

the Anemones

I made thousands of pictures of anemones for a period of more than two years, searching for those that looked like watercolors, prints or traditional art, but in no way like normal photographs. The whole idea was just to forget that the pictures were made with a camera. I fanatically bought all of the anemones I could find. The flowers I collected were not always as good as I expected. Some were damaged, some were rotten, and some leaves were eaten away.

Trying to combine the pictures of the "good" anemones with those of the "damaged" anemones did not work. It was fun however to concentrate on the pictures of the most damaged ones. I "developed" them using Adobe Lightroom, which enabled me to transform the "rotten appearances" into colorful fresh presentations, which was just what I was looking for.

BeyondtheMoon

For some time now I have been working on a series of portraits of women. I made hundreds of pictures of each person in the same position in 15 minutes. All of those that were not sharp, not taken well or where the person photographed did not look into the lens, were deleted. From the pictures that remained, a selection was made. Of those, when both the "photographed" and the "photographer" could agree on one, that picture was picked. If not, a new series was made.

While making these portraits I became interested in getting closer, concentrating on parts of the ears, the neck, the chin and every other possible part of the rest of the female body: I saw landscapes; unknown hidden landscapes. I had in mind to explore unknown territories like once driving in and around Monument Valley. It didn't work.

The results from this approach reminded me too much of the work of other photographers who have done similar things. I refused to copy work I had seen before. I was looking for something else so I started all over again to make pictures that did not look like anybody else's. The results of this new approach are presented here.

theOranges

The Oranges belong to the same series of pictures as the Reds&Greens: all pictures of food. The Reds&Greens consist of pictures of paprikas (Reds) and cucumbers (Greens). The Oranges offer more variety: carrots, melons, potatoes, and pumpkins.

Imagine viewing ultra-large photographic prints mounted on walls in an enormous space. Think modern art. Think big.

Think of monochromatic paintings by well known painters.

With the Reds, Greens, and Oranges, it's your guess.

That is all I can tell you.

Green- Orange- Red: think traffic lights.

Green: go

Orange: use discretion

Red: stop

the Water

Water has always played an important role in my life. As a young boy I would spend a lot of time helping my grandfather at the market close to the harbor. My father worked at a shipping company. My wife grew up on an island close to the Finnish seaside.

Many years later, I started to photograph the coastline between the German-Polish borders and Cherbourg on the French coast. I wondered what might be behind the water. I wondered too if I could see the other side. The photographs from those trips did not result in a project but much later I did my best to get The Fisherman project located on the coasts near Dunkerque (France), Helsinki (Finland), and Rotterdam (the Netherlands).

Water is important for the work of many artists and painters who have inspired me. I have made pictures of a selection of those "waters" using a large format camera with a digital camera at the back. With this technique, I made series of hundreds of pictures several times a day of the same "water".

These series of hundreds of pictures were combined in Photoshop. I searched for pictures that took on a life of their own: pictures that were inspired by the water photographed but which were not necessarily pictures of that water. The result was one large format picture of each series.

Reds&Greens

Every day in the media and on the internet I see images, lots of images. I filter what I have seen and delete in my head as much as possible. I try to forget most of what I saw. Some images however keep coming back. I have no idea why. To be honest, I do not care. The images that keep coming back offer a kind of starting point: a first hint for a possible project.

I liked the colors and textures of the ingredients I saw in our kitchen and at the market. The images of the paprikas and the cucumbers in particular were very bright red and bright green. I started to make pictures of them, got intrigued by the results, picked up more ingredients, made more pictures and got more intrigued.

I liked the images of the colors and the textures I photographed. I forgot I was working with food. I felt like a painter, painting with natural colors of natural materials on large canvases.

The images presented here are each made of combinations of hundreds of exposures, resulting in large digital files that make printing large formats possible. Each image is named after its color and the number of pixels it has.

New York

The New York pictures were made a couple of years ago on the streets of that city. I enjoyed the energy and wonderful spring feeling that was in the air. It was great to be there again.

I know New York has been photographed by people like Elliott Erwitt, William Klein, Daido Moriyama, Ken Schles, and Weegee. I have seen their pictures and endless others by slews of photographers and artists.

It takes time to get rid of the images I have seen by them that are stuck in my memory. I am not interested in doing what somebody else has already done. Although I must admit that the way Daido Moriyama works inspired me to use an ND filter and to manipulate the sensitivity of the camera.

