

BREAKING BARRIERS

The evolving role of women in Dutch architecture through the lives and works of Margaret Staal-Kropholler & Liesbeth van der Pol



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Abstract

Throughout 20th century, the role of women in Dutch society and in architecture changed under the influence of the first, second, third and fourth feminist waves. At the beginning of the 20th century, some women broke the gender barriers in architecture, a field traditionally dominated by men (Smeets-Klokgieters, 2022).

The purpose of this thesis is to examine, through social and historical factors related to the role of women in both architecture and society, how the position of women in these fields has changed over the past century. This is explored through the lives and works of the two pioneering Dutch female architects Margaret Staal-Kropholler and Liesbeth van der Pol. Hence, the research question is formulated as follows:

‘How do the lives and works of the two Dutch pioneer architects Margaret Staal-Kropholler and Liesbeth van der Pol reflect the influence of the changing role of women in architecture in the 20th / 21st century in the Netherlands?’

In order to answer the research question, a literature review and an interview were conducted. The literature review includes books and articles from different centuries, providing a comprehensive understanding of how views on the role of women in society and architec-

ture have evolved over the past hundred years. It also includes an interview with Liesbeth van der Pol, which provides further insight into her thoughts about women in architecture during the late 20th /early 21st century.

The lives of Margaret Staal-Kropholler and Liesbeth van der Pol offer interesting insights into the changing role of women in society and architecture in the Netherlands. Margaret Staal-Kropholler is regarded as the first female Dutch architect, she lived in a time when women rarely entered the architectural profession (Kuperus & van Kessel, 1990). She showed that women were not inferior to the, until then, male-dominated profession. Throughout Liesbeth van der Pol’s career, the presence and influence of women in modern architecture grew. Despite the fact that approximately half of all architecture students are female, only 23% of working architects are women (Alkemade, 2021). As the first female State Architect of the Netherlands, she can be seen as a pioneer and a role model for many female architects and architecture students. Van der Pol encourages women in this field to be confident and make their voices heard within the profession.

Together, these two architects represent a shift in perception and participation of women within Dutch architecture. The lives and works of Margaret Staal-Kropholler and Liesbeth van der Pol are part of the ongoing evolution of gender equality within this field.

Table of contents

Introduction	4
Chapter 1. Historical and Societal context	6
1.1 <i>Late 19th century: Let the voices be heard</i>	6
1.2 <i>Early 20th century: The rise of women in Dutch architecture</i>	6
1.3 <i>Late 20th century: Women in the workplace</i>	7
1.4 <i>Early 21st century: Women in Dutch architecture</i>	8
1.5 <i>Conclusion</i>	8
Chapter 2. Margaret Staal-Kropholler	10
2.1 <i>The life of Margaret Staal-Kropholler</i>	10
2.2 <i>Society in the early 20th century</i>	11
2.3 <i>Architecture of the early 20th century</i>	12
2.4 <i>The designs of Margaret Staal-Kropholler</i>	12
2.5 <i>Conclusion</i>	18
Chapter 3. Liesbeth van der Pol	19
3.1 <i>The life of Liesbeth van der Pol</i>	19
3.2 <i>Society in the late 20th / early 21st century</i>	20
3.3 <i>Architecture of the late 20th / early 21st century</i>	20
3.4 <i>The designs of Liesbeth van der Pol</i>	21
3.5 <i>Conclusion</i>	24
Chapter 4. Comparison Staal-Kropholler & van der Pol	25
4.1 <i>Changes in society</i>	25
4.2 <i>Changes in architectural movements</i>	25
4.3 <i>The works of Staal-Kropholler & van der Pol</i>	26
4.4 <i>Conclusion</i>	28
Conclusion	29
Bibliography	30
Image bibliography	33
Appendix	37

Introduction

During the 20th century, the role of women in Dutch society underwent significant changes, brought on by the influence of the first, second, third and fourth feminist waves in the Netherlands. These movements brought about important shifts regarding women's roles in society, such as the introduction of women's suffrage and the abolition of legislation that rendered women legally incapacitated (Loo, 2005). In the early 20th century, a few women in the Netherlands broke through gender barriers in architecture, a field traditionally dominated by men. This thesis focuses on two prominent Dutch female architects who were predominantly active in Amsterdam: Margaret Staal-Kropholler (1891-1966) and Liesbeth van der Pol (1959-present). Both of these selected architects are pioneers in their field, with Staal-Kropholler being the first female Dutch architect and Van der Pol being the first, and currently only, female Dutch State Architect.

In this thesis, the focus lies on societal and historical factors concerning the role of female architects in the Netherlands. It is important to investigate how these factors have impacted the lives and works of Staal-Kropholler and Van der Pol to discover how the role of women in architecture has changed over the past century and what the implications are for the future of architecture and gender equality in the Netherlands. Hence, the research question is formulated as follows:

'How do the lives and works of the two Dutch pioneer architects Margaret Staal-Kropholler and Liesbeth van der Pol reflect the influence of the changing role of women in architecture in the 20th / 21st century in the Netherlands?'

Academic context

To understand the significance of the contributions of Staal-Kropholler and Van der Pol regarding the role of women in Dutch architecture, it is first important to consider the broader social and historical context they lived in.

The book *'De vrouw beslist'* by Vilan van de

Loo, published in 2005, provides insight into the first and second feminist waves in the Netherlands and how they changed the role of women in society. It delves into the various feminist action groups and the key figures who brought about many changes during these first two waves. One of these important figures is Mina Kruseman, who, in her book consisting of multiple articles titled *'Mijn Leven'*, offers her perspective on the role of women in Dutch society in 1877. Here, she criticizes this role significantly and advocates for emancipation. Wilhelmina Drucker also expressed her views on this matter in her article from 1892 called *'Een woordje aan de Vrouwen van Nederland'*, where she discusses the necessity of women's rights in Dutch society. Both of these articles provide insight into how women in the 19th century sought to change the role of women in Dutch society.

Erica Smeets-Klokgieters offers insight into the obstacles and barriers faced by the first Dutch women architects in her doctoral research *'To Our Brave Architects!'* published in 2023. This research sheds light on how the first female architects in the Netherlands entered their studies and the field of work and how they were perceived by their male peers and teachers. The book *'Margaret Staal-Kropholler Architect'* by Marga S. Kupers and Ellen van Kessel from 1990 provides insight into the life of the first female Dutch architect, Margaret Staal-Kropholler. This book describes her life trajectory, her major works, and her societal contributions. The magazine *'Wendingen'* (1918-1933) is also utilized, containing various articles written about the works of Staal-Kropholler. The article *'Architectuur'* from the book *'Huldeblijk aan H.M. de koning van de Amsterdamsche Vrouwen'* written by Staal-Kropholler herself in 1938 provides insight into how Staal-Kropholler viewed the role of women in architecture.

The book *'Liesbeth van der Pol Architect'* by Herman Zeinstra from 2003 and *'Met Karakter!'* by Liesbeth van der Pol from 2023 describes the life and major works of Van der Pol. Articles about and written by Van der Pol from the magazines *'The Architect'* and *'Eigen Huis & Interieur'* offer insights into how Dutch society in the late 20th / 21st century perceives her works. The interview with Liesbeth van der Pol in the magazine *'Mevr. De Architect'* from

2021 provides insight into her thoughts about women in architecture during the late 20th / early 21st century.

Finally, the books '*Dutch architecture of the 20th century*' by Hans Ibelings, published in 1995, '*Supermodernism*' also by Hans Ibelings, published in 1998 and '*Double Dutch, architecture in the Netherlands after 1985*' by Bernard Hulseman and Luuk Kramer, published in 2014, are used to gain insight into the changing architectural styles in the Netherlands during the last century. These insights are important to determine if Margaret Staal-Kropholler and Liesbeth van der Pol were influenced by these changing styles.

Methodology

For this research, literature review and an interview are conducted. The literature review includes books and articles from different centuries, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of how views on the role of women in society and architecture have evolved over the past hundred years. These books and articles ensure that a clear, comprehensive narrative can be outlined regarding the changed role of women in Dutch society and architecture, and how this is reflected in the work and lives of Staal-Kropholler and Van der Pol. Additionally, an interview is conducted with Liesbeth van der Pol. For this, a questionnaire is prepared in advance with all the key questions. This interview aims to gain more insight into how Liesbeth van der Pol perceives the role of women in architecture and whether she has witnessed any changes in this regard throughout her career.

Structure

Following this introduction, this thesis is divided in five chapters in which the changing role of women in Dutch society and the two selected female architects are examined and compared.

Chapter 1 provides a brief explanation about the historical and societal context of women's roles in Dutch society and their engagement in the field of architecture.

Chapter 2 describes the life of Margaret Staal-Kropholler. This chapter covers her personal background, the society in the early 20th

century, the architectural movements during the 20th century and her most important designs.

Chapter 3 describes the life of Liesbeth van der Pol. This chapter covers her personal background, the society in the late 20th / early 21st century, the architectural movements during the late 20th / early 21st century and her most important designs.

Chapter 4 described the changes concerning the role of women in society and the architectural movements that have taken place over the past century.

In the conclusion the main research question is answered by integrating all the acquired knowledge from the previous chapters.

Chapter 1. Historical and societal context

In order to address the main research question it is essential to provide an overview of the societal and historical context in which Margaret Staal-Kropholler and Liesbeth van der Pol have lived. Therefore, this chapter outlines an overview of the key events from the past century concerning the changing role of women in Dutch society and architecture in the Netherlands.

1.1 Late 19th century: Let the voices be heard

During the 19th century, women were treated differently than men; they had to take their place in the hierarchy. At the end of the 19th century, Besty Perk (1833-1906) founded the association 'Arbeid Adelt', with which she aimed to remove the stigma of openly earning money for women of higher classes. During this time, only women of the lower class worked for their income. An unmarried lady of the upper class was dependent on her family and was expected to fill her days with music and embroidery. In 1872, Betsy Perk, Together with Mina Kruseman (1839-1922), embarked on a tour giving lectures for money, which had not been done before by women in the Netherlands (Loo, 2005). In her book *'Mijn Leven'* from 1877, Mina Kruseman writes about her vision of the role of women in Dutch society:



Figure 1. Betsy Perk (Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, n.d.)



Figure 2. Mina Kruseman (Atria, n.d.)

"Come, I will confess it to you, I think that we girls and women have such a subordinate role to play on the world stage! – isn't it true, it may be good for once, but to always remain a mere extra, and, from the moment the curtain rises until it falls again, to appear and disappear to the beat of the music, it becomes a bit tedious in the end, doesn't it?" (Kruseman, 1877, p. 7)

In 1898, the National Exhibition of Women's Labor opened in The Hague, exhibiting all kinds of products made by women. Never before had women shown themselves in such a manner. One could even see women at work, such as cigar maker Clasina Landraat, attracting a huge crowd (Loo, 2005) (Smeets-Klokgieters, 2022). With this exhibition, women showed that were more than capable to work. This exhibition lasted until September 21, 1898, and it was a tremendous success. Ultimately, it generated a profit of over 22,000 guilders, which enabled the establishment of new organizations focused on women's rights. These included the 'National Bureau for Women's Labor', the 'National Women's Council' and the 'General Dutch Domestic Workers Union'. Women collaborated for women's rights, irrespective of marital status, education, or social position (Maria & Berteke, 1998). All of this together constituted the first feminist wave in The Netherlands, which had already begun before the exhibition in The Hague, but became particularly visible and impactful since that moment.

1.2 Early 20th century: The rise of women in Dutch architecture

During the first decades of the 20th century, women in the Netherlands began to work in disciplines alike to the arts and crafts, such as art needlework, lace, batik and weaving. These various crafts were seen as 'feminine' (Oven, 1939). Men at this time talked positively about women within the disciplines of interior design or furniture design, as women were thought to have a good sense of intimacy, atmosphere and color (Smeets-Klokgieters, 2022). This positive talk by men about women in these disciplines may have served to deter them from entering the 'male-dominated'

field of architecture.

Women who wanted to become architects at this time had to become proficient in technical skills at an academic level. This was a difficult path, as the field of architecture had been male-dominated for a long time (Smeets-Klokgieters, 2022). The first official architectural education in the Netherlands started in Delft in 1864 at the Polytechnic School (Kamp, 1955). The first women appeared within this course at the end of the 19th century, these were mostly daughters of Delft professors. They



Figure 3. Young women in the drawing room at the old faculty of Architecture in 1909 (Damme-van Weele en Ressing-Wolfert, 1995)

didn't pursue graduating but attended some classes as part of their general education, and presumably to enhance their chances of finding a suitable marriage partner (Jong, 1997). Women were not encouraged to enter the architectural profession at this time, not even by the Technical University itself. The report from the academic year 1908-1909 stated that the practice of architecture by women would pose too high physical demands, and if women truly wanted to become architects, they should focus on the interior decoration of buildings, a direction more suited to women's nature (Everts, 1910).

