How to construct the camel

A Dutch Museum for Architecture and Spatial Design

Zef Hemel
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A study commissioned by the Van Eesteren-Fluck & Van Lohuizen Foundation
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The foundation of a Dutch national museum of architecture and planning is at present being considered. This report is intended as a contribution to the debate about such an institution.

The van Eesteren-Fluck-van Lohuizen Foundation administers the voluminous archives of Cornelis van Eesteren, architect of the Amsterdam Extension Plan of 1934 and president of C.I.A.M. 1930–1947 and Theo van Lohuizen, who did the survey on which the Amsterdam plan was based. The new museum will be the obvious institution to store these precious archives and make them accessible to the public. This is the main reason why the EFL Foundation had commissioned Joseph Hemel, a social geographer, to report on the various options such a museum would have.

He was asked:
- to generate ideas about the function and form of such a museum
- to evaluate the concept of a ‘museum’ as public storage of the past, contemporary information centre and platform for discussion about the future
- to specify the various disciplines which might be involved in such a museum.

The EFL Foundation invited a number of nationally known experts from different disciplines to act as advisers to the author. Jean Dethier, curator for architecture at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, has also graciously accepted such an invitation.

As the report shows, the decision to create a museum of architecture and planning still leaves a number of questions unresolved. At least in three different but interrelated areas clear-cut choices will have to be made:
- for whom? Does the museum address itself to architects, planners and builders, to intellectuals or to the public at large?
- in which format? The report describes three different types of museum, each of which needs a different building
- how extensive? Architecture is part of a larger urban context, of town-planning which in turn is part of regional and even national planning. Planning involves the landscape, and – particularly important in a man-made country – the dikes, canals and reclamation projects. Should all these disciplines find room in this one museum?
The budget of the new institution will of necessity be limited. Outstanding museums everywhere owe their reputation to the clear-cut choices that have been made: the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam or the Centre Pompidou in Paris. This report is intended to facilitate such a clear-cut choice.

Niels L. Prak
chairman of the EFL Foundation
1. Fragment of the map in the 'Guide de l'Architecture des Années 25 à Bruxelles'. An interesting way to thematically open up the town for users of that town or for tourists.
A candid approach to the 11 ideal

'The first step in adequate planning is to make a fresh canvass of human ideals and human purposes.' The validity of this statement by Lewis Mumford, the famous American architectural critic, is not limited solely to the professional planning field. For, every purposeful action should be initiated by an open-minded statement of what inspires those directly concerned. This study should be seen as a first step in this direction: no more, but also no less. By this I mean that I have conceived the role of the investigator as someone who expresses his thoughts with an open mind, and the subject of his attention as the 'ideal', in this case the ideal of an architectural museum in the Netherlands. Thus my presentation of the question was: quite apart from the aspect of realization with all its practical problems and restrictions, how would we envisage the ideal architectural museum, within the context of Dutch physical planning? This assignment has led me through the labyrinth of architecture, town-planning, civil engineering, landscaping, and physical planning on a regional and national scale. The result of this personal quest may be read in the following pages.

A substantial bibliographic report on the subject 'architectural museum', compiled by Sylvia Hagers and Lucy Hovin ga, was made available to me at a very early stage of the inquiry. For this I would like to thank the compilers and their mentor, Mr. B. Koevoets of the 'Kunsthistorisch Instituut' in Leiden. I would also like to extend my thanks to the people who have given time and energy to this study. I will only mention a few by name here, including: those who were kind enough to receive me during my various trips, Jill Lever, Caroline Mierop, Hervé Paindaveine, Maurice Culot and Peter Schwartz; those I had the privilege of getting to know; Heinrich Klotz, who was just leaving for a long visit to the United States, and Aldo Rossi; those I corresponded with, Wim de Wit in Chicago. Furthermore those with whom I enjoyed such pleasant discussions, including S.H. Evenblij, Frank den Oudsten, Lenneke Büller, Caroline van Raamsdonk, Eric de Kuyper and Carla Oldenburger. Finally I am greatly indebted to the members of the commission who supported me in my studies: Mr. W.F. Schut, Prof. A.W. Reinink, Prof. Tj. Dijkstra, Mr. D.H. Frieling, Mr. R.R. de Haas, Prof. R. van Engelsdorp Gastelaars and Jean Dethier. More in particular I should like to thank Jean Dethier, who on two occasions gave me an extensive interview in Paris and contributed so much interesting material, and professor Van Engelsdorp Gastelaars with whom I had a most stimulating exchange of ideas.
Museums

It is quite remarkable how emotionally charged the word ‘museum’ has become. This was certainly not always the case. Until fairly recently the concept of the museum threatened to fade and to become absorbed in the maelstrom of the commonplace. The actual museum, as many people then contended, was to be found in the streets. Too little attention was paid to the specific tasks of the institution, such as preservation and exhibition. And all this at a time when the concept had been broadened to such an extent, that the difference between a department store and a museum, or between a living-room or a community centre and a museum was hardly noticeable any more.

The museum also directed itself towards the outside world, it penetrated the local communities and in order to appeal to a wider public and especially to a less élite one, it tried to establish direct contact with the daily doings of people in the neighbourhood. At a time when so many taboos were being broken, this was understandable. But simultaneously the fear increased that the museum would render itself superfluous.

However, a lot has happened since. An economic crisis cast its shadow over Europe, sobering up the ranks. Certainties about the affluent society suddenly appeared to have been built on quicksand. The end of the welfare state was predicted and the call for a general reorientation which was soon to be heard, produced not only a desire for a different economic order but also heralded a social and cultural revolution. In this process of reorientation the museum would appear to be able to play an important role. After all the museums in Europe are attracting more visitors than ever before. In France and in Germany new museums have even been built in order to meet the demand. Apparently the grimmer the crisis, the greater the surge to the museums.

Politicians should not ignore this phenomenon for it shows what essential needs the museums obviously satisfy. The best way to counteract a crisis is to underpin and to strengthen the position of the museums as institutions.

Architecture

The actual establishment of a museum for architecture in the Netherlands has never been closer than at this particular moment. This is certainly also due to architecture itself which more than in recent years has gained significance as an art form, or at least as a spiritual exercise of special value and as one with a pro-
nounced aesthetic component. The fact that building satisfies not only very simple demands such as a roof over one’s head, a road to ride on, or a centre where one can work or shop, but also the essential desire for identification with the surroundings, leads to an idea that is becoming more and more universally accepted. Architecture may not be the determining factor for the happiness of man, it is at least once more considered as an existential need that deserves satisfaction.

This subject – that is to say, the existential significance of architecture – was the topic of a lecture by the Dutch architect and town-planner Van Eesteren at a congress in 1958 of the International Union of Architects, the U.I.A. In this lecture he referred to his own life.

Born on the banks of the river Rhine, in Kinderdijk near Rotterdam, Van Eesteren was always very much aware of a personal relationship between himself and the river: ‘so I can really say that I have wanted to experience the Rhine (...) and have therefore explored the river in its totality, with its towns, its villages, its landscapes, up to its source in Switzerland.’

As a modern human being he felt the need for a real, vital contact with his environment. Aesthetic dogmas, according to him, did not offer any solution here; and yet there remained a desire for ‘beauty and purity’. How did he meet this need? The solution seemed to Van Eesteren a conscious and active attitude towards his environment. By this he meant a continuous concern with the shape, the proportions, the scale, the atmosphere, the colours, and the forces emanating from the environment. In this he did not limit himself to a selection of individual buildings which were more or less worth inclusion. In fact he spoke of a boundless space – with no sharp economic, cultural, political or social demarcation lines.

True, his special concern was with the Rhine, but this did not mean that his interest stopped at Lobith, where the river reached the border in its course from Germany. Neither did he see the river as an age-old line of separation between two cultures, a northern and a southern. A true contact with the environment meant a personal bond, rational as well as emotional, with all the things that surrounded him: buildings, streets, bridges, dikes, trees, even water, and of course the spaces in between. His conception in this respect matches the answer Frank Lloyd Wrigth once gave to the question as to what he thought architecture was really all about. Wrigth’s answer was: ‘It is man occupying the earth’.

This is exactly what the architectural museum, the subject of this inquiry, should be all about: man labouring and inhabiting the earth, and the way he passes from exploitation to occupation of the land, from overuse leading to exhaustion to a life in harmony with his environment by beautifying it, adding only beauty.

Van Eesteren emphasized the importance of an active attitude. This is not surprising as he is an architect and, as he remarked himself, an architect should take action, even when he feels reason for hesitation.

A more passive point of view as to the relationship with man’s environment, came from Van Lohuizen, the scholar. He argued
that man is in a certain sense a product of his environment. Although there is a danger here of what geographers would later call Environmental Determinism, Van Lohuizen nevertheless pointed out an important fact. We do not live in a homogeneous isotropic space that leaves us indifferent. Every instant we receive impressions of our environment. These are valuable as a means of orientation but also stimulate the process of identification. Right from the start, with our first more or less conscious observations we make ourselves familiar with our environment. The road from home to school as everyone remembers it from his or her childhood, is not only the route from point A to B but also, even more so, a certain space filled with images and events, with colours and shapes. Our mind registers what we smell and feel, hear and see; our emotions see to it that this is consciously or unconsciously experienced and psychologically accepted. In this way the personality is to a great extent nourished and enriched by the environment, which definitely does not mean, however, that we are helpless victims of our surroundings. On the contrary, it is man who shapes his environment and thus it is only he who bears full responsibility. This is certainly the case in the Netherlands where, more than anywhere else in the world, the environment is given shape through human intervention.

What Van Lohuizen wanted to explain is that the desires and demands of people, their plans and their actions, are either to some extent stimulated by, or are reactions to the environment. The stronger a personality, the more conscious his reaction to the environment will be. And, as Van Lohuizen remarked, the more universal the characteristics of the landscape, the more unconsciously they will be accepted. The influence of these characteristics is interwoven with psychological life as a whole; they work through atmosphere, colour, scale and proportion. Van Lohuizen denounced a narrow-minded functionalism, he recognized the important psychological influence of the landscape and had an open eye for the qualities that make man identify himself with it. In a study on the countryside around Rotterdam, carried out in 1927, he testified to his love for the 'polder'-landscape which he shared with Van Eesteren.

It is a study full of keen observations and exhaustive registration of landscape characteristics. In it there is no wish for immediate action, nor is there any question of a form of conservatism. The objective of Van Lohuizen's study was to acquire a description of the basic component parts of the landscape, in the hope of revealing their important psychological contribution to the functioning of those who live in it.

This rational approach seems to be in contrast with Van Eesteren's more instinctive approach. Yet it is just another way to reach the same goal: a living contact with the environment. It is a passive approach in the sense that it sees man as a 'product' of his environment (while Van Eesteren stressed the active side of shaping and exploring); nevertheless it is active in the sense that it invites observation and incites consciousness of the significance and the beauty of town and country.

