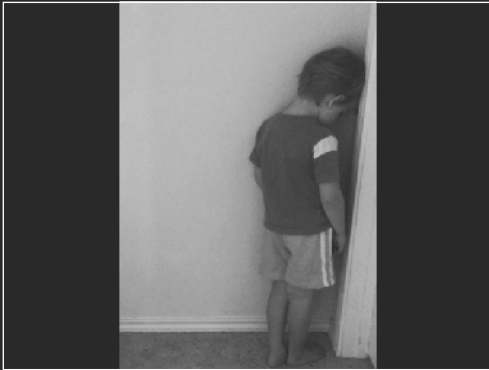
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Because not everyone likes to be in an open office setting, we made an entire world underneath.

One of the things that is super interesting about 'The End of Sitting' project is that all sorts of scientists started to do empirical research on the installation. So it was an artwork, but then scientists from human movement sciences, from ecological psychology and from epidemiology all started to do experiments on this art installation, to investigate how a future without chairs could look like and to have people tell them how they experience an environment like this. After we finished that large installation we continued doing material experiments. Sometimes you get stuck in using one material. We were stuck using the material wood. So what we did, we built a large metal frame in which we tested out all sorts of different materials on the scale of the body, one to one. In this frame we would then experiment with different materials to find out what works well for supporting the body if you want to live in non sedentary ways. For example we suspended the inner tires of bikes. They are actually quite comfortable, particularly if you tilt the frame and tilt the feet, so you're leaning back. Another material is carpet, which is normally on floors. We lifted it up and we made an environment which you can experience yourself at the Mondriaan Fund for Visual Arts in the Center of Amsterdam. [13] Another material is releasing straps in which you can hang in an entirely different way than you are used to.

Before telling something about our projects, I want to emphasize that affordances are not just about supporting the body or thinking about how to generate behaviour. They can also help us to think in terms of the resources that our surroundings offer. One of the forms of resources available are the affordances offered by vacant or empty buildings. We've been fascinated by them for years.

[David]
Vacant NL - Venice Biennale 2010

We'll go to Venice, to the biennial in 2010. In this biennial we were asked to make a temporary exhibition about vacancy in the Netherlands. So, we make site specific work and all the projects that we do start from our own fascinations. For example, Radio Kootwijk in the East of the Netherlands, is a very beautiful public building that everybody in the Netherlands paid for, but it has stood vacant for 30 years. What we were asked, was to make an exhibition in the Rietveld Pavilion in Venice. We found out that it is a Dutch building on Dutch soil, but then in Venice. Because the biennial is only a part of the year and changes between the architecture and art biennial, the building was already vacant for 39 years in 2010. We tried to translate the experience of this vacant building into the art installation. You have to imagine that in an art biennial, every pavilion is filled with art and architecture. Installations and people are everywhere, so we tried to keep the pavilion totally empty, to have an experience of vacancy. [14] But, when you walk up the stairs, you are actually standing in a building full of vacant buildings: 10.000 vacant buildings in the Netherlands [15]. Some were famous church towers and one for example is the Shell tower in Amsterdam. These 10.000 buildings actually stand for 50.000 years of vacancy. On average they are vacant for 5 years or more, so 10.000 buildings, that is 50.000 years of public money that we don't invest into either people who want to innovate in these buildings or innovations within the arts. When you have to build an art installation, you try to make the best use of the qualities of the spaces themselves. It is very important to feel the space yourself, to try to summarize it and translate it into what it could be. The foam cut buildings were suspended on these steel ruds, but they actually are lifted up towards and capturing the beautiful light that Rietveld designed within this building. You get this blue glooming touch of light coming from the installation. After the installation we were asked to do the same exhibition but then in the NAi and in the Arcam, but we never repeat an installation, it is always site specific work. So for the Centraal Museum in Utrecht we tried to figure out how we could translate what we already had into a new exhibition. That became the counter space that reacted to this old church-like chapel space that is part of the museum. [16] The leftovers of the installation in Venice were translated into a new installation on a new location that makes use of different qualities of the light.

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Secret Operation 610 - Airbase Soesterberg

I want to get back to this hardcore heritage approach, because it is not only about cutting bunkers. It is way more diverse in how you can open up your ways of thinking about how or what heritage means in the future. One of the places that was part of the exhibition of Venice, was the Airbase in Soesterberg, an old Nato base. Together with Frank Havermans we made an installation called Secret Operation 610. When we arrived at the place, there was this 3 km long airstrip, made of tarmac. It was one of the vacant places that was left behind after the Cold War, after the Nato soldiers went away. What you could still feel within this space when we first arrived, was the mystery of the Cold War. We were alone on a tarmec strip, where you could put the pedal all the way down and race across the landing strip towards this shelter, shelter 610.

We were asked to make an interior design for this bunker [17]. The bunker was housing the f15 that would be ready to leave and lift off within 30 seconds after a thread would have been alarmed. The question was whether you would start building a structure from the inside out, or whether you would use the qualities of the doors opening up and actually translate it into the connection with this airstrip itself. Together with Frank Havermans we tested again one to one and developed endless models. I think there were over a 100 different varieties of this installation and in the end it became this movable sculpture that can come out of the doors.

Imagine these air-force bells ringing when the doors open up and this creature is actually drawn out and moves in between the crowd [18]. If you come up close you can feel the scale and the enormous structure of it and you can actually still feel the scale of the f15 strike fighter that could fly at 2mg. But this creature moves at 1 or 2 km/h very slowly over this landing strip. [19] On the inside it's a mobile workspace, so 10 people can work here. It was designed as a space where you can think for example about the green flying of the future. In this specific location there is a very beautiful natural area that has become a conservation area which comes together with this Cold War technological history. We think these are the perfect locations to sort of invite and trigger new ways of thinking of how you could think of

green flying for example. Another very important thing that the object does in the space itself, in this endless strip of tarmac, is that it actually draws how big the space itself is. [20] By moving very slowly through the area, people that can now go there with their bikes and walk through the area, suddenly see this strange creature approaching and you somehow still feel a little bit of the Cold War history that is slowly disappearing from the area with all these new signing, fences and redesigning of the place going on.

After Image - Sugar Factory Groningen

This is a very interesting assignment, because where do you get your sources, and where do you get your inspiration from when the whole factory that you are asked to do something with has been demolished. [21] Only a small part was kept and saved, this brick old building. Just at the last moment, one week before demolition, there was a group of people that stopped people from demolishing it. We were asked to make a temporary art installation at this location. There was practically nothing that you could react on or study, but at RAAAF we started noticing this sort of vague imprint of an old foundation. On this foundation there had been 80 meters high sugar silos. We are in the lowlands of the Netherlands, in this case on clay soil. You can imagine the weight that is being pushed down onto the soil. Beneath this world we dove into the archive and started excavating. There was a whole industrial row of columns. Under the bigger silo, there were already 500 columns of 11 meters deep and they were about 50 x 50 cm. The plan is to not only excavate in the archives but actually excavate the foundations of the silos. [22]

Where at first sight there was nothing, all of a sudden by just digging the soil away there was a new cathedral space that gives people the opportunity to experience the world that is below the Netherlands. Not only in Groningen but in half of the Netherlands we have to build these kinds of constructions. This gives the opportunity to experience them for once. They are 9 meters high and it is an incredibly light space. We cut the slope towards the silo on the sun side next to the factory that is still there. It is sort of an industrial heritage heart, and the new heart for a whole new development for Groningen around this place that has lost its history. If you talk to people in Groningen, they will tell you that they were actually

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attached to this factory and find it horrible that it has been destroyed completely. But what I really found interesting about it, is that you can sort of highlight and unveil spaces that are still there, and that can mean something new towards the future of the area.

[Erik]
Deltawerk // - Dutch Hydrodynamics Laboratory Flevoland

This project is made at a site where 75 engineers used to work on the Delta Works. The Delta Works were built in Zeeland and they keep the Netherlands from flooding. [23] In this photograph you see the enormous size of the construction works that were necessary for building the Delta Works. The 75 engineers, that were doing all sorts of experiments to for instance test if it would be strong enough, were working in Flevoland in a big forest, called the Waterloo Bos. Here they would do all sorts of scale experiments. One of the objects there in the Waterloo Bos was this huge 250 metres long delta flume, a wave machine. It's 250 metres long, 8 metres high and 5 metres wide. The engineers could make all sorts of waves that were necessary for testing the structures that they were building. They could make tsunami waves if they wanted, and then bump them into the construction that they were inventing.

At some point, all the engineers moved away, partly to Delft, and the whole terrain became vacant and overgrown by nature. Nature made such a nice new environment of this former engineering site, that it now has become a national park, called Waterloo Bos. [24] One of these objects in this vacant area is this delta flume without waves. We were invited to make an artwork for this new national monument Waterloo Bos. As we have mentioned already several times, when we start to do a project, we always do a lot of (historical) research about the site. [25] In the archives we found an image of the construction of the Delta flume, in which you see it was actually built on the ground and later the earth was moved against it. When we found this image, it first led to the idea that perhaps we could dig it out again so that it is just like it was, and so that you can feel the size of these enormous 79 meter high walls that were necessary for making this wave machine.

So what we did was dig out all the earth on the sides and take it away. [26] This is the image we made to convince the commissioner that we should get the funding to make this artwork. Of course it is easy to make an image, but it is very difficult to realize the project in reality. [27] This is the built result, so it is actually quite similar. For anyone who has ever built something, you will know that there is often a discrepancy between what you have imagined and what it has become reality. We are a small studio and we want to keep it this way, so we can be involved in the process of making and can be on top of the realization of the work. We always try to make reality even better than what we have imagined in our images. So being on top of the making process, of the realization, is essential to us.

Some of the plates are super heavy and you can almost feel the heaviness of the plates over your heads. Basically, the project questions the idea of the Netherlands being able to produce an indestructible Holland. What you see is a new way of approaching ruins that doesn't wait for something to become a ruin, but is more like an active ruin creation. What is very special about the place, is that the experience is always entirely different with different light and weather conditions. So it is worth visiting during different moments of the day and during different seasons.

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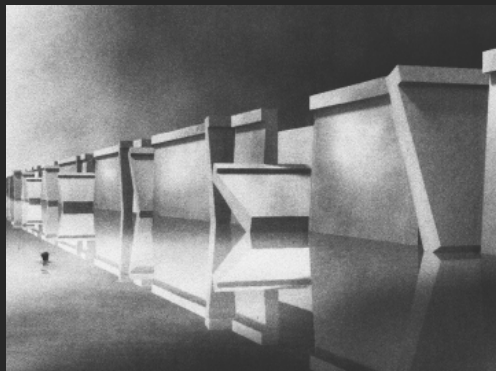
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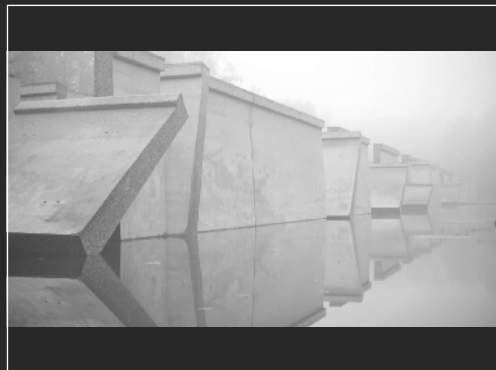
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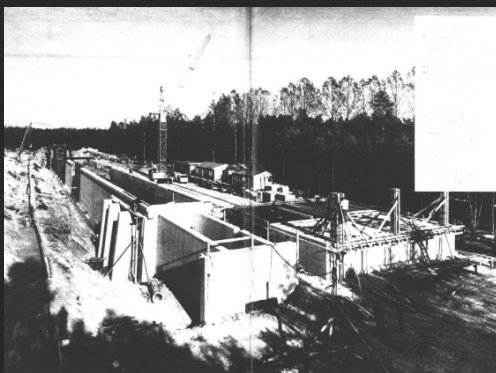
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eko prawoto
Eko Prawoto Architecture Workshop

Indonesian architect Eko Prawoto completed his studies at Gadjah Mada University in 1982 and obtained his masters in architecture at the Berlage Institute in Amsterdam in 1993. Since he has his own firm of architects and is a lecturer at the Duta Wacana Christian University in Yogyakarta. He designs and executes architectural constructions, making use of local technical knowledge and all kinds of available materials which are often recycled and which he converts into a modern design. His ecological architecture is a direct consequence of the social and cultural context for which his designs are intended. His aim is to reinforce communities' solidarity with one another and to improve local people's living conditions. His work has been exhibited at the Venice Biennale 2000, Arte all'arte, the Gwangju Biennale, the Echigo Tsumari Art Triennale, the Kamikatsu Art Festival, the Anyang popular art project in Korea, Common Ground Australia, Regionale xii in Austria, the Singapore Biennale 2013 and SONSBEEK '16 among others.

Architecture of the Ordinary - Celebrating life and nature

What I'm about to share today are some small things. I remember when I met one of the professors Abel Cahen Father Mangunwijaya, he asked me: 'Oh, you want to be an architect?' and I said: 'Yes' and he said: 'You will be very lonely as an architect'. So this is maybe part of the journey: walking in a small path as a so called architect. Maybe this, what I am going to show, is not really architecture, or at least not architecture with a capital A, but architecture with a small a.

I will start with what I saw in Indonesia: everything has become a commodity [1]. We are living in the era of commodification. At the same time, I'm aware that we are in a transitional period. We are in the middle of the process from the traditional to the modern. We are not yet modern, but we're also not traditional anymore. Father Meehan Mijaja mentioned that this period is like a mermaid: it's not a fish anymore, but also not yet a human. It is suspended somewhere in between.

What is never mentioned in a textbook in the architectural curriculum, is that we have about 17.000 islands with more than 400 languages and ethnic groups, all with their own culture and architecture culture. So the question is, what will we use of those things? Would it still be possible to modernise and stay rooted in our own culture in a globalised world? Or do we have to let it go? Would it still be possible to keep the values and wisdom from the richness of the Indonesian culture and architecture in a modern context?

I really feel that this is not easy. We are flooded with a lot of information and everything is changing very fast. We could question what is possibly the role of the architect or architecture?

I met one of my guru's, Balkrishna Vithaldas Doshi, three times. We first met at the beginning of my years at the Berlage Institute, when I felt very confused and worried. He said: 'Eko don't worry about change. Everything changes. You know when the butterfly dies, but you will not know when the mountain dies. But everything changes.' The second time I met him in Yogyakarta, he said: 'Not everything changes, there are some things that remain the same. Your feelings regarding the sky, your feelings regarding the trees, your feelings regarding your mother. Those will remain the same.'

After some years I met him in Ahmedabad. I told him: 'I will learn from India, because now the pressure is so big and I feel very worried about the process of modernisation and globalisation in Indonesia.' He said: 'No, you cannot learn from India. You have to learn from yourself. But do not confront. You have to adapt and negotiate, not confront.'

Glocality

To start, I made a kind of reflection of my own journey in searching and trying to find the balance in doing architecture. First I searched the quiet pathway to learn from what we have in Indonesia. I think agriculture is the root of our architecture in Indonesia. Agriculture is culture [2]. It's more than just planting seeds or managing the rice fields. It is the knowledge and understanding of how nature, the water system, climate and the weather are working together. It has been there for so many years. Even in the belief system, there is a harmony or relationship between human beings and ancestors and human beings and nature.

In the epic of Ramayana, part of our belief system, there are two aspects of human being. One is the greedy one and the other is the quiet, humble and reflective one. It is these two kinds of characters that we have inside our bodies and we could become both [3].

Working in the rice field is always together [4]. You cannot do it alone. That's why it has become the collective culture. If we talk about architecture, the main ingredient of architecture is creating shade. It's because of the character of a two seasons country. We just need a roof to protect us from the sun, wind, rain, and earthquakes.

Earthquakes have happened multiple times [5]. The last big earthquake in Yogyakarta was in 2006 and it will not be the last one. We will experience them, or floods, or volcanic eruptions, again. It's part of our lives. But, it has also, in a way, mentally or spiritually made us stronger. We always believe in this kind of

...is everything only commodity?

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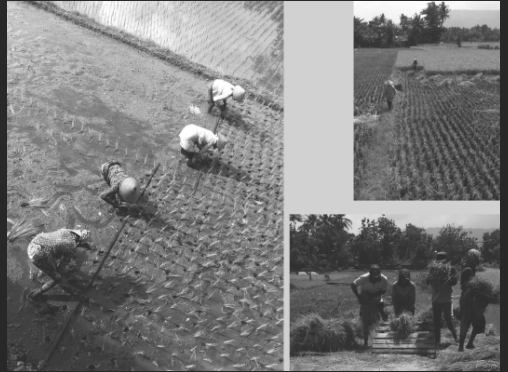
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power that controls many things. Maybe this is what built the Javanese character: trying to accommodate and compromise in a way and trying to adapt to and negotiate with these kinds of very dominant and important factors like time, water and wind [6].

We never cut off the relationship with the surroundings. The Javanese never say no, because we try to keep the relationship, never confronting others, never cutting it off. We have many kinds of yes, maybe 15 kinds of yes, which sometimes means no as well.

The seeds of architecture are a roof, a breathing wall, the relationship with plants and nature and organic materials. This is never taught or learned in the architecture department of the university. Also flexible space, ornament, detail and color are things we pay very special attention to. Basically you see that a traditional or vernacular structure is a flexible space, which is quite modern. Of course in the beginning, it is not done very consciously, but it becomes more and more by trying to do architecture that enhances the local spirit or to start with the available things. Instead of exploring ideas, I try to begin with preparing, reading and collecting the ingredients needed.

In my projects I use a lot of existing and recycled elements, like old structures [7]. I also try to respect the existing trees and to use vernacular principles and flexible wall panels. By using and combining the available materials, you can create something new.

This is Nindityo Mella's House. How understand the fluidity of the space? How to insert in the middle of a rather dense Kampung. It is owned by an artist couple.

Sharon's House [8] house shows how to use coconut wood as a main structure and how to create a space which is very transparent and open. The owner is a bit claustrophobic, so everything had to be transparent and open. Even the bathroom has no doors. The wall configuration is like a snail, so no doors are needed. I tried to respect the existing trees again. There was one tree producing fruit that fell down and damaged the roof tiles. Someone said: 'Why don't you cut down the trees?' No, they should stay. Instead of cutting down the trees, I made a woven bamboo structure to protect the roof.

This is Sitok's House [9], an artists house, using local stone taken from the side and used doors and windows. Sometimes, when you do something like this, you don't know what kind of doors or windows you will get. Sometimes the door is higher than the wall you designed, but that is the fun part. Then you can make funny things, by thinking of how to adjust the different heights.

This is another case, Jaduk's House [10], that shows how we respect the existing trees and use recycled elements. We used recycled tiles and there were only 147 tiles, so we had to distribute them around the house.

This is the house of a dancer, Jeanny-Lantip. The ground floor is fluid [11, left], the upper floor is more rigid. Again you see a lot of the detailing [11, right]. It's handcrafted by the local people.

Santi & Miko's House is the house of young artists. Here, it's more about combining the traditional with industrial materials like the stairs made of skateboards, their own artwork and the lamp holder made from bicycle frames.

[6]

Time,water and wind.....*follow the flow*

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SITOK'S HOUSE

[7]

Utilize the available materials&skills
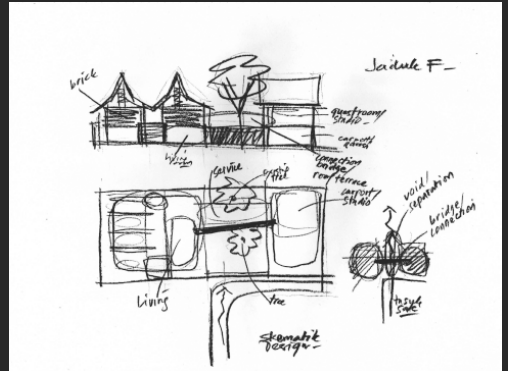
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This is a project, called Saba CLC - Collective Memory [12], that works with the community to bring back their collective memory. The roof shapes come from the shape of the back of the turtle. We built it together with the community, while before this, they had no skills.

The next project is called Ujung Alang CLC - Local Knowledge. What I have discovered, is that actually the community knows more about the local knowledge. This foundation system for example, is not my invention, but it's following how they build. The area is very swampy, with a very low bearing capacity. What they did, is just put some kind of palm sticks with woven bamboo on top. On top of this they build the stone or concrete foundation, finished with the bamboo structure. This system works very well in a swampy area.

After the earthquake in 2006, I had the opportunity to work with a community in the village, on a project called Ngibikan Village Reconstruction - Spirit of Togetherness. What I did actually was just proposing a very simple structure which they could build by themselves. In a relatively short time, 90 days, we were able to build 65 houses and in the next phase another 40 houses. In the end, all the houses looked a bit different. Every house is unique, because they used recycled elements and they improvised themselves.

This project is called Tokino Hashi/Time Bridge - Kamikatsu Art Festival, in Japan 2007 [13]. Also within the art projects, I discovered that working with the community is very interesting. It's not about me, it's about them. So the beginning is always exploring, talking and discussing a lot to make the project relevant. During the process some ideas from the people are brought in.

The next project is called the Wormhole. Building these kinds of art projects in a foreign country gives not only an experience to the bamboo workers and the villagers, but also lets them reflect upon their own culture. It's part of the education for the building workers.

This, Bamburst [14], is a large project in Arnhem with bamboo. It is very interesting to see how the people here respond to, or fill in the activities of the structure. Weddings, yoga lessons, etc.

This project, Konstruk 'Tunggak Semi' in Malaysia 2016 [15], was an opportunity to use different kinds of technologies and ways of building it. In Indonesia maybe we wouldn't have been able to build it, but in Malaysia be could. What is actually important is how to understand the site, how to read the site, how to make architecture which is blended with the site in a way, but also using the available local skills and technology [16].

Other layers which I have experienced are related to spirituality. How to read the site with a different angle. It's part of a Buddhist school in Malang and they still have or are practicing the rituals on how to create a dialogue with nature. It's an old or even ancient knowledge of how to read the regulations of nature and how to use it to do architecture.

Here, at the Dance School and Art Space, local materials and local skills were used, but in a rather different way. It is part of the revitalisation of the local dance school and art space. The imperfections are not in the sense of precision perceived by the industrial rules or engineer, but this is more the language of nature.

Concluding, this is how I tried to understand and develop the language of architecture and how I tried to work with the people and make architecture not starting with the idea but the other way around: collecting the information, the thinking, the potentiality, the materials, and I then only become a catalyst or facilitator. A small trigger which makes the architecture happen in respect to the life of the people and also to the existence of the nature. I think I have said what I could share with you for today.

Thank you

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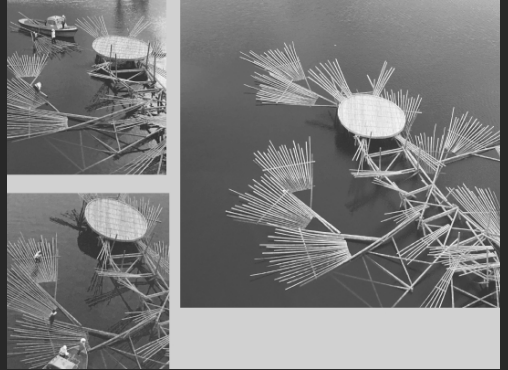
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francine houben

Mecanoo

Francine Houben studied at the Delft University of Technology. There she began to formulate the three fundamental concepts of her architectural vision. Designing primarily for People, constructing spaces that are relevant to Place, and forging connections that give a building Purpose have remained consistent. Over the past three decades these values have been underlying the work of Mecanoo, which she co-founded in 1984. Always seeking inspiration in the details of specific sites and locations, Francine bases her work on precise analysis coupled with an intuition built over three decades. She interweaves social, technical, playful and human aspects of space-making together in order to create a unique solution to each architectural challenge.

People, Place, Purpose

First of all, I am very happy to be here, in Delft, it is where my office is. I thought maybe I will show you some projects and tell you, as my position as an architect, what interests me. This lecture will be about trying to understand from your perspective why it is interesting for me to be an architect. First of all, I like to be the follow up of Eko (Prawoto) because of the People, Place, Purpose philosophy. Architecture was, when I was at school, very much purpose driven. It was about square meters, programs and functions. But in my experience that always changes in the end. So why should we be so much purpose driven? The place is more important, also thinking of these climate issues, and what country or place you are working in. But at the same time number one is the people. Maybe it is the same philosophy as you have. In the end there are a lot of things changing but not the people. It is very much about the senses, how people feel the space. It is about touching, about feeling, it is about acoustics, it is about the influence of daylight. That you want to take care of your children or your parents. So I think this is a similar philosophy as you explained. I also like to do things I have never done before. I love it.

Why I like it to be here in Delft is because of its history, because I studied here, because of being part of the changing of the university, to make the library. What I really learned is that being an architect is not to do it all alone. It is really about being part of a bigger team. I enjoy it very much and call it the symphony orchestra [1]. But you can also have more recital size of teams. Change I like very much, but also be aware, this is a picture of 1969 and I started studying in 1974. This was the picture of 2012 and I was part of that changing the university itself. By making the park, making this library. But even after that it also keeps on changing. It is always updating because the world is changing, education is changing.

If you look at the original interior of the library for instance. We were, when we were working on that library, prepared by the chief librarian. He said to me; 'Francine, I know it will change. Partly I will know what will change, and partly I have no clue how it will change'. We were prepared for that and that is what we did. This is an old one and a new one [2]. You see it in the floorplans, and still it is not a building that is so flexible that it is really standard. No, it has character, it has identity and it had the space to change; the interior. For instance, nowadays all the magazines are gone and the collection of the books is changing. It is much more informal learning than what we did 20 years ago. Also there is much more co-working space than it used to be like 20 years, 10 years, 15 years ago. So it is very interesting to follow what is happening in the world. I always say to my people in my office and also students I am teaching to: 'Go away from your computer. Look what is happening in the world and how the world is changing. You should be part of it and serve that.'

Now I want to tell you something totally different. What is this? [3] What do you think this is? It's in Venice. I wanted to tell you this since a lot of people always think it is about big projects. But it is very small things that are also interesting. A lot of work for me is based on analysis and intuition. I sometimes say this is my most intuitive project. It is a chapel. I received a phone call from a priest: 'Do you want to design a chapel, somewhere here in Rotterdam on a cemetery?' I said okay, let's make an appointment, but now I am on my way to Venice, so when I come back let's make an appointment. In Venice I was thinking on how to design a chapel in a cemetery. It was meant for the year 2000 and I thought this is so exciting. I was there with a friend who was an art curator, so I went with him to visit all the chapels in Venice and I was amazed. He explained to me it was like a jewel box with these colours. It is also the time where they had these paintings [4] that were part of the collection and colours of the chapels.

I did like a golden ceiling and this: the Pantheon [5]. The dramatic light. He asked me after visiting all these chapels, 'How will your chapel look like?' I said, I had no clue, because I did not know the plot and I explained to him what my Venetian dream was. One really important thing was for me, that people do not come in the same door as when you go away. I wanted, when there is a ceremony, people to enter a door somewhere, go into the space, have the ceremony, close that door, and I wanted to introduce a new door as a symbol that life continues. I wanted to have special lighting like this, I wanted a golden ceiling and I wanted to have blue.

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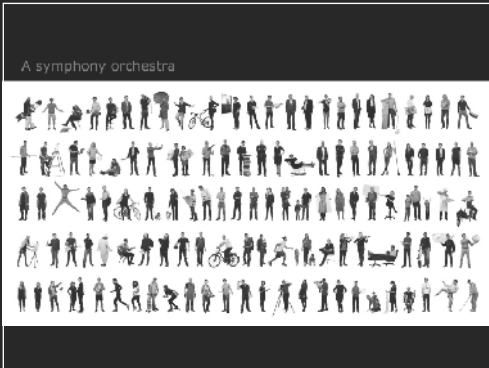
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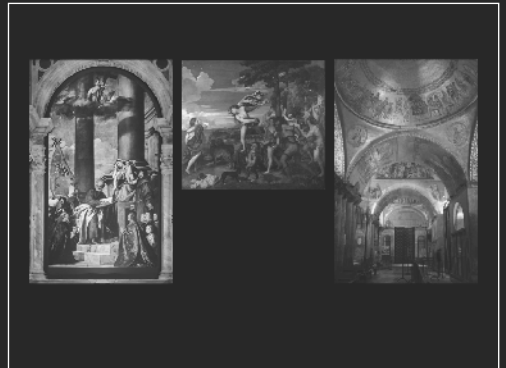
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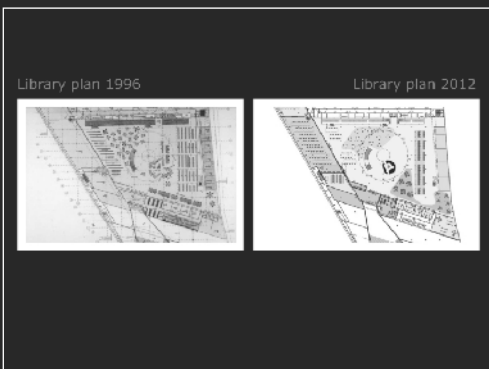
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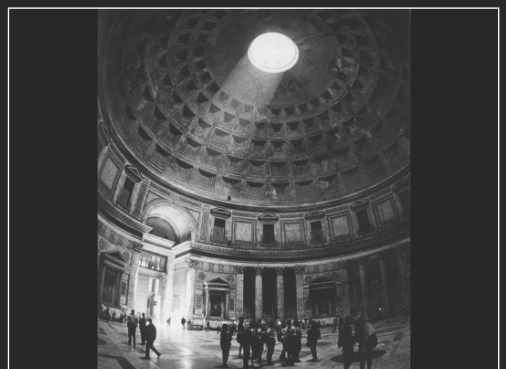
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That is what I said and for the rest I did not know. Then I came back to the Netherlands, so this was very intuitive. The cemetery happened to be very close to my house and I had never been there. Also it had a history. This was in I think 1850, you see on that plot there was what we now would call a church but it is a chapel. Because of the bad soil in Rotterdam, the soil is very soft, the foundation was not good enough and they had to replace it with another chapel. So that is what they did. I think it was 1950 or something like that. You still see the old foundation and they put a Tipi tent like the Indians on top of it [6]. I have seen this chapel but you can not believe what happened. Because of the bad foundation in Rotterdam also this one had a problem and had to be demolished. The old thing had a bell in the top.

When I designed I put my Venetian dream on top of the foundation [7]. You see this idea, entering a space, closing it, the ceremony and then continue on top of it, as a symbol. It is part of the layout of the whole cemetery. Here you see the routing, the sketch with the big roof on top of it and the old foundation. Also the idea was that in cemetery chapels are often maybe 20-30 people, but sometimes it is more people. So we wanted to create a big roof, so if there are a lot of people they can stand underneath the roof. We kept the old bell of the second chapel. We used the foundation of the first chapel and in between this the Venetian dream. When you enter the space, the golden ceiling and the blue is continuous around you. The whole space is closed with this special natural light. You really feel that somebody goes to heaven and then opens the door and brings someone in the end to the cemetery in the graveyard. I realised that you should develop your own attitude towards architecture. For me there is not one attitude. You should develop your own one.

This project [8] I wanted to share with you because for me, it is very interesting. It is in Washington DC, the place where Martin Luther King gave his 'I have a dream' speech. It is a library, designed on the grid of the L'Enfant plan of historical Washington. Now the city uses a grid but here you see it was out of the grid. It was designed by Mies van der Rohe in the 60's and it was opened in 1972 and it was named after Martin Luther King. It really is a Mies van der Rohe building. Maybe you think it looks nice from the outside, but from the inside it was not that pleasant. You also have to realize - that was so fascinating - that every morning at 9:30 there is a line of homeless that are brought here by bus and they go into the building. In the US library's are very much for the homeless and it is organized. For me it was a fascinating view to see these famous Mies van der Rohe Barcelona chairs every morning filled with homeless people [9].

The question to us was, how can you deal, as architects - of course I have been studying Mies van der Rohe and he is one of the heroes - how do you treat him? A building that is named after Martin Luther King after his assassination, how to deal with that, and at the same time make out of this building, which is not so perfect I can tell you, the library of the future? What is really serving the public of Washington DC now? We even made a documentary about it [10]. So what was interesting for me, as an architect, as an attitude, how should I honour Mies van der Rohe? We did even find the original project architect who was still alive and living in Chicago. We talked to him to see what the ideas were. A lot of historical people are talking about Mies van der Rohe but to really talk to the guy who did it was extremely interesting. It was emotional to meet him.

The other thing that was maybe much more important is that we started to do a whole research. The TU Delft helped us with the academic research on Mies van der Rohe, but also to find out the values of Martin Luther King. In a city of Washington of course, maybe we think Mies van der Rohe is important, but I can tell you Martin Luther King is a hundred times more important. The values of Martin Luther King, the whole research and making the documentary helped me to realise that this building is named after Luther King. Which was not normal at the time. Library's were named after George Washington or somebody else. But it was named after Luther King even though it was never designed for him.

In the end I took the things on my shoulders to make this Mies van der Rohe building really a building designed for Martin Luther King. Not to honour him with a statue but with we totally designed and made this building open for the whole public. There is a very nice documentary on it. Just some quick thoughts, analysing the typology and the whole research, what is a Mies van der Rohe building? Finding out what is the free space and the four cores in the building. It

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A LEGACY OF
MIES AND KING
RENOVATING THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF WASHINGTON D.C.
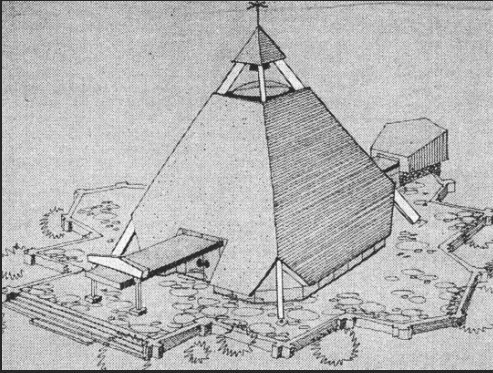
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had horrible staircases in it. This is the existing and future situation, to play with these four cores and make it very much that people can just walk the stairs. These buildings by Mies van der Rohe were very much designed that you, almost feels like you are in an office building. You need to be very intelligent to come into this library. It is not welcoming for all but you want people to be invited to come to all floors.

It was a very dark building. From the inside it is just full of brick walls [11]. What we really wanted to do was to redesign those four cores and to make it more like a museum space. Also to create in these four cores stairs, what I call social stairs - that you want people to meet and walk in an intuitive way through a building. Here you can see that in the section [12]. It is very clear what Mecanoo is and what Mies is. Sometimes I said here is Mies and here is Martin Luther King and they are conflicting. I chose the side of Martin Luther King. I had to make this entrance much more open but also make it fit in the aesthetics of Mies van der Rohe. Or even this corner that was maybe at a certain moment the most disconnected corner of Washington. Normally Mies van der Rohe always stops these horizontal spaces and then he puts a wall. But you know this is not nice. So I really wanted to take away that wall and really open it up to the city of Washington. Or even this part is very interesting because it is not a high rise.

All of Washington is about ten stories high but this is a lower building. We really wanted to change it in what we call the pocket park. It is very nice for many reasons, also for climate reasons, to make it green. And to have a pavilion on top of it, which is not visible from the outside, so you still just see the Mies van der Rohe building [13]. Here you see it, a picture from maybe a week ago, how it is under construction. That is also what I really enjoy. Things that we dream of also get realized. I think a lot of people are jealous about us, about our profession, that you see what you have been doing in your life. I always say that also if you make a mistake everybody sees it. So there is also this responsibility on your shoulders to make no mistakes.

The last project is maybe the most in line with the idea of People, Place, Purpose. Is this project in Taiwan in Kaohsiung, the harbour city of Taiwan. Taiwan is a country similar sized to the Netherlands. It is a very

formal city and what I really like to do, we do quite a lot of public buildings, we try to combine the formal with the informal. I also like to travel, to go here. To look at the history, what is their origin for theatre for instance, of Chinese opera. It is the street [14]. Even in the Netherlands the origins of theatre are the street and the churches. It is also interesting how you try to link to that, these informal outdoor performances. If you want to reach the public you should not only reach the people who can pay a ticket. For me it is also interesting how I can inspire people who can not buy a ticket. Maybe you want to inspire them to develop themselves as well. The formal and informal.

It is also a tropical city and I think it is very similar to Indonesia. Tropical means that at six o'clock it is dark in less than half an hour. And then the light comes up. Taiwan is like China, they like very much - I don't know how that is in Indonesia - artificial light in many colours. They eat in the streets outside and have all the informal performing artists [15]. It is all happening in the streets underneath canopy's or underneath the trees.

The plot was a former military compound which was an enclosed space and the city decided that this would be the central park of this city. They really wanted to change the harbour city, which was a very dirty city with a lot of air pollution, into a healthy city. They really wanted to create cultural buildings, parks and public transportation. I have been working there for twelve years, in this twelve year time I have seen the change of the city to a much more healthy city. You should all go to Taiwan to see it. I remember going to the site, as I told you it was an enclosed site, and I remember barking dogs, empty barracks and Banyan trees [16]. These Banyan trees became our inspiration. But why this Banyan tree? I always look at the trees because they are rooted in the soil and the soil says something about the climate. They are grounded there.
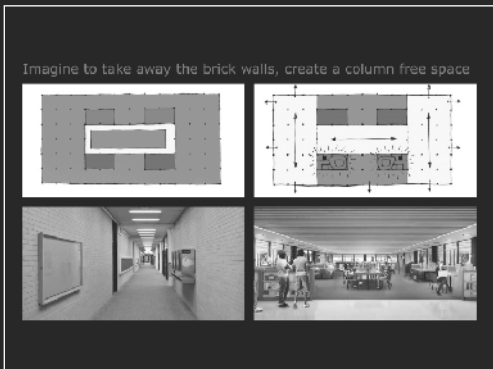
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What is interesting about the Banyan tree is that it just continues [17]. I did like it because of the sculpturality of the trees and also because of the idea that they make a huge crown together. Why a crown? They are protecting you from the rain and the sun, also the elements, the earthquakes and typhoons. That is why this is so pleasant because what you want to do in a tropical climate, you want to catch the wind of the ocean, to cool it down in a natural way. Nowadays everybody does something with air conditioning. No, this is the best way.

What I also was doing was trying to understand how people will use the park and this informality. Seeing the people making music, but also Thai Chi or yoga because people don't go to yoga clubs or fitness. It is organised in the park. That is where people do it in an informal way. I don't know if that is also happening in China but here it is happening in the parks. So what we did is we transformed the Banyan tree into what became the biggest performing art centre in the world underneath one roof. Having a concert Hall, a Lyric Theatre, an Open Air Theatre, and Playhouse and a Recital Hall all together. They all have their own atmosphere and acoustics, and then putting them all together, with one roof over it.

The idea was that we put it in the park as a part of the landscape. We also called it an acoustic landscape ourselves. I always have to explain to people the wind can really blow through the building. It are just these elements, the auditoriums that are acclimatized. The rest is totally open. Here you can see it is part of the whole layout of the park. This was the rendering we made twelve years ago [18]. Where the roof touches the park it becomes an open air theatre. Here on the right you can also see the music, concert and recital hall. On the left is the playhouse theatre and in the middle is the opera, a combination of music and spoken word. We are also playing with the light again, artificial light. We were aware that people like it if you can adjust it to the local culture. Testing, I always love it. We had to make big models to test the acoustics [19]. That is what I love to do.

There is a lot of theatre technique behind it. It is amazing. This is the model we made 12 years ago. We did it almost as when I was a student here, with softwood and then carve it out [20]. We were extremely proud about it.

Of course that is old fashioned now. Now you would do it with 3D models and 3D printing but this all happened in 12 years of working. Our profession did change. This is also testing because it is an enormous ocean liner, putting it in a 3D model [21]. We also tested a 1:4 model, what I called 'A piece of Banyan', so we did cut a piece of Banyan. To be honest we had no clue how to build this Banyan plaza. So we were testing it in aluminium, in gypsum and in tiles. We also tested the changing of the colour. The colour was okay but to use tiles in a wet climate, forget it. It did not even work in Italy so it totally does not work in Taiwan. It was very interesting to develop our own tiles, maybe we will use it for another project once.

We came up with the idea to do it with the local ship building industry. We also said that we really wanted to do it with the detailing of a cargo ship for many reasons. We had a very basic budget. But also because of the tactility, that you really see the pieces. Also the naming we did was like how you do it in a ship. We really wanted to show the joints because it is a huge building and it gives a kind of human touch to it and a human scale. That I also really like, as a part of Mecanoo's philosophy, it is based on the local Banyan tree and built by the local ship industry. It is for a public building so people in Taiwan really feel it was made for them, by them and, of course with the help of our thoughts.

As an architect I always love to go to the building site. This was maybe the most exciting building site ever in my life. It was an extremely interesting process, since it is so interesting as architects, that we also work with engineers. The ship building engineers said 'Okay it is a big building but an ocean liner is also that big.' They were just thinking how to produce this and how to mount it. Normally you would mount it from the outside but this was more difficult because there was a ceiling above you. How to deal with that? They found a way how it works. You can see all the pieces which are mounted to what you can call the ceiling. Here you see, what I said earlier, that you see the joints. We really wanted to show the joints. We want people to play with the building. We do not want to be control freaks. We want to give space that people can use. This dramatic light in the building from the Pantheon I really love [22].

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Competition model: hand-carved out of wood

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Banyan Plaza overview, the size of an enormous ocean-liner
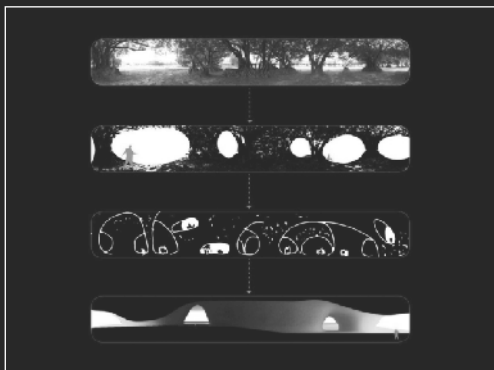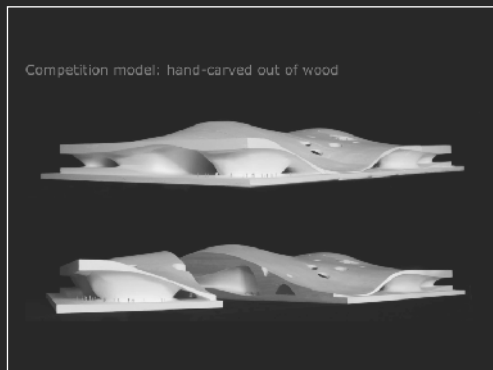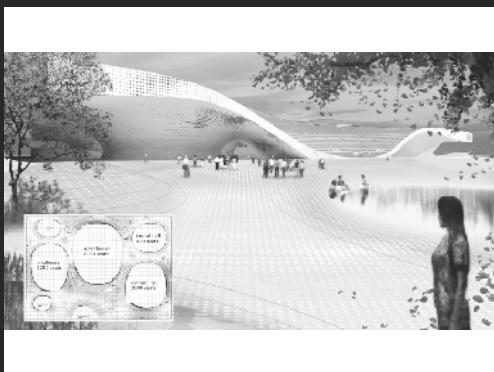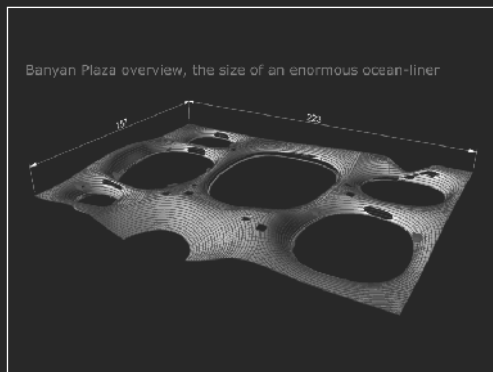
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The park was also redone during construction. The building is still in construction, so you can see it is big but it really fits in the scale of the park. I told you we were testing that you can change and adjust the light and the colour of the light. We developed 12 big chandeliers on the scale of a city chandelier, so the city living room. They can change from colour and it is also the lighting concept in the flooring [23]. If you go into the foyer of one of the auditoriums then you get into the concert hall. I think it is a unique space, the acoustics are extremely good. What is special is that it has a double organ. This space is very organic, like the Banyan tree, sitting all around the piano player. We also had to design the organ so we did it like bamboo bushes.

The recital hall is asymmetric, where the acoustic screens are like Calder, the artist Calder, hanging above it. The theatre space is the most flexible space. The Chinese opera is in this theatre space. The Chinese opera is completely different from Western style opera and it also needs other acoustics and layout of the theatre. What I also enjoy is, for instance, the seating. The fabric is extremely important. We had to find the right fabric in high quality for this and that is made in the Netherlands. We also designed the patterns. But again, to go into the factory and to make sure it is done, is for me the most enjoyable moment of being an architect. For me it is very much about materialising dreams and really selecting your materials. It is not about photoshopping the world.

What is so pleasant is that if you enter this building, you really experience the climate of a tropical city. It is very warm in the park, especially in the summertime. But then you enter this space which really catches the wind. We also had to make schemes to find out the flow of the wind of the ocean through the whole building. I like the formal and informal. These four auditoriums, I think they are great, but the most unique space is this very informal space and how it is used by the local people [24]. As I told you it is yoga. People are sitting there with their own headset on watching a movie and using the building as a screen [25]. Like I said I wanted to have hoists. I did not know what they would hang on it but in the end they did it for children to swing [26]. There are more performances in the Banyan plaza. It is really nice how you can play and it really becomes part of the city also in a very silent way. For me this was even more interesting. This was the opening. They are so well behaved that they put off their shoes before they start to use the building as a slide but in such a happy way [27]. That made me extremely happy.

In the end it makes me really happy how this People, Place, Purpose - people first - is used. You can maybe do your own house, or a private villa, but to really do something for the whole public and with the whole team makes me extremely proud and happy to be an architect.

Thank you

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ma yansong
MAD Architects

Ma Yansong is a Chinese architect and founder of MAD Architects, a globally operating architecture firm that seeks to explore a type of 'dream architecture' that opens up a dialogue with nature, earth, and sky. Through its work, MAD is committed to creating a vision for the city of the future that is inspired by the spiritual and emotional needs of its residents. MAD's signature projects include the Harbin Opera House, the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art in Los Angeles and the Absolute Towers in Mississauga. MAD has participated on numerous occasions in significant exhibitions at the Venice Architecture Biennale, and at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art and MAXXI. In 2011 he received the prestigious 'International Fellowship' from Royal Institute of British Architects.

