

BEYOND ARCHITECTURE

UNINHIBITED EXPERIMENTS BY GER C. BOUT

Text by Koos Bosma

PREFACE

Without the help of others, it would not have been possible to publish
"Beyond Architecture".

Without Koos Bosma there would be no text. Without Henk van Zijp there would be no
concept and lay-out. Without Riitta Bout-Saari there would be no completed whole.

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Ger C. Bout, Rotterdam, December 1995, Rotterdam.

"A man named Yuan Hsaio was on his way to the famous Mount Kaoyu to study the teachings of Buddha. When night fell, he happened to be beside a cemetery, so he lay down to sleep among the burial mounds. Then in the middle of the night he awoke with a terrible thirst. Stretching out his hand, he scooped up some water from a hole by his side. As he dozed off again, he thought to himself that never had water tasted so pure, fresh and cold. But when morning came, he saw what he had drunk from in the dark. Incredible though it seemed, what had tasted so delicious was water that had collected in a human skull. He retched and was sick. Yet this experience taught something to Yuan Hsaio. He realised that as long as conscious desire is at work, it will permit distinctions to exist. But if one can suppress it, these distinctions dissolve and one can be as content with a skull as with nothing else" (1).

1. THE MENTALITY

The Italian architect Aldo Rossi remembers as a child having visited the “sacri monti”, mountains in the Alps that were once declared holy. The trails in these mountains lead past chapels or shrines containing a niche where biblical scenes are depicted, often scenes from the Calvary of Christ. Rossi was overwhelmed by these chapels with their classicist sculptural pieces and objects, as well as by the view of the Lago Maggiore from one of these holy mountains. These memories from his youth have contributed to Rossi developing an extreme sensitivity to what he calls “exalted coolness”: the stability of timeless miracles, dinner tables that have been set for eternity, beverages that will never be consumed, objects that are merely what they are. Rossi prefers to design and construct still lifes.

In comparison to the search for the architectural expression of eternal values, the sketches and designs of the American architect John Hejduk breathe a completely different atmosphere. His series of “masks” made in the eighties and nineties can be considered a dramatic quest for new, authentic programmes with which to challenge or substitute the barrenness of western housing programmes and urban planning. Like Rossi, in a reaction against uncontrolled growth, Hejduk reduces the ornateness and the pastiches of western imagery. His commitment is expressed in the dissemination of separate elements within a confined space. Design is subordinate to life. Hejduk creates enigmatic objects which cannot be entirely explained by the mind. In order to mobilise people either physically or spiritually, he creates surreal, voyeuristic and existential situations. Hejduk’s programmes are metaphors for alternative metropolitan life, small dramas that have a rippling effect on life (3). If the Rotterdam-based architect Ger C. Bout (1950) were to be asked which of these diametrically opposed approaches to life has his preference – the still life or the drama –, he would choose Hejduk’s approach without hesitation. Bout was brought up in a still life: Rotterdam-Zuidwijk; he even saw it being developed. As a child he witnessed how a bulldozer buried life on the urban periphery under a layer of sand and how the new residential area lacked shops and business accommodation. In this neighbourhood where picking flowers was prohibited >, Bout experienced the abstraction of light, air and space. His friends lived in an adjacent still life developed by CIAM: Rotterdam-Pendrecht. Bout regards such egalitarian residential areas as sad

excrescences of social democracy. He is primarily interested in processes that give life variation and colour. Action, movement and the unexpected ultimately result in form and aesthetics. The deathliness of the still life and the unapproachability of architecture must be combated with dramatic events and – by means of deliberate insensitivity to “style” or formal judgments – the postponing of design. Bout takes a critical stance towards architectural practice which is governed by rules, regulations, commercial agreements and other conventions. He resists adapting to this straitjacket and seeks an alternative route. In search of a new vitality, he experiments with laboratory situations where conventions are silenced. This search for the unexpected is comparable to the method of Gordon Matta-Clark, who assailed derelict buildings in New York with a chain-saw (“cuttings”) until eventually adventurous, dramatic and even perilous spaces were created (4). Matta-Clark called it “discrete mutilation”, his objective being to generate new meanings by means of destruction (5). In addition, Bout attempts to stretch the conventions and the status quo of architecture in the direction of the visual arts. Visual arts themes are seldom addressed in architecture, whereas on the other hand architectural themes are often visualised in other art disciplines. Censorship, conventions and lack of courage influence the interpretation of the watershed between these domains. Bout is inquisitive as to the addictive effect of the stereotype and architecture’s role as an accomplice. By dramatising the stereotype and through the combined use of new materials, processes and images, Bout seeks to make concealed spaces accessible or to reveal the deeper layers of the architecture. The stretching of boundaries, for example through close collaboration between different disciplines, may even lead to transgression, a transition from one visual medium to another.

2 CONFRONTATION WITH THE STRAITJACKET

Bout studied at the Technical University of Delft. He was one of the first students to graduate not on a design, but on a text (1975) bearing the significant title: "The principles of designing". He was looking for the driving mechanisms behind the relationship between social conduct and the built-up environment, or more precisely for results of research performed by social scientists which could serve as the basis for an interdisciplinary and scientific approach to the designing and building process (6). The personal theme of his study at the Department of Architecture was to gain knowledge and insight in power relations, social processes and the architect's role therein. By carrying out research (for example on the building regulations prescribed by national governments in Europe which, he concluded, lead to design conduct aimed at avoiding risks, and consequently evoke a certain type of design) Bout gathered in-depth knowledge and practical experience with the phenomenon of public participation in social housing schemes. Bout studied during the renowned period of democratisation in Dutch universities. At the risk of creating a caricature, one can state that the restructuring of the education system around 1970 was aimed at liberating architecture from its capitalist chains and making design serve the needs of the part of the nation living in social housing (7). Within the framework of the democratisation of society and the emancipation of the citizen through a more equal distribution of power and the levelling of income, it was thought that the architect should focus on bridging the gap between the needs of the citizen and the development of his housing environment, either in urban expansion districts, or in the historic inner cities. Such an ambitious undertaking makes heavy demands on this type of architect: willingness to participate in public enquiry procedures, cost consciousness and a very flexible attitude. This attitude not seldom had a detrimental effect on designing qualities. The struggle for a better "physical environment" was not only justified using the sociological jargon of "humane living" but was also linked to the heroic period of "Nieuwe Bouwen" (New Building) in the twenties. The heroes of that era were asked about their contribution to the individual building, social housing and the city. Young civil engineers and architects attempted to give shape to the outcomes of this interrogation in the urban renewal projects undertaken in the big cities. The democratisation of the architectural profession went hand in hand with fierce criticism of high-rise buildings and of Dutch urban expansion areas, which were said to consist mainly of monotonous

single-family dwellings and flats. The Stichting Nieuwe Woonvormen i (1968–1977) was one of the initiators who aimed at animation of the future new housing developments. The involvement of the future residents was one of the main instruments with which the monotony was to be broken. This contribution was fruitful here and there, for example in several “Centraal Wonen” projects and experiments with casco-building. The architecture, however, cannot be described as elevated (8). As an official working at the Foundation for New Living Designs (1968–1977), the Werkgroep 2000 and the Provincial Authorities in South Holland, Bout was involved in public participation procedures in, a.o., Spijkenisse and Vlaardingen (9). The emancipation and the growing political awareness of the future residents was to result in a different kind of housing environment: extra quality through higher building densities, multifunctional use of space, varied chain of dwellings, but above all less paternalism from the authorities. However, paternalism was substituted by a different treatment: the sociological jargon of security and human needs. Bout personally experienced that government busybodies and lack of pluck combined with the conventions of the construction practice present limitations to such an extent that the architect cannot perform his actual profession. The architect became a “public participation assistant” and the residents ended up in monocultures. In an article published in 1978, Bout was still optimistic about the possibilities of public participation, a year later skepticism predominated (10). The collective hangover from public participation initiatives was heaviest in the case of the most ambitious public participation project of the seventies: Spijkenisse. Spijkenisse was designated “New City” in 1977 and plans were that the number of inhabitants of this small town should increase from 30,000 to 90,000 in twelve years. The council allocated future residents houses which had not yet been drawn and for which the architect was still to be appointed. Instead of the owners it was the users – the tenants – who were to be the construction managers. Even though participation was limited to giving substance to programmes already developed by national government, the resident acted as planner of his own future living environment. Enticed by infrastructural gratuities offered by national government, the council became caught up in an active centralist policy. This subordination led to an extremely intensive planning process involving numerous strong partners who eventually defeated the weaker brothers – the architects and the residents. Public participation declined into a management and sales technique. There is probably no other place in the Netherlands where the gap between the raised expectations and the final dwellings and living envi-

ronment is wider. Accordingly, Bout's conclusion was that "Modern architecture and public participation seldom mix" (11). Not only in the public participation Ω culture but also in his capacity of practising architect, Bout experienced that councils and construction companies work according to a method and management that does not serve the realisation of architecture. He experienced the same during the years he was active in alternative and environmentally-friendly circles in Holland, involved in conspicuous initiatives such as "De Kleine Aarde" and the magazine "De Twaalf Ambachten". He published a design for a do-it-yourself house (12) and heavily criticised the waste of materials in urban renewal projects in the larger cities ("interior demolition"), where many cheap houses permanently disappeared and materials which could be re-used were replaced by more inferior materials (13). He thus linked up with the appeals of residents' groups who wished to maintain not only the old street pattern, but also the social cohesion, the existing mix of firms, workshops and shops and therefore the liveliness in their neighbourhood (14). But alternative initiatives also, such as small-scale and ecological construction, unnecessarily excluded too much and encouraged extremely normative behaviour. Only occasionally does an architect come across a crevice through which escape is possible. Bout's competition entries for Stawon (1983) and the Unesco "Tomorrow's Habitat" (1984) date back to this period. These works can be considered as exercises in ascetic living, variations of the "Existenzminimum": simple construction, low maintenance and advanced prefabrication. Repetition and monotony were on the lurk in the case of these designs. Slightly less austere was the entry for a housing competition in Den Bosch (1983), but here also minimalism was predominant. The design consists of a very long and extremely narrow building site, in skyscraper terms a "sliver", which moreover is situated in a sensitive inner city tissue. Small jumps in the building line and large differences in height help to emphasize the "sliver"-like nature in the longitudinal direction of the street which is reinforced by the stretched vertical windows. If one were standing in front of the façades one would observe four separate buildings each with their own façade. Bout also uses the ascetic as a theme in a design for a summer house in Finland (1981), consisting of a manipulation of the classic cube in such a way that the standard interior of a Finnish holiday home fits in it. All these designs have in common the suppression of aesthetic pretensions. Bout's design for a prefab-house constructed in timber frame (Padowx house 1986) looks like yet another typological reference to Le Corbusier's Maison Citrohan and his Monol-type. Because typically enough, Bout ex-

pressly refers to the industrial fabrication of the automobile. But the fact that no aesthetic expectations are attached is illustrated by the ironic title "ugly duckling" (Citroen 2CV). Foremost are a low price without any form of subsidy, a record construction time of a few days, and comfort (15). The positive conclusion to be drawn from all these experiences – building for public participation, ecological construction and building for the breadline – was that Bout had gathered practical experience and was now convinced that he mastered the profession. The negative conclusion was that the architect's own responsibility was too marginal within the boundaries set by those participating in the building process. In Bout's opinion, there is a growing tension between the everyday, rigid building practice and the increasing diversity in society: the divide between working and non-working members of the population, the drastic decrease in the number of family households, the differences in income, the wide range of life styles, the increasing mobility. He brings up for discussion architectural practice, where both architects and users are hostages of the conventions and regulations of a paternalistic government bureaucracy and the intertwined interests of the building industry. The constant underlying issue is: what right do those dictating regulations have to create straitjackets and what has happened to the regard for the civilian's own responsibility? Why is he not allowed to live and work the way he wants? But also: why do residents have such a limited number of references with respect to architecture, while they demonstrate more daring for example in their choice of clothes? The margins for pertinence were too small. This realisation meant a radical rupture for Bout. From 1980 onwards he refused to collaborate with the system and went in search of his own way. He decided to, wherever possible, be his own patron.