The desire for architecture is nothing but a yearning for this living contact with the environment. In my opinion these two com-
plementary versions of the subject make it clear, what a museum
dedicated to architecture should be about.
In the first place I wanted to indicate that there is need of a con-
cept of architecture in the widest possible sense. In spite of the
fact that architecture in the narrow sense of the word may include
an improbable amount of building types, it is important that the
subject of the museum should not be limited to them. Neither
should the museum be about the things architects do or make.
Although this would bring furniture, doorhandles, lighting, in-
deed, even teaspoons, gardens and maybe also wallpaper de-
signs, within the scope of the museum, the emphasis still lies in
another sphere. The museum certainly should not try to give a
biased presentation of a particular professional group, nor should
it restrict itself to the sole stimulation of that particular profes-
sional group. The architectural museum is essentially a museum
about an art form which, set as an ideal, each of us would wish to
master, namely to give meaning, form and content to the en-
vironment in which we live.
There can even be said to be a general longing for architecture,
in spite of the assertion that no interest in architecture exists
among a wider public. If it concerns knowledge of building
styles, constructions, dates and names of architects, they might
be right. By no means everybody is interested in such knowledge,
let alone that there is a general longing for it. Nevertheless people
have something in them which makes them scour their surround-
ings and stimulates them to travel. It is not only a matter of
reaching the set goal as fast as possible, but also, and this is all too
often forgotten, the trip itself is part of their sphere of interest. To
see how in winter the ice piles up against the dike of the IJss-
elsemeer, to be in the woods of the Veluwe during the summer, to
take an evening walk along the beach at Scheveningen, these are
all activities which strengthen the contact with the environment –
an environment that is more or less artificial. For who would not
appreciate a visit to an unknown city? And who would not sub-
scribe to the conservation of nature, even when it results in ‘no-
admission’ signs? Does not every one of us feel a need for contact
with animals and plants in their natural surroundings? – sur-
roundings, for that matter, that we resolutely try to maintain in
this small country (so much for being called ‘artificial’!). Even an
abstract longing for untilled land, for an open and unspoiled ho-
rizon, moves many people to action. We all need it and by inves-
tigating our surroundings, we find the places where our diver-
genent wishes are fulfilled. In other words, our environment is not
purely decorative, not just a background for our activities. No, it
forms a much more essential part of our life. The environment is,
in the words of the Norwegian architectural historian Norberg-
Schulz, existential space.4
So far the point of my argument has been to explain that in the
framework of an architectural museum, the concept architecture
should be taken in the widest possible sense of the word: it con-
cerns all aspects of the environment.
Furthermore, that in such an institution the main objective is to
strengthen the contact between man on the one hand and on the
other this spacial entity that he wants to know and to experience.
There is a third aspect. The introductory viewpoints served as an explanation of the fact that strengthening of the contact between man and his environment may be achieved in two ways: through observation and creation, through a passive and an active attitude. In both cases the aim is to reach a similar goal, namely to enjoy, or rather, to experience beauty. Through observation knowledge will increase and everybody knows that better understanding often leads to a better sense of beauty. But the observation need not be strictly analytical and intellectual: we experience the environment with all our senses. It is only in this way that we actually have the feeling of really being 'somewhere'.

Through the act of creation, intuition is used in a totally different manner: if it is well done, new beauty can then be added. In effect it is no different to a good football match: from the stands and in the field what ultimately matters is the same, namely the experiencing of an exciting match. This distinction between observation and creation as two ways in which contact is made between man and his environment, can also be found in the museum where either reflection or involvement determines the atmosphere.

There remains a fourth aspect. The creative process in physical planning is an unremitting process. New needs demand new constructions. There will never be the ultimate building. Towns continuously change their appearance and the same goes for virtually any landscape. Everyone who knows the prints of Jörg Müller, knows what this change means: it is difficult in a continually changing environment to keep in touch with this environment. In actual fact there is a 'do-world', formed by sensible, practical people who are always looking for new projects. It is the world of contractors, real-estate developers, investors, planners, engineers and managers. On the other hand there are those along the sidelines, commenting on the work of the 'do-ers'. These are the journalists, the scholars and the artists. Between those two worlds, that of the do-ers and the thinkers (because they limit themselves to thinking), there is little contact. The question is why. Discussion is generally limited to the thinkers' circle - it is they who often even overrate the significance of the debate. The doers prefer to keep themselves aloof, they see the debate as a waste of time. The result of their efforts is a consumable, achieved according to the laws of supply and demand. Discussion does not encourage productivity, and the experiment entails too many risks. In their opinion it is dangerous to bring something new and unusual on the market and it can only be justified, when market research has established that there is a demand for it. There is little appreciation for aesthetic elaborations. Doers usually speak of 'building', not of 'architecture'. Indeed why should they?

Norberg-Schulz had a clear answer to this when he explained the concept of 'genius loci'. Architecture, he said, means visualizing the genius loci. It is the task of the architect to create meaningful places. It is senseless in fact, to imagine an event without implicating the place of action. The 'place' is an integral part of our
existence. Thus every building activity should lead to an awareness of the existential meaning of places.

'The aim of architecture is to move us', Le Corbusier wrote. If the act of building does not move and excite us, it cannot be called architecture and consequently something basic is lacking in our existence.

All too often – and especially in the period after the Second World War – the architect was seen as a doer, not as the artist belonging to the world of thinkers. The architect was the creator of functional, that is, meaningless space. He did not seem to be able to add character to an area; in his functional approach he lacked any capacity to shape a site into a place with an individual identity. One still often hears that no matter where a particular building is realized, whether it be Moscow, Venice or San Francisco: no-one will notice the difference.

However, now that architects are no longer considered as pure technicians but are again establishing a name as artists, there is a change for the better. Imagination and creativity are gaining ground and as Heinrich Klotz, director of the architectural museum in Frankfurt am Main, rightly put it, this will lead to architects after all being considered as enlightened spirits again. It associates them with a different world and a totally different way of life. Architects once more feel attracted to the world of reflective thought and comment.

All this goes rather beyond the subject of this study; as regards the architectural museum it does not in the first place concern the professional performance of the architects. As was mentioned before, the museum is involved with art, not with the profession. Much more essential for the functioning of the museum is the contact that it can establish between doers and thinkers. And establish in such a way that the adventurous will reap the benefits that are the result of observations and experiments by the cautious. Of course there is question of a dialogue here: there must be some exchange between the two sketched worlds: what would the thinkers have to communicate if they knew nothing about the efforts and deliberations of the doers?

A conclusion of great importance for the museum may be found in the remark that two forms of contact have to be maintained by the museum. The one form is the relationship between man and his environment – in itself a noncommittal pronouncement that will have to be elaborated upon in the following chapters. The other is the interrelationship between people, or rather between those who keep drastically changing the environment and those who in whatever way pass comments. This last statement also seems noncommittal at first sight, but is far from it: all too often comment keeps going around in the circles of the thinkers themselves and does not reach those who should really profit from it, namely the doers. To establish communication will be quite a tall order for the architectural museum.
18 Public use

Doers, thinkers, users

In the last paragraph we had actually already distinguished three potential groups of clients. The first are the general public users who form the target group: the contact with the environment sought by this group, should find a broader base in the museum. The second is the doers’ group.

The third that of the thinkers.

The two last mentioned groups are formed by people who are professionally involved with the process of building and design. Although the doers live with a perpetual lack of time and do not really belong to the traditional clientele of museums, there must nevertheless be some interest in an architectural museum among their ranks. They will not take much interest in theoretical speculation. Nor will they wish to digest much text-matter – such time-consuming affairs are not in their own interest. Doers are very much oriented towards the future, but avoid experiments. It is precisely in the sphere of exploration of the future that the museum must make an appeal. The thinkers, as was said before, enjoy debating. They will feel committed to the museum when it functions as a ‘platform’ for discussion. Because this group in particular considers a critical attitude as the supreme good, every hint of popularization is anathema. The problem is that they are split up into very different, often conflicting groups. It is therefore difficult for a museum to please the group as a whole. Even academics from different disciplines lack a common denominator. Just think of the relationship between artists and scientists! Nevertheless, in spite of the heterogeneous composition of the participants, the debate may at least function as a means of giving the various sections an opportunity to take a stand. We should mention here once more that the task of the museum goes further than just gathering thinkers together. It is precisely the contacts between them and the doers which are of the utmost importance for a meaningful functioning of an architectural museum.

Indeed, the remaining group is of a very vague and unsegmented composition: the general group of public users. There is little point in philosophizing about their presence in the architectural museum. Distinguishing this group only makes sense when we fathom its needs.

In the event that the architectural museum would for instance be perceived as an art museum – which is quite conceivable –, then an appreciable restriction may be imposed resulting from the
conclusions which Bourdieu and Darbel drew from empirical research: for they have ascertained that that the number of visitors to art museums in Europe is mainly limited to graduates from secondary schools, that is to say in the age group from 17 to 30. Interest in the museum however, is not simply learned at school, according to the French researchers, but is closely related to the individual cultural background. If the parents are not accustomed to regular visits to an art museum, the chances are their children will also take little notice of the museum. Does this also apply to an architectural museum? It goes without saying that this will depend on the museum’s conception and presentation of architecture: if it wants to measure up to the art museums the general group of public users will diminish into a subsection of the art museum’s traditional group of visitors designated by Bourdieu and Darbel. And it will be a subsection, because for many art lovers the gap between painting and architecture is still so great.

On the other hand it is an encouraging idea that in the case of the architectural museum, the general group of public users may also be approached in an entirely different way, namely as ‘users’ of architecture. Probably far fewer people feel the need for painting and sculpture than for architecture. After all the built environment is in daily evidence and everybody makes continuous use of it. Is it not a natural conclusion that the subject of such a museum will appeal to more people? It is true that the architectural museum lacks traditional clients such as are known to the opera, the symphony orchestra and the art museum. This is an advantage and at the same time a disadvantage. The idea that the museum can assemble its own public is irresistible. On the other hand this realization puts a heavy pressure on the activities of the museum and gives rise to the question as to what the users really expect of the museum. A manual with instructions for use?

No, definitely not. They are more concerned with a certain identification with the environment which the museum should be able to bring about. Simple everyday use should be enriched with new meanings. This sounds fairly vague but can easily be illustrated: just by reproducing a part of the familiar environment on a smaller scale within the walls of the museum, people will start looking at reality in a new way. If the presentation should relate to a situation from the past or more particularly to a possible future condition, this will only be enhanced. If this evokes the right atmosphere — that is to say the atmosphere that fits the time and place to which the exhibit refers —, then the inclusion will open up entirely new spheres of observation and significance.

Without any doubt the very young will form the most susceptible group. Within the general group of public users they moreover constitute the most important group. If architecture is ever to become popular, then it must be incorporated in the children’s perception of the environment. It will often suffice to miniaturize reality in order to appeal to them. However, the presentation of architecture may take place in a much more sophisticated manner: by making use of light effects, colours, all kinds of materials, and especially by bringing three-dimensional space into the
exhibition, the necessary attention is attracted to establish contact between children and their surroundings. Up to the present years architectural exhibitions paid very little attention to a youthful public. In spite of the fact that their environment in particular is so well suited to illustrating all kinds of things in the context of a museum.

Tourism

Another receptive group is that of the tourists. Introduction to a new region is possible with the help of guides, organized excursions or simply by taking pot luck. But a museum which tries to portray a country or a region, does not yet exist. In that respect the tourists are let down by the museums. Why the introduction to local culture should be limited to a glimpse of the Nightwatch in the ‘Rijksmuseum’ whilst the experience of the tourists is far broader, is a mystery. Would you believe that a folder of the same Rijksmuseum opens with an explanation about the museum building: ‘We can be brief about the much heard question as to whether the Rijksmuseum was formerly a convent, a church or a railway station. The Rijksmuseum was built as a museum in 1885 by architect Cuypers and has never been used for any other purpose.’ The compilers of the ‘Guide Rouge’ of Michelin are very positive about this in the volume on the Benelux. Every tourist who wants to go well prepared on his trip to the Low Countries considers this guide an essential part of his luggage. What does he read? ‘Art in the Netherlands’.

