

A Flat Tale

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A Flat Tale Project Description

At the height of its production, Dutch architecture has come to the point where the main criteria for a project's success is its compelling concept, which in turn manifests itself through the architectural story. The project questions the capacity of architectural storytelling, which is exactly the topic that should be discussed in this story-based environment. "A Flat Tale" is an exploration of the Dutch visual culture, through architecture as a primary lens of discovery. The project consists of 3 component parts. They represent three levels of complexity of architectural representation as well as three steps in the development and maturation of narratives and architectural projects. They are based on the investigation of the Netherlands, Dutch architectural projects and narratives.

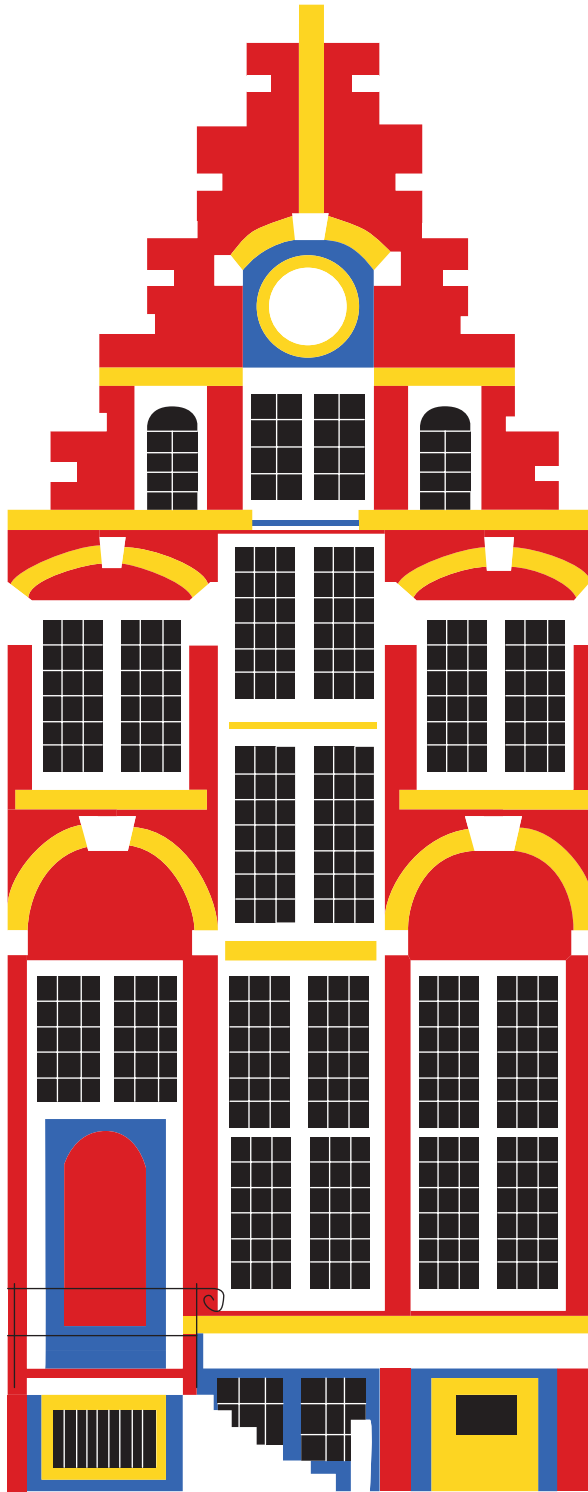
"A Good Life ABC", establishes the grammar of Dutch architecture. It represents the simplest way of giving and receiving knowledge. Letters of the alphabet are paired with images that form examples of objects and elements of the Dutch built environment. Drawn in a reductive manner, and with the use of only primary colours, these objects form emblematic images, stripped of any specificity, that represent only themselves and their Dutchness. They become symbols of Dutch identity.

After establishing the grammar, "A Flat Tale", forms the syntax. It is an architectural picturebook which uses images to convey spatial narratives, and text to convey temporal ones. Some aspects of the story are made explicit through images and some through text creating a complementary relationship with the two forms of storytelling. This, in the words of Perry Nodelman, results in a relationship between pictures and texts in picturebooks that tends to be ironic where each element speaks about matters on which the other is silent. The story is based on the development of Almere and it is used to establish ideas that form generative theoretical elements of Dutch architecture and culture, such as concept, export, identity, welfare, subsidies, etc.

The third part represents the most mature phase of developing an architectural idea. It uses architectural polemic through the format of an architectural journal, titled "Pitch". Dutch architectural stories are clear and relatable. Architects do not try to mystify the process through complex semantic constructs, but rather use metaphoric descriptions that allude to known spaces, places and experiences. "Pitch" examines Dutch architectural projects through the use of narrative, argumentation and criticism. "Pitch" ends with a fictional

project. It is set in an undefined future. It is a utopian, infrastructural, urban and architectural project of a mountain in the Netherlands. Using only text, diagrams and allusions to the project (in the form of "infiltrators" placed in the first two parts), the project questions and tests the capacity of architectural storytelling.

As a conclusion, operations performed in all three parts of the project are compiled and collated in a final appendix. It explains the intentions and interrelations of the drawings and stories, positioning them in their context and the architectural discourse. Approaching the topic of architectural representation through both its lexical and visual qualities allows for the elucidation of three main categories: the diagram and the emblematic object, the architectural design project and its narrative and the architectural essay. Together, the parts represent the symbols, a depiction, a reflection and a story of the construct of the good life in the Netherlands.



A drawing of a typical Dutch canal house with a raised entrance

A Short Introduction on Dutch Architecture An Excerpt from “A Reference Unreferenced”

Dutch architecture has had a significant role in the European architectural discourse. The first important epoch of Dutch architecture was in the 17th century. This period is also known as the Dutch Golden Age and it was a period when the Netherlands established itself as a powerful economic entity. Dutch cities expanded and became urban centres. One of the most important architectural elements that formed these urban centres was the Dutch canal house. The canal house is a narrow, high and deep building, used mostly for housing. The basement and attic can be used for storing goods. Due to possible flooding, the entrance to the house is raised and accessed with stairs on the front facade. The narrow plots left little room for stairs and hallways, which is why most of the houses have a hook and pulley system installed on the top of the front facade which is used to pull goods and furniture to the higher floors of the house through the large windows.

The second important epoch of Dutch architecture was at the beginning of the 20th century. This period is signified by different architectural groups. One important architect of that period, a representative of the rationalists, was Hendrik Petrus Berlage. One of his most significant projects is the Beurs van Berlage building in Amsterdam. The building was originally designed as

a commodity exchange, but has since been transformed and reprogrammed. Due to its atrium like section, which consists of four storeys of spaces on the sides of the building and an open, high, glass covered area in the centre, the building can host multiple functions simultaneously. Given the fact that the spaces are radically different in character, varied and perhaps opposing programs can exist and function at the same time. The use of heavy, brick structure for the perimeter spaces and a light, steel and glass structure for the central area of the building also gives this spaces different visual characters and ambient, which in turn provides the building with strong identity. Another significant group was De Stijl which was founded in Amsterdam in 1917. It was a movement which consisted of artists and architects. See kunst. The third epoch began in the 1990s. “The strength of Dutch architecture during the 1990s is that it succeeded in finding a place within an international architectural discourse without sacrificing the typically Dutch qualities of realism and *Sachlichkeit* (matter-of-factness).”¹ This final period encompasses a lot of currently operating Dutch architects which were able to, once again, put Dutch architecture ‘on the map’. Some of the most prominent offices include OMA (Office of Metropolitan Architecture),

UN Studio, MVRDV, Mecanoo, West 8, Neutelings Riedijk, NOX, Oosterhuis.nl, Atelier van Lieshout and architects Wiel Arets, Erik van Egeraat and Koen van Velsen, all part of the “SuperDutch”, a term coined after the book of that name from 2000 by Bart Lootsma.

1-Lootsma, Bart. SuperDutch: New Architecture in the Netherlands, Princeton Architectural Press, 2000

The drawing depicts the Dutch land in its current condition. There is a differentiation in the depiction of land which used to be water and the land 'which is sand'. The drawing includes historic and contemporary polders, dikes that are of major importance, larger rivers and lakes, as well as some smaller hill and mountain ranges. Dutch provinces and their capitals are also marked on the map.





SOURCE: "A Flat Tale": Opening 1 - Land. Drawing by Jana Čulek

A Glossary

Explaining the Formatting and Aesthetic Choices

This glossary refers to element and approaches of designing a picturebook. It contains structural, artistic and aesthetic elements of books.