In 1904, the Polytechnic School admitted the first two female students to study architecture, however, both did not complete their studies. The first woman graduated from the study architecture at the Polytechnic School in 1917, this woman was Grada Wolffensperger (Smeets-Klokgieters, 2022). In the period up to 1946, 19 women graduated as architects from the 81 women that had enrolled in the full-time study from 1904 (Vereeniging van Delfsche ingenieurs, 1982). After graduation,

three options existed to pursue the architectural profession at this time. First, female graduates could take a position with the government. From 1924, however, only unmarried women could gain access to this job (Trouw, 1964). A second option was to work in an architectural firm, as Margaret Staal-Kropholler did. Nevertheless, this proved to be a difficult option for many women. This was mainly due to prevailing beliefs that women were supposed to be at home for the benefit of their husbands and families. A third option was to start their own architectural firm with their husband. This allowed women to develop as equal partners within this practice. None of the first women architects to graduate from the Polytechnic School became partners in an architectural firm (Smeets-Klokgieters, 2022).

1.3 Late 20th century: Women in the workplace

In November 1967, Joke Kool-Smit wrote the article '*Women's Discomfort*', in which she describes how women's societal position is double conditioned by men. Firstly, by whether they have a husband (or not), and secondly, by the fact that a woman's status in society is directly dependent on her husband. It determines the circles she will move in and where she will live; for most women, this is dependent on the man they happen to be married to. This leads to women living a passive existence (Kool-Smit, 1984).



Figure 4. Joke Kool-Smit (ANP, n.d.)

This article is considered the inception of the second feminist wave in the Netherlands. In this article, Kool-Smit used her own situation as a starting point. She was a woman from the middle class, married to a man, and a mother of children at home. Getting married and

having children were important choices in which she had a significant say, but according to Kool-Smit, they were influenced by the society she lived in, which perceived women as mothers and homemakers. Kool-Smit argued that men occupied a different marital position than women. She wrote that men, as breadwinners, could choose from a wide range of paid jobs once they entered the workforce. In contrast, women from the middle class (like Joke Kool-Smit herself) were limited to professions where they had to work excessively for low wages. This disadvantaged position of women in the workforce, according to Kool-Smit, was linked to the traditional gender roles of women as mothers and men as primary earners (Kool-Smit, 1984). This began to change around the 1980s when the business world realized the profitability of part-time jobs. However, during this time, women's salaries were still lower than men's for the same work, as employers assumed that every woman had a husband who earned the 'real money' (Loo, 2005).

More and more women began to pursue higher education in the second half of the 20th century (Tijdens, 2006). However, a lot of the course material was still heavily centered around the 'male society'. For example, Andreas Burnier, a female professor of criminology, remarked during a discussion about the position of women in universities in 1972:

"At the university, female students, even if they were to make up fifty percent or more of the student population, would experience complete alienation if they wanted to study history, philosophy, sociology, or psychology. The facts presented as important, the problem statements, the solutions that are accepted, particularly in the behavioral sciences are based on masculinist view of people and the world, and masculine priorities." (Poldervaart, 1983, pp. 46-47)

Burnier's statement not only addresses the role of women in universities, but also how the curriculum of the university where she worked was focused on the male-oriented world-view and priorities.

Thanks to the second feminist wave, having a paid job and the female right to economic independence became more common. Men saw the benefit, and sometimes the necessity, of a second income (Loo, 2005). During the 1990s, a new generation of women and men emerged with new expectations regarding work-life balance. However, there were significant differences in these expectations between women and men. Women expected a future where they would have a full-time job alongside their partner, who would share household and childcare responsibilities. On the other hand, men also anticipated having a full time job but expected their wives to have a part time job and take care of the household (Moree, 1992).

1.4 Early 21st century: Women in Dutch architecture

Today, women are well represented in architecture studies at universities in the Netherlands, making up approximately half of the student population. However, only 23% of practicing architects are women, which is less than half the proportion of female students studying architecture (Alkemade, 2021). Women often encounter difficulties transitioning into the workforce after completing their studies, and this is due to several factors. Firstly, there is a lack of representation of female leaders and instructors as role models in the field of architecture. Currently, only 12% of directors of architectural firms in the Netherlands are women. These role models are essential as they provide examples of positive career paths for female students. Secondly, women face a male-dominated work environment where men generally hold higher positions than women creating a hierarchical situation. In society, the profession of architecture is still perceived as masculine (Schuster, 2021).

1.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the role of women in society has undergone a significant transformation over the past century. Since the late 19th century, the emergence of feminist movements like 'Arbeit Adelt' have facilitated women's access to traditionally male-dominated / low-class-domains, such as education and employment. While previously women from lower classes

had to work for their livelihood, now women from all backgrounds could work for their own income. Nowadays, it is no longer uncommon for a woman to hold a prominent position, yet there is room for improvement within the field of architecture. Currently, almost half of the architecture students are female, yet only 23 percent of these women actually enter the architectural workforce. This underscores the need for more female role models to inspire young women in pursuing a career in architecture.

Chapter 2. Margaret Staal-Kropholler

Margaret Staal-Kropholler (1891-1966) is regarded as the first female architect in the Netherlands, being active in the field of architecture for over fifty years. In addition to designing buildings, she also created interior designs such as furniture and lamps. She saw the combination of being a homemaker and an architect as ideal, because women would have a better understanding of a practical home layout than men. Because of this, she paid extra attention to the desire of housewives in her designs. Staal-Kropholler proved that the profession of architect is not exclusively reserved for men, making her a true pioneer in Dutch architecture.



Figure 5. Margaret Staal-Kropholler (Atria, between 1916 - 1920)

2.1 The life of Margaret Staal-Kropholler

Margaret Staal-Kropholler was born in Haarlem in 1891. After primary school, she attended the Dagteeken- en Ambachtsschool for girls in Amsterdam, which she completed in 1907. During this education, she learned decorative drawing, freehand drawing, and drawing techniques. Her brother Jacobus (Co) Kropholler was an architect. At a young age, Margaret Staal-Kropholler accompanied her brother to construction sites. After completing her education at the Dagteeken- en Ambachtschool in 1907, she apprenticed with her brother. Co had recently started his own architectural firm with Jan Frederik Staal in Amsterdam (Smeets-Klokgieters, 2022). During this time, Staal-Kropholler learned everything related to the architectural profession. Loeff-Bokma wrote in the magazine *'De Vrouw en Haar Huis'*:

"Here she learned everything related to the profession in theory and practice, she regularly studied individual subjects, had the opportunity to become familiar with construction execution as a daily supervisor at various building sites, and her own talent soon led her to

very personal work." (Loeff-Bokma, 1929, p. 399)

In 1910 the firm Staal & Kropholler ceased to exist, and Jacobus Kropholler and Jan Frederik Staal would never speak to each other again. This rupture was due in part to their differing architectural opinions. Kropholler wanted a traditional and conservative architectural style, while Staal leaned more towards the Amsterdam School style. Additionally, Margaret Staal-Kropholler (then Margaret Kropholler) and Jan Frederik Staal began a romantic relationship, while Staal was still married. This secret affair likely played a significant role in the breakup of Staal & Kropholler. After the breakup, Staal continued the firm under his own name, and Margaret Kropholler continued to work with him. Staal praised her to various clients as one of his best supervisors (Priester, 2004). Staal-Kropholler attended a building course in Haarlem in 1910. She then enrolled as a student at the Amsterdam Academy of Architecture in 1914, but did not complete this study. From 1915, she worked as a draftsman supervisor at the Public Works department of the municipality of Amsterdam, where she was the only woman. She left with honorable discharge in September 1915, after which she returned to Jan Frederik Staal's office, where she would work as an independent architect from that moment on (Kuperus & van Kessel, 1990).

When Margaret Staal-Kropholler was twenty years old she received her first major commission: the interior design of 'het huis 1913' (the house 1913), which would be exhibited at the Amsterdam exhibition called *'De Vrouw 1813 - 1913'*. This exhibition advocated for women's independence and political equality. Staal-Kropholler submitted her entry under a pseudonym: Greta Derlinge. She possibly used this pseudonym to avoid being confused with her brother, Jacobus Kropholler, with whom she had a difficult relationship since her affair with J.F. Staal (Smeets-Klokgieters, 2022). Her design for 'het huis 1913' had to be furnished according to the latest innovations in hygiene and comfort to facilitate household management. The exhibition committee was ultimately very satisfied with Staal-Kropholler's work (Loeff-Bokma, 1929).

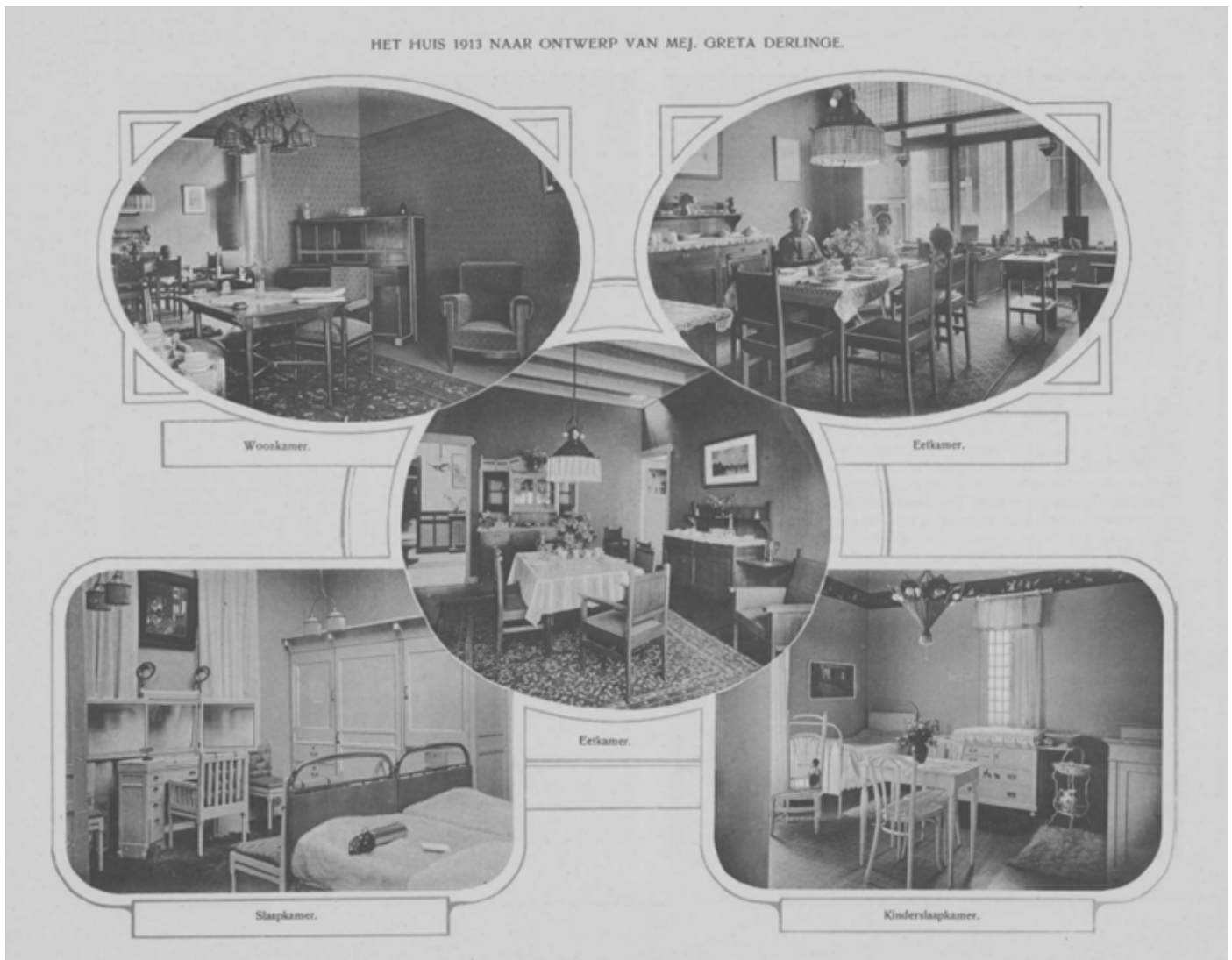


Figure 6. Het Huis 1913 by Greta Derlinge (Gedenkboek Tentoonstelling De Vrouw 1813-1913, 1913)

2.2 Society in the early 20th century

Women did not work as independent architects at the beginning of the 20th century in the Netherlands. This changed when Margaret Staal-Kropholler entered the field at her partner Jan Frederik Staal's architectural firm as an independent architect in 1915. For a long time, she was the only woman working as an independent architect in the Netherlands, as stated in the magazine *'De Vrouw en Haar Huis'* from 1929:

"Mrs. M. Staal-Kropholler, who made a name for herself as an architect under the name Margaret Kropholler, was and still is the only woman in the Netherlands who actually builds." (Loeff-Bokma, 1929, p. 399)

This article indicates that, at that time,

Staal-Kropholler was still the only independent female architect in the Netherlands who had also been able to carry out commissions. This was because she was employed by her partner, the architect Jan Frederik Staal, giving her the opportunity to prove herself as a female architect.

For women, it was difficult to become an architect in the early 20th century; this profession was seen as 'male' and certainly not suitable for women, who belonged at home with the children (Smeets-Klokgieters, 2022).