3.HIS OWN WAY

After being introduced to the work of a group of Californian architects (among others Frank Gehry and Brian Murphy) around 1980, Bout pointed his feelers in the direction of the United States of America. The candour with which these American architects sought collaboration with artists had a magnetizing effect on Bout. Since that time, the conscious search for common ground with the visual arts has been a constant element in Bout's approach. He visited New York and California in 1981 (and regularly after that). In that period his work was a response to the exchange of arts: a design competition for a children's playground, installations and joint projects with artists of other disciplines. Examples are his collaboration with Jan van Munster in a light project in Apeldoorn and project 226, an inter-disciplinary project with dancers which Bout conceived. In exaggerated terms, before Bout's trip to the States his designs were primarily focused on an ideal image, after which the slumbering aesthetics could be awakened. In addition to (furniture) exhibitions, Bout made designs for furniture – originally composed of elementary geometrical shapes – such as lamps, chairs for children, beds, bookcases and toys. For example, Bout's entry in a Finnish competition for new ideas on children's toys (1982) was composed of elementary geometrical shapes: semi-cylinders, half or quarter cubes (partly open), a three-dimensional rectangle and two round wooden rods. Children were incited to stack up the shapes to make big objects such as chairs, trains or a theatre. Another example dates back to 1981: a table comprising a round glass top, a rectangular wooden support and a triangular base made of brown steel. But a year later Bout made another fragile-looking table. The glass top is roundish, yet neither oval-shaped nor a circle. The wooden support, originally rectangular, has rounded edges and the second support of this table is an iron rod ending in a playful curl which rests on the floor. Bout focuses on breaking open the connection between a certain way of thinking and a certain form. His own home in Rotterdam has served as an experimental garden. Its interior was ripped out and refurbished by Bout himself. As an architect he has designed for various principals, such as homes for private owners and housing projects for developers (16). An extreme example is the construction of a small house in Rotterdam consisting of a large living room and kitchen, three bedrooms and a toilet. The materials used are second-hand and waste materials: sheets of corrugated iron, old doors, glass partitions. For Bout the circumstances under which this project was carried out were ex-

4. CONCEPTS AND DESIGN RULES

In Bout's approach designing rules can be detected. The frame of reference is broad, there is no marked preference. There is no unrestricted stream of subconsciousness ("automatic writing" in the Surrealist tradition) as is rather artificially imitated by the Viennese architect-duo Coop Himmelb(l)au on the premise that in this way all external circumstances, the clichés and existing ideas can be shut out and that art and architecture can thus be reconciled (17). Bout does not employ such rhetoric. He does however wish to question all definitions and conventions. In that sense he shows more resemblance to Eva Hesse who so disarmingly stammered her creed: "I remember I wanted to get to non art, non connotive, non anthropomorphic, non geometric, non, nothing, everything, but of another kind, vision, sort. from a total other reference point. is it possible? I have learned that anything is possible. I know that. that vision or concept will come through total risk, freedom, discipline. I will do it " (18). In the initial situation Bout adopts a conceptual approach. Bout will study a new space first through a series of sketches, the "routing" of which is essential. The routes enable movement through the space, the boundaries and passages must never obstruct the movement. Vitality is more important than design (19). When the concept becomes more tangible, it is fleshed out in an associative process. In the originally created space Bout, or the group he works with, makes use of all kinds of possibilities for associations to emerge. Bout continually looks back on his former work in search of links and new initiatives. Ultimately, he is looking for images behind the design and for means of expression which combine not only such underlying images but also the field of impressions and "borrowed" material. Bout's conceptual method is expressed in conversions, installations, models and pieces of furniture based on combinations of spatial figures and carefully chosen materials; as well as in large drawings which illustrate general concepts that need not be portrayed in a scale model. They are usually accompanied by statements on the subject of architecture.

5. THE SCALE MODELS

The making of models offers less opportunities than actual construction. There is a tension between what is desired and what is possible. The restrictions lie in the material available and the scale. The basis is formed by an idea, but the availability of material for models (with specific characteristics!) also influences the end result. Not all materials can be combined. Furthermore, it must be possible to transport the often weak material: glued joints may well be strong, but the material itself may be fragile and weak. The choice of materials depends on the basic ideas or the initial situation. Next, a certain line of approach is plotted. The material directs the production process, the options and subsequently, in part, the form. Models on a scale of 1:10 or 1:20 are most suitable because recognition is facilitated and the width of walls can be distinguished. The basis for Bout's models is the visualisation of architectonic archetypes in the sense of design which is pre-programmed by society and traditional, which are disrupted by generating new possibilities. In collaboration with various groups of people, Bout makes models (often competition entries) that serve to develop ideas and creativity. Bout determines the framework and the theme and wants to find out where the group creativity will lead. He either gives each group member a role or does not issue any structuring instructions beforehand. The final shape of the models is of secondary importance; evoking emotions is foremost. In Bout's opinion, models are more suitable than drawings for representing the mood and the spatial effect of a design. His models can be considered montages of material and form that suggest concrete spatial divisions which moreover can actually be realised. The result is always a raw, almost loud image. Obvious is not only Bout's preference for lively colours, but at the same time the texture's almost ugly fragility in which coincidence appears to play a key role. Each series of models is centred around a different body of data. Each time, the architect introduces filters so that it is possible to work towards an end product. Sometimes even compromises are inevitable to reach the final stage. In conceptual terms, the models can be reduced to two processes: reduction and discomfort ("decharging") versus expression and free interpretation ("charging"). An archetype serves as a starting point and is stripped of social pre-programming. After this disruption new possibilities are introduced which make the "still life" as such indigestible. Here are a few examples. The "One-dimensional House" (1982) consists of a surface area with three indications of loose façades. They suggest a virtual reality:

a slanted roof, set distances between the façades and in each façade a cut-away for a door. One of the façades is made of transparent plexiglass, the façade in the middle consists merely of an outline made of a steel rod, the third façade is made of steel: the three aspects of a façade – the hermetic, the open and the boundaries – are combined in a single image. Yet this image also permits the interpretation that we are dealing with one and the same house in which all the façade characteristics are summarised. They represent the profile of present-day hollowed out living. The "House of Frozen Water" (1992) is made of MDF-board, painted white to evoke the association with ice. The archetype is disrupted by connecting doors and windows, permitting volume but no interior. The manipulation freezes the disrupted relationship between interior and exterior. The "Transparent House" is inspired by an existing dwelling with archetypical traits. It is constructed of metal gauze soldered together. The choice of material turns the squares in the gauze into modules. Furthermore, maximum transparency is achieved so that it becomes impossible to take clear photographs of its forms. Another aesthetic moment is the decision to abort the traditional wall thickness, even to widen it as it were to make an interior space, in other words to make outer and inner walls of the same thickness. The rooms are cages within a cage. The model gives the impression of an X-ray of an almost evaporated house. The second process Bout applies in his models, is "charging", namely the search for extreme expressions of material and form which can be interpreted in numerous ways. The models are the fruit of a self-conferred assignment or a competition entry. Non-uniform repetition of shapes and spatial variety are permanent ingredients. Formal contradictions can also be detected within each model: geometry versus the organic, order and chaos, repetition and difference, hard and soft, permanence and change. The following are a few examples of this process. The model "Summer House" (1989) is invitingly open on one side and closed on the other. The open side consists of a row of rods set out at a considerable distance from each other. This palisade encloses an open space which is bordered by a semi-circular wall on the side facing the middle of the house. The seclusion of this space is reinforced by two irregularly shaped blocks which mark the space. Behind these blocks lies the secluded part of the house: three rooms of different dimensions and materials, all issuing onto a communal corridor. One of the rooms is delimited by a white wall, the wall in the other room has a very fine lattice with small windows. The third room has three large windows. The fourth room is of a totally different nature and comprises a horizontal triangle without a base. Finally, on the edge

of the house hangs a small square room without an opening or doorway. Somewhere outside the house proper stands a zigzagging wall with holes, possibly the garage. Thus, with a little bit of effort one can distinguish "functions" in this house, but these are no match for the "possibilities" which can be distilled from the model. The "Japanese House" (1987) has three walls: a long, wavy, grey wall made of wood and a wall with a short, white wave containing cut-aways of various sizes which suggest windows. The third wall is a square, wire glass wall which serves as a window. The entrance to the house is indicated by a long, rectangular wall made of sanded down wood and by a space in the shape of a three quarter circle intended for kitchen and sanitary facilities. The space outside is filled with a wooden cube and an erect slim rectangle. It is an ascetic space which corresponds with the traditional Japanese housing culture. The "Unesco House" (1987) consists of three horizontal elements: floor slab, storey slab with a round hole and an elongated block of wood (kitchen), a slanted roof suggested by bent wire. A very tall column penetrates both floors and sticks out of the roof like a chimney. A wide grid suggests an outer wall with twenty windows. The horizontal elements are complemented by two vertical elements. Between both slabs there is an oval piece of wood (sanitary unit) and an iron stair which sticks through the round hole into the glass slab.