Picturebook. “Picturebooks are unified artistic wholes in which text and pictures, covers and endpages, and the details of design work together to provide an aesthetically satisfying experience. The spelling picturebook—as one word—is utilized intentionally in order to emphasize the unity of words and pictures that is the most important hallmark of this type of book.”¹

Cover. “All the elements of the picturebook which we see before we come to the first text opening (where the words of the story begin) communicate a mood and may give us signals about the thematic thrust of the story. In some picturebooks the storyline begins with the cover, the endpapers, or the illustrations included with the front matter, half title, or title page.”² The covers of all four books (the three parts of the project and the appendix) all tell a related story. The triangular shapes and letters all refer to the same thing. For more information see Part III, Infiltrator 0.

Endpapers. “Endpapers may be printed in a colour which is chosen to set the mood for the story. If there are illustrated endpapers, they are frequently designed as a stylized or

repeated pattern with motifs important to the story.”³ Endpapers of all four books are related to their themes and topics. The colour of the drawings / patterns on the endpapers matches the colour of the book covers, as well as the overall colour palate of the specific book. In that way, “A Good Life ABC” has rows of tulips depicted on the endpapers. The tulips are coloured in red, the same as the cover. Tulips are one of the elements found in the book and are also one of the most repetitive elements found in the Dutch environment. Placed among the tulips is the bunny character of Nintje. Paired, these elements talk about the relationship of natural and constructed elements in the Dutch environment. The two also have an artistic connection which is achieved through Piet Mondrian and the De Stijl group. “Thus Charmion von Wiegand on Mondrian’s New York studio. In his Paris studio he had used flowers to make it more cheerful. One tulip in a vase, an artificial one, its leaves painted white. As Mondrian was probably incapable of irony, the tulip was unlikely to be a wry joke about his having had to produce flower pieces between 1922 and 1925 when he no longer wanted to because there were no buyers for his abstracts. It could, of course, have been a revenge for the agony a compromise of that sort

must have cost him. More likely, it was simply a part of the general revulsion against green and growth which made him, when seated at a table beside a window through which trees were visible to him, persuade someone to change places.”⁴ More information on Nintje and De Stijl can be found in Part I: A Good Life ABC; N – Nintje.

The endpapers of “A Flat Tale” depict repetitive rows of Dutch canals and canal houses. Both front and back sides of the houses are visible, along with either their entrances to the street or private back gardens. Since “A Flat Tale” tells a story of Dutch architecture and the built environment, its endpapers represent its most common form. In “Pitch”, the endpapers represent the grid of the Mountain. Trees are planted in this grid in order to emulate a feeling of a natural environment. For more information on the Mountain, look in Part III: Pitch.

Opening. “Opening refers to any two facing pages. Picturebooks are rarely paginated; in the absence of page numbers, we can refer to, for example, the second opening or the seventh opening.”⁵

Colour. “The three aspects of colour—hue, tone, and saturation—may help us to analyse the colours used in an illustration. Hue refers to the different segments of the spectrum, allowing us to distinguish

all that might be called red from all that might be called orange (though the distinctions are of course blurry, because the spectrum is a continuum). Tone refers to the amount of darkness or brightness of a hue and can further be broken down into tint (the addition of white, or water in the case of watercolour) and shade (the addition of black). Saturation refers to the intensity or purity of a colour. Changes in colour can be signs of changing mood. Lastly, the deliberate lack of colour in picturebook illustrations is an interesting choice, especially nowadays when the technology of colour reproduction is so advanced. Another aspect of the depiction of colour and light is the use of light and shadow to both manipulate our attention and to suggest symbolic meaning.⁶ The use of colour differs in all parts of the project. "A Good Life ABC" uses only primary colours. It does so in order to remove any specificity from objects. In this way, the objects become emblems rather than specific representations. "A Flat Tale" has a wider colour palate. But unlike the first part, where the colours are bold and bright, the second part has a more saturated, pastel palate. This is done in order to conjure up the cloudy diffuse ambient of the Netherlands. "Pitch" is done in black and white in order to convey its seriousness and

maturity. The lack of colour also plays a role in focusing the reader on the text rather than the images. "A Reference Unreferenced" is a little grey book with orange drawings. The use of orange colour is closely related to the Netherlands, given the fact that it is the colour of the Dutch Royal Family. The orange colour pops out in the field of grey letters.

Distance. "The closer we seem to the action, the more empathy and emotion we may feel; whereas a long view tends to make us more objective and detached, viewing the action from a safe distance."⁷

Framing. "Frames often serve to convey the impression that we are looking through a window. The most common way of framing is to simply leave some space around the illustration. The wider the space, the more set-off the illustration seems, and the more objective and detached we can be about it. Moebius (1986) puts it this way: "Framed, the illustration provides a limited glimpse 'into' a world. Unframed, the illustration constitutes a total experience, the view from 'within.'" When an illustration extends to the edges of the page without any frame, it is said to bleed. Full bleed means that the illustration extends to the edges of the page on all four sides. In a full-bleed double page spread, the illustration completely

covers the two pages of the opening. This is perhaps the ultimate "view from within". (Moebius, 1986, p. 150). Doonan (1993) comments that full bleed "suggests a life going on beyond the confines of the page, so that the beholder becomes more of a participant than a spectator of the pictured events"⁸ The drawings in "A Flat Tale" are always done in 'full bleed', covering the entire surface of the paper. This is done because the drawings always depict merely a sample of the built environment, a chosen specimen, an interesting occurrence. There are always more things happening beyond the limits of the frame, but they are just not visible in the book.

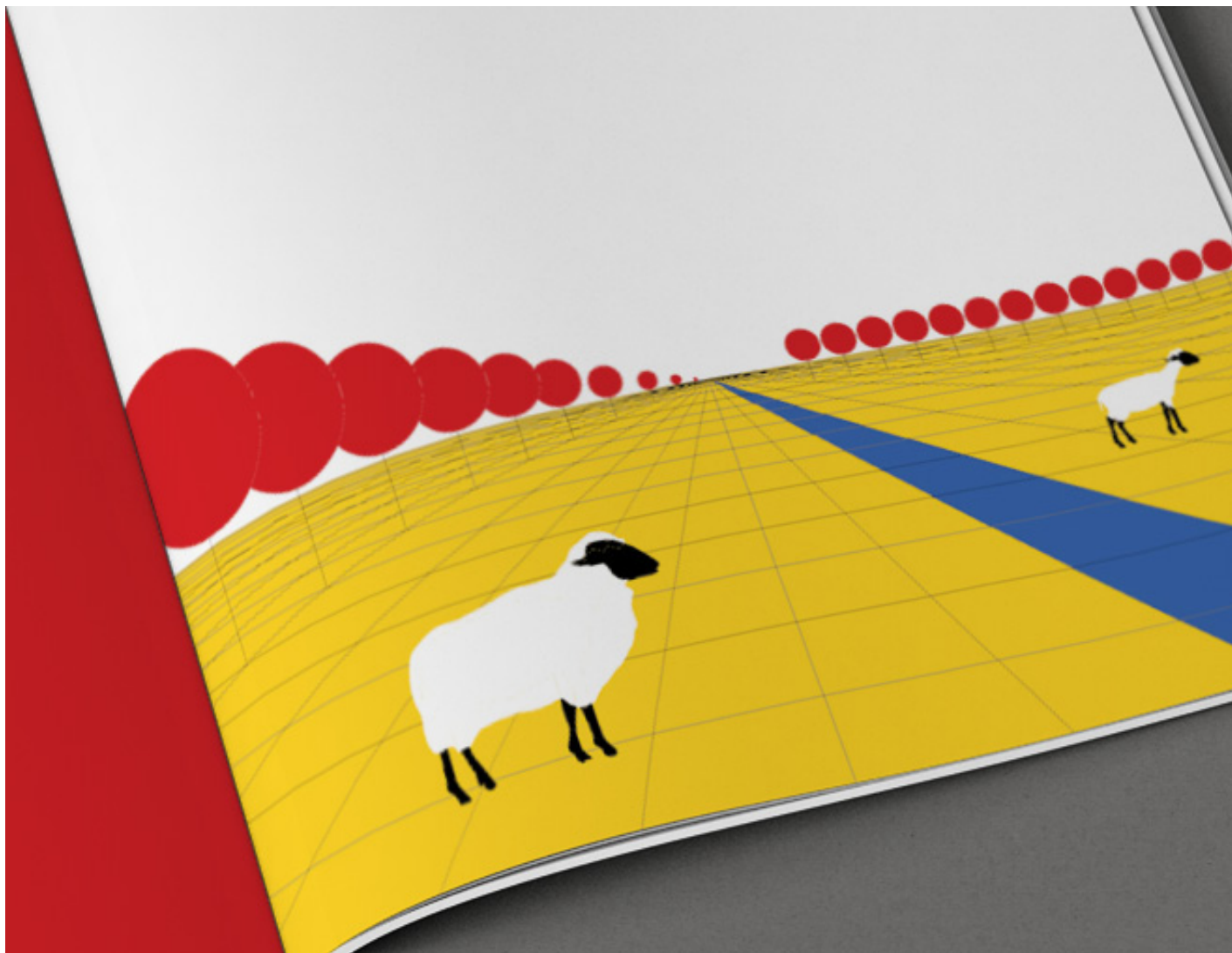
- 1-Sipe, Lawrence R. "Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects". Literacy Teaching and Learning, Volume 6, Number 1, pp.23-42
- 2-Ibid.
- 3-Ibid.
- 4-Sylvester, David. "About Modern Art: Critical Essays, 1948-1997". Henry Holt and Co., 1997.
- 5-Ibid. 1
- 6-Ibid. 1
- 7-Ibid. 1
- 8-Ibid. 1