Building Nature

Hi everyone, I am very happy to be here. Today, I would like to discuss building with nature, since I am from Beijing and in China we are building many new cities. Therefore, I would like to talk about the relationship between the built and nature.

Nature and the artificial are opposites. That is what most people think, and we - as architects - often think we cannot build nature, we are building artificial buildings. But I was wondering if there is a way that nature can be artificial and that the artificial world can also be natural.

This [1] was Le Corbusier's 1926 proposal for Paris. This is the dream for the modern city, right? Towers, highways and cars. Eventually, as we know, that project did not happen but nowadays this kind of typology is being realised. For example in cities such as Manhattan in New York and Tianjin in China. Actually, these two cities show [2] the same approach. The high-rise tower has become the main character for modern cities, showing the power, capitalism and taking space from the environment. They look the same although they were built one hundred years apart.

In Paris nowadays you see small streets and narrow, even smaller buildings. In contrast with the Montparnasse Tower, also known as the scar of Paris, for which they held a competition to renovate it. This [3] was our proposal; we could only change the facade and not demolish the building. So our idea was to make the facade reflective but reverse everything it reflects. So from a certain angle the Eiffel Tower becomes visible upside down. The reason being that, when we challenge the black building we should also question the Eiffel Tower. Because that was the starting point; thinking of building a high structure is something symbolic, that we are powerful, we can master the material, we can master the technology, we can master many things.

This [4] was a proposal I made when I was a student, for the New York WTC after 911. A lot of architects made a proposal to build a higher building, or to make something powerful, as a memorial. My proposal was to build an island with trees, lakes and nature floating above the city. So the structure is horizontal, it is

not competing with other structures, not aiming for height. For me it is a relief. It is like you go into the sky without boundaries. You are just floating up there and you can look at your horizon, the sky, the clouds and the river. So I think from the very beginning, when I was a student, without knowing what architecture was, I was thinking architecture could bring us freedom and could bring us closer to nature.

Last year we made a proposal for a very tiny tower next to the Empire State Building [5]. It is a residential high-rise with a very small footprint. Actually it is not that tall but the proportions are very extreme. It is very skinny, and the idea was that we wanted to build an organic black tower but that becomes transparent at the top. It is kind of a black tower disappearing into the sky. So in that way the architecture can probably have an incremental relation with the background, with nature. Many other buildings in New York are often so powerful, you see the muscles, the top, the skyline of the city, they are either very strong or they make a point of aiming for the height, but we tried to do something different.

These [6] are two towers we are currently building in Toronto. The original idea was the same; we did not want to do a boxy tower, but do twin towers dancing together and responding to the wind and the sun. You do not see the structure, you do not see the vertical elements, but you only see the balconies. They are shifting and they twist on every level, so that all these balconies start to become the terraces. At the same time these two buildings are not the same, they are not using the same geometry, but the space in-between them becomes very interesting. When you look at the twin towers from different angles they have a different relationship.

In Amsterdam at the Zuidas, I saw all the boxy towers and wanted to make a mountain, because in Holland there are no mountains. I thought maybe we could make an urban plan as a big mountain range. So in between you have valleys, natural creeks, everything. But of course it could not happen, although later I used it and developed the same idea into another project.

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In Nanjing I wanted to develop a mountain range as a large scale urban development. We put plants, rocks, everything in this model and then we later translated this into a building. So these [7] are actually thirteen towers that make up the whole masterplan, all with the same facade. They become the backdrop, looking like waterfalls or a mountain range. More important is that we are able to build this human scale village in the centre of the mountain range and we can put in trees, mountains, outdoor terraces and courtyards, so that when you enter the village you are protected by these human scale structures and villages and you don't feel pressure from the large scale mountain buildings.

Talking about nature, we probably have a different understanding. One concept of nature is physical nature; the trees, the green, the lovely creatures. And the other definition of nature and culture, you can see in the Oriental gardens in China and Japan. Those elements, like rocks, trees, water, they're all artificially planned as scenery, and those elements have some kind of a metaphor to them. They are not physical nature, they are emotional nature. They are an imaginary nature. So they are often linked to some sort of literature or art. At the same time, nature in this cultural sense is always posed with architecture, so temples for example, never stand alone as a building. In the Eastern philosophy people think we should coexist with nature, we cannot only live by ourselves. A building cannot stand alone; it has to be a part of nature. But this philosophy is also reflected in the city planning. In Central Park in New York, a very western urban plan, nature and the city are very divided. In Beijing [8], you see the forbidden city, with its lakes, bridges, mountains. These plans are artificial and large scale, but it follows the same philosophy you find in the smaller scale gardens. Everything is mixed.

I am trying to bring this methodology into modern architecture. What if we could build a high-rise in which nature and structure are always mixed. Like in paintings, you can always find a human being and architecture composed together with nature. We built a proposal of this kind into a model and then we built this model in some kind of architecture. The tower [9] you see doesn't show a clear geometry. It feels like it is growing; you can never tell if the tower has a clear shape. It is a rather organised structure, but unfortunately we couldn't realise this design.

We then realised this idea in another project, a low rise on a mountain range. It is a housing project facing a lake, for which we decided to take a contour landscape and make them as individual buildings. So here [10] you can see the many buildings without any having the same shape, they all try to follow the topography. In this case with artificial buildings you can clearly see the concrete structure as buildings, but they're trying to become part of nature. They're kind of floating on top of each other. They don't want to show a very strong envelope and they try to embed that into the trees, the bamboo. When there's a tree on the site we just simply changed the shape of the building. Each plan is thus almost like hand drawing; we used the trees of the site and we turned that into the AutoCAD drawing and then we built it. The building techniques were very low cost, not really refined and precise. But the roughness gives some dynamics to the building. When you have a group of towers, and you have a lot of terraces, you see the people can start to look at each other and start to communicate. So in the end this high density project has towers that a traditional city never has, but probably the philosophy between buildings and nature is part from the traditional village. In that sense this could become a new type of village in the modern time.

This [11] is another project where we started with the model. We made a glass shape, like stone, and then used the architecture model to build the model as bigger buildings. When the buildings are placed into the city - Beijing - you can see the big park in front of the project and many other boxy buildings around it. That is a similar condition you find in Central Park in Manhattan. You want to be at the front line that looks at nature as a resource. But in our case we tried to make the tower as part of the park. It has an organic look, like a mountain, something that grows out of the park. So when you look at this building from the park it is not a wall, not a boundary, but it is an extension or rather transition from the park to the city. From here [12] you view the city as the typical city where the many towers and their strong geometry have a certain distance from those structures.

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So I think it is a perfect location to build these huge mountains. By pushing the density of these towers we can have a little more freedom to the other area, we can have smaller scale buildings.

When you look at the building from the park, this [13] is a reality. A lot of people think we don't fit into reality, because the building is too dark, and the geometry looks so different from the surrounding buildings. But I think there's something wrong with the context maybe. Because you can imagine this kind of building everywhere. They don't really care about the natural context, also they don't care about the cultural context.

This is another project in Northern China, in a city called Harbin, where we built this opera house [14]. It looks like something growing out of the wetland, almost lying on the ground. It doesn't stand, it is trying to embed into the horizon. There are two theatres, a large one and a small one, and there is a plaza in front of the two theatres. We designed the whole bridge, the masterplan and the whole park. You see the building is trying to look continuous from the landscape. You can approach the building very easily, it doesn't have a very strong facade, a front. You can even walk onto this facade when the opera house is closed. Eventually you arrive at the top, where we created this vertical space, from where you can just look at the sky. From this angle you can see the building is quite high, there's a big space inside. But from any angle you feel this building is trying to blend into the horizon. When it is evening the building is very transparent. You can see what's happening inside the opera house. The auditorium inside is made of wood, it is all wooden material from the local factory.

This [15] is a museum we built in the middle of a lake. We wanted to actually design a mountain, but hidden below the water surface; so what you see is an island. A building becoming an island. You can enter the building through a bridge but when you arrive you don't find the building because the building is the island itself. Even though this island is artificial it somehow has a similarity to other islands around the site. So when you are there, you feel it belongs to the place. But at the same time it is also very surreal, because it has almost no trees, no greenery, no rocks. Everything is abstract.

This [16] is another project under construction. It is a conference centre in the Northern part of China; it is like a Chinese version of Davos. All these business people go there and there is a snowy mountain in front of the site. So we decided to make this building more like a tent in front of the mountain. There is a bridge connecting the hotel and the conference centre, and then inside you experience a lot of wood and natural light. Basically all these projects are trying to do the same thing. They are trying to have a dialogue with nature in a very abstract way. They do not want to restore all the modern elements that you are familiar with. So the building does not reference anything you see in daily life. It is very abstract, but it has some dialogue with the landscape that is there forever. So you feel this building does belong to the future but at the same time it could be linked to the past.

This [17] is a huge project that is now under construction in China. It is a sports park; with a lot of big sports facilities inside the mountains. So basically, we don't build a building, but we build a mountain, and then we program the interior of the mountain. You can climb all these mountains, so the building becomes a landscape. At the same time, when this shape looks so abstract, it is not a real mountain but more becoming a large type of land art. The whole atmosphere here is different from other green parks in the city. It's also different from the natural mountains outside the city. Inside the mountain we use a different structure system. Working with a different program and providing different atmospheres with light and air.

I call this [18] a cloud for knowledge. It is a museum that is called Lucas Museum for Narrative Arts, sponsored by George Lucas, the Star Wars producer. It is a huge museum which is home to the narrative arts, which means everything around storytelling. Original scripts, drawings, costumes, digital art, everything. So it is basically a space so unrealistic, it is all about imagination right?

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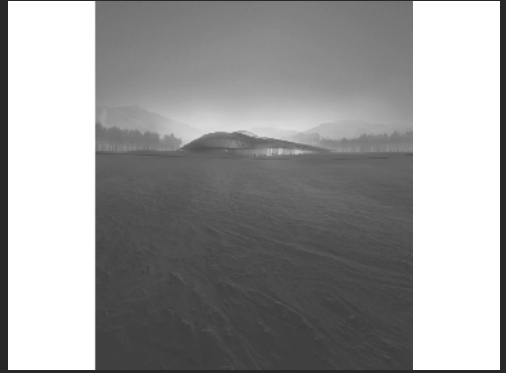
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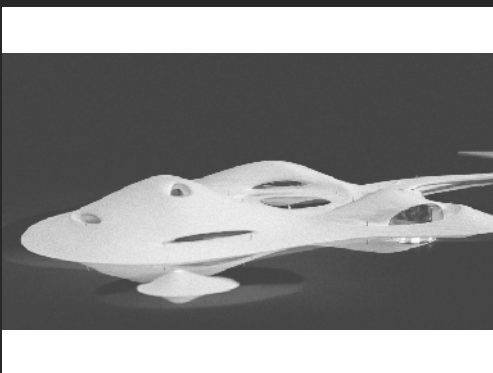
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I like this rendering [19] because of the realistic surroundings. You see the mountains, the beautiful mountains north of Los Angeles. But everything in this image is temporary, I mean, temporary compared to the mountains, the landscape. So what if we build these buildings as a cloud, almost like a temporary thing here. And floating above the site, so that it could be going in other places. By doing this, we can also keep a lot of green at the ground level at the same time providing a roof terrace, a roof garden at the top. We designed the museum in two parts, there is a big arch in the middle to become the gateway into this park. It is called the exposition park, so this building, the National History Museum and the Colosseum they all become one neighbourhood.

This kindergarten in Beijing [20] is also currently under construction. What you see is a roof and in the middle a traditional courtyard which is a listed building and really historical courtyard house. There's another modern four story building on the corner, so we decided to make a one floor low-rise with a new courtyard with insertions into this space. Then at the same time connect the old building and the new modern building. So it's basically one big roof covering the whole site, and this roof is a little lower than the peak roof from the old house. So in this case the roof could be the new ground floor because it is huge and people can go there to run, walk, and play. Because the courtyard is supposed to stay inside the boundary, here we try to bring this activity closer to the sky. So onto his new roof the kids can run around the old house on this new layer.

We're also working here in Rotterdam for a cultural project called Fenix Food Factory. This place used to be the place where immigrants depart from Europe to America. The idea is to renovate this building from warehouse into a cultural facility for immigration. When I got out there, I saw this existing building and I saw this very heavy and strong concrete structure. Subsequently, I did this sketch with a tornado in the middle. I thought of something that has energy and floating above the ground and can go through this heavy structure. Then the second part is a bird on the corner. I think these two things have some kind of a dialogue [21] to the theme which is immigration. The tornado in the structure is actually a staircase that we think could be located in the lobby and become really public and open for everyone to go there, take

the stairs and have a great view of the harbour and the surroundings. During this journey upwards the complicity of the tornado almost mimics the journey of immigrants. The bird in this case is much larger than a real bird. It is because birds fly everywhere and they look the same everywhere; that is something I really like. So we keep the old structure as it is and the new structure is really floating in there. One is very stable, very monumental, the other is very active, very light and is always moving. I think this project is small, but I rather look at it as public art. It is more like an installation that can bring people together; to a new angle, to a new level, so they can have a different understanding about the environment.

The last project I would like to discuss is in Japan, also a relatively small project. It deals with a river in the mountains that a lot of Japanese go to. Because it is so dangerous, the Japanese government decided to build a tunnel inside the mountain; a very cold concrete tunnel abandoned two years ago. For an art festival project, we were then invited to renovate the tunnel. So we came here and we made the tunnel become almost like a light installation. We put reflective material on the top and then we drew the water from the river down there. So if you want to go to the edge and look at the mountains and the river [22] you have to take off your shoes and walk into the water. At the same time the tunnel becomes almost like a departure space. You almost think you can fly, you can go out from here. You hear the water down there, the sound, you think the water is falling down from here. This connection from inside to outside is not architecture for me, but it is trying to explain the artificial world in which we can create a different feeling. A different quality in the artificial world with respecting nature. We are not necessarily building a fake nature or bringing nature in the artificial world, but we can build our world, the big city, the towers, the house, the cultural facility, by creating new feelings, a new spirit, that we learn from nature. So I think that is the quality of nature beyond environmental topics, or physical or scientific topics. It is emotional, so I think that could be the new opportunity for architecture to in the future become a real expression of our inner desire.

Thank you

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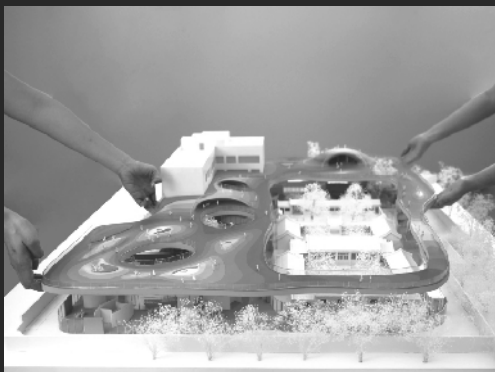
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The social developments mentioned lead to a dichotomy in the expressive quality of architecture. On the one hand extravagant (virtual) architecture is strongly visible, while a more modest architecture, on the other hand, is also on the rise. This division is equally noticeable in architectural representation, where artful collages are increasingly popular - replacing the trend of hyper realistic renders. Should one opt for exuberant expression or a more modest one?

statemeent

federica sofia zambeletti
KooZA/rch

Federica Sofia Zambeletti is the founder of the platform KooZA/rch. Her interests lie at the intersection of art and architecture - a 'space' she has widely explored both through a series of thought provoking architectural projects at the Architectural Association and ultimately through the online platform KooZA/rch which she founded in 2014. KooZA/rch is a Visionary Design Discussion Platform for Architects and Curious People Worldwide. KooZA/rch challenges paper architecture in the land of the pixel. KooZA/rch values the daring and the absurd, the alternative to the standard, the ideas which push contemporary pre-conceptions and boundaries. With over 2,500 published projects, more than 2,000 daily contacts and 120,000 followers on Instagram, it has become a point of reference and inspiration for students, architects and designers worldwide.

The IMAGE ERA

It is really an honour to be here and share the KooZ/ Arch project with all of you. We live in the year of images as mediated by the pixels on our screens. Today, architecture can be seen, discussed and shared at a global scale by a sightless population. As per Archdaily's website, more than 13 million architects visit the platform monthly to search for inspiration, tools and knowledge. Whilst Architizer is an online collective which counts more than 335.000 architects, 65.000 projects and 17.000 manufacturers. On the other hand, 250 million Pinterest users share more than 175 billion pins, generating a market value of 15 billion dollars. Whilst the Instagram #forarchitecture counts 103 million images. This kind of data cannot be compared to any kind of hard copy publication or magazine. Architecture has essentially never been so open. The private sphere of architecture is now publicly posted, it's processed, representation is quickly judged, at least commented on by the online agora. Its intermediate phases, drafts and schemes are often almost randomly pinned on boards without any reference. However, the way we see it, the internet has empowered the architect, allowing him and for his idea to transcend physical borders and engage in a global architectural discourse. Our About section reads: KooZA/rch is a visionary design discussion platform for architects and curious people worldwide. We believe in the power of the architectural image as one which through which we can share ideas and generate inclusive discussions, of all the architecture which was, is and which will be. We value the daring and the absurd, the alternative to the norm, the ideas which push contemporary preconception and boundaries. We challenge paper architecture in the land of the pixel. We value powerful imagination compared to the spectacular brick. We value the critically inbuilt for us the image is.

It would be very naïve not to recognise that the profession of architecture is intimately tied to the production and consumption of images. As for Boullée [1], in order to execute, it is first necessary to conceive. It is this product of the mind, this process of creation that constitutes architecture. The truth is that 99 percent of architecture is unbuilt, however the history of architecture exists and thrives on paper.

The image is the first sight where we sketch, construct and challenge the very essence of building, thinking and being. Questioning the status quo and suggesting visionary ways of life. From the space of academia to that of the studio, we continuously engage with the image to reimagine architecture and its elements. Through an infinite array of tools being them analogue or digital, we shape our visions with the hope of generating and answering questions, which speak of architecture and beyond. We advocate for an architectural image, which speaks of a vision. It does not limit itself to the orthogonal projection, the technical drawing, but rather pledges to the concept revealing an architectural effect rather than an artefact.

As in the case of this image [2], where the redesign of the walkway system in Hong Kong through a folded plate structure collapses and amplifies the vertical condition of the city and the horizontal condition of the walkway, establishing a new, unique, urban reading of the city. The image does not exist to explore the architecture, how it is constructed, but rather to explore the effect this intervention would have on the perception of how Hong Kong would be imagined. It is testament to a year-long research within the intermediate environment of the architectural association. It is no surprise that KooZA/rch was founded during my studies at the AA of London, a space where the drawing is essentially first and foremost a discursive tool. Students are here challenged to explore the drawing both as a theoretical reflection and as a medium through which to articulate their architecture. However, realising that most of the conversations held within this thriving creative environment would remain as marks on a page, bound to the walls of London and 36 Bedford Square, we turned to the idea of the digital platform. A place which would transcend physical limits, allowing us to share our ideas and test them especially at a global scale with a worldwide audience.

So we launched the platform on April 18th 2013 with the publication of Vatican City Airport [3]. It was the result of the work done by two students at United ETH in Zürich, taught by Patrick Heitz and Francois Charbonnet. What was interesting for us, was the absurdity and the reality of the image itself. One
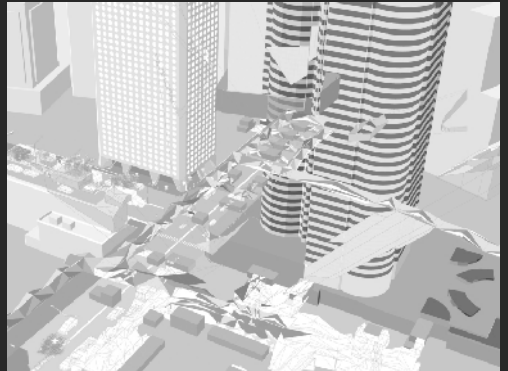
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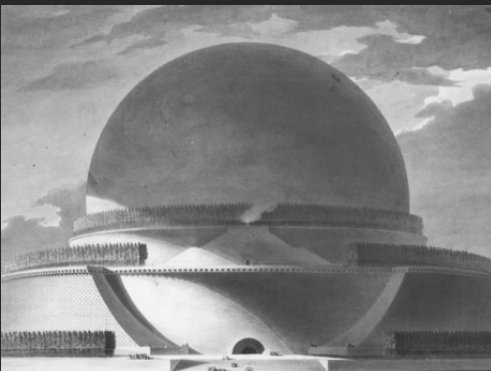
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which stimulated our curiosity, and which instantly made us reflect on the power of an image to question and provoke a discourse, which did not limit itself to architecture, but rather spoke of our contemporary, social and economic infrastructure. Here the Vatican is reinterpreted as an airport terminal, a heterotopian procession connecting earth and heaven with the idea of shopping as arguably the last ruin from a public activity is exasperated and put in relation to one of the highest forms of Catholicism. The image as a provocation to contemporary culture, the unbuilt and the impossible in relation to the built and the sacred. The feature did not have more than four images and was visited by a shy 100 people. However, since its conception, KooZA/rch has published the work of more than 1.000 creatives from 85 different countries, asking more than 20.000 questions. With more than 10.000 images, which range from classical orthogonal projections as the plan, to reinterpretations of these and hyperdense axonometrics [4] as surreal and imagined documentations, to photo manipulations which question the very limits of building images as two-dimensional entities, to entire virtual environments. We want to share the multitude of ways through which we can use the image as a means of constructing, exploring and communicating architecture. We believe in the image as proof of the unbuilt architecture which pushes architecture and the profession forward. We trust in the digital archive as a means to share these thought-provoking ideas across physical borders and disciplines. We do not want to limit the conversation to architects, but rather open it up to be challenged by a multidisciplinary audience.

First and foremost, for us the image is process, it is testament to the development of a thought. At the time when creatives alike seem to be engaged with the production of sexy, likeable images, we seek to go further on the medium as tool through which to test, explore and develop the project. Recalling our weekly reviews at the AA, where conversations were held in and around the drawing, we challenge the potential of this as sight for the architectural project. We believe in the drawing as a tool, which should enable collective discourses. We share, for example, the approach of the Portuguese Corpo Atelier [5], where the drawing exists as sight upon which discussions unfold through a selection of accumulated fragments, marks, cuts and writings by

each member of the team around the table, ultimately grounding the project to a different interpretation of sight. We value mediums as collage as crucial to the process, as for Alberto Arostegui [6] they are a way to explore ideas that sometimes until that moment, were in the unconscious and not visible, and that would not have been understood should they have not been made tangible through this simple process. Through continuously evolving iterations we can build upon this medium as a means to push the project further. We fathom the use of the drawing as a means to understand, explore and read the existing. For example, in Tasos' project in St. Dunstan London [7], the drawing was never empty, but rather was used as a device to firstly analyse and record, and later on respond to the site. We do not limit ourselves to the construction of images because we believe that every project requires its own mediums and methodologies. As a result, we trust in the making and the use of models. In the project 'Maelstrom' by Bennett Oh [8], numerous iterative models were generated as a means of effectively visualising volumetric prototypes that cannot ultimately be mimicked on a computer screen in a two-dimensional way. Helping him to establish the fine cross-breed between architecture and urbanism.

Secondly, the image is the answer. It is a problem-solving device. Exploiting the format of the interview, we want to question the very objectives of the architectural project, investigating the questions and conditions that the project responds to. At the time when the possibility that continued life on earth for future generations to come appears presumably quite bleak, projects as 'colonising the red planet' by Matteo Capirola draw on initiatives as space acts to develop an architecture on this, what now appears to be, an inhospitable environment. By analysing the evolution of urban structures, starting from the ancient Greeks to present days, the architect develops an aggregative scheme of housing models. Rather than importing materials from the earth – because let's face it, we would have a huge problem of logistics, Matteo explores the possibility of 3D-printing with local regolith rock [9]. Looking back to our own planet, we value the images' means to prove the inadequacy of important urban housing models within the countryside of Brazil. Within the project 'White house, Red soil' by Maicon Rodrigo, she uses the medium to articulate
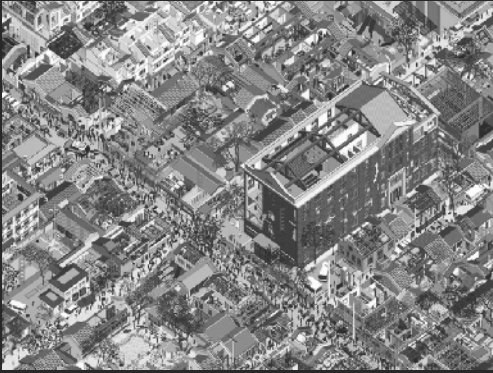
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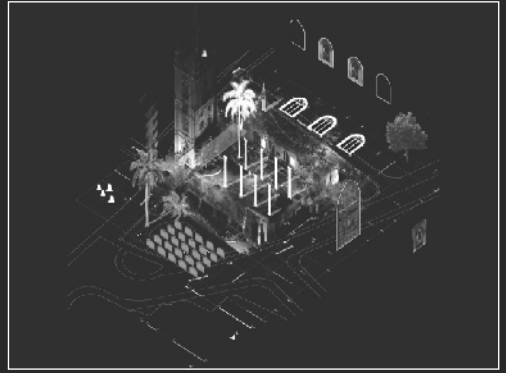
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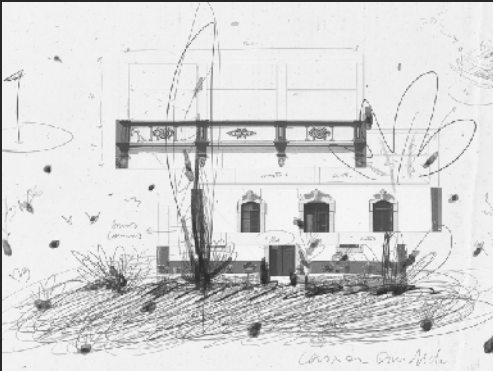
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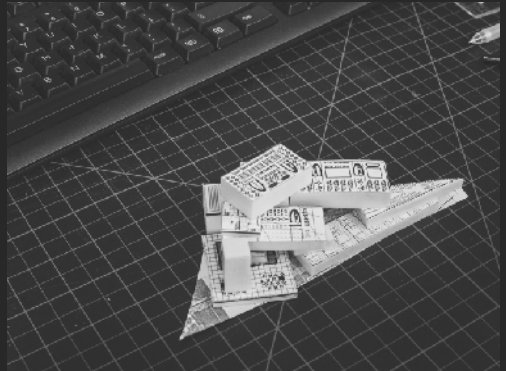
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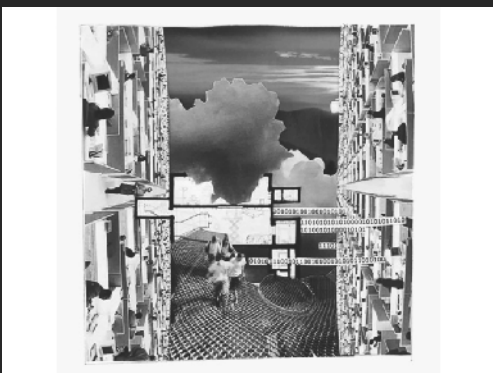
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an architectural analysis of how the introduction of a new housing typology, which features transformation and construction materials, spatial distribution and territorial occupancy, have affected the housekeeping and the female residents. Through a selection of images, the thesis proves that the importing of external typology results in a dramatic increment in the woman's housekeeping activities compared to typical local construction. What is created is the interior of a home as a space of confinement, an isolation for the woman, a modern-day slavery. We cherish projects which respond to contemporary national phenomenons, as in the case of the design of the new courthouse for Marseille [10]. The project addresses the weakened, social balance which has contributed to the disintegration of a national solidarity within France. Using Marseille as a testing round where justice has too often failed, the project aims to reroute justice for the population of a city whose territory has been marked by both crime and political and police corruption.

We indulge in projects which address local conflict, which however touch upon global teams. At the time when the very notion of borders is at the forefront of many social and political discourses, we share the intention of projects as Herman Borrego's [11], which through iterative graphic exploration aims to question how architectural forums act as a medium through which the physical manifestation of self-determination can be explored. The project's speculative theories surround the development of a new nation and the role of built forms as embodiments of self-determination for the Raizal population as they move towards the realisation of their own sovereignty. On the other hand, we're also intrigued by projects which answer and challenge personal obsessions as, for example, Lloyd Lee's project Road to the European Super District [12], who uses the unbuilt hyper-building by OMA as a point of departure to question the limits of our obsession with bigger buildings within a new urban expansion strategy that is somehow culturally bound, but in the testing ground of Vienna.

We believe that the image is the message. Drawing on the very idea of architecture as a collective practice, Sabrina Morreale's project calls for a form of collaboration which makes space for the exchange of fragments. During the project, the architectural language is thus articulated through sampling. The project explores this action of appropriation which implies an action of copying appropriation and erasure. Through the selection, use and methodology of tracing these fragments, Sabrina advocates for the authentication of oneself. The project argues that the final product inter-corporates the various authors from which one has copied, creating a collection chain where the work is both absolutely personal, yet of a thousand others. Every final result has its own individuality, despite its collective authorship. In Carolina's project, 'A Chronicle of 1001 Islands', inspired by the Suprematist images, not only represents, but injects the proposal with a theoretical discussion of its concepts. Because of the collage [13], she was able to understand the typological characteristics of the islands and abstract them to their architectural essence. The diagram [14] allowed a quick and precise analysis of what were the main characteristics, whilst allowing for a personal reading and freedom in its manipulation. Working in an endless loop, the very methods of representation shape the project and its discourse.

Emma Fraser's project 'Wonderwall' uses the render's illusionary reality as a means to legitimise architecture. The project is a manifesto to the contemporary irrelevance of the cultural icon, which chooses the quasi-reality of the hyper-realistic render as a means to legitimise the absurd trajectory of the narrative. Using the imminent global rising sea-level crisis as a primus to relocate icons under threat, the 'Wonderwall' is built as a vast sea-based retreat within which to relocate and save the world's cultural heritage [15]. Once cleaved from their original sites, the icons are transported, pictured to their new home. Lacking navigational systems, the barges lose their way, floating as most of the worlds' waterborne trash does, towards one another in a swirling mass of detritus. Meanwhile, the wall lies empty, waiting for its treasures, becoming a monument to lost culture and challenging the reader to question whether the icon is ultimately tied more to its form or to its memory. By using such a means of representation, the project gains much more validity than if the drawings had been represented in a more ambiguous style. The format of the photograph maintains the monuments in the context that we live in nowadays, captured by savvy tourists and uploaded quasi-instantly on the worldwide web, but allows to be displaced into the

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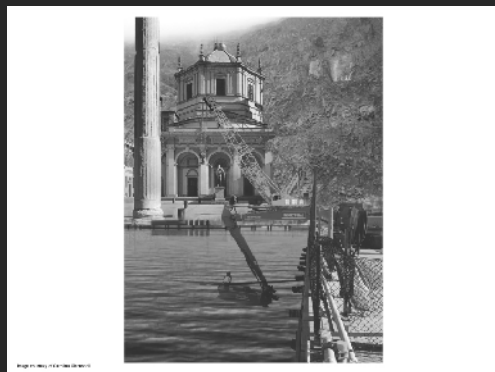
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world of the project, removing them from context. On the other hand exploring this hyper-realistic rendering a different way, Alexander Bahr uses it to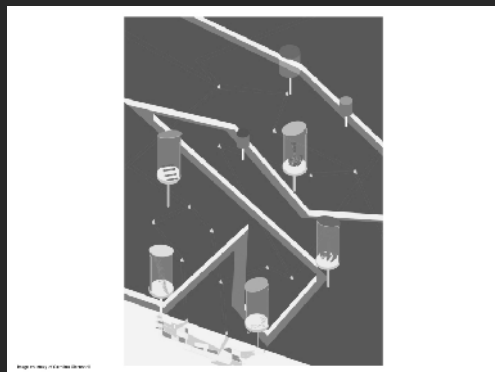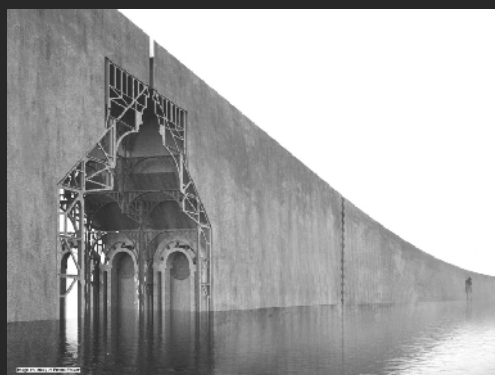 blur the parts of the building in the project, establishing a new typology and way of thinking about the discipline. Inspired by the research developed by OMA in 2014 at the Venice Biennale: Fundamentals, Alexander challenges the architecture to question the individual elements that make up their buildings, blurring the relationship of the parts of architecture and the scale in which they are represented. The project takes most accessible and mundane details within contemporary architecture and exploits them to create new architectural opportunities. Details or moments such as gypsum wall connections, floor-based connections are given new meaning [16]. More than just a pure hybridisation of function, the project explores how an architectural detail performs when architecture has qualities of two different systems, but cannot be fully categorised as either. This plain reality not only puts the project in a place where it can essentially be realised, but also puts the general public into crucial contemplation, where they can begin to speculate on architecture both past and future.

Anatolious Strathaiou's 'Kill BIM' does not aim to design a building, but to rethink the processes and the tools that affect the moments of inception and intuition within our creative process. It introduces the game format as a communication tool that should initiate architectural conversations through interactive three-dimensional environments. In the same way that perspective shaped renaissance and the axonometric affected and defined architectural utopian visions in the 19th and 20th century, BIM nowadays seems to be a successor to CAD systems. Kill BIM is a video game that follows the protagonist Lewis and his struggle against a mundane and homogenised built environment. At the centre of blame and attention is BIM. Although BIM encourages a collaborative model between professionals, it has been dubbed as a facilitator of standardised architecture. The video game critically evaluates the ideas of standardisation introduced through modernism and rethinks the value of work, intuition and the bias towards experience [17]. The character transcends from the contemporary boring conditions to a world that is formed by visionary projects of the past, acting as some kind of a contemporary sandbox where creative conversation can take place. It's a

sandbox where play and work merge, but it's easy and dangerous for the sandbox of possibilities to turn into a desert of ruins and failed ideas. The video game has a satirical narrative that acts as a cautionary tale to architects and design professionals.

From gaming to virtual reality, projects such as 'Becoming' by Daniel Duffield use the power of the immersive environment to unfold the psychic conditions of the realm of architectural education by inverting power relationships between the tutor and the student. Through Daniel's environment, one is immersed in an architecture of intoxicating intensities and emotive experience, testing and exploring the potential of virtual reality as both design driver and critical design practice. By designing in the programme, one experiences an inherent perception of space beyond sketching or modelling, forming an impression of experience that the mind cannot refuse, it potentially bridges the gap between the imaginary and the real [18].

The construction of images derives from a selection of specific choices. When decomposing the image and the drawing to its single elements and at the time when Hockney's portraits have invaded most architectural fantasies, we're intrigued by the use of silhouettes as Kim Kardashian as an interpretation of a contemporary monument. Here [19], Kim personally embodies much of what Dalley, the architect seeks to criticise about the current condition of overshared, yet under-refined information. An era distracted by narcissist digital hedonism. Flying pigs, fruit-conveyor belts and celebrities become the architecture of post-truth. These conspicuous motives are necessary to provide an introduction to the theme of the commentary. They headline a subject of distraction, obsession and apathy that provide the foundation for discourse and challenge the meaning of visualisation in architectural education.

We trust in the image as a tool through which to visualise what apparently seems to be unseen. From sharing visions of the critically unbuilt, we fathom the image to reveal what exists, but what is not apparent to the eye. Images, for example, as Catherine O Donnell's, are an exploration of the architecture, culture and history of their urban environment. Her current focus on social housing represents the commonly overlooked dwellings of suburbia in an
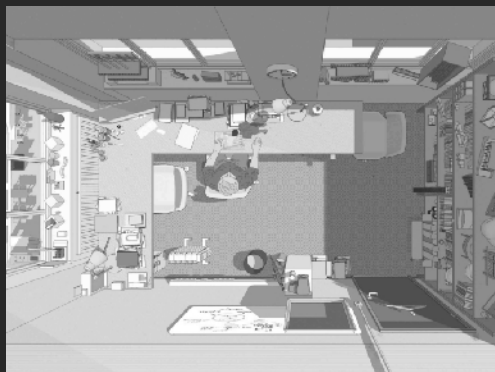
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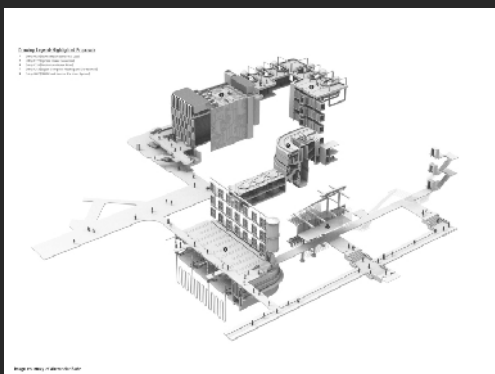
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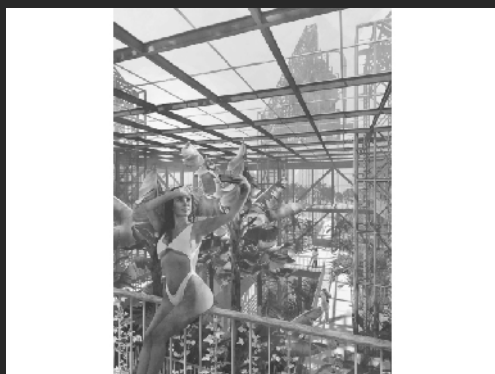
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abstracted form, so as to provide insight into the real social issues of the American suburbs, where the most welfare-dependent people of our society are forced to live. Her artworks speak of society and social issues surrounding these estates and the houses she draws are the physical embodiment of the government policies and decisions made in the mid-20th century that continue to affect those living in them today [20]. These moments maintain an element of the personal and the impersonal, and as such, her drawings of houses and flats become active reminders of human existence as well as outdated social engineering policies, which started with the best of intentions, but quickly deteriorated into a harsh urban reality. Scale here plays a pivotal role. It is always carefully considered with the audience in mind, so as to create a physical as well as a psychological experience for the viewer. In her very large works, the completed drawing ultimately becomes a scaled down or actual size of the version of the dwelling, in effect standing in for the original.

From the medium of the paper and pencil and the hand-drawing to that of the computer and the infinite possibilities of manipulation offered by programmes as Photoshop, the images of Eric Morris exist as explorations of the oddities, peculiarities and perversions of American vernacular architecture. Beginning as an effort of pure documentation, these edits are an exercise in visual storytelling, translating daydreams into the various architectures he photographs [21]. Post-production is the storytelling device, a tool through which Eric is able to translate thoughts and stretched truths. Architecture itself relies on inherent deceit and these images operate within that zone of fact and fiction mixed in the suburban sceneries with part wonderland, part nightmare, the pursuit of a hyper reality.

From the pursuit of a hyper reality back to our tangible world and the overviewing. KooZA/rch is interested in how this micro-perspective enables greater awareness and ability to observe change to grasp scale. We find it particularly interesting that only through an inhuman perspective, which we were potentially never made to see, are we able to grasp and read our own humanity. The alienation provided by the satellite perspective reveals the things we take for granted to be peculiar, even absurd. Banal structures and locations can appear fantastical

and newly intricate. Here, for example, a residential development is seen in Boca Raton, Florida, USA [22]. Because many cities in the states contain master-planned communities, they're often built on top of waterways in the latter half of the 20th century. There are a number of intricate designs that are visible from the overview perspective. Boca Raton is home to roughly 91.000 residents. Seuss Landing is one of the eight islands inside Universal's Island of Adventure theme park in Orlando, Florida. It is based on the work of Dr Seuss and features attractions such as 'The High in the Sky Seuss Trolley Train Ride' and 'The Green Eggs and Ham Coffee'. True to Seuss' style, the theme park claims that no straight line exists in its design [23]. Two pandas are formed by solar panels at the Panda Green Energy Power Plant in Datong, Shanxi province, northern China. Built in corporation with the United Nations development programme, this solar farm covers roughly 1.500 acres and includes an education centre that teaches children about sustainable and renewable energy. Their acting curiosity towards their own human landscape, we may find that those things that are the most recognisable human are also the most fragile. Here pictured the destruction caused by four tornado's that tore through Lee County, Alabama just a few months back [24]. Today, these images have the potential to sit above man made borders which divide us on the ground. Politics, race and the borders of our countries landing an objective and beautiful perspective to what is happening in the world.

So the last chapter. The image is abstraction. With the aim of continuously developing our research into the power of the image and its ability to generate collective architectural discussions, within the context of the digital. Last September, we launched the project Abstractions. A research of our research platform, through which we invite a curated selection of creatives to tackle a yearly theme. The only limit: a visual format which can be shared and divulged in the digital wide web. The first tools organically emerged as a means to question other mediums and methods of making apart from drawing. Once again, not limited ourselves to the figure of the architect, but rather expanding the discourse to other creative minds. If the interview exists as a format which allows us to delve further into the individual project, our Abstraction aims to be the agora where a global selection of creatives can reflect upon a specific
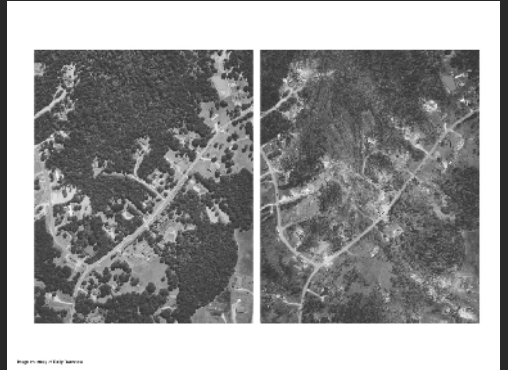
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theme. For tools, the response has been varied, to say the least. In embracing the full potential of the realm of the digital, Dahlia Frontini's contribution explores the possibility of painting in the fourth dimension, where the flat screen is no longer the limit. Instead, we are immersed into the space we are designing. Dahlia asks how ink would perform and respond to gravity and how it could have structural and spatial qualities [25]. From CAD and BIM, Dahlia speculates on how painting will become the new device to design and build, all at once. The Ten-axis robot-arm and the VR-paint clouds will become the new tool that will reach the hands of the end user.

For the Bangkok-, Milan-, and London-based Lemonot, their most important tools are the different props and memorabilia gathered everywhere. As compulsive collectors before architects and academics, their tools are the privileged witnesses of their desires, ambitions and fears. Most of these fragments are always the starting point and the conclusion of their architectural thoughts and projects [26]. As a practice, which is based in-between four countries and two continents, the postcard emerged as the perfect format reminiscent of the notion of travel and the velocity of travelling from one space to the next.

Another compulsive collector, 'Archive of Affinities' by Andrew Kovacs, is the longest project he has ever worked on, a project with no deadline, no clients and no budget. The archive is a constantly updated collection of architectural images that exploit the dual meaning of affinity and the likeliness associated with the word, as both personal predilection and relationship between images. 'Archives of Affinities' is not an archive of the canon or tradition, but rather of the overlooked, of the architectural B-side [27]. If the canon is a solar system, Architecture of Affinities is a galaxy, an active tool, it is never-ending and seeks, searches out and scans each architectural image, good, bad and ugly, to become a crucible for making architecture from architecture.

From collecting to experimenting with the uncontrollable. At a time when machines have allowed us to translate our ideas with an inhuman precision, from the likes of CAD, grasshopper and beyond, the research of Edouard Cabay with 'Machinic Protocols' in-between machine and analogue methods of production praises the unexpected, the deviation. The research was started back in 2015, questions of design methodology which integrates notions of chance and intermediacy, where the drawing exists as an exploratory tool of research. Rather than being a means to an end, the drawing is here deployed as tool of investigation, one which responds and engages with natural elements as the wind, or urban data as the number of pigeons or people crossing a square, or alternatively a set of protocols set forth by an individual to our very own hands. Whilst one might be surprised by the level of deviation inherent to the machine, experiments as '12 Arms' [28] reveal how we as people can ourselves become drawing devices, allowing for our singularities to vanish slowly through time.

From the tangible back to the space of the digital and the tool of the pixel, the nominal unit, the extra-human which is now allowing us to engage with the process of achieving an infinite resolution, disanchoring us from reality and creating a new set of realities, deeper and more detailed. ab(Normal)'s contribution reflects upon the virtual as a derivative dimension. The by-product of the constant recording of routines throughout history, where the lack of curatorial selection of details that occurred within the introduction on mechanical reproduction can be subverted through a critical use of the tool [29]. Inspired by the work of Gerard Richter, where the act of blurring stands in opposition to the appealing viscosity of details offered by the eruption of new tools, ab(Normal) believes that technology can be hacked, downgraded, purged, systematically reduced, deteriorated, eroded, abased and decomposed into something inefficient and yet full of beauty. At the time when the pixel is the ultimate tool through which we communicate daily, when through our smartphones we have the ability to engage globally constantly. We believe in the power of the image as the ultimate architectural tool. KooZA/rch seeks to be a continuously growing digital archive of carefully constructed images of all the architecture which built or unbuilt questions and challenges a continuously evolving architectural, social and political investigation. For us, the image is process, it is message and it is vision. For us, the image is [30].

Thank you

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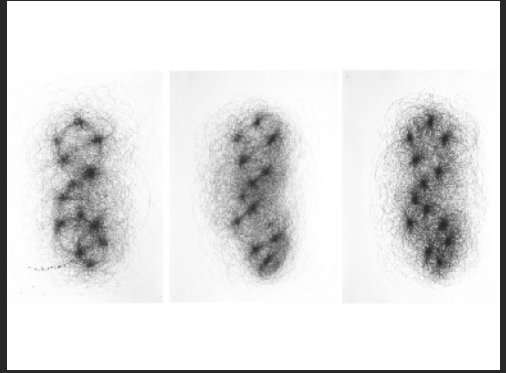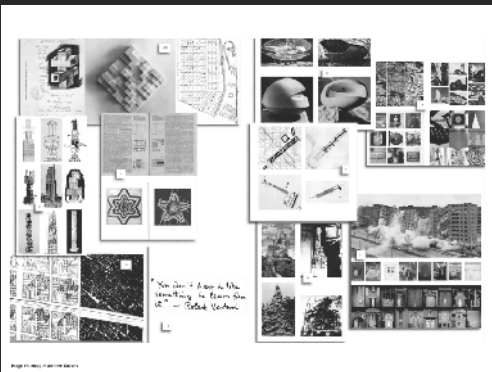
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lera samovich & ahmed belkhodja
fala atelier

Ahmed Belkhodja is co-founder of the naive architecture practice fala atelier in Porto, which was founded in 2013. Together with Lera Samovich, Ahmed has lectured at different universities and institutions, including the Architectural Association in London, the Graham Foundation in Chicago, the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels, the Versailles' Faculty of Architecture in Paris and the Casa della Architettura in Rome; among others, fala has taught at the faculty of architecture in Venice, Munich, Munster, Liège and Bratislava. The atelier's work has been exhibited at the architecture biennials in Venice and Chicago, the Serralves Foundation and the Pavillon de l'Arsenal in Paris, among others. fala's work has been widely published in international media platforms, including Domus, Engawa, Arq.a, Mark, Plot and the Architectural Review. fala has published '01', a collection of early projects by the atelier.

