

Amsterdam Academy of Architecture  
Architecture - Urbanism - Landscape Architecture

# Re-inventing the Academy













Re-inventing the Academy  
*The First Century of the  
Amsterdam Academy of Architecture  
1908-2008*



































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'Tout à l'égout'. Everything down the sewer. That's how Willem Kromhout, founder of the Amsterdam Academy of Architecture, viewed the work of professional colleagues in his younger years. He didn't really mean he wanted to flush everything away. But he was pointing out the necessity of making a fresh start, of reinventing the profession as it were, in the context of the times. By establishing the Academy of Architecture in 1908 he was attempting to achieve exactly that together with a number of colleagues from Amsterdam. At the occasion of the academy's centenary with this publication we look back, consider the present, and try to look into the future.

'Re-inventing the Academy' was the theme of the symposium held to mark the first centenary in October 2008. We may conclude that the academy has on the whole been successful in reinventing itself over its first century. Disciplines in development in a changing context — three disciplines are now taught at the academy: architecture, urbanism and landscape architecture — require an adaptive education system. The model of a society, an association of architects, helped lay the foundation for the flexibility of the academy and its capacity to renew itself. And that dynamism has even survived the transition to the state-funded Masters education system. The school still operates as an academy in the classical sense, a place where new generations of practitioners come together to pass on their knowledge, their profession, to ever new generations of students. How exactly this is done needs to be considered afresh at all time.

That was the case at the symposium, sparked by a number of prominent educators: Brett Steele (AA London), John Palmesino (Atelier Basel), Wim van den Bergh (RWTH Aachen), Ted Landsmark (BAC Boston) and Christoph Girot (ETH Zurich). At the same time, the production of the academy was critically examined.

Graduation work from the past century, as well as criticism from the time, was displayed at Zuiderkerk. And the architectural contribution of graduates to the development of the city of Amsterdam, was the subject of an exhibition at ARCAM gallery.

The current education programme also reflected the centenary celebration by focusing on Plan Zuid by Berlage (drawn up at the time of the school's establishment) in the studio design projects. In addition, the academy presented a gift to the city in the shape of a proposed meeting place in the Amsterdam Robert Scottbuurt.

With this publication the yearbook is also getting a good cleanup. After seven editions it was time for a fresh departure with the academy publications. So this is the first in a series of issues that will appear three to four times a year.

That signifies a shift in emphasis. With the growing importance of reflection and research, more emphasis will be put on the work of the teaching staff both educationally: what results have they achieved with the students in the studio and what do these results contribute to architectural education? And in terms of research: what are they dealing with in their daily practice and what relevance does that have for the development of the profession? The scope will also be broadened. The series makes it possible to link up with particular themes in design and research and provide for example the professors and Artists in Residence with a platform of their own. Each year one issue will concentrate entirely on the work of students at the moment they cease being students and embark on careers as young professionals.

Let me join the editors in wishing that this first issue marks the start of a series that shows how the academy continually endeavours to reinvent itself, as both a school of architecture and a place of reflection and research.

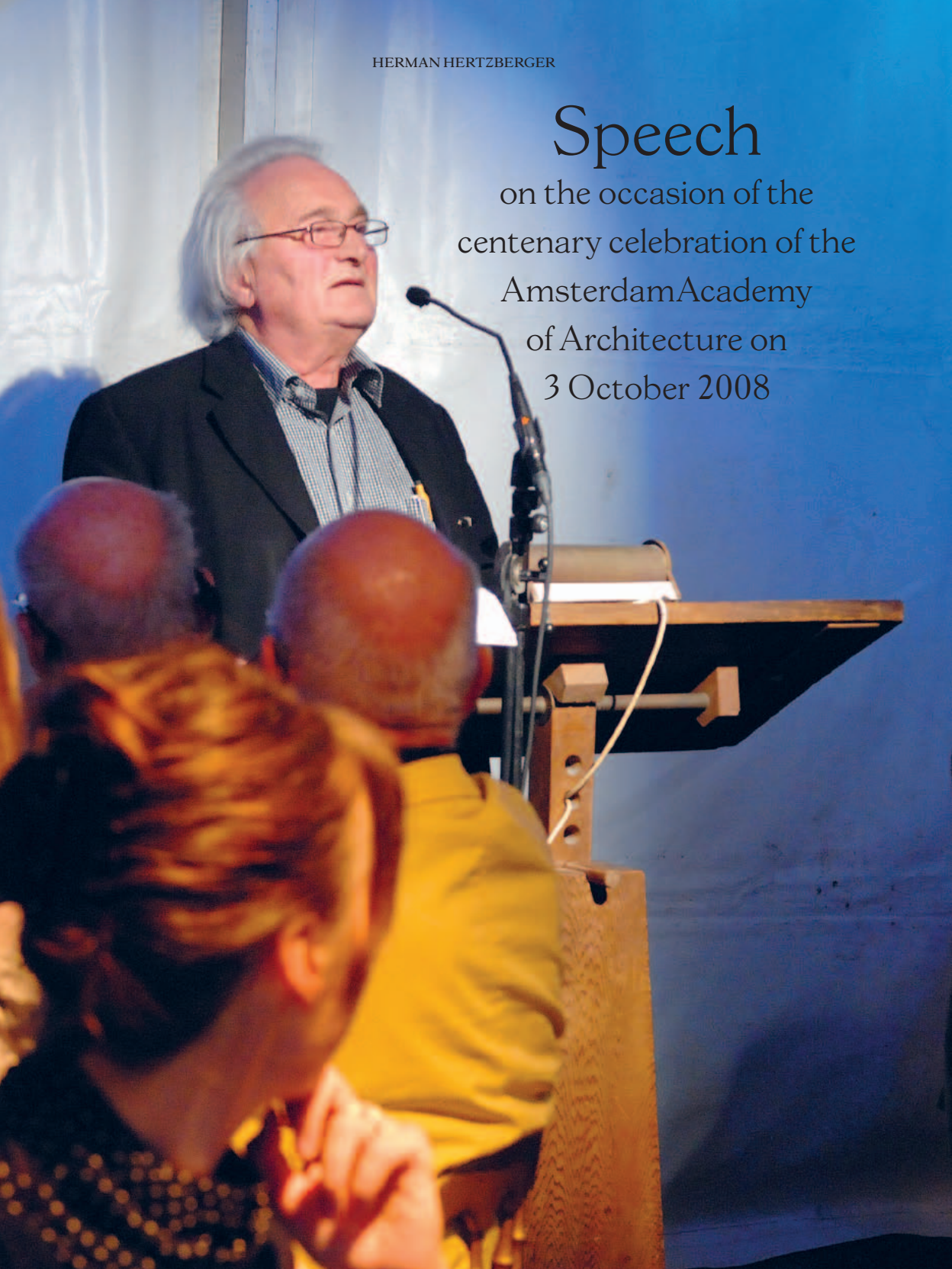




HERMAN HERTZBERGER

# Speech

on the occasion of the  
centenary celebration of the  
Amsterdam Academy  
of Architecture on  
3 October 2008





'A celebration speech is a speech that proves there's an occasion worth celebrating.' Rietveld began his speech with these cast-iron words in 1958, fifty years ago. He was seventy at the time, and he quit working when he was seventy-seven, my age now. I plan to keep going for a while, though not as long as another colleague, Wijdeveld, who went past one hundred. Quoting Rietveld further, we come across a couple of remarkable statements in light of today's situation. 'My opinion is that there will be more reasons than ever to replace the architecture of building mass (heavy or light) with the architecture of space.' And: 'The so-called modern has now changed tack; unfortunately most of it is nothing more than modernism or modern baroque, which is apparently a responsible thing because of a sort of functionalism (though not the real one) that speculates on the laziness of our time. There are more wasteful exertions than the genuine application of new materials.'

Now, fifty years later, little has come of the dreams of Rietveld. We do have a lot of glass, but very little space, little transparency and in fact less and less accessibility. It's all about safety now, even though the world has, relatively speaking, never been safer, and it's not as if you can create an absolutely safe world. Fear reigns, and the safety measures and assurances reach further and further to the point of absurdity, at the expense of normal social intercourse. And thus the world

becomes more and more boarded up as time goes by.

Apart from that, it seems that architects are scarcely concerned about good architecture and are most interested in fame and the power that comes with it. Architecture, for that matter, has always edged up close to power, where the money is, because the truth is that money still counts when it comes to building.

Architecture is packaging, but it still has to package something. It has to be more than Christmas presents for small children who don't fully understand what it's all about and just peel off layer after layer of paper until the big parcel gets smaller and smaller until finally, amid shrieks of laughter, there's nothing inside. Architecture has to contain something.

And that content is what the Academy of Architecture should be about. It is fine that people, in addition to their daily practice, can spend their evenings trying to design things so that they can make use of that at work or so that they might perhaps work on their own one day. But an academy like ours has the potential to function in a more fundamental way, to furnish architecture with new meaning. I think it is the task of the academy in particular to stimulate content and issues of substance, and therefore to work exclusively in a meaningful way. And that leads to a search for meaning and, irrevocably, for change. Change is the inescapable obligation of our time. Instability is our most important

condition. Since we have no horizon to aim at or to measure what we're doing, everything we do has to be new, and the effect of that is that architects drift about. The discipline, too, is rather adrift and loses more and more credibility as time goes by. The Academy of Architecture should concern itself with this like a real academy.

Over the past fifty years there have certainly been a number of meaningful moments when students and tutors arrived at new insights and when it genuinely was about issues that matter. Like when Furkan Köse demonstrated that you could design an Islamic cemetery without the usual hackneyed forms associated with it, as an enrichment of the city and as a real contribution to architecture. And then — and that to me was a highlight and perhaps the absolute highlight of the academy's history — when student Piet Blom smashed the model of his 'Noah's Ark' plan to pieces by throwing it down the stairwell of the main staircase after Aldo van Eyck had taken it to the Team X meeting in Royaumont in 1962 where it was heavily criticised. This was in fact a brilliant piece of work and consisted of a form of growth in which each element spawned the next one, just as a crystal multiplies itself. A theoretical model that architects are good at, but one that Piet Blom carried through to the point of absurdity. This plan, which was in fact the logical conclusion of the configurative process propagated by

Van Eyck, was 'unmasked' by Team X as fundamentalistic, and they even called it fascist. Aldo van Eyck, who defended it as a snow crystal, made no headway at all and was left a little bewildered. After all, nobody knew the space of Victory Boogie Woogie by Mondriaan as well as he did.

But the message had apparently been heard, by the author at any rate. By destroying his plan, Piet Blom was confirming its format. For him it was an important lesson, and not just for him. This was about more; it was about the limits of architecture, no matter how brilliantly conceived, in a social sense. Discussions like that, when conducted explicitly and in public, make the academy significant.

More thinking is needed in addition to all that making; more knowledge of what people have devised and done in past centuries, not with the aim of imitating them but of measuring and sharpening our own thinking with the resources at our disposal. So we should reflect more in addition to all that making.

Now we need more reflection and, with that, more political awareness. It's not only about objects but also about increased political awareness, not only objects but also — or especially — the effects they have, on whom and why!

Today there's a lot of talk about sustainability in building, a term often misused by business. So it's high time that the notion of sustainability was formulated in architectural terms. And where better to conduct the discussion on sustainability, thrift and caution

than at the Academy of Architecture. The thing to celebrate is the fact that here at the Academy we have the possibility and the total freedom to think about what we want to do, and perhaps we should use that freedom more intensively and be less distant and, above all, cautious with people and with resources.

To conclude, and to introduce the next fifty years at the Academy of Architecture, it is worthwhile recalling the conclusion of Rietveld's celebratory speech in 1958: 'Do not overburden society; that's to nobody's advantage; and remember that not all the riches here on earth were created for us or are there just for our existence; therefore they will never be able to advance our welfare without many objectionable consequences, which might well turn out to be greater than the benefits. Get to know the affluence of sobriety!

I hope that when the time comes for the academy's next anniversary, today's festivities will have turned out to have been good and worthwhile. Three cheers for the Academy of Architecture.'





PAST





# Graduation projects 1908–2008

BAS VAN VLAENDEREN

Graduation work offers excellent insight into the objectives of education and the development of the profession. In the early years the final test was set by the teacher, and the first projects reflect the ideas of the body of teachers on important issues and show the stylistic framework within which they were completed. In recent decades each student has chosen his or her own graduation subject and group of mentors. The selected designs therefore reveal what assignments the student deems important and which professional colleagues he or she chooses as mentors.

*Thanks to Melanie Verhoeven, Pieter Winters,  
Ingrid Oosterheerd, Dave Wendt, Indira van 't Klooster*

1919

**B.T. Boeyinga**

(architecture)

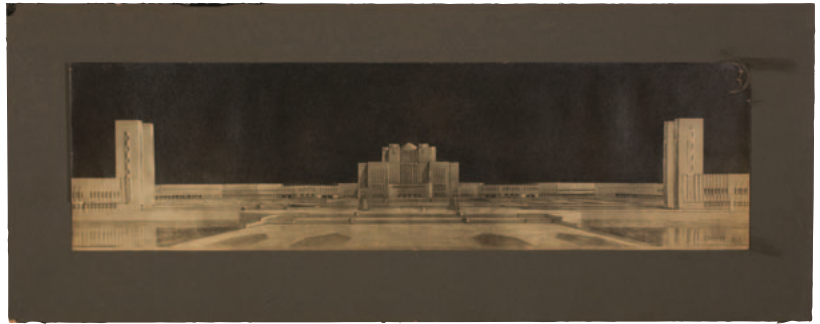
Government centre at the tip  
of Minervalaan

Tutor: J.M. van der Mey

'The requested projects go far beyond the powers of the designers; the result here is an empty parade.'

*Bouwkundig Weekblad*, 1919

J.P Mieras is blunt in his criticism in the periodical *Bouwkundig Weekblad* in 1919. He had just visited the Rijksacademie to see an exhibition that included major designs by B.T. Boeyinga for a government centre on the old August Allebéplein. Mieras understands the attractiveness of the design, but the task set for Boeyinga is to him simply too silly. He was asked to design a complex of government buildings, including ministries, a parliament, a 'house for the people', and museums — all of them located in a park 240 hectares in size. That gigantic assignment is beyond the powers of the designers, according to Mieras.



1922

**C. van Eesteren**

(architecture)

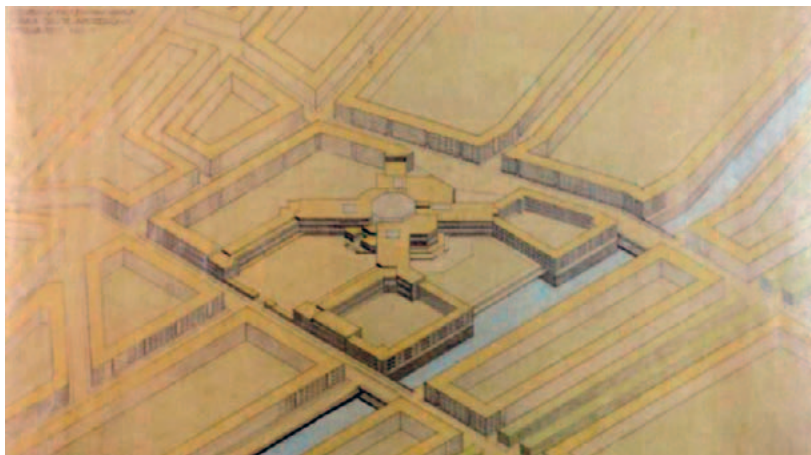
University complex on Jozef Israëlskade

Tutor: A.R. Hulshoff

'It would be advisable, given the circumstances in which the designer has had to work, to give him the opportunity to retract his submission. Both the chairman of this society and the tutor involved very much regret encouraging this designer to complete his final project.'

Jan de Meyer, 1923

These words from chairman of the board Jan de Meyer in January 1923 must have been tough for Van Eesteren. He is considered a promising student, not least because he won the Prix de Rome award in 1921. With the prize money he travelled to Prague, Berlin and Weimar, where he became acquainted with Bauhaus and Cubism. The design he submitted in 1922 by post from Germany is — unlike the voluptuous Amsterdam School designs of his fellow students — largely clinical, horizontal and rectilinear. That does not go down well and he has to forego the chance of a diploma. But that doesn't prevent him from pursuing an impressive career at the Department of City Development of the Public Works Department where, from 1929 to 1959, he is in charge of the Westelijke Tuinsteden and other projects.





1926

**H.J. Berding****J. Slebos****A. van der Vorst**

(architecture)

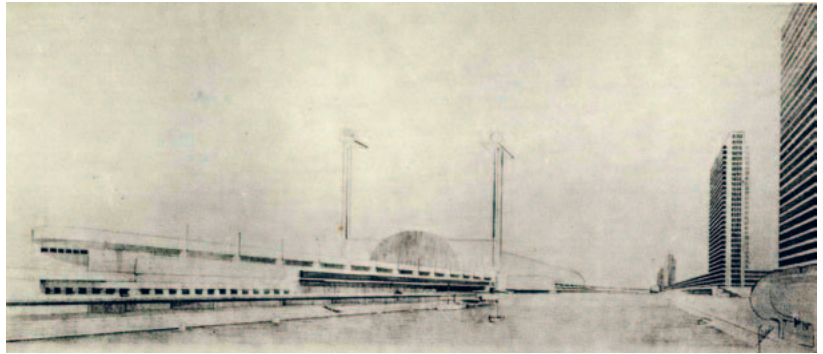
Station for rail and air  
transport in a city with over  
a million inhabitants

Tutor: J. Duiker

'It is a relatively easy thing  
over the course of a number  
of years to teach talented  
youths to reflect a virtuoso  
though deceptive creative  
power, which enables them  
to lose themselves in dream  
fantasies that exceed all  
borders.'

*Bouwkundig Weekblad*, 1926

In his review in the  
*Bouwkundig Weekblad*  
periodical, A.J. van der  
Steur admits that, on the  
basis of the projects by the  
three graduating students,  
he has major doubts about  
the direction taken at that  
time by the Academy of  
Architecture. He thinks it  
is the architecture school's  
duty to teach students that  
they are just beginners  
and their experiences will  
only become formative in  
their later career. 'Because  
the initial delight at one's  
recently discovered creative  
power' only results in paper  
plans that relate in no way  
with reality.



1932

**J. Pot**

(architecture)

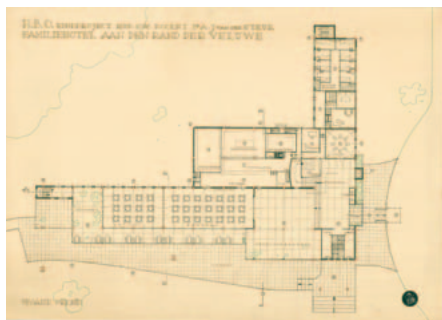
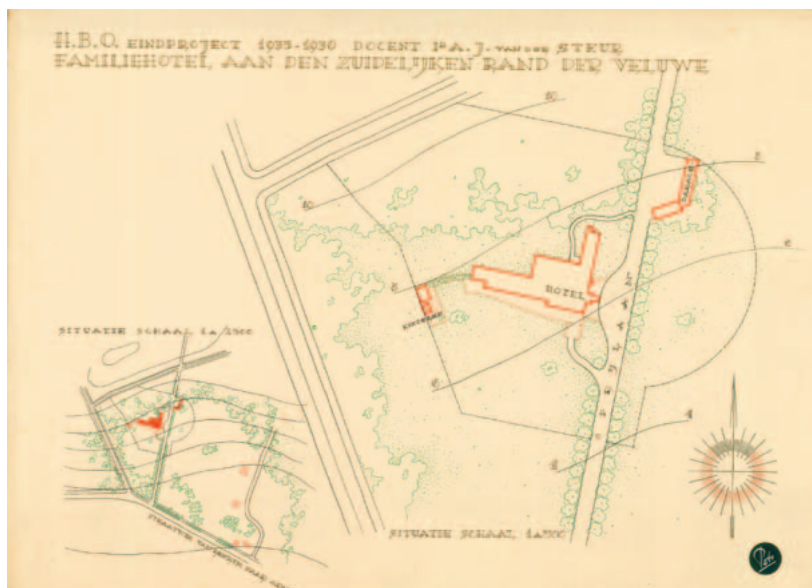
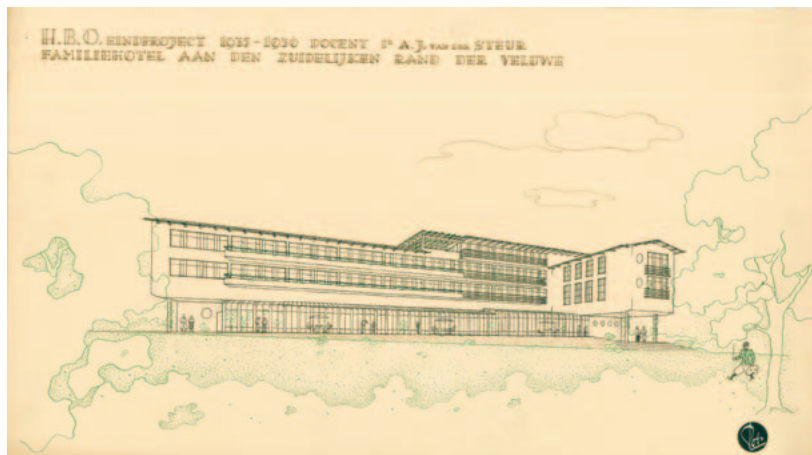
Family hotel on the southern  
edge of the Veluwe

Tutor: A.J. van der Steur

'His work reveals talent and  
character. This student fully  
deserves his diploma.'

*Bouwkundig Weekblad*, 1937

The assignment was to  
design a hotel for a hundred  
guests. The big and small  
dining rooms and the  
conservatory are separated  
by sliding walls so that they  
can be merged to form one  
big reception room. Some  
rooms can be joined together  
to accommodate big families.  
Pot designed an austere  
building with a largely glazed  
entrance topped by three  
floors, the uppermost of  
which extends over half of  
the building. Above the hall  
he designed a cantilevered  
volume. The building is  
modern in appearance, but  
the small round windows  
in the saloon and the  
alternating use of flat and  
pitched roofs reveals the era  
of its design.



1943

**W. Oomen**

(architecture)

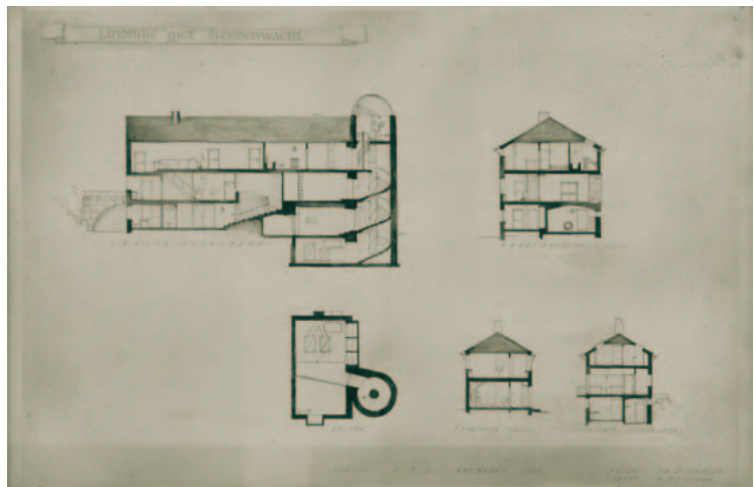
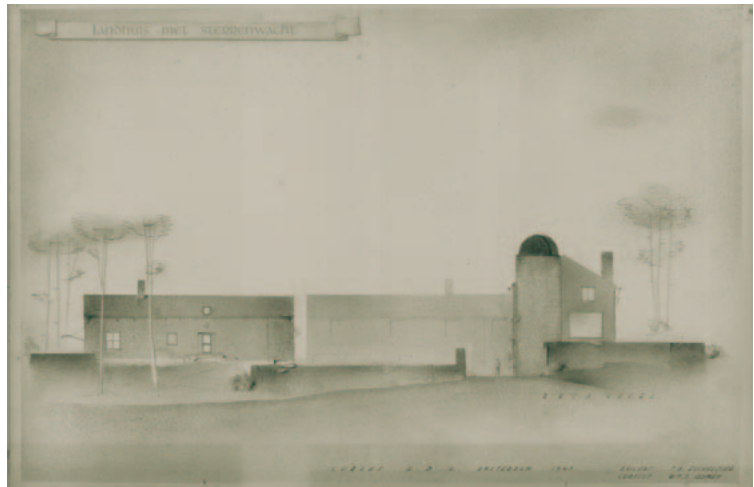
Country house with  
observatory

Tutor: F.A. Eschauzier

'For me this complex of buildings is very convincing, and although the interior of the building does not have those qualities that one would wish for, I have no doubts about recommending that you award this student the final diploma of our school.'

*Bouwkundig Weekblad*, 1947

It was three years later that tutor F.A. Eschauzier wrote these words about his student. The war meant that the *Bouwkundig Weekblad* was no longer able to feature the work. Even more striking than the work by Oomen was the description of the assignment. Too much embellishment of the design was discouraged because it was intended for a 'magistrate or officer of the water control board and his young family. A serious family sense must be expressed in this design.' The drawings reveal a rather traditional country house with a recessed door in the façade and, above it, a round window adorned with sculpture work.