6. THE INSTALLATIONS

Installations which are realised as a result of collaboration between various disciplines and people are exceptionally suitable for breaking out of sectarian architectonic frames of reference. An installation can be considered as a life-size model, differing from a realised object in that it is set up temporarily and that it can be the stage for ritual activities. If the installation is built solidly enough, the behaviour of the actor or the observer within the space is totally free. By using the space, he or she can live it. Because Bout's aim is vital architecture, he likes to work with living material. For example: a group of dancers moves through the installation and brings the space to life. But the observer too can be invited to take active part. For example: for an installation in the Hague Centre for Contemporary Art (October 1992), Bout was allocated three rooms. He filled the rear-most room with a series of disarranged, cubic shapes of widely diverse sizes made of unfinished chipboard mounted together in topsy-turvy fashion. Circling around this conglomerate, the observer could choose from various angles. The two other rooms were left completely empty. "There was a peculiar tension between the ethereal emptiness of the "unused" white rooms and the topsy-turvy compression of the back room....". Work like this undeniably refers to a ritual passage: coming from nothingness one enters a labyrinth, to then leave it and once again enter nothingness" (19). Bout focuses on spatial constructions with partly visible and partly imaginary lines and volumes. In order to bring these spatial scenes to life, moving bodies are introduced which lend a diversity of perspectives to the space. In comparison to old-fashioned plays or costume films it is striking how reduced the installations are: attention is not drawn to human behaviour expressed by means of mimicry, allegory and ~ all kinds of attributes, but to the relationship between the moving human bodies and the surrounding space. By using and observing it, the space can be experienced as an essential entity. As a ritual space, the installation is a highly appropriate medium for combating the idea of the still life by introducing movement. The shots that remain after the installation has been dismantled, are "life-photographs" which register the movement, and photographs for which the dancers have posed. The decision to oppose the still life also has a shady side: the body of documentation on the installation frequently consists of no more than motionless, instantaneous exposures, which literally freeze the movement; they are never to be completed. In sixteenth and seventeenth century interpretations of the treatise made by the Roman

architect Vitruvius, the Ten Books on Architecture, man serves as the measure for every architectonic composition. This interpretation is symbolically portrayed in the representation of a man with arms stretching out diagonally and legs apart who is placed in a square. In the twentieth century, Le Corbusier updated this image in his measuring system which is a variation on the golden section: the Modulor. Bout made this image – an average human measure of 226 by 226 cm – three-dimensional by suggesting a cube. This he achieved by fixing four rods of the specified size in vertical position on a square base plate. If 81 rods are placed according to this principle, eight rows of eight cubes are formed in an area measuring eighteen by eighteen metres. This is the spatial concept for an open-air dance project "Bewegingsmaat Twee-Twee-Zes" (Measure of Motion Two-Two-Six) which was performed on the Schouwburgplein in Rotterdam (1983) (20). The rigid aspect of the stage was softened by spanning semi-transparent screens (gauze) at irregular intervals between the rods, in both horizontal and vertical direction. Human figures in white overalls improvised dance as if they were chess pieces moving across the board according to their own rules, driven by the music composed to the measure 2-2-6 and produced by the iron hammers of a "xylophone" consisting of 16 aluminium pipes and a large wooden drum. A combination of collaboration between visual artists and the extension of the concept "house" was applied in an installation in Delft (1991). The basic idea, which was first elaborated in a model, consists of five cubes – each with its own colour – whose ribs are inseparably linked. By tilting, shifting and weaving the cubes, the conventional concept "house" is reshuffled. The installation is carried out in underlayment. The ribs of the cubes span five to six metres. Each cube has its own colour. For this installation Bout engaged a choreographer who put together a programme in one week. The installation was eventually carried out by five naked dancers who were each painted in body paint the colour of one of the cubes. They moved through the space and sang children's songs. Interesting detail: the material left over from this installation was used to make a table, which while consisting of a jumble of slats and colours still meets the basic requirements of a table, such as smooth upper surfaces and supports and sides without projections. In addition to installations aimed at combining architecture, visual arts, music and dance, Bout also makes installations intended to "offload", but taken to such an extent that the archetype can no longer be recognised. "The House Project" (original idea 1990, carried out in 1993) involved the dismantling of a small wooden house belonging to the Finnish National Railway and the

subsequent transportation of the elements, which were then used to build an installation near the Art Museum in Pori (Finland). The demolition of a more or less standardised archetype of the Finnish house represents the transition from architecture to the visual arts. Where exactly does the transition lie? The anonymity and the primal characteristics of the type (shelter and minimum amount of facilities) are removed by stripping the architectural elements of their functional meaning and by placing them in a new context of meaning, a construction that is not primarily architectonic but sculptural (21). In this respect, Bout is related to an artist such as Gordon Matta-Clark. The process of "discrete mutilation", these cuts of an optical surgeon, added an extra dimension to the building. But Bout goes one step further than Matta-Clark. He lets the patient die first. Only after the parts of the body have been sorted by shape and size does the creative act commence, in other words after the dismantling of the limiting conditions belonging to architecture. It is not without reason that diagonals appear in the new sculpture, all directions are given equal chances. Everything is centred around the ritual transition (transgression) from one spatial medium (architecture) to another where space is not designed (sculpture). Moreover, in comparison with the original state, the elements of the new structure have been erected in another place, not ordered hierarchically, even put together in an absolutely arbitrary fashion. This reflects a temporary and a changeable state, the result of a process.

7. TRANSGRESSION

Over a period of twenty years, Ger C. Bout has shifted his field of activity from urban development, via architecture as an applied art, to visual arts or rather, he has dismissed the boundaries between these disciplines. His starting-point is always formed by a concept in the sense of an analysis of an assignment and a direction in which the solution can be sought. But the search process that follows does not guarantee control over the form and the structure of the end product. All efforts are aimed at working towards an ideal image according to specific guidelines. Various stages can be distinguished in that process. The first stage concerns the straitjacket: letting go of the set frame of reference. The second is stretching the archetypes, or adapting to the extreme the design options of a concept. The question constantly being asked is: how far can you go? The third stage is the most existential stage: why do I build? The progressing elimination of the prescribed guidelines ultimately affects the architect as a person in his struggle for freedom. He is hovering on the edge of the abyss: total lack of freedom means the straitjacket, but total freedom means the absence of options. In Bout's work, the dividing line between architecture and visual arts is becoming increasingly obscure. Being an architect develops from a discipline to a way of life. That is not a noncommittal choice, but an emotional search for vitality. Unpredictability is the trump card. This risk-laden approach can be compared with the concept which formed the basis of an experiment by Dennis Oppenheim. In this experiment Oppenheim exposed his virtually bare torso, of which only part was covered by an open book, to the sun for five hours in order to experience the notion of transgression: "I allowed myself to be painted, my skin became pigment" (22). It is this kind of transgression, the rays of the sun serving as the painter's brush, that Bout is ultimately looking for: to unblock the conscious mind, to deliver oneself to unknown forces, to arouse curiosity, to cherish the risky undertaking, to take risks. The issue of whether the fruits of these experiments should be labelled architecture or visual art is no longer of interest: broadening awareness is foremost. The invitation to experiences at the height of sensory perceptions in extreme conditions – the thirsty man quenched his thirst with water from a skull – carries the promise of a vital architecture.

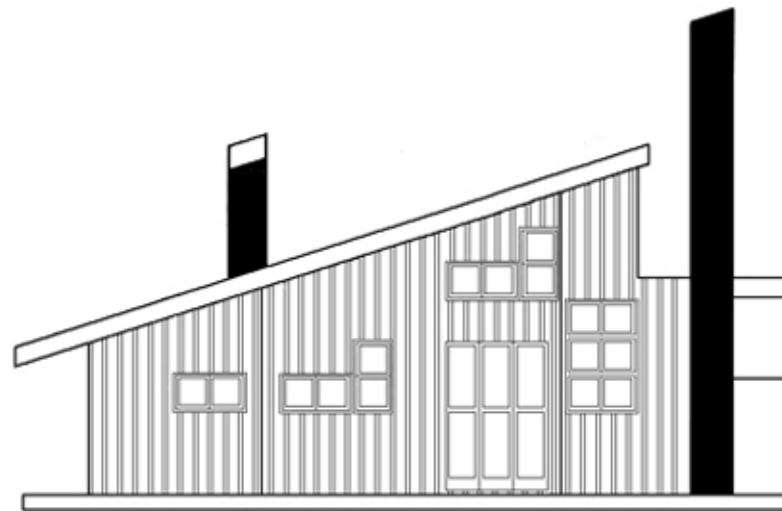
FOOTNOTES

- 1) Y. Mishima, *The Sea of Fertility*, London 1986, 26.
- 2) A. Rossi, *A scientific autobiography*, Cambridge /London 1981.
- 3) See for example: J. Hejduk, *Collapse of time. Diary constructions*, Cambridge/London 1987. J. Hejduk, *Berlin Night*, Rotterdam 1993.
- 4) See for example: M.J. Jacob, *Gordon Matta-Clark. A retrospective*, Chicago 1985.
- 5) M. Brouwer, "Gordon Matta-Clark en de taal van de architectuur", *Archis*, (1993) 4, 54-65.
- 6) A sociological approach to public space and the housing environment was very popular in the seventies. See for example: J. Gehl, *Leven tussen huizen*, Zutphen 1978 (original titel: *Livet mellem husene*, Copenhagen 1971).
- 7) See the merciless: *De elite. Een analyse van de afdeling Bouwkunde van de Technische Hogeschool te Delft*, Delft 1974.
- 8) G. Bout, "Woningbouw in Nederland", in: *Grensland-ontmoetingen*, Borken 1980, i 20-26.
- 9) G. Bout, "Vlaardingen Holy-centrum. Een gebied in aanbouw", *Plan*, (1977) 12, 9-14.
- 10) G. Bout, "Spijkenisse groeikern inspraakkern", *Plan*, (1978) 3, 22-34. G. Bout, "Spijkenisse: voorbeeld voor een groeikern met inspraak?", *Futura*, (1979) 4, 19-22. Zie ook: R. Dettingmeijer, "Onder de baksteen zit het betonskelet verborgen", *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 27 July 1977.
- 11) Lecture given in Helsinki, 31 August 1981.
- 12) "Schets voor een zelfbouwhuis", *De Twaalf Ambachten*, (1981), 19,18.
- 13) "Stadsvernieuwing, o ja?", *Futura*, (1979) 6, 14-17.
- 14) Compare Jane Jacobs' study, *The Death and Life of great American Cities*, New York 1961.
- 15) "Goedkoop wonen in een hsb-woning", *Cobouw*, 31 May 1986.
- 16) 30 Dwellings in Utrecht and 50 in Rotterdam. In an advanced stage, when the application for a planning permission was to be submitted, Bout gave the assignments back.
- 17) H. Dimitriadopoulos, "Process, or the neo-(modern) in Coöp Himmel(b)lau's

- work", Art Papers, (1993) 2, 3–6. G. Harper, "Automatic drawing: delirium or nostalgia", Art Papers, (1993)2, 14–17.
- 18) Eva Hesse quoted in: L. Lippard, Eva Hesse, New York 1976, 165.
 - 19) Ph. Peters, Ger C. Bout, The Hague 1992, 9, catalogue HCAK,1993.
 - 20) Choreography: Eef de Kievit, music Don Satijn. Dance performed by students of the Rotterdam School of Dance.
 - 21) Ph. Peters, "Standards and arbitrariness: a suggestion by Ger C. Bout", in: G.C. Bout, K. Koivisto en M. Voogt, The House Project, Pori 1993.
 - 22) Th. C. McEvelley, "The rightness of wrongness: modernism and its alter-ego in the work of Dennis Oppenheim", in: A. Heiss, Dennis Oppenheim. Selected works 1967–1990, New York 1992, 27. See also: R. Armstrong en R. Marschall, The new sculpture 1965–1975. Between geometry and gesture, New York