A Flate Tale: Part 1
A Good Life ABC



SOURCE: Image of aspread from "A Good Life ABC" created by Jana Čulek

- 1: A spread from "A Good Life ABC": A is for Architecture
- 2: A spread from "A Good Life ABC": L is for Landscape
- 3: A spread from "A Good Life ABC": G is for Glasshouse (next page)

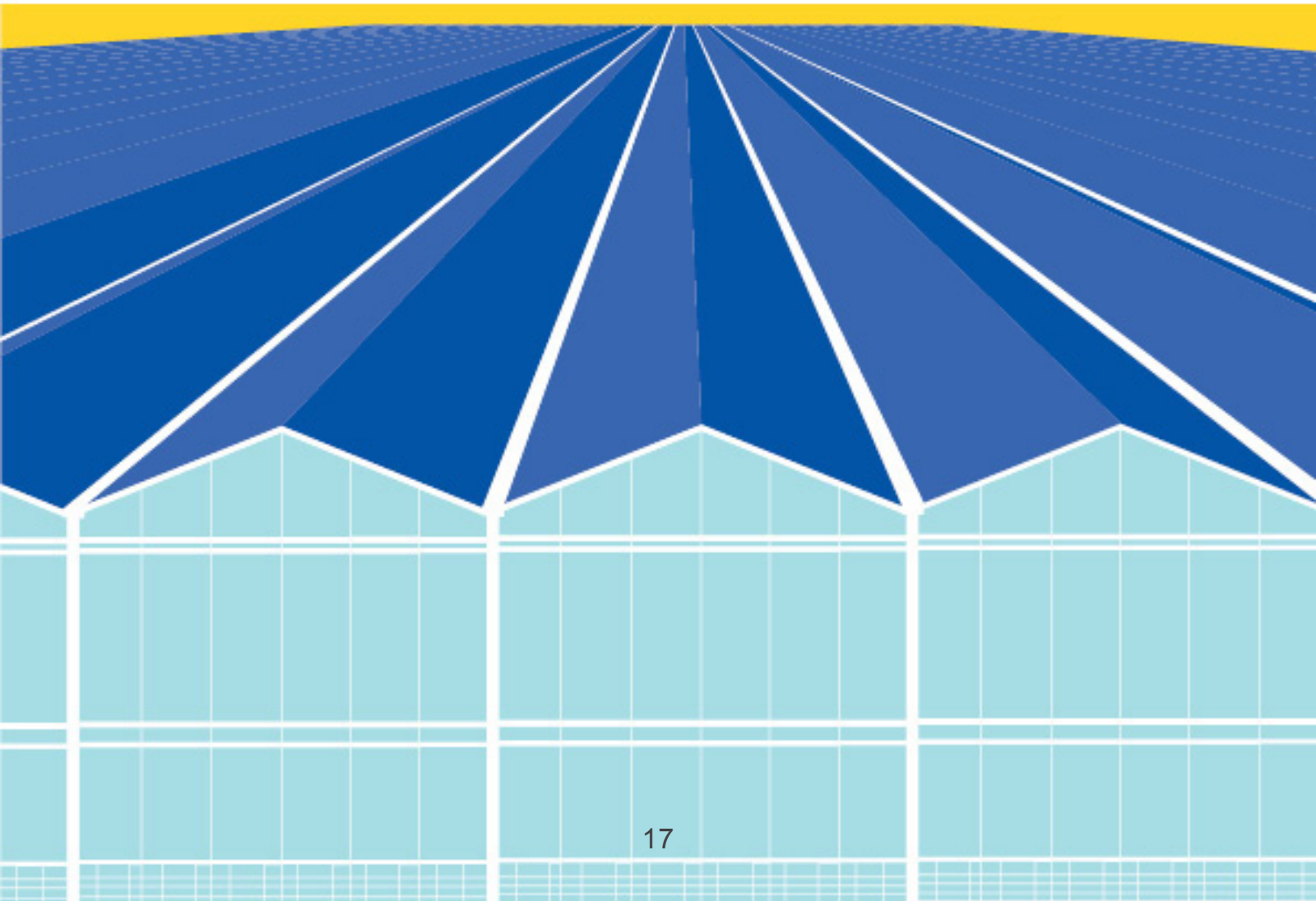


To establish the basic grammar of the Netherlands and its architecture, "A Good Life ABC" is used as an example of the simplest way of giving and receiving knowledge. It is an analogy to the way architecture is represented to the general public. With the intention to make projects easier to understand, which consequently allows them to be accepted better by the oversimplify. In an effort to explain the complex architectural idea in a relatable way, a series of reductive diagrams is produced with the intent to explain the architectural process. This process is, in the end, reduced to a simplified, reductive drawing that represents the final stage of development: an icon, which then becomes the means of recognition for the project. "A Good

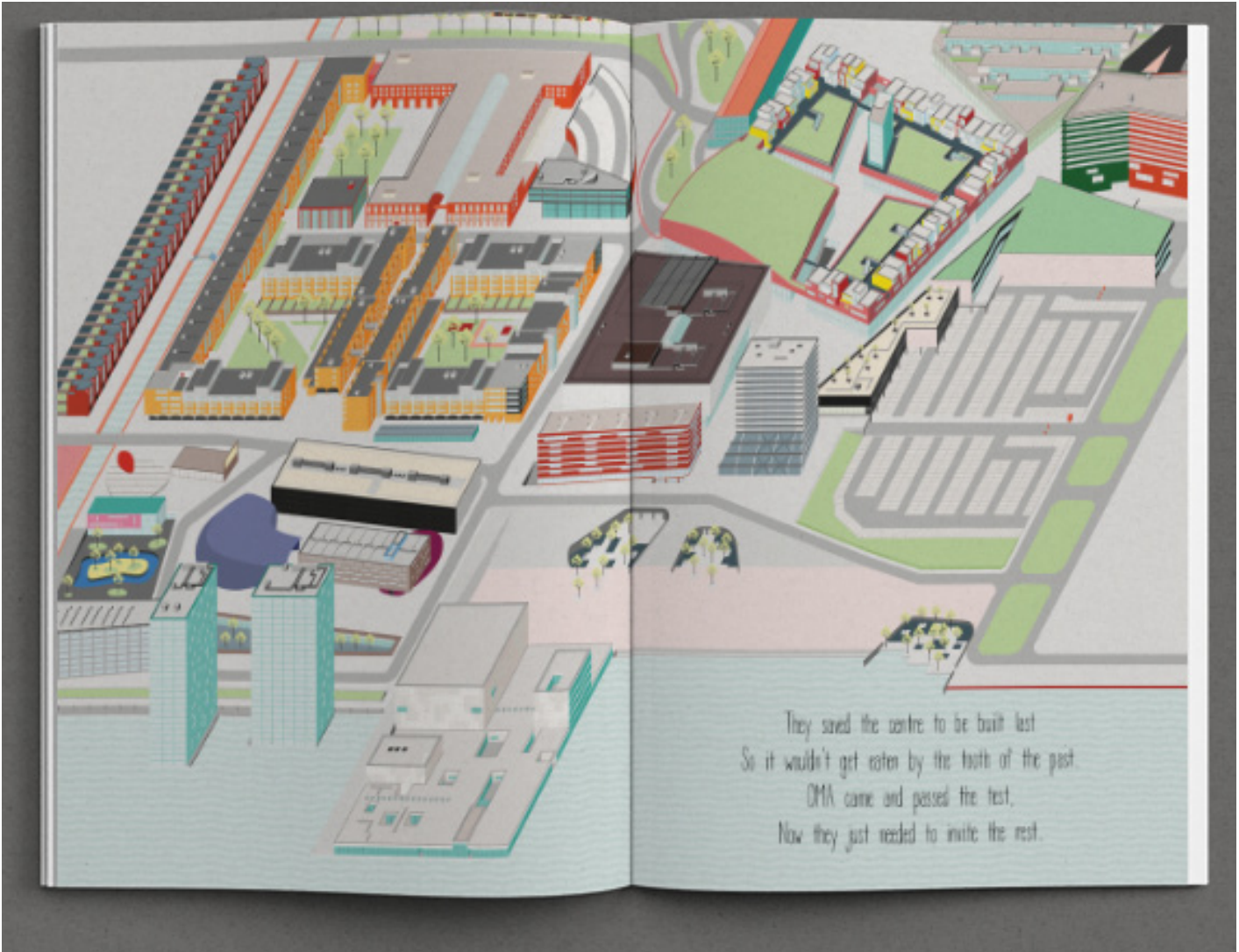
Life ABC" uses letters of the alphabet, which are paired with drawings of objects and elements of the built environment. The drawings are drawn in a reductive manner, with minimal detailing and with the use of only primary colours. This is done in order to remove any specificity of a singular object. In this way, emblematic objects and places are created which refer only to themselves and their Dutchness. They perform as symbols of Dutch identity.