1945

**A.C. Nicolai**

(architecture)

Student society building on  
Doelenstraat

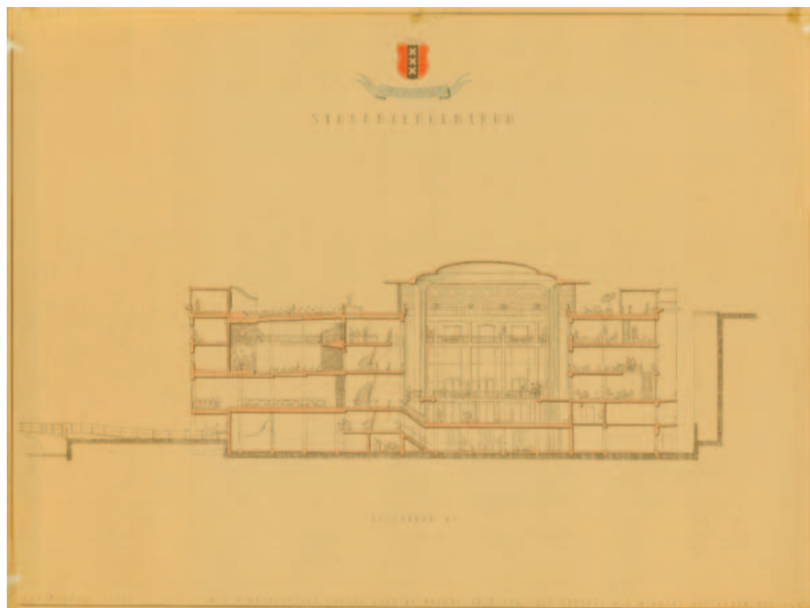
Tutor: W. van Tijen

'Modern through and  
through, the façades  
are excellently suited to  
Amsterdam.'

*Bouwkundig Weekblad*, 1947

This is the opinion of  
tutor W. van Tijen, under  
whom Nicolai graduated.  
The crammed design for a  
clubhouse consists not only  
of a congress hall for 500  
people and a small hall for  
150 people but also spaces  
for receptions, exhibitions,  
reading, meeting, sleeping  
and society activities.

Additional facilities include  
a canteen, a gymnasium,  
a swimming pool, some  
dwellings, and a jetty for  
rowing boats. Nicolai  
combines these functions  
in a design in which  
modernity and tradition  
go hand in hand. That is  
why it looks as though he  
wants to harmonise with  
the architecture of the city  
centre, even though this is a  
big building.



1952

**J.B. Ingwersen**

(architecture)

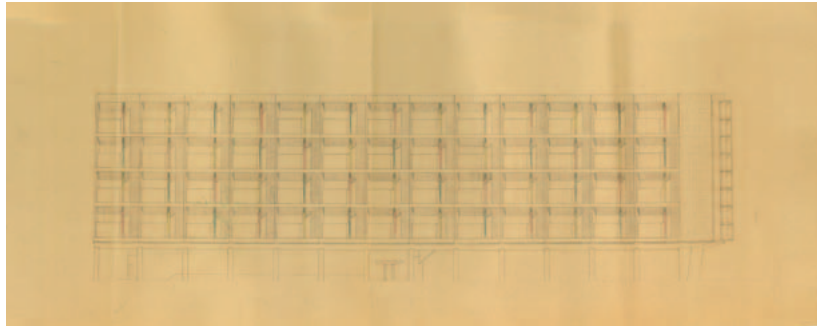
Residential centre in  
Amsterdam

Tutor: W. van Tijen

'In this study the almost rustic silhouette of the Amstel, with the city centre in the background and its pinnacles as enduring urban beauty, is respected.'

*Bouwkundig Weekblad*, 1952

The project for a residential centre exudes the heavy sense of sweeping urban renewal. For the site is bounded by the Amstel River, Singelgracht and Sarphatistraat, an area earmarked for large-scale housing development as part of renewal efforts. The city centre is planned as a commercial centre and is therefore no longer suitable as a residential area. The dwellings are aimed at 'intellectual workers' such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, businessmen and bank officials who work in the city centre. Ingwersen designed a ten-level gallery-access block of flats with maisonnettes along Sarphatistraat, which is widened by more than twenty metres; a tall twenty-level building with studios for bachelors; and a four-level housing block along the Amstel for well-to-do people. On the unbuilt site he proposes a collective garden for all residents as well as a sports hall, school and crèche, all surrounded by shops, a cafeteria and a film house. The Corbusian design exudes the mood of his later work, such as the Technical School and the Autopon car showroom.



1962

**P. Blom**

(architecture)

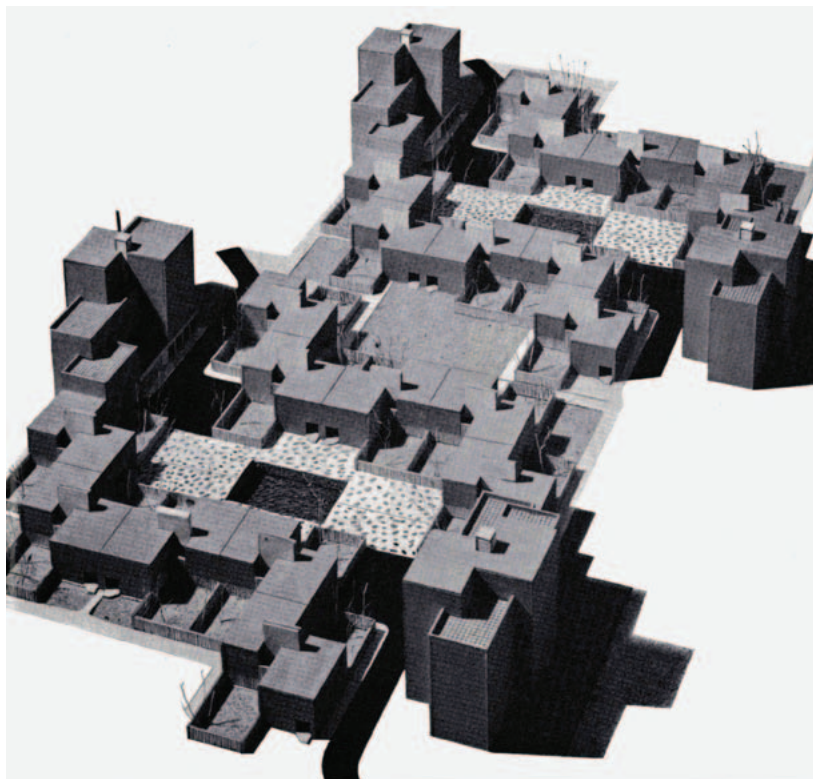
Urban design exercise

Tutor: P. Kessler

'One must conclude that this project does not deserve an unsatisfactory grade but, rather, that Blom in the end has a lot to learn before he is ready for urban design.'

*Forum*, 1960

This comment, written in 1960 by D.C. Apon in *Forum* magazine was not intended as criticism but as scorn for P. Kessler, who wrote this about his student after an assignment in the fourth year of his professional studies. Blom is considered a promising student at the time; two years later he would win the Prix de Rome. Later he devises and perfects in an entirely individual way a model in which different forms of living interlock with one another to form a new structure that can be extended as much as necessary. These structures distinguish themselves by their alternation of open and closed sections. When Aldo van Eyck takes the drawings to the Team Ten meeting near Paris in 1962 to present them to the public as illustration material, the project is heavily criticised. Later, too, during the assessment at the academy, the project is deemed to 'impose a compulsory lifestyle on the residents'. Blom sees no alternative other than to pick up the model and throw it down the stairs, smashing it to pieces.



Blom's urban design project from his final year of study concerns an area in Amsterdam West. The proposal comprises 200 single-family dwellings, 300 apartments, and a small shopping centre.



1966

**B. Loerakker**

(architecture)

Neighbourhood for 20,000 people near Durgerdam and Villa on the Amstel for a specialist

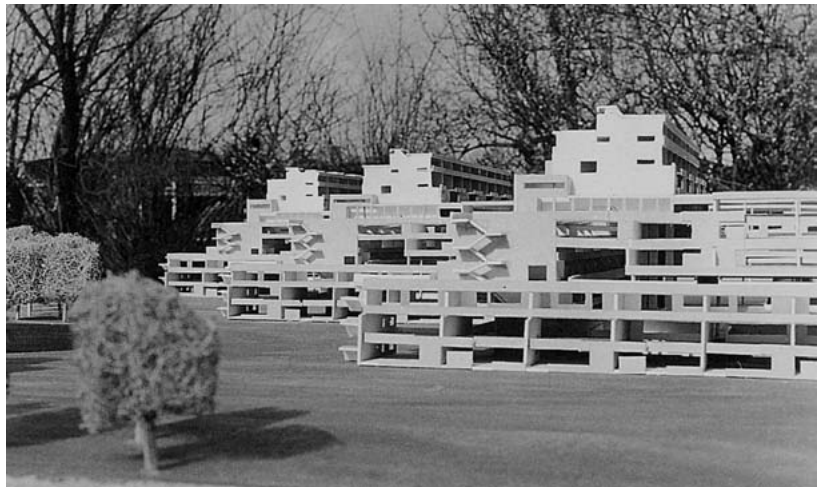
Tutors: A. van den Berg, B. van der Paardt

'With some pride he was told by Bodon that Rietveld, upon seeing the model, had said that he himself could have designed it.'  
Ben Loerakker, *Eerst de Structuur dan de Vorm*, 1996

After many highly commended sketch designs to test the analytical approach and the siting, Loerakker earned his first diploma in July 1964 with a design for a villa for a specialist on the Amstel. Two years later he graduated from the academy with a city expansion plan for Amsterdam. Both designs are clear precursors to Loerakker's later work in which house plans with level changes and interconnected spaces occur frequently. Moreover, it is immediately clear from the start that he prefers working with study models and sketches of structure and plans rather than elaborating design drawings.



Villa on the Amstel for a specialist



Neighbourhood for 20,000 near Durgerdam

The neighbourhood is designed as one big building in which all dwellings are orientated towards the open nature of water and polders. The design for the villa exploits height differences to anchor the house in its surroundings, and Loerakker does the same at the larger scale of the city with this plan for Durgerdam.

1973

**Theo Bosch**

(architecture)

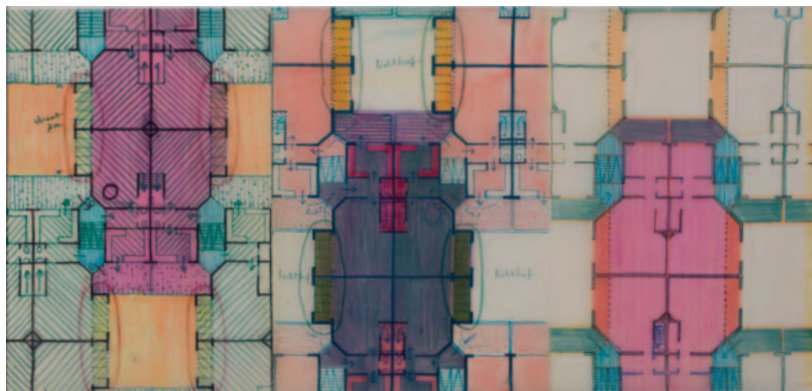
Housing roof project for the Jordaan

Tutor: H. Davidson

'It can lead to what now seems to be a budding miracle becoming reality. That is very important, because the inhabitants of a city that is crumbling have waited a long time for a miracle.'

*Wonen TA/BK, 1973*

'Woningdak', Bosch's graduation project, lays the foundation for the later project to restore a piece of the Jordaan district by Van Eyck, Bosch, Lafour and Knemeijer. The empty building sites and partly demolished dwellings in the area bordered by Lijnbaansgracht, Brouwersgracht, Lindengracht and Palmgracht are replaced by new development. Initially, the designers are caught between high building costs, the desire to build for low-income groups, and the desired quality of dwellings and architecture. To keep costs under control, it is proposed to work in a bigger area in a repetitive, regular system. This consistency creates voids between the housing blocks that put pressure on the design. That the designers still manage to integrate the new developments earns the project the name 'the miracle of the Jordaan'.



Bosch concentrated on the street. Striking features of the 'housing roof' are the plot divisions indicated by the barrel-shaped roofs and the interweaving of functions such as a kindergarten, commercial spaces, dwellings and studio homes. High-density housing is achieved with the arched roof and a certain liveliness is stimulated. Bosch not only placed living rooms above the street but also added pedestrian passages on the second level, along which are located the front doors to the houses.



1978

**K. Hund**

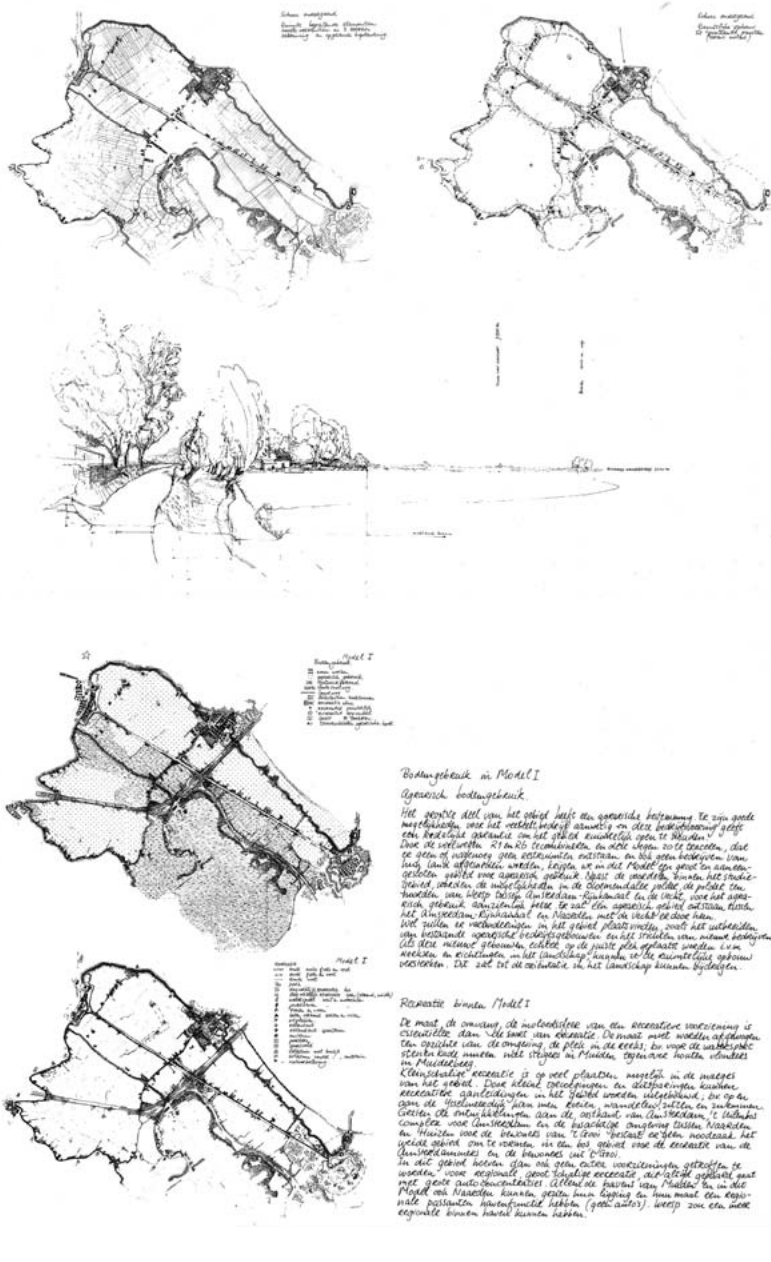
(landscape architecture)  
Sketchbook for the design  
of the landscape of Muiden -  
Naarden

Tutors: P. Baas, B. Eerhard,  
R. van Leeuwen, S. Meyn,  
H. Warnau

'In his study Kees Hund has made a successful attempt to do justice to the aspects of preservation and renewal. It should also be noted that he has achieved this without making any half-hearted compromises.'

*de Architect*, 1979

The construction of rail and road connections and the provision of access to the recently reclaimed Flevopolders puts great pressure on the area just outside Amsterdam between Muiden and Naarden. Hund studies the effects of this development and then considers the future of agriculture and recreation. The projects by both Hund and Hendriks are praised by the jury of the Ex Aequo student competition, which includes Dick Apon and Hubert de Boer, because they succeed in avoiding the 'restrictiveness' of their time, namely the 'fear of intervening in developed structures'.





1978

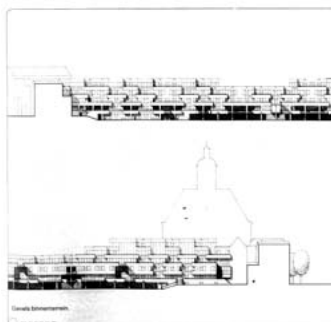
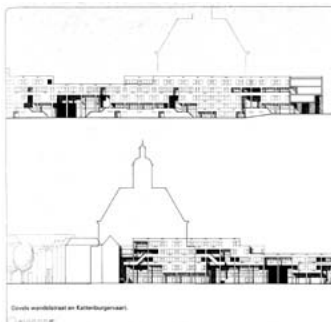
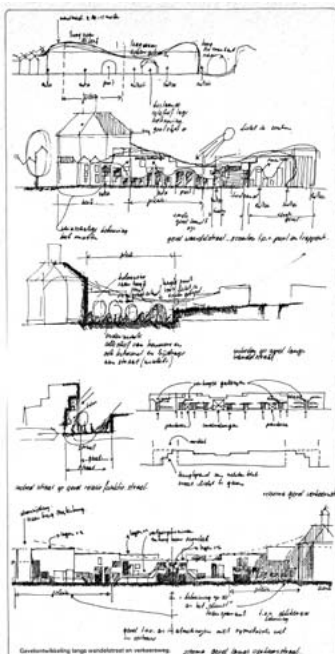
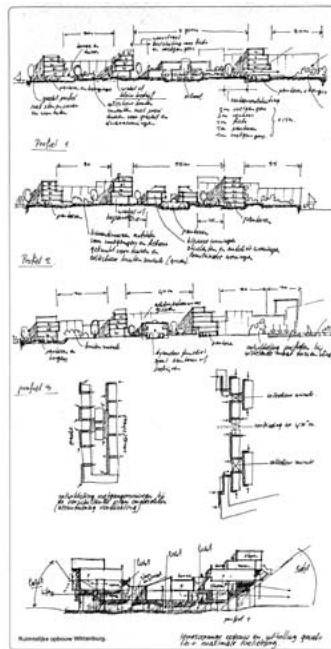
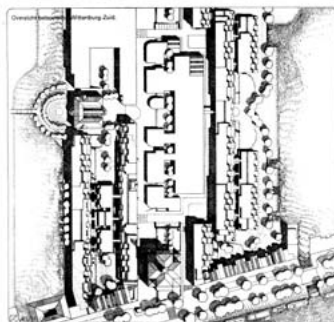
**G.J. Hendriks**  
(architecture)

An inhabitable island

Tutors: P. Snel, R. Poel, R.  
van Engelsdorp Gastelaars

'Hendriks has made a rational contribution to the issue of the quality of urban living.'  
*de Architect*, 1979

In 1979 the island of Wittenburg was practically cleared. It was the victim of demolition in favour of sweeping reconstruction. For the new development, commercial functions were rejected in favour of a series of blocks of flats in an open arrangement with courtyards. Hendriks makes an alternative plan that reveals structuralist influences through the weaving of building volumes that are clearly distinguishable, and also the arrangement of long strips of building that foreshadow the 1980s. The jury of the Ex Aequo student competition, which includes Dick Apon and Tjeerd Boersma, is full of praise for the project: 'The entire scheme expresses great precision, devotion and sensitivity for the situation and the dimensions that it offers. In the chosen situation the final impression can, judged by the standards of Dutch building practice, be considered a totally new and fresh image in which both the component parts and the whole entity are recognisable.'



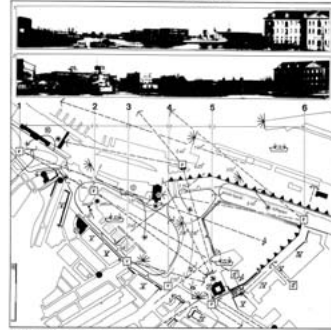
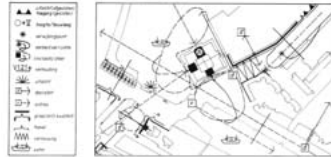
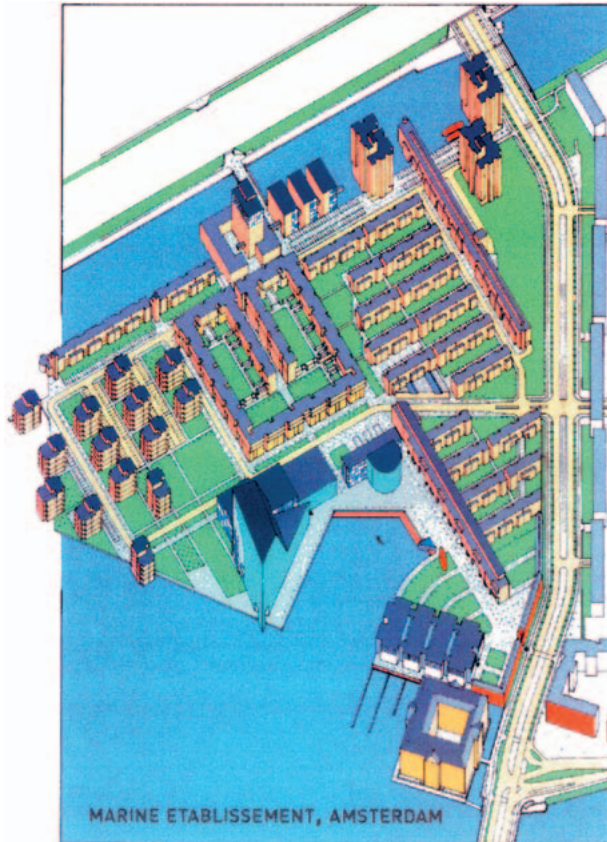
## 1984

**F. Riem**

(urban design)

The Nautical District,  
AmsterdamTutors: R. van Engelsdorp,  
G. Urhahn, F. Lambalk,  
F. Linnert, H. Tupker‘This submission scores  
highly according to all  
assessment criteria.’*Archiprix jury report, 1984*

The Archiprix jury is full of appreciation for Riem's project to redevelop the Nautical District in Amsterdam. This area, used to this day as a marine education institute, would be suitable for housing and for the concentration of museum activities of a nautical nature. Riem composes the final arrangement from various plan elements using research, an inventory and models. In urban-design terms it is made up of an area with strip development and an area with free-standing flat buildings, which results in a regular, Bauhaus-like appearance. In addition, he proposes a monumental museum structure in expressive forms that partly stands in the water.

**INVENTARISATIEFASE****MILIEUTYPELOGIE****INVENTARISATIEFASE****RUMTELLIKE INVENTARISATIE****MODELFASE**

1986

**H. Meijer**

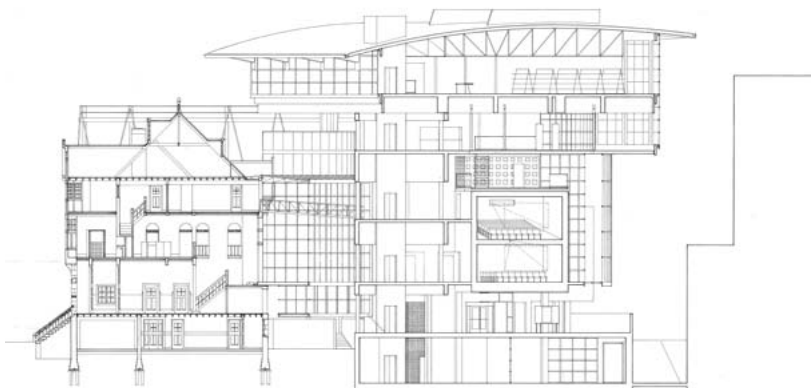
(architecture)

Film club on Museumplein,  
AmsterdamTutors: H. Hertzberger,  
P. Wintermans, J. de Wolf,  
M. Kloos, H. Camping,  
P. Snel

'The building looks like a movement that has halted inexplicably, thus provoking the occupant to move, to wander around and to piece together his own film from the architecture.'

*Archiprix jury report, 1987*

A very topical design given the situation today is that by Meijer for a film club on the west side of Museumplein. Planned right next to, and partly connected to, the villa by Ed. Cuypers, is a building marked by glass façades, stacked volumes, various sorts of screen façades made of stone, glass and other materials. The biggest screen is an architectural interpretation of a film screen, as it were. The columns, steps and façades create a somewhat diffused design, but it harmonises well with the square. The graduation committee judges the project to be 'astounding' on all fronts and awards Meijer a diploma with distinction.



Partly enclosed by glass, the ground floor houses the café and restaurant, the information desk and the ticket office. The library is located right below the curved roof. Reflective screens ensure that daylight reaches down to the exhibition space below. In the evening the projection screen reveals the shadows and silhouettes of the structure and people within. For outdoor movies the film is projected onto the screen outside. Once the screen slides away, the new buildings behind the villa are revealed.



1996

**N. Dietz**

(urban design/landscape architecture)

Grensmaas

Tutor: C. Zalm, W. Maas, B. Olthof

'Over the years the area develops through a number of carefully planned interventions into a fascinating flowing landscape in which different principles are combined in a very convincing manner.'

*Archiprix jury report, 1997*

The project concerns the radical transformation of the landscape along the River Maas in Limburg. It must prevent future flooding and link safety with land reclamation, water purification and the development of leisure amenities. After a period of 30 years of land reclamation the plan continues to develop. The biggest risk to such a large intervention is opposition from the local population to change. The only projects with a chance of success are those that manage to combine a high level of necessity with extreme persuasiveness. Grensmaas possesses those qualities.

**Edges**

The height differences at the edges are solved by gentle gravel slopes and steep clay ramps at places susceptible to drying out. A 10-metre-tall dam amplifies the inflow from the river.

**Ground**

The lower side of the layer of gravel determines the position of the cracks. These cracks follow the existing height lines.