Throughout her professional life, Staal-Kropholler has been socially active regarding the role of women in architecture. In 1938, Staal-Kropholler wrote in her article *'Architectuur'* about this topic. She stated that architecture originated from male crafts such as carpentry and stonemasonry. Yet, this did not mean that male architects deserved preference over female architects. According to

Staal-Kropholler, women can design the interior of homes much better than their male colleagues, as she writes:

“Women know much better the domestic business of cleaning and food provision, so important in homes and institutions. They feel much better how necessary it is to limit and facilitate domestic work; how much free time is lost due to unskilled or loveless furnished homes, both by impractical space allocation with a lack of well-chosen storage space, and by a lack of technical provisions that shorten daily activities.” (Staal-Kropholler, *Architectuur*, 1938, p. 141)

However, she also writes in this article that she thinks in the future few women will choose the profession, as an interest for subjects such as mathematics and physics are needed, which she believes is much more common among young men than among young women (Staal-Kropholler, *Architectuur*, 1938). Yet Dutch society was very enthusiastic about Staal-Kropholler, as Loeff-Bokma wrote at the end of her article in the magazine *‘De Vrouw en Haar Huis’*:

“That a woman speaks a worthy word in the language of architecture can rejoice us all!” (Loeff-Bokma, 1929, p. 405)

2.3 Architecture of the early 20th century

During the time Margaret Staal-Kropholler was active as an architect, several significant architectural movements emerged. These movements influenced many architects in the Netherlands, which is why it is important to identify the key trends from the first half of the 20th century, too see if Staal-Kropholler was influenced by them.

Around 1900, architects sought a way out of the neo-styles that had strongly determined the previous century. There needed to be an architecture that was simpler in form than the architecture of the 19th century. Some architects felt that the new architecture should be ‘distinctly Dutch’, which led to a resurgence of

brick classicism. Between 1896 and 1903, the ‘Koopmansbeurs’ by H.P. Berlage was designed and built, which was seen as the starting point of modern architecture in the Netherlands. It was a robust, virtually ornament-free structure that left the 19th century behind (Ibelings, *Nederlandse Architectuur van de 20ste eeuw*, 1995).

Around 1910, the architecture of the Amsterdam School began to develop. The ‘Scheepvaartmuseum’ by P.J.H. Cuypers was one of the first milestones of this style. Also, the villas in Park Meerwijk in Bergen, where Staal-Kropholler realized some designs, are important works of the Amsterdam School (Kuperus & van Kessel, 1990). During this period, De Stijl also emerged. A group that opposed the architecture of the Amsterdam School and sought architecture that was ‘purely visual’. Both movements believed it was important for art and architecture to reflect their own time (Risselada, et al., 2001). The Amsterdam School remained popular until the 1930s. During this time, the style of ‘New Objectivity’ (also known as functionalism or modernism) emerged, characterized by architecture of concrete, glass and steel with an emphasis on simple geometry and transparency. Architects wanted their designs to align with the latest developments in society: machinery, cars, airplanes et cetera. One of the most important buildings of the New Objectivity is the Van Nelle Factory in Rotterdam, designed by J.A. Brinkman and Van der Vlugt (Ibelings, *Nederlandse Architectuur van de 20ste eeuw*, 1995). During the 1930s, traditionalism and functionalism were the predominant movements. The two movements were in many ways opposed to each other, with traditionalism in brick and functionalism in concrete. During World War II, construction nearly came to a halt, and many buildings were destroyed. After the war, the country needed to be rebuilt, with priority given to the restoration of ports, industry, and infrastructure. It wasn’t until the 1950s that the reconstruction of housing began (Risselada, et al., 2001).

2.4 The design of Margaret Staal-Kropholler

Throughout her life, Margaret Staal-Kropholler has realized many different designs in various leading architectural styles. This paragraph will discuss some of her most important works.

2.4.1 1917: Amsterdamse School: Country houses in Park Meerwijk, Bergen

Staal-Kropholler is considered one of the pioneers of the Amsterdam School, partly due to her involvement in the villas at Park Meerwijk in Bergen. Staal-Kropholler became acquainted with this style through her education and her association with J.F. Staal (Kuperus & van Kessel, 1990).

In 1917, tile merchant A.M.A. Heystee commissioned five architects to design seventeen villas for Park Meerwijk, one of them was J.F. Staal. Staal involved Margaret Staal-Kropholler in designing four country houses, numbered as houses 5, 6, 7, and 17 (Wendingen, 1918).

Country houses number 5 and 6, called Meerluis and Meezennest, are identical but back to back, making them mirror images of each other. The decorative language of forms in the exterior is immediately noticeable, and this theme continues into the interior. One of the remarkable features of this interior layout, is that none of the rooms are squarely structured. For these country houses, Staal-Kropholler designed a kitchen layout focused on the convenience of the housewife, including a table that can be folded up (Kuperus & van Kessel, 1990). Staal-Kropholler also designed a brick bridge leading to the entrance of the house, demonstrating her consideration for the surroundings in her designs.



Figure 7. Meerluis / Meezennest (Regionaal Archief Alkmaar, 1925)



Figure 8. Stair portal (Regionaal Archief Alkmaar, n.d.)

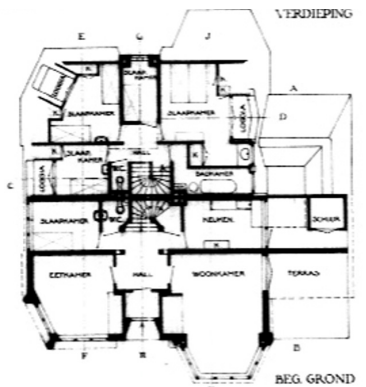


Figure 9. Ground floor Meerluis / Meezennest (Staal-Kropholler, 1916-1920)



Figure 10. Brick bridge (Westhoff, 2015)

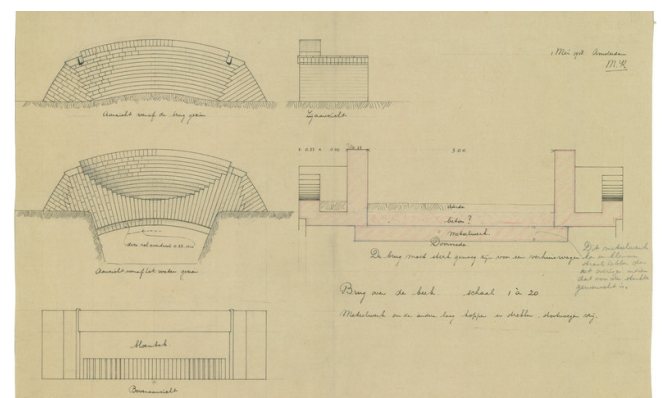


Figure 11. Brick bridge design (Staal-Kropholler, 1916-1920)

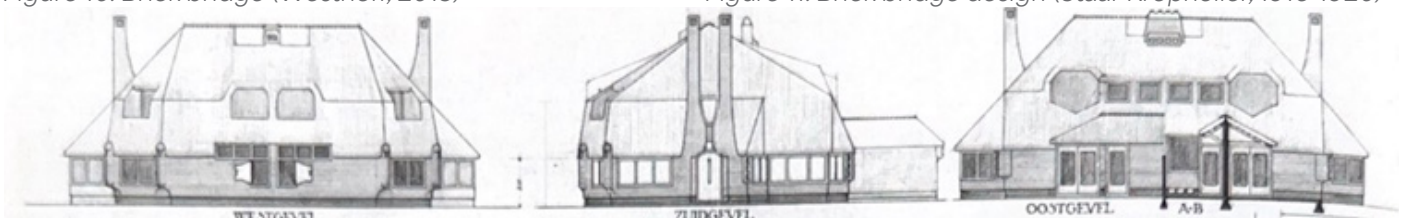


Figure 12. Meezennest and Meerluis facades (Staal-Kropholler, 1916-1920)

Country house number 7, also known as the Beukenhoek, was designed in a similar style. Like the other houses, none of the rooms in this residence are entirely square. The country house has the shape of a ship because the terrace enclosure in the exterior extends to a point.

Country house number 17, known as De Bark, was never executed (Kuperus & van Kessel, 1990). There are some design drawings that have a strong resemblance to country house number 7. There is no information available regarding why this house was not built.



Figure 13. Beukenhoek (Archief Alkmaar, 1920)

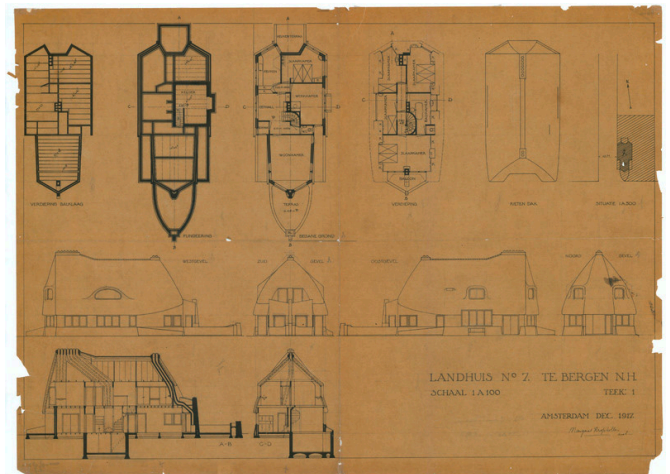


Figure 14. Design for Beukenhoek (Staal-Kropholler, 1917)

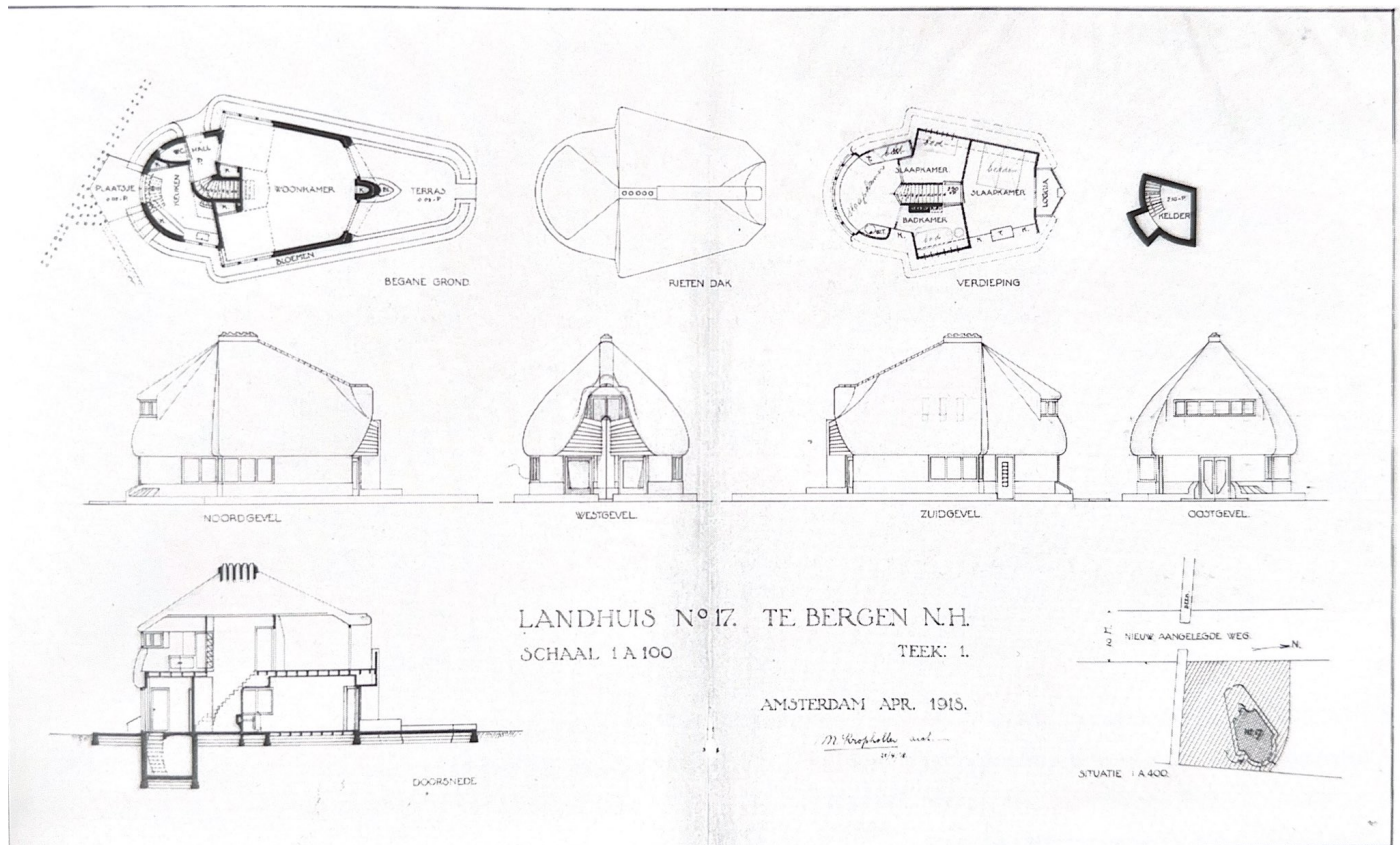


Figure 15. De Bark (Staal-Kropholler, 1915)

2.4.2 1921: Amsterdamse School: Holendrechtstraat / Jozef Israëlkade

In the 1920s, Staal-Kropholler was commissioned to design the façade of the building block on Holendrechtstraat in Amsterdam, which was part of H.P. Berlage's 'Plan Zuid'. This plan was entirely realized by architects of the Amsterdam School. The designed façade is symmetrically arranged. Several meters before the ends of the facades, the façade protrudes two meters forward in a wave-like motion, with balconies situated within these waves. Staal-Kropholler's skill in designing details was well demonstrated in this design. This façade design brought her much recognition, leading to an invitation from the Union of Dutch Architects to join the committee aimed at conducting exams for building supervisors and draftsmen (Kuperus & van Kessel, 1990).