G

Glasshouse



A Flate Tale: Part 2 A Flat Tale



SOURCE: Image of a spread from "A Flat Tale" created by Jana Čulek

After establishing the grammar, with "The Good Life ABC", "A Flat Tale" forms the syntax. It is presented in the form of a picturebook which uses illustrations to give image to the events of the corresponding fabula. Image is used as a conveyor of spatial narrative, while text is used to convey the temporal one. Since "words and pictures necessarily have a combative relationship, their complementarity is a matter of opposites complementing each other by virtue of their differences. As a result, the relationships between pictures and texts in picturebooks tend to be ironic: each speaks about matters on which the other is silent."¹ The architectural design project, correspondingly, also consists out of images and text. Both image

and text are used to convey the message. They can also, like in the picturebook, correspond with each other or not. If we consider the "original" users of each format, the child for the picturebook and the investor or stakeholder for the architectural project, we can also conclude that, in both cases, the users need a pre-acquired set of skills that enable them to read and comprehend these materials. "The encoding of these elementary structures of signification through which a work achieves meaning and life as narrative is analysed in terms of the reader-viewer's creation of a "possible world" conceived as a construct (from individual experience) upon which disbelief is suspended"². Both the architectural design project

1: A spread from "A Flat Tale": Almere Centrum
2: A spread from "A Flat Tale": The Office - Production of Concepts
3: A spread from "A Flat Tale": Housing - Facade Picking (next page)



SOURCE: Image of a spread from "A Flat Tale" created by Jana Čulek

and the picturebook require a certain removal from the given reality in order to be able to use one's imagination and comprehend, acknowledge and visualize / imagine the ideas presented in the format. The story depicted in "A Flat Tale" is centred around the development of Almere, the newest city on the youngest Dutch polder. Almere was created on the Flevoland Polder, an artificial piece of land created by reclaiming the IJsselmeer in the 1960s. Almere has been an architectural testing ground since the beginning of its creation in the 1970s. The city is divided into housing quarters, which have been built in stages. The construction of its most recent quarter, Almere Poort, started in 2005. The city still plans to expand due to a rapid

growth in population. From large areas of housing developments, which are emblematic examples of urban planning approaches, to the masterplan for the Almere Centrum which was created by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture in 1997 and public buildings constructed there by other famous Dutch architectural offices, Almere has it all. It is a dense conglomeration of architectural experiments and approaches. The narrative of Almere can be viewed as a shorter, dense version of Dutch architectural history which is fruitful for the creation of imagery related to a variety of different aspects of Dutch architectural production. In "A Flat Tale", Almere is used as a lens for presenting and observing architectural, urban and infrastructural

approaches. It is also used to establish ideas that form generative theoretical elements of Dutch architecture and culture (such as concept, export, good life, welfare, subsidies, etc.)

- 1-Nodelman, Perry. *Words About Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books*. University of Georgia Press: 1990
- 2-Trifonas, Peter Pericles. "Semiosis and the Picture- Book: On Method and the Cross-medial Relation of Lexical and Visual Narrative Texts". *Applied Semiotics / Sémiotique appliquée* 4: 11/12 (2002) : 181-202. OISE / University of Toronto: 2002.





A Flate Tale: Part 3 Pitch

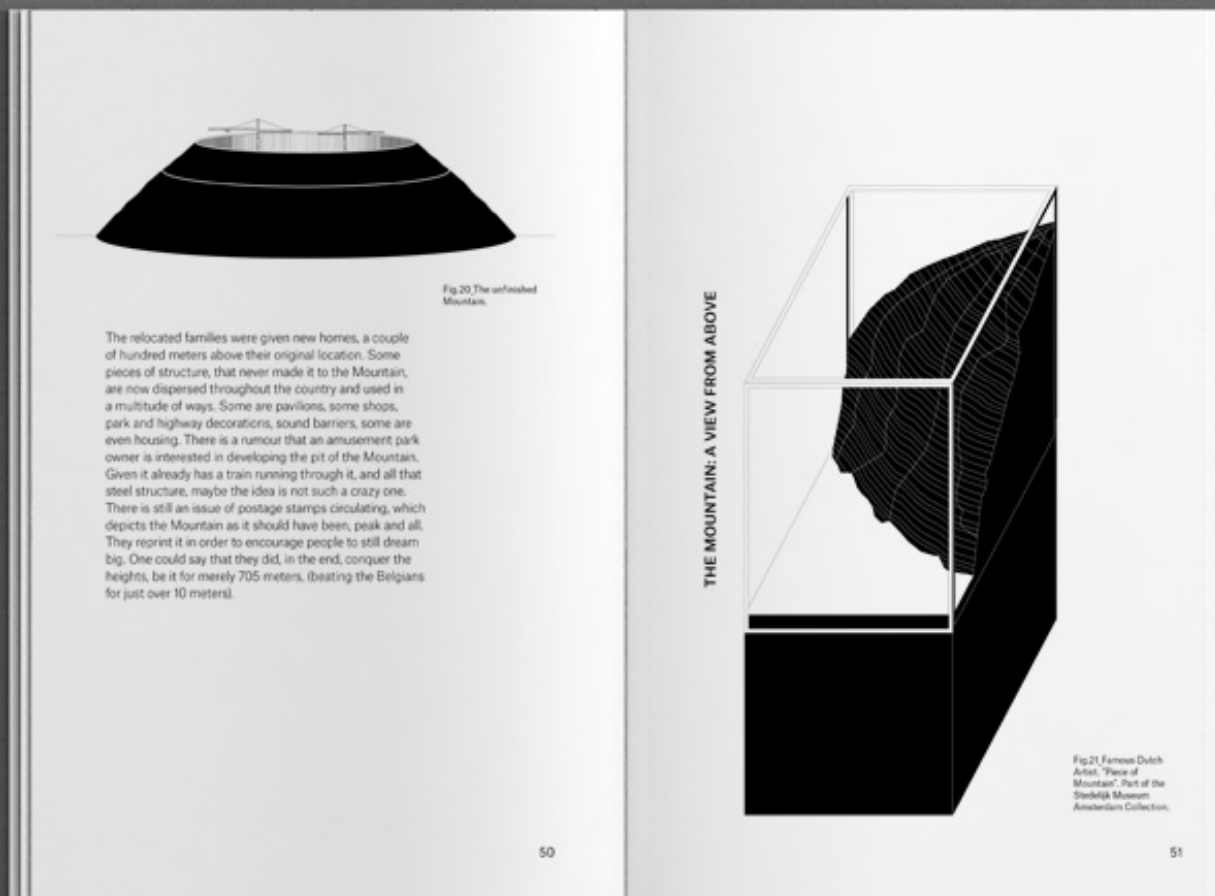
SOURCE: Image of a spread from "Pitch" created by Jana Culek



- 1: A spread from "Pitch": Grid, Module, Structuralism
- 2: A spread from "Pitch": The Mountain: A View from Above
- 3: A spread from "Pitch": Use of Utility - The Windmill

"In order to do interdisciplinary work, it is not enough to take a 'subject' (a theme) and to arrange two or three sciences around it. Interdisciplinary study consists in creating a new object which belongs to no one."¹ The third part represents the most mature phase of developing an architectural idea. It uses architectural polemic through the format of an architectural journal, titled "Pitch". Dutch architectural stories are clear and relatable. Architects do not try to mystify the process through complex semantic constructs, but rather use metaphoric descriptions that allude to known spaces, places and experiences. "Pitch" examines Dutch architectural projects through the use of narrative, argumentation and criticism. "Aside from the lack

of attention to communication in architecture training, De Botton uncovered, architecture theorists also seem to 'place a premium on obscure language...I think the reason for that is that they've confused complicated and good architecture with complicated and good ideas, almost as they felt that in order to make good architecture, the ideas behind the architecture had to be complicated'.² "Pitch" ends with a "fictional conclusion, an interpretation of the same material, but through the words of an architectural project."³ It is set in an undefined future. It is a utopian, infrastructural, urban and architectural project of a mountain in the Netherlands. Using only text, diagrams and allusions to the project (in the form of "infiltrators" placed



in the first two parts), the project questions and tests the capacity of architectural storytelling. "In this introduction to the work of OMA, George Baird observes that much of the power of their drawings and the texts which accompany them, lies in the quality of presenting the reader with opposing positions – both at the same time. OMA's observations on the metropolitanism, he notes, contain, simultaneously, the extremes of an architecture which is both visionary and implementable, surreal and commonsensical, revolutionary and evolutionary, and puritanical and luxurious. Baird points out that rarely in the work are these oppositions satisfactory resolved – they are extremes which do not, as yet, mesh, but rather, touch."⁴ Approaching the

topic of architectural representation through both its lexical and visual qualities allowed me to distil three main categories: the diagram and the emblematic object, the architectural design project and its narrative and the architectural essay. Together, the parts represent the symbols, a depiction, a reflection and a story of the construct of the good life in the Netherlands.