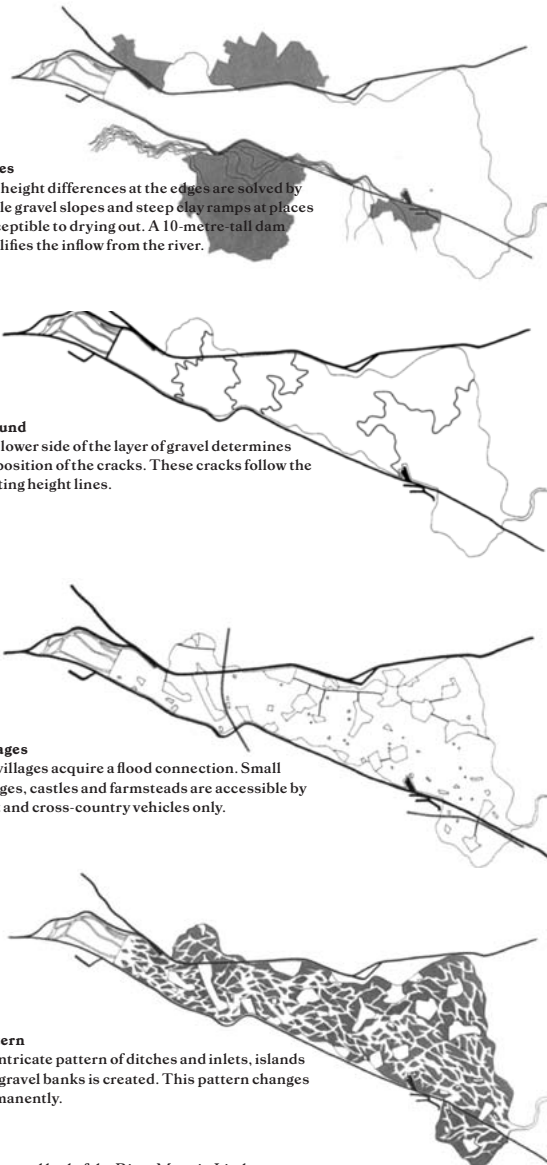
**Villages**

Big villages acquire a flood connection. Small villages, castles and farmsteads are accessible by boat and cross-country vehicles only.

**Pattern**

An intricate pattern of ditches and inlets, islands and gravel banks is created. This pattern changes permanently.

The gravel bed of the River Maas in Limburg is the only source of gravel in the Netherlands. This makes it attractive to prevent flooding by digging away the gravel. Thirty years of digging will produce enough gravel for the construction of 2.8 million homes. At the same time, an inhabited nature area of 10,000 hectares is created. The sloping landscape is dug away to create horizontal tiers. The result is a wild landscape in which 'riffles' with a steep incline and a lot of erosion alternate with 'pools' with a shallow incline and a lot of sedimentation. In the summer this leads to dry gravel tiers and in the winter to staged floods. The villages in the valley remain dry; because of the surrounding digging they are elevated on mounds in the river. An essential aspect of this project is the continuous development of the area, even after digging is completed, when the landscape shapes itself.





2002

**M. van Beest**

(landscape architecture)

Zandloper

Tutors: M. Timmermans,

B. Strootman, P. Roncken

'In its singularity, the design is a wonder of creativity.'

*Archiprix jury report, 2004*

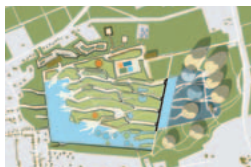
Instead of the planned levelling and planting with greenery of a former quarry in the Brabantse Wal landscape, Van Beest proposes an interesting alternative. He wants to strengthen and make more visible the geological and ecological processes that act upon this area, partly present already, by allowing water to flow through it. That would allow the channels to erode and silt up again, walls to collapse and trees to be uprooted. 'The controlled transformation results in a park with a surrealistic landscape that evokes in the visitor experiences suggested by such 'games' as *Tomb Raider* and *Exile*, but then for real!' according to the jury.

**0 - 10 Years**

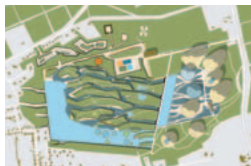
An open plateau that will slowly be colonised in the early years. The hard clay and the powerful erosion will delay the usual pioneering vegetation considerably in their colonisation.

**10 - 20 Years**

Geoclimax. The ground-shaping processes are at their peak. Closing the locks, thereby allowing the reservoir to flood by precipitation, halts erosion. A calm period then follows.

**20 - 30 Years**

Ecoclimax. A stable situation in which the biggest variety of plants is created in the area. The variations in environments are largest and offer space for about 70 % of all Dutch biotopes.

**30 - 50 Years**

A forest with greater biodiversity than on the sandy soils. The diversity declines sharply after the ecoclimax, but at least three types of forest survive under more variable conditions than in the surrounding forests.



2002

**R. Rietveld**

(landscape architecture)

Deltawerken 2.0: dikes and a park

Tutors: L. van

Nieuwenhuijze, E. Bindels,

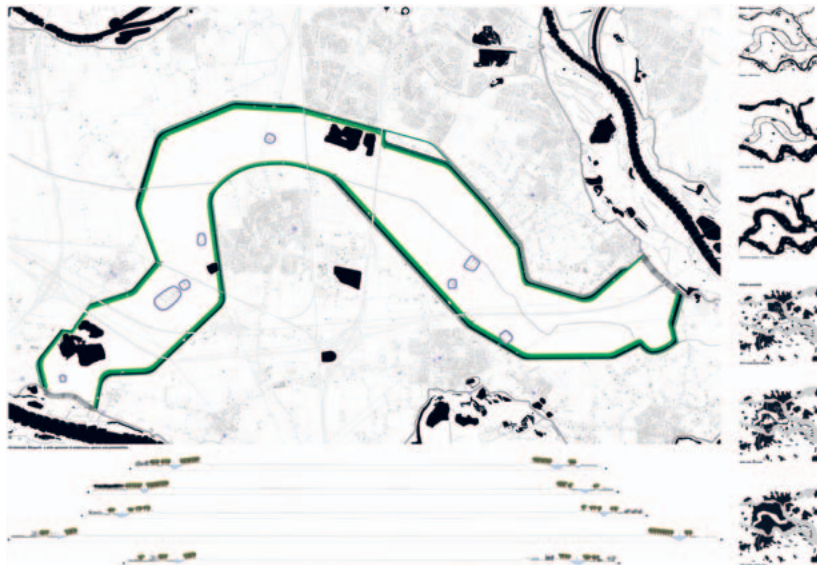
J. van Hezewijk

'The project adds an inspiring chapter to the Dutch struggle against water.'

*Archiprix jury report, 2004*

For years people have grappled with the issue of what to do with the small bottleneck in the Waal River near Nijmegen. This constitutes a potential danger owing to the expected rise in the water level.

Rietveld designs a bypass 42 kilometres in length and, on average, 200 metres wide that will fill with water once every twenty to forty years. The bypass itself has to be completely empty, apart from some islands enclosed by six-metre-high dikes. A landscape park is planned along the dikes of the bypass itself like 'a frame around a green river'. The jury is full of praise for the way in which he succeeds in embedding everything in the landscape.



Instead of raising the existing dikes every 10 years, this design proposes construction of a new landscape component that enables the entire river system to process extreme peak volumes of up to 20,000 m<sup>3</sup> per second: 'the green river'. The 200-m-wide dike of this green river is also a 42-km-long landscape park and, with 50,000 elms, forms the monumental enclosure for a huge empty area 3000 hectares in size. The dike park is the new front for urban developments in the Over-Betuwe region. The green river flows through the lowest-lying areas that are still open. The spectacle of controlled flooding can be witnessed two or three times over the course of a lifetime. The excavation of soil for the new dike on the spot creates a regional water buffer for periods of severe rainfall and drought. Accordingly, two big hydraulic problems are solved with one intervention.



2004

**F. Köse**

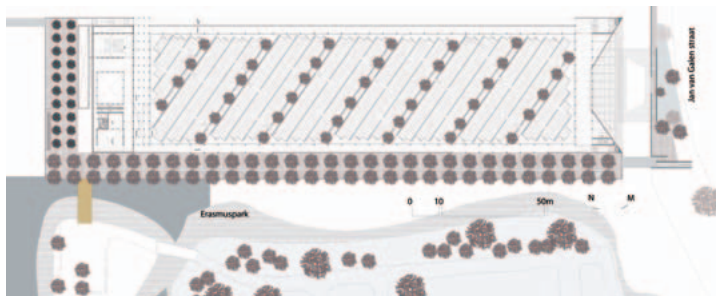
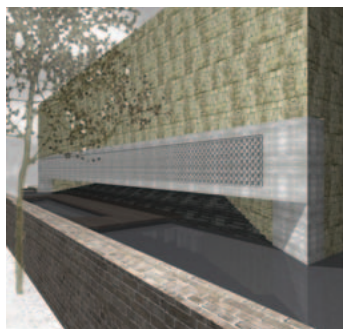
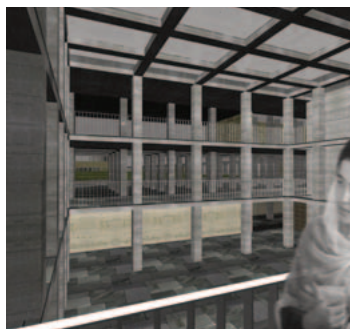
(architecture)

Islamic cemetery,  
AmsterdamTutors: T. Ploeg, H. Zeinstra,  
B. Doedens, M. Spaan

'New interpretations of elements from different cultures lead to a design with a character all of its own. The result enriches both cultures.'

*Archiprix jury report, 2005*

Köse designs a cemetery to unite two objectives. First, to meet the needs of the Islamic population that intends to remain in the Netherlands indefinitely; secondly, to make a positive contribution to the debate on integration. He bases his scheme on classic examples of mosques and garden designs but interprets them in an abstract manner and places them in a Western context. That results in a dignified though very accessible complex in Erasmuspark that groups an auditorium, a condolence space and a prayer space around an open patio.



2005

**B. van Vlaenderen**

(architecture)

History for a big house

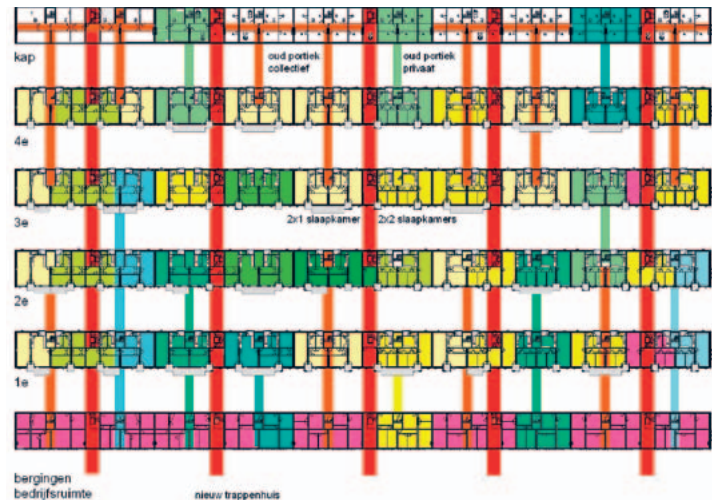
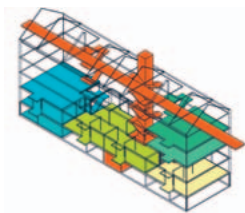
Tutors: J. Hovenier,

B. Liesker, M. de Hoog

'In a very precise and personal quest for a solution to the reuse of an existing block of flats, the designer combines social realism and technical realisation.'

*Archiprix jury report, 2006*

For a block of flats in the Geuzenveld district of Amsterdam, Van Vlaenderen devises a new, flexible structure. Currently occupied by large families, the flats will be turned into homes for first-time buyers and finally into luxury owner-occupied apartments. The ground-floor shops ensure that the immigrant residents can open a business here and also that the neighbourhood attracts first-time buyers so that the process of gentrification is set in motion. The plan seems to offer an alternative to the sizeable design task for architects to restructure post-war housing districts. The reuse of such buildings is historically and socially more responsible and economically attractive than demolition and new development.





2006

**J. Heijmans**

(architecture)

Das Bauwerk des Tekton

Tutors: R. Bouman,

F. Havermans, J. Bosch,

M. Spaan

'The model of the *tekton* offers a worthwhile alternative to the eroded position of the architect in contemporary building practice.'

*Archiprix jury report, 2007*

Heijmans tries to unite thinking and making using the various meanings of the Greek word *tekton*, which can mean builder or craftsman, but which also has more poetic connotations, e.g. the maker of poetry, the maker of songs. The project for the transformation of an old barn beside a farmhouse into a garden pavilion is, in fact, unimportant. For Heijmans it's about bringing together all disciplines such as looking, studying, documenting, designing and building on site. This leads to interesting discoveries that he incorporates into his project. The result is a 'nicely proportioned, sturdily made and inventively detailed' pavilion.





# The school's city

MAAIKE BEHM

PHOTOGRAPHY WIM RUIGROK

Asked for a contribution to the centenary of the academy, the Amsterdam Centre for Architecture (ARCAM) organised an exhibition about the relation between Amsterdam's cityscape and the architectural education at the academy.

The exhibition used Amsterdam buildings, that are probably familiar to many people, to tell stories about ten 'moments in time' in which teachers and students of the academy influenced the cityscape in a particular manner. Seven of those stories have been rewritten especially for this publication.

### Higher Course in Architecture

The education at the Academy of Architecture has changed drastically over the hundred years in which the Amsterdam cityscape was linked to the school. Today the academy offers a Masters programme in architecture, landscape architecture and urbanism for students who work at architecture firms and attend evening lessons given by freelance teachers in subjects such as design methodology and form studies, text analysis and repertoire knowledge. But one hundred years ago completely different ideas existed about the proper education of an architect. Early last century a group of around twenty key figures from the illustrious *Architectura et Amicitia* (A et A) society took the initiative to set up the *Hooger Bouwkunst Onderricht* (Dutch for 'Higher Course in Architecture', hereafter referred to as HBO), the precursor to today's academy. Moreover, they were the very first teachers: Willem Kromhout, H.P. Berlage, Jos. Cuypers, K.P.C. de Bazel, A.W. Weissman and Herman Walenkamp. At the time these architects still had one foot in the 19th century, but they were actively renewing architecture. They were searching for a contemporary style and propagated more expression in architecture through the integration of all art forms.

This pursuit of *Gesamtkunst* was expressed in the curriculum. On the school timetable of the first academic year, for example, we read that Kromhout, the architect of the American Hotel, taught the subjects 'Profiling' and 'City Embellishment'. Weissman built the Stedelijk Museum on Museumplein and gave lessons in 'Staircases, Driveways and Ramps' and in 'Towers, Spires and Cupolas'. Walenkamp, the architect of the Zaanhof



complex, instructed in the design of 'Doors, Windows and Archways'.

Architects aside, the vast majority of teachers were famous figures from fields of art related to architecture. They instructed students on how to integrate other art disciplines into architectural design. For this, subjects on offer included the 'Art of Painting', the 'Art of Sculpture', the 'Art of Textiles', 'Heraldry', 'Colour' and the 'Theory of Ornament'. Yet other topics covered by the education programme were 'Hygiene', 'Ventilation' and 'Electrical Engineering'.

Among the architecture teachers at the HBO who had a major influence on Amsterdam's cityscape were H.P. Berlage (teacher from 1908-1915), K.P.C. de Bazel (1912-1920) and Gerrit Jan Rutgers (1914-1925).

In addition to teaching subjects such as the 'Art of Space', 'Assembly Rooms and Theatres', 'City Expansions', and 'Floor Plans and Elevations', Berlage was the architect of Plan Zuid, the Stock Exchange and the so-called Berlage Blocks (1915), a housing complex in the Indische Buurt of Amsterdam. Berlage interrupted the pattern of long street fronts with two perpendicular streets to produce three short blocks. As a result more dwellings enjoyed a better orientation towards the sun and were located on quiet streets. Recessing the corners made for more efficient floor plans in the houses, which were well illuminated and ventilated.

De Bazel lectured in 'Simple Sketch Design', 'Style', 'City Expansion' and 'Building Plasticity'. He achieved his objective of integrating all arts in his design for the head office of the Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij (1926) on Vijzelstraat. Not a single floor, decoration or door escaped his attention. He worked with major artists, such as the sculptors Joseph Mendes da Costa and Hendrik van den Eijnde. Antoon Derkinderen, who also worked as director of the Rijksakademie voor Beeldende Kunsten ('Royal Academy of Visual Arts'), made the stained-glass windows and was also responsible for the decorative composition. Since 2007 'De Bazel' houses the Amsterdam City Archive, and for that purpose it was restored by Bureau Fritz and refurbished by Claus en Kaan, the same architects who renovated the Academy of Architecture in 2007. Gerrit Jan Rutgers was a prolific architect and taught just one subject at the HBO: 'Ceilings'. His designs in Amsterdam

H.P. Berlage  
'Berlage Blocks'  
(1915)



K.P.C. de Bazel  
Office Nederlandsche  
Handel-Maatschappij  
(1926)



include the Carlton Hotel, the Valerius Clinic and no fewer than ninety housing complexes, such as Van Tuyll van Serooskerkenplein (1930). The axis extending from this square to the entrance to the Olympic Stadium widens in three phases. Both the wall enclosing the square and the open side opposite were designed by Rutgers. The façades boast a regular rhythm of angled bay windows and dormer windows, and the doorways are topped by stained-glass details. The two sculptures of polo players on tall pedestals are the work of Anton Raedeker. Together with artists and other architects, Rutgers turned the square into a true *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

### **'Doorn' during the war**

Over the next decades the objective of integrating all the arts was completely eclipsed as attention turned to totally different issues during and after World War II. Even during the war architects discussed how the country should be reconstructed after the war. These discussions took place in the town of Doorn, near Utrecht, and were called the 'Doorn Courses'. During one such meeting in June 1942, modernists and traditionalists spoke about ending their style battle so as not to hamper the reconstruction effort. The architecture students from the student societies in Delft and Amsterdam got involved in the discussions. They applauded the initiative to set aside the differences between modernism (Amsterdam) and traditionalism (Delft). Their big example in that endeavour was Willem van Tijen, who taught in Amsterdam from 1936 to 1945. Van Tijen initiated studies into standardisation in construction and into more expression in modernist buildings, and in the process he occasionally borrowed from the best of the traditionalists. Among Van Tijen's employees during the war were Romke de Vries, Ernest Groosman and Jaap Bakema. This small group was also taught by Granpré Molière in 1942. When Bakema addressed the gathering in Doorn, he advocated absorbing the best from all movements and incorporating it in architecture.

In much post-war construction the style battle does indeed appear less conspicuous. And yet the objective of the Doorn Courses was not fully achieved. The completed buildings couldn't be characterised as the so-called shake hands architecture of Van Tijen, but were more the result of a less stringent execution of existing ideologies, of a version of

G.J. Rutgers  
Housing complex  
(1930)



J.F. Berghoef  
Sloterhof  
(1959)





modernism with more feeling for form and detail than previously was the case. The scarcity of money and building materials also explains a lot. Moreover, the demand for housing was so great after the war that standardisation of dwelling types and production methods was essential. Uniformity was propagated for speed — and also for socialist motives — but it made for monotonous architecture. Architects could only make a difference in details. Every architect — no matter his architectural principles — made use of the building systems developed at the time, such as MUWI, Dato, Dura and Airey. In 1959, for example, the traditionalist and academy teacher (1936-1946) Johannes Berghoef was the first to deploy the Airey standard system in the construction of his Slotershof project. It so happens that Berghoef and fellow HBO teacher H.T. Zwiers (1936 to 1948) helped the firm Nemavo to develop the Airey system on condition that the first 10,000 dwellings built with that system were designed by them.

In 1957, more to the north in the Western Garden Suburbs, Jan Stokla (graduated in 1952), project architect at the office of Van den Broek en Bakema, designed a gallery-access building with split-level flats. The free-standing staircases are of particular note. These elongated concrete structures stand out among the Amsterdam brickwork and courtyard structure of Geuzenveld. Romke de Vries (diploma 1942), together with J.P. Kloos (academy teacher from 1949 to 1957), designed a staircase-accessed block of flats with a concrete skeleton and Dato system floors and ceilings. Sliding walls meant that the dwellings had four or five rooms — for no fewer than six or nine beds. The block was located on Einsteinweg, now the western part of the A10 motorway. For a long time the building was easily recognisable because of its balconies, which looked as though they were suspended above the increasingly wide street. After the renovation and the addition of floors, based on a design by Heren 5 architecten, the Leeuw van Vlaanderen now features galleries behind a façade that keeps out the noise and particulate matter.

## Forum

In the years after post-war reconstruction, between 1959 and 1963, Forum magazine roused Dutch architecture out of its slumber. Chief amongst the new editors responsible for the commotion was Dick Slebos. He graduated from the HBO in 1952, worked for the Amsterdam Office of Public Works,

J. Stokla  
Flat building  
(1957)



R. de Vries  
Leeuw van Vlaanderen  
(1961)



and designed the north-east bank of Sloterplass Lake. He later became the academy's director but before that, in 1958, he joined the board of A et A. In that capacity he sided with Jaap Bakema who, just like him, was concerned about the future of the architectural profession. The influence of post-war reconstruction meant that the profession had lost much of its intellectual force, and that is why in 1959 Slebos organised one more so-called Doorn Course on the theme of 'creative power of imagination'.

Bakema and Slebos also concerned themselves with the role of Forum magazine, which was published by A et A. This culminated that same year in the appointment of two former academy students — Jaap Bakema and Dick Apon — as new Forum editors under Slebos' supervision. From the start Aldo van Eyck, a teacher at the academy in the years 1954-1958, was a dominant figure within the editorial staff. The young Herman Hertzberger, who graduated in 1958 from the Delft Institute of Technology and who would later teach at the academy, became editorial secretary.

The new Forum performed pioneering work. It pointed out the responsibility of architects and urban planners to design a world in which people could develop their talents to the full, both as individuals and as members of the community. The central issue had to be the coherent representation of the complex spatial and social aggregate. In Amsterdam the Burgerweeshuis by Aldo van Eyck (teacher from 1954 to 1958), the Student Housing by Herman Hertzberger (teacher from 1960 to 1968), and the Gouden Leeuw and Groenhoven housing complexes by Joop van Stigt (diploma 1961) were silent witnesses to a period in which the academy too must have intensely monitored new developments.

Aldo van Eyck was the elder of the three. After the war he worked at the Amsterdam Public Works Office in the Department of City Development under the director Cornelis van Eesteren (left the academy in 1922 without a diploma), who played an important role in the international debate about functionalist architecture particularly before the war. Van Eyck became involved in that debate after the war, just as he tended to get involved wherever he appeared. Along with Bakema, he was one of those who contended that modern architects paid insufficient attention to the complexity of society. He expressed this as an

**Van Eyck**  
Burgerweeshuis  
(1960)



**H. Hertzberger**  
Student Housing  
(1966)





editor of Forum and in the design of the orphanage. In those years, working on his Student Housing, Herman Hertzberger experienced a breakthrough in his thinking. In 1958 he and Tjakko Hazewinkel won the competition for this project. After that he joined the editorial staff at Forum, which amounted to something of a post-doctoral education for him. The design of the student housing project changed significantly under the influence of Forum. Commenting on his relation with Aldo van Eyck in that regard, Hertzberger said: 'What Aldo introduced was not entirely new to me. He did reinforce what I already knew, however, though I didn't realise I knew it.' At the time the orphanage was nearing completion. 'The orphanage constantly came up in editorial discussions at Forum,' recalls Hertzberger. 'Now and then we went to take a look on site and I was astounded by it.'

Joop van Stigt studied under Van Eyck at the academy and combined his study with a job as draftsman and construction supervisor at the orphanage. Dutch Functionalism and Van Eyck were to shape Van Stigt's outlook. 'The essence of Dutch Functionalism was that you had to make space with elementary and primary means,' he explained. 'From Aldo I learned how big and small could confront each other yet remain in harmony.' The dwellings in the Bijlmer are a good illustration of this.

### **Unabashedly big**

The decades that followed, the 1970s and 1980s, are known in Amsterdam for their careful urban renewal operation. But up until then substantial and large-scale interventions were the order of the day in Amsterdam. These were in part the work of architects who graduated from the Academy of Architecture in the years 1953-1965. In those days this generation had to take a stand, either in favour of the rigorous manner in which Le Corbusier wanted to renew the European city, or in favour of the approach of someone like Aldo van Eyck, which was more attuned to people's everyday surroundings.

One of the most rigorous plans for Amsterdam was the structural plan for the first phase of housing in the Bijlmermeer by Siegfried Nassuth (academy teacher in the 1950s), which dates from 1965. Around that time Piet Zanstra (left the academy in 1926 without a diploma), in his design for the now-demolished Maupoleum on the Jodenbreestraat, could still assume that this

J. van Stigt  
Gouden Leeuw and  
Groenhoven  
(1974)



G. de Klerk  
Marriott Hotel  
(1975)



huge building would be located next to a motorway that would cut right through the city centre. Shortly afterwards a conflict erupted surrounding demolition work to clear the way for the first metro line with stations designed by Sier van Rhijn and Ben Spänsberg, who graduated from the academy in 1953 and 1959. Moreover, plans to demolish large parts of the Jordaan were tabled in 1959-1960.

On the edges of the centre of Amsterdam a number of complexes stand out on account of the contrast in scale with the surrounding districts. Such projects include the work of architect Jacob Dunnebie, who graduated from the Academy of Architecture in 1930. His architecture looks like a mild combination of Amsterdam School and Nieuwe Zakelijkheid ('New Objectivity') and is best expressed in his housing in the Dapperbuurt from 1974. This neighbourhood was built rapidly and cheaply in the late 19th century, and by the late 1960s it was in an appalling condition. A plan from 1972 envisaged the almost total demolition and reconstruction of the district on the basis of a new system of building plots. Well-organised opposition prevented implementation of this plan, except for one project: Dunnebie's scheme for the Roomtuintjes.

Gerard de Klerk (diploma 1958) was similar to Dunnebie in that his architecture lacked an outspoken character. With his big, commercial architecture office he was responsible for the former Public Library on Prinsengracht and a series of hotels. De Klerk was not afraid of big volumes either, as is clearly evident in his Marriott Hotel from 1975. It was built on the Leidsebosje, on a site previously occupied by a protestant church with a dome. With Toon ter Braak one must also mention the colleagues with whom he associated in the mid-1950s: Dick Apon, Johan van den Berg and Wim Tromp (bureau ABBT). They were taught by architects like Van Tijen, Maaskant and Van den Broek & Bakema, and all of them graduated from the academy in the years 1954-1956. In the period 1959-1963 Dick Apon was also involved with Forum magazine. In the Kattenburg district Ter Braak and company were able to complete a very big housing project because practically the whole island had already been demolished in the late 1960s. The new district, built between 1971 and 1976, was totally dissimilar to typologies in the centre of Amsterdam. Even during construction it was decided that the process of urban renewal should not continue along these lines.