Figure 18. Balconies Holendrechtstraat (Verheij, 2015)



Figure 16. Entrances Holendrechtstraat (Westhoff, 2015)



Figure 19. Roof details Holendrechtstraat (Lobbjes, 2017)

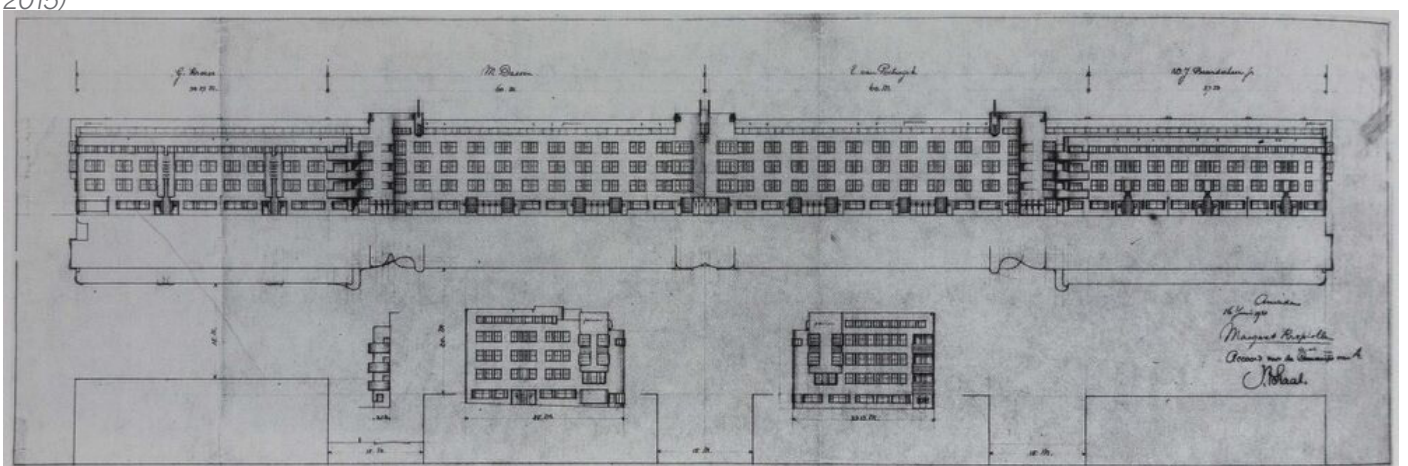


Figure 17. Facade design Holendrechtstraat (Staal-Kropholler, 1921)

2.4.3 1930: The New Objectivity: Leather goods store FOX

Around 1930, Staal-Kropholler transitioned from the Amsterdam School style to the style of the New Objectivity (Kuperus & van Kessel, 1990). This new style is clearly evident in the façade design of the Fox leather goods store in Amsterdam. The façade exhibits a businesslike, sleek appearance. This design clearly demonstrates an affinity with the New Objectivity style through the use of modern materials such as steel and glass, as well as the simple typography she designed for the company's logo.



Figure 20. Leather goods store FOX facade (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1931)

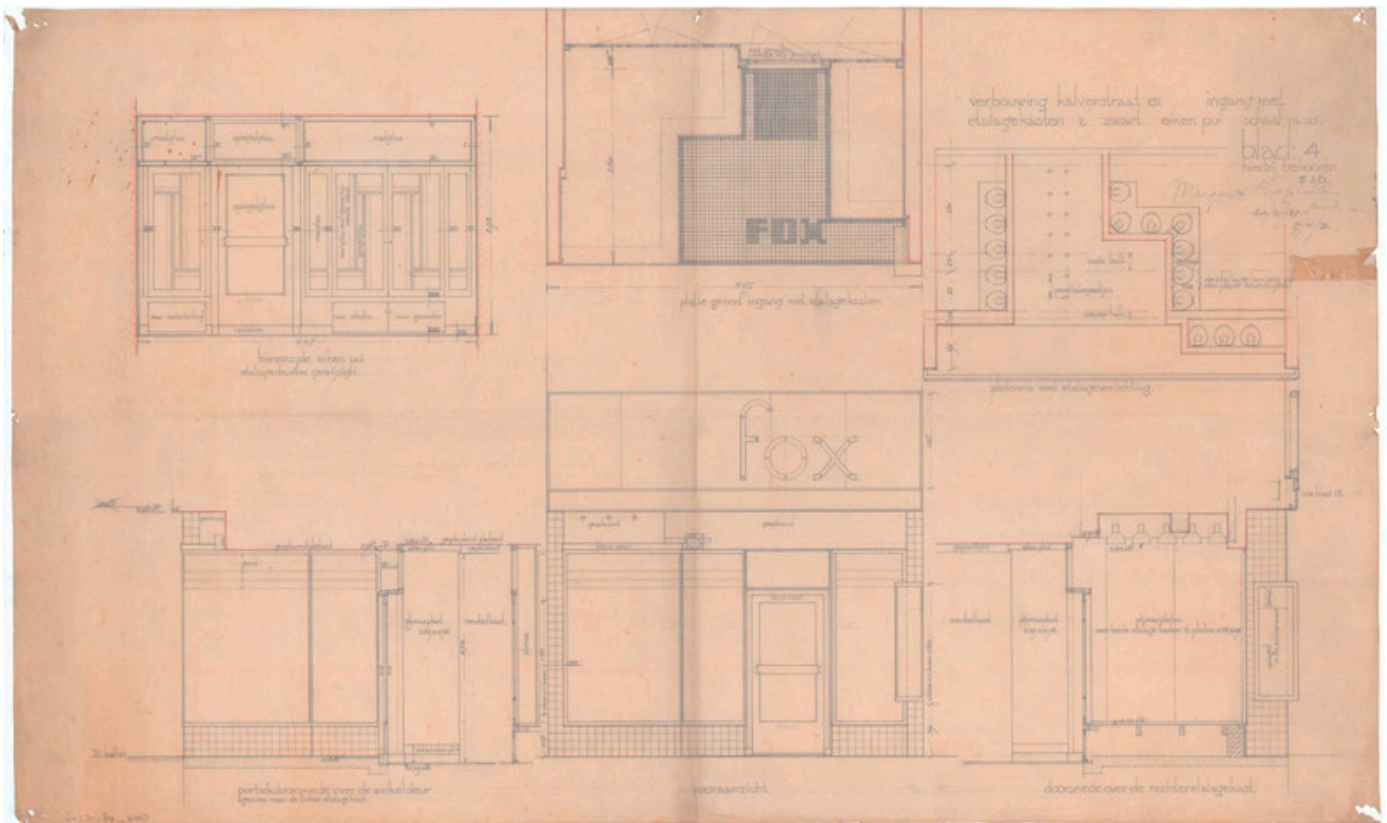


Figure 21. Design facade leather goods store FOX (Staal-Kropholler, 1931)

2.4.4 1964: Staal-Kropholler last design: The Louise Wenthuis

Since 1919, Staal-Kropholler has been concerned with the issue of residential buildings for single women and girls. In that year, she sent the director of the housing department in Amsterdam a detailed description of how such a home should look, however, nothing was done with this at the time.

In 1937, she was commissioned to design the Louise Wenthuis, a home for single women and girls. Nonetheless, she proposed a plan that was not financially feasible. During the Second World War, the plan came to a standstill, and during the reconstruction period after 1945, the focus of construction was mainly on family homes. In the early 1950s, women's associations took action to promote dwellings for singles. Eventually, on March 24, 1961, the first foundation stone was laid for the Louise Wenthuis, and Staal-Kropholler's final design was completed in 1964.

The Louise Wenthuis consists of six residential floors with 170 units for single women and men, which differs from the original plan to accommodate only single women and girls. Two shops, a florist and a household goods store, are located at the bottom of the building. The building is modest and functional, avoiding monotony in the façade design by having the façade step back halfway up the building (Leijnse, 2022).

In 1964, the Dutch weekly magazine called 'De Maasbode' wrote about the success of the Louise Wenthuis:

"The apartment building has just been completed, and the 190 residents (173 women and 17 men) have moved in. A small self-service shop has been installed at the bottom of the building, where they can quickly pick up sugar, coffee or bread when they return tired from work. Working women and single men are still asking if there is space available in the apartment building. Working women who live alone settle into their 'own home' with almost greater joy than a family." (Kuperus & van Kessel, 1990, p. 80)



Figure 22. Louise Wenthuis (Archief Amsterdam, 1963)



Figure 23. Louise Wenthuis (Archief Amsterdam, 2007)

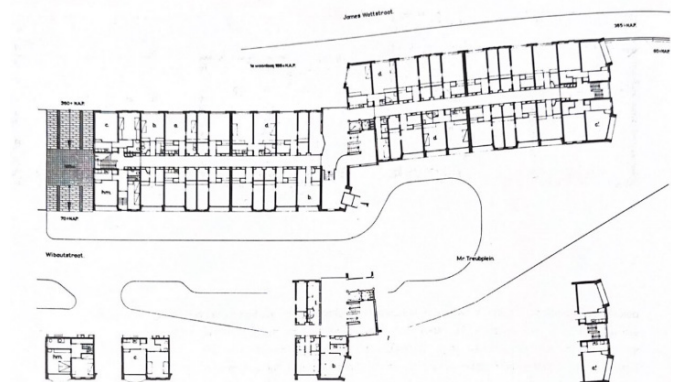


Figure 24. Overview map Louise Wenthuis (Staal-Kropholler, 1963)

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, Margaret Staal-Kropholler has meant a great deal to women in architecture. As the first female architect in the Netherlands, she broke gender boundaries and demonstrated that the profession of architecture is not exclusively reserved for men.

Staal-Kropholler was strongly influenced by the Amsterdam School movement in the beginning of her career, of which she was one of the pioneers. Around the 1930s, the influences of the New Objectivity movement can be seen in her designs.

In the era in which Staal-Kropholler lived, it was common for women to assume the role of homemaker and be responsible for household duties. Staal-Kropholler regarded the combination of being a homemaker and an architect as ideal, believing that women excelled in designing the practical layout of homes as they knew how to operate within the domestic sphere. With this perspective, she accepted the prevailing societal norms regarding the role of women and incorporated this aspect into her designs, which were primarily focused on the comfort and needs of the housewife.

Throughout her life, Staal-Kropholler advocated for more women in architecture; she regularly gave lectures on this topic and wrote multiple articles, such as the discussed piece '*architectuur*' in which she emphasized the importance of women in architecture. Furthermore, in her designs, Staal-Kropholler was also socially active. Her last design, the Louise Wenthuis, underscores her dedication to addressing the societal need for independent housing for single women and girls.

Chapter 3. Liesbeth van der Pol

Liesbeth van der Pol (1959) is a well-known female Dutch architect and is one of the founders of DOK Architects, located in Amsterdam. For Van der Pol, buildings are almost people. She creates the character of her buildings by working with watercolors. In 2008, she became the first female State Architect of the Netherlands, a position she held until 2011.



Figure 25. Liesbeth van der Pol (De Architect, 2023)

3.1 The life of Liesbeth van der Pol

Liesbeth van der Pol is born in Amsterdam as the youngest of four sisters. When she was younger, she sailed frequently with her father, encountering many bridges along the way. This sparked her fascination with bridges, leading her to aspire studying civil engineering. At the age of 17, she began working for Hertzberger, where she learned that architecture is a highly passionate profession. As a result, she decided to pursue architectural studies at Delft University of Technology where she graduated with honors in 1988 (Pol, Interview Liesbeth van der Pol, 2024).

She describes her opinion on the architecture of the 1980s and 1990s in the book *'Liesbeth van der Pol Architect'* published in 1993:

"An off-white mist is making its way across the Netherlands, a mist of flat boxes meant to be lived in. Like sauce hollandaise, white rendering is applied indiscriminately, whatever the architectural dish." (Zeinstra, 1993, p. 6)

With this, Van der Pol indicates a lack of imagination in Dutch housing design from the 1980s and 1990s. This is why this is her goal: to give power, color and expression to her buildings by designing them as true characters.

Van der Pol does this by creating many watercolor sketches in which she can freely explore a design (Zeinstra, 1993). Van der Pol learned the use of watercolor painting while studying at TU Delft, where she learned the principles (Thomas, 2023).

Before and during her studies, Van der Pol worked at several (inter)national architectural firms such as Herman Hertzberger's firm. In 1989 she established herself as an independent architect, after which in 1995, together with her partner Herman Zeinstra, she founded the firm Atelier Zeinstra van der Pol. This office grew rapidly and had many different types of projects, such as housing, buildings for culture and industry. In 2007, Atelier Zeinstra van der Pol was transformed into DOK architects, which she co-leads with Patrick Cannon (Thomas, 2023).