1-Mirzoeff, Nicholas quotes Barthes, Roland. "What is Visual Culture?". Visual Culture: An Introduction. Routledge: 2007

2-Christophe Van Gerrewey, Hans Teerds, Véronique Patteuw. Editorial. Oase #90: What is Good

Architecture?. NAI 010 Publishers, 2013

3-Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, New York: The Monacelli Press: 1994

4-Baird, George. "les Extremes Qui se Touchent?". Architectural Design – AD Profiles 5: OMA. 5/77. London, 1977.

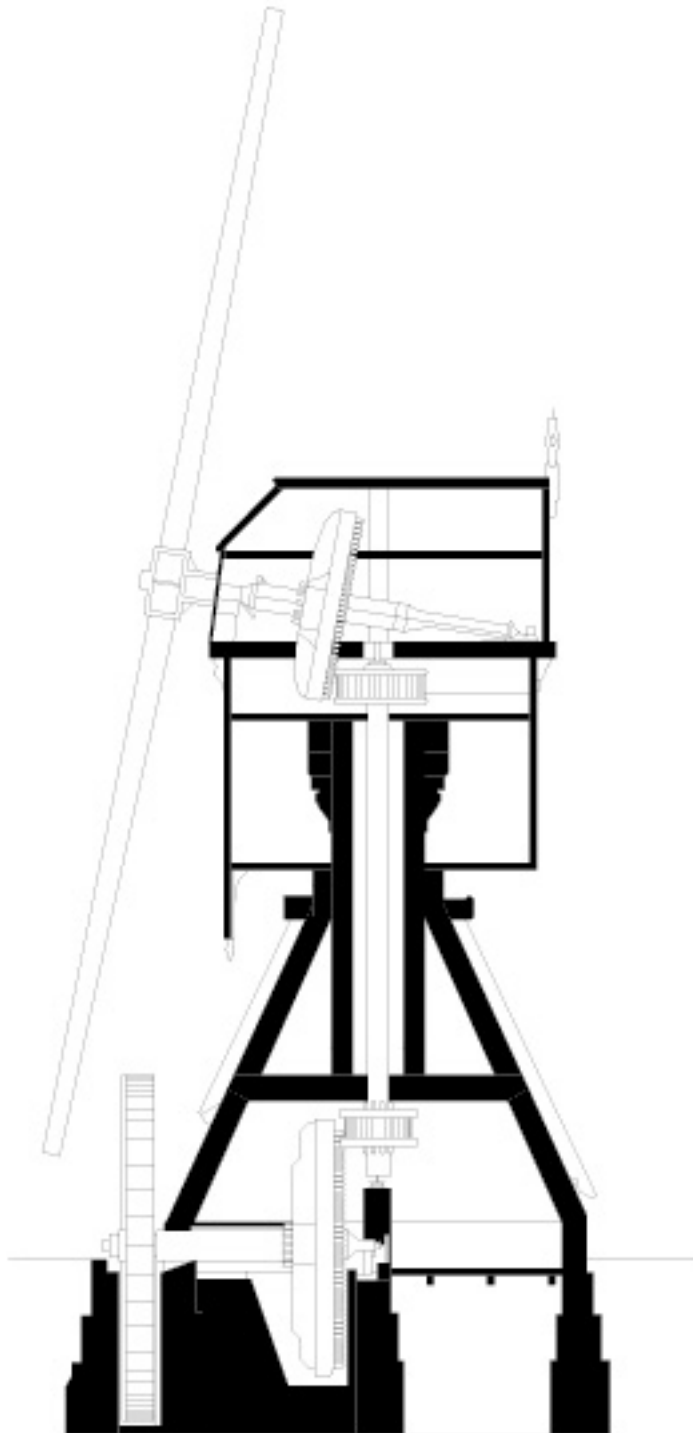


Fig.2_The Hollow Post Mill

USE OF UTILITY: THE WINDMILL

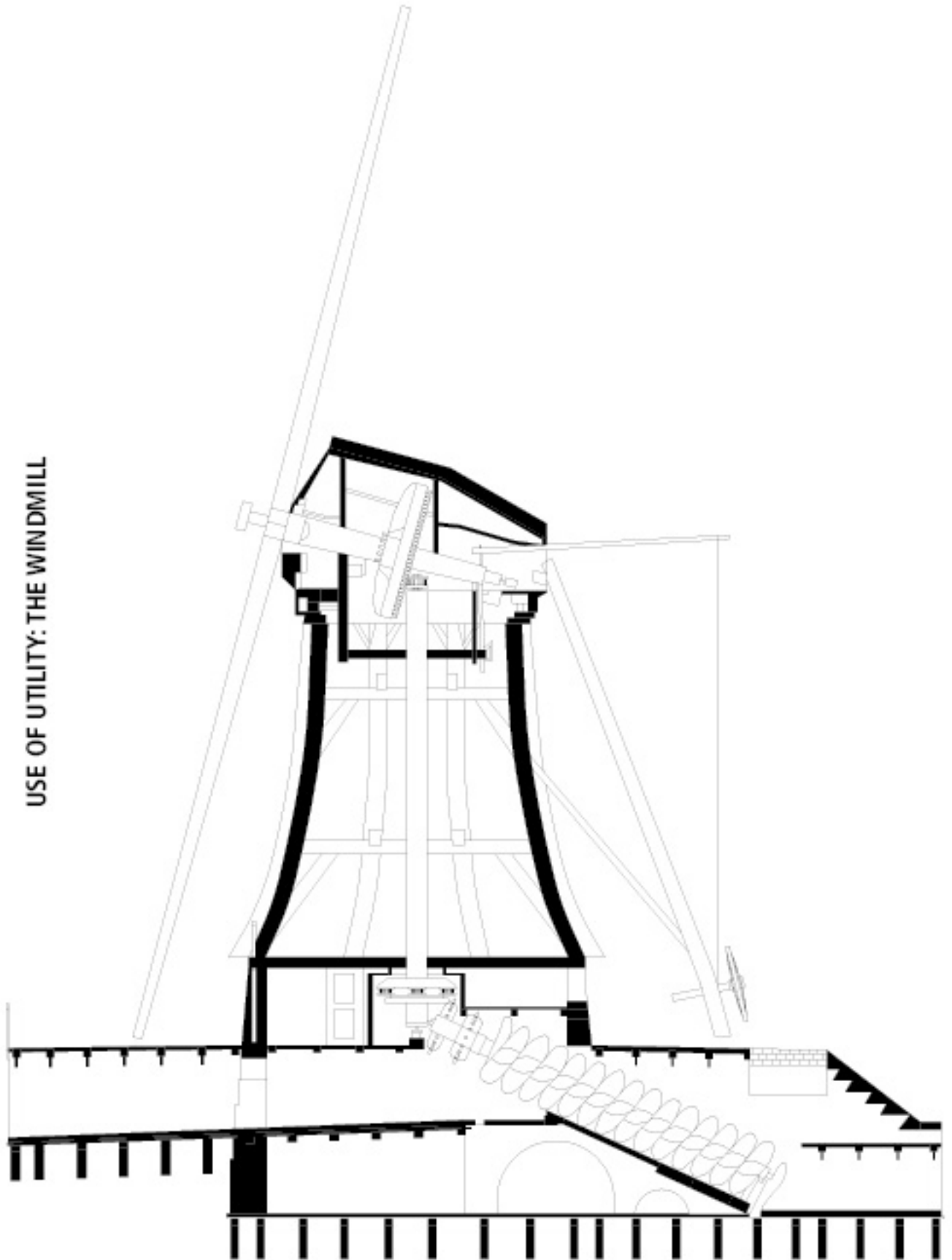
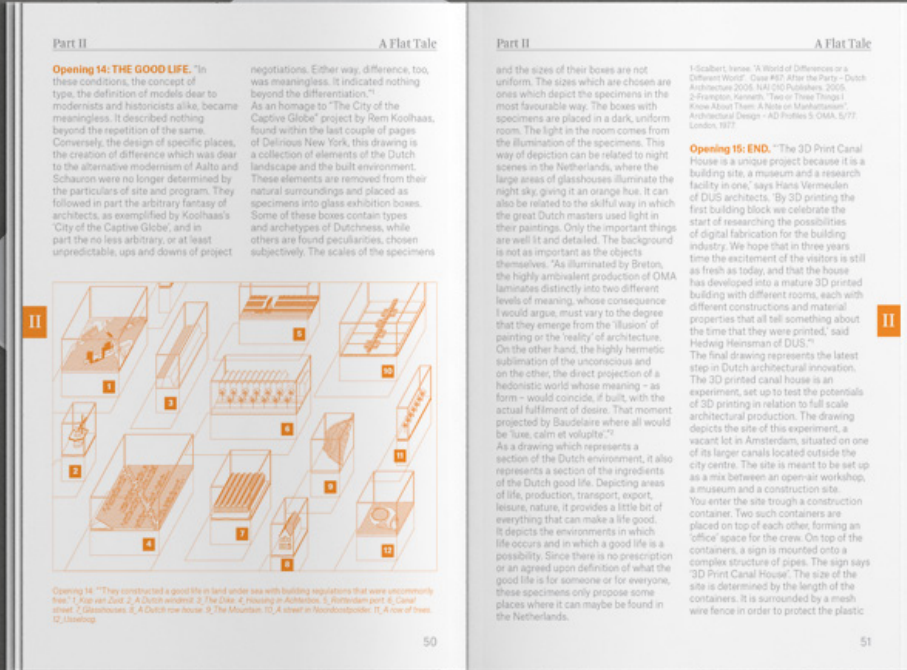