**J. Dunnebier**  
**Roomtuintjes**  
(1974)



**P. de Ley,**  
**J. van den Bout**  
**Housing**  
**Bickerseiland**  
(1977)





### Urban renewal new style

The unbridled increase in scale could not, of course, be halted that easily. A pair of colossal office blocks built on Bickerseiland in the early 1970s bore no relationship to the intricate urban fabric of the surroundings. But it was precisely the plans for new development based on the existing structure that were supposed to be pioneering.

Social developments in the 1960s and 1970s nurtured that turnaround. Protests increased, especially on account of the feeling that fundamental changes were actually possible. This resulted in protests all over the world. The Vietnam demonstrations and events of May '68 were international milestones, while the Provo and Kabouter movements played significant roles in Amsterdam. A wave of democracy swept through education. Key themes were freedom of development and social responsibility.

Under the influence of these events, the attitude of students at the Academy of Architecture also changed. As politicians became aware of the need to deal with housing issues ('building for the neighbourhood'), academy students were among the first to turn words into deeds. They supported residents who had a say in zoning plans, plans intended to improve the existing urban structure gradually.

In this context, momentous events took place in the early 1970s. In 1972 a new zoning plan for the Jordaan district based on the existing structure of the neighbourhood was adopted, and in 1973 the plan to drive a four-lane road through the Haarlemmer district was abandoned. Moreover, the proposal for a road between Weesperstraat and Central Station was dropped, which meant that the reconstruction plan for the Nieuwmarkt district dating from 1953 was also ditched.

The resulting complexes on Bickerseiland, along the Nieuwe Houttuinen and on the Zuiderkerkhof, are examples of lengthy projects in which protests against earlier plans acquired tangible form. The architects of these projects knew one another from the Academy of Architecture.

For years Paul de Ley (diploma 1972) and Theo Bosch met in the evenings at the academy after finishing work at the office of Aldo van Eyck. In 1970, together with fellow student Van den Bout, De Ley started working with residents on the careful integration of housing on Bickerseiland. They graduated with the project

T. Bosch  
Pentagon  
(1983)



A. van Herk,  
C. Nagelkerke  
Nieuwe Houttuinen  
(1982)



in 1976, and three years later the first eighteen dwellings were completed. De Ley immediately began working on a second cluster of nineteen dwellings. In the meantime he started his own office, initially accommodated within Van Eyck's office and later within that of Theo Bosch for a period.

Before he entered the academy, Theo Bosch had earned his secondary diploma in 1966 under Dick Apon, the same Apon who was involved in the Kattenburg housing scheme. He went to work for Van Eyck, thus laying the foundations for what in the 1970s would become the office of Van Eyck & Bosch. He graduated in 1973 with a plan for the Jordaan district; his mentor was the urban designer Hans Davidson, the author of the commended Jordaan Zoning Plan. This graduation plan would later result in the completion of new development along and around Palmdwarsstraat. The Pentagon, one of the infill schemes of the revised reconstruction plan by Van Eyck & Bosch for the Nieuwmarkt district, was finished in the year Van Eyck and Bosch parted company.

Arne van Herk and Cees Nagelkerke were less involved in the circle of people around Van Eyck. They met in the first half of the 1970s at the academy. After graduating in 1976 they formed the office of Van Herk & Nagelkerke and immediately put into practice what they had learned at the academy. They raised the issue of the future of what was at that time a rather dilapidated city — not a monument but a dynamic entity. An expression of that was their radical proposal to build an elongated housing structure at Nieuwe Houttuinen on the strip between Haarlemmerplein and Central Station and give it an urban character again at one stroke.

### **Back in shape!**

Design played scarcely any role in architecture in the years of 'building for the neighbourhood'. But the Netherlands recovered from the recession and the prestige of architects — especially young ones! — rose again in the 1980s. All over Amsterdam building activity was in evidence. The establishment of a number of companies along the A10 motorway spawned the introduction of the term 'Zuidas', and plans for the Omval and the banks of the IJ were on the drawing boards. The Archiprix Foundation was set up in 1985, and a year later ARCAM was founded. Furthermore, the first 'Biennale for Young Dutch Architects' was held in Amsterdam in 1983 and featured work by, among

**K. van Velzen**  
Rijksakademie voor  
Beeldende Kunsten  
(1992)







**B. Doedens**  
Terrain RWZI  
(2006)



**P. McCabe**  
Façade gardens  
(2005)

J. Mollink  
Bike shed  
(2005)



H. van der Made  
Oostelijke  
Handelskade  
(1995-2008)



others, Jan Benthem, Mels Crouwel, Jo Coenen, Frits van Dongen, Sjoerd Soeters and Koen van Velsen — the established names of today.

Van Velsen graduated that year from the academy and was already building at the time. Sjoerd Soeters, coordinator of the Architecture Department, considered Van Velsen a full-fledged colleague even while he was still a student. Van Velsen worked on the renovation of and extension to the Kavalerie Barracks on Sarphatistraat, which would become home to the Rijksakademie voor Beeldende Kunsten in 1992. The studios and the workshops were placed in the old barracks and the courtyard acquired two towers of glass and steel for the entrance, the offices and a library. This project illustrates a renewed awareness that architecture is more than a collection of blocks that have to be arranged by resident groups, that architecture is more than function alone. Aesthetics, form, concept and idea became accepted notions again for the first time in ages. In addition, the Academy of Architecture allowed students of architecture, urbanism and landscape architecture to work together to offer a new understanding of scale, time and function. The discipline of landscape architecture was relatively new and broadened from forestry management and tree cultivation to encompass the design of industrial parks, housing districts, waterways and silt depots.

Bruno Doedens graduated from the academy as a landscape architect in 1991 and early this century he drew up the landscape plan for the site of the new sewage treatment plant in the western harbour district designed by Laurens Jan ten Kate (head of the Architecture Department in the period 1998-2002). Using sturdy pine trees, charming pools, delicate blossoms and butterfly bushes, Doedens deliberately sought a contrast with the kilometres-long infrastructure of tall white tanks. The design was not a planting scheme or a park design but a well-considered ensemble of buildings, infrastructure and nature development. Urban designer Hans van der Made (graduated in 1988) tackled the issues of time and scale in a totally different way in the redevelopment of the southern banks of the IJ. In 1996, after earlier unsuccessful plans, he started drawing up proposals at the Department of Physical Planning for living, working and culture on the narrow, abandoned strip of dockland between

the railway tracks and the IJ. At the time the computer was still seldom used, so Van de Made made sketches and models. He was able to estimate what the area would be like if some warehouses were retained, if residential blocks were grouped in high densities, if height accents were added and, especially, if eye-catchers like Muziekgebouw aan het IJ and Bimhuis were included. The departing and arriving passengers and freight at the cruise terminal have made the infrastructure situation along the Piet Heinkade extremely complex. Various architects designed the individual sites within the urban plan, and work continues today on the blocks that are intended to strengthen the identity and solid character of the port architecture.

### **Spectacularly small**

As the turn of the millennium approached the economy flourished. Commissions for housing, especially in Vinex districts, were numerous, but different and foreign commissions enjoyed greater prestige. Dutch design became an export product thanks to the SUPERDUTCH architects like Francine Houben, Ben van Berkel, Winy Maas and Rem Koolhaas (all of whom were active at the academy during this period as speaker or teacher). Young architects from all over the world wanted to learn the profession in Dutch offices. The academy students are predominantly Dutch, but an increasing number of nationalities come together in the offices where they work. The arrival of the internet in the mid-1990s facilitated access to information all over the world, and study tours included destinations further and further afield — no longer to France in a Citroen 2CV but to America, Japan and Brazil.

Increased prosperity meant clients were more willing to experiment. Young architects in particular could complete exceptional, small or temporary projects characterised by audacity, a certain light-heartedness, and once more a central role for occupants.

In that framework the concept that Rob Wagemans (diploma 2004) devised for the Supperclub (2000) had a huge impact. The design was overpowering yet totally subservient. The design of the club compellingly prescribes the correct behaviour and produces an experience that speaks to all the senses. But once the music, the lighting and the visitors take possession of the space, the design forms no more than a backdrop, an empty container in which everything is possible.



A 'non-building' was how Joep Mollink (diploma 2003) described the small, glass, very carefully detailed object he designed for the Pontplein in North Amsterdam. The building offered access to a basement, which cannot be described as a building either. These two non-building volumes together form the first fully automatic underground bike shed in the Netherlands. The object acknowledges its surroundings with a glazed side to the IJ and a brickwork side to the Tolhuistuin.

Not a design in the true sense but indisputably the intervention of a designer is the project on Bankastraat by landscape architect Patrick McCabe (diploma 2003). After the renovation of the housing was completed here in 2005, he took the initiative to complete a series of façade gardens. He generated enthusiasm with model gardens, residents chose their own plants, and a team of landscape architects and gardeners were on hand to help. The initiative, in all its simplicity, turned out to be a great success. A garden group has now been set up and Bankastraat is a street of flowers and greenery where contact among neighbours is intense.

The most recent Amsterdam designs by former academy students are a long way from the Gesamtkunst envisaged by the founders of the Hooger Bouwkunst Onderricht. Nonetheless, in contemporary practice the three disciplines taught at the academy are inextricably linked to one another. Clear-cut architecture movements, or disputes between their adherents, are no longer an issue in current architectural education, but discussions about what interventions are needed to maintain the vitality of the city are still stimulated. The Amsterdam metropolitan area wants to develop in a dynamic and durable manner and faces huge operations to increase density in which existing urban and rural structures will have to be assessed, in which large-scale infrastructure projects are under construction and new ones are in the pipeline. These are the main challenges that the current crops of graduates from the Academy of Architecture are being prepared to tackle.

*With thanks to Maarten Kloos, Indira van 't Klooster, Lieselore Maes, Jeroen Schilt and Dave Wendt.*



PRESENT

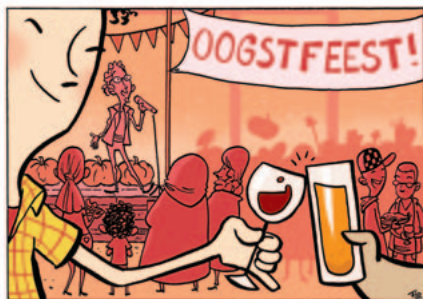




# A gift to the city

JORD DEN HOLLANDER

The 2008 centenary was a lavish celebration that included a reunion, presentations, a wonderful publication, a symposium, excursions and the party of the century. Plenty of events. But even that wasn't enough. Wouldn't this be the perfect occasion to make a documentary about the centenarian? The illustrious history of the academy on the silver screen! So Aart Oxenaar called Jord den Hollander, architect and film-maker, to discuss the matter. An interview with Jord den Hollander about a gift to the city.



*That was two years ago. How's the film progressing?*

No, that film isn't going to happen. But the first talk with Aart Oxenaar and current faculty manager Dorien Letschert in August 2008 led to a much better idea.

*Even better than a documentary?*

Yes, that's right. They had already spoken to film and television producer IDTV about a film and had suggested me as director. I then spoke with IDTV and we sat philosophising about the approach. Plenty of possibilities of course. Many famous architects have passed through the academy and almost all of them have been involved with some much-discussed or significant project or other in Amsterdam. We could, for example, make a portrait of the academy through the work of these architects. Archival footage, comments from alumni still living. A wonderful portrait of an era would emerge of its own accord. But would that be exciting enough for an outsider? Or would it do justice to the academy? We also considered featuring a number of young architects and interspersing that with work by older generations. But we couldn't really decide. You have to remember that making a film is a relatively costly endeavour and external funding usually has to be found. The film also had to serve a bigger objective than just the public of the academy. Research, searching through archives, filming and editing can take up to a year and a half. On top of that, I was wary of indulging in navel-gazing, the academy making a film about itself on its birthday. That would be like giving yourself a gift.

*But you mentioned a better idea.*

I thought: why don't we give something to the city? All those parties and reviews at the academy are great fun of course, but it would be much better if the academy demonstrated its involvement with the city, and did it in a way the average neighbourhood resident understood. Most people do not of course think so explicitly about their city in the way a designer does. They know the square around the corner, where they can walk the dog, and complain about the leaky roof of the neighbourhood centre. Since students often use Amsterdam as a laboratory for their projects, they develop a degree of involvement with the city — but that involvement is more one of intellectual detachment. The majority of people in Amsterdam don't even know that the Academy of Architecture is located behind those old façades on Waterlooplein, never mind that they know what goes on inside.

*And thus the gift to the city emerged.*

Yes, December, the month for giving gifts, was fast approaching and that made a nice connection. The idea was simple: we ask residents what they would like to see built in their neighbourhood or street — a meeting point, a shared playing field, a seat near the water, a kiosk where you can get a coffee... The sort of small additions that make a neighbourhood more social and pleasant and make a real contribution to the city. From these submissions we would then let a jury select the most appealing idea, after which academy students would have to make a design for it. And a public jury would then select the best design.

*Were those residents saddled with a design that they couldn't get built?*

No, the result would of course be the real gift. The academy would then make an effort to achieve the plan. And my aim was that the students themselves would help with the building work. That could be part of a workshop, or count as extra study credits.

It's not as if students aren't busy enough as it is, with a job and a study. They're not exactly waiting for a DIY weekend for a bunch of people in the Baarsjes who want a free playground. The plan was based precisely on the idea of broadening the study. Students were challenged to come up with original yet realistic designs. And they would elaborate the designs together with residents. The result would be an exchange with the city that inspired all involved. After all, it's really about building. And there's too little of that at the academy. If you see the fun that students have in the summer workshops with Machiel Spaan, where they really do have to build with their hands!

In that regard I was very inspired by the architect Samuel Mockbee and the Rural Studio he set up. At the University of Auburn in Alabama (US), he developed a programme to enable students to build all sorts of things for the poorest inhabitants of Alabama, in the area around Hale County. Houses, fire stations, schools, parks, community centres. The most wonderful projects were developed in consultation with people who had never thought about architecture before, people whose greatest wish was for nothing more than a roof over

their heads. And they were built by the students themselves, sometimes together with residents.

So it works both ways: the students are challenged to come up with not only beautiful but also feasible designs and, at the same time, develop greater social awareness by working with the poorest people in the United States.

*Surely you don't expect academy students to become full-time construction workers?*

That's not necessary. At Rural Studio they are assisted by carpenters and builders. What it's really about is building something yourself and engaging with the people who live there. That results in more understanding among all parties for everyone else involved. The poor residents are now proud of their architecture; it has given them a greater sense of self-esteem. And the students are educated not only about technology but also society.

*Did you receive many applications for that gift to the city?*

After we placed a notice in some local newspapers we received about thirty applications, varying from playgrounds for schools and seats in the neighbourhood to meeting spaces. We assessed the social and architectural relevance with a small jury (Sandra Chedi, Suzanne Heering, Machiel Spaan, Jord den Hollander, Arjan van Ruyven) and checked whether the projects were feasible. By then we had appointed Arjan van Ruyven as a real project manager. There was a nice application for a mobile cinema for showing all sorts of informative films to people from the forty deprived neighbourhoods that the government had selected for



special attention. We discussed this submission for a long time but in the end opted for a project in Geuzenveld. A group of artists had already set up a project about food with the residents. Now they wanted a meeting room with a greenhouse where residents could grow their own vegetables. A couple of times a year they could gather here for a group meal with the harvest from the gardens. We chose this project because we felt that the application touched many current issues in the city — food, social cohesion, problems in deprived neighbourhoods.

*And it's been built.*

Hold on a moment. Not so fast. A design brief was then drawn up at the academy and six teams of students got to work. Conversations with residents, visits to the area, thinking about the presentation — it all had to happen at breakneck speed. The Bijenkorf department store agreed to display the six projects in its shop windows. You couldn't ask for a better opportunity than that to present the academy to a large audience. The people of Amsterdam could vote for the best project. Voting forms were available in the Bijenkorf and you could cast your vote by depositing the form in one of the big vote boxes. It was a serious affair. Those presentations were fantastic. They revealed the inventive ability of students. The models and drawings were made in such a way that non-professionals could also understand the projects. In that sense the experiment had already succeeded. The winning group consisted of Pauline Wieringa, Hilda van Gortel, Annemarijn Haarink, Bas Schuit, Wouter Schipper-Ott and Sebastian

van Berkel. And by then the local council had agreed that the project would actually be built.

*But the question was: has it been built?*

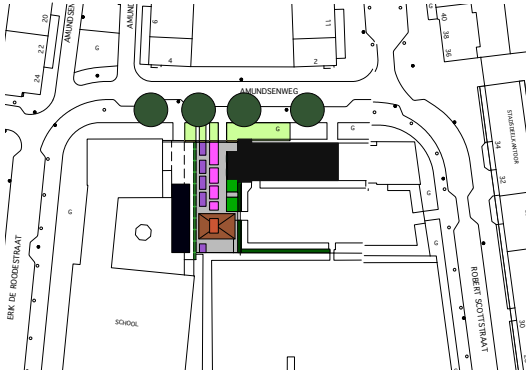
There you go again. There are so many uncertainties about the site where the project was planned that construction is impossible there for the time being. Although the local exhibition of the projects received a lot of support from both residents and officials, construction has been postponed for the present. A part of it may be carried out temporarily on another site to test the viability of the idea.

*Unsuccessful project?*

It would of course have been much better if the plan had already been built. But then again, reality isn't as straightforward as you imagine in all your initial optimism. That's something we can learn from. But luckily there are plenty of positives. With this project the academy has demonstrated its social side to the city. And that grassroots way of working, starting with the wishes of residents instead of projecting spectacular projects on the city, has gone down well. The gift to the city generated a lot of debate within the academy about the role of architectural education within society. What difference can architects make? Or, put it another way, what is the social significance of the architect? In the current crisis, when large-scale projects are no longer a given, the focus is turning again to the city. In the coming years the profession will be determined to a large extent by coherence in the city, attention for small-scale interventions, social cohesion, and also the dynamics of

cultural and economic diversity. In that sense this project has set an example for how you can participate within the academy.

*That would have made for a good film.*  
I thought about that too of course, and I've shot a lot of material. We have followed the different phases of the project up to now — the presentations of the schemes for the Bijenkorf, the jury deliberations, the presentations at the start. At the back of my mind I was always thinking that if that project is built soon, we have some great film footage about how such a project comes about. A film about how people work and think with the academy, but also about what the relevance can be for the city. The film can of course only be made once the greenhouse has been built and we can see how it functions. Then we'll have documented the interplay between academy and city nicely. And that'll be a gift to both of them.



### How does yours grow?

The idea of our group for the Gift to the City is to offer the Robert Scott neighbourhood a place of gathering in the form of a greenhouse, and to involve neighbourhood residents as much as possible. Besides the greenhouse the participating residents also get a present of a balcony box that acts as a miniature herb garden, thereby enlarging the total area of the cultivated ground.

The size of the balcony boxes is 20 by 60 cm and based on square-metre gardening, a concept whereby urban residents can cultivate some of their fruit and vegetables in small gardens. The size of these boxes can be found repeatedly in the raised herb-garden plots in and around the greenhouse. What's more, the growth cycle of the supplied balcony boxes ensures that the residents come together at set times to share cuttings or to pot plants again in the bare ground of the neighbourhood greenhouse. The miniature herb gardens are also used in the immediate surroundings of the neighbourhood greenhouse as an extension of the herb garden.

The greenhouse is raised on columns to form a neighbourhood landmark, but this also means it has just one entrance and is socially safer. The material of the timber balcony boxes and the timber-enclosed plant areas returns in the columns of the greenhouse. Different timber connections mean that the structure can be easily dismantled and moved to another site.

The greenhouse itself consists of two standard greenhouses, one of which serves as a meeting point and 'living room' and the other is used for cultivating plants. Each year a harvest feast with world recipes is organised and all neighbourhood residents can take part, further emphasising the function of the greenhouse as a place of encounter for the neighbourhood.

Pauline Wieringa







# Berlage revisited

Maurits de Hoog

In 1992 the Year of Berlage Foundation marked the 75th anniversary of Plan Zuid with a series of events. Under the chairmanship of the legendary Piet Kranenberg the foundation organised an exhibition in the City Archive, commissioned design studies and held a well-attended congress at the RAI convention centre entitled *A Future for Berlage's Amsterdam Zuid*<sup>1</sup>. In the introduction to the accompanying catalogue Roel de Wit concisely summarised the general appreciation for Berlage's plan at that time as 'a historic monument of urban design from which Amsterdam has derived great honour and where the quality of housing and living is still good'. 'Preservation and repair' and 'a careful design of public space' were the themes that, following the great esteem in which the plan was held, were discussed at the congress.

Students at the Amsterdam Academy of Architecture studied Plan Zuid again in 2008 as part of the centenary celebration and in many cases arrived at different conclusions and often critical opinions. Hendrik Petrus Berlage was one of the founding fathers of the academy and is considered by many as the most important Dutch architect and urban designer of the 20th century. Is this esteem on the wane?

1

Karin Gaillard, Betsy Dokter  
(ed.): *Berlage en Amsterdam Zuid*,  
Amsterdam/Rotterdam 1992.  
Robert Elfrink, Donald Lambert,  
Piet Polderman (ed.): *Berlage en  
de toekomst van Amsterdam Zuid*,  
Rotterdam 1992.

### **The rediscovery of Berlage's work in the 1970s and 1980s**

In a short film on the website *Geheugen van Plan Zuid* we see film footage of Berlage at the opening of the Berlage Bridge in 1932, and we hear a lofty speech by Mayor De Vlugt. More fascinating are the scenes of the crowd as they rush across the bridge once the mayor lowers the ramp with the push of a button. In a comparable manner, this new part of the city was appropriated in the 1920s and 1930s by the people of the city: by well-to-do burghers around Minervalaan; by the new middle class and emancipated workers in districts such as P.L. Takbuurt, Rivierenbuurt and Olympiabuur; by German refugees around Beethovenstraat; and by sportsmen and women and sports fans of course, with the Olympic Stadium as undisputed icon. The completion of the first streets, bridges and blocks instilled pride in the people of Amsterdam for this new city district, which came to be known in common parlance as Plan Zuid. Few pieces of city are referred to by the word 'plan'. Plan Zuid shares the honour with the Bosplan (Dutch for 'forest plan'), later known as the Amsterdamse Bos, and with the Plan Van Gool on the north bank of the IJ,

the experimental housing district built in the 1960s near Buikslotermeerplein.

Remarkably, the initial academic interest in and recognition for Plan Zuid came from abroad. In the 1960s and 1970s Pieter Singelenberg and Wessel Reinink published their monumental studies on the work of Berlage, but they focused largely on his architectural work, on the break with the 19th century and the radical innovations in construction, materials and architectural expression in Berlage's designs for the Stock Exchange, the St. Hubertus hunting lodge in Hoenderloo and De Nederlanden office building and the Gemeente Museum in The Hague<sup>2</sup>. A number of Italians were the first to establish a link between Berlage's architectural and urban innovations. The standard work *Architettura Moderna in Olanda 1900-1940* from 1968 by Giovanni Fanelli argues that this relationship stems from our planning tradition and thinking in terms of typologies<sup>3</sup>. According to Fanelli, the highly imaginative experiments of the Amsterdam School architects, such as Michel de Klerk, Jan van der Mey, Piet Kramer and Jan Boterenbrood, illustrate the possibilities offered by the new design



2

Pieter Singelenberg: *Eenige beschouwingen over de Beurs van Berlage*, Bulletin KNOB XII, jaargang VI, 1959. Pieter Singelenberg: *H.P. Berlage. Idea and Style. The quest for Modern Architecture*, Utrecht 1972. Adriaan Wessel Reinink: *Amsterdam en de Beurs van Berlage, reacties van tijdgenoten*, The Hague 1975. See also the dissertation by Manfred Bock: *Anfänge einer neuen Architektur*, The Hague 1983

3

Giovanni Fanelli: *Architettura Moderna in Olanda 1900-1940*, Florence 1968. Translated by A.E. van Helsdingen-Ivens, revised and adapted by Wim de Wit as: *Moderne architectuur in Nederland 1900-1940*, The Hague 1978.

task that Berlage formulated for the urban building block.

The establishment of the Nederlands Documentatiecentrum voor de Bouwkunst ('Dutch Documentation Centre for Architecture', or NDB) at the start of the 1970s made possible a systematic study of the records of these early 20th-century architects: a wonderful opportunity for a new generation of art historians, among them Fons Asselbergs, Manfred Bock, Vincent van Rossem, Wim de Wit and Auke van der Woud. The result, some years later, was a series of pioneering public exhibitions. In 1975, for example, Berlage's work was exhibited at the Gemeente Museum in The Hague, and the work of the Amsterdam School architects was shown in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam<sup>4</sup>.

A year earlier the blocks designed by De Klerk and Kramer for De Dageraad housing association in P.L. Takbuurt were earmarked as national historic monuments on account of their 'exceptional architectural quality'.<sup>5</sup>

The most well-wrought analysis of the qualities of Berlage's Plan Zuid from this period of reassessment was *Formes urbaines* by the French architects Jean Castex, Jean-Charles

Depaule and Philippe Panerai from 1977<sup>6</sup>. Using simple diagrams and sections they illustrated the general plan composition and pointed out the strength of the design and the architectural elaboration by such architects as De Klerk and Kramer. They considered Plan Zuid as a plan that anticipated a pre-eminently urban architecture. The composition, spatial forms and hierarchy of avenues, streets, squares and canals in the plan, combined with the principle of perimeter blocks with predetermined building alignments, challenged architects to articulate the position of the block within the city, the coherence and the hierarchy in the design of the building block. This applied to the composition, sculptural quality and detailing of the ground floor, the façade surface, roof edges and corners, as well as the setting and the effect of non-residential functions such as schools and shops. In addition, they extensively discussed the position of the plan within the city. The main elements of Plan Zuid made it very autonomous spatially and separated it from the city by a network of canals, comparable to the Singelgracht around the city centre. At the same time, a sophisticated network of secondary city streets connected the plan to the



4 M. Bock, K. Broos, P. Singelenberg: *H.P. Berlage, bouwmeester 1856-1934*, The Hague 1975. Ellinoor Bergvelt (ed.): *Amsterdamse school 1910-1930*, Amsterdam 1975. Works by such figures as De Bazel, Kromhout, Lauweriks were exhibited that same year in Amsterdam. The Kröller-Müller Museum staged the exhibition 'Americana' on the relationship in architecture between the Netherlands and America during the period 1880-1930.