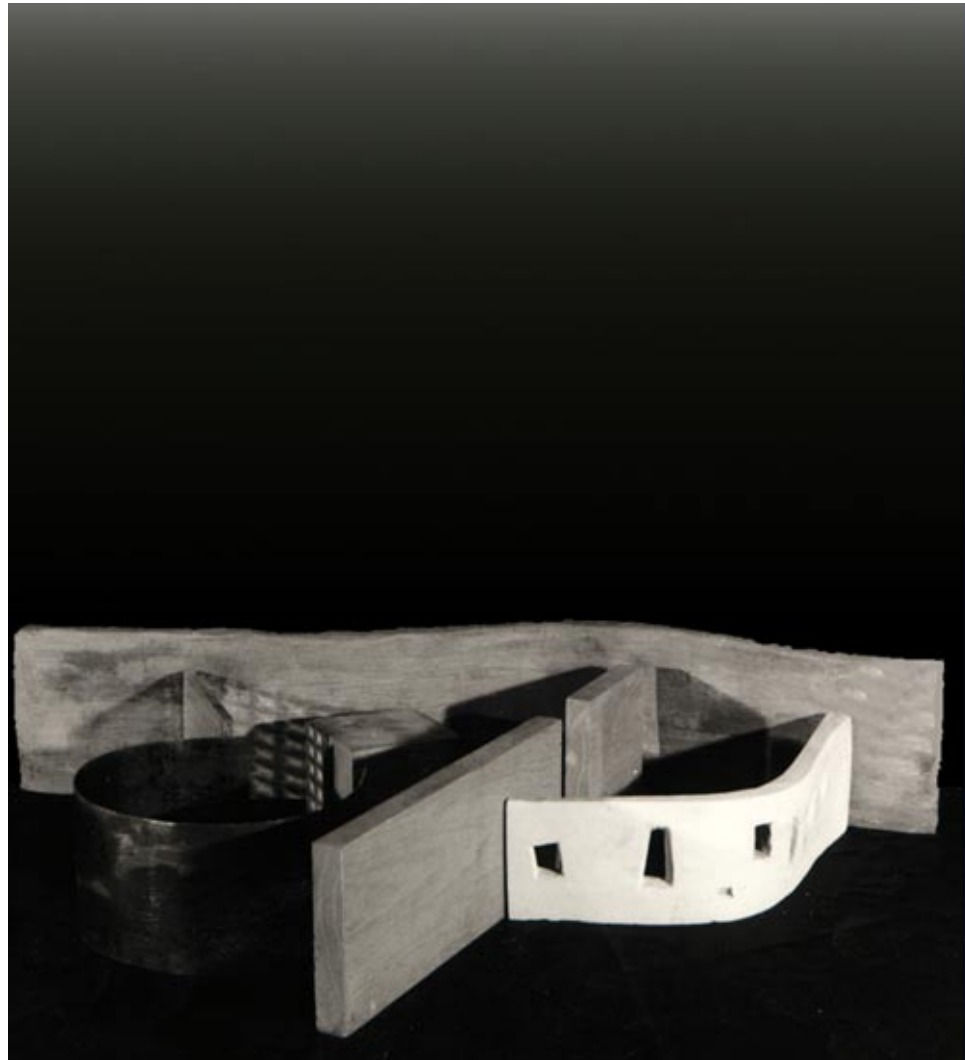
Table, 70 X 55 X 45 cm, 1981.



Design Summer Cottage, Finland, 1981.



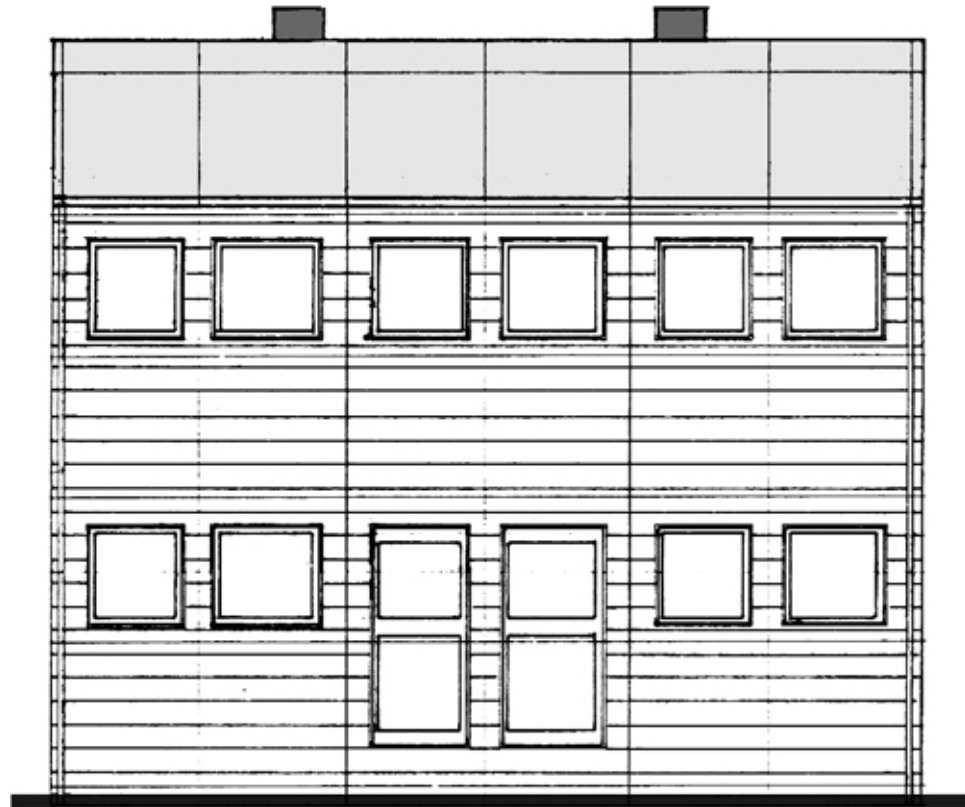
Lamp, "Heavy Light", 26 x 16 x 2,5 cm, 1982.



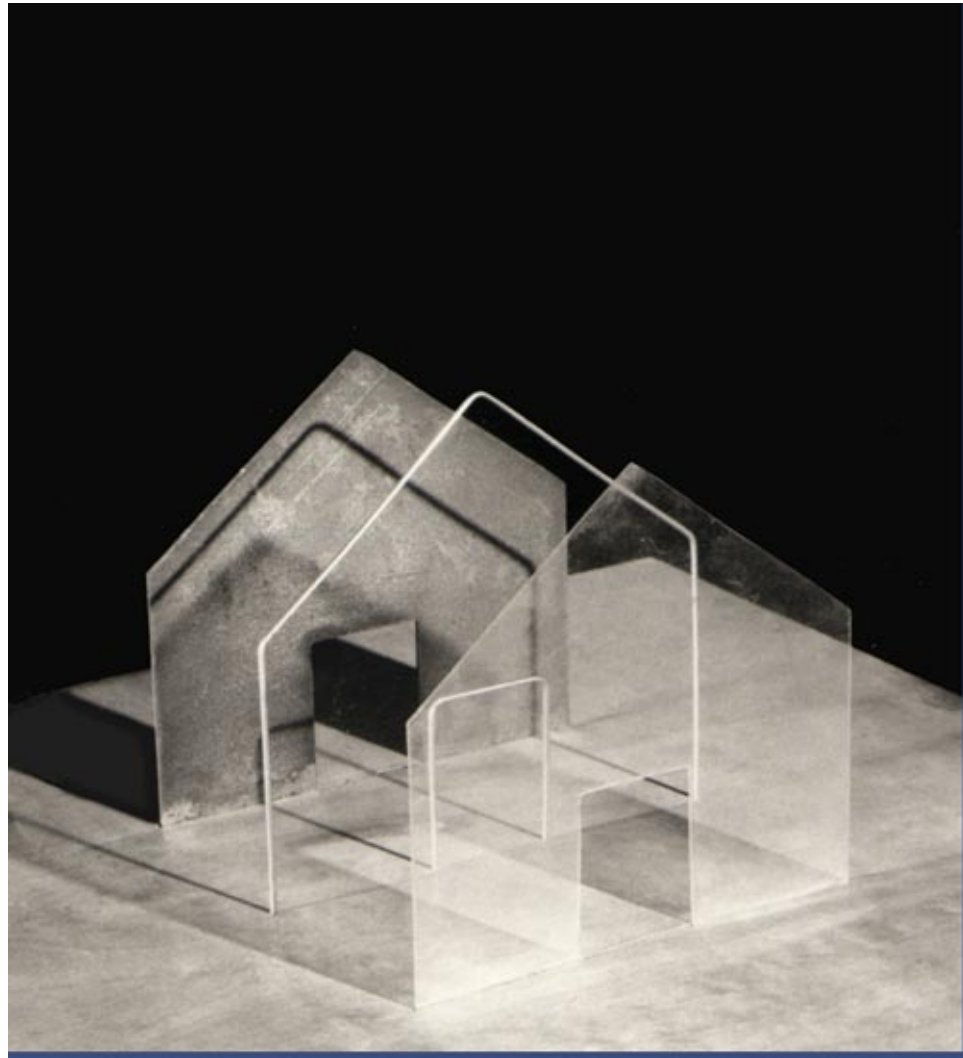
Model "Japanese House", 70 x 40 x 14 cm, 1987.



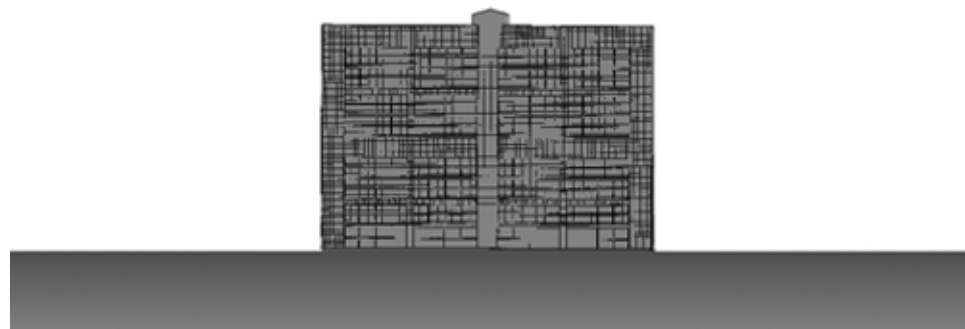
Design Marketplace, Apeldoorn, with Jan van Munster,
The Netherlands, 1982.



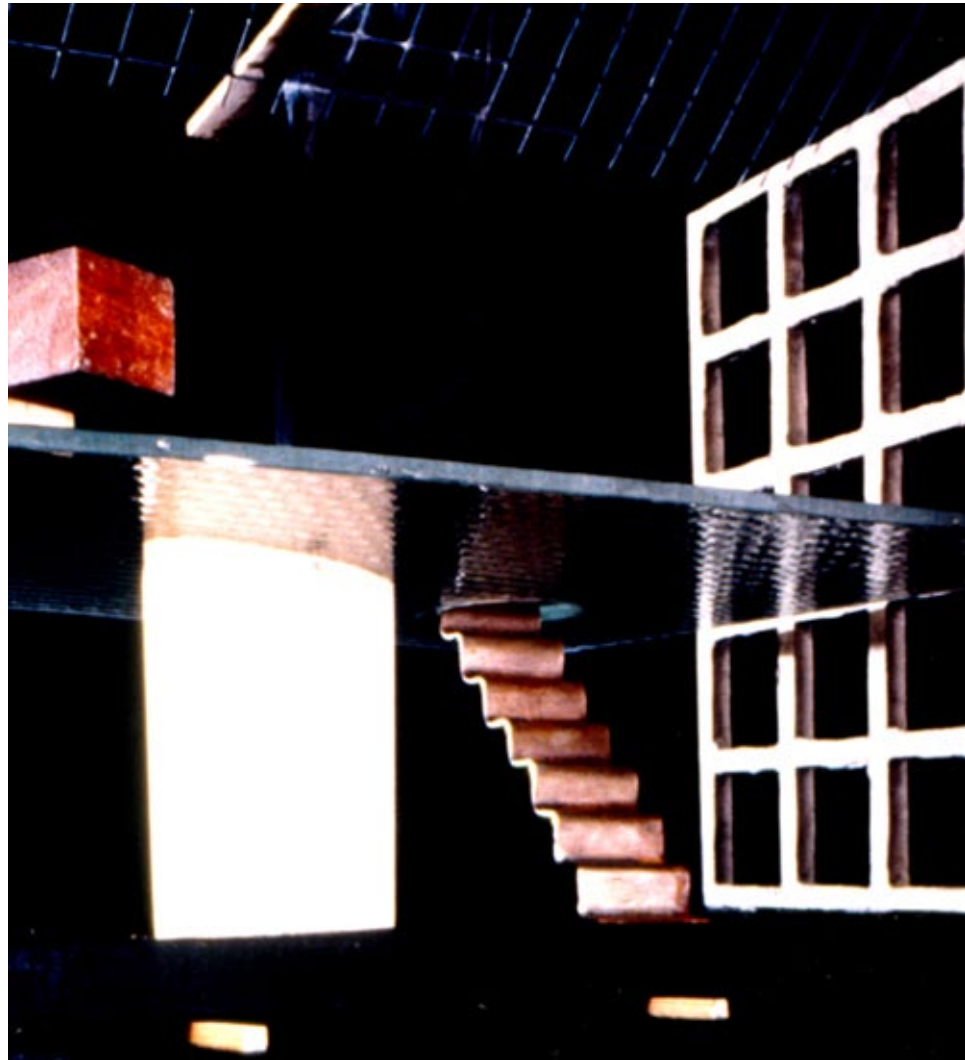
Proposal "Do-it-yourself House" 1981.