The Netherlands have played an important role in the field of the arts within West European culture. Sculpture and music have indeed been of limited importance. But the architecture (sic!), definitely remarkable in some periods, and especially the brilliant painting tradition, make Holland into a place of pilgrimage and an inspiring country which can match France, Italy and Belgium."7

Hereafter follows an elaborate discourse on painting - Hals, Rembrandt, Ruysdael, Vermeer and Van Gogh are treated with the necessary deference. Then comes: ‘Architecture’.

The Netherlands possess remarkable gothic buildings (etc.). However, the guide rejoices: ‘it is especially since the end of the 19th century that Dutch architecture enjoys an exceptional reputation’.

The author then gives a list of names of architects who deserve the attention of the respected reader: Cuypers, Berlage, De Klerk, Dudok, Oud and De Bazel. The ‘Koopmansbeurs’ of Berlage is not explicitly mentioned, as might have been expected, whereas no. 32 Vijzelgracht, headquarters of the ‘Algemene Bank Nederland’, designed by De Bazel, is.8 It may appear rather strange that tourists who read this are not referred to a museum where they can become acquainted with this art form which apparently enjoys ‘an exceptional international reputation’. There is a Rijksmuseum and a Van Gogh mu-
There is yet another fact worth mentioning. In the same ‘Guide Rouge’ detailed attention is given to the ‘conquest’ of land from the sea. This cliché, which some of us consider rather over-worked, makes the reader face the fact that architecture is apparently still restricted to a collection of individual buildings, even: ‘cute little houses’. Whereas in the Netherlands it concerns a structure of very different dimensions, namely a land reclaimed from the sea which has for centuries been put to well-planned use.

Unfortunately the creation of the polders is always presented as a masterly example of technical ingenuity – a project of digging-in, draining and colonizing: ‘The number of roads and bridges increases, the villages and towns are provided with electricity, telephone, parks and recreational areas. Woods are planted, orchards and cattle animate the countryside; the meadows, the fields with flowers, potatoes and beets, the vegetable gardens and the greenhouses, all relieve the monotony of the infinite plain’. The guide furthermore points to facilities in and around the new lakes which are being constructed for the benefit of water sports, such as artificial beaches and marinas. ‘C’est un pays neuf’, is its conclusion.

However, what is really supposed to impress the reader are the records which have been broken in volume, quantity and capital. Not a word about the qualitative aspects of land reclamation. Art, technology and economics are obviously still very far apart.

Numbers and structure

There is some experience as to visitors. The architectural museum in Frankfurt am Main for example, which opened its doors in July 1984, counted an average of 500 to 600 visitors per day. Measured against the limited space of the museum (it is housed in a 19th century villa which has been enlarged and renovated by the German architect Unger), this is quite a large amount.

A number, moreover, that had not been anticipated and which after three years, forces the museum to look for extra floor space. About half of the visitors to the German architectural museum consists of people with a professional interest, mainly architects. The other half is of a variable composition. The remarkable thing about this is the apparent preference for visits in groups. Not only students feel this, but also politicians, managers and staff members of housing associations, those receiving complementary education, etc.

One might ask why this is so. Bourdieu and Darbel have pointed to the fact that especially people from lower social strata, who are not in the habit of visiting a museum, show a pronounced preference for museum excursions in groups. Unfamiliar with the phenomenon ‘architectural museum’ many people may feel the
same and this is the reason why fewer people enter the museum by themselves. Another remarkable observation concerns the frequency with which visitors in Frankfurt come to the museum. Since 1984 an entirely new generation of lovers of architecture seems to have appeared who regularly go to the museum. Bearing in mind the absence of a traditional public faithfully attending every architectural manifestation, this fact certainly deserves mention.

The problem with the evaluation of numbers and structure of the public in the architectural museums is that all data have necessarily been based on temporary exhibitions. There is no fixed museum arrangement for architecture. Particularly at temporary exhibitions it is very important to know who was responsible for the lay-out, where and when the exhibition took place, and what it was about. There is a world of difference between say, an architectural exhibition on the fifth floor of the Centre Pompidou in Paris and a presentation of an architectural museum in Helsinki. This may lead to diverse, indeed to contrasting conclusions.

Nevertheless we may assume that the architectural exhibitions in the last ten years have developed into interesting events attracting large numbers of sightseers all over Europe. Museology, at first rather feeble, slowly grew mature, and from simple picture-exhibits complex presentations were developed which can brilliantly measure up to any other museum presentation.

This means that the presentation of architectural exhibitions has become a matter of professional attention, with all its consequences for museum-organization in the sphere of management, financing and publicity.

**More than a local institution**

It is tempting to concentrate on the crowd-drawing presentations in the architectural museum. However, in the architectural museum a larger ‘clientele’ is concerned than just the actual visitors to exhibitions. Just think of the study packets for schools, the video tape lending department and other such services which see to it that education pays attention to architecture.

Furthermore the museum has a vague assignment to strengthen the contact between doers and thinkers. The fact that this need not take place within the museum building is the only thing that is quite clear in this matter – for doers the museum system is actually a marginal matter, which does not really fit into a work scheme of sixteen hours per day mainly filled with reading memos, attending meetings and making decisions. Nevertheless the museum can break out and try to reach the doers in their office towers. By offering a product which links up with their interests the museum can obtain a much broader significance than would be possible if it confined itself to the preservation and presentation of material. Thinkers, although they too often ensconce themselves in their ivory tower or shut themselves up in their studios, need a challenge to come out with creative ideas which

are subsequently interpreted by the museum and sold to the public. With one foot in the world of thinkers and the other in that of doers the museum can have a bridging function between the two.

In the aforesaid tourists have been mentioned as an important target group for the museum. In so far as the impression had been created that this only concerned foreign visitors, it must be said that the meaning should be more widely interpreted: everyone looking for recreation when travelling through a town, region or country, should be included in the public group in question. The recreational character is the criterion.

In what sense does the architectural museum offer an interesting 'product' to this group? In this case a visit to the museum is not a first requirement either. Tourists can often manage quite well with a map of the region as long as it provides the right kind of information. The fact that such maps are as yet totally lacking should be a matter of concern for the museum. The small journals issued by the Archives d'Architecture Moderne in Brussels about Art Nouveau and about the architecture of the twenties in the Belgian capital form a good example: a map, some biographical data and other useful background information are suffi-
cient to get a completely new perspective of the town. Now that large cities due to increasing insecurity and inconvenience are losing more and more of their recreational attraction, such initiatives may produce a change for the better. If the pockets of the towns are this way turned inside out and the public discovers what treasures they contain, the appreciation for urban quality may be favourably influenced. And not only the larger towns but also the landscape is suitable for such a new introduction. A key map of the valley of the Hunze, on the border between Groningen and Drenthe, may serve here as a modest example of what is conceivable. Eleven map sections show the structure of the landscape, providing the cyclist with an impression of the visual quality of this landscape and simultaneously with some information about the geology, historic occupation-patterns and recent artificial intervention in the region.

A more or less analogous approach characterizes the activities of the foundation ‘Archivisie’. This Amsterdam foundation organizes guided tours focusing attention on the built environment. Starting point is the idea that we can value architecture only by experiencing it in reality. A visit to the inside of the building, and at the same time attention to the environment in which it is incorporated, puts new life into concepts such as scale, proportion, colour and distance. This too is an activity which shows the limitations of the architectural museum as an on the spot activity.

3. miniature of Nicolas van Blarenberghne, once the property of the count of Choiseul, Minister of War under Louis XV. Circa 1770. The scale-model collection of Louis XIV in the Tuileries, now to be admired in an educational and original setting at the Galerie des Plan-Relief, Musée de l’Armée, Paris.
Finally there is the hunger for information. Too many questions are conceivable about the environment to think that a museum could have all the answers. The subjects vary from tunnel construction to ecologic control, from architectural visions to straightforward planning problems, from pavings to subjects relating to water management. We might ask again: why stick to the idea of a museum building somewhere in the Netherlands with limited opening hours and a modest staff? What is needed here is professional service, it is the supply of information in particular that is of the utmost importance if the interest for architecture and physical planning is really to amount to anything. A carefully maintained network of suppliers of information is the most precious possession of the museum and we should certainly never treat this lightly.

Of course the museum also goes beyond the limitations of its location by issuing a magazine or circular with which it involves people in its activities, without immediately committing them to a visit. In order to be able to follow the debate and to be kept informed about coming events, a well organized programme is a must. The Institut Français d’Architecture in Paris may serve as an example, its architectural programme with a wide monthly circulation is a handy guidebook for those who seriously wish to be introduced to the turbulent world of architecture.

It will be obvious that the circle of people around an architectural museum is not restricted to those who actually visit the museum. The circle is much wider; how wide depends on the initiatives of the museum itself. The fact that there is a lot of demand for information about architecture, and also a need for inspiring activities in this field, will surprise no-one; people look for contact with their environment in various ways. Up to the present however, we have been very ill-provided in this respect. The way in which the museum will manage to meet these demands and desires will determine its success.
Historic examples

The impression could be created that the architectural museum is a new phenomenon. Nothing could be less true. Admittedly, up to the present day the architectural museum has not managed to secure a place for itself which enable it to measure up to other kinds of museums, such as art museums or natural history museums. Yet for centuries collections of casts, architectural drawings and models have filled the museums of Europe. A beautiful example is the congealed presentation in the Musée des Monuments Français in the Palais Chaillot in Paris, where the original collection of casts of the 19th century French architect Viollet-Le-Duc is accommodated. In the Musée de l’Armée the scale models of cities and fortifications from the private collection of king Louis XIV also form a remarkable example, even though these were really intended for military strategic studies.

In the eighteenth century, when such collections were started, people had to go out of their way to study architecture. Reproductions of buildings such as are known to us, were hard to come by. People had to travel, which was a far less comfortable affair than it is today; the traveller had to take the rough with the smooth. But his hardships were ultimately rewarded: confronted with the actual creations, insight into the European building tradition could be gained. Casts were brought home by the architects and were eventually given a place in the museums.

In the 19th century and more particularly in our own time, the revolution in mass-transportation, in combination with the new techniques of reproduction, has replaced these old centralized museums with a tight network of monuments. Monuments of which the preservation is guaranteed (or so we hope) are now open to the public and give an idea of the local architectural culture.⁹

Reasoning in this vein the ‘Rijksdienst voor de Monumentenzorg’ (Department for the Preservation of Monuments and Historic Buildings) could be regarded as the most refined museum institution in the field of architecture, a decentralized architectural museum moreover, which is maintained with the help of private initiative and which is involved in a continuous discussion on the quality of the built environment.