In 2008, Liesbeth van der Pol became the first, and currently still only, female State Architect of the Netherlands, a position she held until 2011. She was asked to take on this role by the State Architect before her, Mels Crouwel. Crouwel was positive about her approach in various juries they had served together. Van der Pol herself had never really considered taking on this role until it was offered to her. She found it very honorable and enjoyable as it represented a shift to a much larger design scale after 30 years of practicing architecture (Pol, Interview Liesbeth van der Pol, 2024). During this period, Van der Pol advised the government on the architectural policy of the Netherlands. However, Van der Pol experienced a profound low during this period, as she describes in the magazine *'Zin'*:

"I became the first female State Architect, and we were in the midst of the financial crisis. While my firm was crumbling, I was fighting for the quality of urban planning. At some point, it became too much, but I didn't realize it. I just kept running, otherwise, I wouldn't enjoy it. I don't question myself with everything: can I do this? I always have to look back - where is everyone? - and only then do I see a big mess. Soaring high and then crash." (Velde, 2021, p. 91)

From 2014 to 2017, Van der Pol served as supervisor of architecture and urban planning at Schiphol Airport. She then served as a coordinating architect of the renovation of the northern part of the Binnenhof complex in The Hague from 2017 to 2019 (DOK architecten, 2024).

Nowadays, Liesbeth van der Pol is a guest lecturer at various universities and academies in the Netherlands, and is a regular guest speaker at lectures, debates, conferences and workshops (Pol, Met Karakter!, 2023).

3.2 Society in the late 20th / early 21st century

In the second half of the 20th century, an increasing number of women started working in the Netherlands. In 1960, 22% of all women between the ages of 15 and 64 were part of the workforce. This increased to 30% in 1970, after which it remained stable in the 1970s. From the 1980s onwards, female workforce participation began to rise again (Tijdens, 2006). By 2023, the labor force participation of women had increased to 69,2% (CBS, 2024).

In the 1950s and 1960s, women's workforce participation was linked to their wedding day; they often stopped working once they were married. During the 1970s, women increasingly started working until the birth of their first child. 6 out of 10 women who had their first child in the second half of the 1980s continued working after they had this child. This increased to 9 out of 10 in the second half of the 1990s (De Beer & Deven, 2000). In the second half of the 20th century, the family with a breadwinning man and a full-time housewife disappeared, and the dual-income family became dominant in the Netherlands (Tijdens, 2006).

Currently, a large portion of women are employed in the Netherlands, with the majority of this group working in healthcare and welfare. Within this sector, 77,8% are women and 22,2% are men. In contrast, within the technical sector, the opposite is true, with 16,6% women and 83,4% men (CBS, 2024). Among architectural designers in the Netherlands, only 23% are women (Alkemade, 2021). This is noteworthy considering that within architectural studies at universities, women constitute approxima-

tely half of all students in the Netherlands. However, after graduation, female students often encounter a male-dominated work environment. Higher positions in architectural firms are typically held by men, creating a hierarchical situation. Consequently, women often feel the need to excel and demonstrate their skills and abilities within the field of architecture (Schuster, 2021).

In an interview for 'Mevr. De Architect', Van der Pol expresses her views on why she believes so few women enter the architectural profession after completing their studies:

"Women often suffer from a significant lack of self-confidence. While men confidently put themselves forward, women tend to retreat. This is frustrating and unfair because women are perfectly capable of practicing the profession and should be given the opportunity to do so. I find it regrettable that within many architectural firms, their insecurities are not nurtured, despite the fact that it's okay to have doubts." (Pit, 2021, p. 54)

Within the architectural firm of Liesbeth van der Pol, doubt is encouraged. According to Van der Pol, taking another look at a design ultimately only improves it (Pit, 2021).

3.3 Architecture of the late 20th / early 21st century

During the time Liesbeth van der Pol has been active as an architect, several significant architectural movements emerged. These movements influenced many architects in the Netherlands, which is why it is important to identify the key trends from the late half of the 20th and the early 21st century, too see if Van der Pol was influenced by them.

In the 1960s, Modernism was one of the predominant movements in architecture in the Netherlands, characterized by sculptural forms, expressions of construction and technology, and large dimensions. During this period, there was a rise in high-rise gallery flats in residential construction, assembled through

system building techniques. This led to the creation of monotonous neighborhoods with uniform high-rise flats and row houses, a development that faced considerable criticism due to the lack of variation in design (Ibelings, *Nederlandse Architectuur van de 20ste eeuw*, 1995).

During the 1970s, architectural elements such as linkages, stairs, terraces, protrusions and recesses saw increased utilization, particularly evident in residential construction. Residential architecture of the 1970s emphasized modest scale and hospitality. Structuralism emerged as a significant movement, characterized by buildings constructed from a number of often identical small units. These buildings often feature a layout reminiscent of a village or small town (Risselada, et al., 2001).

In the 1980s, Neorationalism emerged, characterized by a rational approach to design, often employing neutral geometric forms. Architecture aimed to be stripped of personal expression during this period (Ibelings, *Nederlandse Architectuur van de 20ste eeuw*, 1995). Additionally, there was a revival of Modernism known as Neomodernism. This movement built upon the principles of Modernism. During the 1980s, numerous buildings were constructed with flat roofs, glass facades, and plastered walls, reminiscent of the works of modernist such as Le Corbusier and Alvar Aalto (Hulsman & Kramer, 2013).

In the 1990s, architects in the Netherlands began designing building where diverse forms and materials clashed against each other, a style that falls under the term Deconstructivism. Compared to other Deconstructivist architecture abroad, Dutch Deconstructivism was notably softer, lacking the extreme sharp and impractical forms seen in the works of architects like Peter Eisenman and Zaha Hadid. Additionally, around this time, Blob architecture emerged: complex buildings designed with computer techniques featuring curves and undulations. Thus, around the turn of the century, there were two completely different styles within Dutch architecture: the Deconstructivists and the computer architects. (Hulsman & Kramer, 2013).

Around the turn of the century, Supermodernism emerged in the Netherlands, facilitated in part by the globalization. This is because the buildings that emerged were not bound by place and time; they could exist anywhere in

the world. However, for many, this movement sparked a desire for architecture that responds to its environment with its own unique identity (Ibelings, *Supermodernisme*, 1998).

3.4 The designs of Liesbeth van der Pol

Throughout her life, Liesbeth van der Pol has realized many different designs. In an interview with the weekly magazine BOUW in 1989, Van der Pol expressed her reluctance to align herself with any particular architectural movement or style. She acknowledged the influence of Herman Hertzberger during her studies, with whom she worked at the time. However, she consciously sought to pursue a different architectural direction afterwards (Cate, 1989). Reflecting on designing with a specific architectural style, Van der Pol stated in the magazine *'Eigen Huis & Interieur'* in 1997:

"During my studies, architects like Herman Hertzberger and Aldo van Eyck were firmly established. Rem Koolhaas and Zaha Hadid were the innovators, and Aldo Rossi intrigued me. They all presented something different; the variety was overwhelming. I found it confusing. I'm glad I didn't cling to any of those movements out of fear of doing something myself. Now I realize it's not so bad not to immediately align with anything." (Zalingen, 1997, p. 64)

Van der Pol holds strong views on late 20th-century architecture and aims to design a different kind of architecture as a result. In *'Eigen Huis & Interieur'*, she states:

"I am against ready-made architecture. Against the grey-white mist of plastered, flattened boxes that sweeps across the Netherlands and in which people are expected to live." (Zalingen, 1997, p. 64)

Van der Pol's design are imaginative, facilitated in part by her colorful watercolor paintings. This paragraph will now discuss some of her most significant works.

3.4.1 1991: Pieter Vlammingstraat

Thanks to the design at the Pieter Vlammingstraat in Amsterdam, Van der Pol received the Rotterdam-Maaskant Prize for young architects in 1993. The jury stated in the Rotterdam-Maaskant Prize report:

“In particular, in the housing project at the Pieter Vlammingstraat in Amsterdam, Liesbeth van der Pol has proven her worth. This sparkling and spiritual cornerstone for the city, both architecturally and in terms of materials and construction, is located in a typical urban renewal neighborhood.” (Zeinstra, 1993, p. 5)

The building is positioned on a sharp corner. ‘Figure 26. Sketch Pieter Vlammingstraat’ shows the two completely different building parts that lean against each other, as if they collide. Yet, they depend on each other. Each building part has its own character, the heavy, dark façade faces the busy street side, while the open, light, glassy façade faces the cozy residential street. The dwellings are designed

openly; walls can be placed or removed between the different columns, providing great flexibility in this design.

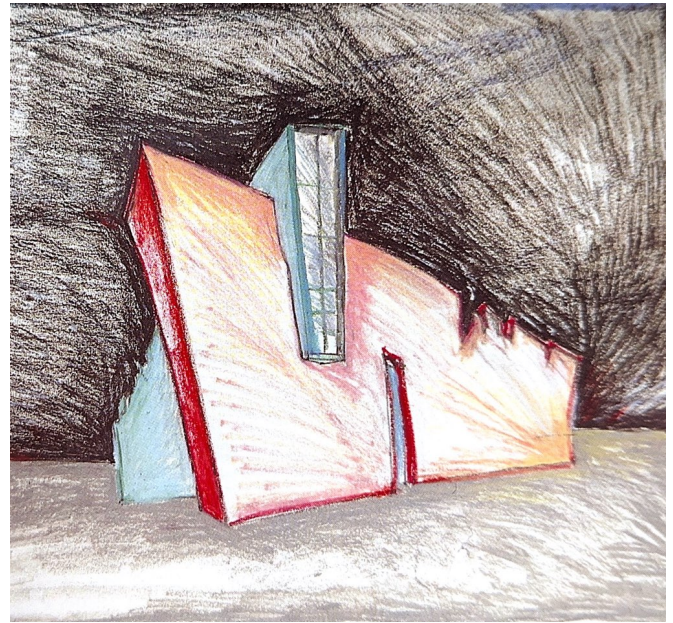


Figure 26. Sketch Pieter Vlammingstraat (Van der Pol, 1989)



Figure 27. Pieter Vlammingstraat - sharp corner (DOK, 1991)



Figure 28. Pieter Vlammingstraat - street side (DOK, 1991)

3.4.2 2002: Meerhuizenplein, Amsterdam

The design for Meerhuizenplein is situated in a neighborhood where the Amsterdam School architecture is predominant: heavy distinctive brick architecture originating from the 1920s. Within this design, respect for the existing environment was crucial; it shouldn't pale in comparison to the Amsterdam School architecture. The building is characterized by its curved shape on the side facing the square (DOK Architecten, 2002).

Van der Pol has closely studied the methods of the Amsterdam School architects for this design. They often employ a romantic design language with rounded forms and dark brick plinths with light-colored bricks above them, which Van der Pol also incorporated into her design for the Meerhuizenplein (Pol, Interview Liesbeth van der Pol, 2024).



Figure 29. Meerhuizenplein curved masonry (Schmitz, 2002)



Figure 31. Meerhuizenplein front facade (Schmitz, 2002)



Figure 30. Watercolor of Meerhuizenplein (Van der Pol, 1996)



Figure 32. Meerhuizenplein front facade close up (Schmitz, 2002)

3.4.3 2021: The Wave, Amsterdam

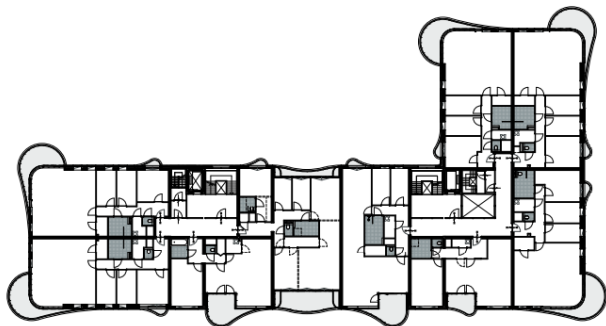
In the new residential area in Amsterdam-Noord stands a design by Liesbeth van der Pol called The Wave. This apartment complex stands out for its large undulating outdoor spaces, which run along each side of the building. These waves are intended to evoke a sense of water, enhanced by the mother of pearl bricks. From a distance, it appears as a completely white building, but upon closer inspection, seven different mother of pearl brick colors can be distinguished (DOK Architecten, 2002).

Van der Pol has designed the shape of the balconies in an Amsterdam School like manner, with exaggerated curves, to prevent the massive building from appearing too rectangular. Van der Pol draws inspiration from the works of the Amsterdam School, as is evident in this design (Pol, Interview Liesbeth van der Pol, 2024).

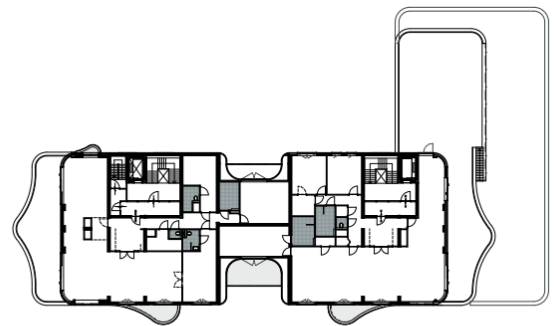
3.5 Conclusion

As the first female State Architect of the Netherlands, Liesbeth van der Pol can be regarded as a pioneer and rolemodel in terms of women in architecture. She showcases female architects and students a positive and successful career in architecture.