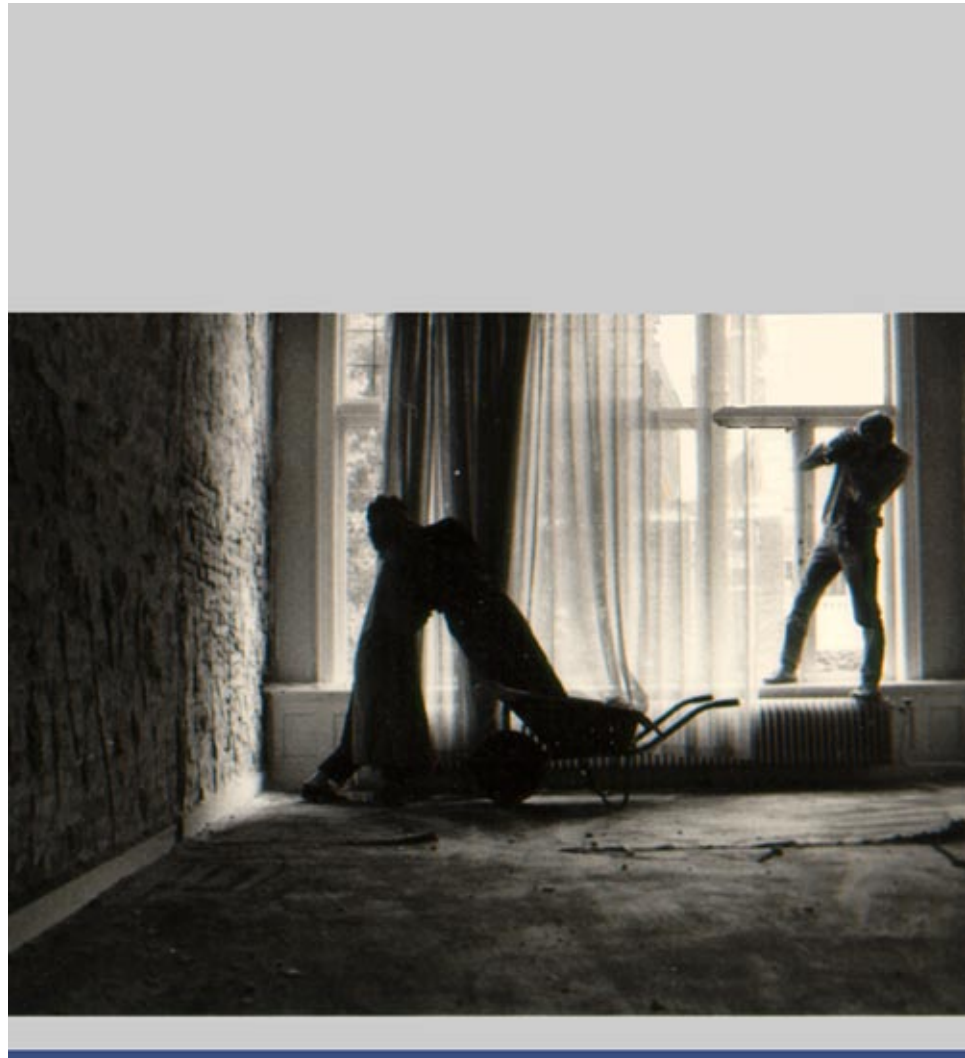
Model Entry for the Stawom Design Competition, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1984 Monument for One-Dimensional Architecture, 43 x 43 x 15 cm, 1982.



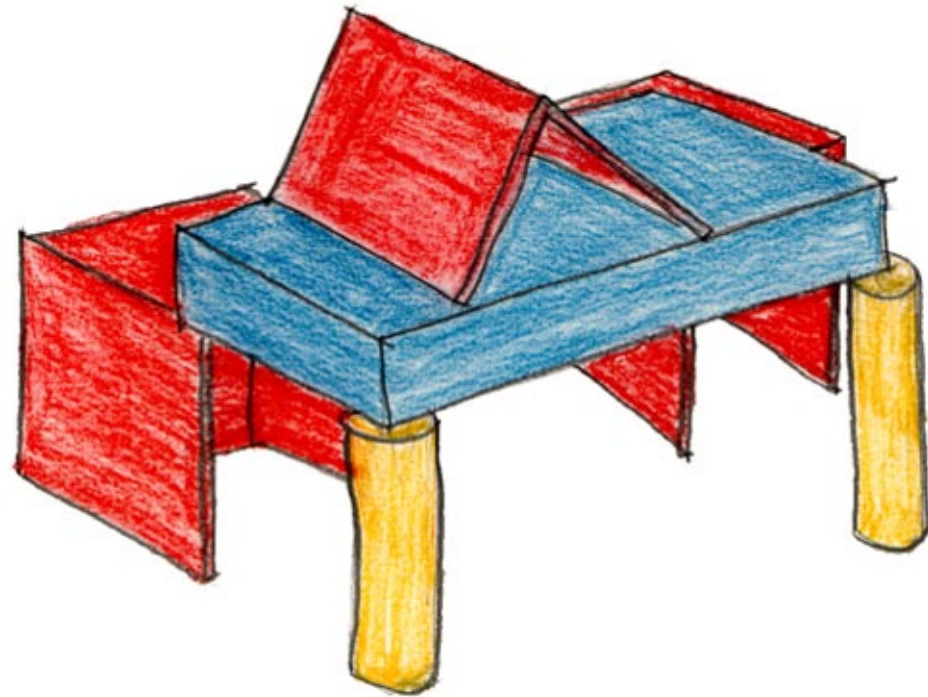
Entry for the Stawom Design Competition, Amsterdam,
The Netherlands, 1984



Model for the Unesco Design Competition, Amsterdam,
The Netherlands, 70 x 40 x 40 cm, 1987.



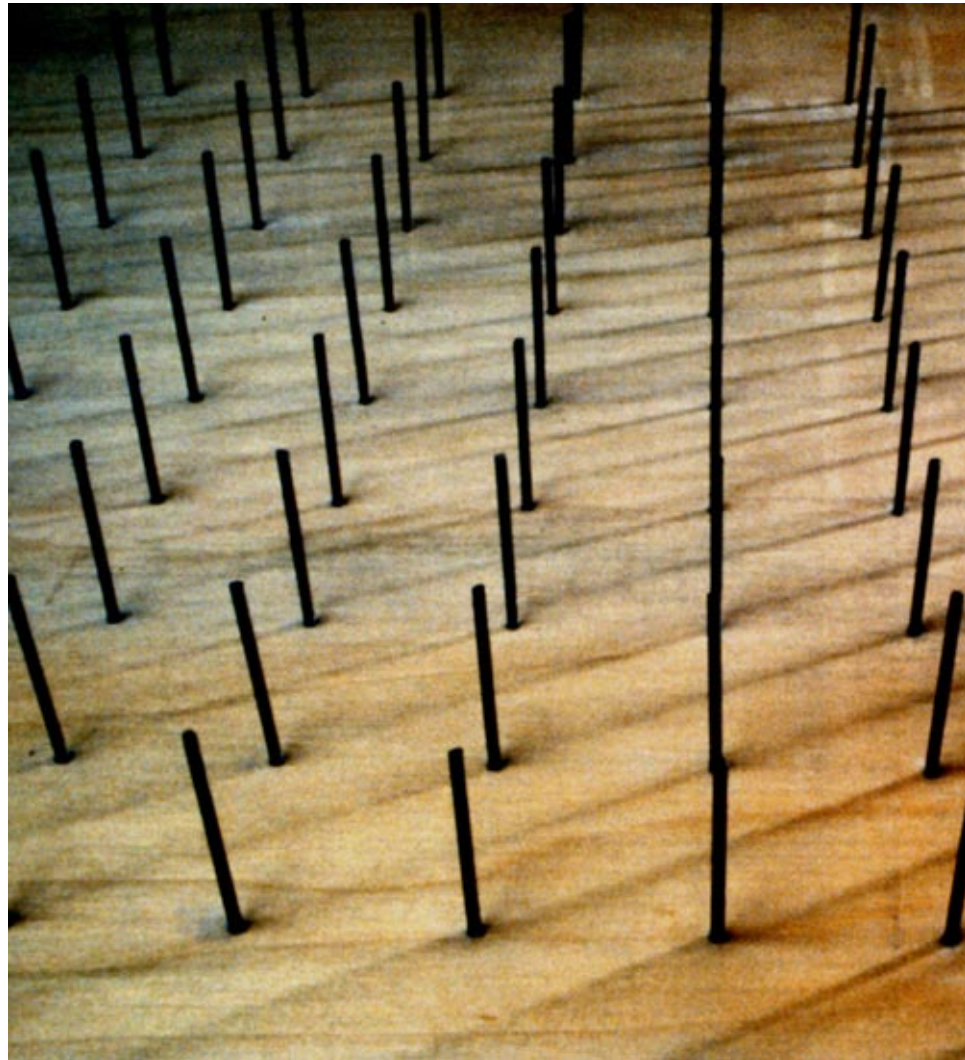
Performance, Empty House, Rotterdam,
The Netherlands, 1983.



Entry for the Children's Play Element Competition,
Finland, 1982.



Design, Gallery Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1984,
not realised.