Apparently the only thing that is lacking in this supposed museum are the public functions (a recently established foundation ‘Open Monumentendag’ the aim of which is to open to the public as many monuments as possible for one day per year, is now trying to provide for this).
Besides the development which proclaims existing parts of towns as museum areas, more and more initiatives have been developed with the objective of finding a different way of bringing the cultural value of architecture into the limelight. The tangible museum for architecture may for decades have attracted enough attention to make many people envious, but up till the present this has not yet led to its actual erection. Most Dutch initiatives consider the architect and publicist Leliman as their great predecessor. In 1912, he had published an article in which he showed himself a warm supporter of the idea of founding a real architectural museum in the Netherlands. Meanwhile De Jong and Baalman were able to explain into which historic context this plea would really fit: the difficult situation of the ‘Maatschappij tot Bevordering der Bouwkunst’ (Society for the advancement of Architecture) played an important role in this. All this was at a time when the very same Society at its premises on the Marnixstraat in Amsterdam had, particularly since 1880, developed a combination of activities which according to De Jong and Baalman, ‘form a good cross-section of what today, a hundred years later, we intend to undertake in the new architectural institute’.10

What Leliman had in view was really nothing unusual as to content: a collection should be started of drawings and models of mainly contemporary architecture. He had established that neither in the existing museums nor within his own professional group was there much interest for such an initiative. For this reason he proposed to call a special institute into being. As he was well aware of the fact that the intended collection should not count on a large and eager public, he emphasized the element of study. By subjecting the collected works to research, the true creativity of architects would be substantiated by facts. And a better understanding of the creative process of a building would gradually make people receptive to the idea that architects are also artists. Even though Leliman knew that an architectural museum would not be a popular undertaking, he was of the opinion that a tangible museum would bear richer rewards than the temporary architectural exhibitions which were already often organized at that time. Moreover, and he was very well aware of the fact, the need for a collective aim existed within the professional group. Leliman saw in an architectural museum a potential force which could bring unity within this discipline.

The way things usually go in Holland, commissions studying the ideas of Leliman followed each other in rapid succession. Without results however.11

Yet, in 1955 this finally led to the establishment of the ‘Stichting Architectuur Museum’ (Foundation Architectural Museum) (SAM) which had as its objective the gathering of documents on architecture. In spite of the relatively late start the enterprise appeared to be very successful. But again things did not go smoothly. Financial problems forced the foundation to turn to the government. In the beginning of the Seventies the latter offered to set up the Dutch Documentation Centre for Architecture, to be assigned to the Government Department for the Preservation of Monuments and Historic Buildings. This Documentation Centre was to be responsible for the activities which would guar-
rantec the accessibility of the collections which had in the meantime been assembled. The Foundation Architectural Museum would henceforth concentrate on fundraising with the aim of continuing the policy of collecting and making a start on a series of exhibitions. The culmination of the division of tasks between the government and SAM consisted without any doubt of the four exhibitions dedicated to architecture, which were held in 1975 in various museums, including the Documentation Centre.

From the ‘Stichting Goed Wonen’, established in Amsterdam, a new foundation was formed in the early seventies, called ‘Stichting Wonen’. This foundation undertook to rouse a general interest in architecture and town planning, in particular in the circumstances under which the environment could be organized in a more democratic way. With the aim of stimulating people in their ideas about the environment, it planned many feasible outlines for educational programmes. The foundation soon came to be known as an experimental centre of innovative activities which were in harmony with the spirit of the times of the post-'68 period.

Not so long ago an ‘Architecture’ section was established within the ‘Rotterdame Kunst Stichting’. This section showed great energy in the organization of frequently much-discussed events in the field of architecture. It started out with an invitation to a group of internationally famous critics to express their opinion on the quality of the post-war architecture in Rotterdam. The great success of this manifestation stimulated the section to continue along the lines of organizing provocative events. Notably in the framework of Architecture International Rotterdam (AIR) activities were developed which showed that public debate and large-scale manifestation could immensely stimulate architecture as a whole.

Contemporary examples

The establishment of an architectural museum in Frankfurt am Main in 1984 heralded a new era. It was contended that this would be the first new-style architectural museum, not to be compared to the existing institutes which called themselves museums. These were rather to be defined as archives or libraries than as museums. The Deutsches Architektur Museum appeared to be clearing the path for new ‘real’ museums in the field of architecture. Its motto: temporary exhibitions in spectacular settings. The idea behind it was partly practical: to start yet again on a collection in 1979, the year in which preparations for the realization of the museum were started, was almost impossible or at least too costly. By emphasizing post-war architecture and showing this to the public in short-term exhibitions, it would be possible to borrow the work of contemporary architects for the duration of such exhibitions.

However, the chosen formula was also based on matters of principle: the current situation within architecture demanded atten-
tion and, according to the director Heinrich Klotz, the best way to bring improvement into this situation was to conceive the museum as a meeting place and platform for professional discussion. Some people see the museum in Frankfurt as a fascinating gallery. In a sense we have to concede this point. But on the other hand the museum misses the experimental qualities of the gallery by emphasizing international heroic architecture. The chosen set-up reminds us in many ways of the manner in which museums of modern art are at present manifesting themselves, that is to say, that the emphasis is on the display of 20th century objects with a special preference for avant-garde-movements which appeal to the imagination; otherwise there is a partiality for 'pieces' of high quality, connected with famous names; contacts with the outside world bear witness to strong international orientation; the attitude of commitment is very striking. The fixation in Frankfurt on temporary sensational exhibitions, some of which give surveys of the latest trends, intensify this impression even more.

The situation in England sharply contrasts with that in Germany. In London no trace is to be found of any museum presentation of architecture. With the exception of the Heinz-Gallery in Portman Square there is no building where people could get the impression of being in a museum for architecture. Even the Heinz-Gallery is nothing but a dark room of modest dimensions with a high ceiling, situated on the ground floor of the building where the RIBA Drawings Collection is also housed. Of course there is the drawings collection which demands respect in every sense. But this is not to be embedded in any museum conception. Here there is the remarkable atmosphere of a famous archival institution where one can experience the great love of collecting. This does not mean however, that the British situation as a whole is inferior to any other. Exhibitions such as those in the Royal Academy on the work of the architects Foster, Rogers and Stirling are still inconceivable in the Netherlands. Furthermore there are nowadays several private galleries in London where architecture is presented. The Heinz-Gallery may have been an innovation, in the meantime more such institutions have come into being.

Whereas the German architectural museum is, in spite of its name, a local initiative which has for the greater part been paid from urban funds, the Drawings Collection is part of the British association of architects, the Royal Institute of British Architects. This partly explains the differences in approach. Moreover, when one realizes the differences in age of the two institutions, the nervous experimenting in the one and the 'good old' tradition in the other institute are also understandable.

In Brussels the situation is completely different again. Here no less than three institutions have found accommodation, all privately established, with different functions and separate staff, but at the same time working in close cooperation. Since 1969 the Archives d'Architecture Moderne, shortly AAM, have been established in the Belgian capital or more precisely in
the Rue Defacqz. This foundation applies itself to the issue of an architectural journal and particularly to collecting documents, drawings and books on modern architecture ('modern' meaning late 19th and 20th century). Several hundreds of thousands of documents have already been collected. Problems of conservation, classification and restoration of documents, but also of frequent consultation, led to the foundation of the Musée des Archives d'Architecture Moderne in 1983. Furthermore, a Fondation pour l'Architecture was founded three years later and served as a complement to the Archives and the Museum. The Foundation, established within a stone's throw of the Museum, has as its objective the realization of a confrontation of ideas, to revive the architectural debate and to bring this within the circle of a broader public. Particularly large exhibitions will be needed to realize these objectives.

The example of the Brussels situation shows that the careful interweaving of the many functions of an architectural museum, even when it is dispersed over different buildings all over town, may lead to successful growth towards a mature state.

Independence, an open mind to new ideas, the knowledge that preservation of documents should be linked with presentations of the material, with publications and research, and that this will eventually also lead to new donations, make the institutions serious candidates for financial subsidies and sponsoring. Perhaps it does not seem as spectacular as what is going on in Frankfurt; yet it is a remarkably ambitious undertaking.

Closely connected with the Brussels institutions, not least due to the presence within the organizations of Maurice Culot, is the Institut Français d'Architecture, or IFA in Paris. Since its establishment in 1981, the French government has entrusted this institute with the promotion of architecture within the home country. It is not the collecting activities which come first in this case - these have already been taken care of; the institute functions mainly as a meeting place and for the exchange of ideas. Its facilities consist in rough outline of an exhibition space, a library and an information bulletin. The IFA is especially oriented in its efforts towards stimulation of other organizations in their work and coordination of all activities in the field of architecture. The IFA does not pretend to be the national architectural museum.

The same goes, moreover, for the Architecture department of the Centre Pompidou, a department which is accommodated at the Centre de Creation Industrielle. The large architectural exhibitions which are regularly organized by this department do not yet make it into a museum; there are no collections, there is no permanent presentation, it does not function as a meeting place. Nevertheless the architectural exhibitions, which are organized by the CCI, are very successful, they mobilize on average 200,000 people every time (Le temps des Gares, Images et Imaginaires d'Architecture, Plaisir d'Architecture); Vienne fin de siècle, in which a lot of space was devoted to architecture, even drew on average 6000 visitors daily! And it is especially the younger generation, originating from the middle classes, for whom these events have such an appeal. Thus the exhibitions
offer a substantial contribution to the generalization of interest in architecture among a wide public, which makes them more than noteworthy.

It is tempting to dwell here on the professional method of the CCI. The organization of architectural exhibitions is not an amateurish activity, it demands special talents. Proof of this is provided in Paris. We are acutely confronted with the question as to how successful, really popular architectural exhibitions are achieved. What is the right concept? What should be displayed and what should not? And even more important, how should the selected material be exhibited? Many questions are imposed on us; they lead back to complicated, almost philosophical problems, all related to the statement that architecture is to be found outside in the streets. Within this frame of thought it is important to be aware of the field of tension between the opinion that the exhibition should in the first place convey a message, and the one based on the proposition that the exhibition is a world in itself.

Of course the danger that architectural exhibitions should become independent phenomena which lose contact with the practice of building and designing is not imaginary. On the other hand it may be argued that the independent significance of the architectural exhibition is as yet too rarely acknowledged. It is precisely such exhibitions which offer the possibility to break loose from the exhibits and which can support theatrical effects better than other museum arrangements. Or, as Jean Dethier puts it, architectural exhibitions should offer more visual delight to their visitors. Yet all too often they are repulsive because of their dullness, because of an excessive attention to design or inadequate staging. Compelling exhibitions not only demand the total dedication of well-coordinated teams of specialists, but they also need the availability of large budgets. This in turn demands an approach whereby right from the start the possibility of travel is taken into account in order to be able to spread costs. Such an approach is typical for the French architectural exhibitions. A condition of their success is a well functioning network of contacts between the various architectural museums all over the world; something that is now developing at a modest scale between the Chicago Art Institute, the Paris museums and the Deutsches Architekturmuseum. Is such an international network really in preparation? With the establishment of ICAM, the International Conference of Architectural Museums, a platform has been created where information can be exchanged and initiatives can be geared to one another. The value of these kinds of bodies can hardly be overestimated, the least they can achieve is to establish the impression with the outside world that architectural museums have a right to exist. But a network?

This self-imposed question leads to Finland. According to 20th century standards the oldest architectural museum in the world is in Helsinki.\(^{13}\) It was founded in 1956 and is, moreover, one of the most respected architectural museums. It shows how a creative cultural institution can function with great success. However, the
problem with the museum in Helsinki is that the Finnish government sets its stamp too heavily on the activities of the museum, as this forms part of the strategy to export Finnish design.