I hope to be back in New York soon to continue on these series.

the Flowers XS

In 1993 I went to Tokyo for the presentation of my "Table No 1" at the Tokyo Furniture Fair. My winning entry for the Asahikawa International Furniture Competition was also on display. It was there that I discovered TENSHI-SAI by Nobuyoshi Araki and bought the book. I still enjoy the pictures of the flowers: the colors in particular are amazing.

Some years ago I got interested in digital photography and printing. I wondered if I could produce the same intense colors like the flowers in Araki's book. Photographing flowers was the only way to find out so I made endless pictures of flowers of every color.

I used many flowers but ended up with hortensias because of their colors and the shape of their leaves. The final idea is to make large intensely colored prints for an installation.

the Trees

A year long I made photographs
of the same branches
of the same trees
we can see from our window.
I did so
with the same lens
and the same camera
for a number of times a day,
without a plan.
I have watched the trees
for many years now
and noticed
that a tree is always the same,
yet ever-changing.

the Tulips

Groups of children from primary schools, disabled people from institutions, the elderly and many more participated in the Tulips project. Prior to the start of the project artists, teachers, and group leaders spoke to the participants about different aspects of art.

All of the participants were given paper and pencils and asked to create their own version of a tulip. So far more than 12,000 drawings of tulips have been made all over the place. From every set of drawings, one was selected for a follow-up.

For the next stage of the project, students from professional and vocational schools made steel models of the selections. They also constructed concrete blocks for the base and helped with the painting of all of the tulips. Now you can see a web of tulips growing from the harbor in the west to the highway in the east on the south side of Rotterdam.

When our city became the Rotterdam European Youth Capital in 2009, The Tulips served as the opening symbol. More importantly, The Tulips is an ongoing project.

Berlin

The sketch for a table with 4 chairs, not 2 dimensional but 3 dimensional, not made with a pen but with scaffolding material, was a project visualized for the city of Berlin because of its special history and its position in Europe and the world.

I thought about building a table 100 x 100 meters wide and 70 meters high with befitting chairs. The idea was to have the construction built outdoors by students from vocational schools and NATO army recruits from all over Europe working together. The furniture pieces would be lifted up by 4 large military cranes.

I visited Berlin frequently to find out how this idea could be realized there and also to work on a presentation. For the presentation lots of pictures were needed to show how immense the project would be in perspective. To make them, I decided to walk every day from a different station on the ring line towards Alexanderplatz.

The first presentation for this project took place in 1998 at the Goethe Institute in Rotterdam.

In talking to people I concluded that the time was not ripe for a project like this and it never got off the ground. The making of the pictures became a goal in itself. In the near future there will be sufficient material for a book.

the River

When the Fisherman was brought to its permanent location in 2006, one of the members of the Board of the City of Rotterdam came up with the idea to donate a second Fisherman to Istanbul. It would be built in a similar way to the one in Rotterdam and be transported straight through Europe along the rivers connecting Rotterdam and Istanbul.

At that time, a number of cities located along the route were European Cultural Capitals. One option for the project was to have student participants begin with the feet in Rotterdam and gradually more parts would be added by other students in other cities, piece by piece.

I paid for all of the expenses for the first Fisherman myself but did not feel I should do that again. Still, to get started I began to make lots of pictures along the river to prepare for a possible presentation, as well as to get an idea of the actual route the new Fishermen would have to travel and any obstacles that might be encountered along the way.

The collection of pictures is still growing and eventually there will be a publication made of them.

the Fisherman

The concept for the Fisherman was born during a trip to Dunkerque. It felt like something was missing near the heavy industrial areas along the channel between France and England. There I got the idea to make a giant Fisherman that might also be visible from the other side of the water.

I ended up however with a smaller model of the original idea at the Finnish Cultural Center in Antwerp and subsequently in Helsinki, Finland. There the project became part of the Helsinki Cultural Capital Program in 2000. After many visits to Helsinki and hundreds of meetings, the actual project was declared impossible. In contrast, the Fisherman received a warm welcome in Rotterdam.

Using a small scale model instead of drawings as a guideline, the work in Rotterdam was constructed by hundreds of students from different local vocational schools. The actual Fisherman is now 10 meters high holding a fishing rod 22 meters long.

Without any financial support, I paid for all expenses myself and the Rotterdam project got completed in September 2006. The Fisherman can be seen across from the Euromast along the southern bank of the Maas River. It has been met with a lot of enthusiasm and appreciation to this day and still continues to draw a lot of attention and enthusiastic reactions.

the Boat

For a long time I have been fascinated by boats, large passenger boats.
When I was younger I often used to visit the Maritime Museum in Rotterdam.