Model, Installation Danceproject "Bewegingsmaat 226",
60 x 60 x 8 cm, 1982



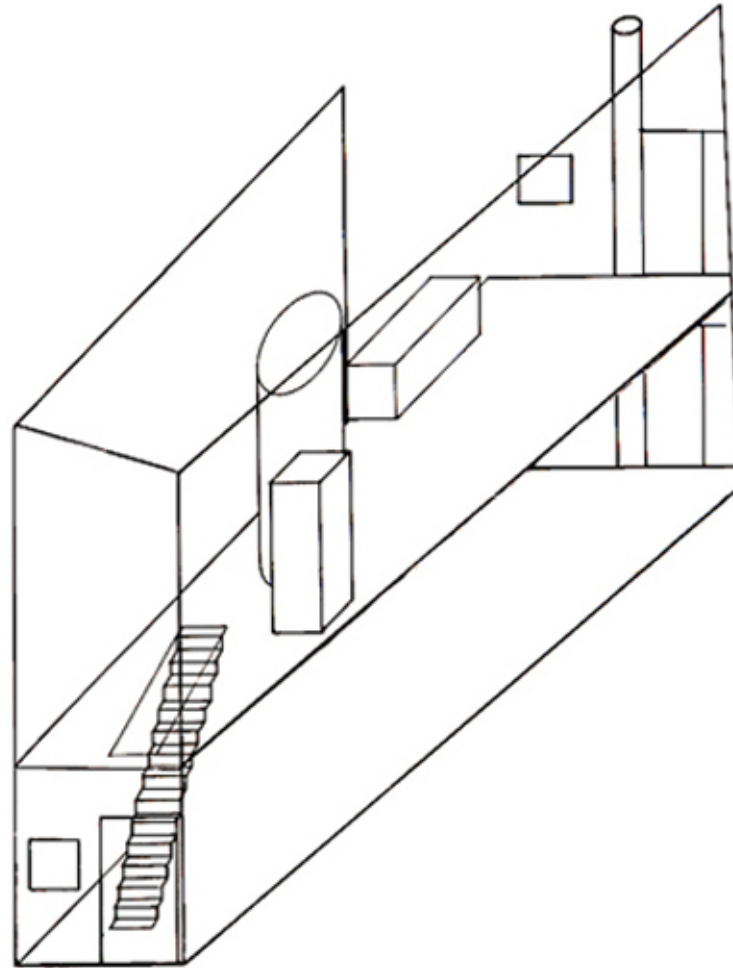
Entry for the Urban R enewal Competition,'s Hertogen-
bosch, The Netherlands, 1984



Dance Project "Bewegingsmaat 22", Rotterdam,
The Netherlands, 1983.



Design and Renovation Canal House, Ann Hill,
Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1984.



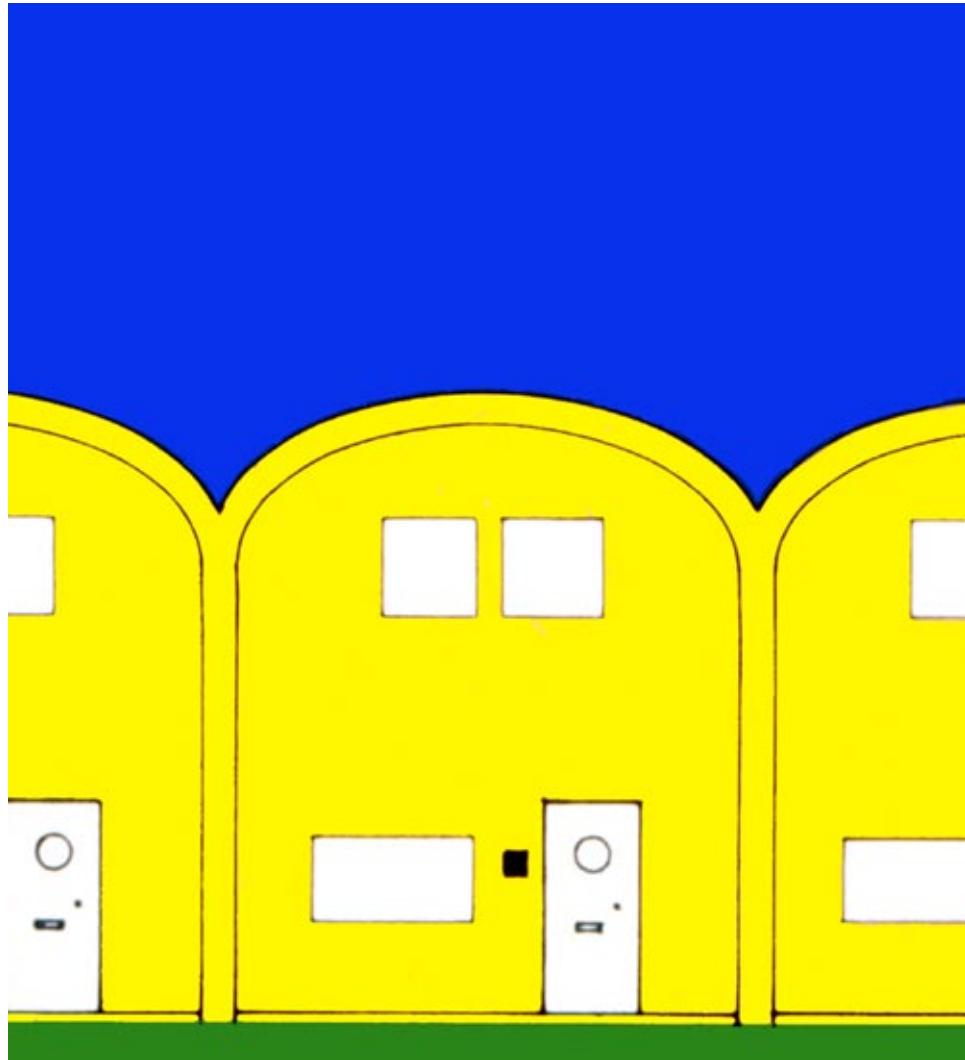
Entry for the Unesco Design Competition,
Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1984.



Summer Cottage, Tom and Anje Rubingh, Rotterdam,
The Netherlands, 1987.



Model, Summer Cottage, 125 x 90 x 28 cm, 1988.



Design, Prefab Dwelling, in collaboration with Padox BV.
Warmond, The Netherlands, 1986.



Entry for the Teylers Museum Design Competition,
Haarlem, The Netherlands, 1990.



Kitchen Design and Renovation, Fred and Mariët van
Essen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 1988.



Entry for the Chamber-Theatre-Art-Centre Design Competition, Moscow, Russia, 1990.



"Indesem", Installation, Department of Architecture,
University of Technology, Delft, The Netherlands, 1991.



Model Design House, 90 x 80 x 20 cm, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 1991.



Installation, the Centre for Contemporary Art, the
Hague, The Netherlands, 1992.



Drawing, "Architecture is Wonderful", 1993,
250 x 220 cm.

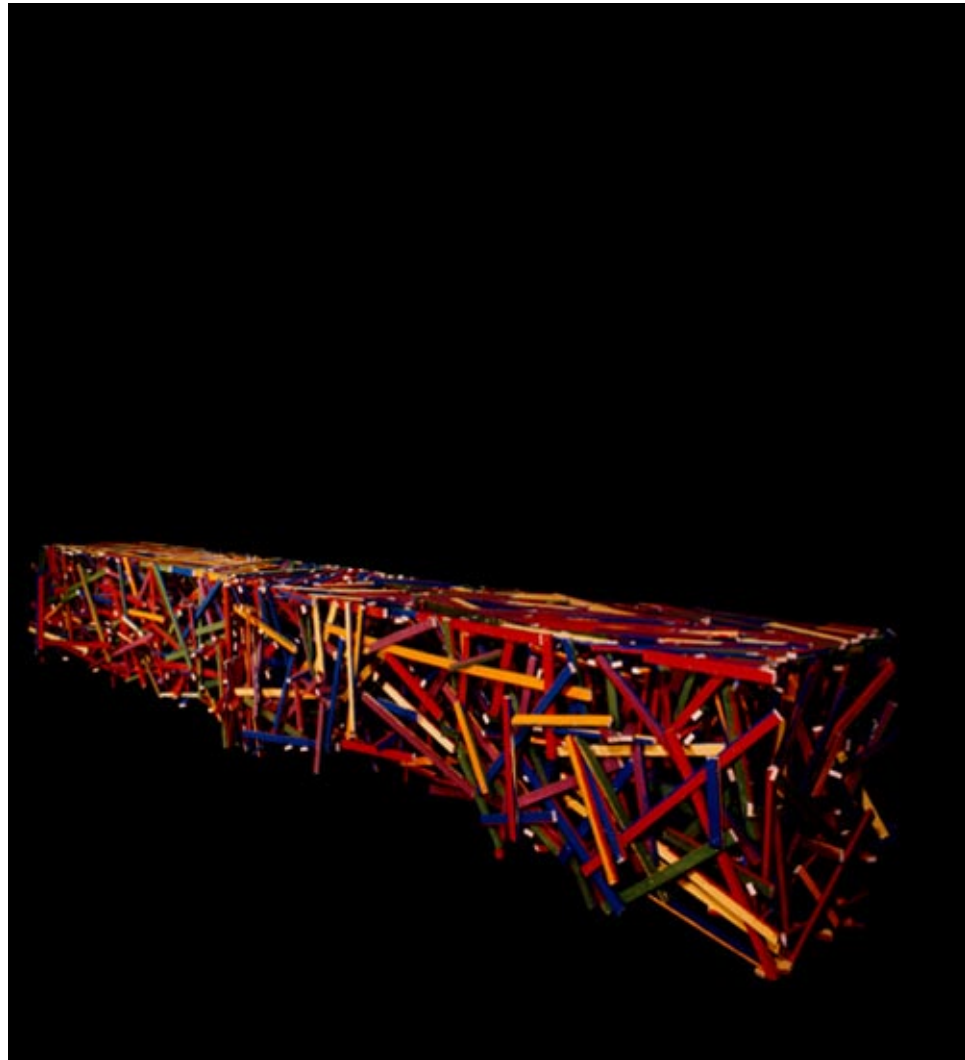
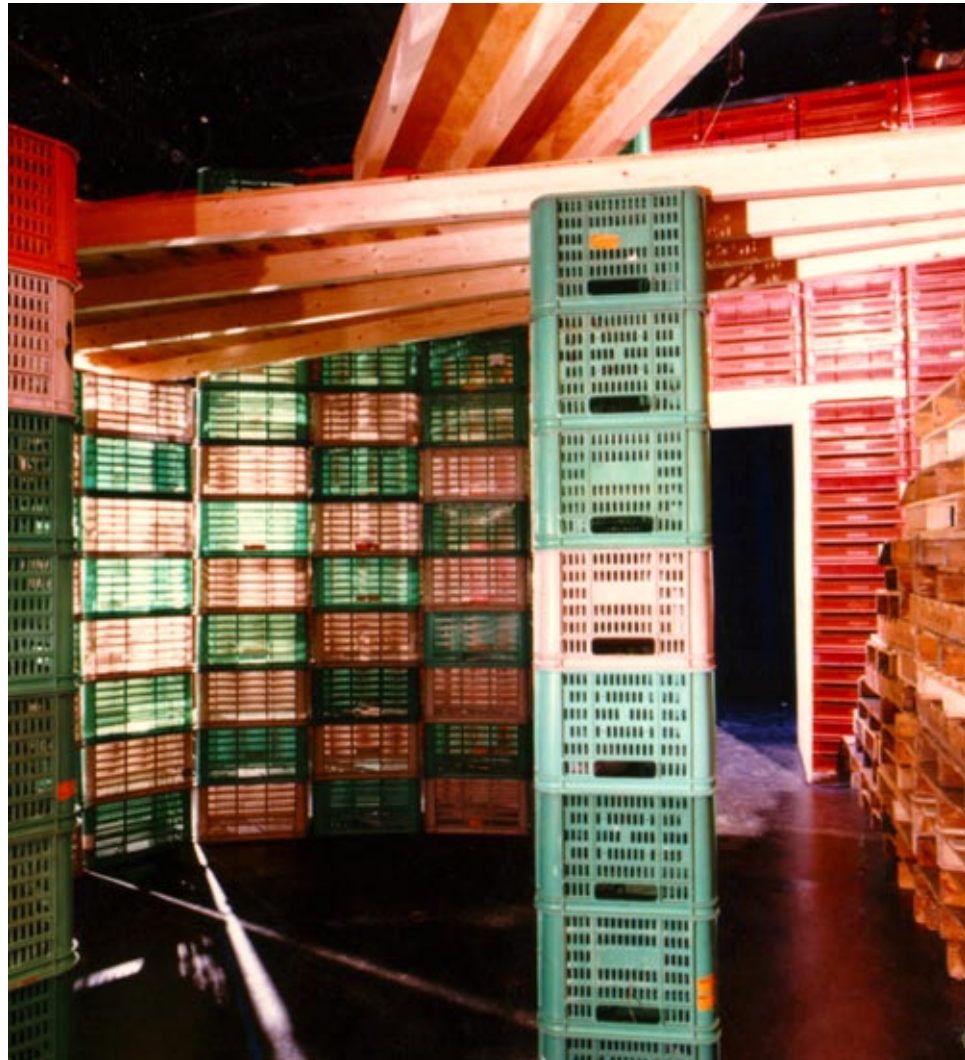


Table Number One", Entry Asahikawa International Furniture Design Competition, "Asahikawa, Japan, 1993, "Chairman's Special Award". 500 x 70 x 60 cm.