Projects, Tropes & Lenses

[Lera]
Preamble

We are from Fala atelier, a rather small office in Portugal. We are almost six years old, and the office at the moment consists of ten people, all coming from quite different backgrounds. The story of the office actually starts in this building [1], the Nakagin tower in Japan, and this [2] is the capsule where Filipe and Ana lived for a few months. What I find fascinating about this photo is that already here on the wall, you can kind of see this set of images of references, let's say our first attempt to make a little catalogue of references. If you look closely at current images of the office, you'll notice that these references are still on the table, even today.

In the beginning the office was quite fragile, we were mainly doing competitions. [3] Here you can see the first competition we have done in Portugal, a library, and the very first collage that fala produced. Then there more competitions, mostly in Switzerland, mostly schools for some reason. A few months ago we moved away from this tiny office in the very city centre. It was a very intense and tiny place, but it was also very nice for us, because it almost forced close discussion, including all of us, and to keep track of what is happening in the office. So as I said, in the beginning our world was essentially made of 'fictional' projects, or rather projects we knew were almost certainly going to remain fiction. But at the same time I think they set a certain base for the office. A base that I think was necessary for us to try our ideas and obsessions, and to speculate on what the office could be.

Then step by step, we started to gather our first projects and the scale was slowly grew. First, an exhibition in Lisbon, then a first apartment, then a first house, which is actually a garage. It was a very nice project, because it was the first space for which we had a close relationship with a client who was going to inhabit it. Then the first outside expression [4] and the first façade that was built. Then the projects came in succession and we mostly worked on renovations and on living spaces. Although it was the same typology, for us it the challenge was to avoid repetition and to find new possibilities every time. It was of course a huge process of making mistakes, and then learning, and then starting to build things, and kind of discovering these little joyful moments. Although it was mostly renovations and it was all about living spaces, all the buildings were very different, so it also allowed us to explore different spatial possibilities. We now also have a set of buildings that are not renovations, but that we approach the same way. And with having a certain amount of projects, I think right now we start to be able to also look back, which allows to understand the role of the tools that we use. In the office we are quite obsessed about certain ways of drawing. We look at all projects in what we call « single-line drawings », and then find these little elements that might be repeated, to understand the themes or strategies that are somehow reappearing [5]. These tools are also sometimes a way to look at one project from a different side. So we are trying these very complex exploded axo's, that are summarising the entire project in one drawing. In parallel this informs teaching. It is still quite modest, we are doing a few workshops here and there, but this is also a way to extend the research that is happening in the office. There are also a few exhibitions. And the geography of the office has also expanded a bit, I would say not only in terms of lectures, but also with the collaborators and these workshops and occasional exhibitions.

So the way we produce architecture is essentially messy but we are still are to take control over all the elements we produce, in a sharper and more precise manner. And as a theme for this talk we decided to mention « projects, tropes and lenses ». Today, for us this is the structure, the flat hierarchy of the things we produce as an architecture practice. « Projects » is a self-explained category. « Tropes » are elements or compositional strategies, a certain field of that is always there, and that we will talk about later. Then there are « lenses », which are basically representation methods – drawings, collages, images, etc. – that carry the projects.

[Ahmed]
I will also mention, because I believe its an often underestimated aspect, that the value of these three categories first became clear to us when we recently renewed our website. So for us and I think this is also
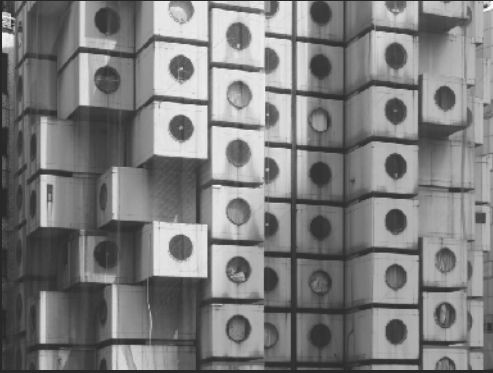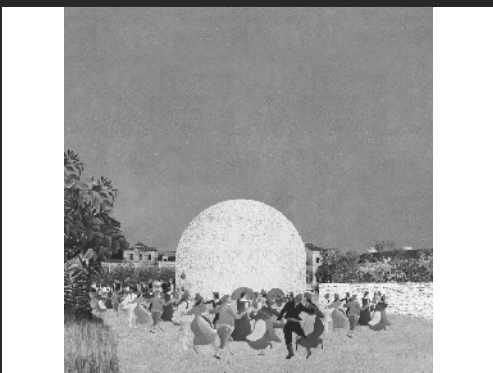
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true for most practices today, even the most internet-sceptic ones, conceiving a website or an online presence is a very fundamental task, very close to the actual conception of a practice. [5] This was the homepage of our previous website, and in the past few months we have been working on a new one, which presents our work through the three categories already mentioned. And this talk will follow this logic, going through a few projects first, then a few tropes, and finally some key lenses.

Projects

[048 house in rua do paraiso, Porto, Portugal; 2017]

This is the second finished building that we worked on in Porto. [6] It is a small house was in very bad condition. We were asked to do four small apartments in it. The desire of the client was to have students living there. We started sketching many things. The question for us was how to conceive a project that was made out of this very repetitive typology. Four spaces, studio apartments, that are quite neutral in terms of use, because everything happens in the same space (dining, living, sleeping etc.), but to still make them all coherent and different, not 'neutral'. Here you can see a lot of experiments [7]. We are often asked if we only do collages. Here you can see we also do renders. And that we also draw on renders. [8] These were the first stabilised ideas about the project. The idea was, the following: you had four apartments that are equivalents and they come together through a very simple vocabulary, reduced, simple, but not generic. So every apartment has two doors, every apartment has a stepped wall concealing the bathroom, and every apartment has a curved perimeter. In the top floor apartments the curve is in the ceiling. In the lower level it is the walls that separate the common corridor from the living spaces. The plan as we found it, was very convoluted, and in typically Portuguese, had many rooms without direct daylight. This is something that doesn't fit contemporary demands, but at the same time the preservation regulations required that we kept the structure, including the staircases, so the staircase was renewed but in the exact same position.

[9] Here is the very simple plan that we came up with. So as you can see on the ground floor there is a very fluid corridor, which then spills to become the terrace of the garden. On the top floor, there are two simple rooms. That free curve that you have on the ground floor to define the corridors become the ceiling that hides the tilted roof on the top floor. So the idea is also to make spaces that have a certain kind of freedom, and that detaches themselves from the very mundane shell in which they exist.

[10] Here the built project. The materiality of the house is a response to the very low budget that we had, very simple, quite abstract. Inside the apartment you have a very strongly patterned wooden floor that tries to give a little warmth to the space. The pattern comes from the fact that the budged did not allow to make the full floor in the darker, more expensive wood, so we made one quarter of it dark, three quarters light, and made a pattern out of it. The stepped wall becomes a shelf in certain rooms. Most of the street facades we work with are protected, but on the back of buildings we have more freedom. So on the back we could draw perfectly square windows, while on the street facades we kept the three existing windows. This is not something we have a problem with. It participates in making all rooms different, and our role was to still make them all come together. That was a modest, but in our eyes crucial goal of the project

[11] For the street façade, the only thing we did was to change the worn tiles for green marble. Marble in Portugal is a relatively cheap material. These are local, easy to access stones. There is a white dot of marble counterbalancing the entrance door that it more visually present than before. Incidentally the composition finds a different charisma, it's cheekier somehow.

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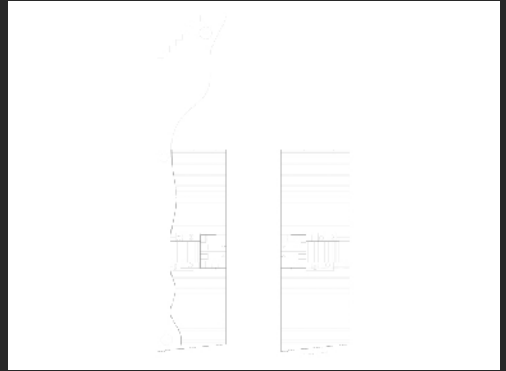
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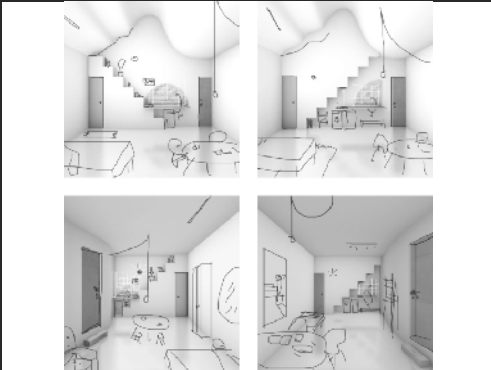
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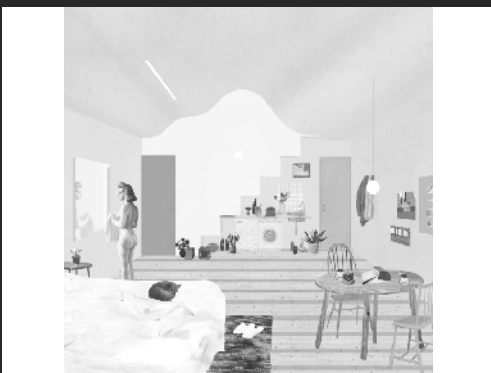
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On the back façade, the existing illegal extensions were removed so we had the opportunity to build a new façade. Of course we started looking into the architecture we love, in this case Peter Märkli, Aldo Rossi and of course Alberti. Because we were working with marble already we also did so in the back. The idea is to make something at least as proud on both sides. The façade as we found it was a ruin, falling apart. [12] Here is the façade we projected. This pattern actually comes from a shirt of Ana's uncle and we also simply liked it. As you can see, the door to the common corridor is totally concealed into the façade. So the facades tried to be a bit restrained, perhaps slightly dumb. It is a bold pattern, two windows, a dot marking an invisible entrance, counterbalancing the composition. The façade has three levels, while the building only has two levels, so it aligns with the neighbour, which felt like the best proposal in this case.

[067 house and atelier, Porto, Portugal; 2018]

Here a more recent project. As Lera mentioned earlier, we are ten people in the office today. I think at the maximum we were twelve, working in a space which was about twenty three square meters. It was very dense and of course we needed something bigger.
We found this building which was exceptionally cheap, and managed to buy it. It used to be two houses and a shop. We found it odd and interesting, because it is almost a corner plot, slightly curved by the road, and the interior organisation was quite unique. It has three staircases, so that each level all has its own entrance. The plan we went for actually retains quite a lot of the existing, but we also imposed a few adjustments to it. It appeared along the process that the building's structure needed a lot of reinforcement, so it also became a bit of a bricolage project. I will explain a bit more about this later. The street façade was also quite interesting because it had these two faces. [13] All we did on it was to paint it white and change the doors. The two green doors bring you to residential spaces, in which Ana Luisa, Filipe and I live. The pink door is the office. The only thing real addition to this façade this dot of white marble, that conceals a tiny window for a shared laundry area.

We also wanted to keep the existing sloped roof, but during construction it collapsed, and so we decided to build a « hat », because we thought the building was nicer with a hat. The top level works as a cellular plan around a central space. This central vertical space allows light in the depth of the building. The surrounding rooms are extremely simple, with no pre-defined use, all with the same weight. The middle level is a generous but simple studio apartment. We almost never do corridors but here you enter through one, then there is one main space. The articulation is done by an exceptional double-door. The lower space is our new office, which is five times the size of the previous one. The composition there is the one which was the most incidental, because we needed a few structural reinforcements, and decided to play with them. There is a beam that stops just before spanning the whole space, and ends on a new column [14]. The office is open as much as possible to the garden, but there is another column on the way, that supports the building visually [15]. Its only actual purpose is to hide the window mullion that would otherwise become very present. So the whole project is a complex spatial composition of objects that have a distant relationship to each other. [16] Here is the new backfacade. So it's a very one, rough concrete, painted in white, and that's it.

[housing in campanhā, Porto, Portugal; ongoing]

Here is one of the largest projects we have ongoing. It is a housing block in quite a special area in Porto, because it is half industrial, half residential. On the left of the street you have housing blocks, on the right you have factories. So our client bought this ruin of a factory and the municipality allowed us to build a housing block there, as long as we would keep the existing volume or that build within that volume. Our first step was to convince the client to build the full volume available, which was not really an obvious volume for housing. He wanted to build studios, because there is a new train station being built nearby, and he hopes commuters will live there. So first we would divide the volume into fifteen equal apartments. The second layer was to try as much as possible to make all these apartments different. So all the living rooms are different, all the bathrooms are different, even though they all have exactly the same program and roughly the same square meters.
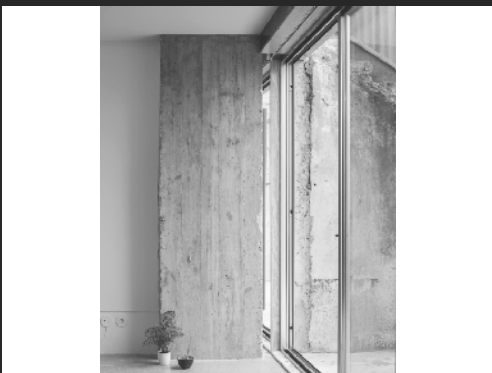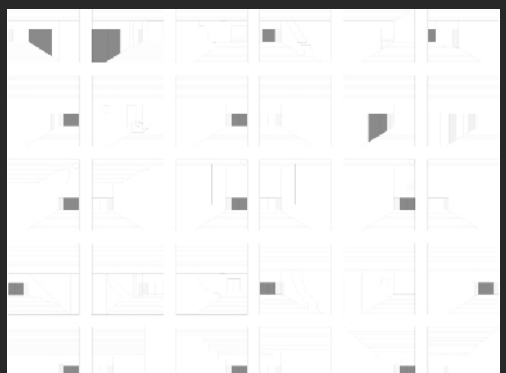
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And then the interior spaces come as a group always with the same materiality, the same language, but all different spatially. [17] Here you can see them all together. Then the façades try to find a tension between domesticity and the industrial aspect of the neighbourhood. The end façades have a sort of minimalistic appearance, while the long facade is more industrial, and the roof has a checkerboard because we liked it. [18] Here is a collage in context.

[Lera]
Tropes

What we call « tropes » is a selection of elements, ideas and strategies that are appearing in many of our projects and most often also outside of them. Playing around with the idea of architecture as a language, we try to extract the vocabulary that is valuable to us. And out of this vocabulary somehow we assembled this system of tropes. Some of them come from precedents, from our heroes and from projects that we like. Others are more a product of the Portuguese context, of this set of very messy and clumsy buildings that we renovate. Others are simply the product of the budget of the project, of the simplicity of means that we have. And then it is also our desire for the richness of the final space, our desire for a certain complexity of a room. So we have many tropes, but we decided to show a few.

[Blues]
Blue is an easy colour to convince the client somehow, and I think also our use of colour is coming from the intention to emphasize certain simple elements in a room. You will also see that the colour is used in a different way in every space, so it can be the colour of the shutters, or the doors of the cabinet, here the five doors of a living room. [19] In the case of this project it is actually five tones of blue that we hand-painted ourselves.

[Columns]
Here a series of drawings, which mark the outlines of the main space of many projects. A series of main spaces, each with a column. I would say we play with two types of columns. The ones that are structural and have to be there for technical reasons, and then the ones which are more symbolic. Here is a column that doesn't touch the ceiling above it. It is just there to mark the space and to separate the areas to establish a certain hierarchy within the project. Here few drawings that we did for that specific trope. [20] This is the space of the office and here you have three columns, a structural one, a new one which is necessary but also a new one which is unnecessary, more playful. [21] Since we are dealing a lot with renovations and with buildings that are already there, in most cases we do not hide the structure behind the wall, but we try to emphasise it, and again we see it as a way to add a layer of information to the space. This column [22] is more of a mistake. It was a perfectly flat wall of the project, but then it had this column and instead of hiding, we decided to paint it black to emphasise the mistake. A column that has a circle on top, like a reverse exclamation point, which leads us to another trope which is circles and dots.

[Circles and dots]
Our joy about the circle and its pure form. Then also the circle as an exceptional element within the space, and as a tool to define the composition of the facade. [19] So the mirror in the living room in the apartment is marking the entrance in this case. [12] The dot on top of the building as a cherry on the cake. [13] Another marble dot hiding a window. The circular opening of a little attic. [23] A marble circle which is the door handle of the apartment and also the mailbox. Another dot in the same project. These two dots are in a way the theme that brings the street facade and the back facade together.

[18]

[21]

[19]

[22]

[20]

[23]

[Curved surfaces]
I think the curved wall for us is not a formal exercise, we learned to use it as a way to solve the space, to solve the many inconsistencies and all the little kinks, and I think we also have a fascination for these curves, because they produce quite a spectacular outline of the room in the end. So we try them a lot. And they appear in many of our projects. [24] Here you can see one of the first ones. I think we also use them a lot as a way to separate the public program from the secondary one, to avoid corridors in a way. So in a way each curve has a weird practicality behind it.

[Pretentious kitchens]
Kitchens, like bathrooms, can be fantastic design opportunities, that clients are often happy to discuss in lengths. So we took these opportunities treat the kitchen almost as a tiny building, at the same time aiming to make it a relevant element within the project. The hood that is above the oven is also a weird player in this game. Here a kitchen that is hidden behind blue doors. [25] Here a kitchen that is a kinked marble surface with a green hood on top, and I think the client even gave a name to it because they loved it.

[Careful mistakes]
Two kinds of mistakes. One that is almost done on purpose, that we find a certain joy in making. Because, it makes the project more human, and provides these complexities that we enjoy. Another kind of mistake, is the one that is found on construction site and with this one we have to improvise, to also enjoy it, never suppress it. [26] Here the facade is a perfect grid, but then one window is missing. [27] Here the mirror is hiding the thickness of the wall, because the facade is glass to the thickness was irritating. [28] This one has a few mistakes. The red beam is coming through the space and pops out, like an accident. Then the curtain kind of cuts the blue cornice, not where it is supposed to be cut. Then the diagonal bracing is breaking the temple-like regularity of the structure.

[Proud patterns]
I think for us patterns are maybe there because we get tired of white surfaces, or its our way to deal with flatness and again the desire for a certain visual richness in the space. And we add a few. [12] Here a back facade.

Here [29] the tower of a tiny house, as a way to separate it from the old vernacular building. But it is then also in the simple pattern of the wooden floor [10], the tiles of the bathroom, the kitchen patterns etc.

[Pink moments]
Pinks are surprisingly less consensual with clients than blues. But they are also something that started to appear in most projects. Maybe we got tired of the blue colour. Again the colour appears as an element and is marking it, making it a bit more present. So it can be the door, the colour of the pattern, the handrail, or a painted surface as a way to claim the surface and to emphasise it.
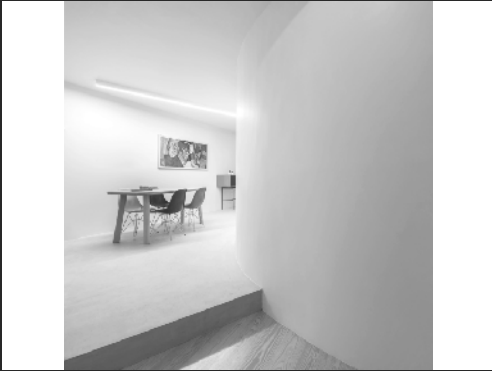
[24]

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[Ahmed]
Lenses

What we call lenses is basically all the different modes of representation that we use within the office. So of course it starts with plans.

[Plans]
Plans for us are not really about construction, they are about the spacial structure and the visual organisation. We look at all our projects in the same way at the same scale. In our office they are always printed in the same scale.

[Elevations]
We recently started to look at all our elevations with this type of drawings that removes all the lines, which makes it really about surfaces and metrics [30]. Interior elevations are looked at exactly in the same way, surprisingly. This is just a living room with a very exuberant fireplace. We usually tend to look at the most important room of the project this way.

[Portraits]
Collages. But it is also about the fact that these images are about a mood, they are not neutral in the way they represent things. Interior portraits [31] and exterior portraits [32]. The goal of these collages is to define as much as possible the architectural imaginary of a project.

[Details]
Then of course this obsession with lenses extends also to photographs. [23] Here for example a mailbox hidden behind an oversized door handle.

[Context]
By context we mean all the images in which we look at our projects within its urban surroundings [33] Here is a patio that we renovated, which is in front of this, incredibly ugly but also very beautiful housing block.
[34] And as of course we have no conclusion, here is one image of an exhibition we did recently, that brought all these themes and lenses together, in a sorte of mise en abyme.
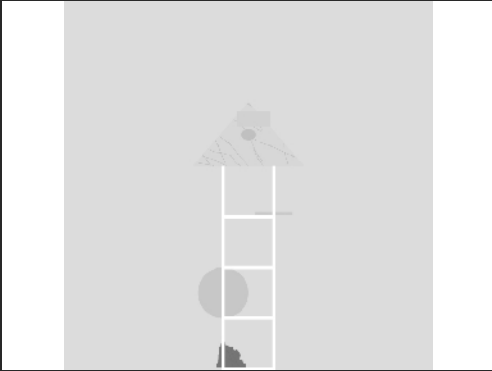
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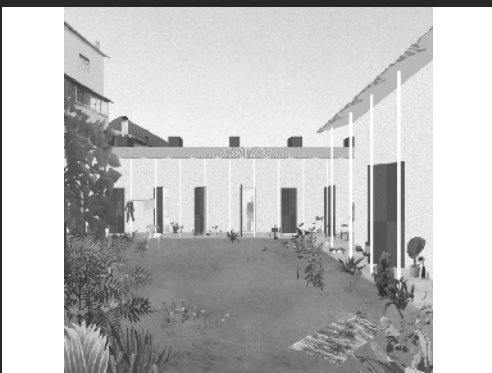
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interviews

reinier de graaf

OMA

In Four Walls and a Roof you write "practicing as an architect seemed to have nothing - and I mean absolutely nothing - to do with studying architecture." Why do you think there is such a big gap between practicing architecture and studying architecture?

I think it is because you have to start again. It is not the fact that as a student you could design and invent everything you wanted, but as an employee you have to draw ceiling plans for instance. That is not important. It is rather the shock of discovering that the financial aspects are the determining factors in a project. For me it wasn't about having to draw those ceiling plans, but learning the reason I was drawing those plans. It was in discovering that the building, before it was finished, was already being transformed because a calculation showed that it would be more profitable with a different function. These financial aspects are completely absent during your studies. They don't prepare you for just how vulgar practice can be. I wonder if that is a good thing...

Do you think more attention should be given to this?

I think that if you prepare students completely for practice, they will lose interest. And that should not be the intention. But a little more preparation would be good in my opinion. Because it is difficult to deal effectively with things you are not sufficiently prepared for. Perhaps a university is the place to start. TU Delft isn't too bad. In other countries, where the building practice is far worse, universities tend to escape into theory. The schism between [theory and practice] becomes almost unbridgeable and a lot of graduates go straight into teaching without ever entering practice. It's almost a tautology. You can see practice as something unpleasant, or you can see knowledge as a kind of experience.

I mean, life experience, which is a good addition to purely theoretical knowledge of course.

You have also led studios at various universities...

Well, I always try to ask questions that make people uncomfortable. With varying results, I have to say [laughs]. But the studios are like that also. It forces students to think about things that they would normally not have to think about at all.

You said that architects are in a closed feedback loop. Do you think this is a way we can escape it?

Well you can break it. You can break it by assigning problems that upset the usual reflexes. The last studio I led in Harvard was about a 'ghost town' in Angola, in which all the buildings were left empty. So what do you do as an architect in this context? The one thing you certainly cannot do, which of course everyone is eager to do, is to propose even more buildings. Some students were very responsive to this, and came out of the studio considerably wiser than before. Whereas others entered a kind of defense mode, and got a little grumpy. I see it as a kind of therapy, with interesting effects.

Do you think the solutions lie in something very different than architecture?

Perhaps. Of course it depends on what you define as architecture. That is the whole point. In the case of this studio, if the solution was not to propose a building per se, however beautifully designed, what then? Well, the funny thing is that the students proposed very different things. Whereas if we hadn't precluded that reflex, everyone would have proposed something familiar. So the studio became a kind of kaleidoscope of possible approaches to the problem. Of course I don't have the solution myself either. I

come across things like 'ghost towns' on the internet, enormous buildings that are never inhabited, and I don't understand it. I look at them with a strange fascination, because it is such an incredibly surreal phenomenon. All the logic about building, renting, selling, and the whole economy is lost, it makes no sense. It seems like science fiction. So the studios are driven by that, fascinations for which I don't have the answer. I use a university or studio to become wiser myself too. The whole crux of teaching is to learn yourself; it is an interactive process. Whereas if you teach architecture in a more traditional way, it quickly becomes one-way traffic.

We noticed in your lectures and your book, you always approach these problems with a sense of humor and a certain irony.

That is a character flaw, I think. Everyone thinks that architects are 'powerful' in practice, certainly well-known architects. But nothing could be further from the truth. I experience the powerlessness of architecture every day. More things fail than succeed. So the only way to continue, is with a dose of humor. Otherwise you will be quite grumpy by the age of forty. Many people have asked me, even after the book, are you cynical? Are you a pessimist? Why are you still doing this? And so on... I enjoy my work. And I think it is strange that, when you openly express doubts or even criticism about aspects of your own profession, the categorical conclusion is that you can't be enjoying it. That is not true. The book has humor, black humor even, a form that is perfectly acceptable in other fields like literature, or the visual arts for instance, but somehow architecture still has a problem with it. I don't know why.

We sometimes get the feeling that architecture is a form of art, perhaps that is not the case...

The stratospheric returns from artworks are often much greater than those from buildings. But artists are much more aware of this than architects, and they use it as a theme. I think that architecture should do the same.

In line with the role of artist as an architect. As the opening lecture of our event, we had a lecture from a sociologist, Stefan Metaal, who is researching the position of the architect from a wider perspective of professions. He mentioned the architect is four professions at the same time: an artist, an engineer, an entrepreneur, and a researcher.

Yes, and none of them.

All these different professions actually have their own personalities and characteristics. Do you think they sometimes clash?

Well, I never think about it that way. I have very little time to think about these kinds of existential questions. I certainly don't think that you have to be all of those things at the same time. And being an architect is not limited to those four things. The architect is actually a generalist, one without any real knowledge of the specifics. When designing a hospital, we never have the same strong arguments as the installation engineer; when designing a bridge, we never have the same strong arguments as the constructor, and so on. But the strange thing is, because you are not the expert, you are constantly absorbing knowledge and learning from other disciplines. So architects are very often crucial in articulating the total, that which transcends specialism. Politicians don't have real knowledge about specifics either. Architects don't have real knowledge of anything at all, which makes the architect a particularly useful person in political situations.

Should the architect also play a political role?

There are examples of that, but those are not really... [laughs]... shining examples. Nowadays it is more project developers who go into politics, and not always with the best intentions, I have to say.

You also mentioned Thierry Baudet in your lecture. He makes quite over-simplified and fierce statements about architecture, by mentioning we are being "undermined by the people who design our buildings" in his speech.

Yes, but he doesn't really dig deep. And I forgive him. I mean, he is a politician, and if you dig deep as a politician you won't get very far. He makes similar statements about administrators, about journalists, and about universities also. And if the shallowness of his knowledge about architecture sets a standard for his knowledge of everything else, I don't give a penny for it. His mentor was the late Roger Scruton, an English arch conservative. It is a simplistic view of architecture, a regressive view. He derides modern architecture as a totalizing solution to non-existent problems. Ironically this applies to Forum for Democracy itself too. It positions itself as the ultimate political solution for a non-existent problem, painting a gloomy picture of a country and a continent which are actually doing pretty well. I mean, the European Union has brought enormous successes, enormous prosperity. The problem is that we will only realize this when it is no longer there. This is something Baudet mentions himself. In that same speech he says, "I would have never noticed the sun, if it had not set again and again". But this equally applies to everything he criticizes and wants to get rid of! Nobody will notice the benefits of the European Union, until it is no longer there. The most valuable things are those which enable us to do what we do. For that reason they are easily overlooked, which is potentially dangerous. Politics run on four-year cycles, and politicians have to find problems to tackle, or they will not have an election program. If you don't have problems, no one will vote for you. So politicians in general invent problems to suit their totalizing solutions.

Do you think it is useless as a profession to get involved in this?

I think it is very difficult. Especially because there is much value in architecture that cannot be expressed straightforwardly in words. Certain architects talk or write better than others, and you have certain architects who write really well, but it is not the core task of an architect. The real value of architecture might only manifest once it is no longer there. Or when we are no longer around to defend it. Architecture is ultimately defenseless.

Back to your projects. Describing buildings such as Dubai Renaissance and recently the Timmerhuis and Norra Tornen, you wrote about a simpler, more effective, and more functional form of architecture. Do you try to distance yourself from that artist's role, and all the aesthetics that come with architecture, with these types of projects?

I don't know if you can say it like that. Different projects have different motives. The building in Dubai we designed to be as simple as possible, because every building there is an 'architectural masterpiece' of sorts. Every building tries to be an exception. So when you design a very normal building you are, curiously enough, the exception. That is the idea behind it. At the Timmerhuis we knew that we would eventually work for a contractor in a design and build contract, and that is why we made something that was very easy to build, and very modular. This reduced the construction time, which made the building process cheaper, so that we were still able to create some special moments – like the materials, overhangs and roof terraces. We could do all of that because we saved costs on the construction time. It was inspired by that idea, and by the fact that a contractor with a certain budget was in charge. The building in Sweden is actually a weird kind of violation of an envelope we didn't like, and that we totally changed without breaking a single rule. We were completely driven into a corner, but through a strange twist we were able to build it anyway. We had a lot of discussions about whether we had to accept the project at all. The strange thing is that we had the idea for the building quite quickly, even before accepting the project. And with that idea, we became enthusiastic for the project, and so took it on. So every building has a different story, which makes it quite difficult to measure them on the same level. Of course, we have a certain approach. And there might well be something to be said about our architecture in a general sense.

But I often find it most interesting, when I talk about our work, to look at it case by case.

Many of the buildings you have worked on, at first glance look simple, but are complex in nature. The execution is not extravagant...

I think it is nice if buildings don't 'show off'. When money does not manifest itself in a design, that is a measure of good architecture in my opinion. Of course there are a lot of ostensibly simple modernist buildings that are in fact really expensive. Mies van der Rohe, the supposed king of simplicity, had a career filled with exorbitant budget overruns. Yet what made his buildings expensive was never motivated by a desire to show money. It was always inspired by an idea to take the space to a higher level. It had no materialistic motive, and yet it was expensive. Perhaps this is the difference between art and kitsch...

Many high rise towers as you mentioned in your lecture, such as Park Avenue by Viñoly, are often only built to generate capital...

I wonder if Viñoly was overly aware of that though... I think it is a nice, and cleverly engineered building, it is something that perhaps we could have done. Our Dubai Renaissance and the Park Avenue tower are not that far apart. So I suppose we too can become complicit in such a trend. But because we are aware of the trend, I think our design would have said something different than what Park Avenue is saying now.

So you have probably also done such projects yourself...

We have certainly done such projects ourselves. I have seen it for myself. I have done housing in London, which is of course the Valhalla of real-estate. We did a housing project around the Design Museum, for which the sole purpose of the building was profit. It is often a case of money seeking a house, not necessarily people. But for this project a large part of that money was spent on a free museum, which is a good goal. Ultimately of course, the profits went far beyond financing the museum. That project was a financial construction par excellence, which I was not at all aware of when we started it. My insight into

this topic has come from experience. It forms a steep learning curve. From becoming part of something, before later realizing what is actually happening, to sharing that as a form of knowledge. In relation to your first question, as to whether that should no longer happen, I think that it should. I think that very few architects speak openly about their problems or their doubts. Most architecture lectures are a form of self-congratulation. There rests an enormous taboo within our profession on talking openly about the doubts and problems we all struggle with. This is also very different in art and in a lot of other professions. I mean, writers are all openly depressed...

Yes, art is pre-eminently used to broach taboos.

Well, the biggest taboo in architecture is a lack of success. But success in itself is not a value. It is not a normative criterion. I mean, Albert Speer was successful, until he wasn't.

And how do you then look back on those kinds of projects? Where you maybe did not realize it was largely about money.

With a mixture of pride and abhorrence. Certain things went very well, certain things ended well despite difficulties, and others are what they are.

Sometimes you can't do anything about it.

Well, there is often very little you can do. You can refuse the project of course. But there is very little light in between. Especially in a situation where you cannot express any doubts. It's often all or nothing. If you cannot express your doubts, you have the choice to either keep your mouth shut and do it, or to walk away.

And if you accept it, you might still be able to bend the rules, and create some more margin for maneuver.

Yes, but the whole idea of "if I don't do it, someone else will" ... I don't really believe that. A lot of what happens you discover along the way. You can't know everything in advance. One of the most difficult moments in our office, is when we all meet on Monday morning, and the list of requests comes in, the list of tenders. Then we have to decide where to participate, where not to participate, what are we going to try to

acquire, and so on. That is very difficult. There is no method, no policy, or checklist for that. It's all just a feeling. Because in every project there is a tight race between good and bad things. Pros and cons. You cannot always know in advance which of the two will prevail. Often things change over time. You once had bad projects in good countries, and good projects in so called bad countries. But there are actually no good or bad countries anymore, that is becoming increasingly clear. Which means that instinct is becoming an increasingly important tool. As an architect you must train your instinct, by becoming aware of your experiences. Every instinct is a function of memory and of course, depending on what you have experienced, your instinct also changes. So what I am promoting is simply a much less narrow approach to architecture in the first place, and an open recognition of its problems. Every solution to a problem begins with the recognition of that problem. But not many people seem to be willing to do that.

You mentioned that architecture is in a state of denial, that the ideology of modernism, which used to provide good and cheap housing for many people by efficient, fast industrial production processes, is now used to maximize profits.

Yes, and it serves both spheres perfectly. It is the perfect tool for either extreme, both sides of the political spectrum. Which also tells us something about the eternal value of architecture. Every architecture is worth as much as the system in which it attempts to be effective. And something that is considered emancipatory or socially progressive, can easily become its opposite. This is visible elsewhere. The internet for instance is both a source of freedom, and a source of surveillance. It is a source of revolution, and a source of oppression. Ultimately human decisions are the determining factor. And without seeing architecture in the context of those decisions, architecture in itself is nothing.

This interview was conducted by Koen Meijman and Guusje Enneking on 14.05.2019.
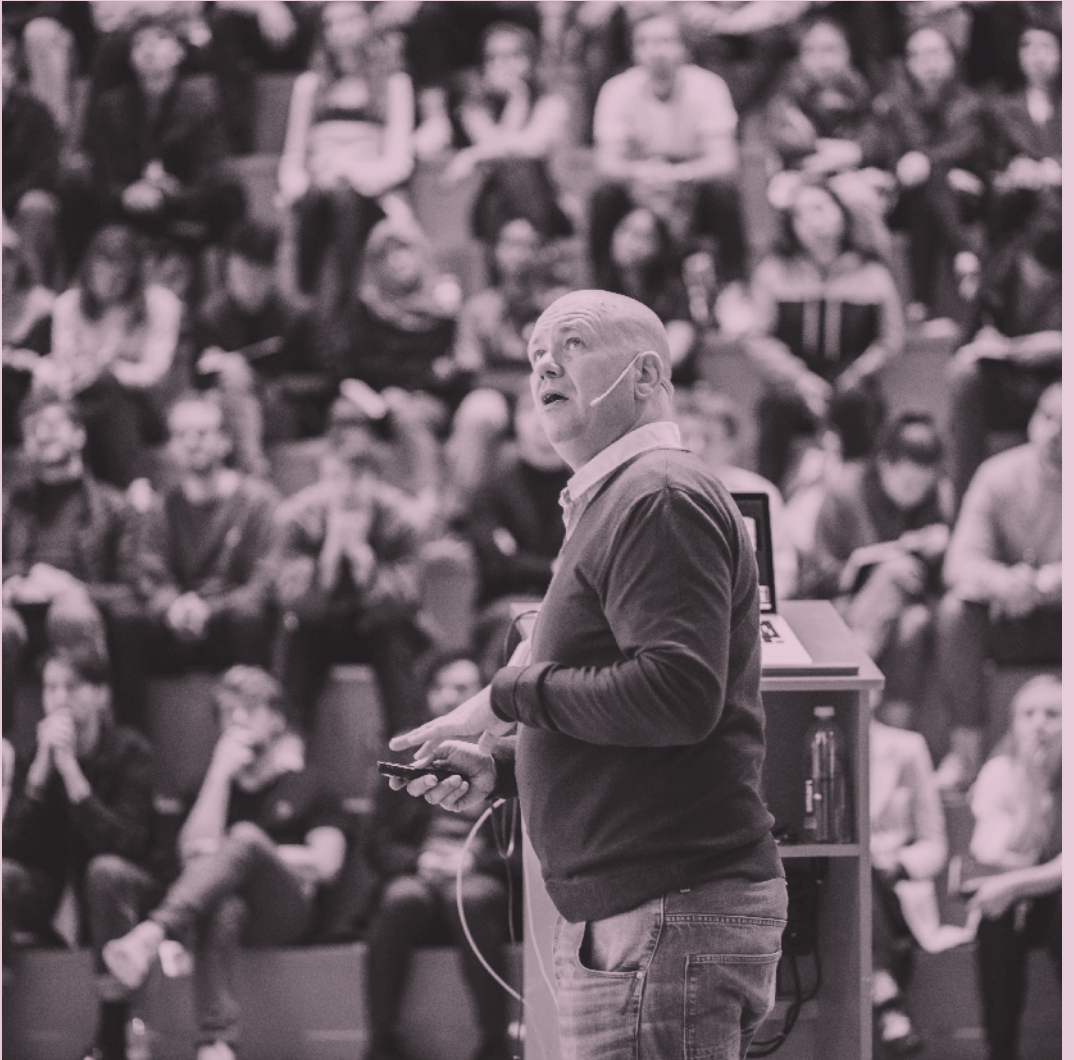
kristian koreman

ZUS

The theme of our seminar is Beyond the Echo Chamber, addressing the openness and closedness of the architecture profession to students. What do you think about this? Do you think the profession is still to o introvert or do you think architecture is already really open to influences from other professions.

The strange thing about this day and age is that, although the presented amount of challenges is sky high, social assignments, climatic assignments, housing assignments, inequality assignments, you name it, they become clearer and clearer, they actually come into the picture with increasing intensity. And at the same time you see thinkers and architects partly dealing with that in a way that makes you think, does this still have something to do with architecture? Another reaction which is clearly visible is that people are being drawn back to that what we know, real architecture, almost as representation in which control over your artwork becomes very important; authorship is again considered very important. Almost the same segregation is visible in society in a wider perspective. Architecture almost as a kind of elite profession or almost as an expression of art. Without a value judgement about the elite, but it is more for a smaller group. While the massive challenges that lie ahead, where you could deal with as well, are being accepted as well, but they are so big that it dilutes very quickly again, what is the architecture in there? And in our office we try to look at the architectural expression or tools we can apply to that bigger assignment, because that bigger assignment is very relevant to us.

So you're trying to distance yourselves from that role of the architect as artist?

Well , distance sounds too absolute. I think people, like Donna van Milligen Bielke, and there are lot of other people, are just really good at defining spaces and people who are able to master all the details right down to the bolt get all their satisfaction out of it, but that's just not what it is only about in our office. We want to make things as well and if we make things, they need to be really good, but we have other agenda's that we also want to serve and then you look at from a wider perspective.

So do you think that it is necessary, trying to serve all those agenda's as ZUS, to work through the scales in such a way that it does not focus on one scale, but that it changes?

Yes, that's right and we have been doing that since day one. Originally we are landscape architects and we have started working as a landscape architect through all scales. We are now also making very meticulous interiors, but also buildings, blocks, squares, parks and landscapes. On every layer you come across different things we like to do, you won't solve climate change with an interior or segregation with a building, but we can try at every scale to address one of our agenda's. We are therefore able to deal with this very consciously.

You also sometimes give, as you call it, unsolicited advice and seek out things on your own initiative and then make statements about it. Why are you doing this? Do you not get enough satisfaction from "normal assignments" or is this something that also feeds your "normal assignments". And how do those involved usually respond to this? Like, for example, your billboards.

It actually started out of pure fascination for what we saw around us. We actually saw certain tensions in public space and we just wondered, what can we do with it? And then at that moment there are no clients walking around asking the same question, so then we become clients ourselves. That's how it starts.

But you also slowly start to see, because our echo chamber goes until the sixties, at least that is a very clear echo chamber, where we see that architects can also be emphatically involved in assignments and put them on the agenda themselves, that you don't need to wait for that competition or that client and therefore the history is full of unsolicited advice. Buckminster Fuller for example or Cedric Price, who did make work without a client asking them to, but because they feel a sort of urge to expose something and use architecture for it to do it in a good way. And that is how creating an agenda with architecture has actually become something we enjoy very much. Also because a kind of dialogue rises and the worst case scenario is that you work very hard on a project and a booklet and that it ends up somewhere in a drawer, that's the worst thing. So preferably you just want it to do something, that it brings something about and with the way in which we make unsolicited advice or do projects, you immediately get feedback and then it becomes something that exists in the real world.

Funny, because we had a lecture on Sunday by Winy Maas and he said, never fall in love with a project before you have been given the assignment to realize it, only fall in love after you've been given it otherwise you will just be disappointed. But in your office I actually recognize the opposite. You actually do something that you are in love with in advance and then ensure that something will happen with it afterwards. But also referring to the fact that the majority of those projects do end up somewhere in a drawer and that's it and we will continue to produce other projects quickly.

No, we also never call it a project. It's just a kind of conviction of what the city should look like or how it should work and why for instance those old buildings should not be demolished.

These are things that a lot of other people agree on, but we are trying to come up with strategies of how you can do that.

But to what extent do you see differences in location? Because the Schieblock was of course something that was very close to you and certain preconditions, such as the economic crisis, made it possible to tackle that property and that area as you did. To what extent would it be different if that area was somewhere else, if you were less personally involved and with perhaps different preconditions? Is this a strategy that you can apply everywhere or is it so specific that it was actually only possible for this location?

This was very specific for this location and for the time we were in, but the strategy and the lessons that we have developed and learned can indeed be applied to all sorts of other places. We happened to have launched a project in Berlin last week where we used the same strategies, also because there were conflicts between infrastructure and the city and there was a question of how to deal with it and how to mobilize people to all come up with an alternative. Then you can see that it is very easy with the right partners in those places to get the same kind of project and the same kind of energy.

That seems crucial to me, that they tell you enough and give you sufficient insight into what should happen to such a location if you are not so involved with it yourself.

That's right and that involvement is also something you create. So you can create involvement in any place and make connections with the place, not only by visually or spatially understanding the place, but also by understanding who act in it and by talking to the right people.

Similarly in America, for the New Meadowlands project, we got to know a very large area affected by Hurricane Sandy, by talking to all the mayors, all the people working there, all nature activists and then you not only see what the area is, but also how it works. Only then you can come up with a strategy on how to work there and with whom and where.

In Rotterdam a lot is being tested with temporary projects, which on the one hand ensures that some projects get reality sooner, but which unfortunately can sometimes lead to the future becoming uncertain for some projects. Like in the case of the Schieblock . How do you cope with this when the future becomes a little more uncertain?

Well, actually uncertainty is a second nature to us, because we were on that location from day one and we could be evicted every two weeks. So that is actually already a reality and we have gradually turned that uncertainty into a strategy. If it keeps on changing, then we can also change well and radically. That's what we call permanent temporality: let's continue to change and there is always a way in which you can push an area or a building one way or the other in history.
We also do not have the ultimate goal, only then would we become frustrated. We have different kind of rhizomatic paths that all lead to the same end goal, but not a well-defined end goal.
And in the meantime, we have also built up leverage, produced arguments, facts on the ground, where everyone, not just us, says: 'but, hey this is good what happened here, value has developed here'. That is not because we have put a price tag on it, but because people here appreciate it and some people or institutions are able to express that appreciation in money and then it starts to work in a different reality and then we can take it a step further. So also progressive insight and self-fulfilling prophecy.

Yes, because I can imagine that if you are talking about a temporary intervention you insinuate that it has to prove itself or not in comparison to a somewhat more traditional commission with a client, which will be ready at some point. But how do you determine whether such a temporary intervention works or not? Is finished or not finished? Because I can also imagine, thinking about what you said about the fall of the Schieblock, that you were actually no longer

responsible for what it means for the survival or success of such a temporary intervention.

Yes there is not one temporary intervention, otherwise it will indeed have a limited lifespan, if it is temporary in advance. We have always used temporality more as a sort of excuse. Like the Biergarten, it is temporarily so it doesn't really matter, or that bridge is only there temporarily, so you can apply other laws.
But it is also meant to try to keep that experiment in it, that you are going to try out whether this is the right form and what you see then is that every time a new layer of temporality comes over it, a layer of meaning, a layer of anchoring on the spot, making it less temporary. And there is nothing as permanent as temporality.
You can now also see that with the bridge, which has been declared permanent by the municipality even before its temporality term has expired, because in the meantime other things around it will change and certainty has to be made. A developer also wants to know if that bridge will stay or not, and then it must be said, well the next 30 years the bridge will remain. In that case you can at least base your building and your investment in it. So those certainties are built in slowly. But sometimes things go completely wrong. So, we also had experiments that simply failed and then they just die again. And that is fine, just like in a real ecosystem, things die off and that becomes humus again for the next things that work.

So basically what you are saying is that it's not bad at all if some things die, as long as the process of temporality has gone through. But once you stop it halfway, as the bridge has been declared permanent, has the experiment not been completed?

Or succeeded very quickly. We didn't know if it was going to work or if the city thought that this was a good idea. But the fact that not only we, but also the city and therefore developers and owners in those areas said 'hey, but that's actually a good idea also for my building, which is empty here' all contributed to the declaration of the bridge as permanent. So many things happen without you being able to foresee them all. The only shame now is maybe that you know what it will look like in thirty years, but luckily there are a hundred other places around it where all sorts of things can still happen. So the city just remains permanently incomplete and unfinished.