It is precisely in an international network that everything revolves around the combination of independence and collective endeavour. It serves no purpose to put too much emphasis on the national character of a cultural institution as it has to function within an international world economy.

It is after all only two hundred kilometers from Amsterdam to Brussels, twice this distance to Frankfurt, hardly one hour’s flying time to London, 500 kilometers to Paris. Since the Second World War Northwestern Europe has changed into an urbanized landscape where problems of shortage of recreative space, violation of the landscape and the preservation of monuments and historic buildings, problems of fast growing mobility, of industrialization and for several decades of a revolution in information and communication, compete for precedence. Why then should we hold on any longer to the examples of national archives as the source of exhibition material? Take as an example Heinrich Klotz, who says about the collection he accumulated in Frankfurt, that his aim was to start an architectural collection at an

4. interior of the Musée des Archives d’Architecture Moderne, 86 rue de l’Ermitage, Brussels. The right atmosphere for a documentary museum: limited accessibility, designed for study and research, but at the same time a presentation of the collection which should be mouth-watering to many a collector.
easily accessible spot in the centre of continental Europa, making it possible for today’s international architecture to be subjected to a comparative study.¹⁴

These words could easily be explained as a plea for far-reaching centralization. But what is really needed, is a network of cultural centres – a coordinated decentralization approach – confronting the Northwestern-European population in a penetrating fashion with the great problems related to its territory.

A museum for observation and action

Once we consider the world as the context of this European megalopolis, it is only a short step to the museum of Patrick Geddes. Geddes, a Scottish biologist who lived from 1854 till 1931, believed that the future of mankind depended to a large extent on the solutions which it could develop for its spatial problems. He was an ecologist-avant-la-lettre, convinced of the proposition that only the balance between culture and nature was in harmony with the intentions of the Creator. He saw sociology, which in his time was considered anything but a mature science, as a useful instrument in the union of all social sciences.

Within the framework of this study Geddes’ ideas on the museum are of especial importance. Geddes was a child of the great World Exhibitions which created such a stir in the second half of the 19th century in Europe and later also in America. Inspired by these, he considered the museum institutions as an active weapon of civilization in the struggle for what he called ‘civics’ – real citizenship, or rather Culture.

Although Geddes used the museum as a place where he could ventilate his ideas about the cultural development of a local community, it was not solely for this reason that he so emphatically gave evidence of his love for the museum; he saw the ability to grasp a region or a town as the preparation of the future, and a visit to the museum would stir those concerned into real action. Geddes was one of those exceptional personalities who manage to combine keen observation with deliberate action. Every inhabitant, he said, should be aware of how his region actually fits together. Not only was it a matter of gathering knowledge about the natural resources, the beauty of the landscape and the cultural heritage, but also: about poverty, criminality and injustice. Every citizen should carefully study all these things in order subsequently to separate good from evil. Such behaviour, according to Geddes, would only be possible when people could actually ‘see’. How, he asked himself, could someone conceive this world, not to mention: improve it, if he were without living visual contact with the things surrounding him?

Geddes’ museum differed from the previously mentioned examples in that it did not limit the subject of museum attention strictly to architecture in the narrow sense of the word. Geddes brought all possible information and ideas regarding a town or region within the walls of the museum. The fact that in this way the visitors were encouraged actively to change their environ-
For a documentary architectural museum a conceivable way of presenting the collection: the collection is well protected, limited space is required, accessible and yet well preserved.
ment, sounds a catching idea. If we take Lewis Mumford as an example, who had already at an early age come into contact with the ideas of Geddes: ‘From the moment I grasped Geddes’ message and method, I began exploring the streets and neighborhoods of New York and tramping over the surrounding countryside with a new sense of both personal direction and public purpose... Even now,’ Mumford wrote in 1982, ‘when I travel or tramp, the old habits I formed then of seeing, appraising, vivify even chance impressions.’

Is it not precisely this attitude which the architectural museum should be concerned about? Identification with the environment through observation, awareness and interpretation of facts, stimulation of forms and functions should be the objectives of the museum. All the examples which have been reviewed above are meant in some way to give shape to this idea. All that is left for us to do is to find the right museum conception.
Three conceptions

Public storage of the past, contemporary information centre and platform for discussion on the future

All the examples mentioned in the preceding paragraph together form a kaleidoscope of efforts to bring people into contact with the built environment. In most of these cases the emphasis seems to be on architecture in the narrow sense of the word. In a man-made and consciously designed country like the Netherlands however, it should be much wider in scope. On the one hand there is in this case question of a situation characterized by a low-lying country with an artificial waterlevel where all possible measures have been taken to make it habitable - this is the genius loci. On the other hand, there is a fast growing urban area in the Netherlands, where the sphere of influence has encroached upon almost the entire national territory; the urban agglomeration of Western Holland, ‘Randstad’ with its spheres of influence radiating towards the east and south-east. Appropriation of new land and urbanization have resulted in a small, completely artificial world, unique, idyllic and in the eyes of some people even bizarre, but at the same time modern, urban and internationally oriented. How the architectural museum is to call attention to both these aspects of the country is a problem of the first order, the genius loci demands regionalization and far-reaching differentiation – rarely does one find a greater variety of landscapes on such a small territory. On the other hand, the very thing that modern urban layout, which seems almost detached from the genius loci, calls for is internationalization and generalization – comparisons are inevitably made with the extensive urban zones of Europe and the American continent. In the museum these apparently widely divergent spheres of attention (regional diversity as against worldwide urban problems) should be combined and presented as a whole.

The fact that we live in the present, will be clear to all. It does not mean however, that we live from one day to the next without involving the past or without keeping the future in view. On the contrary, particularly in building and layout, we have to think years ahead, every step needs to be carefully contemplated. And as for the past, while we are building, we are continually reminded of it, since every intervention in the local scene means a change in a historic situation.

The challenge of adding a new building to the existing situation
has to compete every time with the respect which the cultural heritage commands; every time the question arises whether the intervention can counterbalance the loss of a sometimes pleasing, sometimes valued or even unique historic situation.

What does the architectural museum do? Will the museum try to protect the past against the always dreaded future – a thing the museum mentality is often enough accused of? Or will the museum dare to look ahead and play the guide in the search for new functions and forms of our towns and landscapes? One thing is certain: the architectural museum can disregard neither past nor future. The museum is a public archive of the past as well as a platform for discussion on the future.

‘Everything separates these institutions: articles of association, means, organization and method, objectives and ambitions.’

The Belgian architectural critic Maurice Culot speaks of a ‘concept mouvant’. His message is, do not pass too severe a judgment on ‘l’indécision et le flottement actuel qui entourent la question du musée d’architecture’. The fact that the architectural museum cannot be reduced to a common denominator is in his opinion more of an advantage than a disadvantage.16

A tour of the architectural museums of Frankfurt, Paris, Brussels and London, which I have made in the last few months was especially intended to find a structure, to arrive at a more or less synthesized perception. What determines the thoughts of those actively involved with the ins and outs of the various museums in the year 1987?

Discussions with those concerned and visits to the museums resulted in the description of three conceptions. Each is a logical consistent entity of objectives, ambitions and methods, but none of the three coincides with an existing institute. They are ideas.

The documentary museum

The first conception could be called that of the documentary museum. It is the museum which puts reflection fore and foremost. Considering the name, this is not surprising, as the entire functioning of the museum revolves around the documenting activities. The collections form the essence of the matter. Which means that historic material is especially collected to give as complete a picture as possible of the process of building and layout during a particular period in history.

The collections do not only contain documents which elucidate the creative designing process of architects, such as drawings, sketches and models (the material which most appeals to the imagination), but also more prosaic matters such as correspondence with contractors and clients and the like. The same applies, to a greater extent, for landscape architects, town planners, regional planners and engineers. Their work is, even more than that of architects, a matter of often lengthy analysis which ultimately results in a form. The entire process of thinking about the environment is in some way laid down in the documentary museum,
whether it concerns road construction, land reclamation, land consolidation, urban renewal or preservation of monuments and historic buildings.

It will be obvious that such a comprehensive rescue operation – 'rescue' because only few people realize the value of the mass of paperwork which is involved in the daily functioning of a documentary museum – demands an enormous effort as to acquisition, storage and conservation. The objective of informing coming generations and the idea that everything that is collected will have to survive the projects it registers, make the museum very careful in dealing with the collections.

At this stage some remarks are in order.
In the first place the collections will consist of documents which once belonged to private persons or private enterprises. As such they will illuminate a personal involvement. This in particular is of the utmost importance. It is precisely because most works in physical planning are executed under the government flag, that often too little attention is paid to personal input.
In the second place the period with which the collection policy is concerned will really only begin in the late 19th century. From that moment on the national building production increases at a high pace due to renewed social dynamics; the climax takes place after the Second World War when the Reconstruction coincides
with a turbulent increase in population and a process of industrialization which only then actually started to develop. As regards its collections, the documentary museum is really a museum on modern cities and modern landscapes.

In the third place it should be remarked that the collection policy in a documentary museum also concerns books, cuttings, magazines, slides and films. As to the slides, the Slide Library of the London Architectural Association School may serve as an example: this collection, which contains 70,000 slides, is conveniently classified and lucidly described. It appears to be able to play an essential role in the transfer of knowledge in the field of architecture and physical planning. Something similar should be started for films and film excerpts which relate to the built environment. Everything that is recorded on film about the way a society manages the available space, should be stored. It will give coming generations an impression of the way in which we have experienced our environment.

This means that the preservation and the accessibility of all material in the documentary museum take precedence. The question is however, what comes next.

The documentary museum is not only a depot, it is also a research centre. Specialists from all academic disciplines in any way concerned with the organization of space, work together

8. Walter Art Center, Minneapolis, 1971. Again no architecture. The way of presentation nevertheless is that of a laboratory museum: attention concentrated on the object as a work of art.
here. The work is done in teams. This has the great advantage that information can quickly be exchanged and that cross-fertilization can take place between different points of view. In this way every intervention in town and country can be registered and incorporated, resulting in impressive databanks, gathered together in a number of standard works which give an impression of the history of Dutch building up till the present day. Such ambitious projects, which have not yet lost the illusion of systematics, exhaustiveness and organization, belong to this museum conception. The foregoing certainly sounds very scientific and it is true that in a sense the documentary museum attracts the interest of universities and academies in particular. Nevertheless, the type of museum in question serves a much wider circle of people by providing information about every conceivable aspect of the built environment. It is constantly on the lookout for methods and techniques to increase the accessibility of this information. Computers, audio-visual techniques, telephonic information service, etc. should make it possible to give an immediate answer to every question. In the documentary museum the latest development of making information systems interactive with the help of audio-visual media is the very key to an attractive presentation of the documented material from the collections. By offering this to the visitors in a kind of question-and-answer-game to the visitors, the presentation and documentation functions are merged.17

The British Domescay Project offers a good example in which, by using a videodisk player, linked to a micro computer, a vast amount of data about Great Britain is collected. All the information is available on two videodisks, the 'National Disk'. The possibilities are innumerable. Thus, simulated trips through an individually selected region may be undertaken: thousands of slides provide the 'traveller' with the possibility of determining his own route, even of entering houses, with the help of a cursor.18

Publications also play an important role in the functioning of the documentary museum. The museum shows a distinct preference for publications which are primarily informative, a more poetic approach is less appreciated. Dissertations for instance, are adapted and published in the name of the documentary museum. But also informative publications which lack the scientific aura may count on the museum's interest: these studies, usually 'home-made', may be classified into three groups: those which emphasize the spatial dimension (regions, towns, neighbourhoods, streets, buildings), those which emphasize the time dimension (historic studies which concentrate on specific periods) and those which shed more light on the life and work of particular persons (monographs, biographies).