Installation, Rotterdam Art Foundation, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 1990.



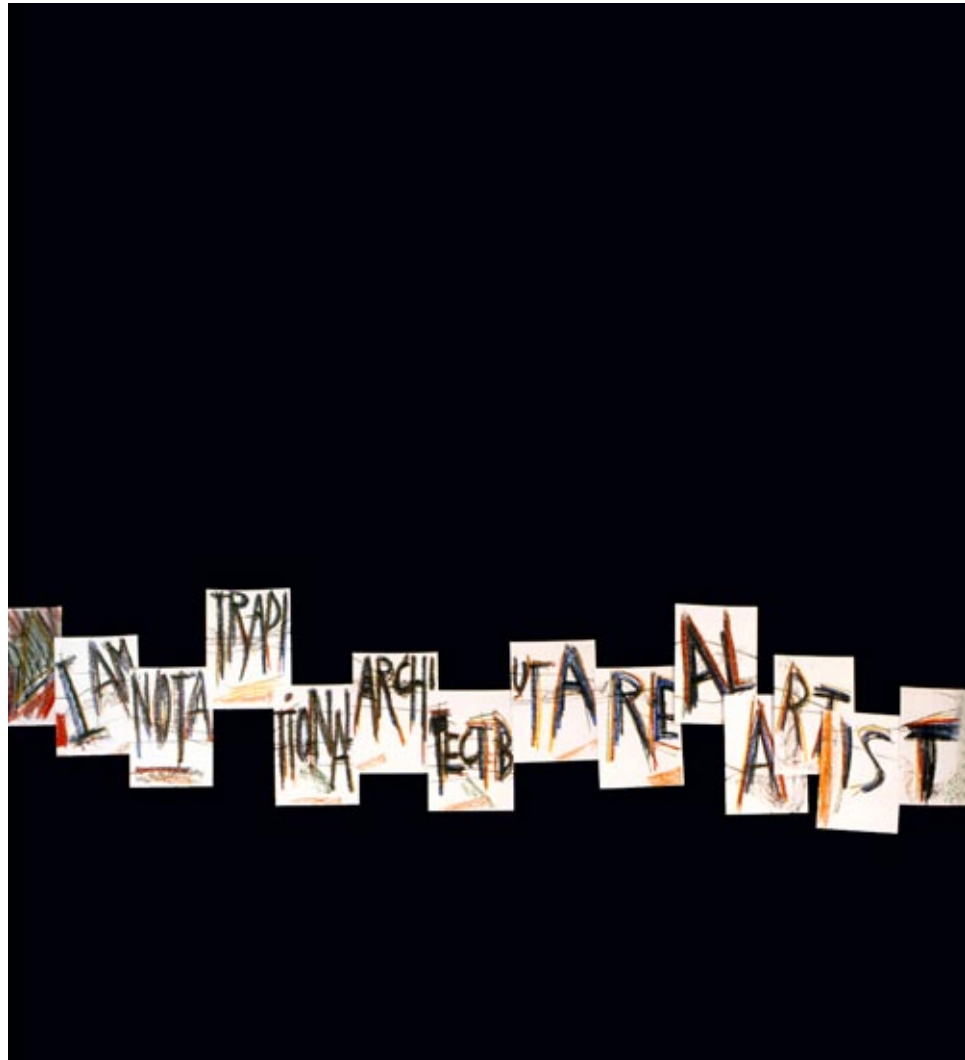
Installation, Department of Industrial Design, University of Technology, Delft, The Netherlands, 1994.



Drawing, "Dance-Design", 1993, 160 x 100 cm.



Installation, "The Magic Restaurant", Arctic Studio,
Oulu, Finland, 1994.



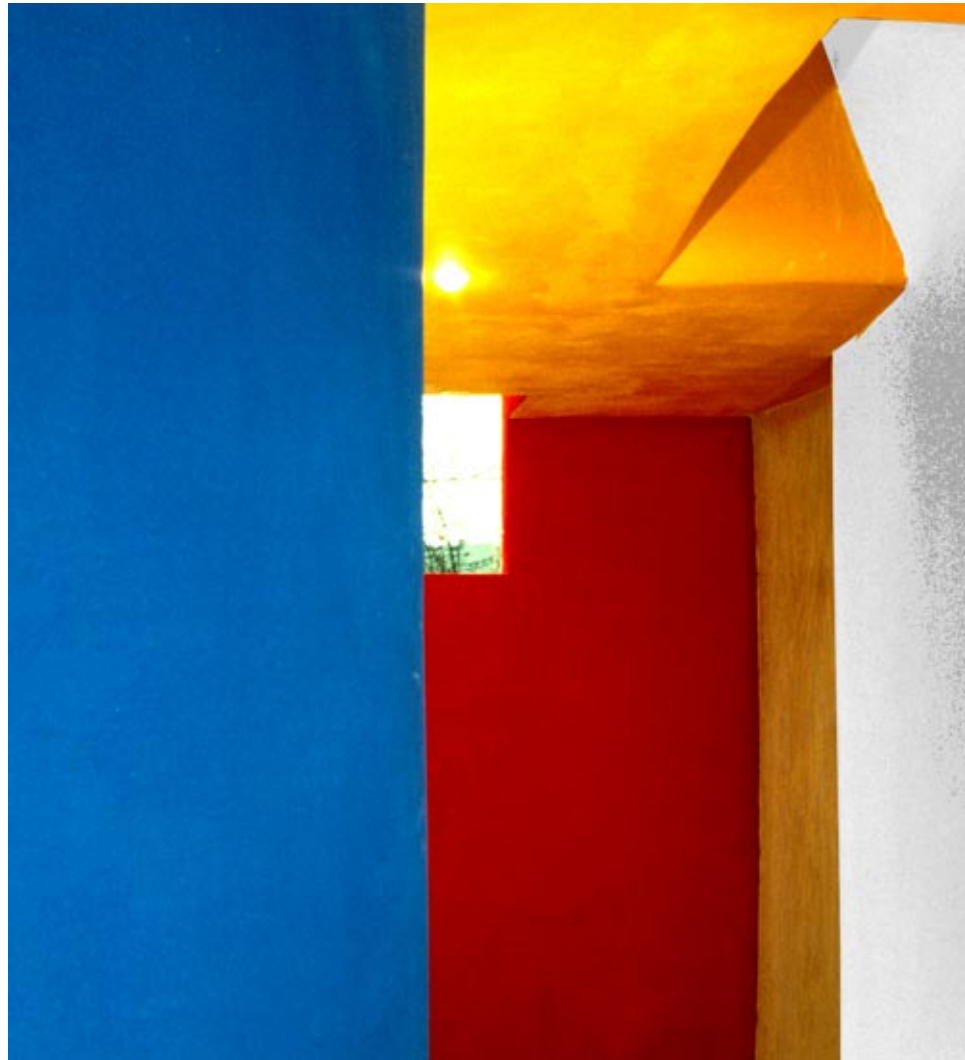
Series of Drawings, "I am not", 1993, 300 x 50 cm.



Installation, "The House Project", Museum of Modern Art, Pori, Finland, 1993.



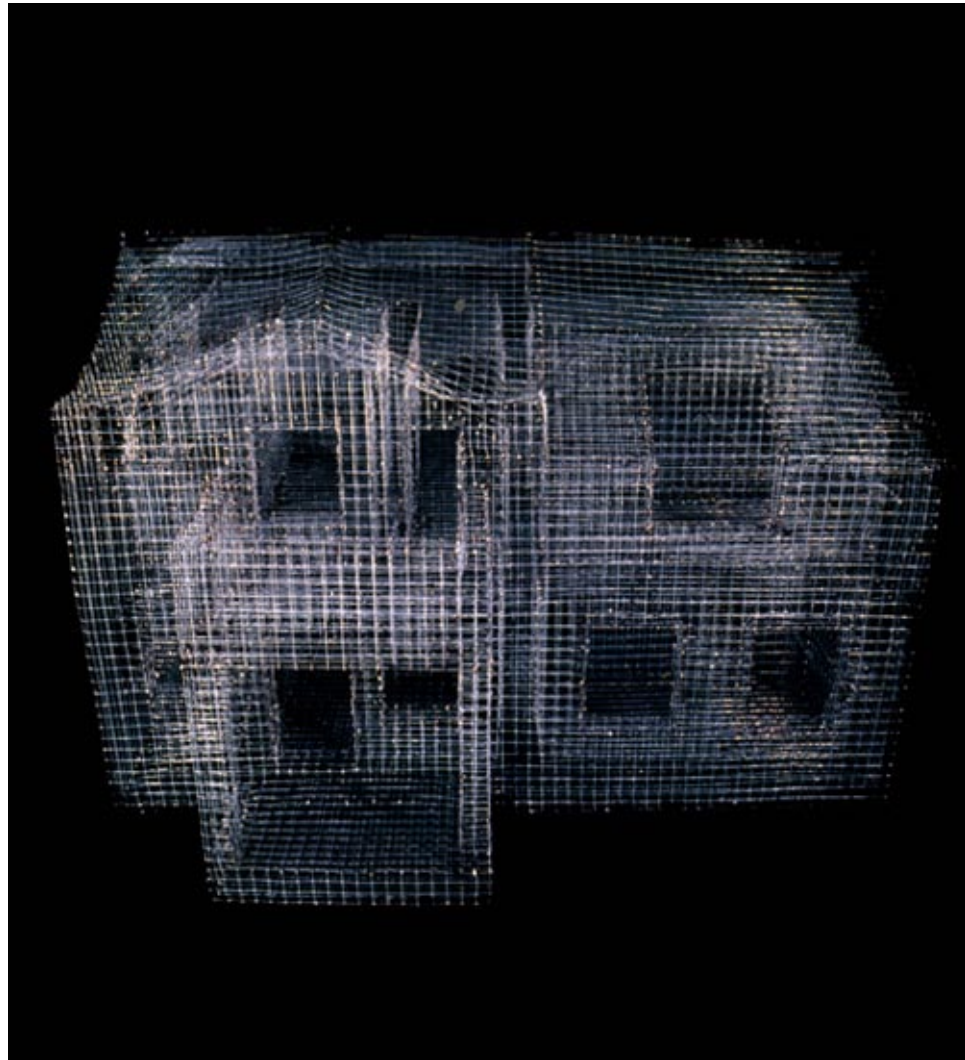
Installation, "The House Project", Museum of Modern Art, Pori, Finland, 1993.