So you experiment quite practically and you have also been involved in various universities, I wondered how you process that in the way you see architecture education? Because you said at the end of your lecture, it is important to get out of that bubble soon and perhaps be a bit more assertive as a student, which may be missing a bit more often in a university, how do you bring that into your education and how did you experience that yourself when you were still studying?

When we were studying, we started our practice quite soon. We were still in school and then we started our office, so we were quickly involved with one hand in the practice of making, which we always really liked. What allowed us to think a lot, so we were really into philosophy and very big thoughts, but at the same time we were also involved in the process of making things and linking those constantly. So it was a kind of mental yoga and also physical, thinking about how to get sharp ideas, but also how to get it done. And that loop, between thinking, with your head as far as possible in the clouds, but also with your feet in the clay, that spectrum, you won't find it anywhere else in a school.
So, you have to choose either to do one thing very precise or something else very precise, but you will never learn how that feedback loop goes. That may take time, but what we try in the studios we teach is to start with a very big idea, even though we only have ten weeks, then we research which location is applicable, then we actually make things and then we go back to the idea. We always try to get that complete acrobatic stretch.

Is this something which is still possible within ZUS, working in a very practical and in a very theoretical way?

Yes, that actually still works very well, because we still find it important. We have just written a book, which was quite a complicated job sometimes, because it's a completely different activity: trying to think about what we have learned, how to convert that and how to position it and at the same time we are still managing all the political work to take the project to the next step, which we already envisioned in our book.

That is a super direct connection.

Yes, that is a very direct one. That's also what everyone who comes to work for us is attracted to. That this combination is possible within our office. People are currently working on our climate utopia studio, which will start in New York in a few weeks, which consists of a whole new agenda that we have been working on, but have not yet theorized or researched so far, so this will be done now. But at the same time there are already projects attached to it for us, where we are already going to try to get it done. So we are making that feedback loop every time.

At the end of your lecture you told about the new school that you founded, what exactly is the idea behind it?

The idea of the school originated with Crimson, they are architecture historians and we are landscape architects / architects / urbanists, but we both have a sort of fascination for the city in such a way that it is always that very complex interplay between politics and design. To operate as an architect in that interplay, you have to use a lot of different disciplines. You can't just say: 'I'm just going to do architecture and then I make it political' or 'I am a politician and I am going to make a project out of it'. You must always be able to make a narrative. So that's why we work with filmmakers and screenwriters. You also have to be able to develop a strategy, so we work with economists, politicians and sociologists and you have to be able to make it, so then we work again with real makers and architects. Being in a school where you come into contact with all these disciplines, you will be able to determine your position more precisely.
We also call it the independent universe, as a kind of universe where you can be attracted to one planet and then by another planet. In that way we hope that students can simply sharpen their own agenda. It is a one-year program and the idea is that you start the program with a preconceived idea. It is a post-graduate program, so having some working experience is an advantage, being around the age of thirty and thinking: 'Life behind a desk at an architecture firm, is not exactly what I expected'.

So do you think that's necessary? To already have followed regular education and have work experience and then to think: 'hey, wait a minute' I'm actually

looking for another way or should normal education be more like your school?

Certainly, yes, but we have now simply chosen not to get accredited, because then you are in the category of regular education and we simply could not set up such a school. We also did not want to be accredited, because then you have to meet all sorts of regulation and you will be pushed into a sort of grid. So we also looking for some sort of independent timeframe, where people could join in. But we hope that we can be a kind of test case in that way, an argument for people to say: 'Hey, that's also possible'.

So also a very direct link with all your projects, looking at how you can push the legislation a bit to get it done.

Exactly!

So is there then something that you can say to students, who are currently in normal education and who share this idea and think this is also something I feel, but who may not have the space yet to express that? What can you advise them, to investigate that, within the possibilities that they currently have?

Yes, I would advise them to maybe just leave your education for half a year, and then don't go on a journey through Australia, but to put yourself in a situation somewhere, where you think you could learn a lot or you don't understand the context at all. This way you force yourself to think about how to use your skills in this very uncomfortable situation and then you will probably come up with completely different ways of applying them, compared to the very appropriate ones, like waiting for a phone call to get that assignment and then start a design.

To make yourself more conscious of your own skills?

Right! And your non-skills as well. You just have to be aware of your weaknesses and then you have to either train it, to do better or you need to try to find people to work with, because let's face it, all the projects that we do are of course all collaborations with many different other institutions and individuals.

And the final question is actually more of a joke. When we were preparing the interviews for you from ZUS (red. Sister in Dutch) and Reinier de Graaf from OMA (red. Grandmother in Dutch) we were wondering, is the name ZUS (Zones Urbaines Sensibles) a little wink to OMA (Office for Metropolitan Architecture)? As the rebellious little sister?

Actually, not consciously. We were researching the French Banlieues at that time we founded ZUS, they are called Zones Urbaines Sensibles. That was somehow such a good abbreviation for sensitive urban zones in a way that they are politically sensitive, because riots can occur for example, but they are also sensitive, simply because you can read and taste them and feel, hear and see them, and that is therefore material that you have to work with. But that political aspect is just a very important ground for us.

This interview was conducted by David van der Blonk and Guusje Enneking on 14.05.2019.

eko prawoto

Eko Prawoto Architecture Workshop

Firstly, we would like to talk about the theme of our seminar; Beyond the Echo Chamber. With this theme we want to address the porosity of the architecture profession. I was wondering what you think about this. Do you think that the architecture profession is still too introverted? Or do you think it is open to other influences from outside?

Well, I would like to answer based on my own experience. I feel that in the last few years, the architecture profession has become narrower and narrower. I feel that my knowledge is not enough anymore to solve the problems of life. So this the important note of our profession. That we are only able to solve a problem which is a very, very small part of life and sometimes we create more problems rather than solving them. Because we don't have the tools to deal with real life actually.

In what way do you think it is getting narrower and narrower?

In Indonesia I feel that people perceive architecture more as a commodity, just from an economic perspective. And in fact we do not even know how to perceive reality or how we should deal with the environmental crisis for instance.

Yesterday, Reinier de Graaf mentioned this aspect of commodification in his lecture. Do you think there is something - we as architects - can do about that?

Well, Reinier spoke about a large scale problem, a system that is difficult to fight against. But on the smaller level I think, yes, we could find our own space or area to play with. This is maybe how to fly under the radar. Yes, I believe that we can do something.

And how do you handle that in your professional life?

I play in a lower level; directly with the community, with society and because the practice is so small, the capital is not interested. Because we cannot compete with the capital. So it's just try to find something - to which most of the people look down on - so we can create a safer place to play.

Do you also think that in the bigger offices, like in Reiniers case, architects can do something about this problem of everything becoming a commodity.

Yes, in the case of OMA for instance, they are already big. In that size of company, of course they are able to challenge the power of the capital. At least they have a bigger bargaining possession. Rather than an individual architect. It is so difficult to have a bargaining power. It is almost not possible.

Many students here experience a difference in studying architecture and then afterwards working in an office. When you are studying, the motives behind your designs are mostly idealistic in contradiction to when you work. Then many decisions are also based on costs and money and profit. Did you also experience such a difference after your education.

Well besides being a practising architect, I am also a lecturer. And sometimes I am also doing arts. So having this kind of opportunity I think makes it better. So you always have a choice to your own life. I remember at a time in younger days, I believed that the practice of an architect is not only one of practising, but here I see that most of the curriculum of the architect education is serving the capital. If we talk about the demand of our profession, it should be more varied so the curriculum should also deal with this different kind of practices as an architect.

So you actually think that in education it is already too much about the economic aspect?

Yes our educational system, not all, but most of them are subordinate to the industry.

So not independent enough?

Well, I don't know. Maybe in a stronger university like the TU Delft, maybe they are able to be more critical or to challenge the capital. But most of the other universities just compromise.

Do you also see that in Jogyakarta?

In Indonesia. But I don't know, maybe you have more possibilities to challenge...

You studied at the Berlage Institute in Amsterdam. How did this influence your career?

Well, I felt very fortunate at that time. I met many great people and also many new friends from different countries. I think it opened up my perspective. But what is also funny is, when I was in Holland I learnt more about Indonesia. Because I had enough distance and I was able to compare. Then I realised, these are the good things about Indonesia, but also the many challenges we have to deal with in the future.

So it gave you the opportunity and time to reflect on Indonesia?

Yes, very much.

So when you get out of your known context you're able to understand it better?

Yes, I always say 'the fish cannot see the water'. So we need something outside to have or to see what the problem is that we are surrounded by.

Jakarta wants to make a new capital city because of the water problems. How do you look at this?

Well, it is a very complex situation actually. Especially because it is about the relationship between Java and outside Java. Indonesia has now more than 225 million people, and 60% of them live in Java. So on some other big island is relatively empty, and in Java itself, 70% or maybe 80% of national money is circulating only in Jakarta. So you can imagine that Jakarta and Java are already overloaded. Well, to move the capital is maybe is maybe worth it to try I mean.

This also happened in the past in Brazil for instance, where they started in the middle of the country I don't think that were the right conditions for a new capital, but maybe in Indonesia you think this can work?

Yes, but we also realise that we need a lot of money [laughs]. To build the city.

Perhaps it also gives a lot of opportunities to develop the city in a new way...

Uhm, yes, but also, how to get there? I mean, It also needs a lot of manpower. Well, Kalimantan now is one of the possible new locations, but in Kalimantan itself don't live many people. First you have to mobilise the people and define what kind of skill-set that they need. But it is interesting, I mean it is a really big job.

We also wanted to talk more specifically about your work. When did you start to work with bamboo? And what are the motives behind it?

Well, in the beginning bamboo was fun. I mean, it is the cheapest material we can work with and it is already beautiful without the need to add anything and it has a lot of potential. What I like about bamboo is not just because it is perceived as sustainable only, but we in Indonesia have what I call a bamboo culture. So there are also many skill sets to work with bamboo. Which is in this case different within every country. I mean in Germany for instance, they have a research centre which is very advanced in working with bamboo, but they don't have bamboo. And they don't have a bamboo culture. It means they only perceive bamboo as a material. Maybe from the point of view as mechanical property or engineering property, then it's okay. But we also have the cultural side, the social side of the bamboo and I would like to use that as well as the main ingredient of my work. So I think a lot about the skill level and how the techniques are used by the traditional people. So I just try to use it, combine it or to slightly modernise a it.

Also in one of you interviews you mentioned that there are 3 levels on which you adjust your interventions: nature, culture and social structure. And is working with bamboo then also a way to attribute those things to adjust your design?

Yes, for me architecture is related to those three things. I mean, doing architecture should be in a more holistic view. So it relates with nature and with the environment of course, but it should also be about the social things, about the skill set, and then the level of wealth of the people. And I try to use architecture as a tool to uplift people's lives as well and of course to the culture, which is related to the value and many things that we have from the past let's say.

Did you also work with bamboo in your designs, when you were studying at the Berlage?

At that time yes. That proposal was about housing for the poor people and I proposed to use bamboo.

So you always have worked with bamboo in a way.

Well, yes. But you know most Indonesians are familiar

with that material I think. Bamboo is always part of our life. So we know it by heart. Deep down inside our brain there is a part with knowledge about bamboo.

And how did the people in Amsterdam then react on the bamboo?

Well, at the time it was just academic work. No one sees it. But in the last exhibition in 2016, part of the Sonsbeek Art Festival, I was able to realise a rather big structure, in Sonsbeek Park. I think it received, well, a lot of attention.

When you are teaching at the university in Yogyakarta, how do you use your morals as an architect in education?

Well, we live in a modern globalised world, and to be honest most of the architecture theories or to say architecture knowledge have come from the West. I cannot say that it is a mistake, it is useful, but then we have to combine it with the local knowledge. So I try to combine both in a way.

Also because you think that culture is perhaps sort of disappearing if you don't work on a local level?

Yes, but also from the traditional practice in doing architecture, there is so much knowledge which is in a way still hidden. This is not yet in the core of our curriculum. So I think it is important to bring this knowledge, to be a part of so called modern or contemporary or future Indonesian architecture. Because that knowledge is very useful. I mean, related with the material itself, with the climate, and with the value of how we perceive our own life, how we perceive nature, and how we perceive other people. I think it is very much related to culture and architecture should be a part of that bigger reality.

I read that in Indonesia building in concrete is a sign of affluence. How do you deal with that? Because you are working with a material such as bamboo.

Yes, I mean the social perception about wood or bamboo as a structural material is still very much negative so to say.

Yes, Kristian Koreman [from ZUS] also mentioned this in his lecture. They [ZUS] are doing a lot of temporary

interventions and they were working a lot with wood as well, which caused some negative comments, because it has some temporary feeling.

The temporary quality is considered as lower so to say. But if you see a wooden temple in Japan for instance, they are hundreds or even thousands of years old. But we still perceive it from the government building regulations, wood and bamboo are materials considered for temporary building. This is why an owner cannot use it as a guarantee to the bank for instance. It is not acknowledged by the banking system, so it is considered as lesser. But with a steel building, a concrete building or a brick building it is considered a permanent building which makes it more suitable for dealing with that kind of reaction from the bank.

So it is even by law...

Yes. You know what I am trying to do is, well, I am learning myself. Now I am living in a wooden house in a village. One part where I live is brought there from another village and is already 125 years old. A wooden structure. So, it is still very strong I mean.

And you could still move it to another place if you want.

Yeah [laughs]

If you could give a piece of advice to the new generation of architects, what would it be?

In the future we need more knowledge to deal with future problems. Architecture cannot isolate architects in itself. So it is related with food, with nature itself, it relates with the limit of the resources, it is related with the relationship with the people with a different culture and with other things. I think we as an architect have to learn from many different places, from many different people, from many different nations and to understand the best option that we could take to make the life of the future of the people. We cannot defy people anymore I think. How the survival of our planet should be given the best change needs a lot of knowledge I think.

This interview was conducted by Koen Meijman and Guusje Enneking on 14.05.2019.

ma yansong
MAD Architects

The theme of our seminar is Beyond the Echo Chamber, addressing the openness and closeness of the architecture profession to students. What do you think about this? Do you think the profession is still to introvert or do you think architecture is already really open to influences from other professions.

I think architecture is not open enough, I think it is too professional for many people to understand and to be involved as participants, like the city. Everyone wants to give an opinion about your building, but they can't. And sometimes designers ignore their opinions, because they think people are thinking in very different ways. But the dialogue, the discussion, could be very efficient amongst the society. This gives a very negative effect on the profession, because some people want to protect the profession even more, which makes the dialogue between the profession and the developer or the authorities very limited.
The communication is very limited, what makes architecture lacking ambition. The Dialogue is too much limited to this small circle and they don't really care what the future is demanding or what the public is talking about, their hopes, their fears. I think the debate about architecture should be as open as possible.

And how do you try to tackle this in your own work?

I would like to know more about the culture, context in many different levels of the place of the project. I think in general artists are more sensitive to the issues in our society. So I almost see our studio as a cultural hub, where you can have many dialogues with other intellectual people and artists to discuss the issues around us. The global issues as well as the local issues. That way we know how to react to those issues.

Sometimes your work is been referred to as futuristic while you refer to your work as more traditional. Could you explain why you call your work traditional and why people might refer to it as futuristic?

What triggers my inspiration and how I see things are influenced much by the eastern traditions. But the outcome is quite unusual, let's put it that way. Something you don't really see or you can not reference from the practical world, people often call those things futuristic. Because they've never seen those kind of things and they say it's the future.
But I would say those things are inspired from the many traditional art forms or cultural forms. So I like to look at the old things and find my interest and my link to those traditional formats and see how I can bring these things or these emotions into a new form of architecture without duplicating any visual elements.

And for instance in the case of your project in Rotterdam now, because it's one of your first projects in Europe right?

It's our first cultural project in Europe and we are also building other residential buildings in Paris.

That project in Rotterdam is an example of a site with a very specific historical context and also a program that really refers to that specific historical context. How do you in that case pursue your traditional way of working?

The project started with a very emotional beginning. I came there, I saw the site, I heard the story, the narrative about the theme of the museum, I looked at many historical photos and stories and I did a sketch. The sketch was my first reaction to everything I heard and saw and then I wanted to keep the feeling from the sketch and directly translate the sketch into architecture or some physical form. So, I would say

it's a very emotional process for me. Because the project is very small, it has a function, but it's not as complicated as a big building. It has almost become a spatial installation, of course it still has to deal with the existing structure and the urban context, but it is small. Almost like an art piece with a small function. So by following the spiral ramp, you can walk beyond the roof and you can oversee the harbor. But I think the emotion in the whole process was about time. I think that's what the museum is about. The museum is about the past and the future, so how to bring the sense of time into the project was the key.

In an interview you mentioned that you think architects nowadays are too practical, compared to the generations before when young architects as a group had a social agenda. Do you think the new generation lacks a certain agenda and is there one you're pushing for with your work?

I think so. I think somehow when the last generation was young, they were quite anti-mainstream, they were proud of being very unique and now it seems the commercial atmosphere is just very strong. So many people and architects try to become accepted by this powerful environment by changing themselves.
To me it feels like a lot of young people are fighting for opportunities to build, to win competitions, to talk about common topics, everyone talks about. So in that sense you will loose that uniqueness or your personal interest somehow. So I think the future generation should be more brave.

So you think everything is becoming more of the same now?

Yes, I think this generation if you open your office when you're young, you're considered successful when you win a project and when you build a bigger project, but think about Zaha and Rem Koolhaas, when they were young they couldn't build a lot. But those writings, those diagrams, those sketches, they were really ambitious and they were really communicating with the world about their dreams, their ambitions and plans for the future and a lot of people talked about it. I think those are more important in the longer period of time, so I think maybe we shouldn't be too practical.

Yesterday we talked to Reinier de Graaf from OMA and according to him the ideology of modernism in providing the less fortunate with good quality housing by using fast, efficient and industrial production methods is being misused nowadays to generate the highest possible profit. Do you agree and do you think we as architects can do something about this?

I don't know, I think that's a nature for developers, to look for profit. But as a designer, as a key person in the whole process you could fight. Because in the end, the quality of design can really help the community, the people and sometimes it's really not a matter of costs, the money, it's about how much effort you put into the design.
So, my attitude is, maybe there are problems in that system, but if I can not change it, I will do my best to limit the effects of these problems. Because sometimes, in China for example, I have to build a high-density neighborhood in some area that I think has beautiful natural resources, where it is almost criminal to do something, but if I am not doing that, someone else will maybe do something really bad. So that actually gives me a new challenge, how do you accommodate this density as well as protecting the environment.

We are also working on social housing in China, with I think maybe ten percent of the costs compared to here, so really really cheap, but how can a designer still bring a sense of community to this kind of construction? I think we have to work with conditions.

And do you feel that you can push the boundaries when you are doing projects like that?

Yes, only when you can succeed. Then the issue you're talking about, can be discussed or people will pay attention to these kinds of issues. But if you fail nobody will listen to you, nobody will pay attention to what you are talking about.

In an interview I read, you said that you think 'architects should be proposing visionary ideas for the future, rather than cozying up to developers' like talked about. And you thaught in a couple of universities. How do you approach this in your education, these kinds of issues that are here nowadays and that the new generation has to tackle as well.

So basically you need students to fight the system. That's the basic skill they should have, that would really be helpful for the future. So the good listener, won't be a good designer. So first, I would challenge them by letting them give themselves an agenda. Like, what is the idea or situation for this kind of a program? This is very easy for everyone. If you are a normal guy from the neighborhood you ask what's your ideal and they will say a lot. But the next step is to design something that reflects what you said, that's the difficult part. Because when they're doing this, they often do something that they learn from other people, but that doesn't solve the issue they talk about. So this will request them to give an unique answer. So as a teacher, I'm just being there and saying: no no no no no, you're not solving the issue, you're not providing the ideal solution for what you're talking about. So, I think that's the main thing for the future designers: to talk about your dream and to know how to do it. I think that's important.

So, do you think that during your education you were prepared for the real work? Or did you face some struggles when you started working as well?

When I was a student, there was an atmosphere in school of some people really liking some heroes and trying to learn from them and trying to become them. Other students, a smaller group, tried to be different from everyone. They learned from someone and then tried to do something a little bit different and next time, maybe they would learn from someone else. I'm that kind of guy. I try to learn, but I don't want to be the same as them. I don't want to repeat myself. I don't feel comfortable when I do things similar to other people. That gives me a lot of pressure of course, but eventually you will dislike more and more and more and then you will kind of find what you want to do. That's a process...

For the final question we ask you for some final advice for the new generation

If you asked me this question several years ago, my answer would have been: be yourself. And then I found many people, that don't know who they are and how they can be themselves. So maybe, to be very sensitive to what is happening around you. You know, learn from the artists, they are very sensitive to their life, like being in this environment, this cultural landscape, this political landscape, how they think about everything happening around them.

They are more engaged?

Yes, engaging to the many, many issues.

And in their work they also express that more than architects

They express their opinions. So try to have an opinion about everything around you. That's what will give you an attitude to architecture.

This interview was conducted by Koen Meijman and Guusje Enneking on 15.05.2019.

ahmed belkhodja & lera samovich

fala atelier

The theme of our seminar is Beyond the Echo Chamber, addressing the openness and closedness of the architecture profession to students. What do you think about this? Do you think the profession is still too introvert or do you think architecture is already really open to influences from other professions?

[A] I think it is the task of the architect to define what belongs to the bubble of his/her practice and how this bubble opens up, so I don't have a critique of the entire architectural profession in regards to that, but..

[L] I have some I think! I don't know if it's a radical opinion or not, but in my perspective it gets way too open and maybe it wouldn't hurt to bring architecture back to very basic things like walls, doors and columns. Because sometimes I feel like any kind of agenda besides this, behind your shoulders, becomes kind of a disadvantage, which I think it should not be. So I think architecture can also just be about the space and its elements.

[A] Okay, but I was talking about the relationship between what practices do within their work and how they relate to clients and audiences, but what you're talking about is, let's say what architecture is made of is enough to do architecture. This is surely something we really believe in. You know, let's take an example, it's like there's the questions of sustainable design for example, I think in the end, especially when you build rather small scale stuff, the most sustainable thing you can do is something that fits the needs of the client and is a good building. This is what we believe is sustainable. And you know, extravaganza in terms of technology and construction does not really go in that direction, so in the end it is a lot about how architecture is perceived and experienced, and in the end it is a lot about doors and windows as well.

[L] Yes, and a living room where it doesn't rain inside is already quite good.

In your email contact with us you mentioned you were talking about architectural echoes as well in your office. What was the definition of architectural echoes for you?

[A] We believe there is not much to invent in terms of architecture so, everything we do is an echo of a lot of things we have seen in the past and that we have looked at and admired sometimes. That is what we meant.

[L] Yes, I think it's about the relevance of references and then the importance to somehow connect yourself to the history of architecture instead of denying it and reinventing every single thing.

So it was more about the repetitive element of an echo?

[A] Not necessarily, because there is enough richness in the history of architecture to do very lively things from it and to do things that combine different ideas in new manners.

[L] I think it's never a direct replica or copy of something, because you know even if you start this way it always evolves in the end into something else
[A] And if something is good, maybe it's worth repeating.

Talking about references, Ahmed, before you started fala with Filipe and Ana Luisa you all worked at Japanese architecture offices. How did this period influence fala's work?

[A] Japanese architecture in broad terms is important to us. There are many names, actually the names that we talk about the most are not necessarily the ones we worked for. But yes, in a way the office was symbolically born in Japan. Therefore it is part of our common knowledge. Besides Japanese architecture, Portugese architecture is of course also very important to us. And Swiss architecture, American architecture, Italian of course, European architecture in general, Scandinavian architecture, so let's say all these things are what we steal from everyday and Japan is very often the most refreshing, because of course it's the one that is the least connected to the European and American continuum.

So when the project finds a slightly dangerous edge, it is very often because there is a Japanese idea that was slipped in.

[L] But, although in the office all of us are coming from different schools and different backgrounds, I think what kind of makes the team work is, I don't know, the shared enthusiasm about things, themes, references, offices and architects and this creates a certain energy that makes it all work.

[A] Because we disagree on a lot of things actually, but on references (there are a few exceptions), we generally agree.

The last decade we have seen a rise in the popularity of digital collages. Where photorealistic renders try to get as close to the final look of the project as possible, these digital collages leave room for interpretation to the viewer. Is this also why you use these collages?

[A] I think yes and no. In a way you could almost say that the collage has much more intention and therefore is much more precise than doing something that seems realistic, but actually is always deceiving when you compare to it. Because the collage is something that is clearly disconnected from reality and therefore there is much more space to project in there. But what I find truly important about the collage is what kind of impact a mode of representation has on how you do architecture and how you perceive it. So in a way, when we started doing them, it was just a very easy way to do images to us. It was almost a necessity when we did the first few ones, but now all of the projects we do would not be the way they are if we didn't look at them with this lens.

[L] I think maybe we need to demystify this a bit, because we also do renders. But the collage and the render are working for very different purposes. They are there to explore and verify very different aspects of the project. The collage in the end has the final say, because it's the image that gives you the idea and it gives you much more understanding of what the project is.

So do you adopt different ways of representation according to whom you're presenting for?

[L] No, I think it's not about the viewer. It's about the moment in the project. I think collage also in this sense can appear in the very beginning or in the very end, but the collage is more about the poetic aspect of the space. The render is about perhaps trying different materials very fast or deciding on the detail of the door. Those are very different tools explore the project.

[A] In a way you could say the collage is our sketching notebook and the 3D-renders are our working models. One is much more about raw intentions and the other one is about solving stuff, so it's less interesting.

Interesting to hear that in a way the collages are much more precise than realistic renders. Because also when you compare your collages to your actual buildings they are almost identical. Is that intentional?

[L] Well, that's because the construction site tries to be as close to the original intention as possible. So in a way that means construction phase went well. But we are not really trying to prove a point with that. We tend to think in flat surfaces and therefore this is a pictorial relationship that just happens.

[L] Yes, I think because we started with these collages and the simple process of doing them. I mean central perspective and even the way we populate this image with objects. I think this now affects the way we do photoshoots and the way we try to imagine how the space can be inhabited.

Also, Nelson Mota, our moderator for today, told us that your collages are also being sold as art, is that true?

[A] Yes

So have you already been commissioned to do collages?

[L] No, but it feels a bit weird, because now there is this "architect as an artist" aspect and I don't know if it is something to be celebrated or to be afraid of. It's a very ambiguous kind of situation.

[A] I don't think architects are artists, but I believe that architecture is art in the humblest sense of the word, "artifacts". This is more about the pieces themselves, and it doesn't mean at all that they disconnect from the world or anything like that. So I have no dilemma with this and I think we always meant the collages as something that had a sort of autonomy as well. I think one of the reasons why we started doing them as well, is that we started doing competitions that we roughly knew we had zero chance of winning. So the collages were also a way to do images that we could keep looking at, after having lost the competition. Because when you do a photorealistic rendering and then you loose the competition, it's somehow more painful to look at it right?

[L] But I think to me the dilemma, or maybe not the dilemma, but something to remember is that the collage at this point is not the final object, the final object is the space or the building.

[A] It is one of the byproducts.

Are you afraid that if it's sold as art and it's just there as the final product, you won't think of the spatial consequences anymore? Do you think that is a line that can easily be crossed?

[A] Yes, but there are many cases where we have worked on a project for months and months with clients and we were absolutely convinced that it was going to be build and we had collages of this and then for some reason the project didn't go on...

[L] Yes, because when the project fails and the building is never going to be build, then the image is the only thing that survives, so...

[A] But not only the images, the plans are equally important to us, other types of drawings are also important to us. So, yes I think if I have a dilemma, it is about the fact that the collage takes so much space in comparison to the other things.

There is so much focus on the collage?

[A] Never from our clients, but it takes a lot of the light at least for the 'architecture audience', not enough space in the echo chamber perhaps...

On your website you describe yourself as a Naive architecture firm. Could you elaborate on that?

[L] Yes, there is the very simple explanation of us being super young. I mean, even if we started five years ago, it was extremely naive back then, because it was literally learning to do things and making all the mistakes and repeating these mistakes.
[A] It's true, we all started without any thick experience in an architecture office. So we had to learn a lot of things by making mistakes. But I think there is also a conscious desire to get rid of preconceived ideas that we had in order to try to learn new things, to get a state of innocence where you can start playing with simple ideas in order to have a sort of fresh white table to work on.

Is this something you keep in the back of your mind every time you start a new project?

[A] Yes, we hate certainties. Usually as an architect tells you they know for sure what they are doing, then this it usually starts getting uninteresting. So we try to, as much as possible, keep a sort of fresh mind and to always question things.

[L] Yes, we are definitely bad at playing safe and what we call naiveness is also an attempt to maintain this feeling of joy while practicing architecture. So I would say that it is not just a joke, for us it's also a joyful and passionate experience.

Is it sometimes difficult to keep that naiveness?

[L] It is difficult, especially after exchanging emails with clients..

[A] But it's not more difficult than swallowing things you don't want to do.

You're also involved in architecture education, how do you integrate this in your way of teaching?

[A] To be absolutely frank, this is something that is still fairly new for us. We were in architecture school not that long ago, or at least we feel it is not that long ago, and we always have a bit of an ambiguous relation to teaching. But yes, I think if anything teaching could be a sort of platform to share a bit of that naivety. By definition, it is a space free from the normative and the desires of promoters and politicians... there is a freshness that you can only find in an architecture school.

[L] For us, I think, it's also a way to expand the research a bit. It's not really happing at the office, because there's never enough time, but we always have these themes in mind that can be explored and I think these summer schools and workshops are a chance to dive a bit in that direction. I think what we are also trying to suggest to our students, are maybe again these tools and methods that we use at the office. So they can also to try that out and see how it works. Being the control freaks that we are the office doesn't help with this, but..

[A] But I think if it's one thing we can sort of teach, it is a way to use, what you called tools. So for example drawings. And, yes I think very often it's opportunities to study something ourselves as well. We try to look at something with the students, that we also want to look at and we try to communicate this desire.

[L] Yes, I think it's also a lot about sharing the references that we admire. For students this is also very nice, because often they discover these references for the first time, so for them it's also a chance to study these names a bit.

[A] Trying to have a sort of common knowledge.

That's what we hear a lot from teachers here at the TU Delft as well. That they also experience this freshness that you mentioned. Maybe also a certain naiveness. Does this help you to maybe keep that naiveness?

[A] It is not that we need it, but I think yes. For us it only makes sense to teach if it's to do it in the same mindset as we normally do architecture and to try to communicate that mindset. So in a way it's not really a freshness that we are on the lookout for, it is the same that we have every day, but it has to be like this, because otherwise we are not in our territory anymore.

Would there be any advice you would give the new generation of Architects?

[A] I would say, a very important question is always to wonder why you like what you like.

[L] For me it was always about, let's say if you like architecture that much, then just go for it, because for me it's totally worth it. The profession has a lot of complexity, and it's worth diving in.
And I think it's also good to have this permanent state of curiosity, so always keep on researching and learning and finding new weird things.

*This interview was conducted by Koen Meijman and Guusje Enneking on 16.05.2019.*

THE GREEN STORY IS OUR ONLY IDEOLOGY

NEW ECOLOGICAL manhattan PROJECT

Diversity
...tion and Resilian...
...carpeting
...ecology healthy again,
...nda, don't harm youe
...arm your PLANET

(y)our FREEDOM of expression CAN LEAD to A CONFLICT with your neighBouRhud.

SO, DO what you want, but

DON't HARM YOUR NEIGHBOU...

Seems to be a good Rule of thumb.
But in times of GLOBALISM,
...w Politics and colliding worlds
...ACTION EFFECTS everyone
...neighbour becomes
...PLANET
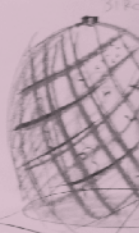
results

assignment
A Physical Manifesto

In a world in which the available amount of information is endless, it is important to take a position and to share all different frames of reference with one another. By whom or what are you influenced as an architect? This defines your echo chamber and to what extent it is perforated or segregated.

This year's theme was about exchanging views, looking beyond and positioning. For one week we tried to make the students leave the safe architecture world of their own faculty and immerse themselves in different architectural perspectives. Bringing together so many different individuals, each carrying their own Echo Chamber, we challenged them to look beyond that Echo Chamber. The design competition encouraged them to do so.

The assignment of INDESEM 2019 was about creating a fictional architecture festival. With a group of architecture and design students, we designed an expo throughout the city of Rotterdam, a celebration of architecture. The proposals shown in this expo formed a palette of architectural positions. Divided into 20 groups, every group designed a spatial object showing their position or statement about what they think architecture should be, taking into account the four sub-themes scope, subject, source and statement. This object expresses the conclusion of the group's discussions during the week.

On the final day of the seminar, the participants were provided a stage to host an exhibition, showing all their results: the physical manifestos. From these results, a jury picked five groups that they think have managed to most convincingly represent and translate their position within their design. These five groups got the opportunity to pitch their design, after which one winning group was chosen.

Where some festivals take place on an empty playground detached from the existing urban fabric, our festival uses exactly this urban fabric as its site. INDESEM 2019 uses the city of Rotterdam to examine a wider perspective of architecture. Rotterdam has had a sparkling role in urban planning since the 1950's, mostly due to the bombing of the centre during the Second World War. The city centre, which was largely destroyed in 1940, is a patchwork of architectural styles: icons of the Nieuwe Bouwen school of modernist Dutch architecture stand alongside characteristic post-war reconstruction architecture from the 1960s, '70s and '80s. These historic buildings clash cheerfully with the hypermodern skyscrapers built in more recent decades. It has therefore become the base for an influential architectural community with multiple outstanding architecture offices, the Netherlands Architecture Institute and the International Architecture Biennale. In 2007, Rotterdam has declared itself 'city of architecture', stressing the role for architecture in urban planning and branding.

Through a random grid overlay, which formed the basis of the different locations, we have sampled different conditions of the city of Rotterdam. The location of the intervention is a 100 m x 100 m square, centered around a grid intersection point. This square hosts a variety of spatial elements in order to make interventions on multiple scales possible. This could be on the scale of an office building or on the scale of a bus stop. Within this 100 m x 100 m square the students had the freedom to choose their exact site. This could be anywhere: on top of a building, on the water or an empty square. This map shows per group the corresponding intersections.
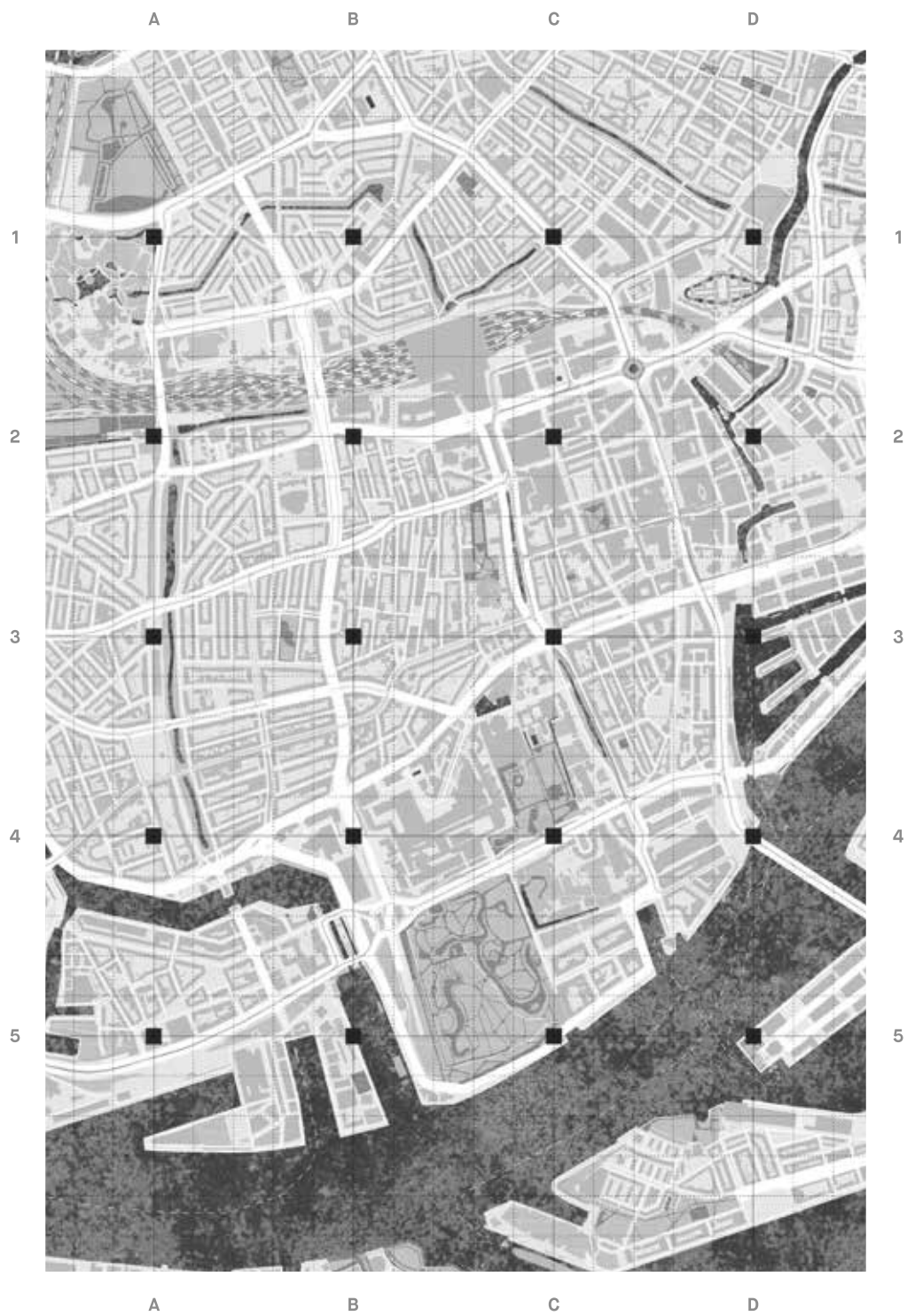
assignment

Groups

The students were divided into 20 groups, each group working on their own physical manifesto, the end product of the workshop week. This physical manifesto was presented by all groups in a uniform way, by an exhibition booth. This exhibition booth consisted of one 1:100 scale model, one image, a text explaining their design, and the five manifestos they composed daily over the week. All booths were exhibited on the final day.

During the workshop week the groups were guided by different tutors from the TU Delft. The groups were divided as followed:

A1 - Federica Campopiano / Eischezsorush Sadiq Sam Verdegaal

Tutors: Adrien Ravon, Lex te Loo

A2 - Tipp Bongers / Katerina Apostolopoulou / Silvia Matisová / Hutomo Sudiharto Putra

Tutors: Rufus van den Ban, Suzana Milanovic

A3 - Matthew Dodd / Leander Nowack Danielle Termote

Tutors: Caspar Frenken, Sereh Mandias

A4 - Albina Saifulina / Jeremia Pasaribu / Pepijn Determann /Berend Vos

Tutors: Geert Koumans, Peter Koorstra, Mieke Vink

A5 - Fadhila Rahman / Louisa Hollander / Jaka Korla

Tutors: Anca Ioana Ionescu, Claudiu Forgaci, Luisa Calabrese

B1 - Lieke Lohmeijer / Stefania Soich / Tarang Gupta

Tutors: Alper Alkan, Negar Sanaan Bensi

B2 - Wing Yi So / Lars van Straalen / Niki Apostolopoulou

Tutors: Benjamin Filbey, Thomas Ponds

B3 - Tim Kaiser / Sze Ho Choi / Elena Khasianova

Tutors: Geert Koumans, Peter Koorstra, Mieke Vink

B4 - Aikebaier Erken / Anna Borisova / Liselotte Brouwer

Tutors: Geert van der Meulen, Daniele Cannatella

B5 - Alexander Sokolov / Inès van Rijn / Arina Perevedentseva

Tutors: Adrien Ravon, Lex te Loo

C1 - Tri Putra Bhakti / Anneloes Tilman / Arina Karenova

Tutors: Rufus van den Ban, Suzana Milanovic

C2 - Kamila Abbiazova / Hidde Dijkstra / Ludovica Beltrami

Tutors: Caspar Frenken, Sereh Mandias

C3 - Ayla Azizova / Ho Kiu Chan / Daan Hietbrink

Tutors: Harald Mooij, René Heijne

C4 - Taliya Nurutdinova / Jelmer Teunissen / Rhiannon Churchward

Tutors: Anca Ioana Ionescu, Claudiu Forgaci, Luisa Calabrese

C5 - Nuerxiati Atawula / Pinelopi Gardika

Tutors: Alper Alkan, Negar Sanaan Bensi

D1 - Ema Krakovska / Ivan Chi Fung Tam / Sarah Meijer

Tutors: Benjamin Filbey, Thomas Ponds

D2 - Minja Radenkovic / Owen Zhang / Reza Ahsan

Tutors: Harald Mooij, René Heijne

D3 - Muhammad Suleman Khan / Fredy Fortich /
Cosku Özdemirci

Tutors: Geert van der Meulen, Daniele Cannatella

D4 - Dewinta Asyiva Sidiq / Florian Heinz /
Francesco Mainetti
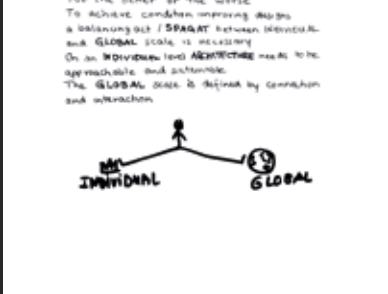
Tutors: Geert Koumans, Peter Koorstra, Mieke Vink

D5 - Friso van Dijk / Laudza Az Zahra /
Tillman Pospischil

*Tutors: Anca Ioana Ionescu, Claudiu Forgaci,
Luisa Calabrese*

manifestos

OUR MAIN SOURCE IS THE EXISTING URBAN CONDITION, WHICH ARCHITECTURE HAS SHAPED. APART FROM PHYSICAL BODY, WE CAPTURE THE IMMATERIAL ELEMENTS OF THE SITE, SUCH AS;

MOVEMENT, LIGHT, SOUND, TEMPERATURE.

G3: AYLA, HO KU, DAAN

SUBJECT

Nowadays instead of designing iconic object architecture creates an iconic scenario. Architecture collects citizen lifestyle patterns and makes up a NORM OF REACTION. The scenario of architecture can be predicted but is not defined anymore.

* the pattern of phenotypic expression of a single genotype across a range of environment

NORM OF REACTION

dreams

Do architects have dreams?
We don't know, as a society, what and where to dream and to stay. Where is the line between local culture and local fiction?
Does architecture embody a vision or a question?
Architects give users a medium to fill the location with a certain meaning.

SCOPE

SUbject

Corporations work as one corps in the same direction. It has a choice to integrate the users opinions.
But in the end the group of architects work in their own direction.
In cooperative systems the line between professionals and users becomes vague.
The role for who and with who is unidentified.

(U) : corporation
(U) : user
(P) : professional
(U) : cooperation

SOURCE

Architecture represents the society.
A society is a coexistence of dreams.
The role of the architect is to compress and structure them relation.
For the dreamers it is important they get involved in the design process.

SCOPE.

VITAL PUBLIC
TO DEALING W
POLITICAL INSTA
ARGUE THAT ARC
ENTANGLEMENT
TO MEANINGFUL
FACTORS WHICH
AN ARCHITECTU

THIS DEMANDS
THEIR PRACTICE
ECOLOGY OCCUPIE

The architecture is a result of common effort and collaboration full of respect and motivation.

Thanks for all participants to build our echo chamber.

SUBJECT

ARCHITECTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE CREATION OF CONDITIONS AND SITUATIONS THAT AFFECT THE URBAN PUBLIC AND PUBLIC LIFE. THIS HAPPENS NOT ONLY THROUGH MATERIALISATION, BUT ALSO IN THE QUALITY OF COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ACTORS AND INTERACTION WITH INSTITUTIONS.

WE FEEL THESE COLLABORATIONS HAVE BECOME TOO RIGID.

THE INTEREST OF THE CLIENT IS OFTEN NOT GEARED TOWARD CONTRIBUTING TO PUBLIC URBAN CULTURE. WE ARGUE FOR AN ARCHITECTURE THAT IS NON-HIERARCHICAL, IN WHICH ARCHITECTS WEAVE AN URBAN FABRIC TOGETHER WITH A WIDE VARIETY OF OTHER ACTORS, OPEN SOURCING THE MAKING OF A CITY, STRIVING FOR AN EXPERIMENTAL PUBLIC URBAN CULTURE.

DURING ARCHITECTURAL **EDUCATION** YOU DEFINE OPINIONS AND BUILD **WALLS** OF YOUR ECHO CHAMBER. IN **PRACTICE** IT BECOMES LESS RIGID AND ACTS MORE AS A **FILTER** THAN A WALL.

SCOPE

The architect is making an action as a premise, but it's the action that give a reaction. The reaction depends on scale and time, while we can't predict the whole impact of the action. The scope of an architect is part of a larger scope with a complex network of collaborations.

BECAUSE OF THE **HYPER-CONNECTED** WORLD EVERY **LOCAL** CONTRIBUTION WE MAKE AS ARCHITECTS IS A **GLOBAL CONTRIBUTION** HOWEVER, IT DOESN'T ALWAYS HAVE A GLOBAL IMPACT.

DO NOT ONLY CREATE CONTEXT, ALSO **CREATE** CHAOS FOR THOSE WHO DARE TO EXPERIENCE.

ARCHITECTURE THAT EVOLVES TO DIFFERENT CONDITIONS ENVIRONMENTS AND USERS.

ARCHITECTURE THAT IS AWARE OF TIME AND TRANSFORMATIONS THAT OCCUR.

ARCHITECTURE THAT IS CONNECTED TO ITS SURROUNDINGS AND BEYOND.

ARCHITECTURE THAT ACKNOWLEDGES HISTORY AND POTENTIAL FUTURE.

SETTING BOUNDARIES ALLOWS THE ...

PEOPLE DESERVE
LIGHT
WARMTH
SHELTER
VIEW
...
ACTIVITY
FROM ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN.

THE SCALE OF THE MOVE YOU MAKE SHOULD BE AS GREAT AS THE REASON BEHIND IT.

DESIGNING FOR THE COMMUNITY CAN **PROVOKE** THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE AND AUTHORITY, PLACE **EQUAL PRIORITY** ON DESIGN, SUSTAINABILITY AND ECONOMICS IN URBAN INTERVENTIONS. IT SHOULD CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT **ENCOURAGES OPEN-SEARCH** AND THE PURSUIT OF INDIVIDUAL CREATIVITY.