I enjoyed looking at the shipping models in the museum. Especially the models made of ships from the late 1930's. Those ships offered the fastest connection between New York and the rest of the world then. They were fascinating.

For some, the ships offered an escape who were looking for a new life somewhere else; for others a luxurious way to travel. The ships were also an essential part of an international postal network.

I liked the contours of those vessels very much. That's why I chose the SS Nieuwe Amsterdam as starting point for a project proposal: a full scale representation of the contours of this boat, realized in steel: 10 meters wide, 6 meters deep, almost 250 meters long, and 45 meters high. Initial calculations revealed that such a line could be built. Although the project received a warm welcome and might possibly have become a Rotterdam landmark, in spite of hundreds of meetings, The Boat has not been realized yet.

a House of Frozen Water

This proposal is about a "house" made of 1000 tons of ice. The blocks of ice will be sawn from the frozen river at the end of the winter. The "house" should be built at the end of the winter because the ice is still very thick then. As soon as spring starts, the ice-house will melt, leaving no trace, just memories.

The proposal for the ice-house has been submitted to the cities of Rovaniemi and Oulu in Northern Finland; Reykjavik, Iceland; and Asahikawa in Northern Japan. In spite of all efforts, the project has not yet been realized.

a Table & 4 Chairs

This Table & 4 Chairs are part of a series which includes "A Transparent House" in Turku, Finland and "A Fisherman" for Helsinki and Rotterdam. One way or the other, 3 three dimensional drawings (giving form to steel strips or steel nets) will trigger stories. The stories will differ from one person to another but they will deal with having a place to stay, meeting people, and ways of earning a living.

The Table & 4 Chairs was conceived for the Carnotstraat in Antwerp in mind. This is a street where people have always gone to buy furniture. The objects of the design are so large that street cars and other vehicles will have to travel between the legs of the table and chairs themselves. Sometimes the support generated to realize a project is not enough or the situation where the realization has to take place is too complicated. That was the case for this project in Belgium. It's a pity but all part of the game for an artist to see how far you can get from an idea to completion.

a Transparent Dream

For a number of years I have been very interested in models for houses. I started with those models in the early 80's. The first ones dealt with elements with which the houses could be built. Later on other issues came into focus and became more interesting.

The Transparent Dream project in Turku, Finland (1996) is one such project. It consists of a wire frame: a 3D drawing made of steel nets used for constructing concrete walls and floors. More specifically, the 3D frame in this project is similar to the wire frames used in digital 3D drawing programs. The wire frame can be used to render colors, textures, and light even, in my view, if they are imaginary.

The presentation of the Transparent Dream, the 3D manifestation of the wire frame of a house, took place on its permanent site. You could walk around it, go inside of it and yet it appeared to you like a drawing or a dream. Those that attended the showing took home unexpected memories.

For me the project was important because it offered an escape from building and architecture. Now that I could actually realize a 3D drawing of a house it would be easy to present a Fisherman and even a Table and 4 Chairs in 3D-like drawings as well. Another aspect that is exciting is the enormous local and national public support the project got in the media.

300 Grams of Wool

A simple installation consisting of 300 grams of knitting wool connecting small metal hooks screwed into the walls, the floor, and the ceiling. Black light was used to emphasize the threads but not the space; the space was made inaccessible but that was hardly noticed. The threads appeared like laser beams, thin metal rods or bundles of light that bounced off the walls.

The result was a three-dimensional structure that appeared to be unattached to the walls but which could also not exist without them. So the space was in fact filled up but without using any materials.

This installation, a three-dimensional drawing which from each angle could be seen as a different three-dimensional object, was realized at The Living Art Museum in Reykjavik, Iceland in 1995.

the Magic Restaurant

In just one and a half weeks a restaurant was conceived, designed, created, and organized in Oulu, Finland in 1994. It opened up for a single night, was attended by many guests, and disappeared again by the following afternoon. Anyone who wanted to could participate in the project and do whatever he or she wanted to do, as long as it fitted into the theme of "a restaurant".

The rules were simple: anyone could react to the ideas and work of others but was only allowed to make a modification using the output of others as a starting point for further development. It was not allowed to destroy the work of someone else. In this way a kind of open creative dialogue took place where many people could participate as they wished and at any time.

The art critic writing for the major national newspaper (The Helsingin Sanomat) described the event as follows: "The Magic Restaurant Ravintola Sampo is: a sampo of ideas and thoughts; a temporary museum that demonstrates all the things a restaurant can be; a fantasy restaurant where a 'mythical' restaurant meets a 'real' restaurant".

