

If you look closely you will see it a couple of hundred times in small print on the invitation: "I hate architecture". On the items this same sentence drowns the fine pattern on the damask, but just like the damask the sentence has a flip-side: "I love building".

The installation Ger C. Bout and others realized is based on a concept that extends the themes of his former projects. They are about taking a distance from architecture. Last year in Pori, Finland for example a traditional Finnish wooden house was totally dismantled. A new construction was erected from the various parts, thereby completely ignoring the functions of the parts. Consequently, the original function of the house was totally lost.

Architecture is not the art of arts. In Ger C. Bout's view it is an applied art like for example industrial design, no less, not inferior, but with limitations. Even though he does not like restrictions, he is intrigued by them and uses them as a starting point for his work. He wants to recognize and question those limitations or even cast them to the wind. His work has this aspect in common with the work of architects such as Frank O'Gehry and Gerrit Rietveld, but also that of artists such as Bruce Nauman and Dennis Oppenheim. "Architecture is a specific structure of thinking. There are endless variations on that structure, but you keep limiting yourself. Why do you accept that you are working within structures without questioning themselves or why do you even ignore the fact that you think within structures?"

What Ger C. Bout did in Tilburg was to make a space inaccessible by filling it up, thereby bringing down one of the basic premises of architecture. It is only with the greatest effort that a person can enter the room. Its function as such has been eliminated: at the most, the space can serve as (inevitable) carrier of the idea on which the project is based.

There was no official opening but a day to set up the installation and later there will be a day to take it apart. Anyone who felt like could take part. With a previously unknown group of interested people the space would be transformed from open to close (and later again from closed to open). The space will only be functional again when the installation has been dismantled.

Through his choice of method of working and carrying out his projects, the artist also distances himself from the traditional role of the architect as composer and conductor. There are various ways of shaping a concept. Bout's preference is for a situation in which neither form nor concept are subordinate to each other. "You could think up a project or design, draught it and ask others to carry it out exactly as planned. In this way, a kind of still life is created, that can be reproduced time and time again without actually changing. It remains a dead thing. If I were to work in this way, I would not have the advantage of the enthusiasm, the know-how and experience, and the mood of the people helping to construct."

Ger C. Bout feels he is more of a catalytic agent than a designer. He presents a concept, but does not have a set idea of what the end result will look like. From the very beginning there will be a continual interaction between all those involved. This process in which participants respond to each other on an ad hoc basis cannot be analyzed. Coincidence plays an important role but is not programmed in advance as in the work of John Cage. In fact coincidence is not the correct term, unpredictability is better. Through his method the artist not only concedes the control over form and structure of the final product but also over the entire process.

Marian van Stiphout

(The quotes are from a conversation between Marian van Stiphout and Ger C. Bout in May. 1994)