Fig.3_The Drainage Mill

A Flate Tale: Appendix A Reference Unreferenced

SOURCE: Image of a spread from "A Reference Unreferenced" created by Jana Čulek



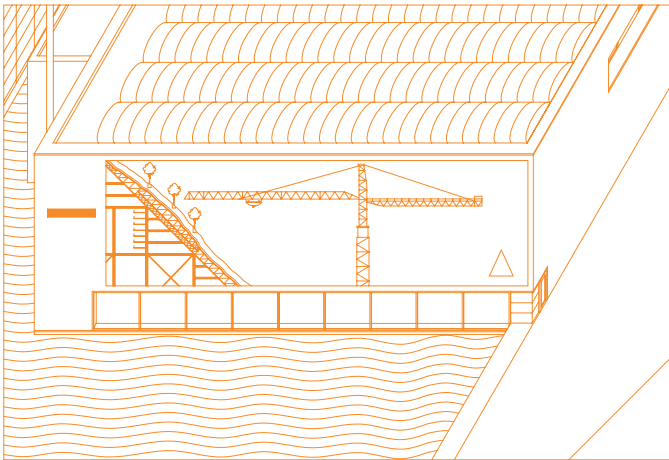
- 1: A spread from "A Reference Unreferenced":
Constructing Landscapes - The Good Life
- 2: 1: A spread from "A Reference Unreferenced":
A_architecture and B_brick
- 2: 1: A spread from "A Reference Unreferenced":
Pitch - The Infiltrators



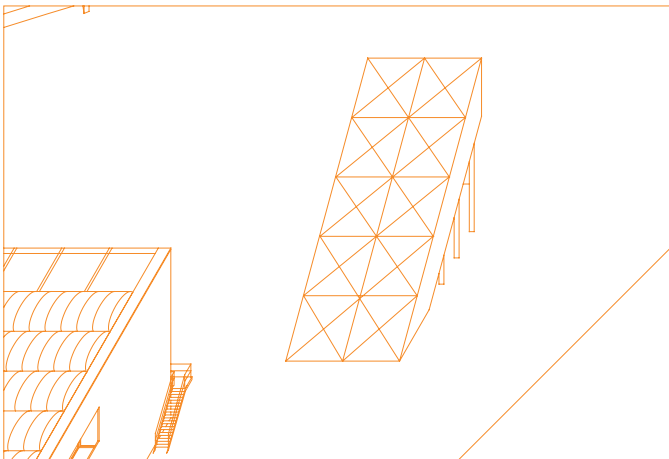
"A Reference Unreferenced" is the project's appendix. It contains references, sources, inspirations and explanations to all three project elements. The appendix draws on the research done on the topics of Dutch architecture and visual culture, the history, meaning and structure of tales and narratives and the approaches, elements, meanings, structures and formats of picturebooks. Starting with "A Good Life ABC", the appendix goes into each letter of the alphabet and the drawings associated with them, giving a short historical, theoretical or visual explanation of the objects and their relation to Dutch culture and the built environment. The second part of the appendix elaborates on the drawings in "A Flat Tale". Every opening has its own story. Every

drawing is described and positioned within its historical and architectural context. References used for the drawings are enumerated and explained in detail. The third part of the appendix elaborates on the final project found in "Pitch". It explains the use of "infiltrators" throughout the three parts and locates them within the previous books. By illuminating the stories behind the infiltrated elements, the drawings of "A Good Life ABC" and "A Flat Tale" are given a deeper meaning which can be explored by re-examining the entire set.

on the brick facade of the NAI exhibition space. The poster depicts the process of building the Mountain through the use of large cranes and modular elements. The logo of the triangle is present on the poster. In addition to the poster, a large scale model of a modular element of the Mountain is placed next to the building. The element serves both as a pavilion and as specimen of the construction elements. It is the same element that was first seen in the Office, but in a much larger scale.



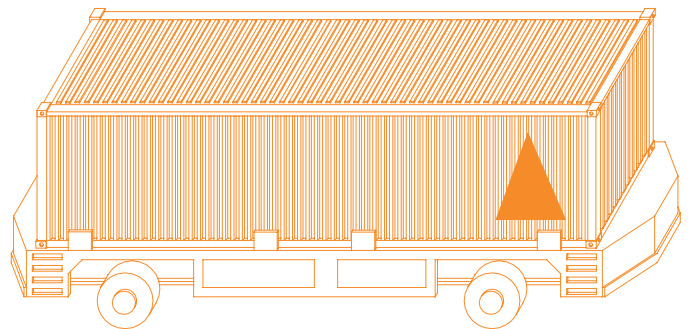
Infiltrator 4.1: The Exhibition poster



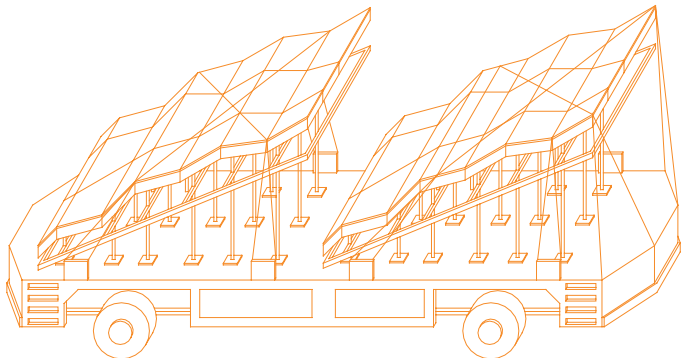
Infiltrator 4.2: The Exhibition pavilion

Infiltrator 5: Import - Export. Even though the primary function of opening 12 is to depict the topic of export, the use of the infiltrator focuses on the aspect of import. As described in the project,

the modular elements of the mountain are constructed in China and imported into the Netherlands via large shipping boats and containers. The infiltrators on this drawing appear both as the modular element, traveling on an automated port vehicle and also as the triangle logo imprinted on some of the containers. Switching the use of the drawing from export to import also depicts the true function of a port or harbour. Goods, objects and ideas come in and are transported out. The function is two-sided.