OF THE IDEA IS PORTRAYED, BY MEANS OF
PHYSICAL REPRESENTATION. THE IDEA AND
THE APPEARANCE ARE EQUALLY IMPORTANT.
THE APPEARANCE SHOULD CLEARLY EXPRESS
THE IDEA, ELIMINATING THE DISTRACTING.

WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF DENSIFICATION
IT IS VITAL TO ALTER LIVING HABITS.
MAKING SPACE BY TAKING ELEMENTS
AWAY FROM THE EXISTING FABRIC. IT IS
ABOUT MAKING PRIVATE MORE PRIVATE AND
PUBLIC MORE PUBLIC. THE COMING GENERATIONS
ARE TO DECIDE MORE OPEN ABOUT DIVISION.
TOGETHER THESE AFFECTS FORM THE MAIN
SOURCE OF ARCHITECTURE.

What is an architectural festival? Is it for a short period? Or c
temporary become permanent? We are sure that architecture is n
producing objects to photograph and upload to social media
brief impression. It is about evoking feelings that one wants to re-e
perience and creating spaces one wants to live in.

SMALL FOOTPRINT BIG IMPACT.
THE SCOPE MAY BE DEFINED AS A SPACE WITH AN
OPPORTUNITY FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION AND INTER-
VENTIONS. THIS CAN BE APPLIED ON BOTH MICRO
AND MACRO LEVEL. THE IDEA BECOMES GLOBAL
WHEN AN INTERVENTION DEVELOPED ON SMALL
SCALE IS IMPLEMENTED WORLDWIDE.

SUBJECT

As architects we are obliged to contribute to the
creation of an environment, that will aid in resolv-
ing the contemporary social, economic and cultural
tensions. To achieve this, we must operate within the
global capitalist system, while subversively exerting
our influence from within. In addition, architectural
design must cease to be an end in itself, imposed
top-down by the all-powerful designer, but should
realign its goals towards providing frameworks for
bottom-up participation of the people in the cre-
ation of our future cities. Only by way of such medi-
ation, can enable the complex habitat of tomorrow.

TOP DOWN

BOTTOM UP

#1

ARCHITECTURE IS ABOUT RELATIONS
BETWEEN USERS AND SPACE.
THIS IS WHY ARCHITECTURE SHOULD
FACILITATE THIS INTERPLAY OF RELATIONS.
ARCHITECTURE IS THE CREATION OF SPACE
AND THE CONSTANT EVOLVEMENT OF
RELATIONS.
BECAUSE EVERYTHING IS BASED UPON
RELATIONS, SPACE IS EVER CHANGING
AND RELATIONS CONSTANTLY CHANGE!
ARCHITECTURE IS NEVER STATIC
BUT EVER CHANGING.

SOCIAL SUSTAINABLE } AGENDA

Hand drawing → Computer drawing → Rendered reality
↓
Reality

- Public active space
- Shopping area
- Parking
- Cultural hubs

Defines the Global

...able to design for an unknown future we need to de-
... proper understanding or informed intuition of this
... The most essential part of understanding change is
...ly what will remain the same and have thorough un-
...ing of it, of how it works." Kees Kaan

...understanding comes from the local scale, it reacts to
... and its people. Via the reading of what the locals
... as an architectural achievement we can have an in-
... the global scale, be able to design for the unknown

Local achievement → Global success → Design unknown future

SOURCE
Accurate reading of the context

When approaching the design we think it is important to
consider the different elements the surrounding offers, its
materiality and forms. A twist in the approach and organiza-
tion to our cities is necessary to shape an environment more
suitable for the next generation. Empty spaces can gain new
purpose and even a modest interventions can have a great
impact on a larger scale.

Modest yet effective

If the architectural intervention is exuberant it should still be
able to reflect the spirit of its context and relate with its his-
tory. An artistic and abstract representation of design could
lead to a more defined and powerful impression yet it should
not abstract attention from the physical outcome.

STATEMENT
- HUMBLE
- SPECIAL
- MODEST

...DWELLING IN THE EXISTING URBAN FABRIC,
... PROJECT WILL INCLUDE THE 'THINGS' THAT
... TEMPLE, IT WILL CONNECT THE RESOURCES
... AVAILABLE AND ADD TO THE COLLECTION
... ARCHITECTURAL AND SPATIAL SUPPLIES.

... COLOUR AND MATERIALITY TRANSLATE
... PROGRAM AND SCALE. EACH INTERVENTION
... GETS A COLOUR AND MATERIALITY
... ACCORDING TO THE USAGE.

LIGHT BECOMES YELLOW AND GLASS
WARMTH BECOMES RED AND EARTH
NATURE BECOMES GREEN AND WOOD
PLAY BECOMES GREY AND CONCRETE
WATER BECOMES BLUE AND STEEL

Look around,
neither one is present!

"THE ARCHITECT IS A SORT OF
THEATRICAL PRODUCER,
THE MAN WHO PLANS THE SETTING
FOR OUR LIVES. INNUMERABLE
CIRCUMSTANCES DEPENDENT ON
THE WAY HE ARRANGES THIS
SETTING FOR US. WHEN HIS
INTENTIONS SUCCEED HE IS LIKE
THE PERFECT HOST WHO PROVIDES
EVERY COMFORT FOR HIS GUESTS
SO THAT LIVING WITH HIM IS
A HAPPY EXPERIENCE."

— STEEN EILER RASMUSSEN

---

architect maintains absolute control. Architec-
ture must learn to embrace uncertainty in order
to enable higher degrees of complexity evolved
through novel process-based design. Architect as
a mediator towards complexity.

FORM ⟶ PROCESS

STATEMENT

Looking through the landscape of contemporary
architecture one can notice many different styles
and expressions, usually used for the purpose of
branding by so-called "starchitects". These shal-
low aesthetic expressions are a result of a disci-
pline led astray by outside pressures and internal
revolutions. In contrast, an architecture based on a
process which enables complexity does not need
any additional expression; the richness provided
by the process is sufficient to satisfy our aesthetic
needs and, as it approaches nature, would like-
ly surpass past architectural monuments. Style is
dead, long live the process!

PROCESS ⟶ EXPRESSION

INFLUENCING THE MINDSET BY CHALLENGING
THE SYSTEM OF LIVING, FORCING PEOPLE
TO QUESTION THEIR CURRENT LIFESTYLE BY
PLACING A STIMULI IN THEIR IMMEDIATE
SURROUNDING.

Dialogue between architecture and a fly

D: Architecture could be a multilayered mirror for reflection of others, also for reflection of yourself.

M: Architecture could be an unawakened mirror.

N: Architecture could be the human mechanism of adjustment to the natural system.

F: Reecccccc...

SCOPE

Although all projects respond to a particular economic, historical and physical context, reality, social media and information accessibility has transformed any project into a potential global catalog for reference or change.

Our proposal seeks to become a local landmark as well as provide a commentary on the impact we as society have on our environments. Here our scope becomes a local intervention aiming to spark a global discussion.

WHY?

We want to address the relationship of architecture and the environment and where we envision this relationship being in the future.

WHAT?

Using nature as a carrier on the site, we will paint a future through architecture, to express our message.

HOW?

We want to convey a sense of urgency to the users, through a pavilion that acts as a landmark and evokes our message in a provocative way.

MESSAGE :

CITIES ARE **ANONYMOUS**.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IS GENERIC. FACELESS BUILDINGS AND GLASS TOWERS SURROUND US. LIFE IN THE CITY IS ALWAYS HECTIC. VAST DEVELOPMENTS LACK HUMAN-SCALE. PEOPLE ARE LONELIER IN AN EVER CONNECTED WORLD... ARCHITECTS HAVE THE OBLIGATION TO FIX THIS.

Office D2
Manifestos-04

...st to future - from the fly to a new fly

...spect to the past,
...al with the present,
...eate for the future-

...chitecture is informed by history and memory whilst being contemporary ...d forward thinking. Idea of context that seeks to understand the deeper ...tural situation of a project, into which an appropriate response is wo- ...n. Although it might be unclear, uncomfortable and sometimes painful, ... friction between old an new takes us somewhere farther than we could ...ve went without it.

...ly cutting it open you open a new perspective on how to deal with heri- ...e"

(RAAAF, TUDelft, 2019)

SOURCE

ARCHITECTS HAVE DEMANDS IMPOSED ON THEM BY THE CURRENT URBAN CONDITION WHICH FORCES THEM TO LET GO OF THE TRADITIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR CLIENT. IN ALL ITS RIGIDITY, IT OFTEN LEADS TO DESIGNS THAT ARE NOT GEARED TOWARDS CONTRIBUTING TO PUBLIC URBAN CULTURE. ARCHITECTS SHOULD SUBMERGE THEM SELVES IN A SOCIAL ECOLOGY WITH VARIETY OF OTHER ACTORS EQUALIZING THE NEEDS OF A SINGLE CLIENT. OPEN SOURCING THE MAKING OF THE CITY IN A RADICAL INCLUSIVITY, WE NEED ROUTE AND ADVERSARIES, CO-CREATE, AND PARTICIPATE COLLECTIVELY THROUGH AN URBAN FABRIC IN SEARCH OF AN EXPERIMENTAL PUBLIC URBAN CULTURE.

Office D2
Manifestos-03

From image to sorrow - from the fly to a mosquito

-Response to the local authenticity,
Search for the participation,
Involve in the historical continuity.

Construction in a particular context is to formalize the given conditions and to reshape the complicated integration of the series of related existing or existed factors. The result of the design implies the final combination of organic superpositions, rather than a seemingly clear form of simple logic.

" 'Go to an old folks' home: sorrow is something tangible. Sorrow is in the walls, in the courtyards, in the dormitory."

(Rossi, The Architecture of the City, 1966)

Office D2
Manifestos-02

From detail to city - from the fly to a plane

-Shape the neighborhood. Connect the city. React to the world

Invest in the current relational gap between inhabiting scales while giving it a globally compatible and historically constructed identity. The ancient paradigm of the house on a site, of the city in a landscape needs to be deconstructed, a new paradigm needs to be constructed

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Office D2
Manifestos-05

From instagram to reality - from the 'fly' to the fly

-D to demolish, D to deconstruct, D to develop-

Architecture and image have forever shared an intimate connection. A phase of imagination has always preceded the production of architecture, be it as drawings, diagrams, plans or perspectives, abstract or not. Architecture has always been thought in terms of and communicated by means of pictures. Nowadays, however, we increasingly encounter architecture that – consciously or unconsciously – seems to be preoccupied with its visual impact; an architecture moving inscrutably towards the mere production of striking images, foregrounding its visual aestheticization.

" I want to bring out the best in a community and contribute something of permanent value."

(I.M.Pei, 1917-2019)

SUBJECT

Architecture should carry a narrative, a story that creates change. Even if it is capable to move only a single person.

Architecture should be able to positively impact the echo chambers of the world.

Architects bear the responsibility, that a piece of architecture should not only be about the one who designed it, but about the people who use it, or even more, about everybody.

Our intervention aims to the uplift of local communities as well as to the creation of new ones. This is a reaction to the current state of our cities, which are more and more saturated with commodified objects, which, more often than not fail to stimulate other senses than sight.

We strive to establish a new community of people that are physically present but geographically distant. Such community will be sharing stories and experiences other than images and idols.

...onditions are fundamental to architecture. ...a product, the built environment is connected ...city, a society, as well to history. To build for ...nc to learn from the past. New sources, methods ...shape a new thinking about architecture.

...ric is the city's DNA we have to truly ...fore making the first line of a design. ...process has to reach on this.

We feel like temporal paradox of this location is an **opportunity** rather than a threat, architecture has the opportunity to draw from the past and influence the future. By designing with the new **digital tools** we as architects are able to **solve problems** we couldn't solve and weren't aware of before.

...architecture and set charts a new course for the **public space** and reimagine history in a more obvious way to give physical and cultural **shelter** to the users

In times where architectural production is saturated by iconic objects and sculpture, the experiential character of the architecture seems to be almost less.

Our intention is to improve on such landmarks, with the add-on of pure sensorial architecture. By exploring the iconic quality of the site, and by literally borrowing the landmark, we want to create a new hybrid which is both iconic and sensorial.

needs we aim to create an architecture that evokes the paradoxical **global nature** of the location and incites the **curiosity** that characterizes Rotterdam and will allow us to breach our echo chamber.

SOURCE

Architectural heritage is a representation of legacy; a legacy in the form of a single well-built building, but also as the whole planet we intend to leave behind. Likewise, architecture should fit within the social and economic context, but just as importantly, it should address the environmental circumstances of our "spaceship earth." Architects and the construction industry have greatly contributed to the rising ocean levels due to global warming therefore, for us, it is only natural that we seek to bring attention to this subject. We believe, this urgent acknowledgement is the first step for repair.

Water connects all of us, humans are in constant dependency and struggle to adapt to the dynamics of water whether it is as a resource or a commodity. We aim to use this underlying understanding to reach out to the global community to communicate our message. By doing this, we can begin to bridge the gap between the understanding of legacy and the fundamental need to change for the future.

STATEMENT

The means of the Statement depends on the message that is being stated. Our statement is depicted through the architecture we chose to design. The architecture stands for the duality of site and context, having a direct message while still maintaining an underlying commentary on our position as architects.

The image becomes a representation of the message, but dare to ask explicit boundaries between reality and depreciation. The aim of the statement is showing an imaginative architectural situation to evoke emotion.

MANIFESTO

...hitect is a mediator. Our role in the cre-...of our environment lies in reconciling the ...between the established global top-down ...ence and emerging local bottom-up tenden-...Architectural design itself should expand its ...ic methods and strategies through interac-...with outside disciplines thereby enabling us ...ake the complex environments suited for ...mporary society. This newfound process ...ual simultaneously act as a source for visual ...ssion; styles become irrelevant, the process ...mes our aesthetic.

SCOPE

...nsibly spreading globalization is increasing-...mogenizing our world. Traditions and re-...al characteristics are being displaced by in-...tional trends creating generic artefacts and ...ving cultural landscape in the process ...aneously, the local frameworks traditionally ...re are out of date in our global hypercon-...d Network society. As architects, we must ...from taking position at either extreme of ...global-local divide, as this would enclose us ...echo chamber, severely limiting our scope. ...ure role lies in reconciling the existing fric-...and mediating the creation of our future en-...ment.

GLOBAL ——0←— LOCAL

Who said architects have to choose between global impact and local contribution? We believe that architecture shall address any possible scale. We cherish both the potential of "instagrammable" architecture to reach the public at large as much as the notion of architecture as a sensorial act for those who can physically experience it.

We strive to complete what is iconic and sculptural, by giving it a sensorial and experiental character.

WE DON'T FIND SOURCES.
WE ENCOUNTER SOURCES.
OUR INTUITION REACTS TO THEM

THIS PROCESS IS:
SUBCONSCIOUS
TIMELESS
MOMENTARY

We believe that cities should strive for diversification: both iconic and modest architecture are equally needed. However, we think that these two architectures, which are currently mostly distinguished from each other, should be more interrelated.

With our intervention, for example, we aimed at completing the landmark with a more human scale which was previously lacking. By blurring the distinction between exuberant and modest architecture, a new hybrid is born where the human scale meets the city scale.

We believe architecture is evolving to a point where social networks drive us to **design for other architects**, to chase the beautiful and **superficial image,** rather than solving society's problems. Being aware of the use of contemporary visualisation tools like hyperactive collages and exuberant axonometric drawings we aim to point toward this fact that it is acceptable to use these types of communicating tools but not **mandatory**.

drawings

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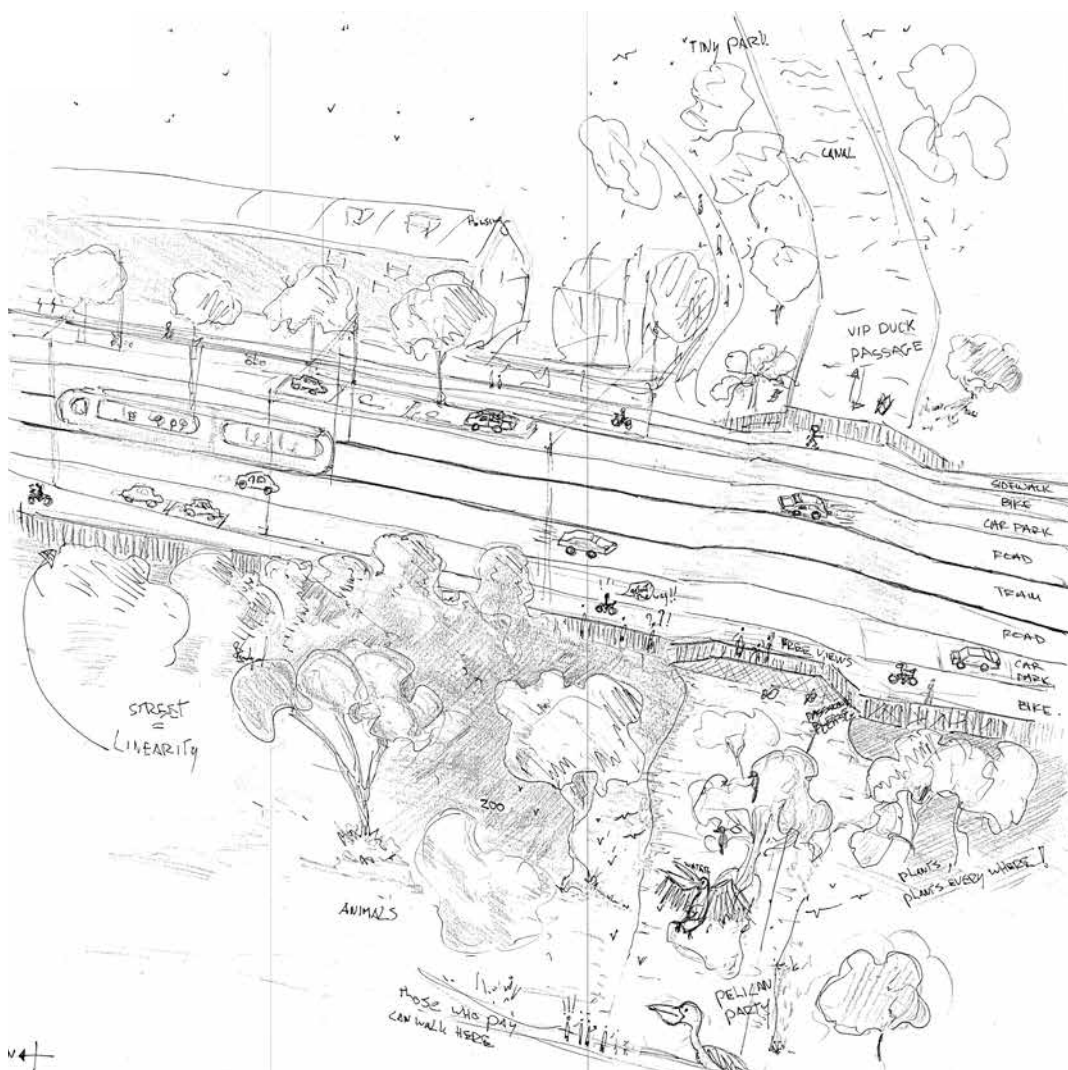
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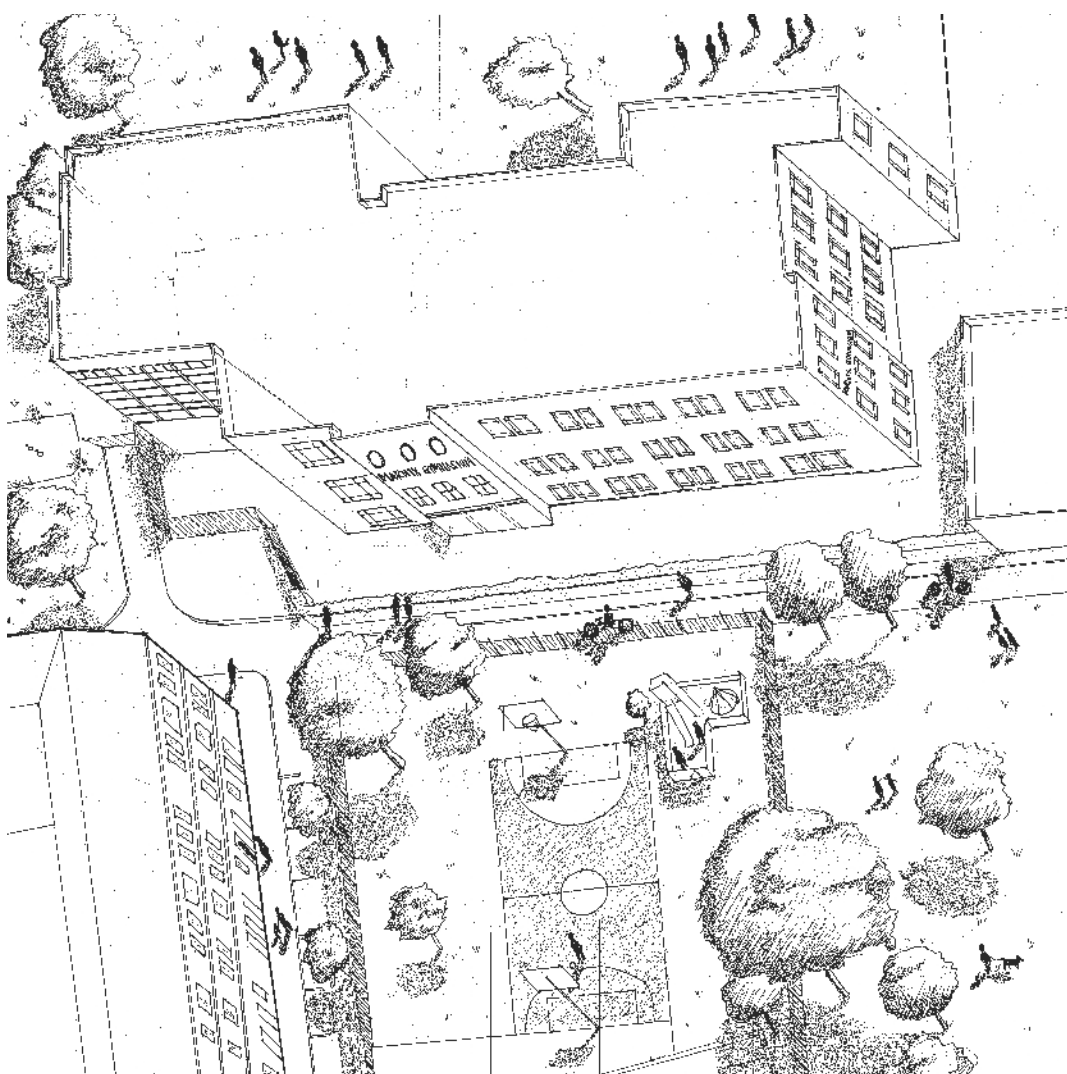
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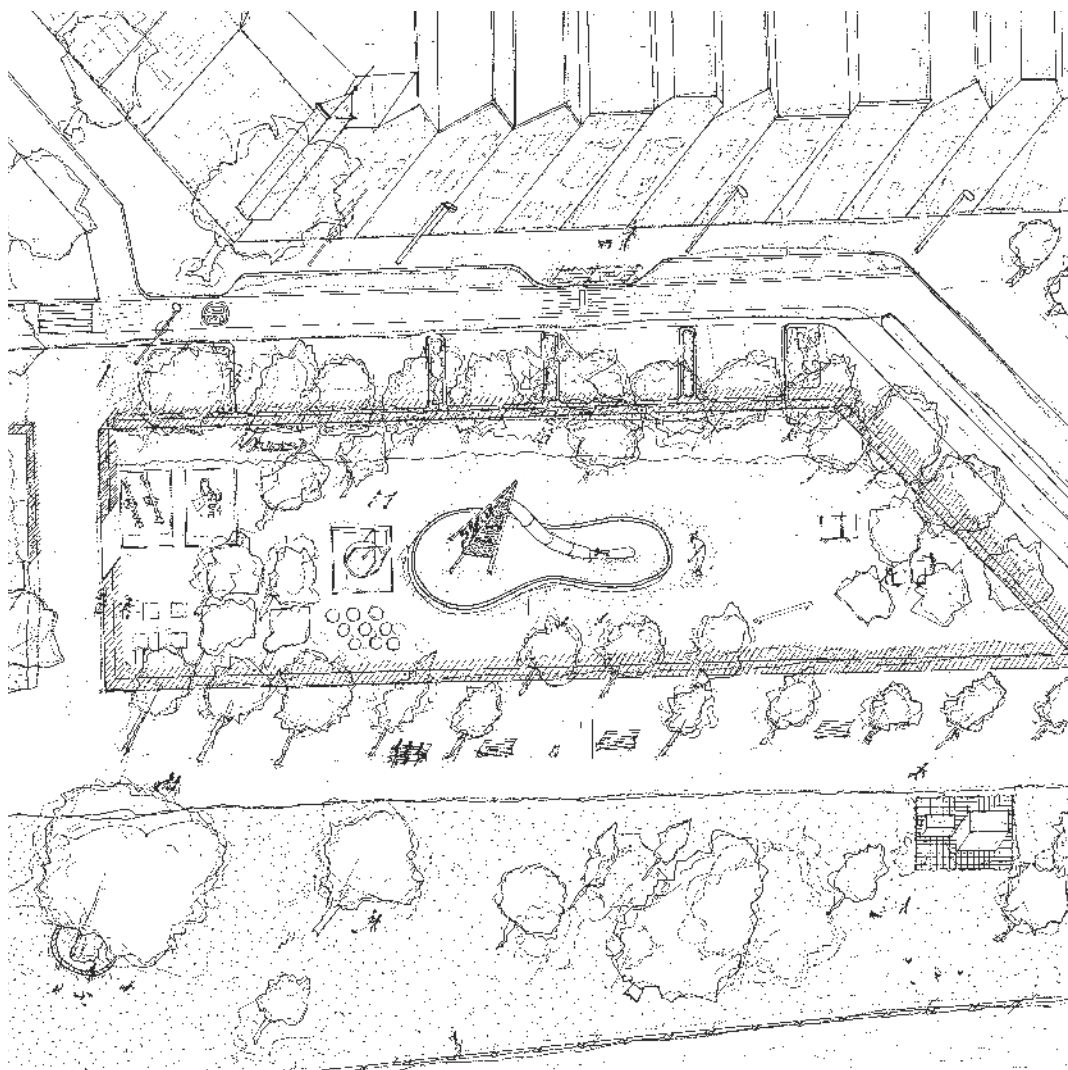
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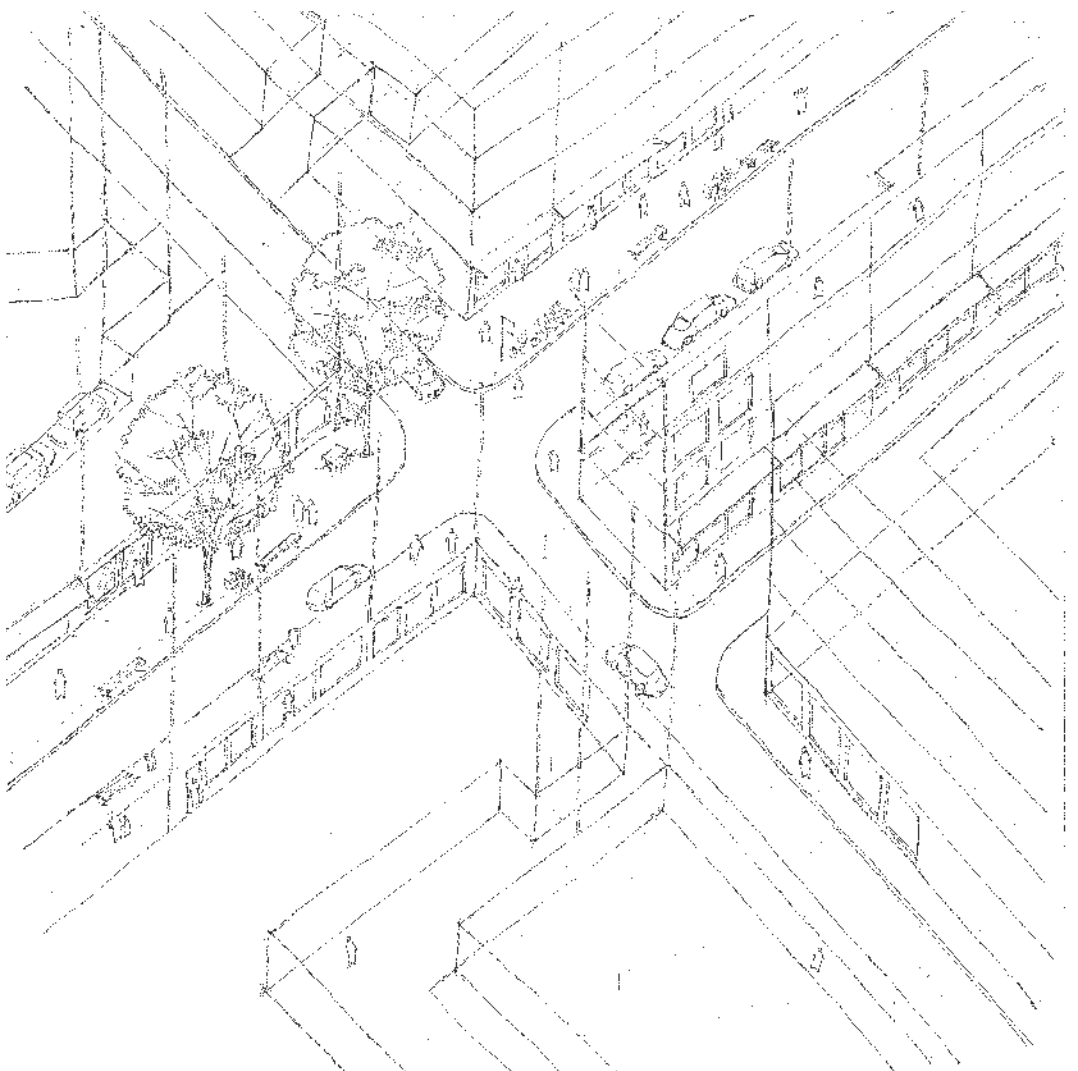# B4