Full House

While working in Pori on the House Project, the idea was conceived of filling up an apartment completely with wooden scaffolding material sticking out in all directions, so that the apartment would be totally inaccessible and uninhabitable.

That idea was realized in 1994 in Tilburg at the Vertoningsruimte Argument. During the opening everyone present participated in putting together this rather chaotic installation.

The space was inaccessible throughout the exhibition period. The idea to open the doors and let the installation of scaffolding parts protrude was unfortunately not realistic. We did not want to take the risk of someone having an accident or setting fire to it. So the doors of the House Project were only open when one of the staff members of the gallery was on site.

At the closing festivity, the whole installation was taken apart by the attending participants.

the House Project

The House Project in Pori, Finland took place in 1993 in close collaboration with the staff of the Pori Art Museum, local artists, and volunteer workers.

I once read somewhere that John Cage had taken one meter of recording tape with part of a Mozart Opera on it, cut it into many small pieces with a razor blade and then fixed them at random back together again.

Similarly, my idea was to take apart a wooden house and put it back together in another way. The house would still be a house (made of the same parts) but functionally speaking it would no longer be a house.

Shortly later, a small wooden house became available not far from the railroad tracks. It took a lot of work to take the house apart, clean the wooden parts, and get all the nails out. Once that job was completed, some of the workers reconstructed the house close to the museum. After a couple of weeks the installation was dismantled.

Table No 1

Table No 1 was made out of 1000 meters of wood, 1/2" x 1" thick, cut in all different lengths without any predetermined measurements.

It took some time before the idea and construction method for this table was conceived.

The wood was painted in various color combinations depending upon what was available in my workshop.

The pieces of wood were fixed together with a tackler that shot little nails into the spots where the pieces connected.

Table No 1 was awarded the Jury's Special Award at the Asahikawa International Furniture competition in 1993.

Subsequently, it was presented at the Tokyo International Furniture Fair and later on in many other places like the Frozen Fountain in Amsterdam.

HCAK

A house and its contents can be considered a collection of spaces and containers: rooms, cupboards, cellar, attic etc. But also think of refrigerators, tv's, radio's, furniture (the space under a table), suitcases, beds, marmalade jars, kitchen appliances, books, computers, printers etc... just to mention a few of the many possible rooms/spaces/volumes that exist in a house.

The installation in the HCAK in The Hague in 1992 consisted likewise of a collection of all kinds of spaces: some the size of a small radio, others large enough to get inside of. Without any particular plan, all kinds of "spaces" were formed out of chip wood and put together again randomly, sometimes intersecting or connecting and sometimes not.

With a team of different members helping each day, it took about a week to build this installation.

5 Spaces

The 5 Spaces with 5 Dancers project- or to speak in simple and minimalistic architectural terms 5 rooms and 5 inhabitants - got realized in 1991.

The spaces or rather the rooms were made from strips of plywood to form the contours of each room. These contours were each painted a different color.

Each dancer had one space or to come back to the architectural term: one inhabitant per room. Dancer and space were painted in the same color.

The rooms were not exactly rectangular and they were not connected in a traditional logical way: all rooms intersected each other; all dancers moved through all rooms.

The whole installation took place where I got my degree at the Department of Architecture from the University of Delft some years before.

the Crate House

I was invited by the Rotterdam Art Foundation in 1990 to make an installation in "Theater de Unie" in Rotterdam. The installation would stay open to the public for 3 x 12 hours, from Friday afternoon to the following Sunday afternoon.

The Crate House was conceived following a series of models for potential houses and formed the link between my work as an architect and my work as an artist. Originally it was presented with a sketch and a scale model showing all of the necessary elements for making the "building". As an architect I have to consider all kinds of issues in order to make a house livable. As an artist those issues are irrelevant.

The shape of the house, the way it looks and the way it is organized are interesting elements for me. In that respect, the Crate House has visible elements that potentially could be used by future inhabitants.

The green wall might be the kitchen, the yellow round element the bathroom, the staircase and the floor might perhaps be used as sleeping areas; these are all possibilities but not requirements.

The process in developing the Crate House largely influenced my later projects. There would be no more sketches, only models to visualize ideas three dimensionally at the start of a project.

The model would make clear to others how a structure might look but not how it should look. More specifically, the models were no longer precise: they had no scale or any kind of reference.

Teylorsmuseum

In 1990 an architectural competition was organized for the extension of the Teylors Museum in Haarlem. With a team of architects and artists a scale model (1: 10) was made of the existing museum and the surroundings of the place where the extension would be built.