5 See, among others, [www.bma.amsterdam.nl](http://www.bma.amsterdam.nl)

6 Jean Castex, Jean-Charles Depaule, Philippe Panerai: *Formes urbaines, de l'ilot a la barre*, Paris 1977. Translated into Dutch by Jan Hoffmans and Henk Hoeks: *De rationele stad, Van bouwblok tot wooneenheid*, Nijmegen 1985.

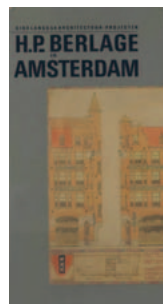
existing city.<sup>7</sup> Some years later a book appeared called *Funzione e Senso, Architettura-Casa-Citta, Olanda 1870-1940*, a catalogue to the eponymous travelling exhibition and a product of the collaboration between the NDB and young Italian architectural historians such as Maristella Casciato, Sergio Polano and Umberto Barbieri.<sup>8</sup> This was followed by an architectural guide entitled *Berlage en Amsterdam* that included an overview of a large number of projects in South Amsterdam.<sup>9</sup> And in 1987 the Italian and English editions of Berlage's *Complete Works* turned Plan Zuid definitively into a historic monument.<sup>10</sup>

### **1992: Berlage year**

In 1992 the interest in and appreciation for the work of Berlage and Plan Zuid culminated in activities to mark the Berlage Year. The most important question now was how to properly deal with a historic monument. The most challenging part of the festivities was without doubt the series of commissioned design studies. Donald Lambert was asked to devise a strategy to deal with public space.<sup>11</sup> Designs were drawn up for four case studies: the transformation of a building block on the site of the Lekstraat tram depot, the design of

public space around Maasstraat and Olympiaplein and finally an 'urban design' around the Muzenplein, right in the heart of South Amsterdam. Two offices worked on each case.

Lambert concurred with the interpretation of Castex and colleagues. According to him, the urban quality lay in the combination of a strong primary structure with ensembles of perimeter blocks. His strategy for public space enlarged on this, arguing in favour of restoring the continuity of the monumental profiles with continuous rows of trees and clearly defined squares and improving the possibilities for using squares and shopping streets by measures such as solving the parking problem. Analogous to that, guidelines were drawn up to ensure the continuity of façade walls along the main routes and to strengthen the internal structure of the ensembles. Special attention was devoted to existing and proposed pavilions, such as the existing rowing sheds. Lambert considered this approach of particular importance for those locations where 'Plan Zuid was never finished. There were opportunities here to enrich the neighbourhood with contemporary urban interventions.' That raised an



7 The theme of autonomy and coherence in Plan Zuid was further analysed by Rein Geurtsen in 1991 within the framework of his commentary on the project for Mercatorplein. See: Rein Geurtsen, Max van Rooy: *Een gat in de ruimte, Berlage's Mercatorplein en de reconstructie van een toren*, Amsterdam 1991.

8 Maristella Casciato: *Funzione e senso, Architettura-Casa-Citta, Olanda 1880-1940*, Turin 1979.

9 Manfred Bock, Jet Collee, Hester Coucke; Maarten Kloos (ed.): *H.P. Berlage en Amsterdam*, gids langs 54 architectuurprojecten, Amsterdam 1987.

10 Sergio Polano: *Hendrik Petrus Berlage, Opera completa*, Milan 1987; later published in English as: *Hendrik Petrus Berlage, Complete Works*, New York 1988.

11 Donald Lambert, Matthijs de Boer: *Strategische aanpak van de openbare ruimte in Plan-Zuid*, in: *Berlage en de toekomst van Amsterdam Zuid*, Rotterdam 1992.



issue that had scarcely been touched upon in architectural studies up to that point, namely that the whole southern section of Plan Zuid was built according to a modified plan. The series of parks from the water area in the centre of the plan to the Royal Villa on the Amstel had disappeared; the wide avenue, which was to connect the two parts of the plan to the south, was not continuous; the garden village was dilapidated and so on. Lambert did not elaborate on this, however. Vincent van Rossem did address this issue in the exhibition catalogue.<sup>12</sup> He showed that the alterations were the result of a whole series of revisions of Berlage's plan by Cornelis van Eesteren. Van Eesteren had visited Berlin and Paris in the early 1920s and made the acquaintance of all sorts of artists and architects from the international avant-garde. In 1928 he joined the newly established City Development Section of the Public Works Department. That offered him the possibility to test new ideas for the composition, form and development of the city. Although Van Eesteren and his Dutch functionalist colleagues were inspired by Berlage, many of them at the time considered Plan Zuid to be a hopelessly outdated plan. In their periodical *De 8 en Opbouw* they

emphatically opposed the 'dressed-up façades' of the Amsterdam School and the reign of terror conducted by the Beauty Committee and the later Committee Zuid. Instead of bricks and roof tiles, they used glass, steel and concrete and experimented with new housing and block forms.

Although they received few chances to build in Plan Zuid, the area boasts some splendid examples of their work, including the Open-Air School by Jan Duiker, the Skyscraper by Jan F. Staal, the studio houses on Zomerdijkstraat by Zanstra, Giessen and Sijmons, the drive-in dwellings by Mart Stam and the Citroën garages by Jan Wils. It is remarkable that almost all these buildings harmonised effortlessly with the structure of Plan Zuid despite their deviating architecture. That was even true of a radical building like the Open-Air School. The gateway structure in the façade wall of the surrounding block established a natural relation with the surroundings. All the buildings mentioned are now recognised as national historic monuments.

Van Eesteren went a step further. In the plans for the southern section of the Rivierenbuurt and for the area around the Prinses Irenestraat, the Berlagian perimeter blocks were

12

Vincent van Rossem: Een keerpunt in de Nederlandse stedenbouw: Plan Zuid, in: *Berlage en de toekomst van Amsterdam Zuid*. Rotterdam 1992.



Plan Zuid as designed by H.P. Berlage



Plan Zuid as it was finally realised

swapped for half-open and open blocks, and the road profiles were widened and laid out asymmetrically. New roads were planned to accommodate regional traffic, and the Beatrix Park and RAI convention centre were positioned in the middle of Plan Zuid. The Artists' House in the 'knot', where all lines converge and are tied together, was replaced by the Apollo Hall and the eponymously named hotel. Two maps show the alterations clearly. The historic monument lost much of its splendour as a result.

### **1992 case studies**

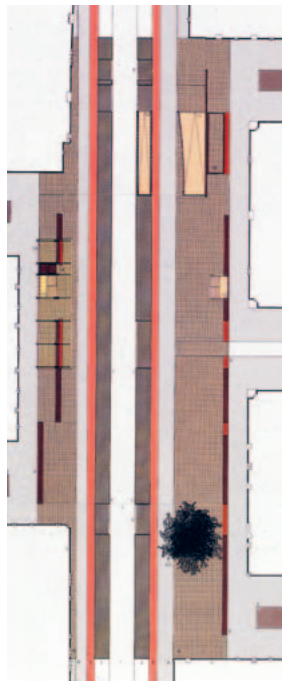
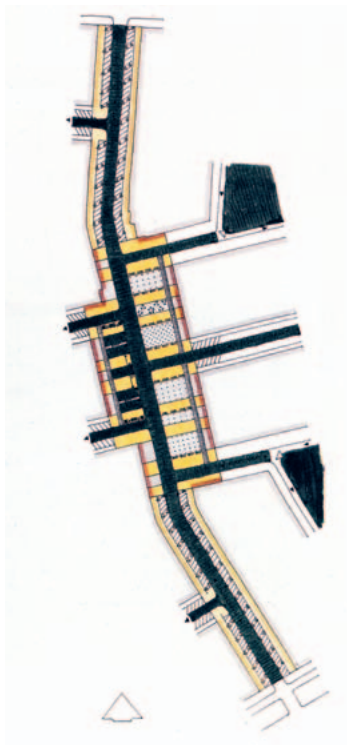
It is striking to see how radical the design of the case studies dealt with the much-praised Berlagian qualities and devoted themselves in earnest to what in the catalogue is termed 'contemporary renewal'. In the study for the Lekstraat tram depot Claus en Kaan Architecten sought a direct confrontation. They added a new form to the Berlagian ensemble and linked up with the characteristics of South Amsterdam in terms of building type and height. Along the Amsteldijk, however, they argued for a reassessment of the so-called 'Ape Rock', the name given to the Rivierstaete office building by Maaskant, and for an intervention that

would do justice to the scale of the city and river. They placed a freely formed building and a tall slab, which marked the entrance to the Vrijheidslaan, on a raised terrace on the Amsteldijk. Izak Salomons was more restrained. He, too, opted for a residential terrace but retained the splendid structures by Rutgers and Boterenbrood. Instead, he sought renewal in the introduction of a whole series of new housing types and space for studios and businesses. In the Muzenplein case study both Loof & van Stigt and Teun Koolhaas Associates (TKA) proposed to demolish the Apollohal and replace it with new cultural amenities. In the exhibition catalogue Michael van Gessel described the building by Boeken as 'a poorly situated and loveless building'. In both designs, extending the water area was seized upon as a way to make the complicated junction more legible. The articulated volumes in the design by Loof & Van Stigt contrasted with the plasticity of curved forms in the TKA design. The designers of public space also proposed radical moves. In the Maasstraat case study the traditional Berlagian grass verges and rows of trees along the shopping street disappeared. They were replaced by hard-surfaced, more urban street

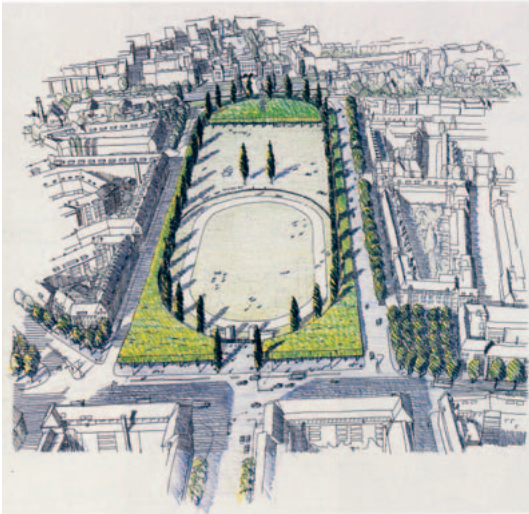
**Location Lekstraat**  
 design by Claus en  
 Kaan Architecten  
**Location Lekstraat**  
 design by Izak  
 Salomons



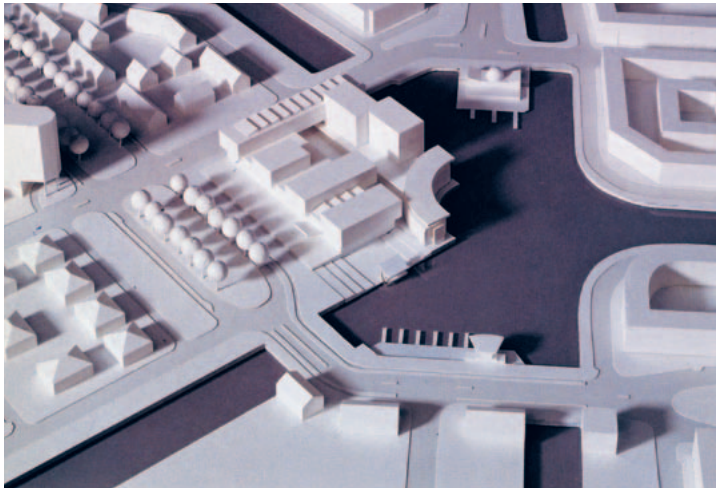
**Location Maasstraat**  
 design by Mick  
 Witsenburg  
**Location Maasstraat**  
 design by BOA (Frans  
 van der Steen)



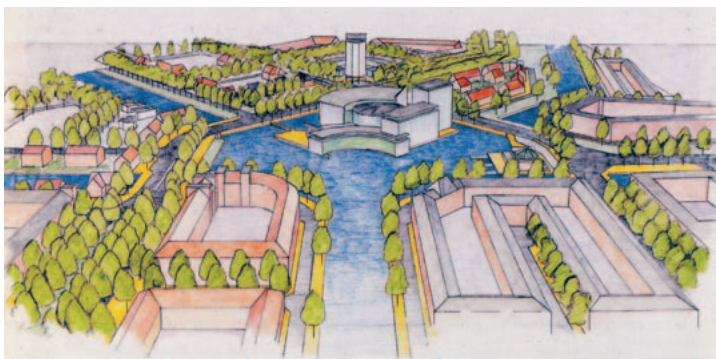




**Location**  
**Olympiaplein**  
 design by Buro  
 Sant en Co (Edwin  
 Santhagens)  
**Location**  
**Olympiaplein**  
 design by Wouter Reh



**Location Muzenplein**  
 design by Loof &  
 Van Stigt  
**Location Muzenplein**  
 design by Teun  
 Koolhaas Associates



furniture: Dutch clinkers, simple light fittings, concrete seating edges, a canopy of trees and a pergola. The designs differed in terms of parking. Miek Witsenburg reorganised the ground plane, and Frans van der Steen demonstrated that a parking garage beneath the square was a genuine improvement. In the redesigns for the Olympiaplein case study by Edwin Santhagens and Wouter Reh, the sports grounds were largely made public. Both designers replanted the edges of the central space: Santhagens made one big space and demolished the Van Heutz Monument; Reh created a series of squares and reused what was left of the monument in the process. There turned out to be a surprising difference in appreciation after 75 years of Plan Zuid. High recognition among historians and policy makers contrasted by a somewhat ambiguous attitude among designers. The approach by Claus en Kaan was certainly very radical and modernist, but the others, too, did not eschew vigorous interventions and attempted to introduce new design elements. The fact that Plan Zuid was only partially realised and heavily revised by Van Eesteren was raised for the first time. This question was only

made the explicit subject of study in the assignment for the Muzenplein. Both Van Loof & Stigt and TKA proposed to demolish the Apollohal and to redefine this important location in Zuid, both programmatically and spatially. They took the monument seriously, but didn't resort to Berlagian tools. Here we see the first example of an approach that Fons Asselbergs would later coin 'preservation through development'.

### **2008 student plans**

With the academy students in 2008, this principle of 'preservation through development' seemed to be fully internalised, but most striking was that criticism of the modernist experiments was much more precise.

The assignment formulated for first-year students stuck close to Berlage. Just as with the two public space assignments in 1992, the structuring elements were redesigned with a contemporary repertoire and a contemporary programme. The 'Object' assignment called for the design of new pavilions: an inspiring location for designers, a cooking and baking shop, a small restaurant, an 'art box', a sauna, and a luxury holiday home in the city for six people. These

objects livened things up and also strengthened the spatial effect of elements of Plan Zuid. That could be achieved with 'modernist' tools such as those adopted by Femke Poppinga in her redesign of the bridge buildings by Piet Kramer at the entrance to Plan Zuid. (project 1) There were also a lot of 'blobby' pavilions. These were independent architectural elements though some, like the design by Meritxell Blanco Diaz for the transition from Victorieplein to Churchillaan, had a clever urban-design effect. (project 2) Something similar applied to the projects drawn up for the 'Place' assignment. Here public space itself was tackled: the avenues in Zuid, the water at Muzenplein, Minervaplein. The meaning of the historic monument at the scale of Zuid as a whole was undisputed, but the structuring elements themselves were due an upgrade in terms of design. The dominance of car traffic was addressed in different projects. The design by Astrid Bennink for Minervalaan and Minervaplein illustrated what that can mean for daily use by pedestrians and cyclists. (project 3) The questions addressed in the designs for Churchillaan by Graham Kolk and Marijke van Suijdam resulted in an

immediate sequel. (project 4, 5) At the instigation of Cintha van Heeswijck, Michiel Romeyn and Roberto Meijer laid out a sculpture trail along Apollolaan. For the first time in years the green strip down the centre of the avenue was used for something else besides walking the dog, and the effect was stunning: a much more pleasant city in which different scales and forms of usage overlapped one another. Zuid, too, could really do with an incentive à la Jane Jacobs!

In the 'Residential Building' assignment, second-year students examined the perimeter building block to assess if it could accommodate new forms of housing. IJsselplein was chosen as the site for some projects. An urban-renewal project was difficult to imagine here. In the 1980s project by Hein van Meer the symmetry in the internal composition of this ensemble was taken as point of departure. This produced a remarkable anachronistic result with wire-cut brick. Appealing developments could be achieved on the basis of new programmes — accommodation for young families, elderly people, living-working units — comparable to that for the studio dwellings on Zomerdijkstraat. The other second-year assignments

went a step further. The redesign of the Van Eesteren plan area around Kennedylaan in particular produced some splendid perspectives on the 'Urban Ensemble' assignment. Peer Baruch Peters' President Kennedy circus proposed lots of daredevil feats, but the effort was clear. (project 6) Construction of the A10 motorway meant that the road added to Zuid by Van Eesteren was no longer meaningful at the level of the city as a whole. This design showed what improvements were possible if the road were removed: direct connections with the Amstel. The proposals by Andrew Page, Avital Broide and Arjen Aarnoudse were more restrained in terms of traffic engineering and focused more on the blocks and the form of the avenue. (project 7, 8, 9) Here, too, there was much to be gained.

The new museums for modern art by Donna van Milligen Bielke and Steven Broekhof ('Building in Landscape' assignment) showed that the urban significance of the Beatrix Park could be boosted enormously with the addition of programme. (project 10, 11) The current city park was more than an alternative for experiencing nature. Buildings in the park could also play

a structuring role in the system of routes. In both cases the sculpture gardens in the museum introduced a wonderful contrast between continuity and intimacy.

The most interesting proposals were those made for the second-year assignment entitled 'Urban Landscape'. As discussed above this dealt with Zuid as a whole. The same applied to a number of projects in the third-year project on 'Fascination'. Ideas about the position of Zuid in the city (and region) have changed totally since 1992. The key issue in the plans for the development of the Zuidas was to improve the relation between Zuid and Buitenveldert. An attractive metropolitan area had to be created around Amsterdam Zuid station that connected smoothly with the surrounding urban districts. The tools deployed to achieve that objective were powerful. The programmatic objective was to turn this area into the Central Business District of the Netherlands. Lowering the large-scale infrastructure elements of the A10 motorway and the railway and metro tracks created the conditions for this. The credit crisis now seems to have thrown a spanner in the works. You could also say that the crisis offers an opportunity to rethink



and reformulate the objectives more precisely.

The projects produced splendid material in this context. Katinka Pricken proposed rules to determine the transition zones between Plan Zuid, Zuidas and the AUP, which created the possibility for a new city district in the area in between. (project 12) David Kloet concluded that the infrastructure did not need to be lowered below ground and added that East-West relations must be strengthened. (project 13) That resulted is an entirely new composition. Stijn de Weerd and Nadine Schiller put their finger on another theme insufficiently addressed: the connection between Zuid and the Amstelscheg. (project 14, 15) Both argued for a re-examination of the possibility to create a continuous park from the centre of Zuid all the way to the Amstel. Nadine even called it the Berlage Park.

Viewed in this way, there's a major challenge ahead for the municipal designers. What is crucial is that one hundred years after the design, the proposed situation seems similar to the original objective. Castex shows that Berlage planned an autonomous city with spatial characteristics and

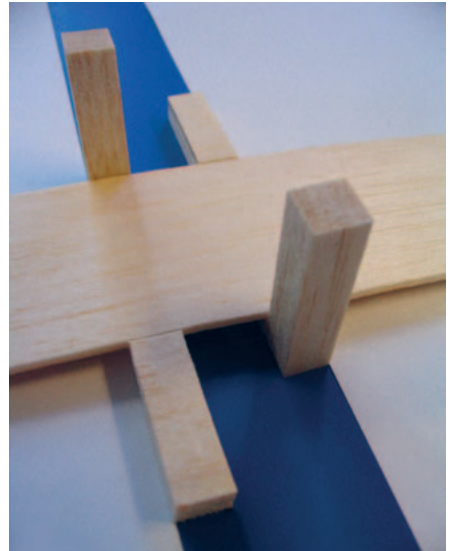
an orientation all of its own. That is once again a current concept in the contemporary network city with its many centres. The student projects demonstrate that rethinking the structure of Zuid as a whole can produce many new qualities. Should this be a grand design? Perhaps we will find answers at another scale. In the project 'Nomadic Theatre' Sjuul Cluitmans proposes a radical redevelopment of the RAI complex. (project 16) An east-west connection and a transformation of the monumental Europahal into a theatre would breathe life into this area. I'm looking forward to the centenary festival in 2017!

# 1 - Femke Poppinga

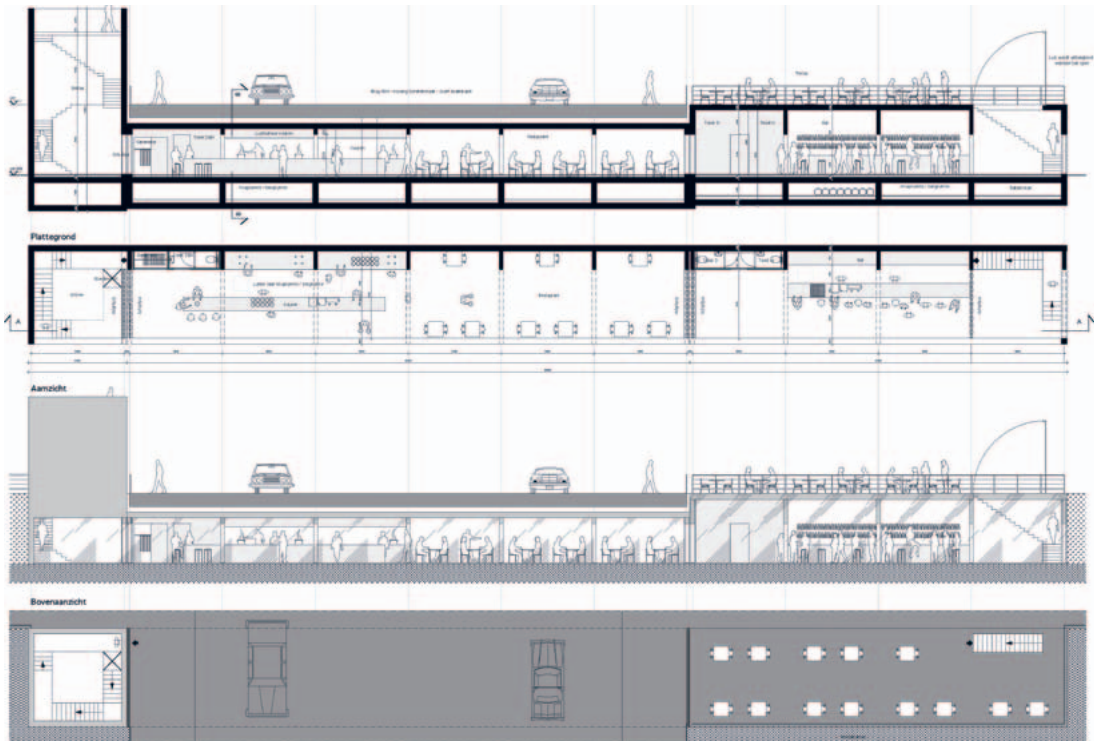
Bridge 404

Tutor: Jarrik Ouburg

This project is a search for a form that connects street level to the water and sets up interaction between the four corners of the crossing, at both water and street level. In terms of function, that results in two small entrance buildings and terraces at street level, and two restaurants with a bar at water level. The buildings mirror each other on either side of the water and extend beneath the bridge. They offer views of each other across the water.



Model



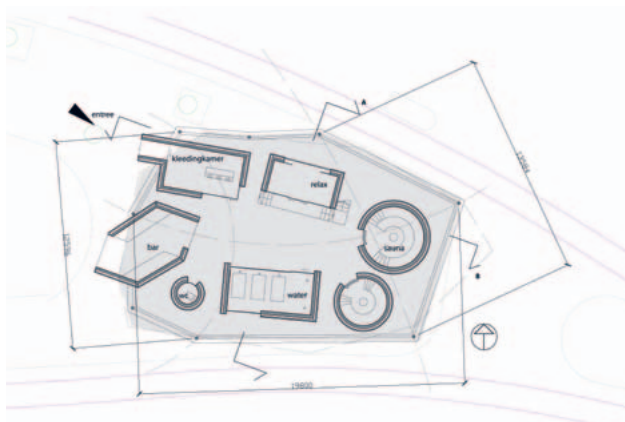
Section, plan, elevation

## 2 - Meritxell Blanco Diaz

Timeless: a 24-hour sauna

Tutor: Mariëtte Janssen

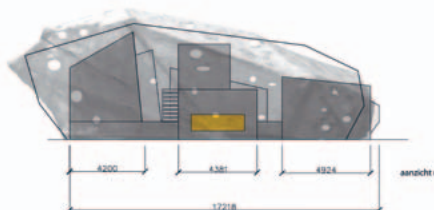
Totally nude in the heart of Amsterdam Zuid. You walk from the chimney to the water. You're in a sauna to escape the bustle of the city. It's cold and rain drips from your perspiring skin. Under your feet is the cool grass. The facade plays with the light and the view. The space not only is a sauna but also adds a small landscape to the city. It's the idea of a box within a box. Where is the edge, and where is the sky ...