Van der Pol strongly diverges from the standardized designs that were common during her years of study; her architecture is characterized by imaginative and expressive designs. Van der Pol does not adhere to one architectural style; but she is inspired by the Amsterdam School style. Particularly by its romantic design language. This influence can be observed in several of her designs. The designs of Van der Pol adapt to the context in which they are situated, with each design possessing its own 'character' and identity.



Tweede verdieping | Second floor



Zevende verdieping | Seventh floor

Figure 33. Second and seventh floor The Wave (DOK, 2021)

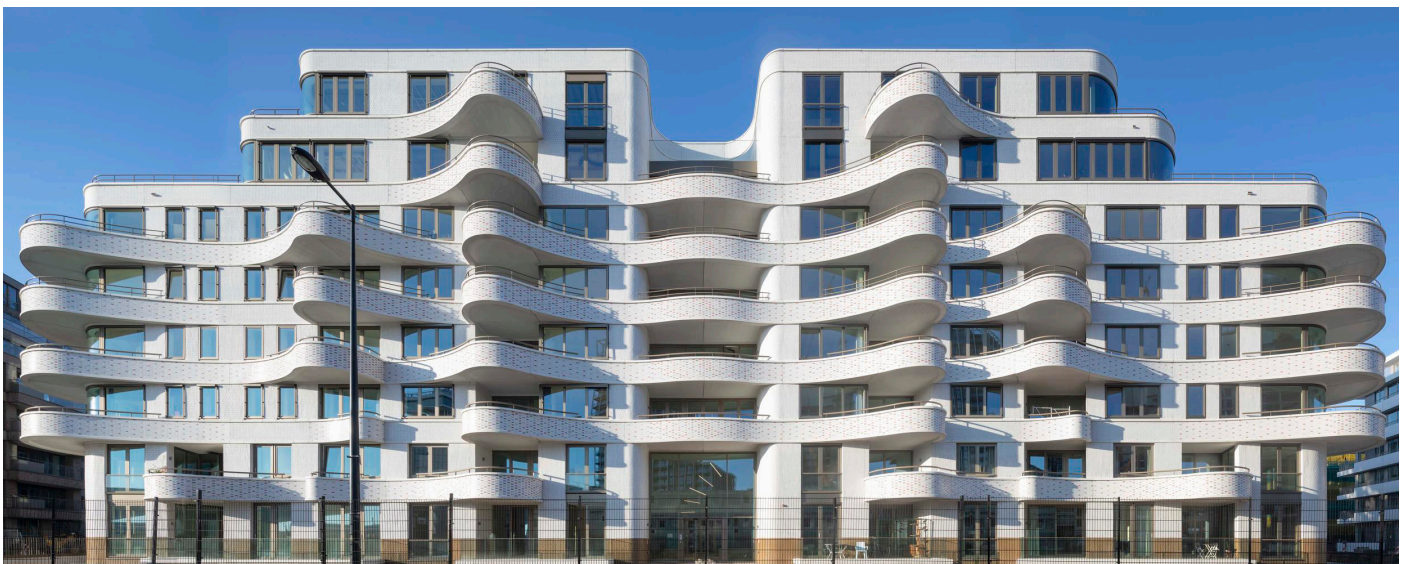


Figure 34. The Wave (Schmitz, 2021)

Chapter 4. Comparison Staal-Kropholler & van der Pol

In the previous two chapters, the lives and works of Margaret Staal-Kropholler and Liesbeth van der Pol have been described. In this chapter, the main changes of the past century regarding women in architecture will be outlined. Additionally, a comparison will be drafted between the two female Dutch architects, exploring their similarities and differences in their designs.

4.1 Changes in society

Both Margaret Staal-Kropholler and Liesbeth van der Pol have been active in architecture throughout the 20th century; however, their professional lives, and the paths leading to them, are quite different. In the early 20th century, the field of architecture was male-dominated, and women were not encouraged to enter the architectural profession, as it was believed that the practice of architecture by women would pose too high physical demands for them (Everts, 1910). Despite these obstacles, Margaret Staal-Kropholler joined her brother, Jacobus Kropholler, and her future husband, Jan Frederik Staal, at their architectural firm in 1907 to apprentice. Through J.F. Staals recommendation to many of his clients, Staal-Kropholler was given the opportunity to develop herself as an independent architect. Staal-Kropholler described the partnership model with her husband as follows:

“Before recognition of female competence in architecture can take place, there must first be an opportunity to demonstrate performance. For this, partnership with a man provides an excellent opportunity.” (Staal-Kropholler, Nationale vrouwenraad van Nederland, 1950)

In the second half of the 20th century, an increasing number of women began to pursue higher education and enter the workforce. In 1960, 22% of all women between 15 and 64 were part of the workforce in the Netherlands. This has risen to 69,2% in 2023 (Tijdens, 2006) (CBS, 2024). In 1989, one year after Van der Pol graduated, 33,5% of all architecture students at the TU Delft were women (Cate, 1989). Nowadays, approximately half of all students in the architecture program are female, yet only 23% of working architects are women (Alkemade, 2021). This is partly due to the ma-

le-dominated work environment that women encounter when they start working, which creates a hierarchical situation, and the lack of female role models (Schuster, 2021).

In 2024, women and men have equal rights; women can decide for themselves whether they want to study, pursue a career, or be a homemaker. This is a significant difference from the early 20th century, when many women had no opportunity to study and work. Margaret Staal-Kropholler and Liesbeth van der Pol thus grew up in very different eras, even though they both were active in the same century.

4.2 Changes in architectural movements

During Margaret Staal-Kropholler's time as an architect, various architects emphasized the importance of creating architecture that was 'distinctly Dutch', leading to a resurgence of brick classicism and the emergence of The Amsterdam School movement (Ibelings, Nederlandse Architectuur van de 20ste eeuw, 1995). Staal-Kropholler was heavily influenced by this movement and is regarded as one of its pioneers.

This stands in contrast to the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, during which globalization began to play an increasingly significant role in architecture. The idea of creating 'distinctly Dutch' architecture gave way to architecture that was not bound by place and time; it could exist anywhere in the world (Ibelings, Supermodernisme, 1998). Today, prominent architects design their buildings all over the world, having very different cultural and political contexts for each project (Frampton, 2020). However, despite these varied contexts, the resulting buildings often share a similar appearance, failing to respond effectively to their surroundings. For many, this movement sparked a desire for architecture that responds to its environment with its own unique identity (Ibelings, Supermodernisme, 1998). This philosophy aligns with Liesbeth van der Pol's approach; she aims to create buildings that are true 'characters' by designing them with power, color and expression. With this, she gives each of her buildings their own identity, they each react to their environment in a different way (Zeinstra, 1993).

4.3 The works of Staal-Kropholler versus van der Pol

Staal-Kropholler and Van der Pol both have created numerous designs, many of which have been realized in Amsterdam. Staal-Kropholler was heavily influenced by the Amsterdam School movement. Although Liesbeth van der Pol herself mentions that she does not want to be tied to one particular architectural style, elements of the Amsterdam School can be identified in several of her designs, as she draws inspiration from this movement.

Firstly, a significant similarity can be observed between the design at Holendrechtstraat by Staal-Kropholler from 1921 and 'The Wave' in Amsterdam-Noord by Van der Pol from 2021. Both designs are characterized by the undulating movements on the façade, where balconies are situated in both designs. Additionally, both designs feature the use of brick, which is a characteristic of the Amsterdam School. In the case of 'The Wave' these are mother of pearl bricks, creating a kind of sheen across the entire design, reminiscent of water waves. In both designs, a strict rhythm of windows is recognizable, interrupted by the undulating balconies.

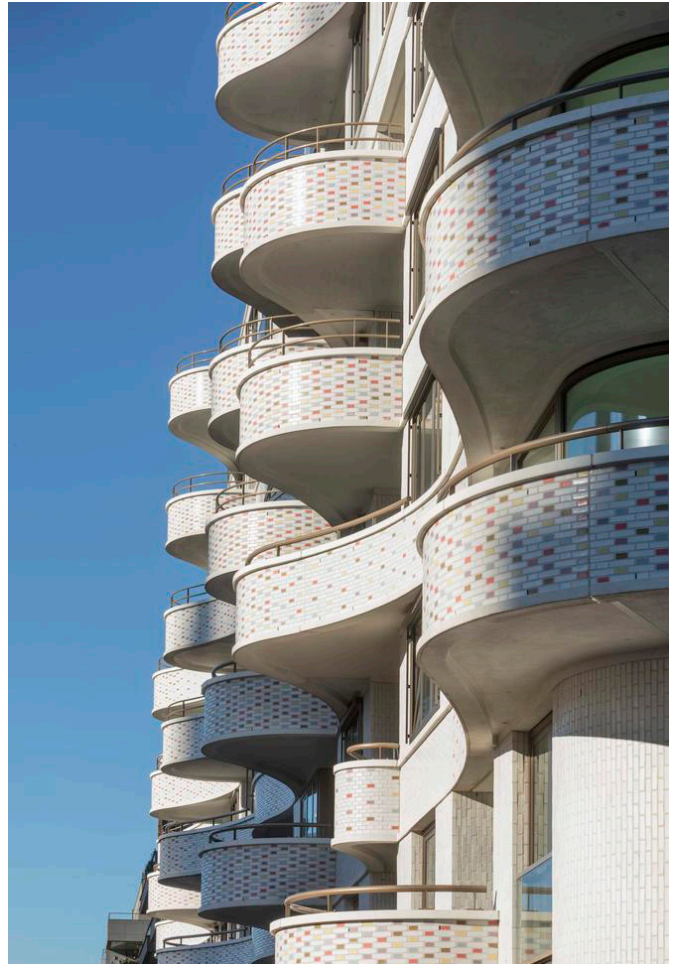


Figure 35. (Wave-like balconies The Wave, Schmitz, 2021)



Figure 36. Wave-like balconies Holendrechtstraat (Verheij, 2015)

In close proximity to Staal-Kropholler's design at Holendrechtstraat in Amsterdam, lies Liesbeth van der Pols design at the Meerhuizenplein from 2002. Van der Pol aimed to treat this design with respect for the existing environment, as it is located in an area where the Amsterdam School architecture prevails. As a result, the influences of the Amsterdam School style are evident in this design by Van der Pol, such as the use of curved masonry and the black brick plinth with light-colored bricks above it. The curved masonry can also be found in the design of the Holendrechtstraat by Staal-Kropholler.



Figure 37. Curved masonry Holendrechtstraat (Lobbes, 2017)



Figure 378 Curved masonry Meerhuizenplein (Schmitz, 2002)



Figure 39. Streetside Holendrechtstraat: strict pattern (Archief Amsterdam, 1924)



Figure 40. Streetside Meerhuizenplein: strict pattern (Schmitz, 2002)

4.4 Conclusion

The most important changes of the last century regarding the role of women in society and architecture are described in this chapter. Both Margaret Staal-Kropholler and Liesbeth van der Pol were active as an architect during the 20th century, yet there are many differences recognizable between the society of the early 20th century and the late 20th century / early 21st century.

Staal-Kropholler operated in a time when the architectural profession was limited for women and dominated by men; she demonstrated that women could also enter this profession. Half a century later, Van der Pol works in a time when women are significantly more active in the workforce, yet many architectural firms are still male-dominated, with men generally holding higher positions, creating a hierarchical situation. There is a need for more female role models to highlight positive and successful careers of women in architecture. Van der Pol is an important role model, as she is the first, and still the only, female State Architect of the Netherlands.

Architectural styles have also evolved over the past century. Staal-Kropholler was greatly influenced by the Amsterdam School, of which she was one of the pioneers. She extensively used brickwork, emphasizing a 'distinctly Dutch' architecture. Van der Pol intentionally does not adhere to a single style or movement; her designs respond to various contexts while maintaining an unique identity. However, she is inspired by the Amsterdam School Style, which is evident in her designs. Her approach to architecture is thus highly flexible.

Conclusion

In this thesis, the following main research question is addressed:

‘How do the lives and works of the two Dutch pioneer architects Margaret Staal-Kropholler and Liesbeth van der Pol reflect the influence of the changing role of women in architecture in the 20th / 21st century in the Netherlands?’.

Through an examination of the lives of Staal-Kropholler and Van der Pol, this thesis investigates the evolving role of women in Dutch society and architecture over the past century.

The role of women in society has undergone significant change over the past century. Since the late 19th century, various feminist movements such as ‘Arbeit Adelt’ have emerged, ensuring that women of all classes have gained access to previously male-dominated or low-class domains, like education and employment. Prior to the emergence of these movements, only women from lower classes worked for their livelihoods, while women from higher classes were expected to fill their days with music and embroidery (Loo, 2005). Due to these various movements, including the first, second, third and fourth feminist waves, women from all backgrounds are now able to work for their own income and be independent.

Margaret Staal-Kropholler (1891-1966) is regarded as the first female architect in the Netherlands. She broke gender boundaries and demonstrated that working in the field of architecture was not exclusive to men but also open to women. In the era in which Staal-Kropholler lived, it was customary for women to be responsible for childcare and household duties. Staal-Kropholler viewed the combination of being a homemaker and an architect as ideal, believing that women excelled in designing the practical layout of homes. She found men to be less adept at this due to their lack of understanding of how households operate (Kuperus & van Kessel, 1990). With this perspective, she accepted society’s beliefs about the role of women and incorporated them into her designs. Consequently, her

designs primarily focused on the comfort and needs of housewives.