Instead of using sketches we decided to work directly on the model itself. From each corner of the model members of our team started to create the design, using appropriate materials to work on it. Progress went well which led to interesting discussions. Everyone discussed the good aspects but also the problems of the design and, where necessary, worked together to make changes to each others contribution.

This process resulted in a large scale model that formed the starting point for the final design for the competition entry. From the large model a smaller model was made and at last the series of drawings portrayed here. Each day the team collaborated on the design, gradually progressing step by step.

We heard on several occasions that the jury disapproved of our entry. We would have considered that a compliment and have been happy about it, if it had been spoken about during a public debate on all of the entries. But to our disappointment that debate and the sharing of ideas never took place.

Interiors

For a number of years I worked as an architect/builder, designing and carrying out renovations in close cooperation with clients and other builders. It never paid much but it was nice to do.

Quite often the work was about reorganizing an apartment like moving some walls, making a new kitchen and bathroom or trying out new

colors. I did my best to stay close to the wishes of the client(s) and at the same time to envisage a challenging new design.

Like a suit or a pair of shoes an apartment has to fit. It has to work and make life pleasant. A car you leave outside but an apartment is always there when you are inside it. It simply has to feel right and feel good physically and emotionally in a sensitive way.

Models

The word models here means "thinking" models of houses as a way to start a design and a manner to get out of traditional ways of thinking. Traditionally a house has to fulfill various criteria in order to be a house. Those criteria can be translated into various forms related to the functions they will have to fulfill.

Almost every house needs systems for ventilation, heating, smoke, and waste air. A chimney for example needs a certain height and diameter. In that respect it can be used as a load bearing element. A toilet is generally a box shaped space with a certain amount of privacy. This box-like element could be a load bearing and stabilizing element, as well. A floor is a kind of slab that is a decisive element for the shape of a house. All of these elements together can be used to define the structure of a house.

I started to work with models in 1984 and used my furniture pieces as a source of inspiration.

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It was at a birthday party where I met someone who asked me what I did. I told her I made furniture and was interested in architectural experiments. She suggested that I get in touch with the Rotterdam School of Dance.

So I did and I got invited to look in on a dance class. Later on I learned that the person I had spoken with was the director of the school. Soon I found out that the intention of the introduction was to start a project wherein the students of the school would perform outdoors with my installation as props.

This resulted in an idea to make an installation using 9x9 poles, 226 cm high (based on the sizes of le Corbusier's Modulor) placed on the corners of each square of a chessboard. I also created musical instruments based on the same sized system.

The installation and performance premiered on the Schouwburgplein in Rotterdam in 1983, as well as in other places later on.

Furniture

For a number of years I worked at different housing companies and organizations and studied the housing norms and standards throughout Europe. I found many limitations for housing designs that were simply taken for granted. So I decided to design and make furniture, autonomously and without perimeters, to allow myself the freedom of being a "real" artist. At the end of the 70's and the beginning of the 80's I started to design and produce furniture.

I started with little things that I could make myself with my own tools. Everything I made my way without the excuse of any norms or standards: I started with a little table, a kind of coffee table, and after that some chairs, cupboards, and lamps.

It was fun to make those pieces in small series and present them at furniture shows. Later designs were sometimes meant to be functional furniture while others served as project installations in public spaces.

the House

The work on the house has been a continuous process that started in 1983. Initially our resources: time, money, experience, and helpers were limited. Eventually with some construction workers and students from different schools (like the School for Modern Dance) we got started to transform the living space, kitchen, and bathroom, as well as to install a central heating system.

After some years we found that the building materials used and the plans we had made were not working. So we had to start again. We took more time, got more resources, and our circle of helpers grew. Step by step the house we lived in transformed to our liking. All of the influences, ideas, and experiences helped the way to make the house what it has become. The ideas and experiences we all gained during each project were fruitful.

The transformation shows the enormous potential of the house, thanks to the creativity of all those who worked, dined, or stayed over night to make it happen. At lunch one time with Toyo Ito, he said: "when you do not know what to do, you just have to be patient and wait, even if it takes 8 years". His remark was keen.

In a complex three dimensional situation models and drawings do not always represent the outcome. Sometimes building something is a process of putting something together, then taking it apart and starting all over again until it works.

The work in the house is not finished yet. Part of the roof has to be redone. Independent of how long it will take, it will be completed in time. Some visitors speak about an iconic house, which is a really nice compliment for the result of years of preparation, hard work, and lots of meetings and discussions with everybody who has been partaking in the project.