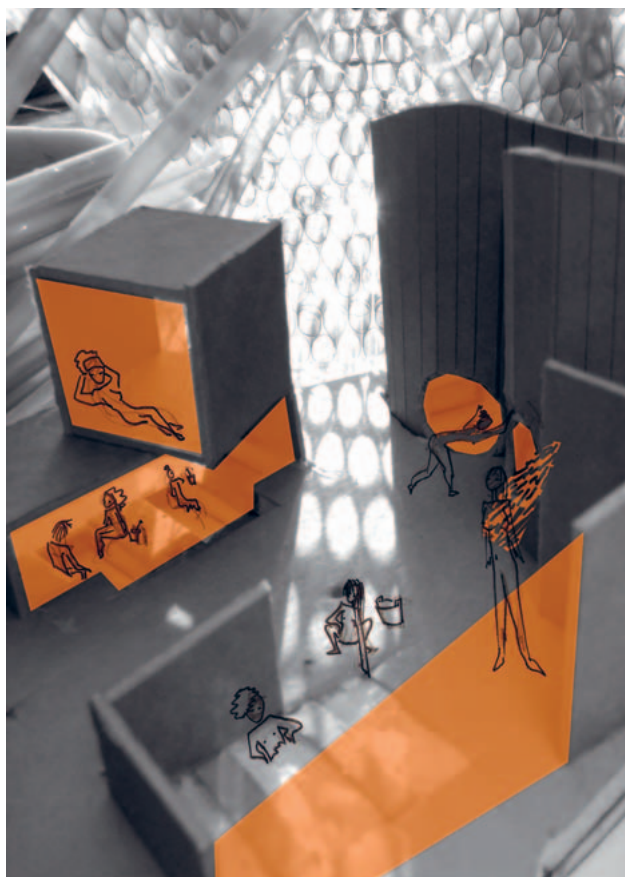
Plan



doorsnede B 1-100



Sections



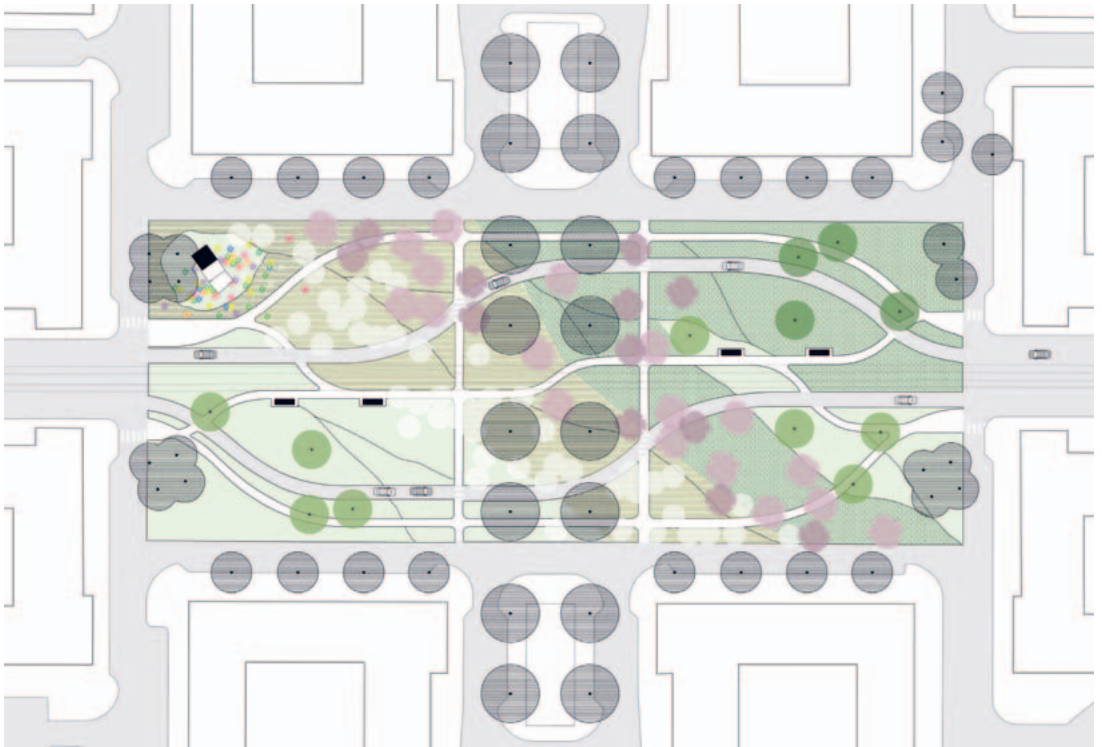
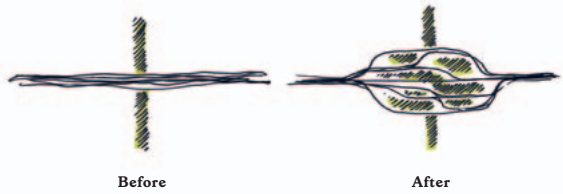
Sauna

### 3 - Astrid Bennink

Minervalaan as Ecological Main Structure

Tutor: Léon Emmen

Traffic travelling along the Stadionweg divides as soon as it reaches the square, just as a river forks into two. The left and right lane, the two cycle lanes, the tram lane, and the pedestrian zone are separated from one another. That produces 'soft' spaces between the traffic flows that allow pedestrians to cross the Minervalaan step by step.



Plan map

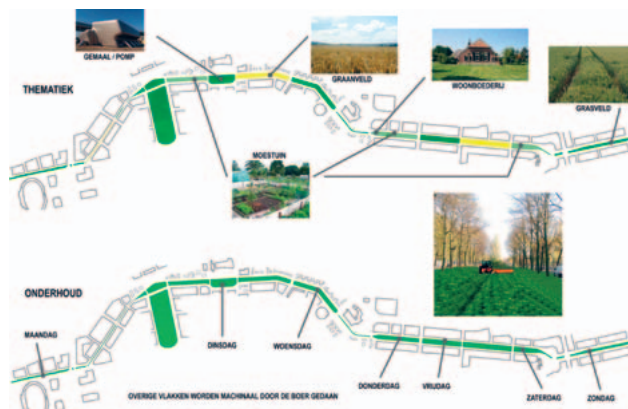


#### 4 - Graham Kolk

Urban Polder

Tutor: Anouk Vögel

Linking the Amstelscheg and the Schinkelscheg to each other creates a green connection, which can serve as an urban amenity. The city extends into the polder and the polder extends into the city, and they can thus use each other's qualities such as water management. For some time rainwater has been transported out of the city as quickly as possible. Now the rainwater is channelled to the green strip where it can be used for cattle farming.



Themes and maintenance



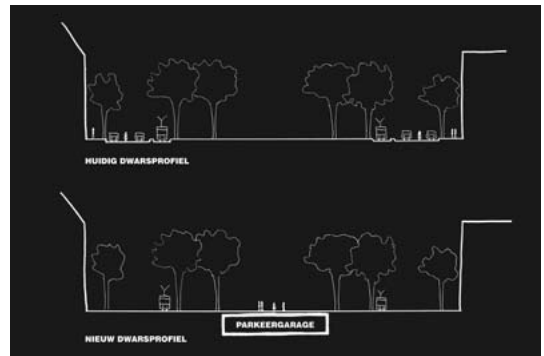
Impression

## 5 - Marijke van Suijdam

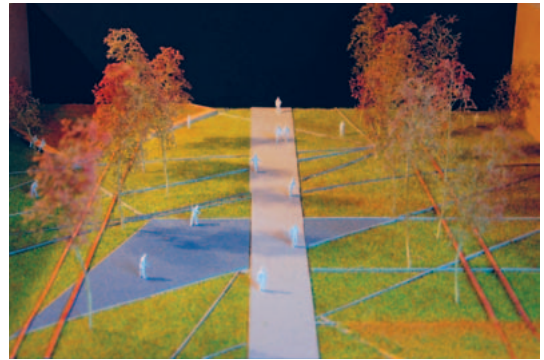
Churchill Park

Tutors: Frans Boots and Steven Delva

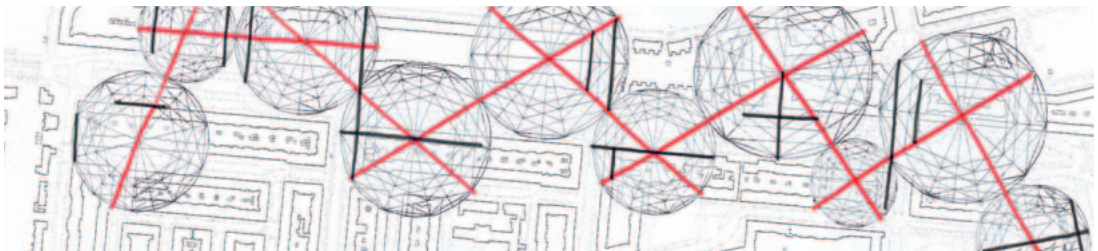
Churchillaan has a wide profile. In the middle of the area is a green strip with trees along both sides. Greenery is thus enclosed by traffic. Car traffic is re-routed to remove the sense of an island. Berlage used a pentagon to create the street network in his design for Plan Zuid. This will also be used for the layout of the park.



Current and new profile



Impression



Layout of the park



## 6 - Peer Baruch Peters

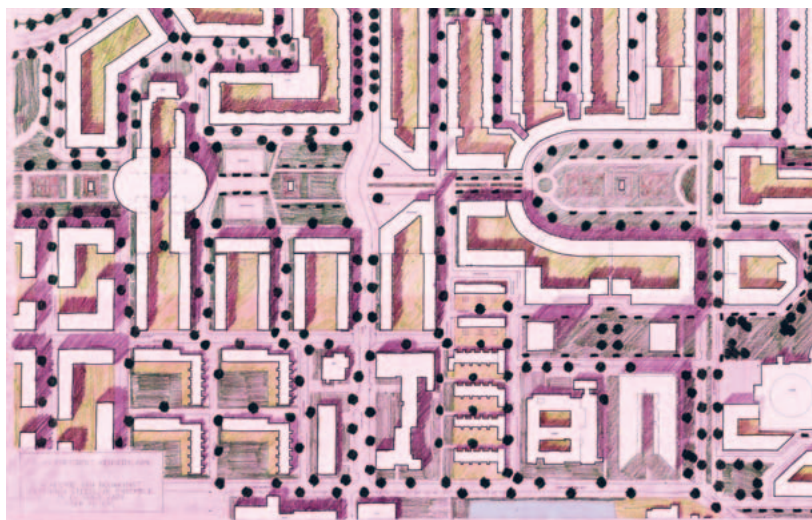
President Kennedy Circus

Tutor: Jeroen Geurts

Back then, President Kennedylaan was planned as an access route between the A2 and A3 motorways, in the direction of Zuid Station. In reality, however, much of this infrastructure was never built. The boulevard divides the pre-war Rivierenbuurt Noord district from the post-war southern district. The boulevard is redundant in terms of traffic; Churchilllaan and the A10 motorway are sufficient for this. Berlage did not envisage two separated districts but one neighbourhood with a coherent green area and a park along the banks of the River Amstel. The plan is to connect the two neighbourhoods and Overamstel (future housing area) with green spaces.



Urban plan



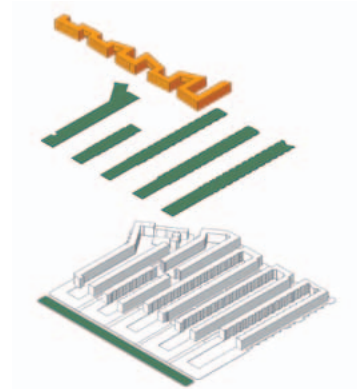
Urban ensemble

**7 - Andrew Page**

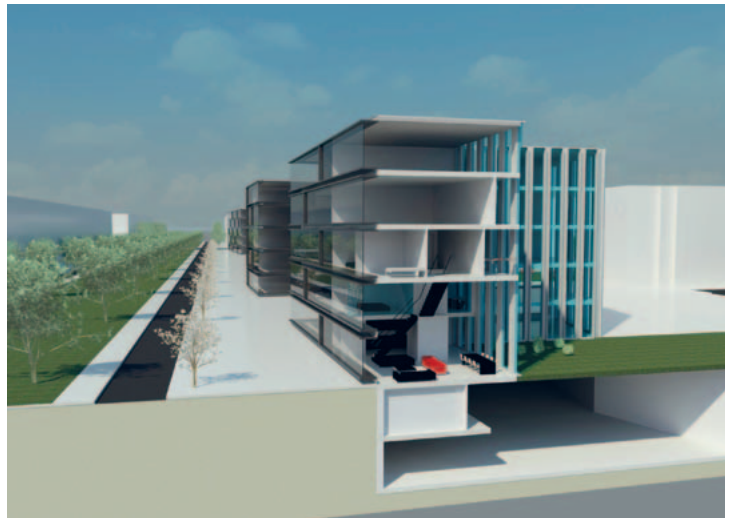
Plan Zuid

Tutor: Franz Ziegler

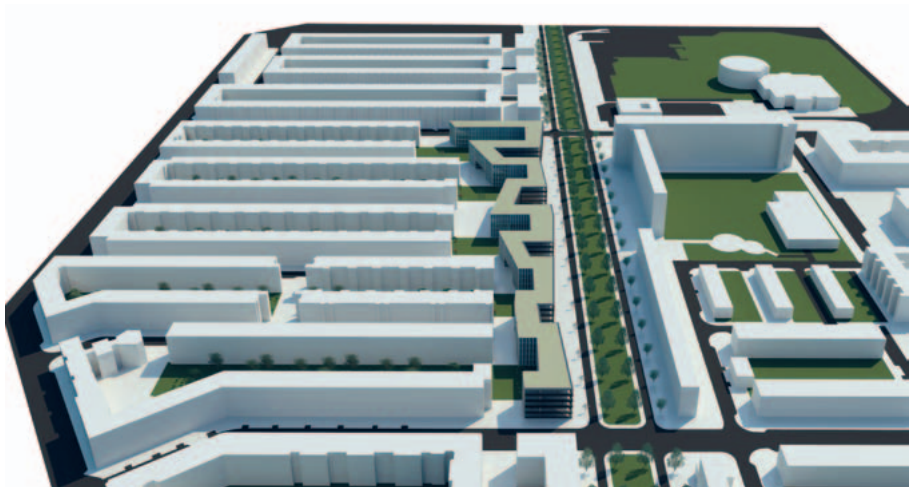
The relation between the northern and southern parts of the Rivierenbuurt district is disrupted owing to the profile of and volume of traffic on President Kennedylaan. To connect these two areas again, a central reserve is created, which can also be used for various recreational activities. The residential building is designed as a curving form to maintain the characteristic atmosphere of the fragmented northern side of President Kennedylaan.



Urban composition



Section



Bird's eye view to west

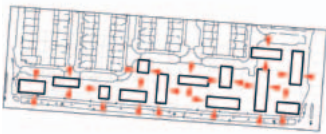


## 8 - Avital Broide

Urban garden

Tutor: Jeroen Geurts

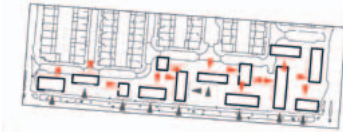
The URBAN GARDENS are paved yards, spread as bays for socializing and strolling. Each building has different point of view, with different quality: The Laan, The paved yard, The internal green area, or two of these. The Kennedy Laan is stretched between two natural gardens; three 'urban-gardens' are interwoven along the laan, connecting its two natural ends. The plan are including: terrace for interaction, shops, and café on the street level and housing on the floors above.



Main facades



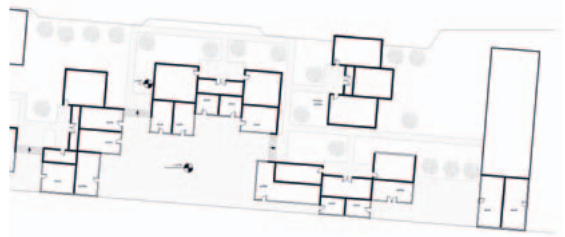
Green areas



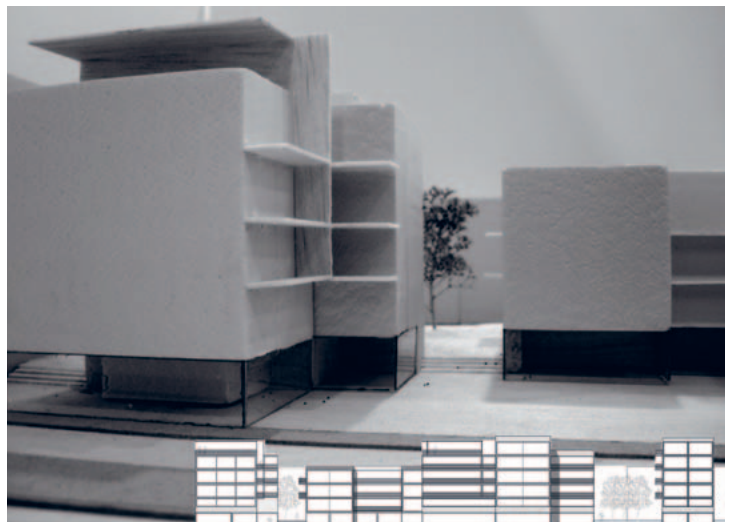
Entrances



Section



Plan level 1



Model and section

## 9 - Arjen Aarnoudse

Liquidambar: Kennedylaan

Tutor: Franz Ziegler

The site for this project is located along a fault line in the city. It is on the line that divides the urban structure by Berlage from the expansion plan by Van Eesteren. Van Eesteren tried to combine the Berlage perimeter block with open-strip development, but the green Kennedylaan and the green inner gardens do not connect with one another. This project seeks to open up the inner gardens to the Kennedylaan and introduce one green structure with the Amberboom ('Liquidambar'). The blocks are designed in such a way that the two exceptional urban districts form one entity again.



Plan of block



Urban plan



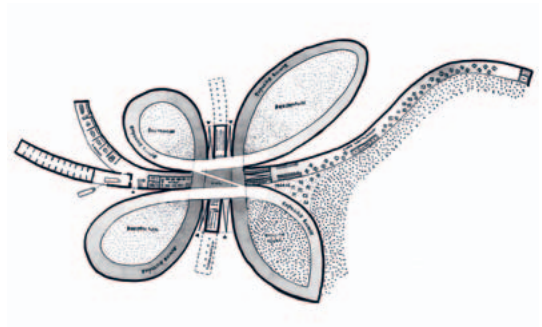
View of inner garden

# 10 - Donna van Milligen Bielke

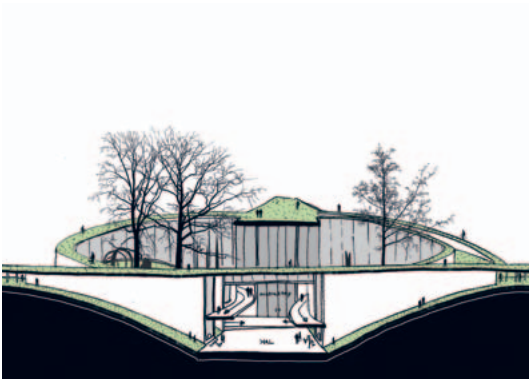
Museum of Modern Art, Beatrix Park

Tutor: Bernie van Elderen

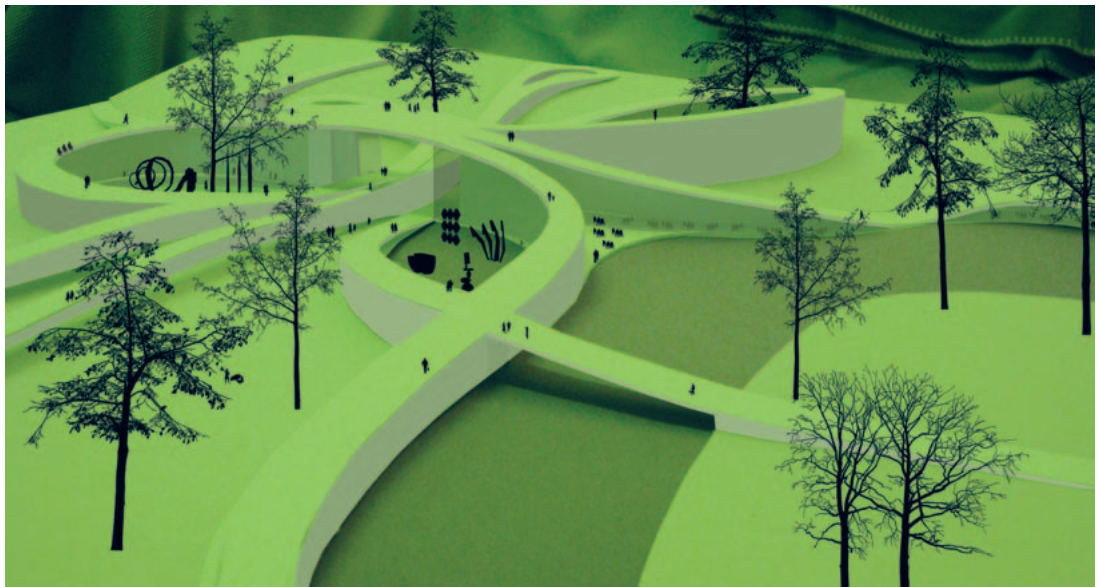
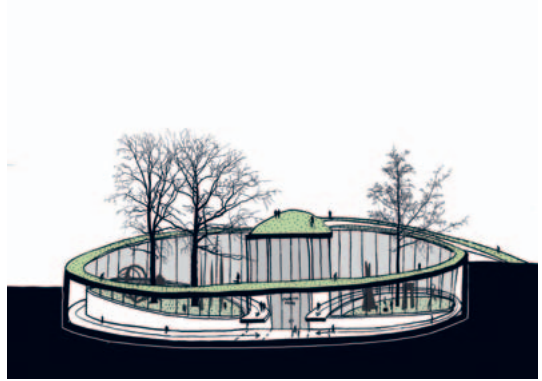
Beatrix Park in Amsterdam-Zuid will be extended with the creation of the Zuidas. The new park will roof over the motorway. Many routes converge at a given location thanks to the extension to the park. The museum designed on this site must not take up any space or block the passageway, but instead allow the different parts of the park to merge and tie the routes together. To this end, and to create the spaciousness required by the museum, a cloverleaf (a motorway intersection) is taken as the starting point for the design.



Plan



Sections



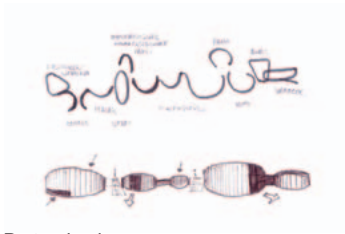
Impression



**11 - Steven Broekhof**  
 Museum of Modern ART  
 Tutor: Hanneke Kijne

A Museum of Modern Art in Beatrix Park should offer future observers the possibility to be whisked from mundane reality to a world created by the artist.

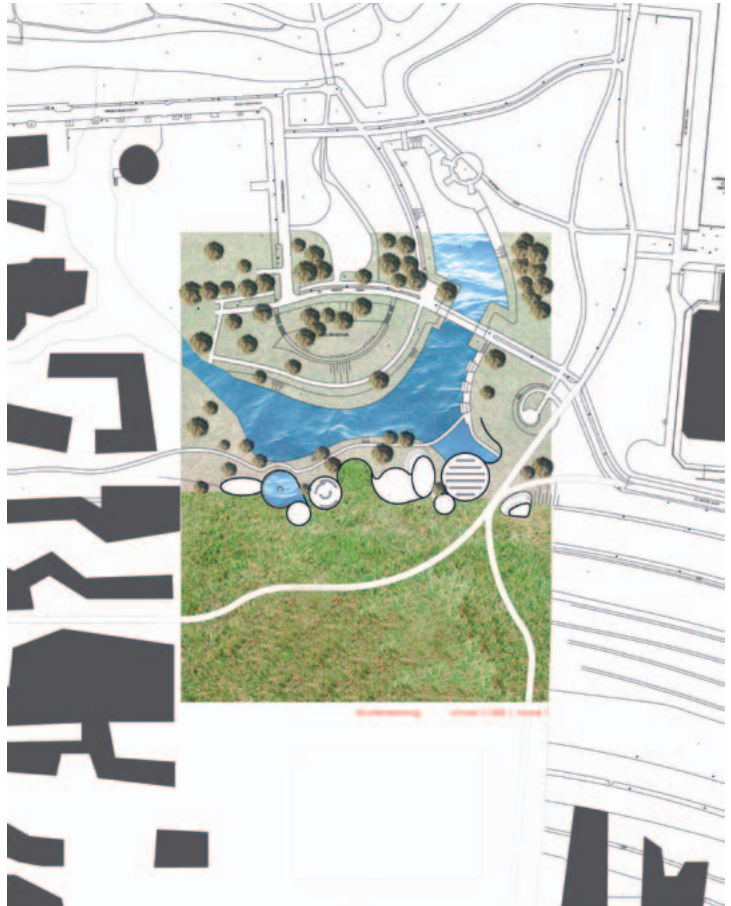
The landscape style formed the basis for this design. Visitors can wander through the building, a new space opening up all the time.