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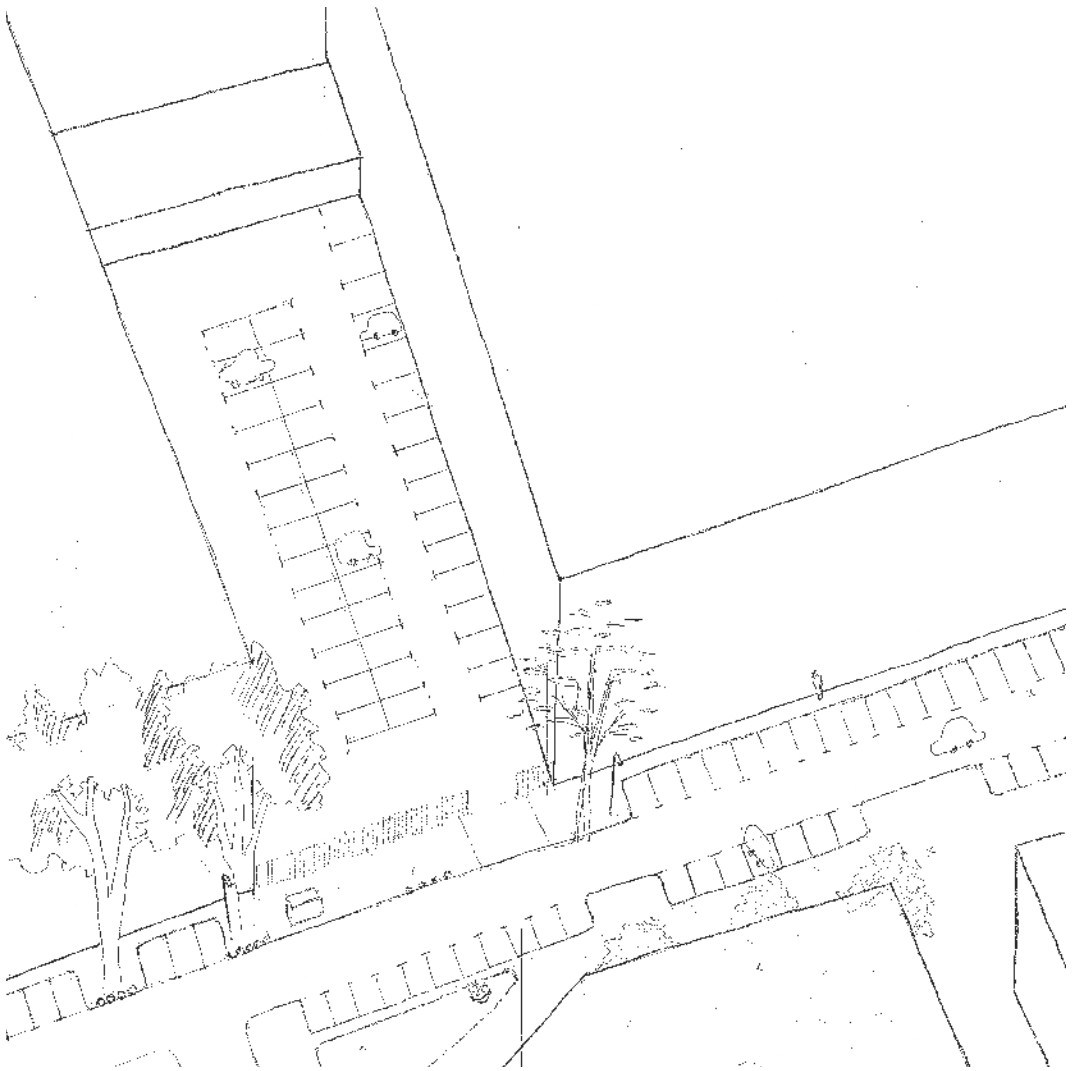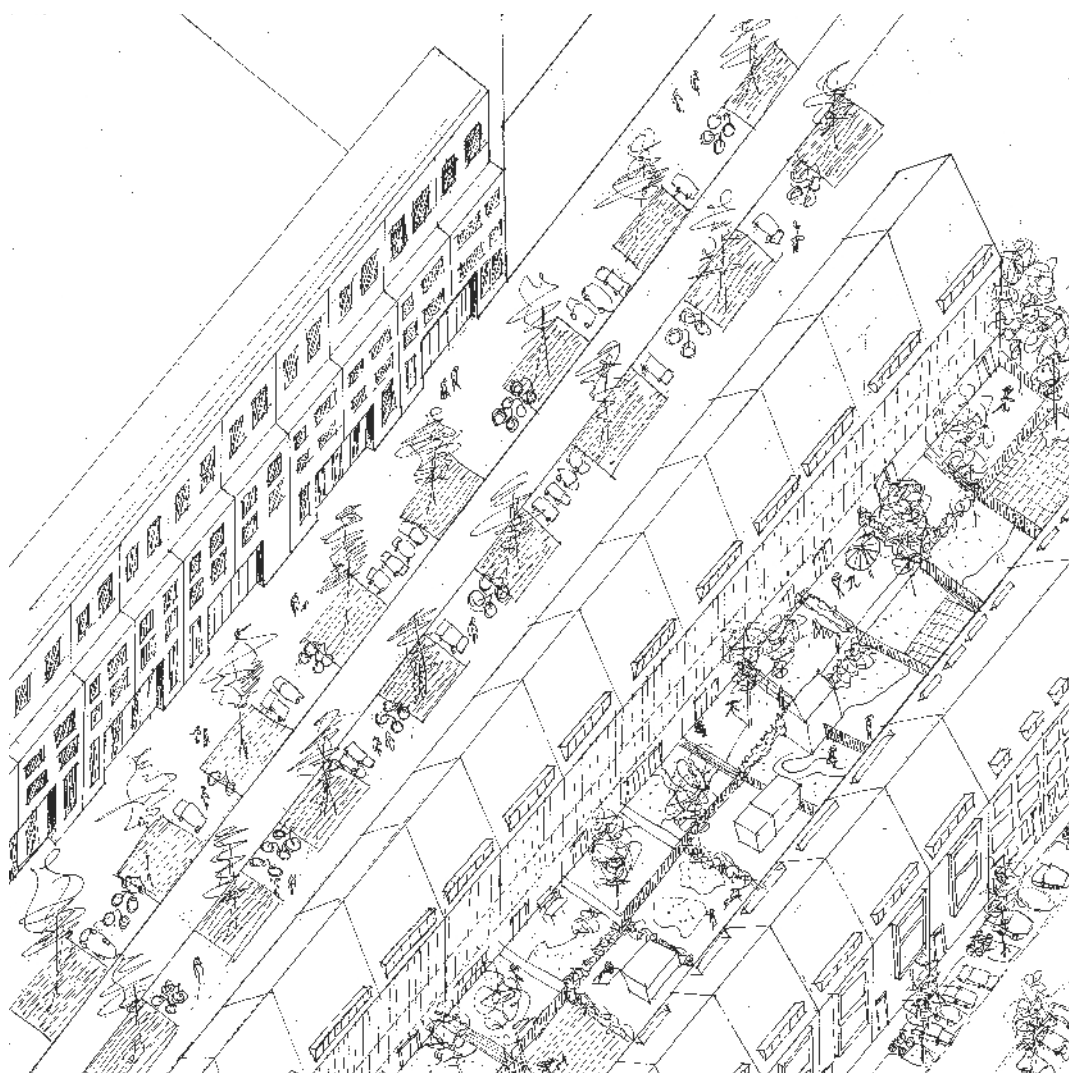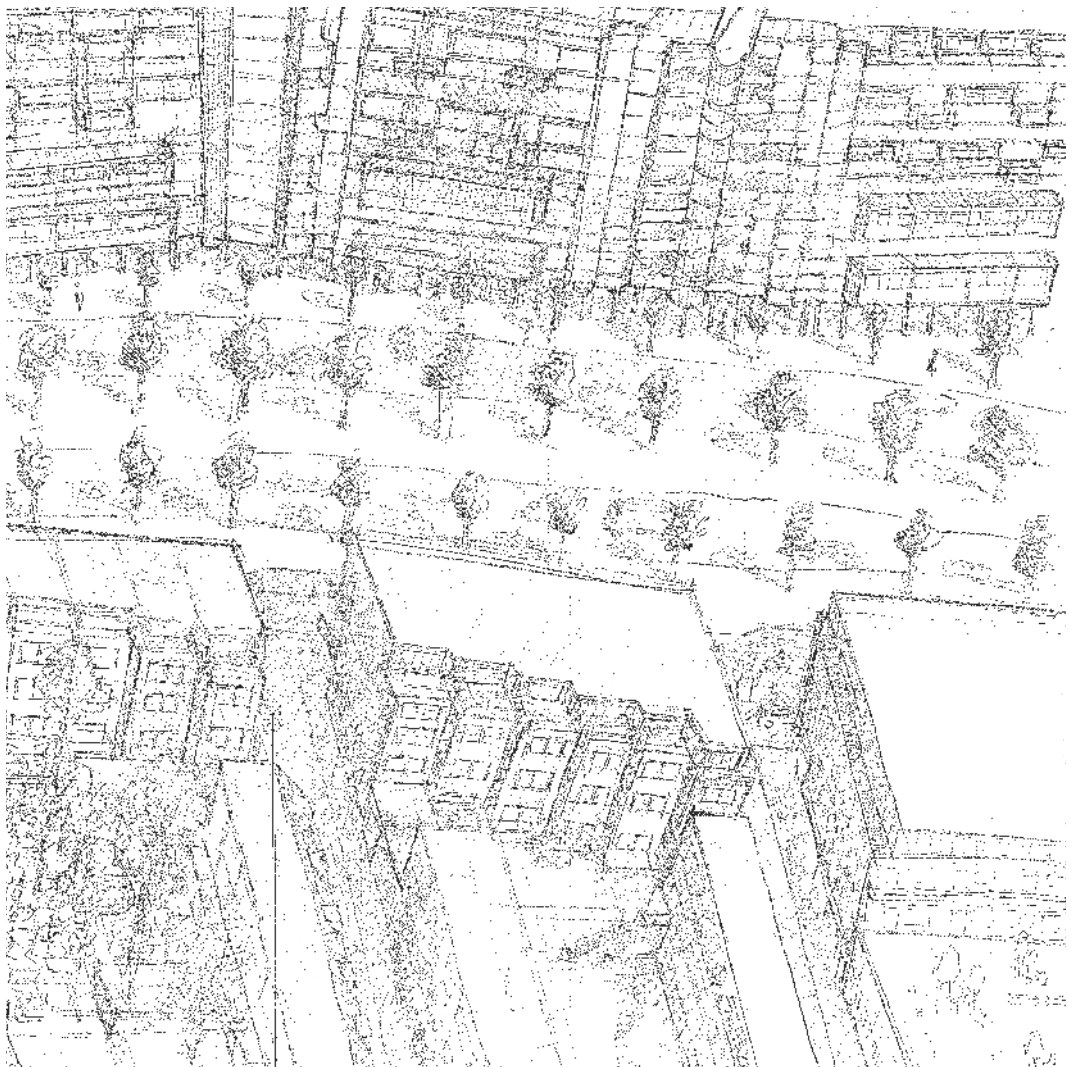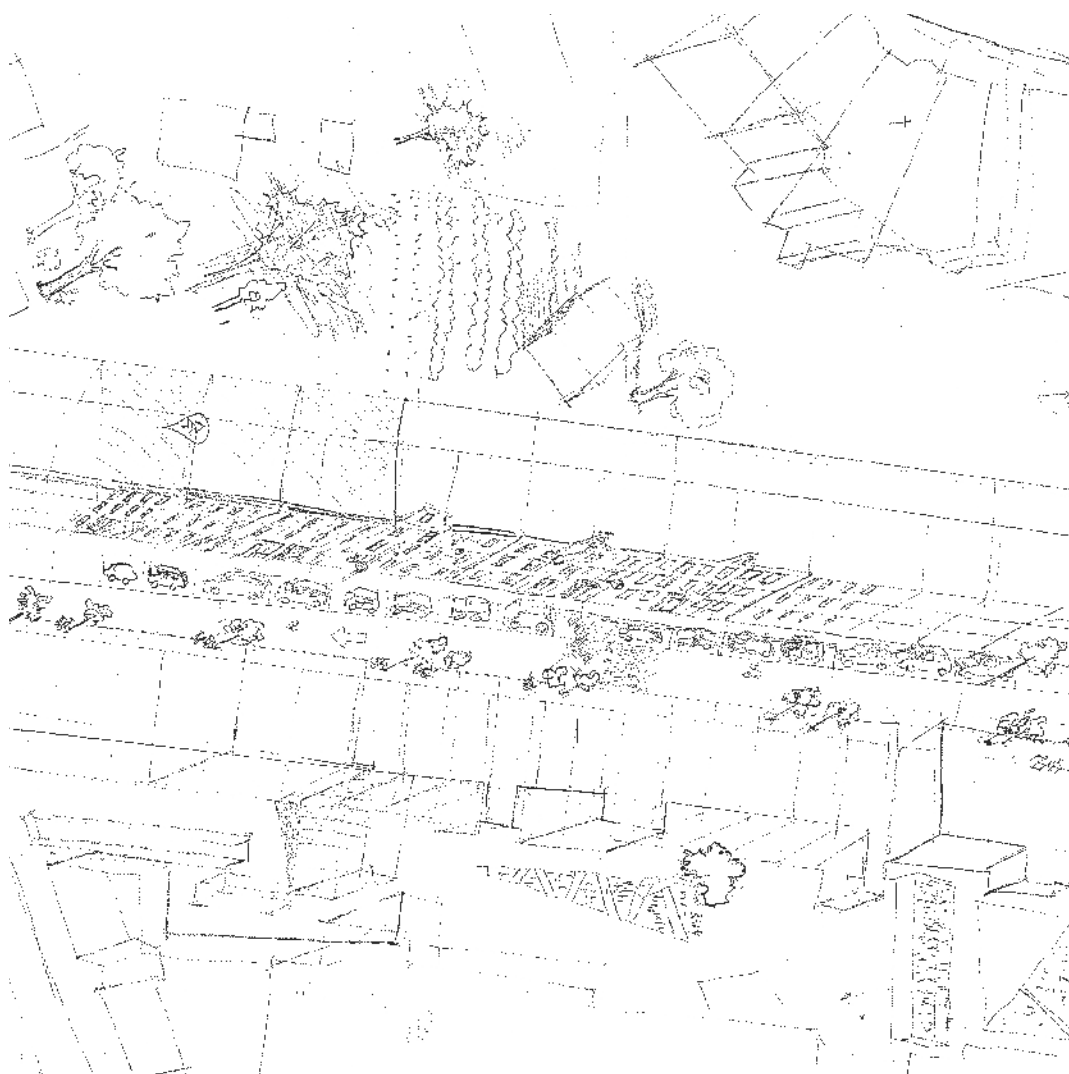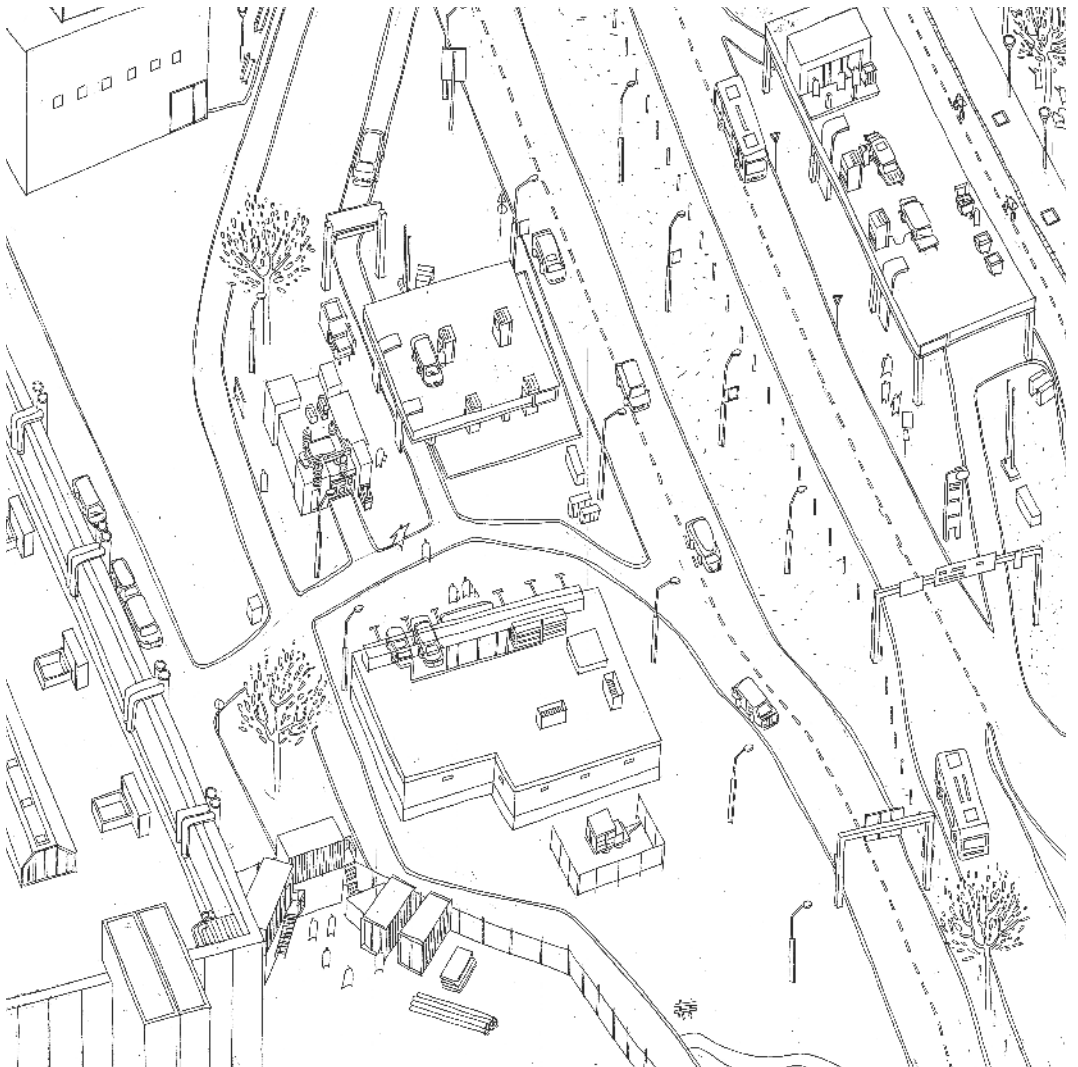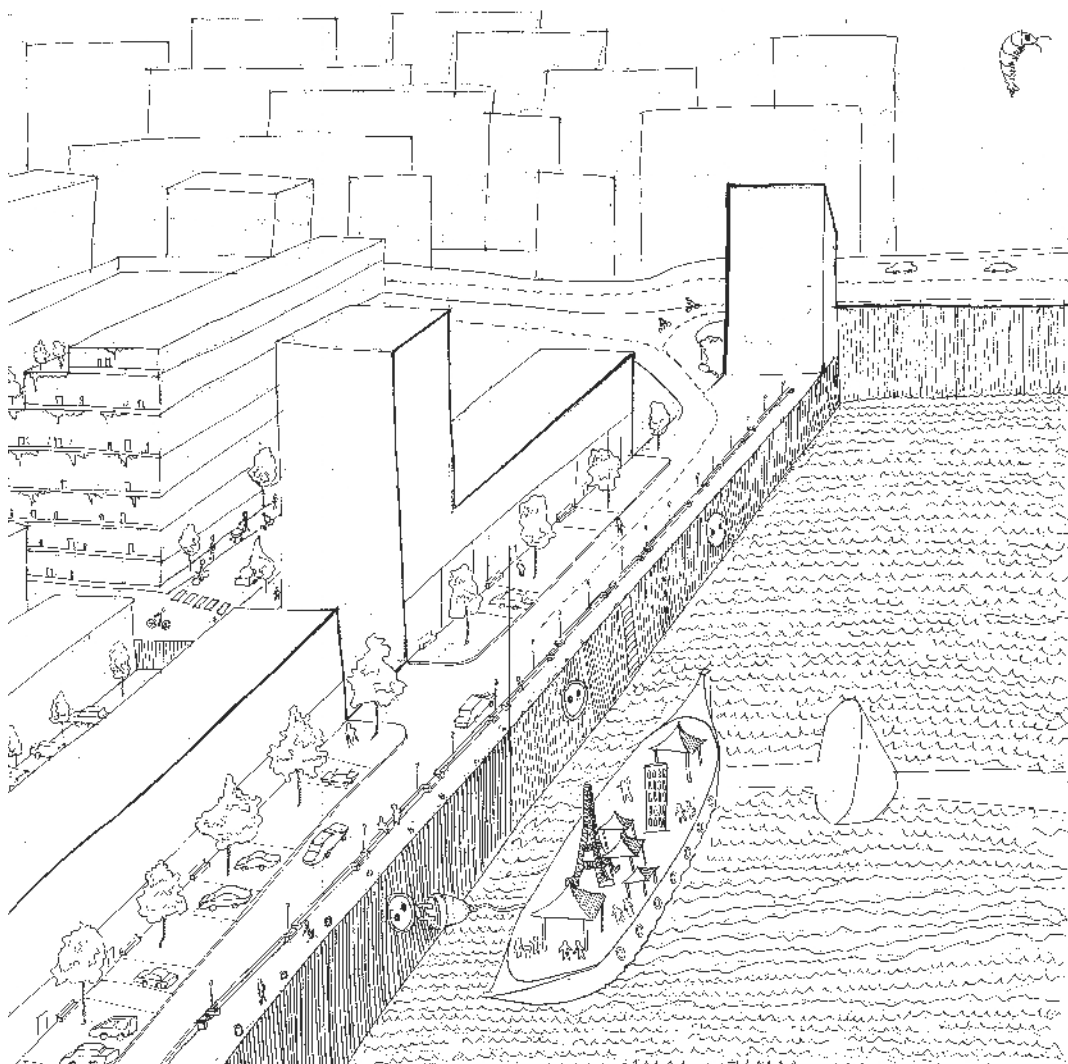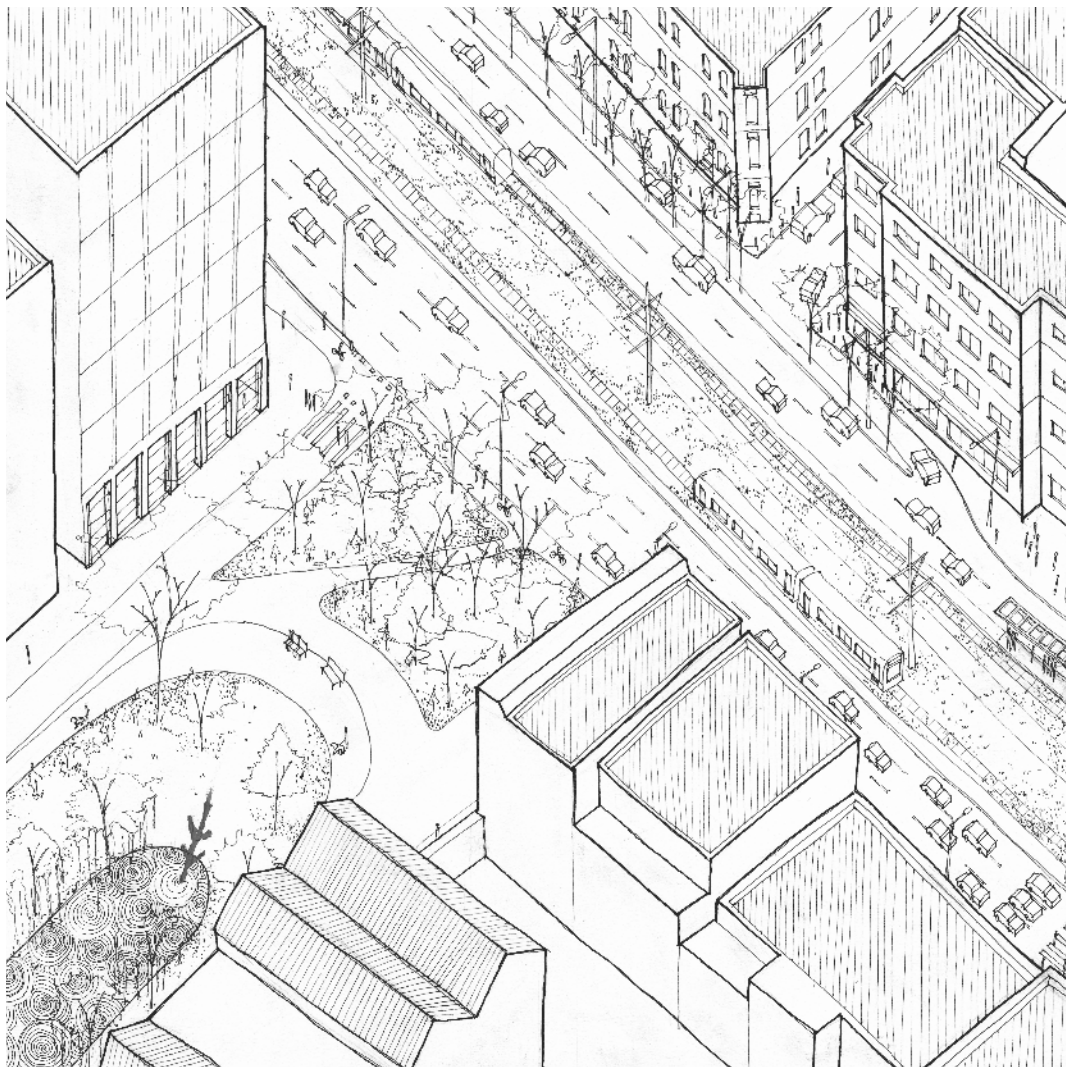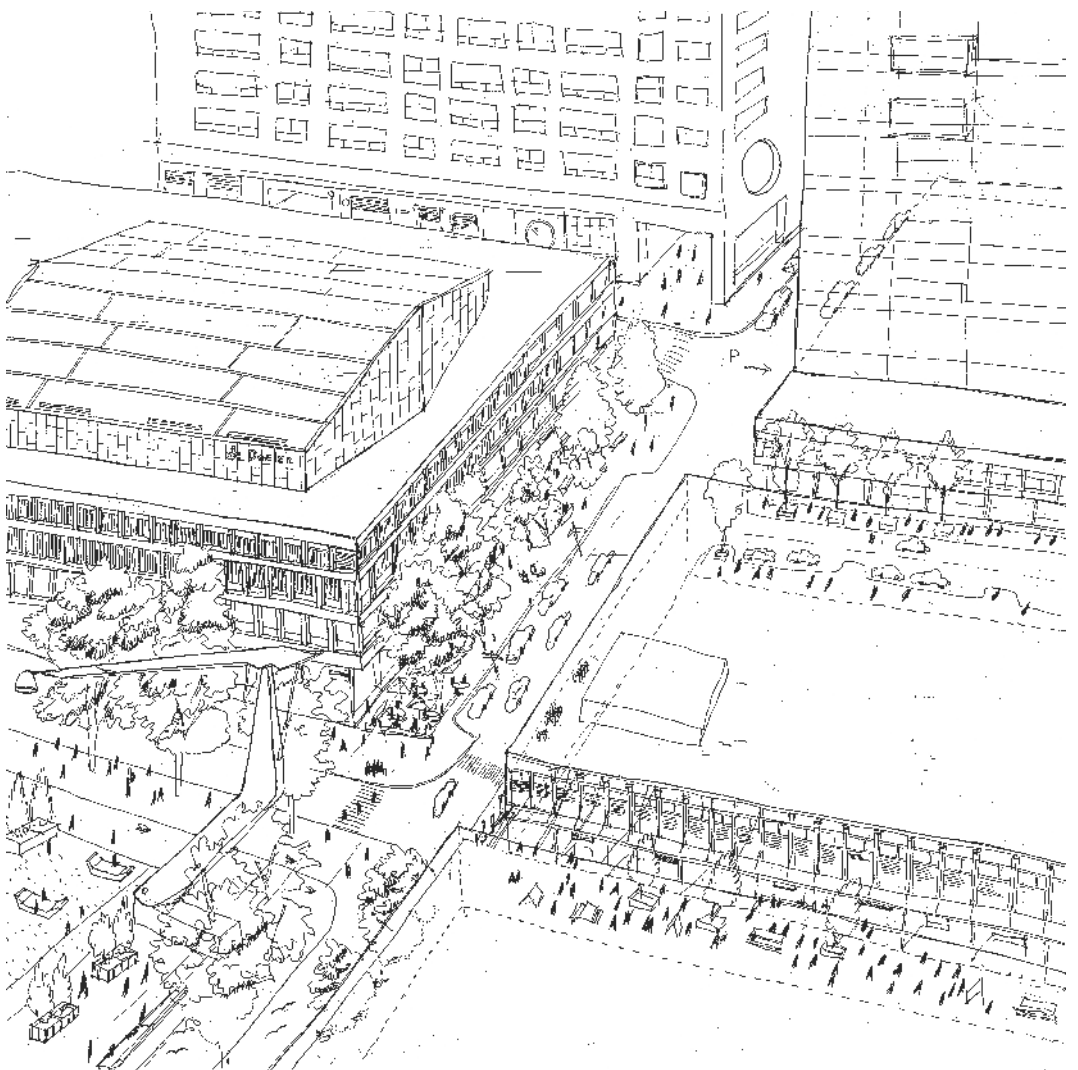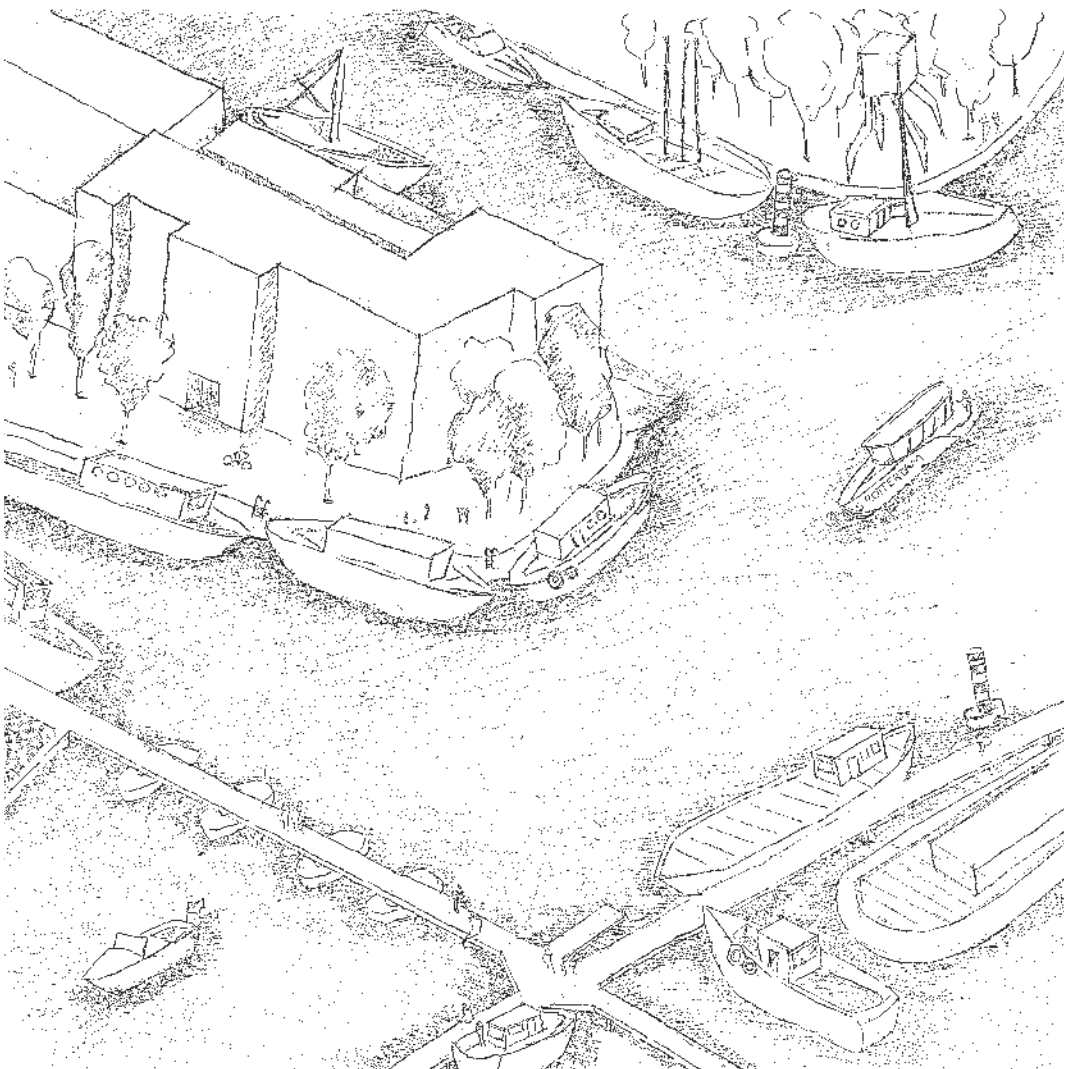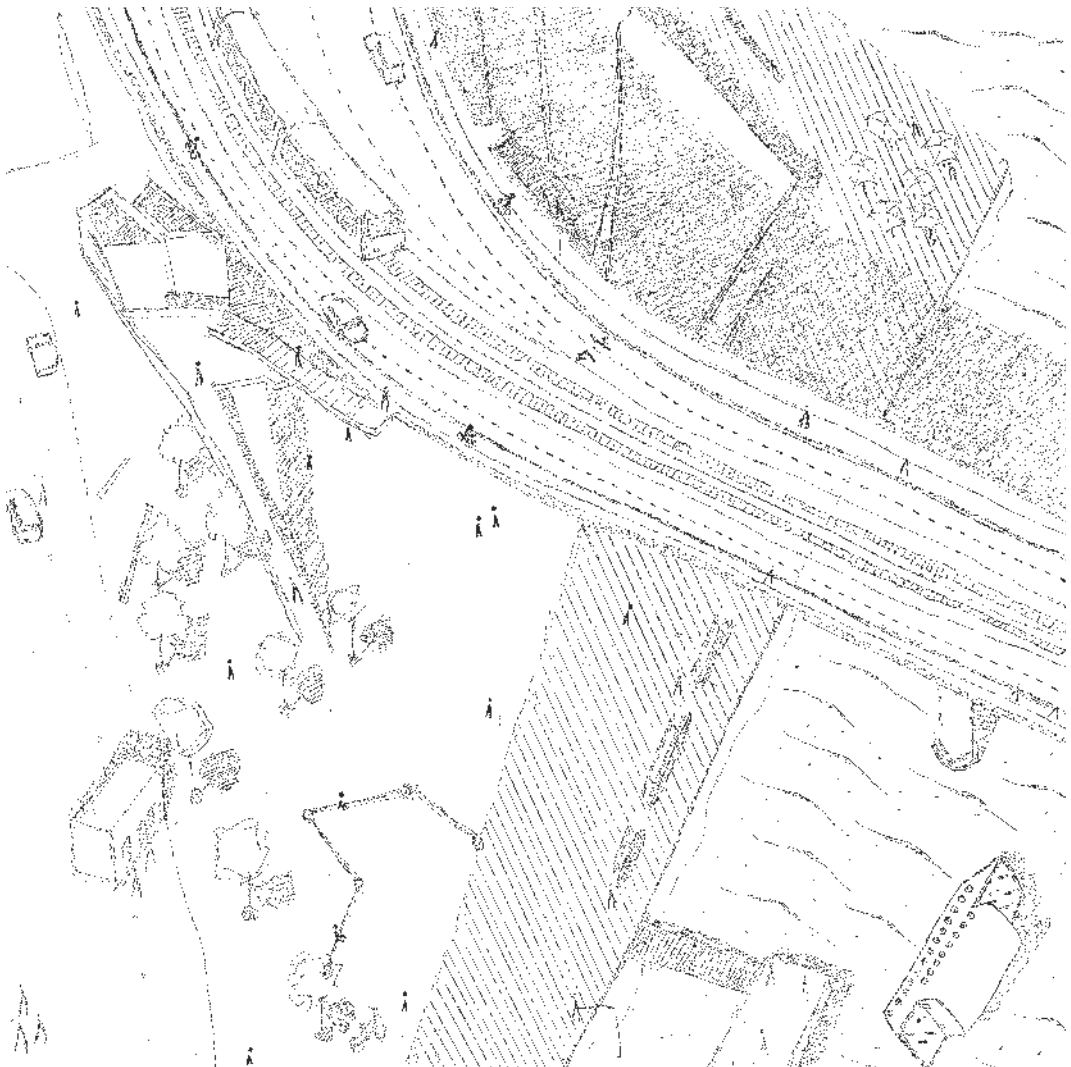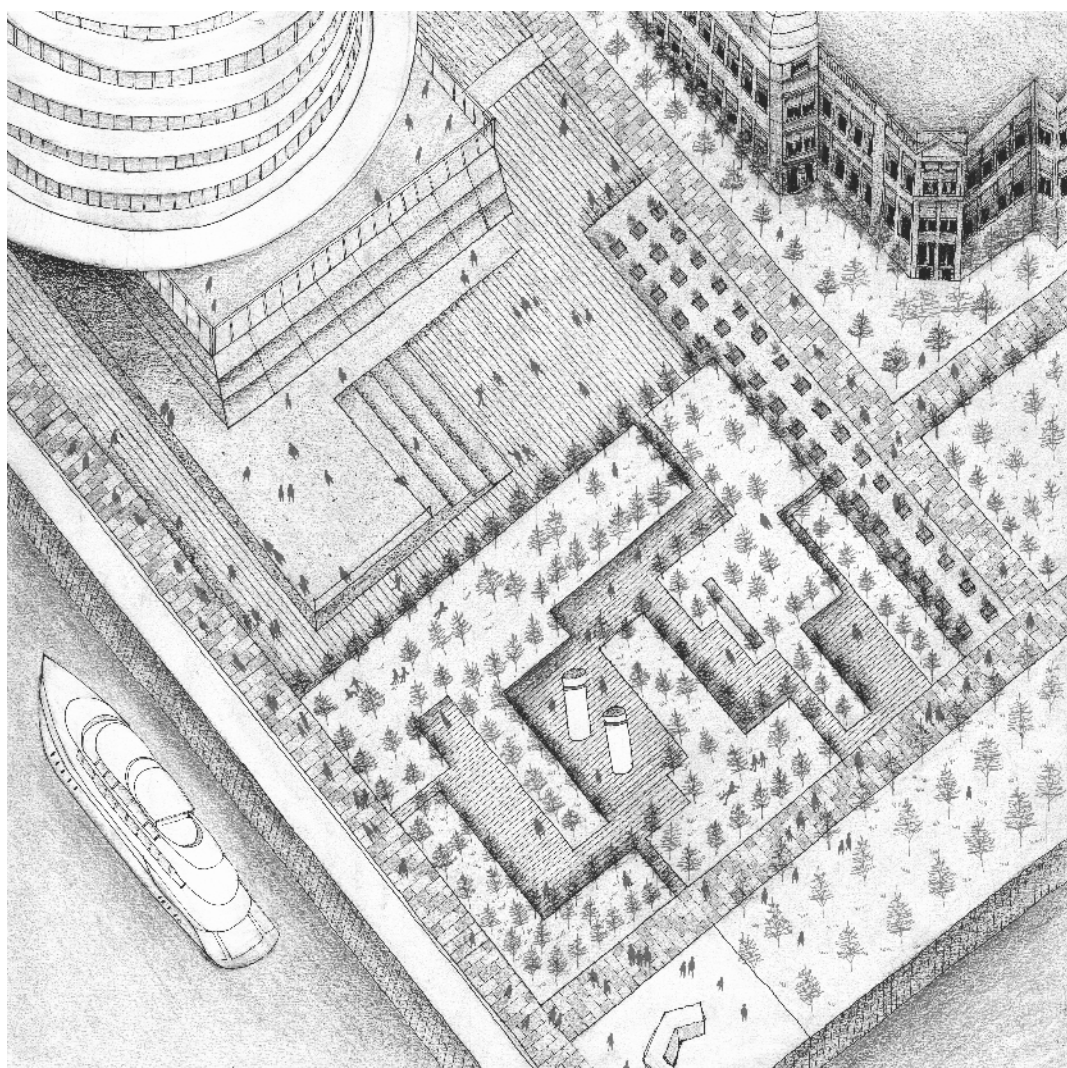
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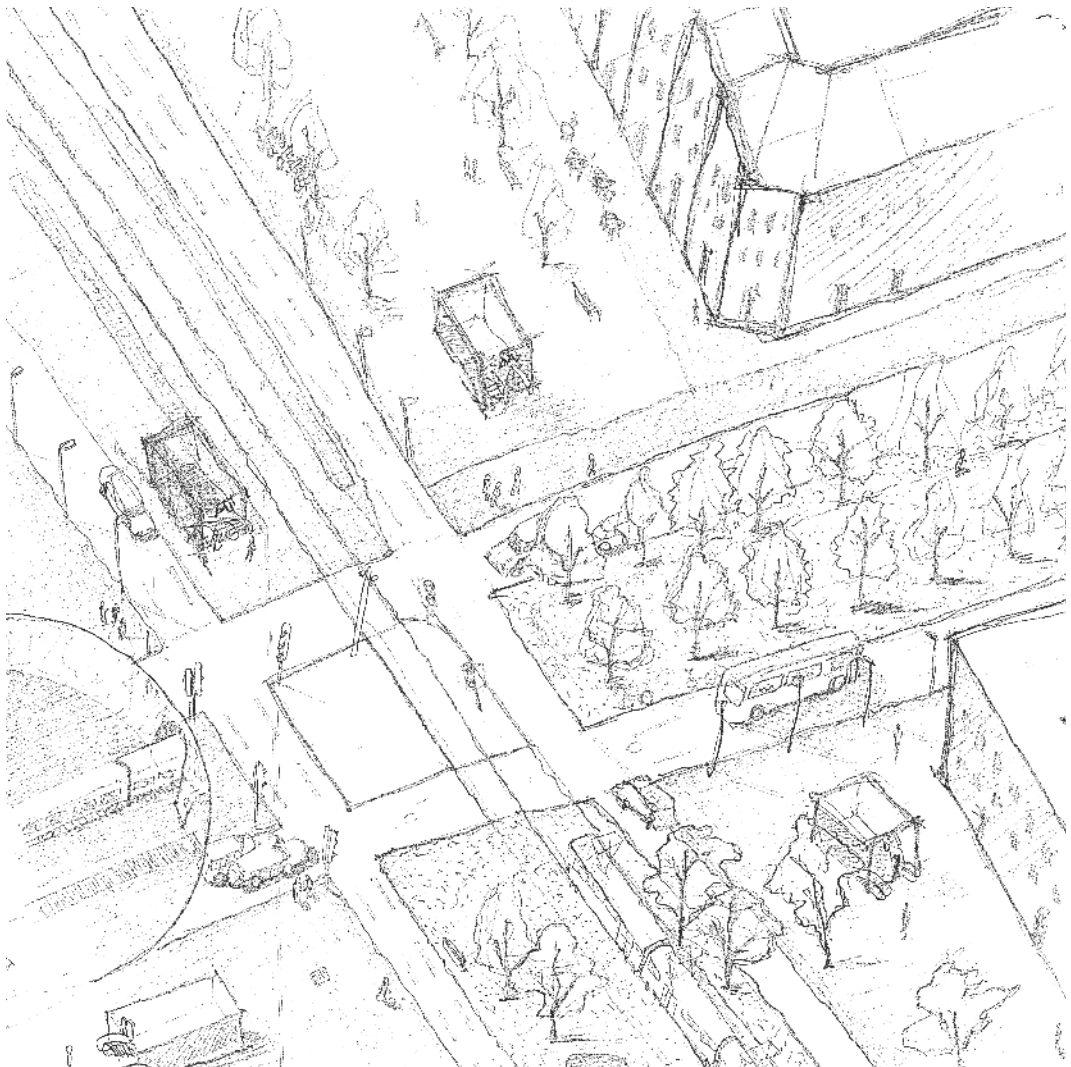
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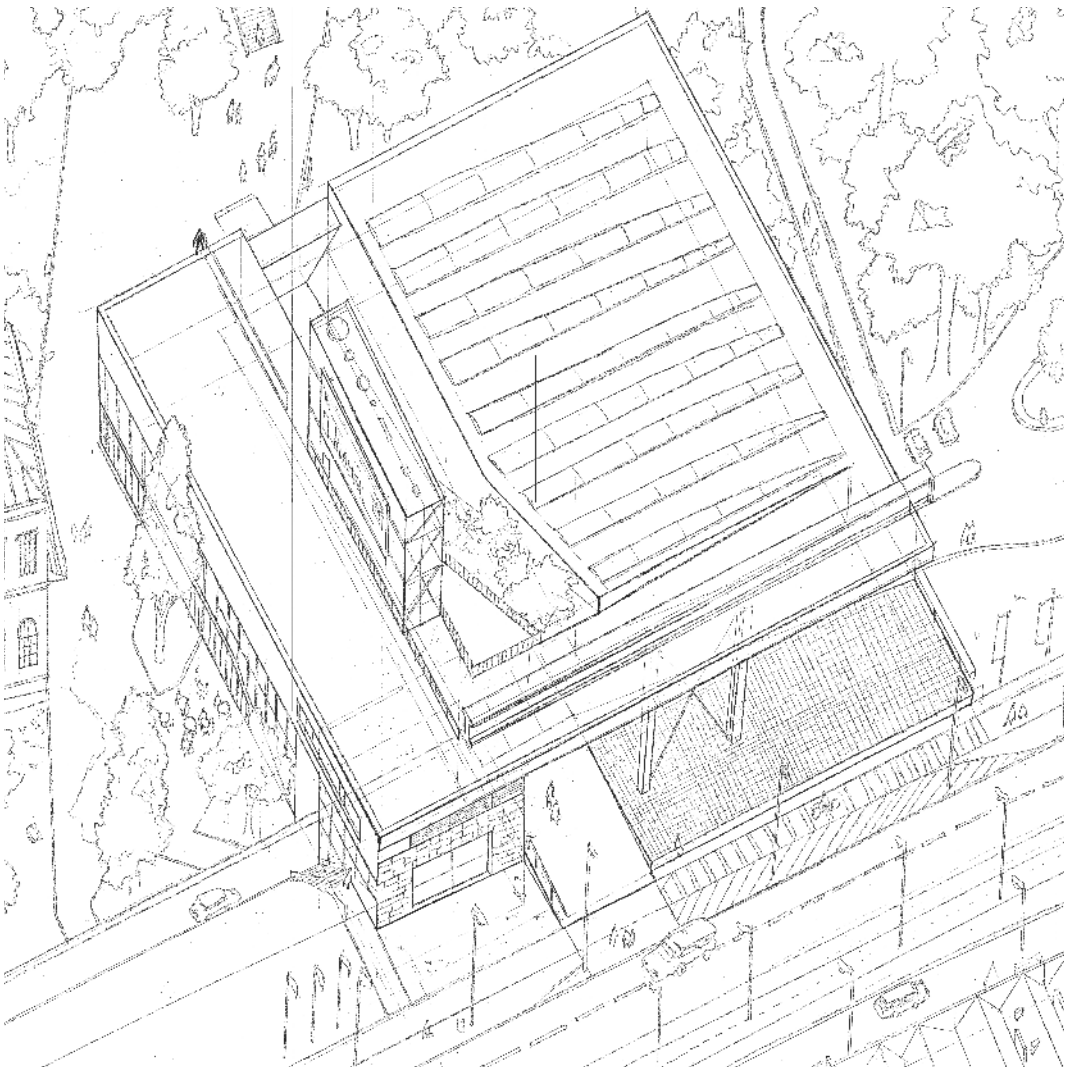
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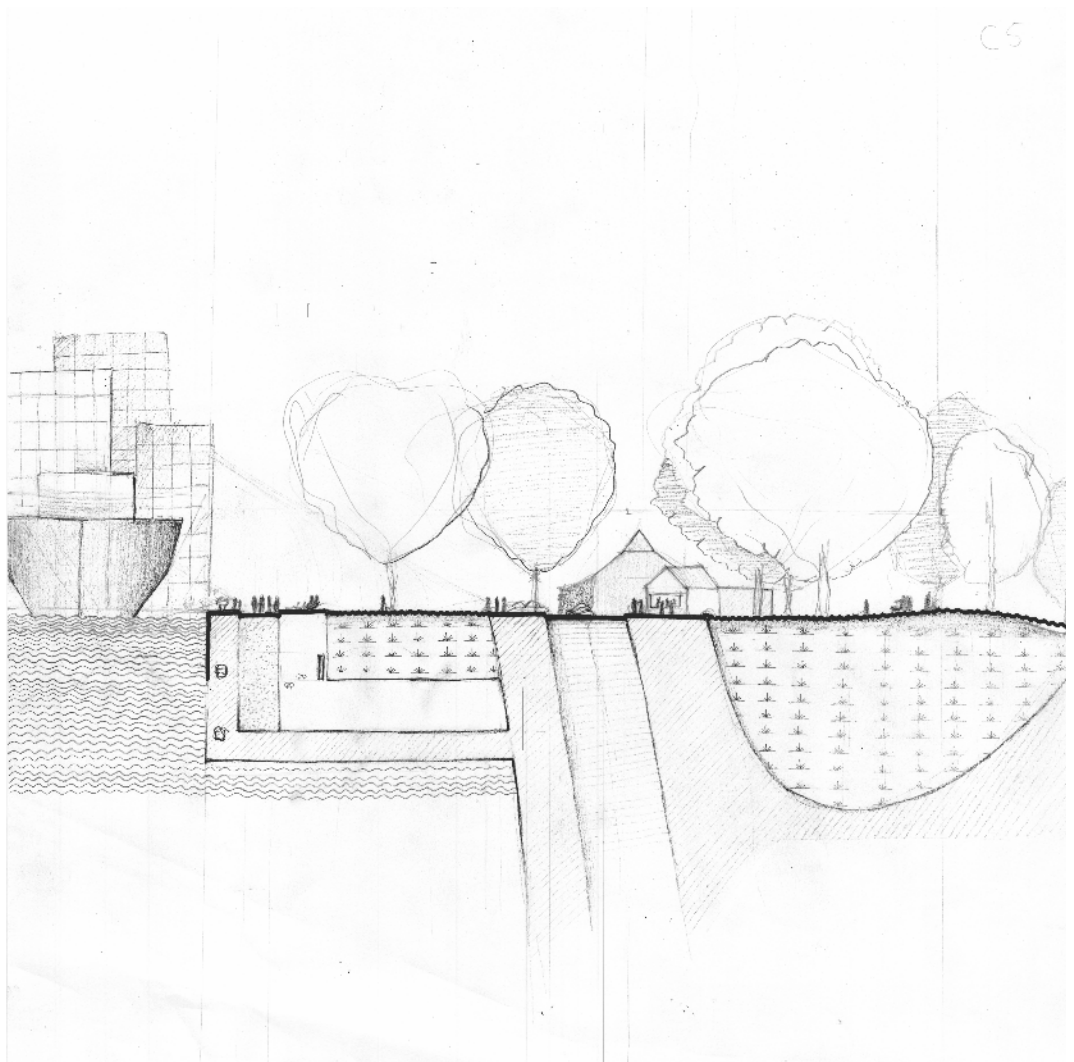
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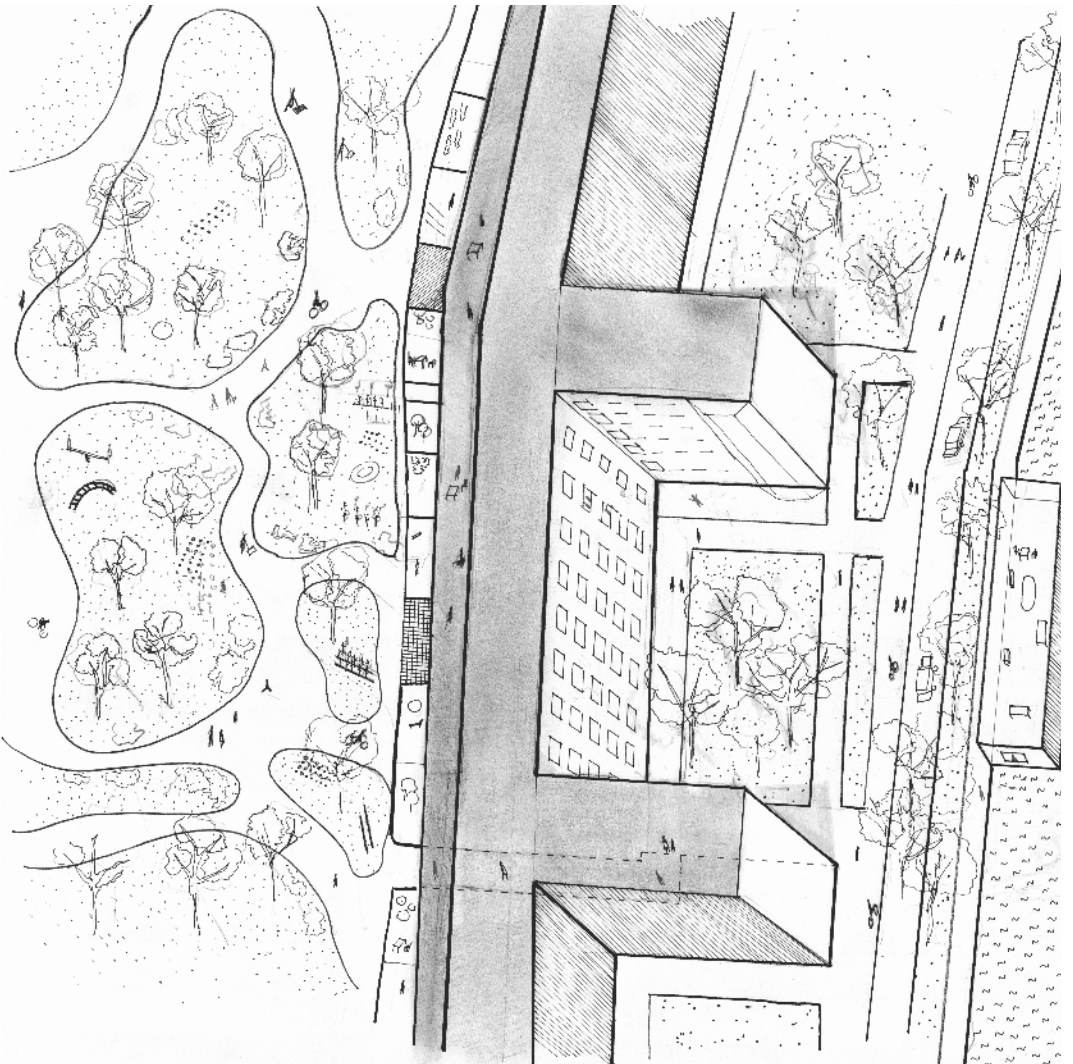
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D3

D4

D5

proposals

stareway

Group A1 - Federica Campopiano / Eischezsorush Sadiq / Sam Verdegaal

We PROPOSE A DESIGN PROCESS for the elevation of spaces throughout Rotterdam that impose waiting, through the means of a stair structure along public transport stops. And we ILLUSTRATE A POTENTIAL OUTCOME for a specific site, located next to the old entrance of Blijdorp Zoo. We hereby present both a global concept as well as a proposal for a local implementation.

Through the proposed design process we hope to unlock properties that had not been thought of previously. This is done by excluding intuition in parts of the early design process. Through exploring different parameters that reside within a set of steps, these thus far hidden properties are provoked to reveal themselves. Examples of the parameters mentioned could be; dimensions, twisting, shapes, amount, rise and slope and material. Then the factor of site is introduced through the parameter of shape. A set of criteria will allow the combining of different parametric settings to form a stair that is specific to a design location. In our exploration regarding steps, the result of the design process is a catalogue of stairs. In our illustration of a possible local implementation we compiled a 'StareWay' based upon criteria such as viewpoints, sunlight, wind, rain, infrastructure and potential user demographics. The aim of this project is to conceptualise the connection between the flexibility of human relations in correspondence to the variability of architecture. The purpose for this architectural festival would not only be a development of the site with a structure, but the birth of a new space in which people can grow and evolve in/with.

The project arose on the concept of complexity, developed through the idea of a set of steps; it is a process of experimentation which results in a catalogue of stairs. One of the key components of a complex system is its unpredictability and disequilibrium, components that have been reflected both in the process as well as in the illustrated local implementation. The variables in the experiment are; the dimensions of a stair, the number of stairs, the spacing in between them, the gradient, the amount of rotation, and the shape. The structure of each stair, was created using the shape of its site as a parameter for its development. Thus, the design which is represented, is based upon certain criteria and is a consequence of each variable, that was suited for the site. In theory this matrix could be applied to different sites with their own criteria in place.

The staircases could be thought as synapses. As a synapse works in the nervous system, our stairs want to be a connection between different destinations with its different features. The task of the stair is to carry out these very aforementioned features, allowing the creation of new places refreshing features. Through the different features, the relations vary with each other; therefore, it's easy to imagine how everything can effortlessly change without forcing it. This kind of "landscape" is matched by Gibson's theory, in which the mind directly perceives environmental stimuli without additional cognitive construction or processing. In the same way, the structure and design of the stairs is closely related to the use of it. Thus it could also shed a light on human relations and its development. Moreover, it's easy to understand what chaos can provide to those who dare to experience it: a sort of entropy, in which every kind of new relation can arise. According to this thought, we can find a multitude of possible variables because of the way they relate with each other from the same places. Lastly we note, that due to time constraints the process is sped up introducing intuitive decision making earlier in the process. In the previously suggested timeline of the process we propose intuition would be kept to a minimum until later notice, in order to enable yet unimagined possibilities.

Architecture is ever changing and thus so is our project.

"STAREWAY"
EXPAND YOUR HORIZON

void unwrapped

Group A2 - Tipp Bongers / Katerina Apostolopoulou / Silvia Matisová / Hutomo Sudiharto Putra

First level of Analysis
In an era characterized by a multiplicity of ideologies and styles, the urban intervention and the architectural practice emerge as dynamic elements of a holistic and synthetic approach for the urban regeneration of the city.

By realizing the limitations, we came to the conclusion that it is exactly these aspects that define the creative process and give it meaning. it is the need to express undoubtedly what constitutes your echo-chamber that makes you capable of change and critical evaluation and repositioning in the whole architectural spectrum. This approach to the term echo-chamber, as something that not only encloses but also defines the architect (positive-negative physiognomy) led us to an analogy: each echo-chamber constitutes a bubble. When standing alone the bubble has a short-term life expectancy, but when being with other bubbles, they create foam. This new formation builds a stronger bond, based on the ability of the unit-bubble to adapt its limits in order to expand. The flexibility becomes a matter of survival that adds to its value.

The design Proposal
By design, we approach the area with the pursuit of developing a functional thickened layer, which affects the horizontal continuity on multiple levels to create a shared space that intervenes in different urban conditions and spatial fragmentation. The reinterpretation of the existing urban borders (fences, rigid facade, open space) of the collective space, expands the ground, while finding appropriate expressions of public space and links to the largest urban and programmatic network.

The territory is renewed with an artificial wilderness of flows introduced through an architectural artefact - the spiral staircase, whose power operates beyond the ground level, leaving the surface seemingly untouched. This staircase works as the mediator between the four segregated areas of the site: the school, the park, the residential block and the greenery. This new element changes the way the intermediate space is perceived and experienced by the users. For the residents, it elevates the ground level. For the park , it creates a new entrance. Finally, for the school it transforms its facade by bringing the circulation as the front layer and as part of the green fence that already exists.

The final aspect that our design tackles is the optical connection with the central station of Rotterdam. A connection is underlined by the two high-rises that are visible from a higher level behind the school. We emphasize this unique element by designing a staircase that progressively ascends the school building, revealing as a final the spectacular view, coexisting with the railway infrastructure and the dense green nature.

Final Thoughts
Through this realization, "Void Unwrapped" builds upon a new approach to urban regeneration based on the idea of layering that hybridizes the collective urban network and individual urban objects, from which familiarity and life forms emerge to inform new urban bridges on different scales. This approach recognizes the strength and potential of urban metabolism and urban integration. At the same time, it aspires to reveal the complexities between the elements that make up the urban ensemble.
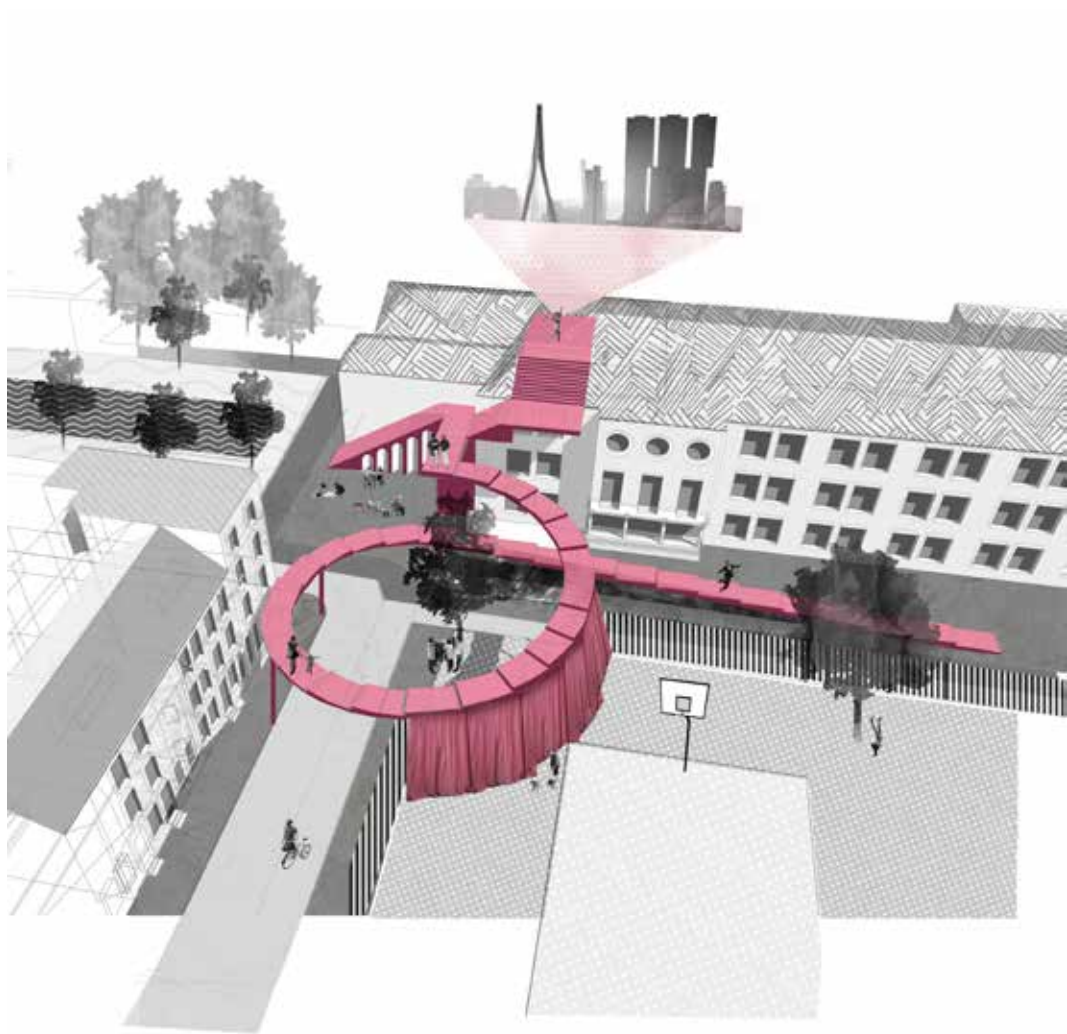
light cover nature warmth play

Group A3 - Matthew Dodd / Leander Nowack / Danielle Termote

We are used to the conditions architecture provides. The underlying quality of space is overshadowed by use and atmospheres. Public space could serve as a place to discuss this topic.