During the second half of the 20th century, more and more women began to study and enter the workforce. Today, about half of all architecture students at universities in the Netherlands are women. Still, only 23% of working architects are female, significantly less (Alkemade, 2021). Women often encounter difficulties transitioning into the workforce after completing their studies, which is due to the lack of representation of female leaders and instructors as role models in the field of architecture and the male-dominated work environment which they enter. Within this work environment men generally hold higher positions than women, creating a hierarchical situation (Schuster, 2021).

Liesbeth van der Pol’s (1959) career testifies to the growing role of women in architecture, in which she can be seen as pioneer, as she is the first female State Architect of the Netherlands. In doing so, she is a role model for female architects and architecture students by showing them to pursue their ambitions without being discouraged by any obstacles. Van der Pol encourages women to be confident and make their voices heard within the architectural profession.

In conclusion, the lives and works of Margaret Staal-Kropholler and Liesbeth van der Pol offer an interesting insight into the evolving role of women in Dutch architecture during the 20th / 21st century. In which Staal-Kropholler can be seen as pioneer from a time where women rarely entered the architectural work field, showing that women are able to function as independent architects. Liesbeth van der Pol can be seen as a pioneer because she emphasized the growing presence and influence of women in modern architecture as the first female State Architect of the Netherlands. Together, these two architects represent a shift in the perception and participation of women within Dutch architecture. The lives and works of Staal-Kropholler and Van der Pol are part of the ongoing evolution of gender equality within this profession.

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Figure 2.

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Figure 3.

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Figure 4.

ANP (n.d.). *Joke Kool-Smit* [Photograph]. Trouw. Retrieved March 8, 2024, from <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/de-wereld-draait-nog-steeds-om-mannen~b2e36c9e/>

Figure 5.

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Figure 6.

Tentoonstelling De Vrouw 1813-1913 (1913). *Het huis 1913* by Greta Derlinge [Photograph]. In *Margaret Staal-Kropholler Architect* (p. 13)

Figure 7.

Regionaal archief Alkmaar (1925). *Meerlhuis / Meezennest* [Photograph]. Retrieved March 13, 2024 from <https://www.regionaalarchiefalkmaar.nl/collecties/beelden/beelden-2/detail/04adb7a9-1e82-4f59-8a9d-0586c0aba626>

Figure 8.

Archief family Venekamp-Staal (n.d.). *Stair portal* [Photograph]. In *Margaret Staal-Kropholler Architect* (p. 20)

Figure 9.

Margaret Staal-Kropholler (1916-1920). *Ground floor Meerlhuis / Meezennest* [Drawing]. In *Margaret Staal-Kropholler Architect* (p. 19)

Figure 10.

Marcel Westhoff (2015). *Brick bridge* [Photograph]. Retrieved April 10, 2024 from <https://items.amsterdamse-school.nl/details/objects/1536>

Figure 11.

Margaret Staal-Kropholler (1916-1920). *Brick bridge design* [Drawing]. Retrieved April 10, 2024 from <https://zoeken.nieuweinstituut.nl/nl/archieven/details/STAX/path/5.15>

Figure 12.

Margaret Staal-Kropholler (1916-1920). *Meezennest and Meerlhuis facades* [Drawing]. In *Margaret Staal-Kropholler Architect* (p. 15)

Figure 13.

Regionaal archief Alkmaar (1920). *Beukenhoek* [Photograph]. Retrieved March 13, 2024 from <https://www.regionaalarchiefalkmaar.nl/collecties/beelden/beelden-2/detail/58a07eee-10dc-4f91-af45-c56608848a6e>

Figure 14.

Margaret Staal-Kropholler (1917). *Design for Beukenhoek* [Drawing]. Retrieved March 13, 2024 from <https://zoeken.nieuweinstituut.nl/nl/archieven/scans/STAX/5.10.4/limit/25>

Figure 15.

Margaret Staal-Kropholler (1915). *De Bark* [Drawing]. In *Margaret Staal-Kropholler Architect* (p. 28)

Figure 16.

Marcel Westhoff (2015). *Entrances Holendrechtstraat* [Photograph]. Wendingen. Retrieved March 13, 2024 from <https://items.amsterdamse-school.nl/details/objects/478>

Figure 17.

Margaret Staal-Kropholler (1921). *Façade design Holenrechtstraat* [Drawing]. Wendingen. Retrieved March 13, 2024 from <https://items.amsterdamse-school.nl/details/objects/478>

Figure 18.

Annemarieke Verheij (2015). *Balconies Holendrechtstraat* [Photograph]. Wendingen. Retrieved March 13, 2024 from <https://items.amsterdamse-school.nl/details/objects/478>

Figure 19.

Gert-Jan Lobbes (2017). *Roof details Holendrechtstraat* [Photograph]. Wendingen. Retrieved March 13, 2024 from <https://items.amsterdamse-school.nl/details/objects/478>

Figure 20.

Stadsarchief Amsterdam (1931). *Leather goods store FOX façade* [Photograph]. Retrieved March 13, 2024 from <https://archief.amsterdam/beeldbank/detail/6c09f495-826b-e537-5ccf-db-f8835a7b91>

Figure 21.

Margaret Staal-Kropholler (1931). *Design façade leather goods store FOX* [Drawing]. Retrieved March 13, 2024 from <https://zoeken.nieuweinstituut.nl/nl/archieven/details/STAX/path/5.15>

Figure 22.

Stadsarchief Amsterdam (1963). *Louise Wenthuis* [Photograph]. Retrieved March 13, 2024 from <https://archief.amsterdam/beeldbank/detail/49a87527-9a97-e890-e240-c688233b13ba>

Figure 23.

Stadsarchief Amsterdam (2007). *Louise Wenthuis* [Photograph]. Retrieved March 13, 2024 from <https://archief.amsterdam/beeldbank/detail/822b8d65-de1e-8b18-65a0-079bc0d56b2b/media/34a7eeed-9c08-c8e0-fd7c-a1cd9df97540?mode=detail&view=horizontal&q=louise%20wenthuis&rows=1&page=12>

Figure 24.

Margaret Staal-Kropholler (1963). *Overview map Louise Wenthuis* [Drawing]. In *Margaret Staal-Kropholler Architect* (p. 96)

Figure 25.

David Meulenbeld (2023). *Liesbeth van der Pol* [Photograph]. Retrieved March 14, 2024 from <https://www.dearchitect.nl/282072/liesbeth-van-der-pol-gebouwen-die-in-je-herinnering-blijven-helen>

Figure 26.

Liesbeth van der Pol (1989). *Sketch Pieter Vlammingsstraat* [Drawing]. In *Liesbeth van der Pol Architect* (p. 15)

Figure 27.

DOK architecten (1991). *Pieter Vlammingsstraat – sharp corner* [Photograph] Retrieved March 14, 2024 from <https://dokarchitecten.nl/project/pieter-vlammingsstraat-amsterdam>

Figure 28.

DOK architecten (1991). *Pieter Vlammingsstraat – street side* [Photograph] Retrieved March 14, 2024 from <https://dokarchitecten.nl/project/pieter-vlammingsstraat-amsterdam>

Figure 29.

Arjen Schmitz (2002). *Meerhuizenplein curved masonry* [Photograph]. DOK architecten. Retrieved March 14, 2024 from <https://dokarchitecten.nl/project/meerhuizenplein-amsterdam>

Figure 30.

Liesbeth van der Pol (1996). *Watercolor of Meerhuizerplein* [Drawing]. In *Met Karakter!* (p. 75)

Figure 31.

Arjen Schmitz (2002). *Meerhuizenplein front facade* [Photograph]. DOK architecten. Retrieved March 14, 2024 from <https://dokarchitecten.nl/project/meerhuizenplein-amsterdam>

Figure 32.

Arjen Schmitz (2002). *Meerhuizenplein front facade close up* [Photograph]. DOK architecten. Retrieved March 14, 2024 from <https://dokarchitecten.nl/project/meerhuizenplein-amsterdam>

Figure 33.

DOK architecten (2021). *Second and seventh floor The Wave* [Drawing]. Retrieved March 14, 2024 from <https://dokarchitecten.nl/project/pdf/61d2fce163ed040b05f524ea.nl/pdf/The-Wave-Amsterdam>

Figure 34.

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Figure 35.

Arjen Schmitz (2021). *Wave like balconies The Wave* [Photograph]. DOK architecten. Retrieved March 14, 2024 from <https://dokarchitecten.nl/project/the-wave-amsterdam>

Figure 36.

Annemarieke Verheij (2015). *Wave-like balconies Holendrechtstraat* [Photograph]. Wendingen. Retrieved March 14, 2024 from <https://items.amsterdamse-school.nl/details/objects/478>

Figure 37.

Gert-Jan Lobbes (2017). *Curved masonry Holendrechtstraat* [Photograph]. Wendingen. Retrieved March 14, 2024 from <https://items.amsterdamse-school.nl/details/objects/478>

Figure 38.

Arjen Schmitz (2002). *Curved masonry Meerhuizenplein* [Photograph]. DOK architecten. Retrieved March 14, 2024 from <https://dokarchitecten.nl/project/meerhuizenplein-amsterdam>

Figure 39.

Archief Amsterdam (1924). *Streetside Holendrechtstraat: strict pattern* [Photograph]. Retrieved March 14, 2024 from <https://archief.amsterdam/beeldbank/detail/260b8ff4-7ea9-5616-7403-d446a63a50bd/media/20de815b-44f9-aecb-62a4-be8d745cdeb3?mode=detail&view=horizontal&q=holendrechtstraat&rows=1&page=4>

Figure 40.

Arjen Schmitz (2002). *Streetside Meerhuizenplein: strict pattern* [Photograph]. DOK architecten. Retrieved March 14, 2024 from <https://dokarchitecten.nl/project/meerhuizenplein-amsterdam>

Appendix

Appendix A. Interview Liesbeth van der Pol (Dutch)

38

Appendix A. Interview Liesbeth van der Pol (Dutch)

Algemene vragen

1. *Zou u wat kunnen vertellen over uw achtergrond en hoe u bent begonnen in de richting van architectuur?*

Ik ben een dochter uit een gezin waarvan de vader bij de NDSM werkte, dat is de scheepsbouwmaatschappij die toen nog in Amsterdam zat. En mijn moeder was een hele creatieve vrouw, maar was omdat ze vier dochters had, toch niet helemaal in staat om dat te ontwikkelen. We woonde in een doorzonwoning, ik heb hier een hele fijne jeugd gehad waarbij ik heel veel buiten was. Op mijn 12e verhuisde mijn ouders naar Amsterdam, Dit vond ik heel fijn. Dan kom je namelijk in de behoefte naar een meer stedelijke omgeving. Toen ik 17 was dacht ik dat ik niet zozeer bouwkunde zou gaan doen, maar juist civiele techniek. Dit was omdat ik heel veel zeilde met mijn vader en daardoor bij heel veel bruggen kwam. Ik ontwikkelde zo een fascinatie voor de kracht van de bruggen. Er was dus wel echt een persoonlijke drive, ik wilde ook een brug bouwen, de Liesbeth van der Pol brug! En toen ben ik heel vroeg gaan werken, eerst bij een architectenbureau dat niet zo bekend was, die deden allerlei restauraties, wat ik hartstikke leuk vond. Toen dacht ik, dit is ook leuk! En daarna ben ik bij Herzberger gaan werken, toen was ik 17 / 18. Dat leerde mij dat je met heel veel passie je werk kan doen en dat architectuur een erg gepassioneerd vak is. En toen heb ik besloten dat ik naar de TU Delft wilde gaan.

2. *Hoe bent u binnen gekomen bij het architectuurbureau van Herzberger terwijl u nog helemaal geen ervaring had in de architectuur?*

Ik was denk ik heel brutaal in combinatie met heel naïef. Ik heb hem opgebeld, hij stond in de telefoongids. Iemand had tegen mij gezegd: die moet je hebben! En ik dacht prima, ik kon helemaal niks! Eigenlijk best heel brutaal. Ik had grote tekeningen meegenomen, waarvan ik dan 1 of 2 lijntjes had gemaakt, of alleen maar de letters had gezet of juist dingen had uitgegumd. Dus ik zat met enorme tekeningen aan tafel, maar ik had echt nog helemaal niks gedaan. En ik heb ook gezegd: ik wil een 10tje per uur, zwart. Achteraf denk ik dat zij ontzettend hebben gelachen. Dat was natuurlijk een wereldberoemd bureau, mensen lagen in de rij om bij hen te mogen werken. En ik had dat allemaal niet, ik was niet belast met die kennis, ik denk dat ze dat heel leuk vonden. Die combinatie van brutaliteit en naïviteit is heel goed. Dat is sowieso een goede mix als je architectuur gaat doen.