Furthermore, in order to open up towns and landscapes, the museum bombards its clients with guides, informative handbooks in which all the knowledge accumulated in the museum, is conveniently arranged according to place, possibly according to a route to be followed. What strikes one most, apart from the obvious preference for informative and 'instructive' publications, is the idea of making series and sequences. Each time this thought
seems to play a role in the background. This is not necessarily surprising: the series or the sequence has a number of important advantages which fit perfectly into the very train of thought of the documentary museum, namely the creation of a loyal public, the maintainance of consistent quality, the ability not only to embrace an amazing theme, but also to clarify it fully, a preference for long-term programmes. The disadvantages are faced and accepted: little opportunity for experimenting, no flexible attitude as to new ideas or refreshing suggestions. The documentary museum is a museum which opts for a safe, thorough approach.

As was to be expected, even the exhibitions are of a documentary character. The material always originates from the collections, the way in which it is displayed is unpretentious. Text panels are not avoided, on the contrary, commentary on the presented objects is considered an essential part of the exhibition. The great advantage of this is that the presence of each object is adequately motivated, and there is little chance that superfluous, often interfering displays obstruct perception of the theme. In principle there is a fixed route which the visitors have to follow, since the exhibited objects illustrate a process and are therefore usually put in chronological order. They have no artistic value to make them into independent works of art, or at least this was not why they were chosen. The reason why as many original objects as possible grace the exhibition does not lie in their artistic value, but rather in their historic significance. Here again the principle applies: no flexibility, no artistry, but thoroughness and constant quality.

Within the documentary museum the significance of exhibitions is certainly not overestimated, as a matter of fact they are no more important than the research which is done within the museum or the publications issued at the initiative of the museum. Exhibitions, it is contended, are costly hobbies which produce only limited effect. Fun, but not worth all the energy; or as John Harris, former administrator of the RIBA Drawings Collection, once remarked: ‘their effect upon most visitors is transitory, and any intended benefits are at the most only partly realised’. Actually the documentary museum recognizes a clear order of precedence in the value it attaches to the various activities: according to the staff, energy should in the first place be put into collecting and into all the activities necessary to guarantee meaningful preservation of the collection, including the accessibility. Once this has been satisfactorily solved, a start should be made on research. Research fulfils a number of real functions. Without the interpretation of origin and interrelationship of the collected items, the policy of collecting has no firm basis. It is precisely research which should contribute to the formulation of coherent acquisition. The prevailing rule is: a collector who ignores the backgrounds of his collection is not a good collector. In the second place research is an important link between collecting on the one hand and presentation either in exhibitions or publications, on the other.

For it is research which supplies themes for exhibitions and material for articles and books. In the third place research is appre-
ciated as an independent activity. It sets the seal on the work of the documentary museum.

From the above it could already be concluded that exhibitions and publications never determine research nor the policy of collecting, rather the reverse is true: these result from research. However, it is appreciated that successful exhibitions and publications may have a positive influence on collecting and research activities.

A lot of attention is therefore given to cohesion and mutual attunement.

Yet the afore mentioned order of priority is essential for the functioning of the documentary museum. No wonder that precisely within this museum conception the question arises each time as to whether a museum or an archive is concerned. As there is no answer to this question, there is a danger that it is precisely the documentary museum which will find itself in a permanent identity crisis.

Procedures including acquisition, classification, description, research and publication/exhibition, take years. As a result the future holds very few surprises in store for the documentary museum. This may sound dull. At least it gives the staff of the museum the opportunity to put quality first.

The past is a matter of great interest to the documentary museum: the activities are always in some way connected with documents, and the fact is, these are related to the past. In other words, we are concerned here with a cultural-historical museum. The present is not lost from sight however, the documentary museum goes to great lengths in order to keep abreast of the latest developments in building and layout, if only to be able to fulfil the above-mentioned informative function.

On the other hand, exploration of the future does not fit in with the ideals of the documentary museum. The idea is evident: by giving people information there will be greater understanding of existing matters, which will lead to a more careful weighing up of interests. In this way the museum indirectly contributes to a preparation of the future.

Its national character is typical for the documentary museum. At any rate the method betrays no international aspirations. The archives are national archives and everything connected with them must necessarily be national by nature. This does not alter the fact that much material is lent to foreign museums. Likewise it may happen that the documentary museum takes exhibitions from abroad to the home country and that in reverse Dutch publications may be translated. As for the latter it should be remarked that, in spite of its national character, a series of publications in English offers great advantages: wider circulation, lower price, better editions. By and large, however, the museum limits itself to the national market, collects national archives, caters to a national public.
Above all the documentary museum maintains contacts with the academic world. The crucial role which research plays within the museum, means that scientific organizations are actively concerned with the doings of the institute. This has its consequences in various fields, not least in its location: proximity of one or more universities is not really a requirement, but does at any rate benefit the functioning of the documentary museum, if only because of the intellectual climate which the presence of a university entails.

Summarizing, we can say of the documentary museum that it is a question of a national museum institution with an overall task in the field of forming collections, which includes an important research effort, a relatively modest budget for exhibitions and an ambitious publication programme, and which places the cultural-historical significance of the built environment in the forefront.

Of course this division of attention will be fairly accurately reflected by the staff. The reservation of surface space will also be in keeping with this: the programme of demands includes a lot of room for the collections, well-equipped research space and a modest wing for exhibitions.

The laboratory museum

The second museum conception is that of the laboratory museum, but it could also be called the atelier museum. It is the museum which, unlike the documentary museum, puts the emphasis on creating, on the active intervention in existing situations. It is the museum which stimulates the experiment so as to develop new ideas on building and utilization of space in actual practice and to inspire and instigate designers and planners in their search for new ways.

In point of fact the laboratory museum considers itself as a museum of modern art, it sees the collections it assembles as art collections, the quality of which is maintained through rigorous selection. Purchase budgets are drawn on. Everything revolves around the most handsome drawings and sketches. The staff has developed an eye for the very best. It has built up contact with a group of prominent designers and acquires one project after the other, until the museum finally owns an interesting collection of items about a number of schools or personalities. The laboratory museum uses the large private collections which bear witness to good taste and pronounced preferences as an example, such as that of Sir John Soane, which may still be admired in perfect condition at no. 13, Lincoln’s Inn Fields in London. So once more the collection is of the utmost importance. However, this time collecting takes place in a completely different context: here it is not a matter of building up an image of a historic cross-section by means of the collection, irrespective of whether this requires one thousand or one hundred cubic metres storage; it here concerns a collection of limited size which gives a very personal
9. The ‘Fantasie’. An initiative in Almere which should appeal to a laboratory museum. The ‘De Fantasie’ Foundation organized a competition and offered land to the winners to enable them to realize their designs. The museum as initiator of renovating impulses by realizing tangible architecture outside the museum walls (photograph Gert Schutte).

impression of an art form in its best condition. The historic preoccupation of the documentary museum has atrophied here into a preference for avant-garde movements from the near past.

Although collecting is considered important, the laboratory museum does not consider itself primarily as a depository of art treasures which are from time to time shown to the public. As was mentioned before, the museum wants to play an active role. For this aim it organizes all kinds of projects, of which the architectural competition is the most widely known.

Competitions always emanate great optimism, they present a situation in which all problems are solved by the design. Moreover, they contain a series of events which attract the attention of the public time and again: the staging of the competition and the announcement, the submission of the projects, the adjudication, the acclamation of the winner and the presentation of all results. This is why the laboratory museum considers the competition an effective means of telling people something about architecture.

However, more projects are conceivable. Examples from the past, although not originating from the museum, come to mind: the building of the Weissenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart, the orga-
nization of the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (the so-called CIAM), etc. These were all activities which stimulated the way of thinking about architecture and physical planning. A contemporary example is the organization in Berlin of the Internationale Bau Ausstellung. At this moment there is no institution which undertakes the organization of such events. The laboratory museum could serve in this case as the base camp. The most important initiative in the series of experiments which the laboratory museum wants to set in motion is to approach famous architects with the request to design something for a specific spot. By involving these talented people, a building process which has come to a dead end may be revitalized. Moreover, in this way tokens may appear in the surroundings which permanently recall the presence of the museum – crystallized allusions to purpose and aim of the museum: the improvement of the quality of the built environment.

The laboratory museum believes in the power and significance of temporary exhibitions. It considers these as projects, comparable to competitions and commissions, to which great names are attached. And just as in competitions and the like, it does not revolve around the supply of information but around stimulation of the discussion: exhibitions should stimulate people to form pronounced opinions. This is why confrontation has been chosen as a guiding principle.

Nothing is explained, there is no pretension of giving a survey of anything, any chronological order is lacking altogether. True, the objects on display do represent a definite art value, they are not just a means to an end, bearers of a message, they have to be admired as a drawing or a model per se. A careful selection according to artistic criteria leads here to a sensitive composition of objects, without any definite line but giving the visitor the possibility always to enjoy to the utmost the works of art he encounters.

To be ahead of its time: that is the mainspring of the laboratory museum. The museum identifies itself with the laboratory where experiments are done, which has a certain impetuosity, which explores new territories and claims scoops for itself, in short, where the future is being prepared. The laboratory museum is not a museum that keeps its distance. On the contrary, it provokes and shows a certain defiance to its public and to its time. It likes clear statements, controversies, in short, it is a museum of commitment. No wonder that it is precisely the laboratory museum which attracts an avant-garde public, a public which reacts modishly and whimsically and feels boundless admiration for world-conquering and innovative art movements from the past. History for the sake of history, as it is professed in the documentary museum, is not in order here. Historic favourites are apparent, heroes from the past. There is no interest in historic generalities with regard to building and utilization of space in daily practice. The fact that the museum should offer the public a true picture of the past is completely ignored by the staff, who are particularly interested in the question
as to what extent knowledge of historic facts can contribute to the solution of contemporary architectural problems or to the conduct of the current architectural debate. History should be provocative and inspiring, should incite to action. This is the museum which wants to interfere and wants to experience the creative process in reality. It is by no means the museum which contents itself with a place along the sideline.

The laboratory museum is internationally oriented, there can be no doubt about that. It forms part of a metropolitan environment and needs a widely branched network of communication lines. It thrives on intensive interaction between the great cultural centres of the world. The innovation it pursues goes beyond political boundaries. Any trace of provincialism is foreign to the museum, with as a result that greater value is often attached to acknowledgement abroad than to popularity at home. The spirit with which the museum manifests itself makes it controversial, especially on native soil. Oddly enough it is precisely this controversial position which determines the success of the laboratory museum. The more it is discredited, the better the museum management seems to like it.