Pavilions
The pavilions, spread out around the site each make use of a specific condition, resource or quality and turn it into a projection of specificity and abstract theory. The intervention consists of 5 different spatial situations:

Light
Adapting and reusing a part of the existing playground, a wooden tower becomes a luminary. On the very top of the highest man-made structure in the park, a lantern is added, that serves multiple purposes: it becomes an icon, a lighthouse that transforms public activity into a sign. Furthermore it illuminates the Park at night, generating an atmosphere of security and well-being.

Cover
The spatial language of the dominant fence is completely changed. Rotating the bars, lifting the barrier up in the air, there is a pathway created, that leads you right through the barrier. The intervention questions the rules of barriers and borders, dissolving existing zones of usage.

Nature
Too often nature in the city provides recreation by mere visibility, where active usage is not possible. Still there is an existing layer of plants and animals, that have their own logic and spatial use. A horizontal structure makes the convergence of man and nature possible. Quite like a tree, it leads the user up in the air, while providing corners and edges for birds to nest in.

Warmth
Infrastructure often becomes invisible in the city, just small signs like power boxes serve as hints to the underlying logics of water- and electricity-supply. While incorporating those power-boxes into the public space, the pavilion makes use of particularly quality of these objects. As they have temperatures up to 40°C, the surrounding space gets heated and provides a warm shelter.

Play
Public space is turning into transfer space in big cities, losing its quality of residence and stay. As a space of gathering, public space should be able to provide stages of activity and play. A small theatre is inserted just where land and water meet, stairs leading down to a small stage, surrounded by radial places to sit. Where in the summer, all kinds of community-activity could take place, the space will transform into an ice-skating point in winter.

Conclusion
All interventions do not only tell narratives of basic architectural qualities, but also react to the specific conditions of the site. Furthermore the pavilions are able to adapt to time and seasons, changing their use and program according to human needs.

LIGHT   COVER   NATURE   WARMTH   PLAY

architectural acupuncture

Group A4 - Albina Saifulina / Jeremia Pasaribu / Pepijn Determann / Berend Vos

Cities are anonymous, they are ill. Over the years, our built environment has become generic and lost its identity. Architects have carelessly placed objects that lack feeling, delicacy and don't respond to the context. The key to a good design is the careful and curious observation of the site. To heal the city our interventions have to be sensitive, deliberate, and precise.

An architectural acupuncture.
Our site is located in a residential district in the west of Rotterdam. The streetscape of the neighbourhood has a bleak atmosphere, with little life and greenery. However, one tunnel through the housing block transports you into an overgrown courtyard. We viewed this small, pristine site as a hidden jewel of the city. Exploring the courtyard, we identified 9 interesting elements, each with its own reason:

The tunnel: Contrast of street and the courtyard
A cut down tree: People's effect on nature
Grass growing between the tiles: Nature's strength and resilience
Fenced-off backyards: The choice of privacy over community
Renovations: The choice of convenience over beauty
An empty bench: Disuse of the courtyard
A vacant school: Vacancy
A broken window: Decay and neglect
Brickwork at the school entrance: Craftsmanship of buildings

The concept is to make the visitor aware of these themes and the subtle beauty of objects that tell a story. The tunnel is painted black, to create the effect of crawling through an Alice in Wonderland rabbit hole which takes you to a different world. Once inside, each element is to be observed by a visitor from the simplest of objects; a chair. When sitting in one of these chairs, the visitor can draw his own conclusions about the potential and values of the place. A sense of discovery and patience are essential to the experience. The chairs act as the acupuncture needles we place in the site to allow the city and the site to heal itself.

ARCHITECTURAL ACUPUNCTURE
BEREND VOS   JEREMIA PASARIBU   PEPIJN DETERMANN   ALBINA SAIFULINA

dreaming delfshaven

Group A5 - Fadhila Rahman / Louisa Hollander / Jaka Korla

Our design reflects what we think architecture should be by positioning ourselves as a mediator within the architectural realm. As architects, we believe that to grow as a person one must connect with its surroundings and be exposed to views and cultures unlike your own. This way your opinions are challenged instead of endlessly confirmed.

We translated this in our design by reconciling multiple antitheses. We situated ourselves between global and local by designing a framework which can be placed anywhere in the world. Yet, the object has direct impact on the inhabitants of the neighbourhood in which it is placed. The object can not only be moved at the discretion of the users, but its contents can also be used or unused by the inhabitants. The object contains multiple objects to use by the inhabitants at their discretion. The object is a framework for the eventual temporary landscape design, designed by the users. This way there is a hands-on approach for the interactors with the object. At the same time the object could be placed anywhere in the world, thus combining a global impact and a local contribution in one design.

In 2019 we live in a global capitalist system, in which there is a disconnection between the all-powerful architect and the people. Our design exerts a top down and bottom up approach to connect these two realms. As architects, we provide an object. However, the exact location of the object, the usage of its contents and the distribution of the elements are up to the inhabitants. By balancing two extremes, we connect the people of Delfshaven in a larger project.

The design of the object is a process. Through the process of distributing the elements across the neighbourhood and by moving the object to the desired location, the ultimate design forms. The style is the process. The process is the expression.

Above all else, this object represents the design of an interactive process as a new aesthetic.

The shape of the object is derived from the history of Delfshaven. Delfshaven used to have a multitude of windmills, distributed through the entire neighbourhood. The windmills contributed to the shipbuilding industry in the formerly known Port of Delft. However, through history more and more of them began to disappear. We wanted to restore this historical heritage by reinventing the old windmill with a new function. Instead of contributing to the industry, the windmill contributes to the society.

The object serves as a Cabinet of Curiosities. The object contains a multitude of elements representing the cultural background of the inhabitants and geometric shapes to use at their discretion. The users can add to the contents, use the contents and place the contents however they wish. The object provides a space to explore and find elements which relate to the users. The Cabinet of Curiosities is a means to connect a neighbourhood through the pleasure of exploration and expression.

DREAMING DELFSHAVEN
A Cabinet of Curiosities

WINDMILL   CABINET   CURIOSITIES   COOPERATE   NEGOTIATE

break in the wall

Group B1 - Lieke Lohmeijer / Stefania Soich / Tarang Gupta

Architects challenge human lifestyle. Instead of addressing the problems of today, an idea of the future should be designed and connected with the present in a form of architecture. To create a successful idea, it would mean to design local interventions that can be implemented worldwide: small footprint, big impact.

In today's society, more and more functions are becoming communal. Shared cars, bikes and working areas prove that next generations are to become more and more open towards sharing facilities. In the future this is taken one step further by sharing the most direct and personal living areas: homes.

With the knowledge of this intensification of human lives it is vital to alter living habits. Making space by taking elements away from the existing fabric. Forcing people to question their current lifestyle and fulfill an active role in their surroundings. Together these aspects form the new sources of architecture.

One way to provoke this, is to do the contrary than what is wished to be reached. By building a wall in the middle of the street, instead of bringing them together, we separate people from their neighbours. Forms that represent certain basic aspects of human residential life – eating, working, sleeping, cooking, working, learning, playing, etc.- are extruded from the wall and filled in with the same elements it is made out of. To meet their neighbours again, people have to get active and de-montage these parts of the wall. Not only do the connections to the other side become more specific and guiding, also the elements will become furniture in the urban landscape: together people design their immediate surroundings as communal spaces.
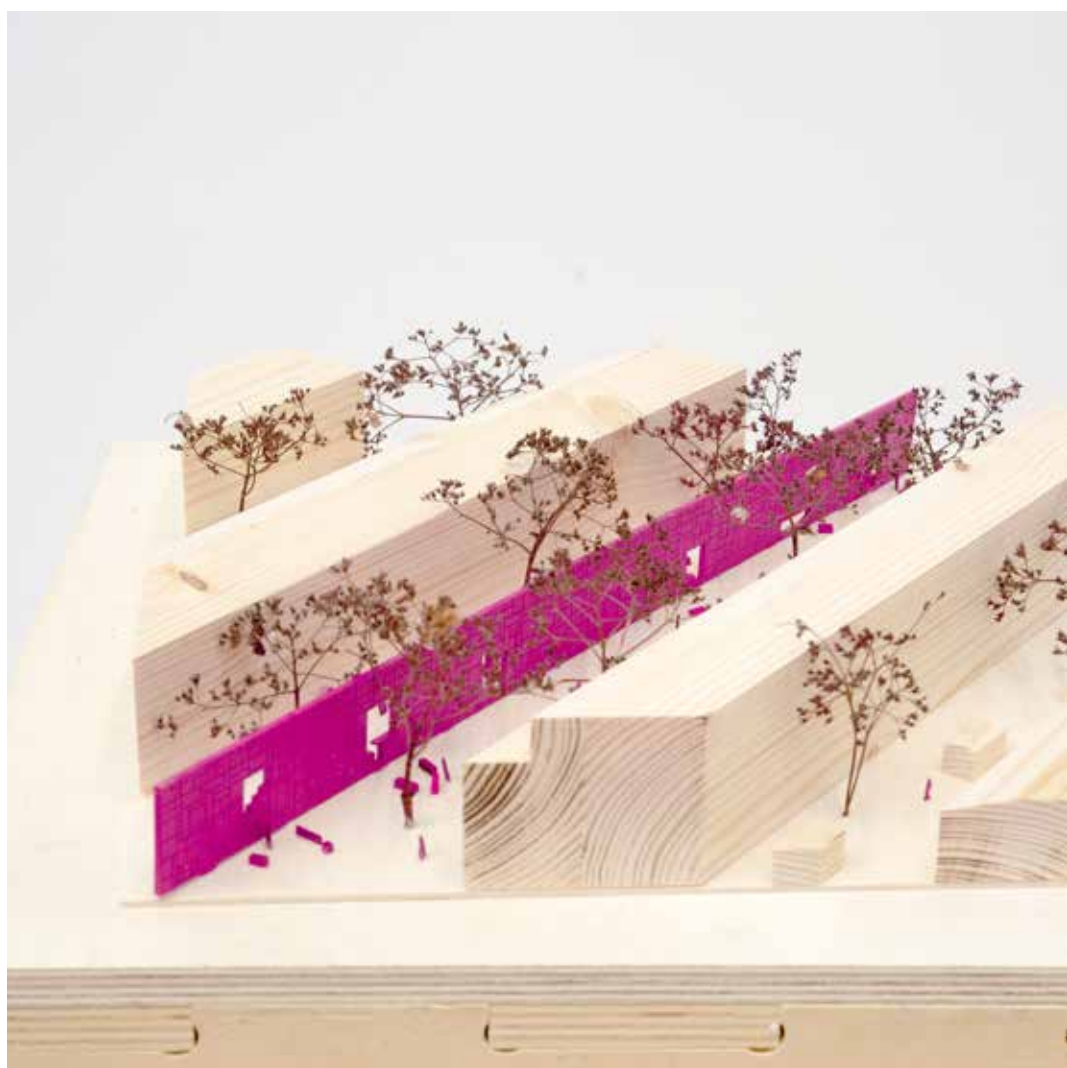
melting architecture

Group B2 - Wing Yi So / Lars van Straalen / Niki Apostolopoulou

The Force Field

The making of architecture is a complex procedure. It is a trial-and-error process before it becomes a reality. While the architect is not the only player in a project, he has to negotiate with other parties - the client, the engineer, the authority, etc. to attain his ambitions. Through all the players who are holding different concerns/ beliefs, from abstract aspects as aesthetics and style to practical/ physical aspects as legislation and life span, the architect tries to manipulate the outcome. The formation of a project becomes an interactive, dynamic and constantly changing force field.

The Invisible Hand (The Dial)

In this modern era where architecture is closely tied to the capitalised market, the environment is changing and it is as fragile as the world economy itself. The architect has to respond to internal as well as external influences. An invisible hand is controlling the resources available for the built environment, and drastic changes are unavoidable. With the turn of a dial, the architect has to adapt immediately to the new conditions, limitations and potentials. Any change of the force field is full of dramatic and unpredictable surprises.

Passive / Aggressive

It would be inaccurate to describe an architect's work as an 'end product'. The outcome reflects only a certain captured moment of the force field. Any alternative, despite being a better option in the architect's ideal, could be discarded beyond his power of influence. However, the architect is always responsible for the creation of meaningful environments for the inhabitants. He is an advocate of the user's interest, in other words, the architect acquires the role of social engineer.

Melting Architecture

At our site for the Architecture Festival in Rotterdam 2019, the facade of an 150m-long social housing complex at Weena neighbourhood is segmented and used as a white canvas for our intervention, an ensemble of facades. A real architectural space is thus being produced and can be physically experienced.

In every turn of a dial, a new facade is created and expresses the extreme outcome of the applied external and internal forces. A spectrum of design gestures is presented showing that we, architects, should be aware of how typology, materiality, structure, climate, client's demands, public realm, aesthetics, flexibility, legislation, or time can alter our design. The intervention is intentionally deconstructed and dynamically presented: some facades stand and others fall down.

Our echo chamber should be critical and awaits any possible change, inspiring us to renegotiate with different approaches and strategies. We carry our own library of references and also have to read through the site- and history-specific context of the project. This will also formulate and revise our design concept. Our proposal is a reflection upon the diverse nature of the architecture profession.
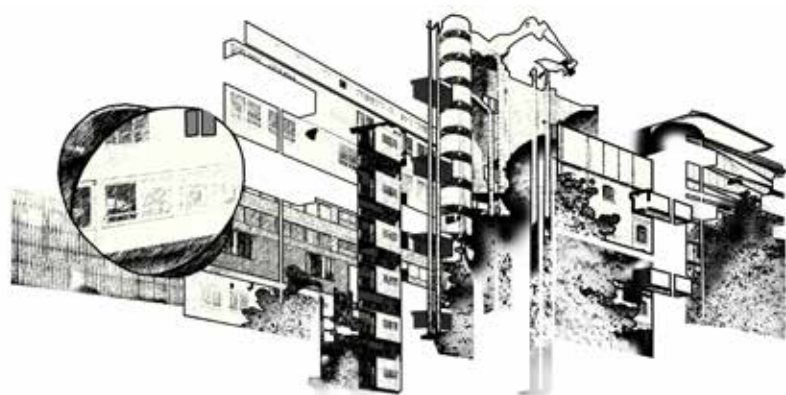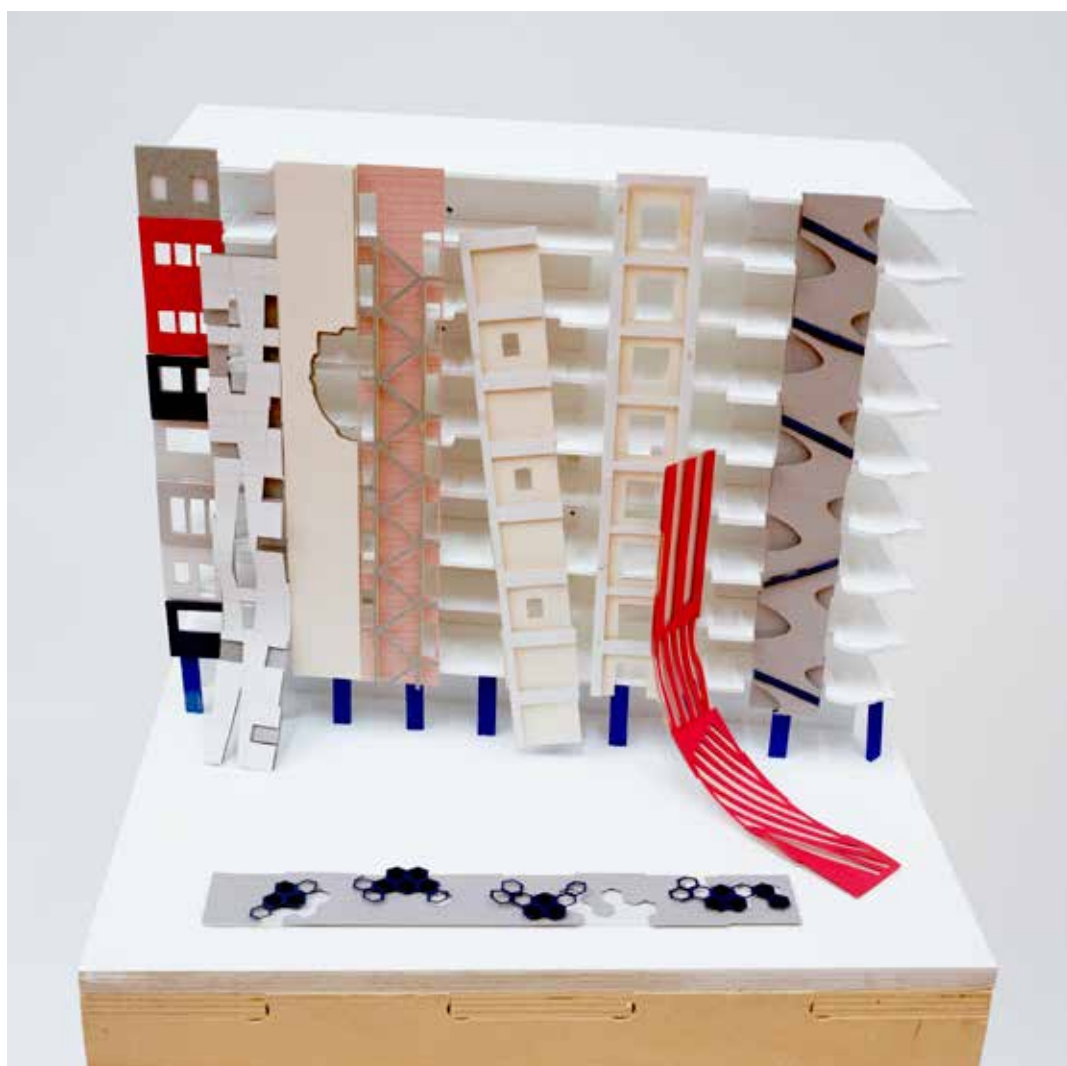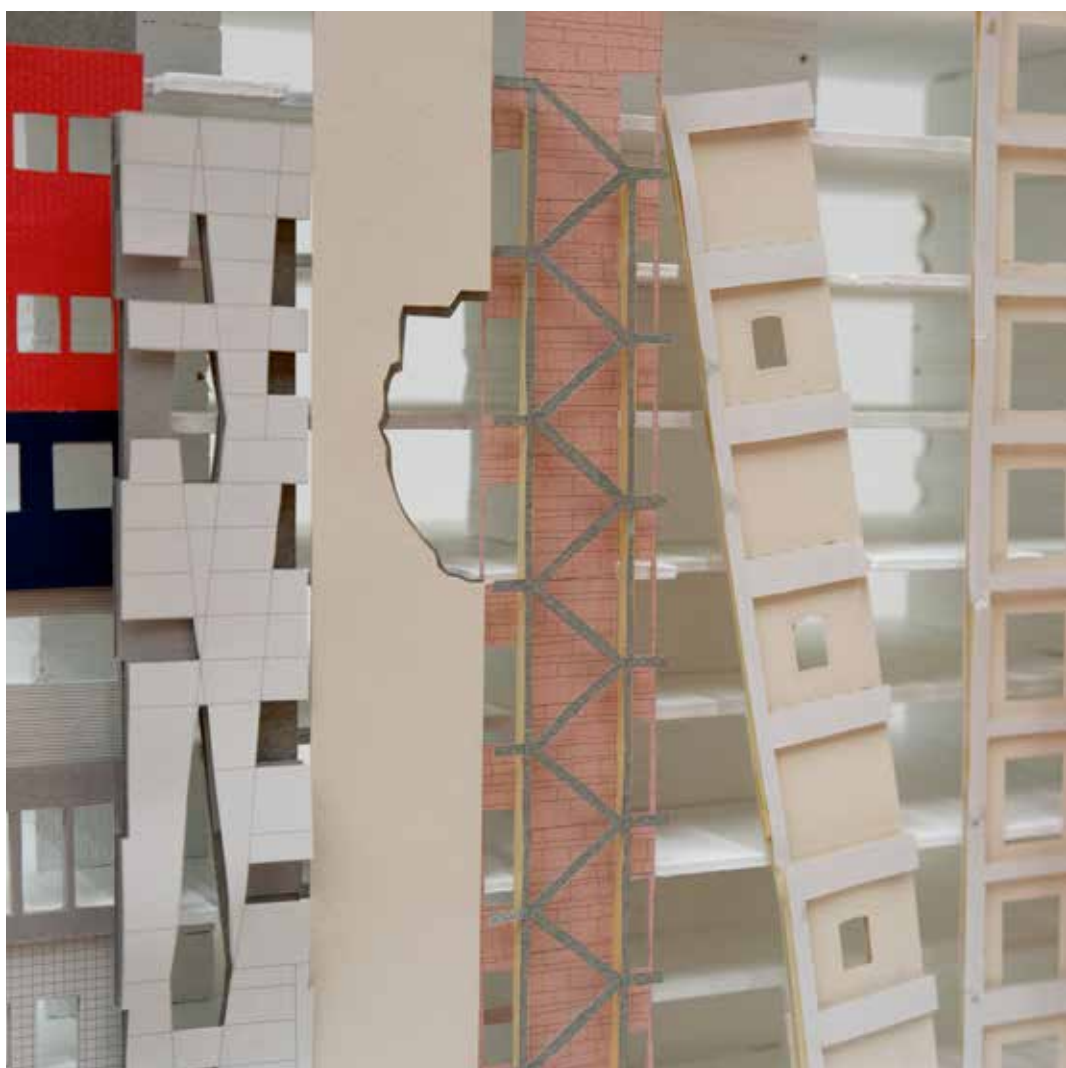
the small planet project

Group B3 - Tim Kaiser / Sze Ho Choi / Elena Khasianova

Last week a shocking report came out in Paris, about the state of biodiversity on our planet. We have to act! Rising sea levels, rapid automation rendering people redundant, ecological disasters, alarming increase of wealth concentration, developments in the field of biotechnology, to name a few challenges of the 21st century. Yes, Harari is calling for an Ecological Manhattan Project, gathering the best scientists to come up with a history changing solution? How can we as architects contribute to this agenda of saving the planet, while operating on an often small local scale?

This spagat seems to be the primary condition of architecture. How can the small contribute to the big? Complex relations seem to blur action and effect; what can I, my house or my neighbourhood do to tackle global challenges? The Small Planet Project is a virtual institute which brings together the best scientists to work on positive actions that can save the planet. As architects we are not biologists. We need to work together with the experts: sociologists, engineers, ecologists, botanic, psychologists, economists... They produce thousands of ideas: A biodiversity breeder, talking arena, sunset staircase, meat printer, rain capturer...

Our architectural object represents these positive actions compressed in a cube. The cube is placed on a mirror, because we do not only need thousands of positive actions, but endless more. On the site various small interventions providing something for the neighbourhood, while contributing to the planet. Because, greening helps, talking helps, giving helps, self-sufficiency helps...

In the end t´s not about architect, it´s about impact! Doesn't matter how small it is. More caring, more giving to your neighbourhood – more caring, more giving to your planet.

The Small Planet Project
An institute for positive actions

Sun Capturer

Green Carpet
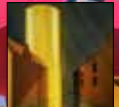
Vegtable Planter

Artificial Star

Sunset Watcher

Waterfall Maker

Bird Breeder

Talker
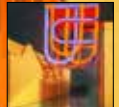
the geobacter

Group B4 - Aikebaier Erken / Anna Borisova / Liselotte Brouwer

The Geobacter. A bridge but also so much more. A place of connection, in a physical and mental way. A place of joy and happiness but also a place of confrontation.

The primary sources of the design are the social and functional aspects of the current city fabric. These sources always create a ripple effect whereas heritage only has an impact if there is any heritage to show. Not all physical context should have an impact on the next design. The main aim of architecture is to connect objects and phenomena on many different levels.

First of all architecture is meta materialistic, it regulates and defines life operations. Due to this a balance will be found between environmental sustainability and human orientation. The design was made for humans and environment care at the same time. Due to the nearby gas stations the site is not sustainable at all which is why the idea of the intervention came to mind. The function of the design stays human centered. It connects people with other people and nature. Media screens on de side of the design and hanging from the bottom the design, are meant for the passing cars and the people filling their gas tanks. They portray the decay of the environment and are meant to remind the people that even a slight change in their car usage can help. This reconnects people and their impact on the environment.

The design can be linked up to a bigger megastructure of sustainable life. Linking up to a mega structure can also be seen in the design. It is built up conform a voronoi diagram which can adapt, expand and even be linked to another public space. Almost all cells have their own pillar which makes it easy to add or take away parts. An expansion proposition is made for the future to link the design up to a megastructure of other public spaces.

The design is made as a bridge but that is only the embodiment of the suggested strategy. It looks like a bridge but it can be used for much more. The functional program of the bridge is predicted but not defined. It is linked to different universities, a hospital and even an enclosed garden. This enclosed garden is a pop up garden on one of the floors of a nearby empty building. The bridge can be used as a public space, something the old situation lacked. It can even be used to learn about sustainability. The bridge is also a lab where the current sustainability investigations are shown. For example it uses different ways to generate energy to power the LED screens. In the side of the bridge there are boxes where you can see energy generating bacteria at work and on the roofs of nearby buildings solar panels will be placed.

All in all, this design is a way of creating new life and connections in a rather dead area.
Geobacter revitalizes the urban fabric.

The Geobacter

participiti-cipapity

Group B5 - Alexander Sokolov / Inès van Rijn / Arina Perevedentseva

Is your personal echo chamber really yours? What if your dream comes true? Can other people still realise their own ones? We believe architecture is a method to solve this conflict between me and we.

A fairway for the users to come to the right solution is to integrate them into the process. We are convinced that through collaboration we can initiate solidarity. We proposed a game to stimulate creative ideas and discussion among multiple users. The game is built up with materials we could find in our environment; the trash cans, on the floor, etc. This act can be translated on the real scale where we, as architects and part of society find inspiration in the surrounding context.

How does the game work?
First step: pull a user-card. Become this person and imagine your dreams for the location.
Second step: choose an element which is important for you in the city.
Third step: pick a volume to integrate your element into the urban space.
Fourth step: place your dream and comment.
Next round: another player does the same. He or she reacts to other users interventions. Each action creates a reaction. Are wishes overlapping? Can we find solutions?
The final result represents a complex system of human relationships in the urban environment.
The role of the architect is to ask questions. How strong is our personal and professional freedom? Can we predict the result? Can we deal as an architect with the patchwork of "participiti – cipapity"?

PARTICIPITI - CIPAPITY

the ripple

Group C1 - Tri Putra Bhakti / Anneloes Tilman / Arina Karenova

This location is situated north of Rotterdam Central Station. The site contains the Schiekade - a busy street that leads to the city centre of Rotterdam - and a singel, which is a typical Dutch street typology containing water, greenery and a peaceful atmosphere.

The site contains a busy, traffic orientated street and a calm a quiet park. In the first, people only pass by to commute from A to B. In the other one is compelled to sit down, wander and relax. Within 10 meters on the site, there is a contrast happening.

The project aims to bring both places together by creating a moment of contemplation, literally in the middle of the busy road. Because the best way to see one (either calm or busy), is to be confronted by the other. Traffic then has to avoid this new volume and divert around it, invading more space within the site. This causes a ripple effect throughout the area.

The new volume is a high and golden spiral. It stands out from its surroundings due to its colour and shape. Gold has always been a mystic and wanted element, it also adds to the allure of the structure. The spiral shape creates a routing that contributes to the transition to calmness within.

This intervention will create two moments of reflection. The first is for the person who visits the volume. He or she sees a new structure in the alluring golden colour. Curiosity is awakened and takes over. The person has to cross a busy road and make an effort in order to reach the volume and be able to discover it. Within the high space there is no contact with the outside and therefore allows for a quiet moment to think. The person is alone with his/her thoughts. This while being in the middle of a busy street.

Meanwhile, the second occasion is created for the users of the crowded route. While driving through the street, they are confronted with a large volume. They have to deal with an unexpected situation and this breaks their routine. The users have to go around the structure in order to continue their way. Within making and figuring out the diversion, there is a moment to contemplate.

The project combines both calm and busy, quiet and loud, crowded and empty. Through these contrasts, one can be fully aware of the essence of the site and the surroundings.

the traffic light

Group C2 - Kamila Abbiazova / Hidde Dijkstra / Ludovica Beltrami

Our design is a small intervention on a local scale that yet can impact the city at large and make a global statement. When visiting, we understood the site as the point clearly marking the junction between the pedestrian and car realm in the city of Rotterdam. It is in fact located on Karel Doormanstraat; intersection between Wenatunnel - 60 m large car access - and the Lijnbaan which was the first pedestrian shopping street.

Working in a context as the city centre of Rotterdam, originally designed for car use, gives us the chance to rethink the infrastructural approach to cities. Thus a change in lifestyle is as important as a new urban strategy. Our intervention is simple in its design, but it can strongly impact the use of the spaces around it, addressing architecture under three agenda: economic, social and sustainable. By being placed in the centre of the street, the red structure blocks the cars from accessing the city centre. Drivers are no longer able to use the street as parking space and are directed into the parking 'Q-Park Weena'. A more enclosed public space is created thanks to this intervention. More trees are located on the two sides of Karel Doormanstraat creating a small urban pocket. The pavilion functions as a staircase as well as a tribune. It offers seating to overlook the new lively car free environment while, at the same time, it brings people to the roof of the car park. Such space that was previously not used becomes an active part of the city. The access point is part of a larger masterplan, a green promenade suspended on the roof of the buildings of Rotterdam. A new layer of the city gets activated within a new pedestrian network.

About the materiality of the project, we thought at first to collect the different materials on the site; the copper roof and the natural stone in the façade of De Doelen, the polycarbonate on the Pathé facade, the red painted metal of the cranes and the metal

plates of the floor of the Schouwburgplein. Later we simplified the form and concept of the project, concluding it would create a stronger statement in the urban context and relate better to the spirit of the people of Rotterdam.

We believe it is important to create a design reacting to the site itself even if we are to abstractedly state what we believe the future of architecture would be. The position of the architect is the traffic light of the evolving urban context and as such it is able to filter the actual needs of the city, orchestrating the people around it.

The Traffic Light
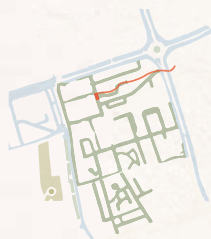
Car realm
Pedestrian realm
Proposed access to the new pedestrian pathway

View showing how the staircase stops the access to cars

View showing the connection between the two layers: the roof promenade and the new active public space

View showing how the new public space gets activated by the pavilion
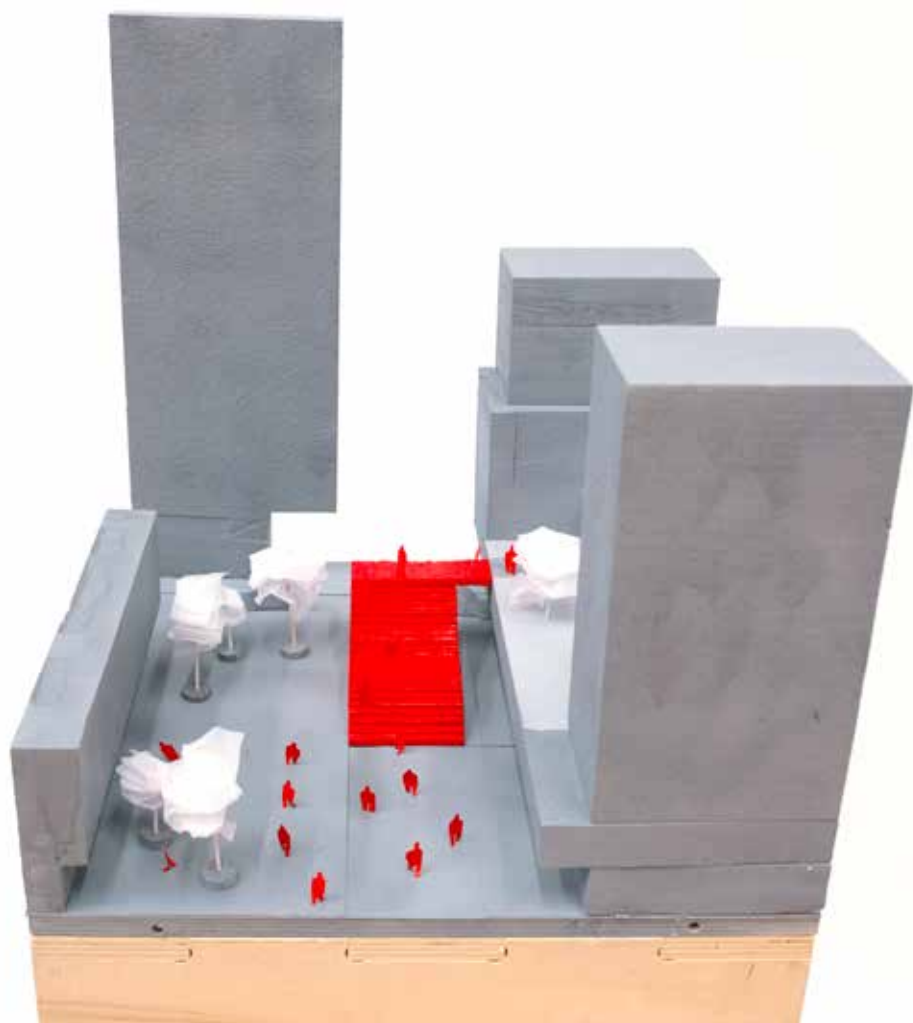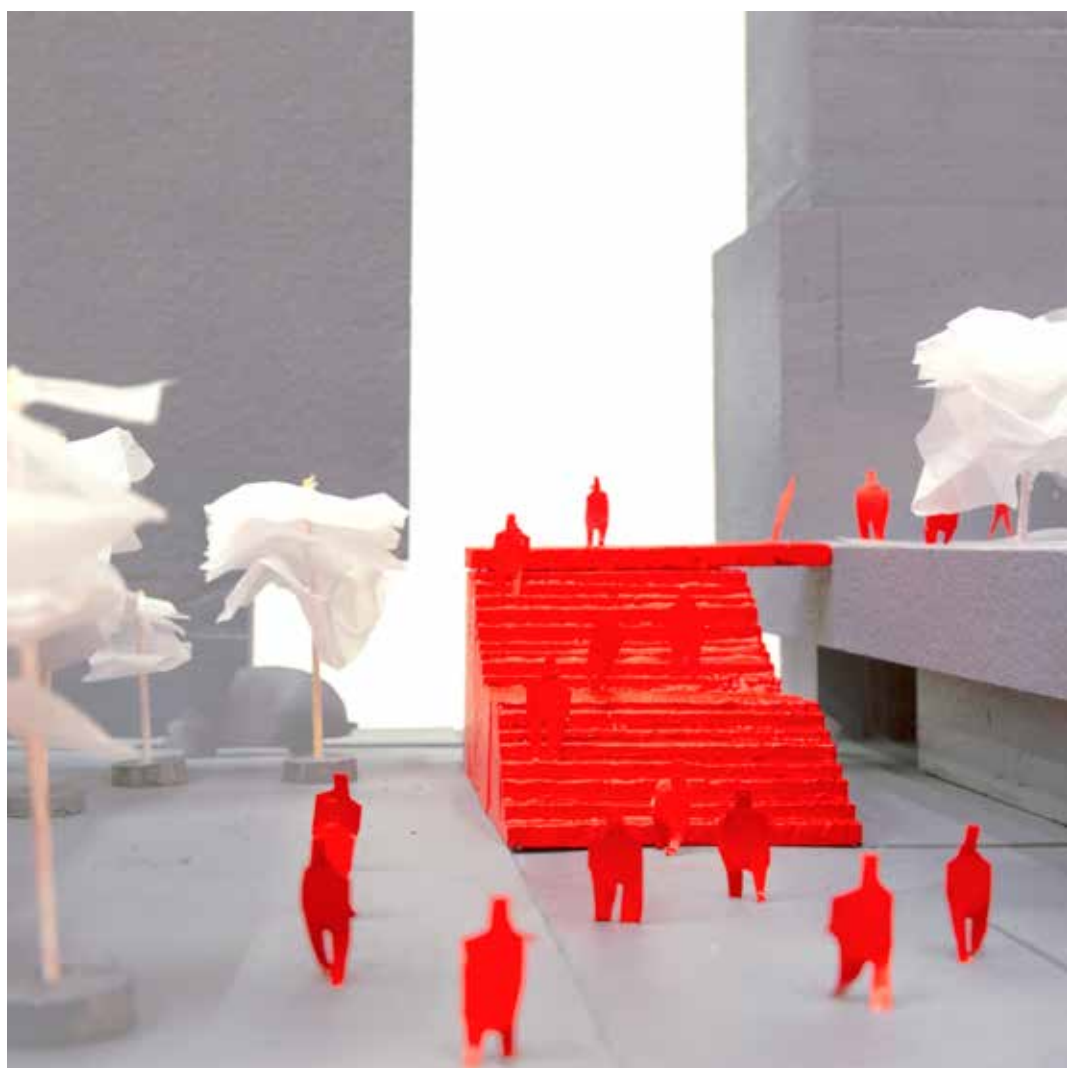
focal point: route to a different view

Group C3 - Ayla Azizova / Ho Kiu Chan / Daan Hietbrink

The crossroads

Every day is the same; mindlessly moving through Rotterdam, it's rush hour. Movement and noise all around. While crossing the busy intersection you toss your empty coffee cup in the trash. Through your headphones you play the same playlist every morning, before you clock in at 9 sharp.

Something's different today. In the middle of the intersection you see people standing in a structure. They are looking at you, but it's impossible to cross the road. You think to yourself: how can I get there? Then you notice a staircase spiraling down...

Exploration

Exploring; you walk towards the entrance of the metro that you are taking daily, numerous times. While going down the escalator, you feel a refreshing breeze. You enter the metro station, it's more quiet here. In the middle of the main hall you see the bottom tip of the structure.

Senses

Taking the leap; you walk towards the structure, while walking along it you notice an opening. While entering, you hear a loud noise echoing. You hear cars, footsteps, talking, birds, wind rushing. It's the sound of the city, louder and more clearly than you have heard it before. The noise is coming out from the openings along an inverted concrete cone in the middle of the structure. Around this cone is a staircase going up. Along your path upwards, you notice light splashing out of openings around the centre. The noise is fading bit by bit. Entering the room, the sound has completely gone, silent. Sound insulation takes up every squeak. You never heard of such deafening sound of silence. But then you feel it. The city, more clearly than ever. You take a seat on the benches along the window and you just watch the city framed.

Realization

Moments later, you notice the stairs going up. Walking upwards, the sound is bouncing back. Through small openings you are able to see the inside of the centre, which is getting wider towards the top. On top of the stairs you see that the centre is overarching. Looking into one of the openings, it becomes visible what it is now. It's a huge horn, a filter taking up the light and noise from the city, bringing it down and showing it like some kind of mirror.

When turning around you see the city, it was always there but you never took the time to notice, now you really see it; the beautiful city.

The echo chamber is within us all, your internal filter. The key to look beyond it is to be aware of your surroundings. By altering the city's movement, lights and sounds and projecting it one after the other you are able to become aware of reality again.

The different interaction with the city forces you to focus. While continuing your path, you are able to see more clearly, be aware of the city and look beyond the echo chamber.

Focal Point
Route to a different view

Sight

Silence

Light

Ayla Azizova, Chan Ho Kiu, Daan Hietbrink
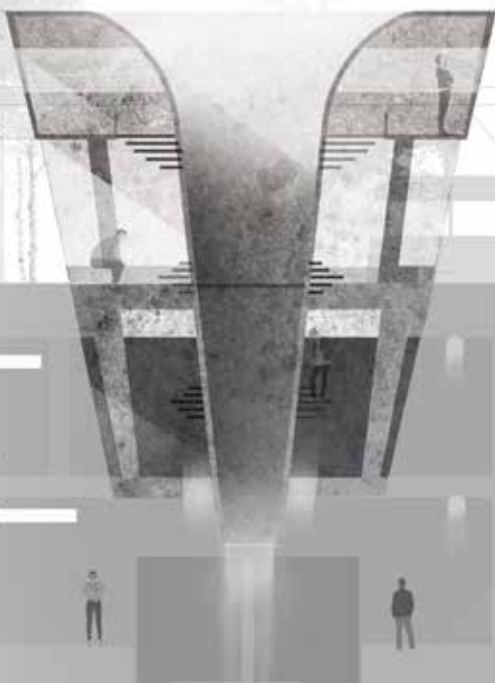
weaving a public

Group C4 - Taliya Nurutdinova / Jelmer Teunissen / Rhiannon Churchward

Halfway between an architectural object and participatory art installation, WEAVING A PUBLIC concentrates on the act of weaving as a collective social ritual. The work is not an object per se, but rather a manifestation of a collective intelligence. It forms meaning from the interactions with public space as a collective artwork, condensing individual experiences into a cumulative structure that reconfigures the existing space, invigorating it, providing opportunity for play and encounter. WEAVING A PUBLIC manoeuvres the strong architectural presence of the Kunsthal by engaging with it in a parasitic relationship and making the audience complicit, inverting the structures of power embodied by the institution and the architect, to establish a non-hierarchical relationship between building, public and installation. Shaping a condition for an alternate sense of the notion of 'public'.

WEAVING A PUBLIC is an unfinished work that instead provides a framework for activity. Its pattern language comprises elements, such as the totem, shelter, route, and stairs, that are woven into the structure or that provide its scaffolding. These are polyvalent, open to pluriform interpretations, attitudes and uses. Forming a convivial urban space that invites interaction, participation and collaboration. While centring the creation of new publics, designers, makers and others are invited to contribute to the language of patterns, blurring the lines of traditional authorship. As the shifting tapestry that builds on these patterns is assembled, with personal contributions amounting to a collective effort, voids are formed as much as the material structure. The public space diversifies, forms unpredictable niches in which a social ecology can prosper, the sewn structures providing places for gatherings, performance and artistic engagement. Its threads move outward from the site to form marked routes and fields that entangle the work with its wider environment, and that grabs ones attention. While the Kunsthal is an ambitious building with dazzling spaces, it has evolved to become mostly centred around its own internal logic and the institution that inhabits it. We see this as symptomatic of an architectural culture that canters heavily on the relationship with the client. We re-evaluate these conditions shaped by the past, reinterpreting them to find new futures. Bound by the rigid relationship with the client, architecture cannot critique or relieve the alarming contemporary situation of growing inequality, political instability and ecological collapse. Vital public culture and urban life are fundamental to deal with these realities. The position of the architects should be as one among many: they should submerge themselves in a social ecology, with a wild variety of other actors, collapsing the notion of a single client. Infusing citymaking with radical inclusivity, we invite and collaborate, co-make and participate, collectively weaving an urban fabric in search of an experimental public urban culture. WEAVING A PUBLIC attempts to take this position, uses it as an approach and expresses it through its socio-spatial poetry.
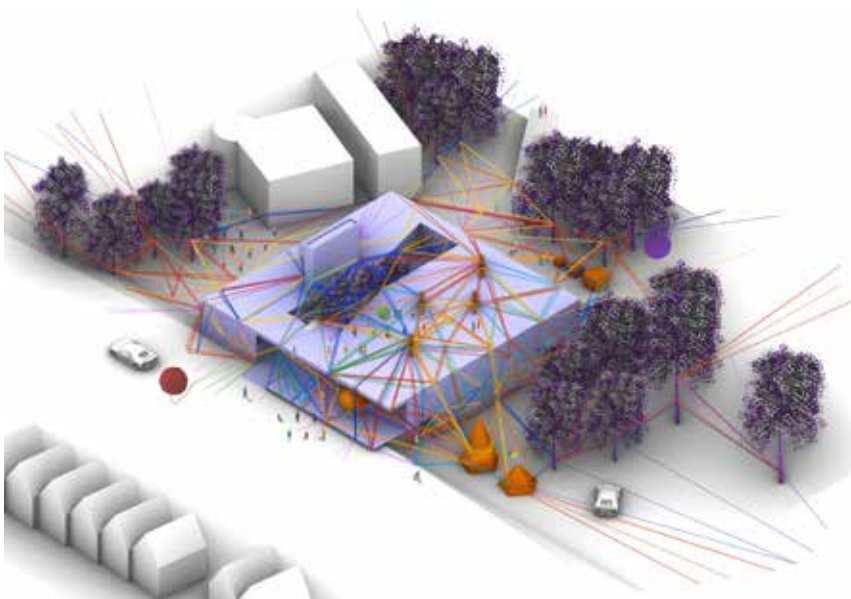
Patterns

Axonometry

Section
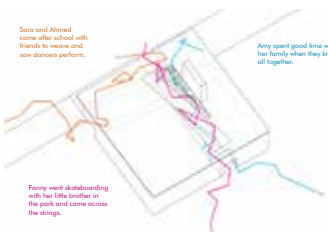
Sara and Ahmed come after school with friends to weave and saw dancers perform.

Amy spent good time with her family when they knit all together.

Fanny went skateboarding with her little brother in the park and came across the strings.

Diagram
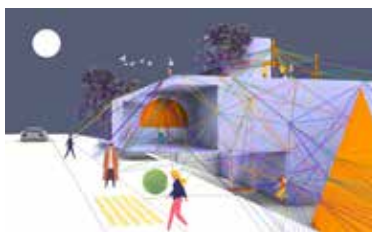
Perspectives

un-boxing

Group C5 - Nuerxiati Atawula / Pinelopi Gardika

Architecture is temporary
Architecture is social commitment
Architecture can be sustainable

We position ourselves within an exceptional context.
Our very special lot in at the southeast corner of Het park. Intersection between local land and transnational waters. Intersection between the urban tissue and the view to the port. Intersection between the park and the river

Rotterdam, Netherlands.
The largest port in Europe and the 4th largest port in the world. The most multicultural city on the Netherlands.

"The architecture city"
The city that rose from its ashes. A city in continuous dialogue with the water

Europe in 2019
Where social awareness around environmental crucial situation is rising but at the same time consumerism is prominent. The production of waste seems unstoppable and the gap between west and east expands continuously. Architecture can respond to this context by being sensitive, modest, energetic.