3. *Hoe bent u het werkveld betreden?*

Ik heb heel lang gestudeerd. Dat is anders dan in jouw tijd. In de tijd waarin ik studeerde kon je gewoon 10 jaar studeren. Dus ik heb heel veel kunnen werken en werkervaring kunnen opdoen bij bureaus, al was het maar om een vakantie te kunnen betalen. En dat is natuurlijk een voordeel, dat was heel fijn. Toen ik afgestudeerd was vond ik dat ik nog helemaal niks kon. Dat is denk ik 1 van de kenmerken van vrouwen doorgaans, dat ze toch als het erop aankomt dan onzeker zijn. Dus ondanks dat ik best een brutale aap was, was ik toch onzeker over wat ik nou eigenlijk kon. Dus ik wilde graag als opzichter gaan werken op de bouw, om een beetje te leren bouwen. Want op de TU Delft leer je gewoon niet een waterdicht detail tekenen. Tegelijkertijd had mijn afstudeerwerk de Archiprix gehaald en daar kreeg ik een eervolle vermelding, dan gaat z'n balletje rollen. Vervolgens heb ik een publicatie gekregen over mijn afstudeerwerk. Dat werd opgepikt door een corporatie die een opdracht had, zij nodigde mij uit. Ik mocht komen solliciteren, ik weet zelfs nog wat ik aantrok! Ken je dat? Mijn verhaal had ik natuurlijk helemaal klaar! Maar wat trek ik aan? Nou ik zag er beeldschoon uit. En uiteindelijk had ik de opdracht gegeven. Op hele jonge leeftijd had ik toch al een vette opdracht! Toen hadden ze gezegd dat ik mij moest binden aan een ervaren architect, want dit is toch te veel voor iemand die zo onervaren was als ik op dat moment. Toen heb ik aan Herman Zeistra gevraagd of hij over mijn schouder mee wilde kijken.

4. *Zou u wat kunnen vertellen over uw eigen architectenbureau DOK Architecten?*

Herman en ik zijn natuurlijk samen begonnen aan een architectenbureau dat soms heel groot werd en soms heel klein werd na crisissen die elkaar opvolgde. Maar 1 ding hebben we altijd gehouden, we maken bijzondere dingen. Dingen die toch altijd wel net verder gaan dan de opgave, die ook wel in herinnering blijven. Dat bindt ons. De architecten die bij ons werken zijn mensen die

daar in geloven en daar voor gaan. Dat geeft een bepaalde sfeer binnen DOK. De sfeer is heel open, niet hiërarchisch. We hebben een echt gezamenlijk doel. Dat maakt ons heel vrolijk. We doen soms ook onderzoekswerkshops van een half uur en 3 kwartier even gaan schetsen, en daar komen de meest fantastische dingen uit. We delen veel, we zijn een leuk bureau. Die sfeer is er altijd geweest. Ook toen we groot waren.

Stijl

5. *Wat is uw architecturale signatuur in uw ontwerpen? Waaraan is een ontwerp van Liesbeth van der Pol te herkennen?*

Laatst zei iemand die dat kon herkennen. We hebben net een gevel opgeleverd aan de PC hoofdstraat. Iemand zei: Ja! Dat is een echte DOK gevel! Met die knipjes en knakjes en hoekverdraaiingen en hoge hakken heeft dat iets vrouwelijks en stoers! Wij zijn daar overigens totaal niet bewust mee bezig, dat is ook niet belangrijk. Ik denk dat buitenstaanders daar iets van vinden, maar ik zelf vind dat niet zo.

Vrouwen in de architectuur

6. *Hoe was de man/vrouw verdeling op TU Delft bouwkunde toen u er studeerde?*

Onder de studenten was de man/vrouw verdeling echt fifty fifty. Ik studeerde met heel veel vrouwen samen, maar wat er daarna gebeuren was echt dramatisch. Want heel veel van die vrouwen die dus wél afgestudeerd zijn verdwijnen dus toch! Ze verdwenen ook in mijn generatie heel gemakkelijk van het toneel. Hoe kan dat nou he? Dat heeft denk ik toch te maken met de leeftijd waarin je kinderen krijgt als vrouw. En toch ook wel de mate waarin je als vrouw moeilijker aan werk komt in de mannenopdrachtgeverswereld. Dus dat vond ik wel bedroevend. Ik heb perfect fifty fifty man vrouw gestudeerd. In ons bureau hebben we ook een hele leuke verdeling tussen mannen en vrouwen. Want als het te weinig van het dit is of te weinig van dat is het niet leuk. Dus daar letten we op. Maar in het vak vind ik dat weinig vrouwen zoals ik zichzelf goed hebben kunnen ontwikkelen.

Het is echt bedroevend. Het is echt te zot voor woorden. Dat zit hem natuurlijk ook wel in een soort glazen plafond effect. Dus er is toch een soort drempel om door te stoten. Waardeloos.

7. *Hoe was de man/vrouw verdeling voor docenten?*

Het waren allemaal mannelijke docenten zoals ik het mij herinner. Er waren geen vrouwelijke docenten bij.

Wat ik echt zorgwekkend vind in dit gehele verhaal is dat er bijna geen vrouwelijke opdrachtgevers zijn. Ze zijn dan weliswaar soms als secondant aanwezig, of ze zitten ergens in een of andere functies. Maar rechtstreeks diegene die de verantwoordelijkheid draagt om een opdracht uit te schrijven aan een architect, is dus maar zelden een vrouw. Ik heb het denk ik maar 1 of 2 keer mee-gemaakt. Het zit in alles. Het is net als de diversiteit problematiek die we hebben. Dat zit in alles, het is bijna niet meer aan te wijzen.

8. *Kun je aan uw gebouwen zien dat ze door een vrouw zijn gemaakt?*

Ik teken ontzettend vaak hoge hakken en slanke dames, maar ik denk dat je dat toch niet kan zien. Dat is toch helemaal niet relevant.

9. *Heeft u de positie van vrouwen in de architectuur zien veranderen sinds het begin van uw carrière?*

Vroeger had je de zogenaamde vrouwenstudies, voor en door vrouwen. Een groot deel van mijn vrouwelijke studie collega's deden daar aan mee. Dat was toen echt een feministische beweging. Dat was een beetje tegen mannen. Ze vochten voor een soort gelijkheidsprincipe. Ik denk dat dat nu anders is, maar dat weet ik niet precies. Ik zit er niet heel actief in. Ik zie wel dat het nu anders

is. Ik zie bij ons in het bureau dat vrouwen goed gedijen. Ze staan goed in hun kracht. Aan de opdrachtgeverskant is nog altijd een erg achtergesteld plaatje van mannetjes.

Staatsarchitect

10. *U was de eerste vrouwelijke rijksbouwmeester van Nederland, zou u kunnen vertellen wat u inspireerde om dit te gaan doen?*

Ik wist inderdaad de eerste vrouw! Na mij is nooit een andere vrouwelijke rijksbouwmeester geweest. Ze zijn vrolijk verder gegaan met al die mannen!

Mij werd het gevraagd om rijksbouwmeester te worden. Ik zat in heel veel jury's en toevallig zat ik ook een paar keer in een jury waarvan de voorzitter van de jury de toenmalige rijksbouwmeester was. En ik zag wel dat hij vond dat ik het heel goed deed. Hij was heel enthousiast over mijn aanpak in die jury's. Ik had er alleen nog nooit over nagedacht en ineens vroeg hij dat aan mij. Je bent dan natuurlijk ook gestreeld. En na 30 jaar architectuur maken is het een grotere opgave, een grotere schaal, het gaat over heel Nederland. Tis ook gewoon heel leuk en eervol! Ik ben daar dus eigenlijk ook weer compleet naïef ingedoken, het was super leuk om te doen. Maar het was wel heel hard werken, omdat je dus zo veel wil bereiken. Ik ben ook heel ambitieus, dus ik probeer van alles. Het was toen net crisis, moeilijke jaren voor architecten. Ik heb echt geprobeerd om ze te redden.

Als vrouw kom je dan in een omgeving van bestuurders. Het grappige was dat daar het aantal vrouwen weer wat hoger is! Ik had 2 ministers en dat waren allebei vrouwen. Je gehoor bestaat vaak uit burgemeesters en wethouders en CEO'S, daar zitten dus weer meer vrouwen in! Zoals de directeur van Albert Heijn bleek een vrouw te zijn. Ik heb daar nog wel een leuk verhaal over. Ken je het gebouw Eye in Amsterdam? Dat was net al half in aanbouw en er waren vreselijke problemen, want de crisis had hard toegeslagen bij iedereen. Dus daar moest 9 miljoen uit bezuinigd worden, maar het gebouw was al in aanbouw. Dus dan ga je daar als rijksbouwmeester heen, want het rijk had meebetaald. Dan ga je daarnaartoe, je neemt de staatssecretaris mee. Ik had gevraagd om ook de directeur van het bouwbedrijf mee te nemen, maar ook de gemeentelijke directeur van stedenbouw, maar ook van het havenbedrijf en de aannemers etc. Een hele stoet! En wij waren daar, we gingen daar naartoe, tot op de tanden gewapend natuurlijk. En we keken die zaal rond, en dat was heel bijzonder, er zaten alleen maar vrouwen! Wow! Ineens kom je daar achter. En je denkt: 'hey! Iedereen is hier vrouw!'. Dus ook het havenbedrijf, de aannemers, echt iedereen! Dat vonden we zo bijzonder. Er ontstond toen een hele leuke sfeer. Meer van: "zeg meiden, dit doen we toch even! Om 4 uur zijn we toch klaar!". We hadden allemaal zoiets van: "natuurlijk joh!" ineens waren alle wapens weg en ontstond er leuke sfeer. Daarna hebben we elkaar ook opgezocht, toen alles was gelukt. We hebben nu dus een groepsapp die heet "Ladies Eye" die is uitgebreid naar 70 vrouwen! En dan gaan we elk jaar naar filmfestivals. Dat is daaruit ontstaan. Eigenlijk is het gek, want iedereen was toen hevig verbaasd dat het allemaal vrouwen waren. Grappig he!

Het is ook wel leuk dat er dan z'n prettige sfeer ontstaat, dat vrouwen het zo goed met elkaar kunnen vinden. Vrouwen zijn wat zachter. Ze kunnen hard zijn he, vrouwen! Maar ze zijn ook vrolijk, ze gaan er ook hopsakee tegenaan.

11. *Hoeveel tijd was u kwijt aan het rijksbouwmeester zijn?*

Ze zeggen dat het 3 dagen per week is, maar ik werkelijkheid is het meer dan fulltime. Ik werkte 6 dagen in de week. Je kunt dan dus niet je eigen vak uitoefenen, dat gaat gewoon niet! Ik had partners van mij gevraagd of ze mijn werk wilde overnemen. Het is echt een heel veeleisende baan. Hele lange dagen waren het. Ik werd sochtends om 07:00 opgehaald en 22:30 werd ik opgehaald, dan kon je nog net slapen.

The wave / Meerhuizenplein vs. Holendrechtstraat

12. *Waardoor was u geïnspireerd met het ontwerp van 'The Wave' in Amsterdam-Noord?*

De opgave was om echt veel vierkante meters te maken. Het is een erg groot gebouw, en eigenlijk best rechthoekig. Als je al die appartementen erin wilde krijgen dan werd het eigenlijk een

rechthoek. Toen dachten wij: als we daar nou balkons aandoen, dan ontstaat er een soort swing / dynamiek / beweging. De zee moet erin komen! We hebben die balkons echt Amsterdamse school achtig vormgegeven. Helemaal overdreven rondingen gegeven. Dat werkt natuurlijk als een tierelier.

Ik heb niet specifiek naar Margaret Staal-Kropholler gekeken, maar wel naar alle werken vanuit de Amsterdamse school! Die inspireren me enorm.

13. *Waardoor was u geïnspireerd bij het ontwerp van het Meerhuizenplein? Hoe heeft u geprobeerd om de elementen van de Amsterdamse School terug te laten komen in dit ontwerp?*

Ik heb heel goed gekeken naar hoe de Amsterdam school architecten dat deden. Ze hebben een hele romantische vormtaal met ronde dingen, dat vind ik heel leuk. En daar had ik ook meteen zin in! Dus ik heb IK ook ronde gevels toegepast. Wel met hele grote glaspuien ertussen, dat is dus wel anders dan zij. Maar toch echt groot en rond. Dan maken zij gebruik van een hele donkere plint en een lichtere baksteen erboven, dus dat heb ik ook gedaan. En in de kozijnen zelf heb ik het glas boven naar voren gedetailleerd en onder naar achter. Dat reliëf in dat hout en in het raam geeft echt een gevoel van ambacht in de gevel. En natuurlijk het ritme! Je kan zoveel dingen meenemen.

Toekomst

14. *Hoe ziet u de toekomst van de architectuur als het gaat om de rol van vrouwen in het veld?*

Ik denk dat we net z'n mooie toekomst hebben als mannen. En ik denk dat er wel iets veranderd! Omdat ook de omgang met het ouderschap van mannen veranderd. Ik ben er heel blij mee dat het ouderschapsverlof niet alleen meer voor vrouwen geldt, maar ook voor mannen. Ik hoop ook dat, als er kinderen komen, dat ook de zorg voor het huishouden ook daadwerkelijk wordt gedeeld. We moeten frisse en fruitige vrouwen hebben die thuis rust krijgen. Daar is iets voor nodig, dat ook mannen / vaders / partners wat voor hun partners moeten geven. Ik ga ervanuit dat dat lang duurt, maar dat is wel in wording.