It is a secret wish of the laboratory museum to reach the same public as that which nowadays frequents the museums of modern art. This is understandable. The ambition to bring architecture into the limelight is much stronger here than in the documentary museum. The laboratory museum is an emancipatory museum, it wants to elevate architecture to an art which can measure up to painting and sculpture. The fact that in this pursuit it is supported in particular by the professional group of architects is not sufficient. The museum is aware of this fact. That is why every change is readily explained as a move in the desired direction. For example, the growing trade in architectural drawings is readily seen as an indication of a favourable tide. But a tide may turn, and the prices which are paid at this moment for a superior architectural drawing are as yet in no proportion to the fantastic sums of money which are spent almost indiscriminately for some Impressionist.

It looks as if the laboratory museum will in the first instance appeal to architects, precisely as the documentary museum attracts the scientific world. It is not just the flattering idea that the profession may manifest itself as an art. The element of confrontation and discussion appeals to them in particular. On the other hand it is important for the functioning of the museum to maintain good contacts with these same architects.

Not just to be able to obtain their files and records later on, (just imagine that towards the end of his life every painter were to hand in his artistic efforts at a museum!, says the architect Carel Weeber), but in order to involve them in the museum projects. A location in the vicinity of professional schools, such as Academies for Architecture or Technical Universities, would be appropriate for the laboratory museum: there is a favourable climate here for a laboratory situation. However, when it concerns the best conditions for the experiment, then it would be
especially appropriate to establish it in an area where there is a serious need for architectural renewal or where such renewal does not by definition meet with resistance. On a smaller scale a place of establishment seems attractive which emphasizes the status of the architectural museum per se: prestigious new building at a stone’s throw from a museum of modern art.

The spatial programme is limited: for many projects are obvious located outside the museum building. Moreover, the collections are relatively modest in size. In the building itself all attention is concentrated on the exhibition space which has been carefully designed and, but this is to a great extent a sign of the times, which is sub-divided into larger and smaller spaces.

Summarizing, it may be said of the laboratory museum that it is an institution which makes itself internationally manifest and where architecture is explicitly presented as art. For this reason the museum pursues a selective purchasing policy, putting the emphasis in the collections on international top quality. The museum takes a thematic approach. The projects it takes up should stimulate discussion. To this end confrontation is consciously sought. Innovative impulses and inspiring action starting from the museum foster architecture.

The cultural-historical museum

A third museum conception originates from the idea that architecture has no significance without understanding of the society in which this architecture is embedded. Architecture is not only an art, it is part of a socio-cultural process. Justification for a special museum dedicated to architecture is in this case found in the fact that for each cultural phenomenon there is a museum – for cars, piggy banks, toys, clothes, you name it –, while the richest and most voluminous, also the most vulnerable and in a way even rather neglected item of cultural value, misses out on all museum attention.

We are concerned here with the conception of the so-called cultural-historical museum.

Buildings have a much richer meaning when they are woven into a pattern of activities, ideas, uses and functions. Whereas the documentary museum puts the emphasis on historic value and the laboratory museum faces up to artistic value, the cultural-historical museum always looks for the social background of building. But it goes even further, it uses architecture as a means to gain insight into political, economic, social and cultural developments: ‘Architecture as a key to interrelation and understanding of these developments’, according to Dethier. So this by no means signifies that design disappears from sight. What the museum is trying to do is precisely to link forms to ideas and activities. Actually the cultural-historical museum gives as much attention to shapes as to the functions in question.
Whereas the documentary museum reminds us of the past and the laboratory museum is anticipating the future, the cultural-historical museum is the museum of here and now. Just by reliving the past and by bringing the future into the present – this by placing the experience of architecture into the foreground –, the museum expects to appeal to a broad public. In that respect it is even a very optimistic museum conception. The museum sees itself as the forceful cultural institute which Patrick Geddes had already envisaged at one time.

Whereas the documentary museum wants to come as close as possible to reality and the laboratory museum on the other hand wants to interfere with it, the cultural-historical museum tries to transform reality. The way this happens is poetic, emotional and sometimes highly symbolic. There is no need to go outside the walls of the museum for this end, the museum should, on the contrary, present itself very clearly as museum. This is why, more than in the other two conceptions, attention is given here to museology: the exhibited object is neither an illustration of something nor an exclusively autonomous item to be admired; the environment in which the object is displayed is at least as revealing as the object itself. In this museum conception the essence is to stage a real show, the museum becomes a theatre. The cultural-historical museum therefore makes an appeal to the imagination of the visitors. With every means at its disposal the museum tempts and delights the public. By leading it through an entirely artificial environment, in which sometimes diminution is applied and sometimes use is made of only building fragments, the public goes through a sensation which it would not have experienced in any other way, such as when reading a book. With the help of well planned lighting, well thought-out use of colours and the application of special effects, the attention is kept alive. In the exhibition there are no neutral spaces which, although carefully designed, are obviously secondary to the objects placed in them. No smooth perfection. Everything is clamouring for attention, and the complete exhibition does not explain more than one or at the most two themes. For without theme the exhibition loses all forcefulness, too many themes lead to the same result.

The cultural-historical museum need not have a privately owned collection at its disposal – it can easily do without. For the exhibitions it organizes, it calls on collections which have been accommodated elsewhere. Furthermore, an important part of the exhibitions consists of material specifically manufactured for the occasion, such as models and ‘environments’, so no collection is required for this either.

The ambitions of the documentary museum do not extend any further than to the borders of the country. The laboratory museum on the other hand, denies every political boundary and considers the entire world as its opponent. How should the cultural-historical museum be seen in this context? Of course this museum likes to attract a lot of international attention, just like the laboratory museum. The difference
with the laboratory museum lies in the nuances: the cultural-historical museum sees itself as a regional institution in an international world. This means that it sets itself international standards, but limits itself to national, regional or sometimes even to local subjects. The greedy desire for international recognition and fame, which characterizes the laboratory museum, is totally absent in this case.

This time it is not the scientific disciplines which the museum tries to contact, nor the architects: this time it is the museums, and in particular the kindred ones, which attract attention. It is not a matter of emancipation of the architectural museum in relation to other arts, but of emancipation of the architectural museum in relation to other types of museums. Precisely the fact of taking example from other museums makes the cultural-historical museum show a clear preference for a location close to these institutions. Moreover, the cultural-historical character of the museum leads to the fact that, in order to be able to function well, it establishes close relations with other, particularly cultural-historical museums. It will surprise no one that all spatial demands are concentrating on the exhibition area. In principle this calls for a flexible floor plan and accommodations of large dimensions.

Summarizing, we may say that the cultural-historical museum represents an entirely new kind of museum which wants to use architecture as a means to link social, economic, political and cultural developments to one another and to present these in an illustrative way. This makes high demands on the museology, whereby no trouble or expense is spared to stage the objects in a convincing way. The cultural-historical museum hardly bothers with the formation of collections, it knows how to use collections from elsewhere for the exhibitions; moreover, it develops important parts of the exhibitions by itself.

A fixed arrangement

So much for the three museum conceptions. The way in which they were described in the above may conceal the fact, to quote Culot: 'combien le concept de “musée d’architecture” est difficile à cerner et à saisir.'²²

Perhaps Culot is right when he considers this more as an advantage than as a disadvantage. The examples he cites seem to be convincing: he sets the wealthy Canadian Centre for Architecture, which, within a few months will open its doors to the public in an area of no less than 12.000 m², against the architectural museum of Liège, which is accommodated in a number of 17th and 18th century houses. Or the famous architectural museum in Frankfurt, with its presentations of recent international architectural movements, against the Musée des Monuments Français, which preserves casts of architectural monuments for posterity.

How can we find any consistency in all this?

Heinrich Klotz distinguishes two architectural museum-conceptions: the old one of the national archives, and the new one of the gallery where contemporary international architecture is brought into the limelight and where the function of meeting place plays an important role. Charles Jencks calls the museum in Frankfurt the most aggressive and evident example of this new type of museum.²⁸

Whereas the image of the architectural museum evoked by Culot is rather diffuse, Klotz’ division in two is obviously too simple: there is too much of a discrepancy between old and new, as if the old notion has been superseded and the new is taking shape. The division in three which I followed in this study does not indicate an evolution: in the year 1987 the three notions of the ideal architectural museum are all equally attractive and measure up to each other as to their value in the future. These are fully mature museums.

It may indeed be argued that a mature museum should at any rate dispose over a fixed arrangement which can be visited every day the museum is open to the public. Why is such an arrangement absent in the architectural museums up till today? Frankfurt has experienced what such a lack entails: to close a museum during the period that a temporary exhibition is dismantled and a new one is set up, damages its proper functioning.
For this a permanent exhibition of over twenty models, which are to give an impression of building through the ages, is now in preparation. In Musée d'Orsay, the big museum in Paris on the 19th century, the process of estrangement between architects and engineers in the previous century is portrayed in a permanent arrangement: how architects persisted in their old ways while the world was changing drastically. The impressive model of the Paris Opéra by Garnier — a cross section of gigantic dimensions which was specially made for the museum — and a three dimensional reconstruction of the urban area around the Opéra, which is laid out in the floor of the museum, show that it is possible to make an attractive fixed arrangement for architecture. A little further on, in the Hotel National des Invalides, there are about twenty models of cities and fortifications, all manufactured between 1668 and 1870 for military strategic purposes, placed in a completely new setting. And to think that this constitutes no more than 20 percent of the collection of the Musée des Plans-Reliefs which is ultimately to be formed. The singularity of the collection, the charm of the historic objects and the new, poetic museology in which it is embedded, make a visit to this museum into an experience of the first order. Jean Dethier considers his work for the new arrangement as a eulogy to town planning: 'une sorte d'hommage à l'urbanité et au génie réducteur - propre au modélisme - qui puisse laisser place au rêve de l'enfant et aux fantasmes de l'adulte; et tous les visiteurs un souvenir clair et mémorable des “plans en relief”.'  

11. Scale model of the quartier de l'Opéra, Paris. Presentation in the Musée d'Orsay. Visitors walk over the model, which is laid out in the floor. Spectacular, unique. A method of presentation which is appropriate in a cultural-historical museum.
A fixed arrangement is definitely conceivable in the case of the cultural-historical museum, indeed, is even an attractive option here. The laboratory museum on the other hand, would sooner tolerate than encourage such an arrangement: its permanent character is not entirely in keeping with the experimental and thematic approach of the museum. On the other hand the art collection assembled in the laboratory museum is certainly suitable for an exclusive and permanent display. But such a display should in that case be of a totally different character than the one in the cultural-historical museum.

The documentary museum rejects any permanent display of the collection, if only because of the worry about preservation of the material.

The question now arises what the character of a Dutch architectural museum will be like. Should it be of a documentary character? Is the Dutch situation more suitable for a laboratory museum? Or has the time come for the establishment of a cultural-historical museum?
The new Netherlands, 1987. An exhibition on the future of the Netherlands. The cultural-historical museum need not, as the name might imply, be limited to the past. Its concern is also for the future, that is to say, the architecture of the future, imbedded in a social context (photograph Teun Voeten).
Ideas concerning function, form and significance of a Dutch Institution for Spatial Design and Architecture

'Es ist ein Land für Augenmenschen, für naiv Empfindende.' Karl Scheffler, a German critic who travelled through the Netherlands at the end of the Twenties, personally experienced how the Dutch landscape stimulated the imagination. 'In Holland wird die Phantasie produktiv.' All the things he came across in the landscape were on a human scale: fields, farmlands, canals, dikes, houses, bridges. Everywhere he experienced the care and attention given to the landscape. The whole country was like a garden.