Design sketch



Plans



Site plan



## 12 - Katinka Pricken

The New City

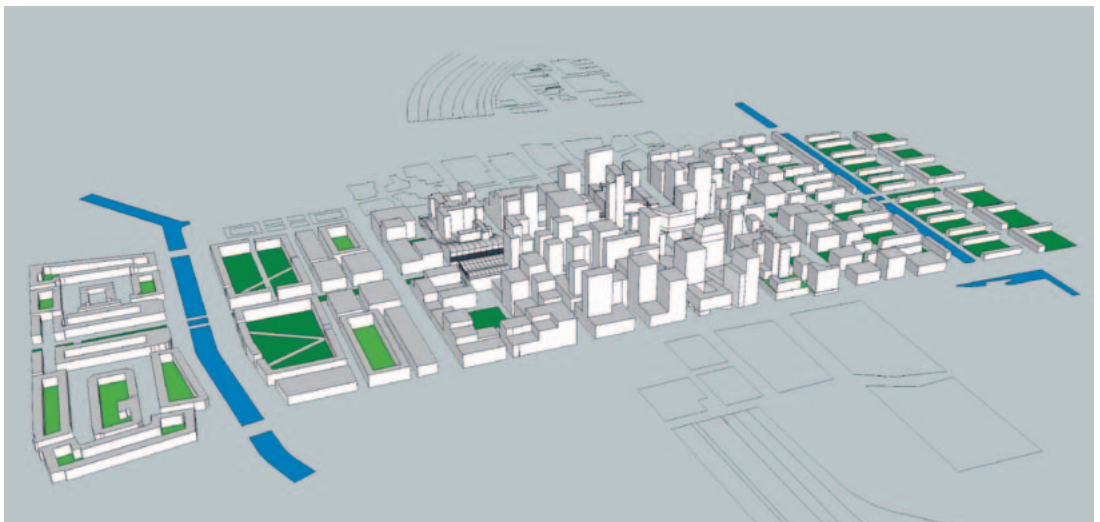
Tutor: Roel van Gerwen

It is assumed that with Plan Zuid, Berlage wanted to create the entrance to Amsterdam and that he didn't foresee the later population growth. But is that assumption correct? In Plan Zuid one can discern a half ring structure; a pattern turned away from the existing city, probably intended as the first stage in the development of a new city. With his General Expansion Plan (AUP), Van Eesteren incorrectly read the design by Berlage. Luckily this can be corrected thanks to the green zone that he introduced.

Plan Zuid, Zuidas, AUP: these successive structures meet one another abruptly with striking contrasts in density and greenery. Rules for the transitional zones do justice to The New City.



Transition from green zones: public green - private green - semi-public green



The New City

### 13 - David Kloet

The Connected City

Tutor: Chris Dijkstra

Owing to the sphere of influence of the Zuidas, Berlage's design comes to occupy a much more central position in the city. But large parts of Plan Zuid currently lack the programme or urban character to form a good connection between the two centres. In addition, sub-centres like Amstelveen and Amsterdam Noord are also growing steadily.

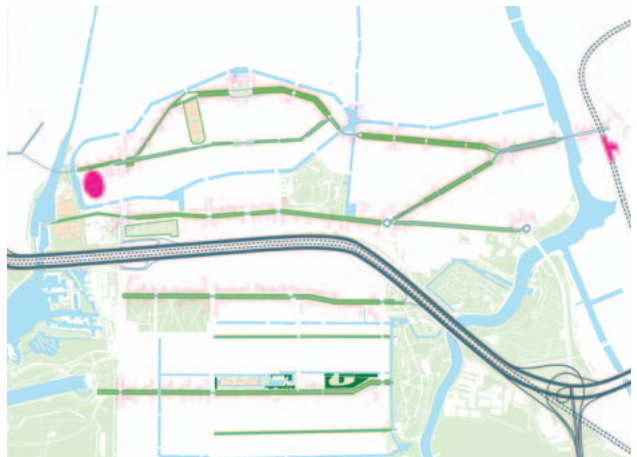
This requires a decisive solution to connect the city with Buitenveldert and Amstelveen. For this, a framework is made up of city streets extending from Buitenveldert across the A10 motorway to the central ring of canals and the spacious boulevards from the plan by Berlage. The framework creates a new opportunity for urban quality: a diversity of public spaces formed by the architecture, the influence of such landscape elements as the waterways, and the intensification of the public transport network.



Vision map



Radials: city streets with urban functions



Tangents: new connections, spacious boulevards with city greenery

## 14 - Stijn de Weerd

### Park Zuid

Tutors: Gianni Cito and Mark Eker

Large-scale urbanisation around the world results in a housing shortage, increasingly higher densities, and the disappearance of the landscape at the expense of urban areas. Time and again we hear of plans to make the city greener but the reality is that the percentage of green continues to decline.

By connecting the green amenities of Zuideramstel to one another — they are now divided by abrupt borders — and providing them with one overall identity, the continued existence of the green Amstelscheg is safeguarded and an urban park is created at a scale that counterbalances the large-scale urbanisation of the Randstad.



Roofing the A10 with a new music theatre



Plan



## 15 - Nadine Schiller

The Berlage Park

Tutor: Roel van Gerwen

The green area between Beatrix Park, Amstel Park and Zorgvlied cemetery acts as a connector. Green areas are linked to one another, and slow-traffic routes and water routes are extended. That makes it possible to travel by water from the Strikje to Strand Zuid via a new harbour, past RAI station and Amstel Park to the River Amstel. A number of cycle routes cross the park from north to south and from east to west. Between the routes is a smaller network of footpaths. This network offers a structure within which the green area can develop. The Berlage Park Structural Plan offers possibilities to develop the green area further over the years.

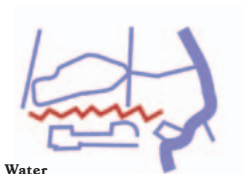
### Outcome analysis:



Buildings



Green



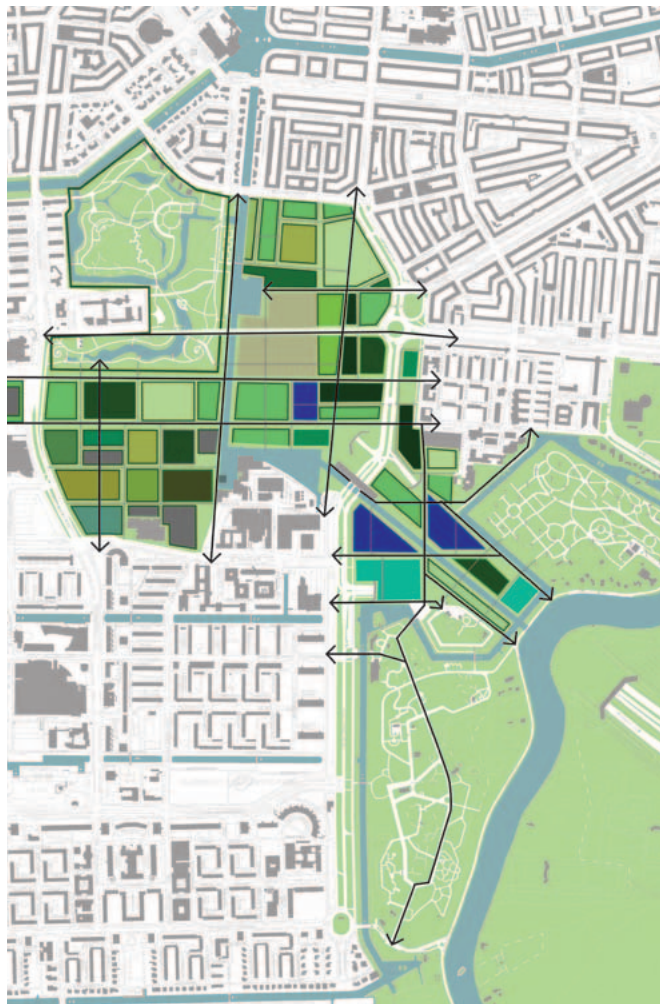
Water



Infrastructure



Vision



Plan of Berlage Park

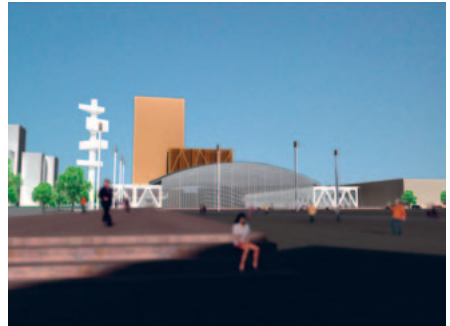


## 16 - Sjuul Cluitmans

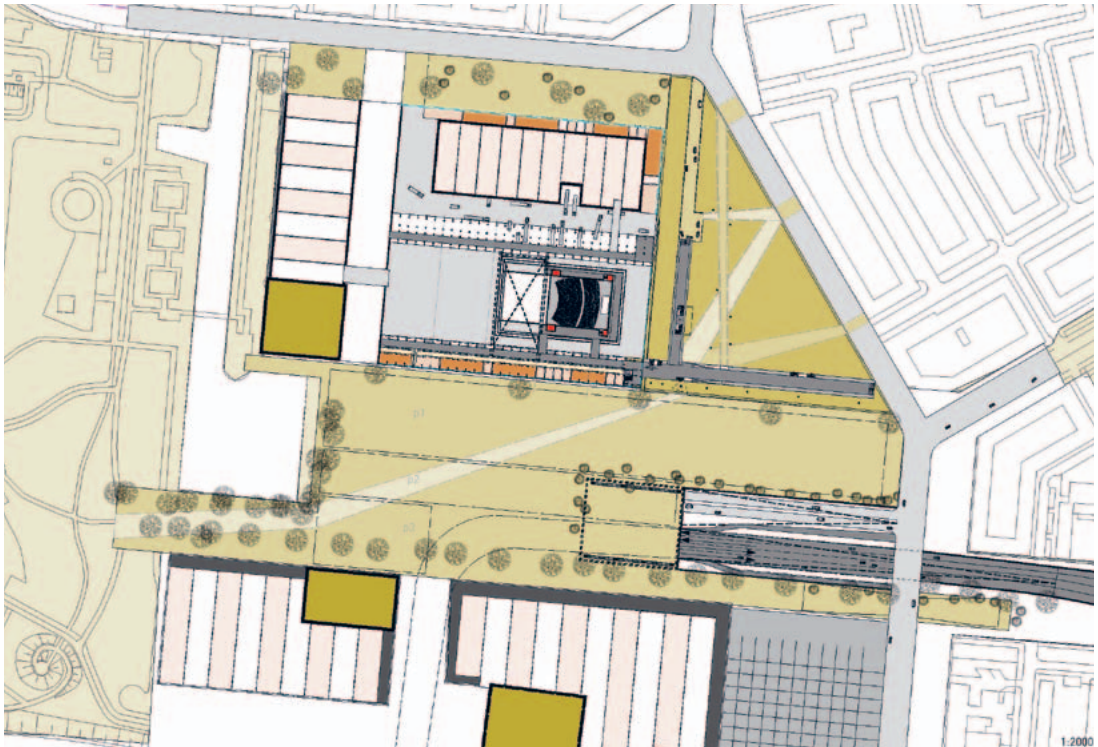
RAI: The Nomadic Theatre

Tutors: Jo Barnett and Ingeborg Thorai

Since 1980 the RAI trade-fair grounds forms a border between the Rivierenbuurt and Oud-Zuid districts. The RAI is part of Berlage's Plan Zuid. A public building with an evening programme is proposed to create interaction among residents and trade-fair visitors. Beatrix Park is extended to the Rivierenbuurt district and the volume of development demolished to achieve this is reconstructed in tall structures on the existing footprint occupied by the RAI. The park therefore forms the central entrance to the complex. The Europahal is turned into a multi-purpose space that can accommodate a trade fair and a theatre at the same time. The mobile stage tower facilitates theatres of different size and arrangement.



Impressions



Site plan

1:2000



FUTURE

# Re-inventing the academy: the symposium

David Keuning



Ted Landmark



Wim van den Bergh



John Palmesino



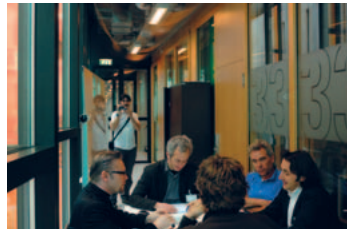
Christoph Girot



Aart Oxenaar



Brett Steele



Laurens Jan ten Kate



Tracy Metz





The Amsterdam Academy of Architecture reached its centenary in 2008. 'Time for a reassessment,' says course co-ordinator Patricia Ruisch who, along with practice co-ordinator Marina Roosebeek, initiated the symposium Re-inventing the Academy, which took place on 4 October 2008 at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam. The academy wanted to use this symposium to examine whether today's concurrent model of education can be improved. This model means that students work four days a week in an architectural practice and also spend many hours at the academy every week. The teaching staff is also drawn exclusively from the profession. This system offers big advantages yet also brings tension: should students be educated to become excellent designers or architects who are also schooled in the practical aspects of the profession? To examine whether the concurrent model is due for revision, the academy invited speakers from architecture schools in Germany, England, Switzerland and the United States. Their lectures reveal their unanimity on one thing: many architecture schools no longer meet the requirements that society imposes on architects.

'The schools are losing their relevance for architectural practice,' said Brett Steele, the American director of the AA School of Architecture in London. History (the AA was established in 1847) is more of a handicap than an advantage. 'Many respectable cultural institutes lack any connection to contemporary society, because they cling to ideals that date from the era of their foundation. Those ideals are outdated now.' The AA has therefore rediscovered itself and does not want to be a school any more in the traditional sense of the word. 'The school is no longer a

school,' argued Steele. Instead, the students go outside; they work on location, in unusual constellations and with techniques that are usually foreign to architecture. What's more, the AA also attracts many foreign students: 90% are not from Great Britain; they come from more than fifty different countries. In addition, many of the projects are set in countries like China and Vietnam.

Ted Landsmark, director of the Boston Architectural College (founded in 1881), observes something similar to Steele, but does seek a solution in a slightly different direction. 'Architectural practice is global and interdisciplinary,' he remarked, 'and schools, in general, are not'. In other words: there are so many parties involved in the building process, but they are not involved in education. 'Most educators teach in the way that was customary at the start of the twentieth century — like a Frank Lloyd Wright who, pencil in hand, peers sternly over the shoulder of the student.' In contrast, the BAC pursues practice-based learning and wants the school 'to be accountable for the results of the education'.

Likewise, John Palmesino of the research network Multiplicity thinks that society today is too complicated for traditional education models. 'After one hundred years of rapid urbanisation, architecture finds itself operating in an uncertain field,' he said. 'In its evolution, the contemporary city does not follow a linear movement where the succession of elements is distinct and the nature of the causes clearly identifiable.' And that puts architectural education in a difficult position, he thinks. 'How can architectural education inscribe non-knowledge into its operations within these transformation processes?'

Wim van den Bergh, professor at RWTH Aachen University, offers a

different perspective to that of the other speakers and starts his lecture with an extensive etymological explanation of the word 'experience', because he believes the term covers both practice and theory and therefore relates well to the concurrent model. Experience, he summarised, consists of three levels that succeed one another in time: perceive, reflect and learn. To illustrate the first level, perception, he cited an exercise he set for fifth-year students at the Cooper Union in New York. He asked them to make a collage using a 100 dollar bill, which had to be cut up in the process. The students could hand in their shredded bills at the Central Bank and receive a new one, but Van den Bergh hoped that the collages would be so successful that the students would decide not to exchange them. The results, said Van den Bergh, were amazing. Similarly, Christophe Girot, professor at the ETH Zürich, spoke of his own teaching experience in his lecture. He talked about new digital design techniques for making landscape designs for hilly sites and supported his story with impressive animations of such designs. For the afternoon programme the symposium attendees could register for one of the four workshops held by four experienced teachers from the courses in architecture, urbanism and landscape architecture at the academy.

Laurens Jan ten Kate, supervisor of the workshop entitled 'Top Master of Architecture', thinks that the school should aspire to bring architectural research back into education. At the same time, he feels we should forget about all conventional ideas and ask ourselves what could be the ideal form of the architecture office. He thinks of loose forms of collaboration geared to specific tasks. Such joint ventures are already common among many young designers in current professional

practice. During the workshop Olv Klijn argued that not only society but also architecture itself has changed a great deal. The profession has become more knowledge-intensive; architects have evolved into spatial specialists. What influence does this have on developments in education?

It was striking that almost all participants endorsed the concurrent model and agreed on the value of combining learning and gaining practical experience. A number of people did, however, suggest a different approach. One proposal was to divide the work and study components into longer periods of time, such as alternating one year of work with one year of study.

Jan Richard Kikkert went even further and proposed a year of travel as part of the academy curriculum. He argued in favour of a year-long bus trip around the world in groups of at least 10 people. Students would support themselves en route by earning money. The travellers would be unaccompanied but would report back to teachers in Amsterdam four times a year. The aim would be to undertake projects on location and with the local population. Students would thus be forced to organise themselves and that, believes Kikkert, would sharpen their way of working. After all, there would be no tutors to steer you off on a different path, or the wrong path. Kamiel Klaasse offered another suggestion. He, too, is convinced that architectural education doesn't need classrooms. The only things a school of architecture requires are a bar and a library, he opined.

The workshop participants stressed the great importance of drawing the public's attention to the profession of architecture again. Just like the model studio on the ground floor at OMA, which became a big attraction for passers-by and local

residents, the work produced within the schools should become visible again. More recommendations like these surfaced in the discussions among the participants. When it comes to the ideal school, for example, Laurens Jan ten Kate cast an envious glance at the Van Nelle Factory, which operates as a sort of multi-tenant building for a large number of design firms. Such a building would be the perfect place for the academy because it facilitates and stimulates encounters between architects and students, and therefore the exchange of ideas too. The architecture school in Delft, which has been looking for a new accommodation since the faculty building burned down in May 2008, could also be accommodated in this building, added Kamiel Klaasse.

In the workshop 'Best Practice in Education, Best Education in Practice' Albert Herder and Jan Peter Wingender, together with Peter Defesche, Pieter Jannink and Claudia Schmidt, each addressed a pre-defined theme. In the group discussions on the theme 'Lack of Time' a majority of participants agreed on the importance of a clear distinction between the tasks of the school and those of the architecture offices. At school the student must learn to design. That includes making analyses and doing research, making complete city designs, developing a theory. In addition, the school should enable students to develop their own interests. By contrast, the architecture office is responsible for developing students' more practical skills. This covers learning about building legislation and regulations, time management and financing.

The discussion on the theme 'Permanent Education' ended with the suggestion that the academy could also play a role in the process of ongoing education that the new Architects Title Act requires in order for people to use the title of

architect. For that matter, various workshop participants — all involved in education — would like teaching at the academy to count as learning so that through their teaching work at the academy they would meet the requirements of the new legislation. After all, 'Teaching is learning', as one participant remarked during the discussion on the theme of 'Cross Traffic'.

The discussions about the theme 'Setting the Agenda' revealed that a majority of participants believe that students should be able to place their work in a broad cultural context and that they should be educated on how to do that. Finally, 'The Educational Practice' resulted in the conclusion that students are responsible for determining their own educational objectives, and that the academy and the architecture office should help them achieve those objectives.

Arjan Klok, who chaired the workshop 'How to Train Young Professionals as Poetic Foxes', asked how young design professionals can be educated to become 'strategic poets or poetic strategists'. He thinks it's important that budding architects are prepared for the expectations of their future clients, which is why he invited three property developers and an official from the Ministry of Spatial Planning to join the discussion. What, according to the client, is the ideal designer? First of all, the client expects a designer to understand his profession in terms of both method and creativity. The designer must be a team player, must be aware of the situation and process in which he or she operates, must possess stamina and courage to continue questioning the client about the nature and vision of the commission. But the designer should ideally have 'euros in the tip of his pencil', as one of the developers put it. In other words, he must be cost-conscious. Does the young designer encounter

the client often enough during his schooling? wondered Klok. That depends largely on the office where the student works. That impression is confirmed by the experiences of the public. The academy should play a bigger role in the contact between the employer and the student, participants argued. The clients echoed this. Both public and private parties are willing to participate in the education of designers. Possible forms of contribution vary from giving lectures or participating in workshops at the start of a design project to creating internship positions during tendering and competition procedures or collaborating on a year-long public study. 'An offer you can't refuse,' said Klok. But on one condition: that there is always scope for the student to continue designing without the coercive eye of the client and without the limitations exerted by regulations and money. According to Klok, this argues in favour of measured and balanced contact with the worlds of bureaucracy and project development.

In the workshop 'Stimulating Professional Practice in Design Assignments', Rob van Leeuwen argued that design education should be organised in the form of practice simulations. It was soon clear that almost nobody agreed with him. Quite the contrary, argued Sylvia Karres. 'The academy shouldn't engage in these kinds of ten-a-penny projects, shouldn't have a programme of requirements or real clients.' Another participant added that 'The academy should in fact set extreme assignments for students. It's the same as top sport: you must practice, practice, practice. Preferably on many small fields of research.'

What's more, student Philomene van der Vliet believes the academy should become more international: 'Use the network that enables

foreign students to come to Amsterdam in the opposite direction,' she suggested. 'Invite foreign teachers, send teachers and staff abroad. The network is there. Just use it.'

A number of interesting insights surfaced during the group discussion that followed the workshops. Those insights stemmed in part from the day-to-day worries of the participants, the majority of whom are active as tutors. 'For each student the teaching at the academy forms an important part of their personal development,' said one tutor. 'The condition is that they are allowed to develop their capacities. That must not change,' he continued. 'The academy should accord students and tutors an equal position,' commented another tutor. 'Tutors should listen to the ideas of students and must expect more from them.' This was echoed by another tutor, who added, 'Change the manner of interaction: allow more than one tutor to access the work of students and allow tutors to disagree publicly. Students can actually learn for such discussions.'

Christoph Girot then put all arguments into perspective. 'Do not overestimate the importance of the curriculum,' he said, on the basis of his many years of experience in education. 'The best schools allow their students to do their own thing. Some of the best architects have enjoyed scarcely any institutional training at all. Herzog and de Meuron, for example, wandered around school for a year and a half before starting for themselves.' In practice, many schools discourage rather than encourage student talent. 'Many schools smother talent through an excess of organisation. Talent, according to many tutors, was the wrong word. They stuff their students full of information and then expect to get a neatly fried egg but they usually end

up with a scrambled egg at best.' Jan Wouter Bruggenkamp concurred: 'Students learn more from one another than from their tutors. What's more, students are selective in what they remember from lessons; they take away other things than the tutor probably intended.'

In the concluding plenary session Aart Oxenaar discussed the results of the workshops with chairman Tracy Metz. 'An ongoing discussion about the quality of education is useful. We have around 250 students compared to 400-450 tutors. They introduce new ideas all the time. Conversations with them force us to explain our policy continually and reconsider everything all the time.' Tracy Metz then raised one of the most important points of criticism about architectural education, namely that architects are so ill-prepared for professional practice when they leave the school. They then have to learn all sorts of practical things, such as how to set up an office, how to hire staff, how to do the bookkeeping. Does the director of the academy think he has a duty here?

Oxenaar: 'Our students work in practice and are therefore aware of how an architecture office operates. I think the academy does enough in this area, although it could perhaps be articulated better. What we do discuss regularly with students, though perhaps not often enough, is what type of architect they want to become. Does your talent lie in running an office or in pulling in clients? Or are you an excellent designer who operates best in an office where all practical matters are organised for you? Discussing these issues is more important than offering a course in office management — which we do anyway.'

Oxenaar then put the results of the workshops into some perspective. 'There's an interesting dichotomy

in the recommendations,' he concluded. 'Some say we should harness the student's talent and ensure that individual talent is not impeded by practical requirements. Others say we should make the design assignments more real. Make sure that the designer has euros in the tip of his pencil. This is the most important, most fundamental consideration that every educational institution has to make. The art is to ensure both extremes are kept in balance with each other.'

*Thanks to Eric Frijters, Karin Christof and Oene Dijk*

## Personalia

**Patricia Ruisch** – Course co-ordinator at the Academy of Architecture  
**Marina Roosebeek** – Architect, practice co-ordinator and study advisor at the Academy of Architecture (till 2009)  
**Brett Steele** – Director of the Architectural Association School of Architecture  
**Ted Landmark** – Director of the Boston Architectural College  
**John Palmesino** – Architect with Multiplicity research network  
**Christophe Girod** – Professor at ETH Zürich  
**Wim van den Bergh** – Professor at RWTH Aachen University  
**Laurens Jan ten Kate** – Architect and tutor  
**Olv Klijn** – Architect and tutor  
**Jan Richard Kikkert** – Architect and tutor  
**Kamiel Klaasse** – Architect and tutor  
**Albert Herder** – Architect and tutor  
**Jan Peter Wingender** – Architect and tutor  
**Peter Defesche** – Architect and tutor  
**Pieter Jannink** – Urban designer and tutor  
**Claudia Schmidt** – Architect and tutor  
**Arjan Klok** – Architect and tutor  
**Rob van Leeuwen** – Architect and tutor  
**Philomene van der Vliet** – Student at the Academy of Architecture  
**Jan Wouter Bruggenkamp** – Landscape architect  
**Aart Oxenaar** – Director of the Academy of Architecture  
**Tracy Metz** – Publicist





# Experience

Wim van den Bergh

## experience

SYLLABICATION: ex·pe·ri·ence

PRONUNCIATION: ɪk-spiˈɪəns

NOUN: **1.** The apprehension of an object, thought, or emotion through the senses or mind: *a child's first experience of snow.* **2a.** Active participation in events or activities, leading to the accumulation of knowledge or skill: *a lesson taught by experience; a carpenter with experience in roof repair.* **b.** The knowledge or skill so derived. **3a.** An event or a series of events participated in or lived through. **b.** The totality of such events in the past of an individual or group.

TRANSITIVE VERB: Inflected forms: **ex·per-i·enced, ex·per-i·enc-ing, ex·per-i·enc-es**  
To participate in personally; undergo:  
*experience a great adventure;*  
*experienced loneliness.*

ETYMOLOGY: Middle English, from Old French, from Latin *experientia*, from *experirens*, *experient-*, present participle of *experiri*, to try. See **per-3** in Appendix I.

The title of the Centennial Conference, 'Re-inventing the Academy', calls for a reflection on the teaching model that the Dutch Academies of Architecture have been using for one hundred years. It is a model of teaching that consciously interweaves Praxis (academy students work during the day in professional practices) with Theory (students receive tuition and attend lectures during the evening and work on design assignments in their own free-time). As such, this model of teaching is extraordinary since it blurs the boundary usually drawn between education and practice, between school and profession. But are these categories of Theory and Praxis, Discipline and Profession really two entirely distinct fields? I'll come back to that question later.