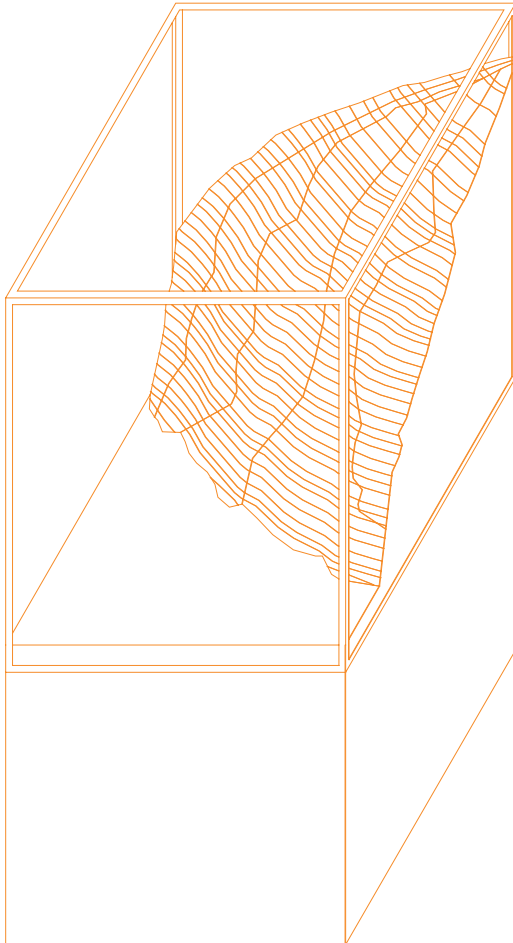
Infiltrator 5.1: The shipping container



Infiltrator 5.2: The modular element

Infiltrator 6: The Exhibit. The scene in opening 14 occurs after parts of the Mountain have already been built. Along with other specimens of the constructed landscape, a piece of the Mountain is placed in a glass box. Its presence in the Dutch environment has become so evident and important that it has become a part of its constructed good life. Since the Mountain is still not complete, the

specimen represents merely a segment of it, a 'geological sample', cut roughly from a piece of land and placed in a well lighted exhibition box.



Infiltrator 6: "Piece of the Mountain" exhibition piece

Pitch. Some of these infiltrators and a number of additional drawings are repeated in "Pitch". They are used to explain the project in a clearer way. Images of imagined views from the Mountain also accompany the story.

The Mountain A View from Above

There is no easy way from earth to the stars. Except for the Dutch.

The profession was just starting to recover after the recent economic crisis when the project of the Mountain surfaced. “Nobody remembered who it was. The idea had been in the air. Others were designing flying cities, spherical theatres, whole artificial planets. Someone had to invent the “Mountain”. An enclave of purity and nature in contained surroundings – it seemed like a first step, a radical and bold one in a gradual program of improving the world through architecture.”¹ Nobody thought they would actually go for it. It was a huge, megalomaniac, utopian project. But that is how the Dutch do it.

The barge caravans transported the materials every Monday morning. They were driving them from the Rotterdam port, where some of the pieces were delivered, towards the site just southeast of Almere. After a first couple of weeks, when the people caught on to what was happening, they started to gather along the canals and watch the caravan pass by. “Look!”, they would say, “we are finally getting our mountain!”. Even though it was to be a hollow structure, it didn’t matter. It brought with it the promise of new found heights to this vertically challenged land. A change of views, of sceneries, of shades and sun and wind. “The notion that one creates a world by reorganizing and perfecting what is already there is central to the way the Dutch have made space and how they have thought about their environment. They do not import the new alien object to be placed in their landscape, nor do they merely try to preserve the crumbling ruins of the past. The aesthetic is one of utilizing and transforming reality.”² It was to be a new step in conquering the land. After taking the sea, they were ready to take the skies.

It was a massive and complex affair. The plan was to construct a large steel skeleton and then cover it with a generous layer of dirt. Of course, trees would be planted to prevent landslides and to create the most natural environment possible. The steel skeleton was, of course, modular. Efficiency is a Dutch invention after all. The architects, along with engineers, landscape designers, biologists, geologists and a whole lot of other –ists were employed or contracted by a newly formed state company (conveniently named HILL – Holland Invents Latitude Landscape), which was to be in charge of all mountain related issues. The company was, of course, also heavily subsidized by the government. All the national institutes related to the specific professions were also involved. It was also supported by the royal family which appointed a special emissary that was to inform them on all Mountain related issues. It was initially predicted that the construction would last 10 years. Given the Mountain’s radius of almost two kilometres and its 1500 meter height, some thought that the 10 years estimate might have been a little too optimistic. As time would show, they were right. But at that time everybody was just too excited that this was even happening to think about the slightly unrealistic timeframe.

The Mountain was a true collaborative effort. It was a huge project and it needed a large creative workforce. Everybody jumped on the band wagon. There were thousands of things to be done. The architectural community was buzzing with excitement. Everyone was able to be involved with a project suitable to their interests. OMA, MVRDV and West 8 did the general masterplan for the Mountain. They divided the work of course. West 8 did the general layout, OMA planned the programmatic zoning, both horizontal and vertical, while MVRDV was in charge of landmarks, way finding and follies. Since there was an ambition to have a ski slope, UN Studio designed special ski jumps, cable car stops, and pavilions. An experimental educational

center was planned which was to be designed by the famous architect Herman Hertzberger. Even though some of the participating architects protested, WAM was commissioned to build an authentic Dutch hotel village 800 meters up the Mountain. It was to be the Dutch town with the highest altitude.

The Mountain is the grid system – stacked. It takes the current logic of land division and city planning and multiplies it vertically ad infinitum. It is the most logical approach. This way, the programmatic zoning and multiple uses of the Mountain can be organized and transformed in a much easier manner than if it was to be an “organic” structure. The idea for the modular structure of the Mountain was taken from a variety of iconic Dutch projects such as the, now demolished Van Eyck Orphanage in Amsterdam, the newly renovated Kubuswoningen in Rotterdam and some of Herzberger’s ideas and building segments. In the end, the engineers (and some interested and knowledgeable architects) decided that the best way to proceed was to design one part which could then be multiplied, stacked, modified and adjusted in order to create the Mountain. Steel structure was of course the natural way to proceed. But they needed a lot of it. A lot. So the Netherlands made a deal with China. The steel frames were produced in Chinese factories and then shipped in thousands and thousands of containers every week. When they reached their destination in the Rotterdam port, they were transported with large carrier trucks to the site. After a year or so, the government decided that it would be much cheaper to build a temporary port of the coast of Lelystad. The transport costs were cut significantly. Naturally, the Mountain was extremely well integrated into the existing structure and infrastructure. The train tracks passing along its northern side would lead the visitors straight to the main cable car leading to the top. By entering the orange coloured cabins, the visitors would

be transported through three stations while simultaneously having the opportunity to enjoy the beautiful views of Amsterdam in the west, the Markermeer in the north and the polder landscapes to the east. When they would arrive close to the top, they would even be able to see the dune islands in the north. "The visitors would come to see some quality of freshness and pragmatism, a kind of optimism that architects in other parts of Europe had lost in the long years of the fierce and critical debate on modern architecture. In Holland, it seemed, architectural experiments were possible which could not even be thought up elsewhere, let alone realized."³ A new, direct train connection was also established between the Mountain and De Hoge Veluwe National Park. The train tracks ran through the mountain to connect with the existing tracks in the north. This way, the visitors could, in less than one hour, travel from lowland nature to fresh mountain air. The trip itself was also a very exciting event. Since the train track was one of the first things to be built, the visitors could literally drive through the massive building site of the Mountain and observe its steel underbelly. When finished, the Mountain would be able to facilitate everybody's needs. Riding your bike up the mountain would no longer be just an expression of riding against the wind. The ski resorts in the Alps would be a far cry from the ones located on the Mountain. The tracks, named red, white and blue, according to their difficulty, provided diverse experiences. The white track, being the easiest one, sloped gently down the southern slopes of the Mountain. This was the scenic route, towards the national park, which allowed you to enjoy the nature vistas while slowly descending towards the bottom. There, you could visit Zeewolde and go for a quick game of golf before the cable car takes you back up the mountain. The blue track was, of course, oriented towards the water. In the years when the winter was very cold, the small lakes bellow

the mountain would freeze, thus creating a multitude of ice skating rinks for people coming up and down the Mountain. The red track led you to the southern edge of Almere. While speeding down the track you could see Amsterdam in the distance. This was also the track where world cup ski competitions were to be held. Since the track was lit during the night and during competitions, it would be visible from the Amsterdam canals. The Mountain is divided into three zones by height. One every 500 meters. The first zone is the only one that is populated. Due to the fact that the Mountain was placed in a populated area, the existing housing had to be moved. In order to facilitate a speedy and conflict free move of the families present on the scattered polder farmland, real-estate options were offered on the first ring of the Mountain. The families could choose which areas they wanted to inhabit and with what views. Since more housing was planned to be built than it existed on the land, the excitement for land purchase grew incredibly fast. From housing corporations to private persons, everybody wanted to own a "view from above". The southwest slope was the most popular one, due to its favourable views towards Amsterdam and Utrecht, as well as the lack of shading from the Mountain itself. The second zone was a big park. Intertwined with hiking, biking, horseback riding and ski running trails, it was to be used for all sorts of recreational purposes. It was also the zone where a number of public buildings would be placed, such as an experimental nature-based school and kindergarten, a Wildlife Research Centre and Museum and a Vertical Agriculture Development Centre, which was established to investigate the production possibilities of this newly constructed landscape. The top zone was reserved for hotels and rented cabins. It was an exciting vacation destination with an experience unparalleled to anywhere else in the Netherlands. It was said, that on a clear, sunny day, you could see the

entire country. But in the end, as all grand dreams of better futures, this one was also interrupted. Due to its extra orbital construction price and a new financial crisis, the government had to pull out of the financing of the project. The developers involved in some larger areas of land were able to sustain the project for a bit longer, but in the end they were also destined for an economic demise. Today, the half-finished Mountain stands as a monument to grand dreams of constructed utopias. Since it was never fully completed, it resembles more a volcano, with its tip cut off to form a giant steel crater. The first height zone is the only one that was fully completed, and luckily so, since the real estate on it was able to settle the investor's debts. The relocated families were given new homes, a couple of hundred meters above their original location. Some pieces of structure, that never made it to the Mountain, are now dispersed throughout the country and used in a multitude of ways. Some are pavilions, some shops, park and highway decorations, sound barriers, some are even housing. There is a rumour that an amusement park owner is interested in developing the pit of the Mountain. Given it already has a train running through it, and all that steel structure, maybe the idea is not such a crazy one. There is still an issue of postage stamps circulating, which depict the Mountain as it should have been, peak and all. They reprint it in order to encourage people to still dream big. One could say that they did, in the end, conquer the heights, be it for merely 705 meters, (beating the Belgians for just over 10 meters).