We choose to reuse the waste of the port to create a leisure space by the riverfront and invite the locals to interact with each other and with the charming surroundings.   We encourage the contact with the water, we step out from our safe zone, we try alternative views.

Useless containers from the port will be transferred to the site and create a platform on the water. Metallic tubes and other kinds of waste will act as supporters for the floating of the platform. The infrastructure enables multiple configurations, the form depends upon the available containers and the need for new spaces. The spatial object is an ensemble of possibilities, not a configured plan. Most of all, offers the possibility of leisure in harmony with the water element and in dialogue with the port.

We trigger the container as the means of importing goods to Europe, one more tool in the continuous process of widening the gap with the exporting countries, one more invisible counterpart in the consumerism industry.

We decided to give it a new life. To open the box, trace its content, communicate its message, act. We claim the right and the duty to know the stories those boxes hide inside. The spaces created by the assemblage of containers will provide space for multiple uses. The containers are expected to communicate the story of their trip to Rotterdam with exhibitions and lecture spaces. To contribute to the goal for a broader education by providing space for library, seminars, workshops. To facilitate a view to the industrial view of the Rotterdam skyline. We believe in change that can come with tentative actions and modest gestures. We are enchanted by the numerous possibilities that open up.

un - boxing

organize

facilities

site
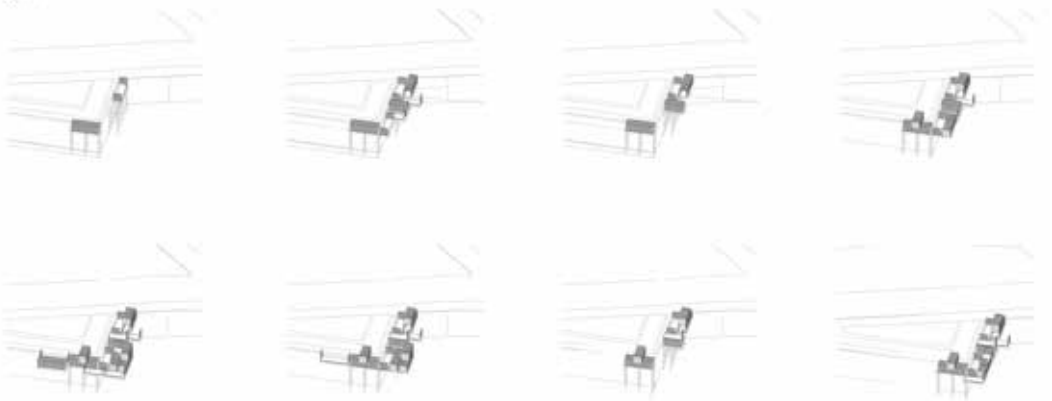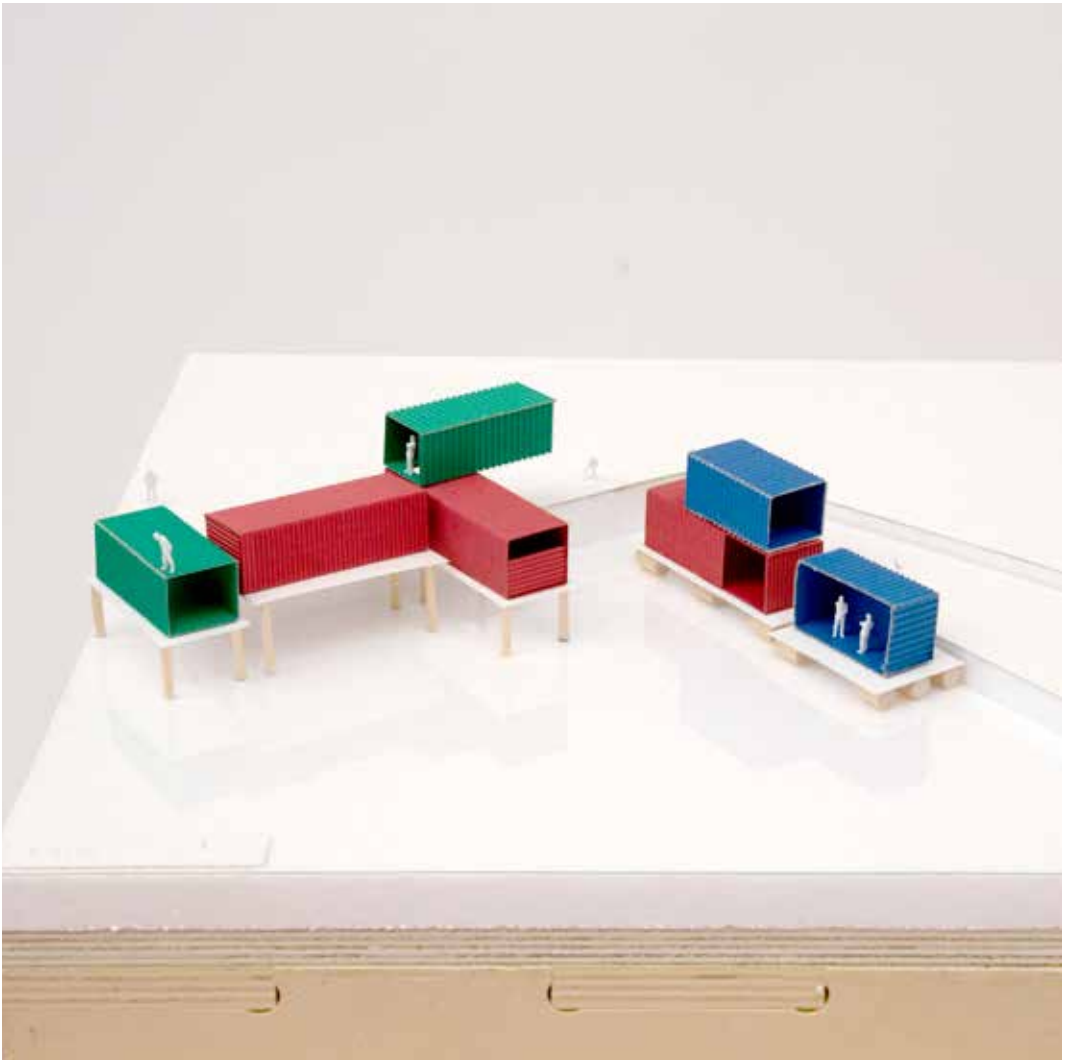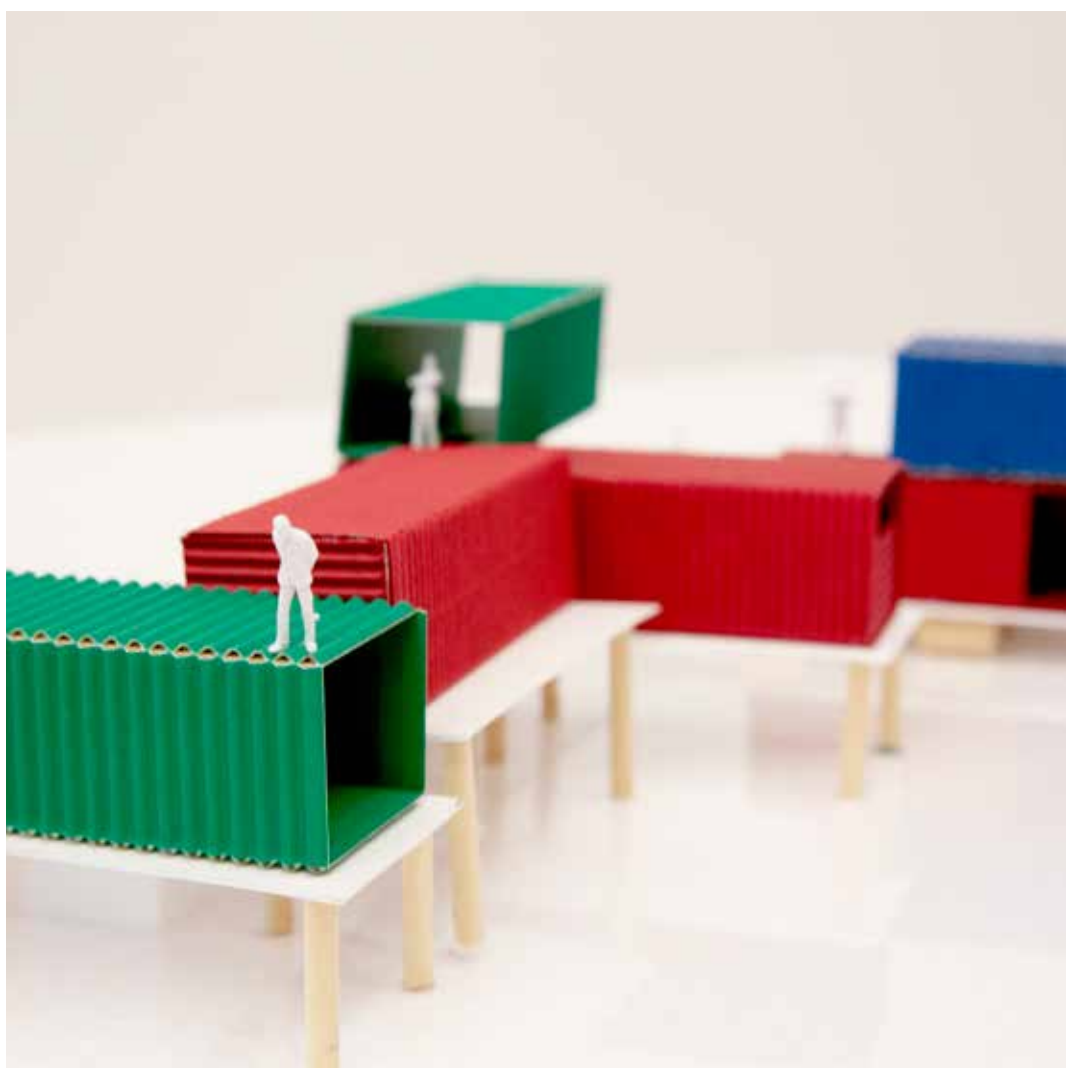
a dialogue

Group D1 - Ema Krakovska / Ivan Chi Fung Tam / Sarah Meijer

Q: "What do you think about our era?"

A: "Too confined and fragmented."

Q: "How so?"

A: "Nowadays beauty is defined by a short visual impact rather than an experience. This is the result of our exponentially fastening pace of society. Small, meaningful encounters are being overlooked or don't even happen anymore..."

Q: "How can architecture react to this phenomenon?"

A: "Stories and Storytellers. The role of architecture is to enable these interactions to happen and be felt by the executors of these actions. Awareness of small, seemingly insignificant actions is a first step to realization and appreciation of the everyday life which is commonly mistaken for 'routine'. "

Q: "But don't you feel like people aren't necessarily looking for small encounters? Don't they prefer global scale impacts as opposed to local contributions?"

A: "Maybe we should approach the paradox of global versus local and perceive it as universal and unique. These terms imply that they can coexist and balance each other out instead of being extreme oppositions. Global and local aren't as inherent as universal and unique. Also, modern-day people are too purpose-orientated without realizing their surroundings and the vast amount of interesting things happening close to them. These happenings are something of great value which is being overseen as it is subconscious."

Q: "How is 'time' related to these encounters?"

A: "Timeless as well as momentary. Because it is an act of intuition we cannot relate it to a specific point in time, it goes beyond any time-frame. However, every encounter is initiated at a certain moment in time, which also makes it momentary. It doesn't have to be one way or the other."

Q: "What is the relationship between the architect and the user?"

A: "Architects create potential sceneries for people to become an audience as well as performers. Architecture is a stage."

Q: "Could you use some words to sum up your project?"

A: "Humble, Special and Mutual."

upside down

Group D2 - Minja Radenkovic / Owen Zhang / Reza Ahsan

Rotterdam is a city of big gestures full of architectural magnets drawing international architecture lovers to the city. It is also rough and unpolished, so it is necessary to cherish its curiosities.

As a result of the bombardment, very few historic buildings remain in the centre of Rotterdam. The Sint-Laurenskerk is one of the few remnants of the medieval city. After the bombing, the image of the heavily damaged church and the reconstruction works that followed became a symbol of all that the city and its people had endured. Today, the medieval Laurenskerk cuts a striking profile amid the bold modernity of the city's present-day architecture. Although it might be unclear, uncomfortable and sometimes painful, the friction between old and new takes us somewhere further than we could have without it.

The underlying goal is to raise awareness for the people living there of the historical values by making the new roof upside down. That itself could be an attraction - seeing the tower of the church under construction. All the citizens of Rotterdam would help construct the tower which would be an exciting thing to do - they could actually add a brick or a plank. It could be a communal building project accomplished through crowdfunding. Together we build it and this togetherness addresses inclusivity. It usually takes years or decades, or even centuries for a church to be built. It is essentially the ongoing manifestation of an architectural vision.

Our approach is defined by rigorous research, extensive engagement, elegant strategy and memorable experiences that build shared value. This experience could be used in other places, as if its a new movement. Instead of being interested in building the new, we are interested in building events for the public; architecture of affordances, designing potentials and activators rather than mere enclosures. Work is informed by history and memory whilst being contemporary and forward thinking.

The idea of context seeks to understand the deeper cultural situation of a project, into which an appropriate response is woven. There's ambition towards creating new communities, towards continuity of the history and creation of the future.
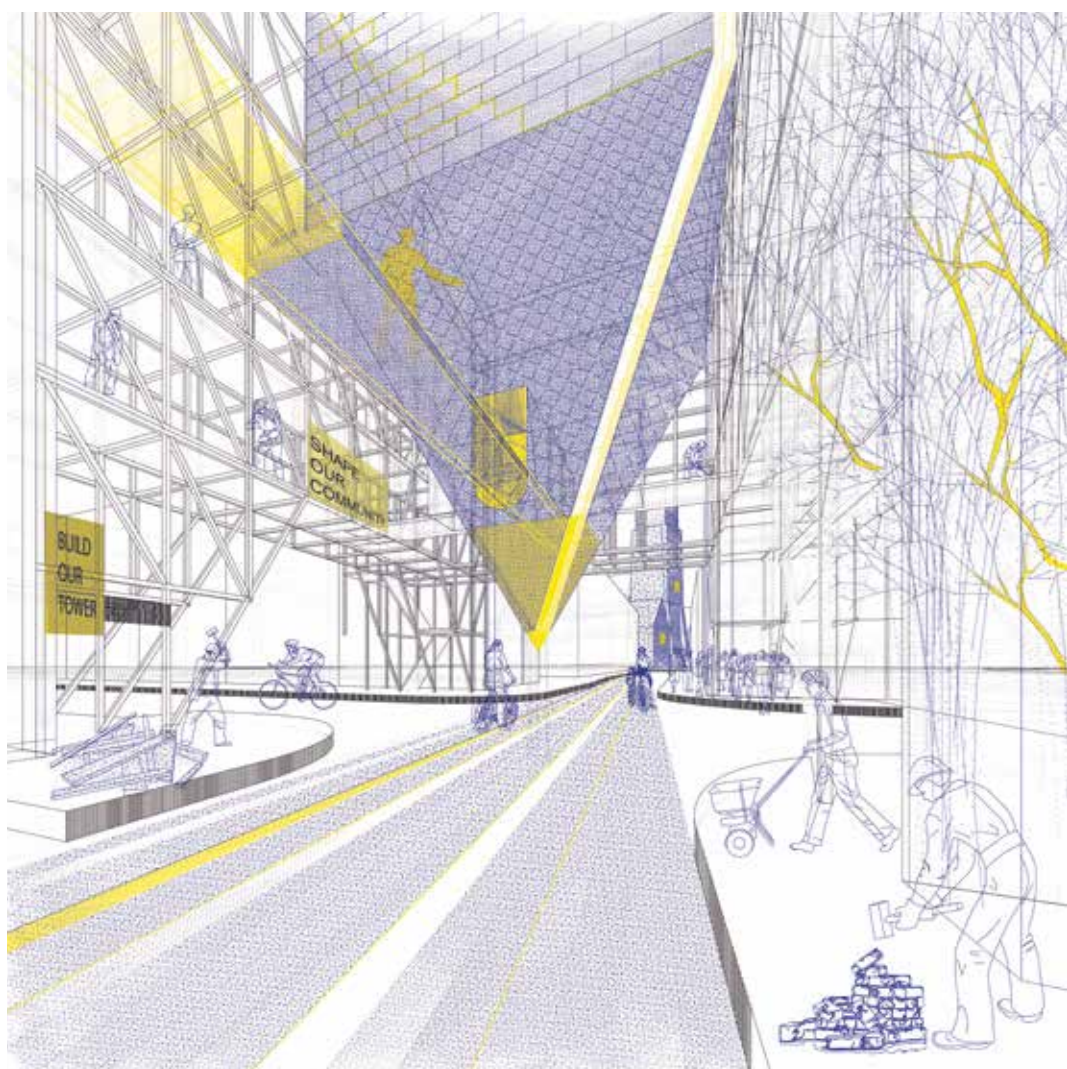
sinking

Group D3 - Muhammad Suleman Khan / Fredy Fortich / Cosku Özdemirci

Rotterdam is a city built in and around water, water becomes the blank canvas to which we paint a picture as architects. Understanding that a large portion of the city is currently sitting under sea level, Sinking takes a literal and critical position in this. Sinking is a pavilion that sits in the water at the local Rotterdam Pier. The goal of this piece of architecture is to integrate into the existing fabric of the site at the connection pathway, while also intervening in a way to create a spot of reflection for the users. Sinking aims to reignite the flame of urgency in relation to the ecological footprint we as a species cause on our planet. By playing with the local context of the Netherlands and the role water plays in this context we can begin to tie together the architecture with the heritage of the place.

Sinking is comprised of two major architectural elements, the two insulating walls and a sinking platform. The architecture manipulates the users' echo chamber in order to make a positive change. As the users approach the site, they are invited and pulled into the pavilion through the curvilinear forms of the walls. Once the user enters the pavilion and takes his/her first step onto the main platform, the base begins to sink and water is exposed into the surrounding area. This provocative act of isolating the user on a metaphorical island is the powerful moment we hope causes a sense of reflection in the users mind. They are subconsciously reminded of the impact they, as humans, have on the environment around them. The larger the number of users the greater the drop in the base and the more the urgency is expressed. When the platform sinks and the user is isolated, the panel walls on the exterior also activate; the second skin closes off views to the outside. This function begins to affect the other sensory systems of the user, creating a more immersive experience and a greater impact. The dynamic wall system also acts as a signal for the bystanders on the exterior, creating a

visual disturbance in the context. This pavilion does not try to disturb the site but it tries to add value to it by providing a place for contemplation and exclusion along the current path of travel.

Sinking is reacting to the over-saturation of information of our era, by making a universal statement along with a site specific one. The architecture understands that it will be seen across the world and that there is a responsibility locally as well as globally.

Above all, Sinking, as a piece of architecture, aims to convey a message to the world, like all architecture should do. We take a stance while integrating it in the local context and raise global awareness. Heritage on the site is maintained while introducing a contemporary solution to activate the site. A statement is delivered to the users on the site in a provocative manner.

Isolation
Visual barrier

Suspition
Instable platform

Urgency
Sinking

SINKING
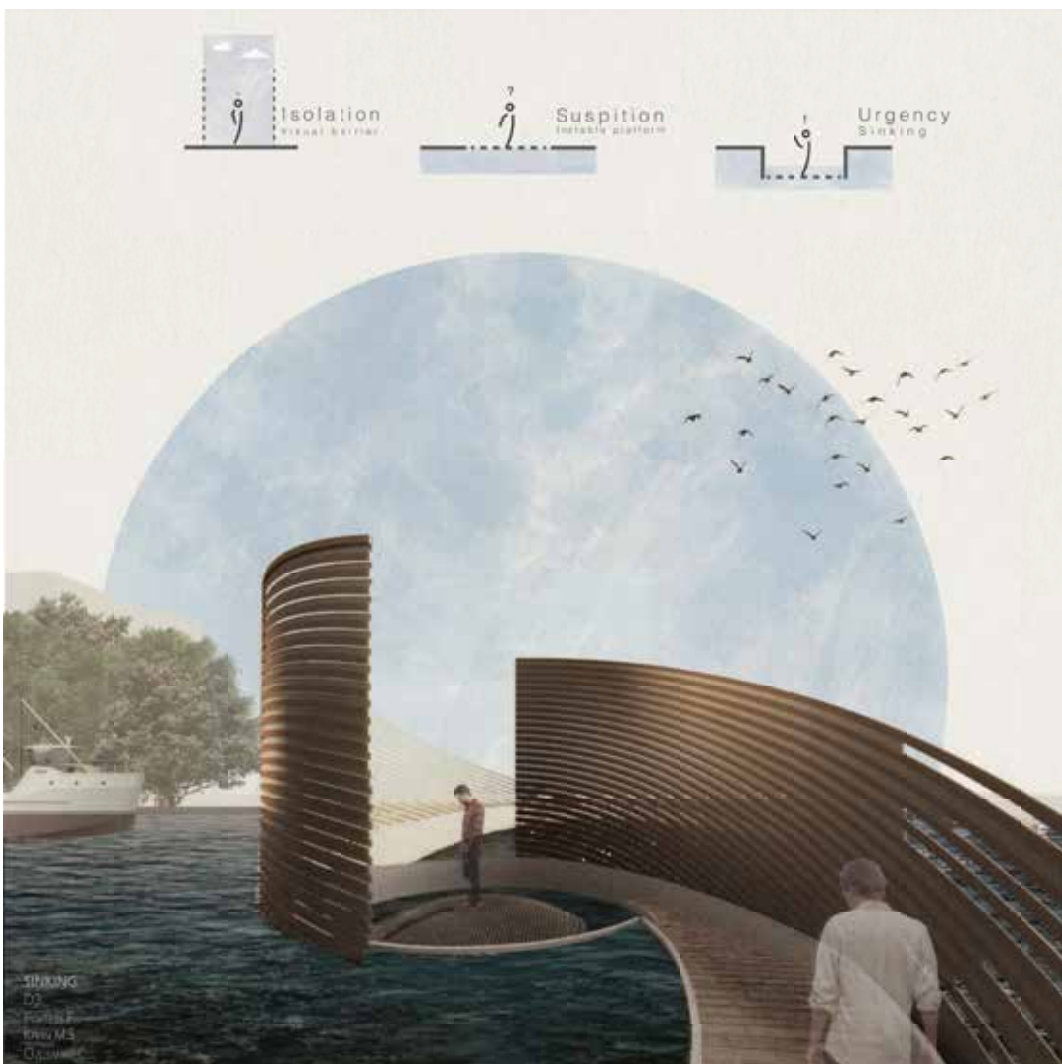
the serendipitier

Group D4 - Dewinta Asyiva Sidiq / Florian Heinz / Francesco Mainetti

It seems apparent that the architecture society nowadays is divided among two classes of professionals: the Sculptors and the Sensorials. The Sculptors are often the most notorious and popular in the profession and they are specialised in the craftsmanship of beautiful architectural objects. Such creations usually employ the facade as the main means of expression and, more often than not, they express themselves vertically, in a desperate cry for attention. The Sensorial architects, on the other hand, are more interested in the experiential qualities of the built environment. These hopeless romantics strive for spaces that can uplift and inspire: their favourite tools are shadows, light and thresholds, and they usually prefer horizontal forms, for they can better relate to the human scale. In such a digitalised world it happens that the Sculptors have a much better chance to see their work draw attention and fame, for it is much better expressed through the digital media than the works of the Sensorial architects.

As a result, our cities are becoming laden with objects and sculptures. Our intention is to intervene in such objects with add-ons of pure sensorial architectures. Therefore, our proposal is composed of a volume that whirls around the structure of the Erasmus bridge, on the northern bank of the Maas. Cladded in refractive glass, the pipe-shaped structure mirrors a distorted image of its context, raising a subtle awareness of its presence amongst the most attentive neighbours. The entrance is strategically located so that it can be seen from the most photogenic spot of the site. Here, thousands of people every year conclude their pilgrimage from Rotterdam Central station to the feet of the Erasmus bridge, just for then turning around and walk back to the city.

The Serendipitier aims to sparkle the curiosity of visitors as well as locals, who will consequently feel attracted to venture inside the structure. Here,

they will find a succession of chambers designed to stimulate the senses, exploiting the conditions of the site as a source. The first room is an antechamber and it is meant to annihilate the perception of space and time in order to better prepare the users. The second room is the stage for an installation of Turrellian light projections generated by filtered undirected sun-rays. In the wind room, a light breeze or a strong gust of wind can be felt, according to the time of the year, coming through the perforated walls. In the sound room, the user will find oneself in a holiday setting with sandy shores and beach balls. Here the sound of the river Maas, coming through the vents, will cradle those users that decide to rest in one of the deckchairs. The next room is characterised by a more direct contact with the site, here openings are carved out in order to offer new views of the Maas. The last sensorial room is aimed at water, which runs through the interior walls and finally falls into the river, which is now directly visible by the visitors, who are forced to walk onto a small bridge, having the floor disappeared.

At the end of this sensorial journey, the users will finally find themselves inside what we like to call a touristic telephonic booth. Here they will be given the opportunity to video call other people around the world that have experienced other Serendipietiers. Our ambition is to intervene on multiple landmarks around the globe and, finally, to connect the users. This way, those that visited the Serendipiter in Bangkok, for instance, at the end of the journey can share their story with those who have been in another Serendipitier in New York, London, Rotterdam, et cetera... Eventually, the visitors will be released in front of the Maas, full of what they have just experienced and conscious of a new way to perceive their surroundings. But most importantly, they will be reminded that the best stories of urban life are virtually impossible to synthesise in a picture, for they require the engagement of all senses.
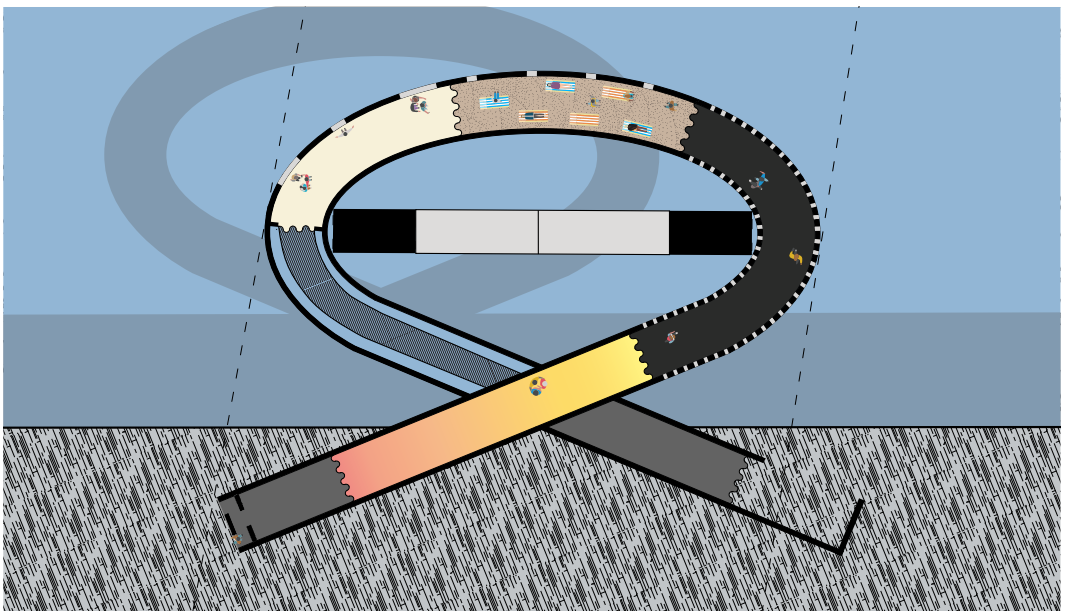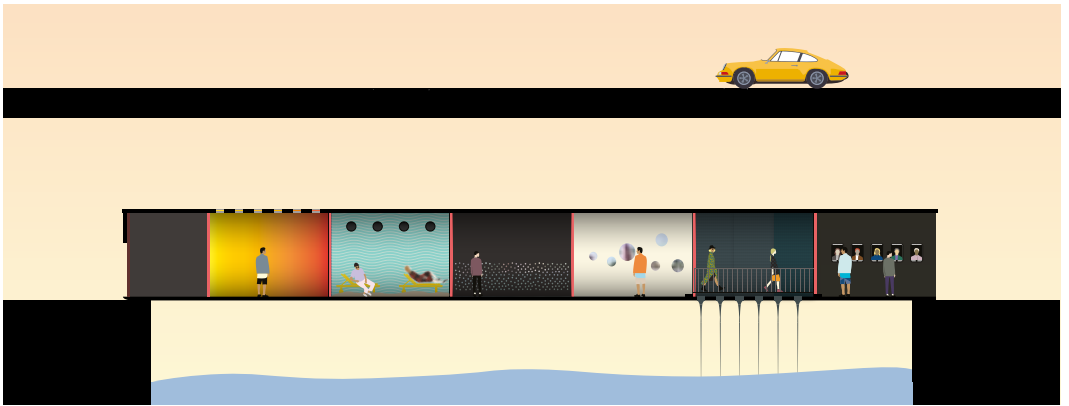
memories of the future

Group D5 - Friso van Dijk / Laudza Az Zahra / Tillman Pospischil

The Kop van Zuid, located on the southern side of the Maas near the Erasmusbrug, has a rich naval history based on many different cultures. It used to be the place where people would head off to emigrate all over the world in the 18th and 19th century. Millions of people's lives were about to change exactly in this place. It used to be a place of new beginnings. Once it was part of the harbour of Rotterdam, which evolved to be one of the biggest in the world, bringing wealth to Europe and the Netherlands. And once it was destroyed in the horrors of the World War, after which it was a place the Rotterdammers used to avoid.
This emptiness was recognized, potential was noted and lead to the development of a masterplan. Norman Foster gave the whole Kop van Zuid a new shape in the nineties by planning a modernist grid in which the northern part should be developed as housing whereas the southern part, where our site is, was developed as a high rise, Northern American influenced part of the city. All the high rises were being named after countries and regions to which Rotterdam used to have economic relations. The most part of the existing building structure was destroyed except the nowadays still called "Hotel New York", which was recognized as an important building because of its past as an administration office for the harbour and its romantic appearance.

Our site is located right beside it. While having a walk, strolling around at this undefined place, dominated by randomly spread flowerbeds, one can relieve stress by turning southwards with stroking the eye over the Maas and the modern harbour in the very southwest. When we turn northwards, one is literally overwhelmed by the masses of glass and concrete, being confronted with the wet dream of modernist architects. As architects, we felt the spirit of the site and recognized the potential it has for a pavilion, expressing the paradox a planner has when acting on site, being confronted with past, present and future, because buildings are built to last, today a bit less than in the past. Our design uses the existing grid to form its attitude towards the Genius Loci as well as to combine its structure out of translucent polycarbonate with the typology of the Hortus Conclusus, the secret garden. With that we aim to create a certain shelter for

the user - a businessman, inhabitant or tourist - as well as to use what is already there. Spices, trees, vegetables, plants and fruits from all over the world are growing inside this secret garden, which is nearly completely enclosed, except of one opening at every site of the building. These openings and the trees showing their crowns, create curiosity when looking into the direction of the pavilion, a curiosity the sailors and tradesmen of Rotterdam have had for hundreds of years. We see curiosity as the main reason for communication. To quote Cedric Price:

" I think communication might be the only reason for architecture (...) Maybe that's the point."

When entering our Hortus Conclusus, which is slightly floating above the ground, the user is forced to play with the building and experience it. And to find a way back out he might have to communicate with others.
Communicating our design, we are aware of using a contemporary language. The ''style'' points on the evolving "Instagrammability" of architecture nowadays. We regard networks, which are literally pure communication, as a main forming factor for architecture nowadays. It is essential for us to break out of this echo chamber of images to deal with the challenges society is confronted with, named climate crisis, the growth of cities, digitalization and globalization. We can't get lost in form. We must be aware of the tools we use. Digital tools can help but they are not the enlightenment. Digital tools and science allows ourselves to be able to use nature, which has been solving problems for millions of years. Natural sciences and its integration in architecture is strongly important. We regard it as a main point to solve modern societies problems. It is scientifically proven that plants can clean air and are the best way of nutrition for a growing society.

With our design we aim to express our attitude towards these topics, mainly pointing out that the architect has to live with contradiction, which we rather see as a malleable good than a necessary evil. The paradox must truly be the catalyst of an architects daily work.
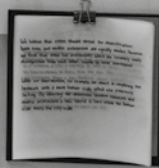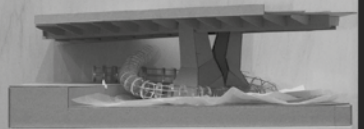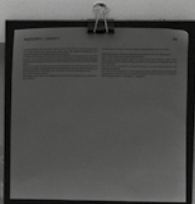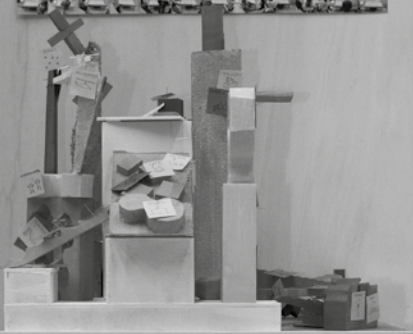
MEMORIES OF THE FUTURE

an architectural Manifesto for a basic ambition in an epoch full of gestures, treating memories as a turning factor.

by Friso van Dijk, Till Popolechi and Landra At-Zahra
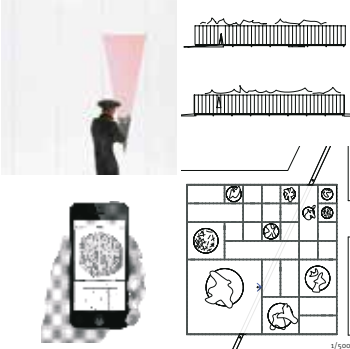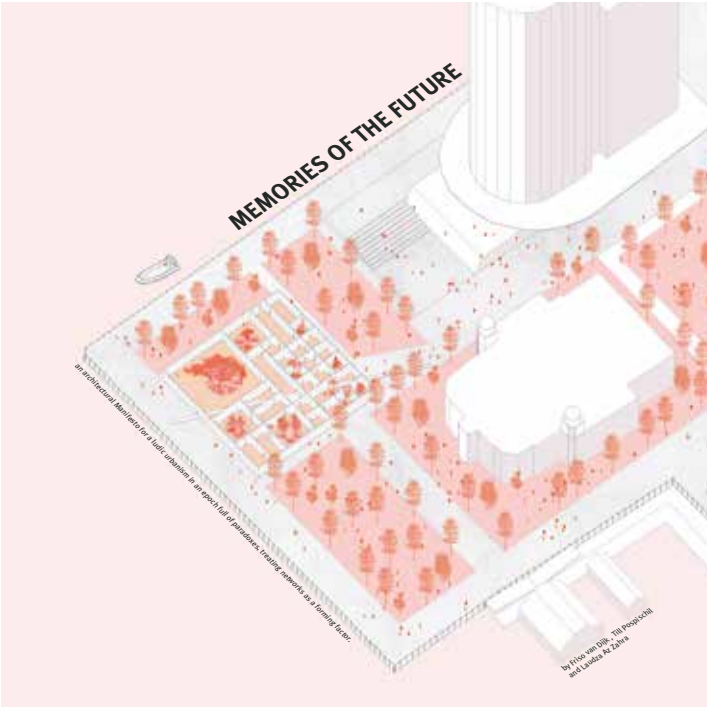
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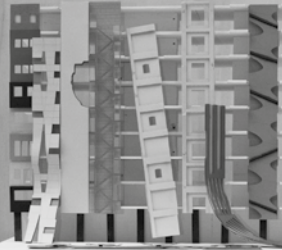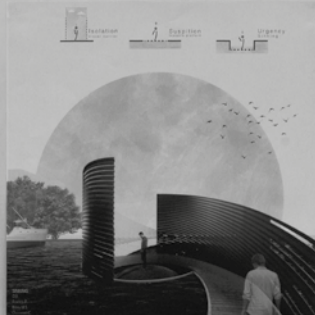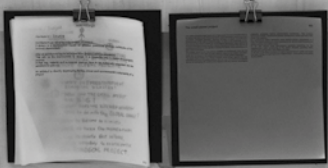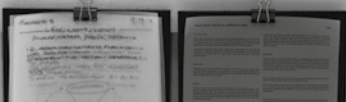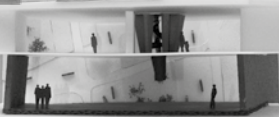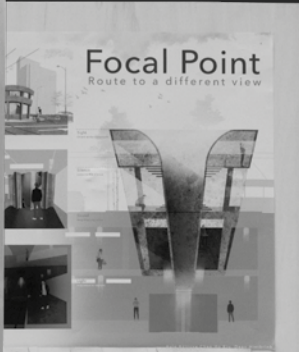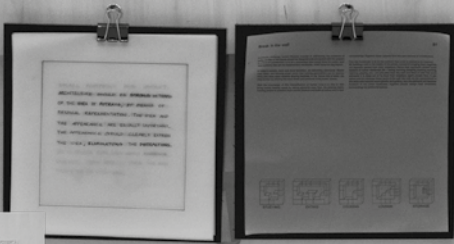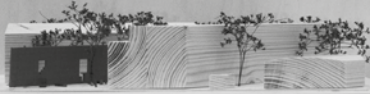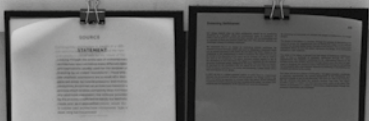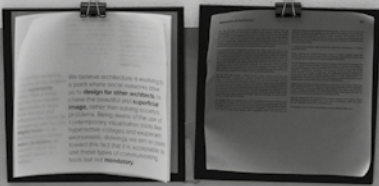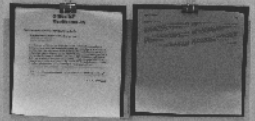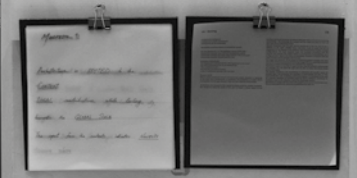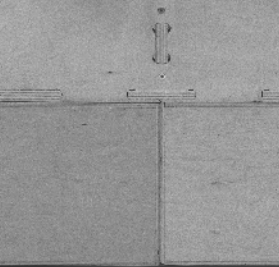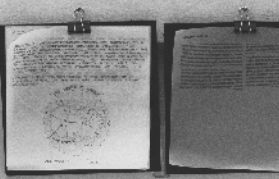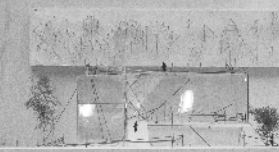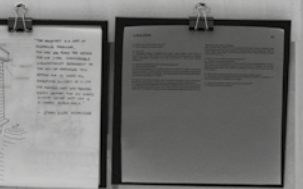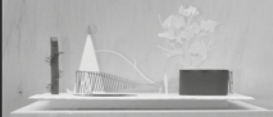
The Small Planet Project
An institute for positive action

ARCHITECTURAL ACUPUNCTURE

Focal Point
Route to a different view
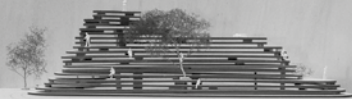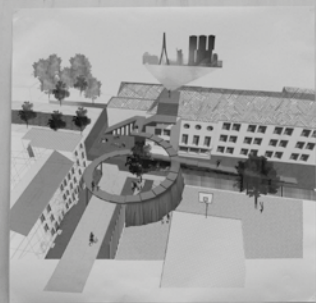
epilogue

jury
by Mark Pimlott

Four jurors––Federica Sofia Zambeletti, Alessandra Covini, Machiel van Dorst, Mark Pimlott––were gathered together by the Indesem team to study an array of proposals by teams of students of architecture from all over the world. Each group of three students, from all parts of the world, considered a specific location in Rotterdam, whose coordinates were set out on the basis of a giant grid. By design, the coordinates of that grid yielded a series of genuine places of real interest. The sources of interest were varied: some might be considered architecturally scenographic, others of profound social import, others still demonstrating the vagaries of the city's form and organisation. Within each of these sites, the student teams devised ways of looking at and appraising them, developing ways of communicating with their buildings, their occupants, their infrastructures. The approaches for each of these sites varied in their ambitions, scales and paradigms, but all were marked by a desire to make the built environment in each particular location visible as a construct to those affected by it, and available to these same people as something for their own use. There seemed to be a widespread desire to see, redeem and rescue the locations and their social workings, which was a central aspect of the manifestos that each group were asked to write. We thought it striking that there was so much conviction and optimism in students' approaches to these places, embodied both in the words they used and the highly varied means they used to make their proposals.

These proposals ranged from the imaginings of new 'environments' that commanded existing structures, to the construction of critical 'machines' that promised change according to citizens' wills, to the making of new infrastructures and monuments for people, consciousness and social exchange, to the setting aside of pavilions and enclaves for isolation and inward reflection, to the setting of urban-scaled furniture that encouraged social contact, to the mounting of large-scale installations––in the manner of art installations––that brought the banal details of local circumstances into meaningful focus. Those interventions that essentially drew attention to the facts and opportunities within specific circumstances––regardless of their intrinsic 'qualities'–– struck us as particularly powerful. The implication of these proposals was that through new points of view, outlooks and perspectives, the mystery of the everyday might reveal itself as a fiction whose constituent elements could be creatively reinterpreted, interfered with, rearranged and renewed for use in the present. One particular project, an elaborate installation woven through the structures and spaces of OMA's Kunsthal, addressed this with considerable ambition. Visitors to the Kunsthal would be led by thin lines of material, stretched taut, to see the predetermined set of relations within the building itself (a constructed manifesto of Koolhaas's Manhattanism) and with everything that surrounded it: the conditions of its visibility. In this sense, it was a neutral device, revealing aspects of constructed reality as constructs. Its optimism lay within the agency it gave those who would 'use' it. This is not the only project that prioritised the agency of people within the conditions of the city, but it is one that suggested, perhaps most strongly, that those conditions could just as easily be seen as fictions to be unravelled and reconfigured into other fictions.

board
By Renske de Meijer and Guusje Enneking

With a growing population and globally emerging ecological and social challenges, the way we design our buildings and cities might be more important than ever. These challenges made us question our role as designers of the built environment. To be able to (re)define this role, breaking out of your status quo can be helpful. To us, this is exactly what INDESEM represents. INDESEM looks beyond the average curriculum, making students leave the safe place and known routines of their own faculty and submerging them in a free and completely different environment to zoom out and reflect on their daily routines.

INDESEM 2019 tried to look Beyond the Echo Chamber by inviting a great variety of speakers, all bringing their own, different, sometimes conflicting, approaches to the sub themes scope, subject, source and statement. Looking back on the week, this diversity of lectures caused interesting discussions among the students and tutors as well as ourselves. The weeklong workshop resulted in 20 unique proposals. We were amazed by the results and all the work they produced in this short amount of time. The winning group provided a framework for the collective activity of weaving around OMA's Kunsthal in Rotterdam. Other projects ranged from a design hiding under the Erasmus bridge challenging iconic sculptural architecture by reintroducing sensorial architecture, to a wall separating and at the same time bringing together neighbours and from deconstructed melting facade panels, to a design brought together by all participating students through a game.

We tried to challenge the participating students by asking them to write a daily manifesto, per sub theme. This stimulated them to think, discuss, make decisions and to stay focused in a diverse group, with a limited amount of time. We hope to have offered them the environment, that inspired them, if at least for this week, to go beyond their echo chambers.

contributors

Board

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Thomas Ponds
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Anca Ioana Ionescu
Claudiu Forgaci
Luisa Calabrese
Geert van der Meulen
Daniele Cannatella

Participating students

Aikebaier Erken
Albina Saifulina
Alexander Sokolov
Anna Borisova
Anneloes Tilman
Arina Perevedentseva
Arina Karenova
Ayla Azizova
Berend Vos
Cosku Özdemirci
Daan Hietbrink
Danielle Termote
Dewinta Asyiva Sidiq
Eischezsorush sadiq
Elena Khasianova
Ema Krakovska
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Florian Heinz
Francesco Mainetti
Fredy Fortich
Friso van Dijk
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Ho Kiu Chan
Hutomo Sudiharto Putra
Inès van Rijn
Ivan Chi Fung Tam
Jaka Korla
Jelmer Teunissen
Jeremia Pasaribu
Kamila Abbiazova
Katerina Apostolopoulou
Lars van Straalen
Laudza Az Zahra
Leander Nowack
Lieke Lohmeijer
Liselotte Brouwer
Louisa Hollander

Ludovica Beltrami
Matthew Dodd
Minja Radenkovic
Muhammad Suleman Khan
Niki Apostolopoulou
Nuerxiati Atawula
Owen Zhang
Pepijn Determann
Pinelopi Gardika
Reza Ahsan
Rhiannon Churchward
Sam Verdegaal
Sarah Meijer
Silvia Matisová
Stefania Soich
Sze Ho Choi
Taliya Nurutdinova
Tarang Gupta
Tillman Pospischil
Tim Kaiser
Tipp Bongers
Tri Putra Bhakti
Wing Yi So

colophon

This publication presents the outcome of Indesem 2019: Beyond the Echo Chamber. It includes lectures, interviews and the documentation of the student work. All text is written by the board of INDESEM unless stated otherwise

Chief Editor
Guusje Enneking

Editorial Board
Renske de Meijer
Bart Vos
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David van der Blonk
Guusje Enneking

Design
David van der Blonk
Guusje Enneking

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QuickVision Creative, Delft

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INDESEM - International Design Seminar - is a biennial with workshops, lectures and debate founded in 1962 and re-initiated in 1986 by Herman Hertzberger.

This publication reviews and reflects on the 2019 edition of the seminar; explorations on the position of the architect in a rapidly developing, (digitally) connected society. Nowadays, the amount of available knowledge to designers is becoming sheer endless. Whether or not willingly, this forces designers, architects and urban planners to take position in a globalised changing world.

By whom or what are you influenced? What is the scope of your work? What message do you want to convey? Who is it precisely you're designing for? In short, what defines the echo chamber wherein one operates? INDESEM 2019 forms a critical stage to confront students with their respective echo chamber, the extent to which it is perforated or segregated and to (re)define it, based on critical debate.

INDESEM 2019 has been contributed to by:

Winy Maas	Ma Yansong
Momoyo Kaijima	Francine Houben
Laurens Jan ten Kate	Eko Prawoto
Stefan Metaal	Federica Sofia Zambeletti
Studio Ossidiana	fala atelier
Alun Jones	Dick van Gameren
Kees Kaan	Nelson Mota
Reinier de Graaf	Thijs Asselbergs
Donna van Milligen Bielke	Salomon Fausto
ZUS	Mark Pimlott
RAAAF	Machiel van Dorst