Renovation, House, Hedi van der Niet, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 1994.



Series of Drawings, "Art is Life", 300 x 75 cm, 1993.



Model, Installation, "The Transparent House", 1992,
80 x 75 x 50 cm.



Installation, "A Three Dimensional Drawing in Three hundred Grams of Wool", The Living Art Museum, Reykjavik, Iceland, 1995



Model, "Dialogue", 60 x 40 x 30 cm, 1994.



Model, Installation, "A House of frozen Water,
60 x 50 x 40 cm, 1992.



Riitta & Ger C. Bout in Finnish Lapland, 1973.

SUMMARY OF WORKS

Installations "Licht in Kampen", Kunstruimte Kampen, Kampen, The Netherlands, 1995
"A three-dimensional drawing in 300 grams of wool", The Living Art Museum, Reykjavik, Iceland, 1995
"The Magic Restaurant", Arctic Studio, Oulu, Finland, 1994
"Full House", Vertoningsruimte Argument, Tilburg, The Netherlands, 1994
"Idee en Ruimte" (Idea and Space), Department of Industrial Design, University of Technology, Delft, The Netherlands, 1994
"The House Project", Museum of Modern Art, Pori, Finland, 1993
"For Misia", Arts Institute, Arnhem, The Netherlands, 1992
"HCAK", The Hague Centre for Contemporary Art, The Hague, The Netherlands, 1992
"De Versnelling", Arts Institute, Arnhem, The Netherlands, 1992
"Indesem", ÷Department of Architecture, University of Technology, Delft, The Netherlands, 1991
"3 x 12", Rotterdam Art Foundation, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 1990
"Het ontwerp" (The Design), School of Architecture, Utrecht, The Netherlands, 1987
"Bewegingsmaat 226", Rotterdam Art Foundation and the Rotterdam School of Modern Dance, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 1983
Exhibitions "Calpreview", Stichting de Achterstraat, Hoorn, The Netherlands, summer 1994 (group)
The Puntgaaf Gallery, Groningen, The Netherlands, 1994 (solo)
Museum of Modern Art, Pori, Finland, 1994 (group)
International Furniture Fair, Tokyo, Japan, 1993 (group)
International Furniture Design Fair, Asahikawa, Japan, 1993 (group)
Fort Asperen, Acquoi, The Netherlands, 1991 (group)
The Montevideo Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium, 1990 (group)
School of Architecture, Rotterdam, The Netherlands 1990 (solo)
The La Linea Gallery, Brussels, 1984 (group)
Furniture Show, The Turfschip, Breda, The Netherlands 1984, (group)
Furniture exhibition, Zwijndrecht, The Netherlands, 1984 (group)
"13 Designers from the Rijnmond Area", The Westersingel Gallery, Rotterdam, The Netherlands 1984 (group)
"Dutch Design", Kortrijk Furniture Fair, Belgium, 1982 (group)
The Jaarbeurs Furniture Fair, Utrecht, The Netherlands 1982, (group)
Items, Delft, The Netherlands, 1982 (group)
Competition entries The "IF - 95", Interiors, Next Wave Design Competition, Nagoya, Japan, 1995
The "Kioski", Design Competition, Helsinki, Finland, 1994
The Asahikawa International Design Competition, Japan, 1993, Chairman's Special Award
The Chamber Theatre Art Centre Design Competition, Moscow, Russia, 1990
The Teylensmuseum Design Competition, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 1990
The Acropolis Museum Design Competition, Athens, Greece, 1990
The Finnish Pavillion Design Competition, World Expo, Seville, Helsinki, Finland, 1989
The Unesco Design Competition,

Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1984 The Stawom Design Competition, Zoetermeer, The Netherlands, 1984 The NSEM-ITT Design Competition, The Hague, The Netherlands, 1984, second prize The Theatre Design Competition, OISTT, Stockholm, Sweden, 1983 The Urban Renewal Design Competition, 's Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands, 1983 The Children's Playing Elements Design Competition, Helsinki, Finland 1982, second prize The Phantasy Design Competition, Almere, The Netherlands, 1982 The Energy Saving Design Competition, Oegstgeest, The Netherlands 1982 The Architectural Review Jewelry Shop Design Competition, London, 1981 The Social Housing Design Competition, Rotterdam, The Netherlands 1981 Teaching Arts Institute, Kampen, The Netherlands, 1995 University of Technology, Oulu, Finland, 1994 University of Technology, Delft, The Netherlands, 1994, 1991 Arts Institute, Arnhem, The Netherlands, 1992 School of Architecture, Utrecht, The Netherlands, 1978 – 1987 University of Technology, Helsinki, Finland, 1975–1976 Guest lecturer at various design schools, dance schools and arts institutes both in The Netherlands and abroad.

PUBLICATIONS

Catalogues "Licht in Kampen, The Netherlands" Kunstruimte Kampen, Kampen, The Netherlands, 1995. "A Three-Dimensional Drawing – 300 Grams Of Wool", The Living Art Museum, Reykjavik, Iceland, 1995. "The Magic Restaurant", Arctic Studio, Oulu, Finland, 1994. "10 Projects by Ger C. Bout", The Puntgaaf Gallery, Groningen, The Netherlands, 1994. "Full House", Vertoningsruimte Argument, Tilburg, The Netherlands, 1994. "Asahikawa International Furniture Design Fair", Asahikawa, Japan, 1993. "The House Project", Pori Art Museum, Pori, Finland, 1993. "G.C. Bout", HCAK, The Hague, The Netherlands, 1993. "13 ontwerpers uit de Rijnmond", The Westersingel Gallery, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 1984. Articles in magazines Eigen Huis & Interieur, Haarlem, The Netherlands, november 1995 Hennie van de Louw, "Meubels van Lange Adem en Eendagshuizen van Ger Bout", Vernissage, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Number 9/10, 1995. Eija Hirvonen, Taide, Helsinki, Finland, 4, 1994. Michael Trudgeon, International Furniture Fair, Australian Wood Review, 88, Australia, 1993. Nikkei Design, Tokyo, Japan, 9 September 1993. Monthly Magazine of Interior Business and Design, no. 333, 8, 1993. L. Krug, "Metamorfose als experiment. Architectenechtpaar Bout", Eigen Huis & Interieur, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 9, 1988. H. Boogert, "Huis voor 40 mille", De Telegraaf Woonkrant, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 28 May 1986. "Goedkoop wonen in een hsb-woning", Cobouw, The Hague, The Netherlands, 31 May 1986. L. Krug, "Verbeterd appartement in grachtenpand", Eigen Huis & Interieur, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 3, 1986. E. Simons, "De dertien ontwerpers van Rijnmond", Meubelnieuws, 906-907, 20 January 1984. B. van Westerop, "Etalage van goede smaak", Wonen TA/BK, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2, 4-5, 1983. Items, Delft, The Netherlands, 4, 4, 1982. Items, Delft, The Netherlands, 2, 4, 1982. Avotakka, Helsinki, Finland, January 1978. Miscellaneous Nieuw Kampen Dagblad, Kampen, The Netherlands, 18 April 1995. Nieuw Kampener Dagblad, Kampen, The Netherlands, 4 April 1995. Morgunbladid, Reykjavik, Iceland, 10 February 1995. Morgunbladid, Reykjavik, Iceland, 4 February 1995. Morgunbladid, Reykjavik, Iceland, 27 January 1995. Helsingin Sanomat, Helsinki, Finland, 13 July 1994. Kaleva, Oulu, Finland, 9 July 1994. Kainuun Sanomat, Kajaani, Finland, 6 July 1994. Suomenmaa, Oulu, Finland, 5 July 1994. Kansan Tahto, Oulu, Finland, 30 June 1994. Kaleva, Oulu, Finland, 28 June 1994. Kaleva, Oulu, Finland, 18 June 1994. Kansan Tahto, Oulu, Finland, 9 June 1994. Helsingin Sanomat, Helsinki, Finland, June 1994. Kaleva, Oulu, Finland, 2 June 1994. Brabants Dagblad, Tilburg,

The Netherlands, 1 June 1994. Ozon, Tilburg, The Netherlands, May 1994. Het Parool, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 7 February 1994. Hokkaido Shimbun Press, Asahikawa, Japan, 10 September 1993. Länsi Suomi, Pori, Finland, 28 August 1993. Satakunnan Kansa, Pori, Finland, 28 August 1993. Satakunnan Kansa, Pori, Finland, 18 August 1993. Haagsche Courant, The Hague, The Netherlands, 16 October 1992. Arnhemse Courant, Arnhem, The Netherlands, 4 December 1992. De Gelderlander, Arnhem, The Netherlands, 4 December 1993. De Gelderlander, Arnhem, The Netherlands, 27 November 1992. De Kunsten, Hogeschool der Beeldende Kunsten Arnhem, The Netherlands (Visual Arts College), 4, 1992. The Delta Show Fort Asperen, Acquoi, The Netherlands, 1992 De Kunsten, Arnhem, The Netherlands, 2, 1992. Het Vrije Volk, Rotterdam, The Netherlands 15 June 1990. De Telegraaf, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 8 November 1989. Het Vrije Volk, Rotterdam, The Netherlands 15 August 1989. Cobouw, The Hague, The Netherlands, 2 December 1986. Het Zuiden, Rotterdam, The Netherlands 23 June 1983. Het Vrije Volk, Rotterdam, The Netherlands 21 June 1983. Asuntosäästäjä, Helsinki, Finland, 15 December 1981. Uusi Suomi, Helsinki, Finland, 1 October 1981. Trouw, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 19 August 1977. Volkskrant, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 24 September 1977. De Groene Amsterdammer, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 27 July 1977. Byggnadstidningen, ^ Stockholm, Sweden, no. 19, 1976. Demari, Helsinki, Finland, 2 June 1976. Hufstadsbladet, Helsinki, Finland, 2 June 1976. Helsingin Sanomat, Helsinki, Finland, 12 June 1976. Radio and TV Ravintola Sammon Nousu ja Tuho, Oulun Käsi- ja Taideteollisuusoppilaitos videolinja, Kari Maja, 1994, video 13 min, 20 sec. Damocles, KRO Radio, Hilversum, The Netherlands, 12 September 1994, 60 min. A-Studio, Yleisradio Helsinki Finland, 11 July 1994, 10 min. Radio Mega, Oulu, Finland, 10 July 1994. Radio Mafia, Pori, Finland, 27 August 1993. Radio Rijnmond, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, guest of the week, October 1990. Radio Rijnmond, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 15 June 1990. Grants The Mondriaan Foundation, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, travel expenses (Japan) 1993. The Anjer Fund, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, production costs (Asahikawa, Japan), 1993. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague, The Netherlands, travel grant (Finland), 1993. The Fund for Visual Arts and Architecture, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1-year working grant, 1991. The Fund for Visual Arts and Architecture, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, travel grant (California, USA), 1987. The Volkskracht Foundation, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, project subsidy, 1983. The Anjer Fund, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, project subsidy, 1983.

BEYOND ARCHITECTURE

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