Scheffler was deeply impressed and called the Netherlands one big 'Gesamtkulturwerk', a word-play on the at the time rather charged concept 'Gesamtkunstwerk'.

'Alles ist eigentlich künstlich, doch ist das künstliche ganz zur Natur geworden.'

Many travel-impressions of foreigners who pay a visit to the Netherlands have this in common: the amazement about the landscape which shows so much loving care, the overwhelming feeling of infinite space, the subtle way in which buildings have been fitted in the landscape, the colours, the remarkable differences in waterlevel and the geomorphological structures, in short: one gazes at the intervention of man in the landscape which is visible everywhere.

In an article in The Architectural Review of January 1985, Peter Buchanan has more to add to this. He points to the extremely high densities of population and the radical shift from a mainly agrarian to an industrial economy after the Second World War. His impressions: that in the Netherlands the art of engineering mediates between man and nature; that this obviously does not call for temples or monuments, that everything has been laid out and built with a view to requirements of function and convenience.

Attention to the past, present and future

It is precisely the receptivity to progressive and social reforms, according to Buchanan, which have made the Netherlands into a laboratory which can assist Europe in solving its spatial
problems. Unfortunately little has been done about the evaluation of the experiments which have already been conducted. The Dutch, he concludes, appear to be exclusively interested in the present. Can a society really live purely from the here and now, 'a thin slice of time, sandwiched between past and present?'

Perhaps the makers of the Dutch landscape will answer Buchanan's question in the affirmative. The thinkers - those who give comments - will however, agree with the author: The past should not be forgotten, history fulfils an essential role. The importance of recording everything which has in the past been achieved in the field of building and utilization of space, is self-evident in their eyes. But who shall actually bear the responsibility?

Up to the present day the Dutch Documentation Centre for Architecture, with the assistance of the Architectural Museum Foundation (Stichting Architectuur Museum), is the institution which has taken on the documentation of the past. Drawings, models and a unique collection of almost complete personal archives of architects is assembled here, including books, administration and correspondence. The collection attracts a lot of international attention. This is an ideal basis for serious research on the history of building in the Netherlands. Town planning, housing and physical planning should have a more distinct place in the archives of the Documentation Centre. Recognition of the importance hereof has led to the establishment of a working group within the NIROV, the Dutch Institute for Physical Planning and Housing, under the name of PSVA. This working group has for several years been dedicated to the preservation of documents covering fields which are closely allied with architecture (that is to say, architecture in the narrow sense of the word).

The overwhelming quantity of documents which have meanwhile been accommodated in the Documentation Centre, and of which, according to its administrator Dick van Woerkom, only 5 percent consists of visual material, calls for the establishment of a fully fledged documentary museum. The present work burden of the institute makes it impossible at the moment to issue even a modest inventory of its possessions, let alone a substantial standard work on the history of Dutch architecture and physical planning. Anything like the catalogue of the collections of the Brussels' Archives d'Architecture Moderne is lacking. Whereas research, accessibility of the collection, fundraising and acquisition would certainly benefit from such publications.

The qualities of systematic processing, long term planning, an acquisition policy which is lucid and comprehensible to all, and careful conservation, are of vital importance especially in the current situation - qualities befitting a documentary museum. Once they have been put into practice, they lead to study programmes which in their turn become a source of new ideas with regard to a society which through the ages has been building for its own future. Such study programmes can be attuned to those of the universities in the Netherlands, but also to those of scientific institutions abroad: the exchange of research experiences at an international level and the presence of foreign researchers can give new
Systematics, classification and registration of the collections, combined with an international intellectual orientation, can make a documentary museum into a success especially in the Dutch context. The collections are already present, they are valuable, highly appreciated, even regarded with envy. And its intellectual potential can be mobilized very simply with a well-considered research programme: set up on an international and inter-disciplinary basis.

The past may become just as exciting as the present.

And what about the future? Do we have any idea as to what the Netherlands will look like in the future? There are many planning bodies in this country which are keen to outline the future. There is even a high degree of coordination between municipal, provincial and national building programmes and schemes for the utilization of space. Yet in reality the future, or actually the face of the future, does not really seem to interest anyone. That is to say, no general concept exists as to what the future should look like in the eyes of society and there is no one in this country trying to interrelate the wishes and possibilities in such a way as to stimulate the imagination. People are paralysed by fear of the future, the resulting apathy, the idea that every change means a change for the worse.

The laboratory museum is an excellent tool for exploring the future and thus to bring in particular the makers of the future into contact with the creative centres of the nation. The tensions between the cool practice of building which mainly adheres to the commercial short-term way of thinking, and the world of free, unattached creativity which thinks more in terms of challenges and bold expectations, could be brought into balance in the laboratory museum. After all, the realization of visual and emotional contact with the future environment is one of the objectives in this museum conception.

If the ‘Gesamtkulturwerk’ were to derive its beauty and charm from incidental interventions which were not developed from a certain continuity, this work of art would not last long. The layer wedged in between past and present is too thin. The situation calls for watchfulness in the face of a practice of building and utilization of space which is based on standard solutions and routine, on regulations which allow no exceptions. It is precisely the inventive matters and the experiments which should find their way into daily practice. The cultural institution of a museum can serve here as a catalyst.

**International network and identity**

The idea that this country is a country for ‘Augenmenschen’, gives the architectural museum a special dimension, particularly in the Dutch context. Eyes should be opened. It is a terrible mis-
conception to think that by reducing the three-dimensional spaces within the walls of a museum to two dimensions, something will become apparent to visitors which would otherwise have gone unnoticed. Simplification of reality will often be necessary, but at the same time this should be combined with the addition of new meanings. It is better to diminish reality and to intensify receptivity by adding new colours, other materials and by using a variety of techniques. We should take advantage of the magic powers of the museum to focus attention on one single object by isolating it or by placing it in an unusual context. It would however become pointless, or it would at least show evidence of little insight, if this were only done for reasons of concentration: the whole point is to evoke new experiences. Such as the experience of size, scale, spatial effects, similarity, proportion, colour, etc. The three-dimensional model – the architectural model – whether it represents a fragment of a building or an entire town, can be an excellent aid here, if used in the proper way. It can bring the experiences in question to life.

The knowledge about how all this can successfully be given shape is gathered together in the cultural-historical museum. This is where a serious study is made of the packaging of themes and ideas in exhibitions. It is mainly these museological studies which are significant in the process of interpreting architecture in a museum environment.

In the Dutch situation the choice between a documentary, a laboratory and a cultural-historical museum makes no sense. In fact all three are of the utmost importance. Children, tourists, schoolboys and girls, excursionists, in short the fiercely coveted broad public can really only be reached from the cultural-historical museum. The tempting way in which architecture is presented here deserves a well equipped and professional apparatus. The stimulus necessary to bring doers and thinkers into contact with each other can really only be provided by the laboratory museum.

The conclusions of Bourdieu and Darbel, which were expounded in a previous paragraph, are of importance in this case: the laboratory museum appeals at best to a public which also appreciates art museums, that is to say the better educated young people, familiar with the museum from childhood. On the other hand the laboratory museum fulfils a real function. By means of its insistent attitude and its challenging, refreshing projects, politicians, contractors and investors are shown their responsibility for creating a livable and above all a beautiful country.

After all the documentary museum is already justified by the simple fact that the collections call for its existence. In order to preserve the fragile past a somewhat reticent and diffident institution is needed. Moreover, and it should not be forgotten, this museum forms a junction in the provision of information on architecture. It issues guides, maps, programmes, and information bulletins. In the museum moreover, people work feverishly on the collection of documents which reflect the ideas on, and the preparation of intervention in the built environment. Here archives, library, reading room, slide-collection and storage of
models constitute a source of unique, in-depth studies. The publicity which the documentary museum misses (must necessarily miss as this is not in keeping with the basic principles which the museum has chosen) is amply compensated by the way in which both of the other museum conceptions attract attention - the one especially internationally, the other more at home. Also in this sense therefore, a combination of the three offers a mutually complementary unit.

Each activity, irrespective of which conception is behind it, would have to proceed from the idea that it plays a vital role within a network of northwest-European architectural museums. Germany, Belgium, France, Great Britain: although initiatives in these countries do not exactly show mutual attunement and coordination, they will eventually have to lead to a relation which provides possibilities for achieving intensive exchange and mutual consultation. In this way, a picture of Dutch architecture may be given in Frankfurt by using the collections of the documentary museum; and the loan of an exhibition from Brussels will attract attention for an interesting theme in the cultural-historical museum; cooperation with the French museum will save considerable expense when realizing an architectural project in the laboratory museum. Etc.

This attention to international exchange and cooperation should be accompanied by the objective of giving a distinct identity to the Dutch architectural museum. There may be a similarity in the approach of the various national institutions, but the elaboration of their programmes should differ each time. It would really be too ridiculous if the museum were to ignore the region in which it is situated. Thus a final plea for regional variation of architectural museums within an international network. As has been said before: in the Netherlands in particular special attention is to be expected for the scale on which the physical utilization of space takes place: the scale of the water board districts, the regional plans, the provinces, the urban agglomerations. If the Dutch architectural museum succeeds at that level in thinking the genius loci - the quality of the land - with: the urbanization, the utilization of land and the changes therein, the historic occupation patterns, and the plans which have been worked out with an eye to the future, then it will not be long before it is able to make a formidable contribution in international circles.
1. Hagers and Hovinga 1986
2. Van Eesteren 1958
3. Van Lohuizen 1927
4. Norberg-Schulz 1980
5. Jencks 1985
6. Bourdieu and Darbel 1969
8. In all honesty it should be added that in later issues of the green Michelin guide on the Netherlands explicit attention was devoted to the 'Koopmansbeurs'.
9. Poulot 1982
10. Bialman and De Jong 1985
11. Van der Phym 1956
12. see among others Domus, January 1987
13. This is not quite correct: a few years earlier an architectural museum was established in Moscow. However, the museum of Helsinki is generally considered as the oldest architectural museum in the world.
14. Klotz 1985
15. Mumford 1982
16. Culot 1987
17. Maurits 1985
18. Nijhuis 1985
19. Harris 1981
20. Meuwissen 1985
21. Montes 1985
22. Culot 1987
23. Jencks 1985
24. Dethier and Eaton 1986
25. Scheffler 1930
26. Buchanan 1985
27. Musée des Archives Moderne, Collections 1986
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This book is not about a camel but about a museum. That is to say, a museum for architecture and spatial design. It is the author's intention to produce some ideas for the foundation of such a museum in the Netherlands.

Just as a camel is an animal of flesh and blood, so an architectural museum is also a living concept which cannot simply be contained in a previously determined shape. The museum building should be the result of an intelligent programme of demands. Unambiguous, internally consistent and attesting to a vision on its future functioning. Only when there is clarity on all these points can we start thinking about the building to be realized.

Three different types of architectural museums can be distinguished: a documentary, a laboratory and a cultural-historical museum. In the first type the documentary and informative activities stand centrally; in the second the innovative; in the third the visual presentations. Each of the three is a conceivable, independent and fully-fledged museum.

Which camel will eventually be built? Will it be a camel with one, two or three humps?