Annotated Bibliography

The book *Delirious New York* is chosen as a source because of its content, format and representational technique. Being a “retroactive manifesto” of New York it investigates the historical and architectural development of the city through a series of inventions and events related to technology and the built environment. Due to the fact that the book was written by a Dutch architect, Rem Koolhaas, and that New York was originally founded by the Dutch as New Amsterdam, it contains a number of comparatives made by the author which give a lot of insight into the Dutch mentality.

The content of the book is important because it frames the question of what constitutes a modern metropolis. By slowly forming the theoretical standpoint through presenting architectural research a fluid architectural story is formed which talks about the becoming of a city. Using some of the insight from the book I will be able to investigate whether such a metropolis exists in a Dutch context and what its constitutive elements are. Even though it is never stated directly, the book deals with a series of concepts that form the city of New York. All these, at the time revolutionary, ideas were concepts for technological, social and economic improvement which made a great impact on built form of the city. This way of viewing the city I perceive to be very indicative of the Dutch condition.

Delirious New York is also significant in relation to the representation of architecture. The format of the book and the representational formats described within it are an important source when investigating the relationship of narrative, representation and architecture. Examples from Hugh Ferriss on depicting the bright nights of the city are a reference that can easily be translated into the Dutch context. The OMA projects presented at the end of the book can be used as a reference for projects that came to be as a result of extensive research but are not conceived as an antithesis to the architectural practices of the

city but rather as projects that work with the intrinsic logic of New York. The mix of tale and architectural fact within the project makes them more interesting and engaging as well as allowing them to be indirectly critical.

2. Christoph Grafe, Madeleine Maaskant, Mechthild Stuhlmacher (edit.). *Oase #67 - After the Party; Dutch Architecture 2005*. Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005

The #67 issue of *Oase* magazine deals with the aftermath of the “SuperDutch” era. Set in 2005, a couple of years after the Dutch architectural boom which was induced by the housing market, a series of texts examine the previous years of architectural production and question whether the same modes can continue.

An interview titled “Eight Years after Nine+One” held with Matthijs Bouw and Christoph Grafe gives insight to the causes of the housing boom at the end of the 1990s. The text elaborates on how these events have led to societies need for innovative architectural forms. In the text “Looking for Partners in Crime” author Janny Rodermond explains the negative connotations of architecture that focuses mostly on the wealthier areas and parts of society. The text also describes how Dutch architectural practices differ from other European practices of that time and how their way of working has influenced the progress of architecture. In an interview with Kristin Feireis, the former director of the Netherlands Architectural Institute, the role of the Dutch government in the promotion of architecture is explained. It is stated how architecture at one point became the “national identity” of the country. This led to the creation of a large number of new architectural offices which were strongly supported by the government, which in turn led to the architectural boom of the late 90s. “Exodus to a New World”, a text by Christoph Grafe, examines the

historical developments of the Netherlands that led to the current architectural practices. He argues that the innovativeness of contemporary Dutch architecture is a result of the lack of modernity at the beginning of the 20th century. Due to the historical timeline that differs from its surrounding European neighbours the Netherlands had to progress more rapidly towards the end of the century which led to the changes and improvements in architectural practices.

The texts and interviews within this issue of *Oase* form a comprehensive causal relationship with Dutch history and the development of its architecture. They give insight into specific social and political situations that led to changes in practice and the forming of architectural practices that we know today. Some of the texts also question whether these modes of working are sustainable for the future and the effects that the types of architecture produced have on the society in general.

3. Matthijs Bouw and Joost Meuwissen, “Disneyland with Euthanasia. The Vicissitudes of the New Welfare State”, Mart Stam’s Trousers: Stories from behind the Scenes of Dutch Moral Modernism. Edited by Crimson with Michael Speaks and Gerard Hadders (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1999), 260-273.

The article talks about historical differences of Dutch architectural approaches in relation to the architectural discourses of specific moments in recent history. It states that the Dutch approach differed from others due to the way the country was developed and the subsequent difference in the mentality of its people. Rem Koolhaas is taken as a main reference point many Dutch architects and architecture that have come to be since he started OMA. He is referred to as “welfare for architects” due to the fact that everyone uses the projects as references but fails

to admit to it. The authors introduce empiricism as a primary drive for Dutch architecture and Rem Koolhaas as a contemporary practitioner of this “method”. Through explaining how this method continuously differed from the main architectural discourse (in Koolhaas’ case semiotics and meaning) it is explained how Dutch architecture has evolved in a different way. The authors also elaborate on how Koolhaas was not the first Dutch architect to employ this architectural approach. They introduce Wim Dudok as a similar type of practitioner. The text gives a more theoretical explanation of Dutch architectural approaches and the main characters that changed and shaped the Dutch architectural discourse. It talks about the relationship of the Welfare state ideals and how it affects architecture and practicing architects.

4. Wouter Vanstiphout. “Concensus Terrorism”. *Harvard Design Magazine*. 5/2015. <http://www.harvard-designmagazine.org/issues/2/consensusterrorism>

Vanstiphout writes in his article about the Dutch housing/city renewal of the 1970s. The text criticizes the approach of the projects due to the fact that they resulted in a system that was repeated infinitely throughout the Netherlands. The main critique that is presented in the text is that during the 1970s a great amount of importance was ascribed to form and experience of form which, in his opinion, led to a shift of architectural focus which was in the end problematic for the totality of architectural developments. In order to conform to visual form and experience, newly constructed neighbourhoods were created in the formal language as the existing, much older ones. This led to a practice that continues even today, where the 1930s house is considered to be the domestic ideal which is duplicated infinitely even though almost a hundred years have passed. Vanstiphout also refers to Koolhaas

and a group of other architects (he refers to them as Delft paranoid historians): Donald van Dansik, Jan de Graaf, Wim Nijenhuis and Ad Habets, as architects who questioned these approaches both theoretically and through practice. The group shares a viewpoint that architecture is not purely about mimicking the successful forms and that not only the form of the building is important. Vanstiphout refers here to the paranoid critical method adopted by Koolhaas in *Delirious New York* (originally “invented” by Salvador Dali) which the architects (predominantly Koolhaas) use as a projective method to undermine and change the existing architectural practice.

5. Demetrios Porphyrios. “Pandora’s Box: An Essay on Metropolitan Portraits”. *Architectural Design: AD Profiles 5 - OMA*. 5/77. London: *Architectural Design Magazine*, 1977

The text forms a critique on architectural representation techniques employed by Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis in the early projects of OMA, namely Exodus, Hotel Sphinx, The City of the Captive Globe and Welfare Palace Hotel. Even though the author doesn’t seem to agree with the graphic methods OMA is introducing into the architectural discourse of the time, the text still gives a very insightful explanation of used techniques and how they differ from the acknowledged methods of that time. A main critique given to OMA within the text regards their use of non-architectural, “secondary” information within the drawings. Since the main discourse of the late 1970s circled around semiotics and meaning in architecture, the employment of other elements within architectural representation was considered almost vulgar by this particular author. Given the fact that the common opinion of the postmodern period was that architecture (and its elements) should hold no memory, the employment of

objects that hold within them associations, in architectural projects was a big no-no. The author goes even so far as to compare them to the French Beaux Arts School. The text gives a good explanation of how the viewing and production of architecture changed and how the work of OMA has influenced that. Even though the analysis is in some cases harsh, it gives an insight to how radical these projects were at the time they were conceived. This also gives insight to the fact that Dutch architecture has maybe always, in some respect, been one step in front of the wider architectural discourse. Or one can conclude that they have just always had their own way of doing things, regardless the “common practice”.

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