I picked the term 'experience' as title for this essay since it is a term that seems to incorporate both Praxis as well as Theory, Discipline as well as Profession. 'Experience' is a term that refers to several aspects closely interlinked with the human ability to perceive, to reflect, to learn. These provide the ability to conceive and to create or, as it is usually called in a school of architecture, to design. On the one hand 'experience' refers to 'the apprehension of an object, thought, or emotion through the senses or mind'. In other words, it refers to the act of simultaneously perceiving and understanding, by which we start to grasp something mentally or become conscious of it through the emotions or senses, as in the interactions between looking and seeing, listening and hearing, or touching and feeling. Let me refer to this initial definition as the first level of 'experience'.

In relation to education and learning this first level of 'experience' is important, because it constantly develops our ability to reflect between perception and imagination. As we know from our own experience, it is possible to look without seeing, to listen without hearing, or to touch without feeling. This would be a situation in which the outward direction of our senses seems not to be interacting inwardly with our mind and consciousness. Paradoxically, we call this 'being absent-minded', whereas in fact we are mostly deep in thought, but heedless of our surrounding circumstances or activities. It is the state in which we see without looking, hear without listening, or feel without touching, sometimes referred to as 'a state of meditation' or just daydreaming. In relation to designing, it is closer to 'a state of imagination' or 'a state of contemplation'. Without this state we would not be able to create or design anything.

In one of his early 17th-century illustrations, Robert Fludd expressed this first level of 'experience' as the interaction between the *Mundus sensibilis* and the *Mundus imaginabilis*, that is to say the place where the 'world of our senses' interacts with the 'world of our imaginations'. This is the place where the outer eye meets the inner eye and where perception and imagination fuse. It is at that moment of fusion that we not only look but also see, the moment in which we not only listen but also hear, the moment in which we not

only touch but also feel. It is the *cogito*, the moment in which we think and learn, the moment in which we 'grasp' something mentally or gain 'insight' into something. This *cogito* is the moment (on the first level of experience) in which we become conscious of something and we start to understand. So in this sense 'experience' is something extremely personal, and it is for this reason that one cannot teach understanding. Understanding is something that everybody has to acquire by himself.

On the other hand, the term 'experience' also refers to the 'active participation in events or activities, leading to the accumulation of knowledge or skill' and also 'the knowledge or skill so derived'. Let's call this the second level of 'experience', the level of personal acquisition, or personal accumulation. By this I mean that the term 'experience' also

refers to the individual embodiment of such understanding through participation, and to its accumulation, in the form of a personal body of knowledge and skills. It is the place where our personal 'motivation' fuses with our 'memory', where we store in our mind those things that are important to us. It is also, as Fludd calls it, the

*aestimo*, the moment in which we evaluate and judge.

There is also a third level of 'experience' that refers to 'an event or a series of events participated in or lived through', and also 'the totality of such events in the past of



an individual or group'. Let's refer to this level of 'experience' as the third level, the level of communal accumulation.

'Experience' on this level refers to the totality of what we experienced in common outwardly and inwardly, the totality of our communal impressions and imaginations, yet also the totality of our memories and motivations, of our visions and our curiosities. 'Experience' in this sense would, in relation to architecture, refer to the body of knowledge and skills accumulated by the totality of all who have ever been active in the discipline and/or the profession of architecture. And as such it would refer to the foundations of architecture, its body of knowledge and skills as a whole, thus to the basis of architecture as both a Science and an Art.

In Fludd's illustration the totality of these three levels culminates in the 'godlike' Mundus Intellectualis, in fact the 'godlike' art and science of 'creation', or as pertains to man and architecture, the art and science of 'design'.

From the etymology of the term 'experience' we further learn that its roots come from 'to try' and 'to risk', referring to the act of 'leading over' and 'pressing forward', and as such also refer to other words related to the idea of fear. With a little imagination we can see that the roots of the term 'experience' are dealing with the virtual borderline of the unknown, just like the words experiment and empirical, words we know from the field of science today. So in a way it is a term that refers to the same sort of 'fear' or, more appropriately, 'curiosity' for the

unknown that every scientist or artist/designer has to deal with initially. And it refers to the same methods of 'trial and error' or 'learning by doing' that scientists and artists/designers use, thus leading them over this virtual border and pressing them forward into the unknown of their search and/or their creation.

At this point you may start asking yourself why I dwell so long on just this one word 'experience' and try to go into the depths of its different meanings. Well, for me these three levels of 'experience' started to represent a basic educational structure that, as I only realised in hindsight, I constantly went through myself, whether I was teaching or designing. To recapitulate: Level one is becoming conscious Level two is evaluating after trying, thus reflecting and accumulating a personal body of knowledge and skills Level three is judging these 'experiences' within a broader, more communal context of 'reality', thus employing (and maybe also expanding) its communal body of knowledge and skills.

Since graduating from university in 1983, and concurrently with my work as a professional architect, I taught almost continuously at many universities and academies. Before 1993, however, I never really reflected upon the teaching of architecture. It was when I became the Head of the Academy of Architecture in Maastricht and had the task of setting up a new educational program that I consciously started to ask myself about the 'what', 'why' and 'how' of actually teaching architectural

design. In most of my teaching assignments before 1993, I was in direct contact with the students and it was a form of learning by doing for all of us, including myself the teacher. I would set a design task for the students and would then respond to what they presented during the tutorials. Teaching in this manner was a bit like directing a play based on improvisation, and although it was a play with a scenario I myself had written, I would never know beforehand what would come out of it at the end. This, one could say, was like the first level of 'experience' for me, the period in which you try out and become aware.

Once, as a guest professor in the US, to give you an example, I was asked to direct a kick-start workshop with the theme 'collage'. Collage was something I had never dealt with, and to be honest I didn't really like to deal with collages made by students as such. This is because normally when you would ask the students to express something by means of a collage, what you would see is that they took some magazines, ripped some obvious images out of them and would then, without much thought or composition, glue them together. Thus, in my opinion, paying very little respect to the material, to the precision and craftsmanship, and to the technique of montage to generate meaning. And for me these were the aspects I valued, since they for me linked this theme of 'collage' to architecture.

So to get the students to understand some of these aspects in relation to design I had to develop an initial exercise. An exercise in which exactly these aspects — respect



for the material, for the precision and craftsmanship, and for the technique — would appear as a key for understanding the broader and deeper meaning that this theme of 'collage' might incorporate for them and later for their design project.

I started off with a little talk on the technique of montage as used (and described) by the Russian film director Sergei Eisenstein, and I tried to show them the precision and craftsmanship used by Eisenstein to express specific emotions and meanings via the technique of framing, of cutting and piecing together. Next I showed them a set of collages done by Max Ernst, and pointed out the precision of his cuttings and his carefully constructed compositions of lines and images done in such a way that in the end the collage didn't look like a collage made of parts pieced together anymore, but more like the image of a single engraving. And I would try to explain to them how this whole could be interpreted as a story told by the pieces, and by the way one interpreted their relationships to one another and within the totality of the image.

Then I would give each student a very short story from a book with the title *Mirror in the Mirror: a Labyrinth* by Michael Ende, a German novelist normally known for children's books such as *Momo* and *The Neverending Story*. *Mirror in the Mirror*, however, is not a storybook for children; it is a collection of thirty very short stories inspired by the

paintings of his father, the German surrealist painter Edgar Ende. The stories in *Mirror in the Mirror* are somehow very spatial in terms of their architectural setting, and the task for the student was to read the story and imagine it as being a scenario (for a theatre play or a film), and then to design its scenography.

The technique to be used was that of the collage (and the montage) — that is, cutting out and piecing together. The only material to be used, however, was a real 100 Dollar banknote in its entirety (I tried to force them to be very economical and precise in the use of their material). Both sides of the bill could be used for complete images or pieces of them, in order to build structures by using lines, surfaces and patterns. Finally, they had to montage it

together in such a way that it would become the backdrop for the scenes of their story.

You can imagine the initial reaction of the students. I reassured them that they could practice with copies, but that at the end I only wanted to see collages made of one real 100 Dollar banknote.

I also told them that they would always get their money back if they brought the collage to the National Bank, but of course the whole point of this for them was to give the banknotes added value by means of their work. If their work resulted in a well-made collage they would never exchange them for a new banknote.

As you can also imagine, I was absolutely unsure what would come out, after the three days they were given to work on it. I simply had to rely on my tutoring skills.

The presentation was done by means of an endoscopic camera (linked to a screen) that the student would have to move over the collage, or zoom in and out of it, while at the same time another student would read the corresponding story aloud.

The results were absolutely amazing, and it's a pity I don't have any images to show you. Perhaps an analogy to this would be the kind of toys made in so-called 'underdeveloped countries' from materials that in the so called 'developed countries' are normally considered to be waste, such as scrap or crap (like a Coke can and some wire). Maybe it gives you an idea of the creative ingenuity that those students were also able to generate after (literally) 'paying' respect to the material. It also gives you an impression of the type of precision and craftsmanship they were able to employ, and of the technique of montage to generate 'meaning' in the form of an image.

Anyhow, on this first level of 'experience' (being in direct contact with the students) I was mainly trying out and somehow becoming aware. Over time I also went through an evolution on the second level of 'experience', the level of motivation and valuation, or better, of personal reflection and accumulation. Thus it was that over the years, through 'experience', I developed my own personal body of knowledge and skills in terms of teaching. And reflecting upon the teaching of architecture, reflecting upon its



topical questions, its what, why and how came to resemble a 'recherche patiente'. Constantly leading me back to what one could call the basic faculties a student of architecture needed to develop, thus to be able to create or design.

After a while my 'recherche patiente' started to circle around specific themes related to these faculties, which in my view, needed to be cultivated by means of the educational

programme. Constantly emphasizing the same fundamental themes and human faculties, which deal primarily with our exceptionally human ability to create. Our ability to conceive and plan, to imagine and shape, to engineer and construct. And 'experience', in my view, is one of these fundamental faculties.

Another fundamental faculty, closely interlinked with 'experience', is 'intuition'. And as such I have the feeling that the human being, equipped with a body that senses and a mind that is able to reflect and conceive, acts as an interface between experience and intuition. 'Intuition', you could say, is actually our embodied 'experience', our accumulated personal body of knowledge and skills, but in an activated mode.

As both a practicing architect and an educator I am often confronted with the fact that I have to communicate to my students how to design or create (preferably good) architecture, a process of which up to a certain degree (I often realize)

I am myself not very conscious. Every architect (every designer/creator) I think will recognise this paradox. On the one hand you came up with a design — you created something — but if somebody

were to ask you, 'How did you do it?' you would have difficulty in explaining (on a rational basis) how you actually did it. Okay, at a certain level of consciousness you would be able to retrace

the different steps that you took in the design process, the sort of methodical path that you followed in a cyclical process of continuously thinking, making and testing. This is a continuous cycle of conceiving and reflecting, plus mentally constructing and trying out, even if it's only a simulation of the actual object that has to be realised later on. Yet during the evolution of the design there would also be these inexplicable enlightened moments, the sort of instant revelations that are very difficult to communicate to others on a rational basis (literally, 'It just came to me!').

Often it is only in hindsight that you realise that those enlightened moments happened and that they were crucial for the design, but you would also realise that during the process of creation itself they often occurred at a subconscious or unconscious level of your thinking. This is what normally we call 'intuition'. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English language provides the following definitions for intuition: 'The act or faculty of

knowing or sensing without the use of rational processes, immediate cognition; Knowledge gained by the use of this faculty; a perceptive insight; A sense of something not evident or deducible — an impression.' And the etymology of intuition refers to 'insight' gained through contemplation.

In our 'modern' society, however, 'intuition' is regarded as something suspect, something not to be trusted, because intuition is highly subjective and thus 'non-scientific'. Our 'Modern', so-called 'enlightened' society first and foremost values objectivity, that which is based on 'theory', on pure reason, on conscious thought and rational science. In other words, that which can be calculated in numbers, time and money and which can be communicated on a methodological level as true knowledge based on objective facts and scientific proof. But, in my view, our society's overreliance on these so-called hard rational facts and figures also produces an imbalance in our system of values. It is, however this unbalanced system that guides, together with a lot of other things, the production of present-day architecture and, even more so, its education.

Within our present day society I constantly sense a mistrust towards the profession and discipline of architecture. This, for example, expresses itself in the almost blind trust that most people place in the so-called specialists and engineers involved with the architectural process, while they are normally rather suspicious of what the architect has to say about it. It is a kind of suspicion of the discipline



of architecture in general that I also sense at most Universities of Technology when it comes to the education of architects, a suspicion that probably has its roots in the fact that a good architect still has to play a double role. On the one hand the architect has to be the objective, rationally acting as the 'building engineer' who knows how to construct a good, solid building, but on the other hand he should (still) also be the subjective, intuitive 'designer/creator/thinker' who intelligently and emotionally senses how to create a good piece of architecture, befitting the complex spatial and cultural environment it is intended for.

This distrust becomes even more evident in the education of architects at the moment administrators and managers get involved with the process of teaching. This is because for them it is very difficult to understand that the education of architects is not only based on teaching these students a specific catalogue of knowledge and skills. Academic 'catalogues' can be calculated in terms of time and space, people and money, and these tangibles are (as one can imagine) the most important consideration for administrators and managers. But how does one explain to them that there is something intangible that is much more important than this catalogue of selected knowledge and skills? As a dedicated educator one then has to face the problem of how to explain to these

administrators and managers (over and over again) that next to learning a specific catalogue of basic knowledge and skills, the most important thing in the education of architects is the fact that the student gains understanding of or insight in the cultural breadth and complexity of the discipline that he studies. And it becomes even more difficult to explain to them then that, as a Professor of Architecture, one cannot teach understanding (like basic knowledge and skills), because understanding or insight/intuition is something every student has to gain by himself. By their very natures, insight and intuition are subjective and not easily demonstrable to one who is not in that particular field.

Yet it is exactly this gaining of understanding of and the acquiring of insight into the 'what, why and how' of architecture as a whole and the love for the cultural breadth and complexity of the discipline of architecture that is most important in its education. As I said before, knowledge and skills are in fact objectified forms of understanding, forms of insight that as a whole express themselves as the body of knowledge of architecture. The

one — knowledge — from the point of view of architecture is a scientific discipline, or in this context its 'Theory'; the other — skills — from the point of view of architecture as a profession (a creative art), that is to say its 'Praxis'. The study of architecture as both a discipline and an art becomes a never-ending

process of slowly becoming more aware of the deeper relationships between the 'what, why and how' of architecture. This is also where the specific 'Perspective' of my essay towards 'Re-Inventing the Academy' comes in. Since 'Intuition' or insight is something one can only gain through (subjective) 'Experience', and by that I mean experience in the double meaning of the word: on one hand experience being the act of bodily and mentally experiencing, that is, the active participation and apprehension of activities, events, objects, thoughts or emotions through the senses and the mind; on the other hand experience being the knowledge and/or skill so derived (one could also say the insight or the intuition thus acquired).

Experience, as its etymology told us before, means to try, and this is precisely what we can learn from the mythical figure Icarus: we only gain insight or intuition through the act of bodily and mentally experiencing. I could ask you now (as I always ask my first-year students at the University in Aachen, when they start hesitating to commit their first intuitive ideas about a design problem to paper) whether you can imagine learning to ride a bicycle by means of the theory of bicycle riding, in other words from a manual that first tells you absolutely everything about the mechanics, dynamics, movements, physics etc. of bicycle riding. I think almost everybody who thinks back about how he or she learned to ride a bicycle will come to the conclusion that it is impossible to learn it purely theoretically. You simply have to try it, and only through the act of bodily and mentally experiencing it, including all the times you painfully fall to the



ground, you can learn it.

This I think also applies to learning to design or create architecture.

Don't misunderstand me. I will be the last to say that theory is not important; on the contrary, theory is a form in which a specific insight, a mental scheme or speculation expresses itself as part of the communal body of knowledge that constitutes architecture as both a discipline and a profession. But we can only understand its deeper meaning in

relation to the 'what, why and how' of architecture, if we physically and mentally experience and evaluate its practical value while we're in the act of creating or designing. So, in order to learn to design (preferably good) architecture, you have to almost physically and mentally experience the act of creation that you simulate within the process of designing as such, including all the painful falls (especially in the beginning), and this happens over and over again.

We must remember that creating in terms of design means first and foremost bringing your imagination and your perception to the point where they start to get in sync with each other. To return to Icarus, the first lesson we can learn from him is that 'intuition' is actually nothing other than our embodied 'experience', but in its activated form. Our embodied 'experience' itself is passive — it is our accumulated body of knowledge and skills that becomes 'intuition' the moment we activate it to press forward into the unknown.



Let me, however, come back to the initial question: 'Are theory and praxis really two distinct fields?'

In our time we always stress the non-participatory and/or speculative side of theory, or theōria as the ancient Greeks called it. And we regard theory as something to be born purely from contemplation and/or speculation and as such, opposed to reality and practice (or praxis). The etymology of the word 'theory' or theōria, however, tells us a different story. The

primary and original meaning of the word referred to the spectator, the theōros, from théa (seeing, spectacle) and horaō (I see). In Ancient Greece the theōroi were a kind of ambassador (or you could say legitimate spies) of the city-states, which would be sent into the world on a pilgrimage or expedition outside of their home territory to attend the sacred festivities, consult oracles, or view religious spectacles and games in other city-states and more distant cultures. Their task was to report back home, to 're-view' their experiences in the form of a theōria, a theory. In other words, to project their experience in a kind of reflected or speculative image that tries to put order on display for those back home who didn't experience such far away spectacles first hand. And, as such, each of these 'theories', these speculative concepts about the outside world, added a new insight to the communal body of knowledge (the information or intelligence) that the city-state already possessed. In this sense you could say that a 'theory' is a third level of 'experience'.

Yet you have to keep in mind that, to be able to do so, the theōros would first have to go through what I've already described as the first and second level of 'experience': first perceive and become conscious, and after that reflect, evaluate and accumulate, before capturing it in the 'ordered (but still speculative) image' of a concept, called theory. What this actually means is that Theory and Praxis were initially not two distinct fields but, rather, just two states of one and the same cyclical process of experiencing and learning. By the same token, the Discipline and the Profession of architecture (respectively linked to this idea of Theory and Praxis) are just two characteristics of the same body of knowledge and skills. And Science and Art are just two modes of operation within this Body of Knowledge and Skills called Architecture.

However, something happened in the valuation of these states, characteristics and modes of operation. What we did, at a certain moment in time, was to consider one side more important than the other. We (academics) started to consider the mind to be more important than the hand, and although we all know that in the act of creation they both are equally important, somehow we still consider 'making by thinking' to be more important than 'thinking by making' — that is, Theory to be more important than Praxis, and the discipline to be more important than the profession. Similarly, in most societies the University is still considered to be more prestigious than a school for higher vocational education.



And the cause of all this (believe it or not) is the Academy itself. No, I am not talking about this Academy but, rather, about the original Academy, or better to say the Academia, the school founded in the early 4th century BC by the Greek philosopher Plato, since it was he who introduced this 'moralistic' distinction between insight gained via the body and insight gained via the mind. It was mainly from Plato that we received the theory of 'Ideas' (or 'Forms', but then you should know that 'idea' in Greek means 'form'). Plato's is a theory according to which the world that we know through the senses is only an imitation of the pure, eternal, and unchanging world of the 'Ideas' (or 'Forms').

However, while imagining this pure, eternal and unchanging world of ideas, this ideal world of pure thought, you should bear in mind that Plato was a thinker by profession and that he lived in a period in which it was mainly the slaves who did the manual labour.

One must also take into consideration that 'profession' in those times meant something other than what today we consider a 'profession' to be. In those times your 'profession' was more of a public declaration of your life's calling, your personal commitment, what we would call a 'vocation' today. It was that which occupied your mind and body, and to which you devoted most of your life, in effect your 'discipline', the branch of knowledge and/or skill of which you were a lifelong disciple.

Raphael's depiction of The School of Athens not only tells us something about the profession of philosophy but also tells us something about the role of architecture within the idea of 'school' or 'academy' in its present-day meanings. We'll first consider 'school' or 'academy' as a group of people with a common interest, then as the space in which they come together, and thirdly and finally as the institutionalised place and time of that gathering in space.

'Now architecture — if you think of it in terms of school — also probably began with a man under a tree who didn't know he was a teacher, talking to a few who didn't know they were pupils. They listened to this man, and thought it was wonderful that he existed, and they would like to have their children and their children's children listen to such a man. Of course, that was in the nature of man impossible. School then became a room, and then an institution.'



These were the words of Louis Kahn, from a paper he delivered in 1962 at the international Design Conference in Aspen, Colorado. What for me is so interesting

about Kahn's description here is that it exactly depicts the spirit of the original Academy, and by this I mean the Pre-Platonic Academy, as it must have been.

Before the Academy (or Academia) became synonymous with the place where Plato used to entertain his audience, it was a public garden or olive grove, situated about six stadia (a good kilometre) outside of the city wall of Athens, to the north-

west of it and alongside the bank of the River Cephissus. The piece of land was named after the Attic Hero Academus or Hecademus, who had left it to the citizens of Athens for gymnastics. During the 6th century BC, one of the three famous Gymnasias of Athens was founded here. Within it there was a sacred grove of olive trees dedicated to Athena (the goddess of wisdom). The archaic name for the site was Hekademia, which in classical times evolved into Akademia. The piece of land was subsequently surrounded by a wall, the river Cephissus was diverted to make the dry land fertile, plane and olive trees were planted, and it was adorned with statues, graves and altars. In this manner it became a public park where festivals were held, funeral games took place, and athletic events were held in which the runners would race between the altars.

It might very well be that the young Plato initially went there to listen to Socrates, his senior by more than forty years, who loved to frequent the gymnasias or palaestrae of Athens and to entertain young Athenians with his philosophical contemplations. And likewise it must have been somewhere around 387 BC that Plato (then in his early forties), who had a house nearby and a garden within the area, sat down under one of the trees of the gymnasium at Akademia and started entertaining an enthralled audience by delivering his lectures. While imagining this scene of a man under a tree (as Louis Kahn imagined it) you should also not forget that the word 'school' comes from the Greek word 'skhole', and that its original notion was that of leisure, which then in its

evolution passed to the idea of an otiose discussion, before becoming identified with the place where such leisurely discussions were performed. Only much later the word 'school' became synonymous with a place, a building or an institution of instruction.

It was around five hundred years after Plato's time that the Roman poet Juvenal, in his 10th Satire, coined the famous and much-quoted Latin words *mens sana in corpore sano* — that is, 'a healthy mind in a healthy body'. This phrase befits the park-like image you might by now have of the Academy or 'Akademia': young Athenians running and playing or sitting around a man (called Plato) under a tree and listening to his fantastic story of Atlantis.



What happened to this gymnasium in ancient Athens, I think you can imagine. Let's hope that there are still men who have something interesting to tell and are willing to

do so. For me, re-thinking the Academy means re-establishing the equilibrium between the world of the senses and the world of the mind, between theory and praxis, between the discipline and the

profession of architecture, between its science and its art, since both are accumulated within its body of knowledge and skills.

Within architecture, making by thinking is as important as thinking by making.



# Amsterdam Academy of Architecture

## *Master of Architecture – Urbanism – Landscape Architecture*

Architects, urban designers and landscape architects learn the profession at the Amsterdam Academy of Architecture through an intensive combination of work and study. They work in small, partly interdisciplinary groups and are supervised by a select group of practising fellow professionals. There is a wide range of options within the programme so that students can put together their own trajectory and specialisation. With the inclusion of the course in Urbanism in 1957 and Landscape Architecture in 1972, the academy is the only architecture school in the Netherlands to bring together the three spatial design disciplines.

Some 350 guest tutors are involved in teaching every year. Each of them is a practising designer or a specific expert in his or her particular subject. The three heads of department also have design practices of their own in addition to their work for the Academy. This structure yields an enormous dynamism and energy and ensures that the courses remain closely linked to the current state of the discipline.

The courses consist of projects, exercises and lectures. First-year and second-year students also engage in morphological studies. Students work on their own or in small groups. The design projects form the backbone of the curriculum. On the basis of a specific design assignment, students develop knowledge, insight and skills. The exercises are focused on training in those skills that are essential for recognising and solving design problems, such as analytical techniques, knowledge of the repertoire, the use of materials, text analysis, and writing. Many of the exercises are linked to the design projects. The morphological studies concentrate on the making of spatial objects, with the emphasis on creative process and implementation. Students experiment with materials and media forms and gain experience in converting an idea into a creation.

During the periods between the terms there are workshops, study trips in the Netherlands and abroad, and other activities. This is also the preferred moment for international exchange projects. The academy regularly invites foreign students for the workshops and recruits well-known designers from the Netherlands and further afield as tutors.

Graduates from the Academy of Architecture are entitled to the following titles: Master of Architecture (MArch), Master of Urbanism (MUrb), or Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA). The Master's diploma gives direct access to the Register of Architects (Stichting Bureau Architectenregister, SBA) in The Hague.

The Academy of Architecture is part of the Amsterdam School of the Arts (AHK), as are the Theatre School, the Amsterdam School for Music, the Netherlands Film and Television Academy, the Academy for Art Education, and the Reinwardt Academy. The AHK, which was founded in 1987, offers a full range of bachelor's and master's courses in the field of music, dance, theatre, film and television, architecture, fine art and cultural heritage. The link with arts education underlines the particular importance that the Academy of Architecture attaches to the artistic aspect in the professional practice of architects, urban designers and landscape architects.



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## Re-inventing the Academy

The Amsterdam Academy of Architecture is celebrating its centenary. Ever since its foundation in 1908, the school's tutors have been drawn from the field of practice. Students gain work experience during the day and meet the tutors in small groups in the evening. Practicing tutors pass on their professional expertise to students in a master-apprentice relationship. This model of education blurs the boundaries between the academy and the world of professional practice.

Yet ideas about education are evolving, as is the profession itself and the world at large. Will this learning model remain valid in the decades to come?

This volume contains contributions by Herman Hertzberger, Maurits de Hoog and Wim van den Bergh, among others, that examine the past, present and future of the academy, and the relation between professional practice and design education.

