

# Ger C. Bout

## the Netherlands, 1950

### modern art & photography

**"If you obey all the rules,  
you miss all the fun"**  
**Katherine Hepburn**

## First Group Show

Bout grew up in a quiet modern housing area in the south of Rotterdam.

He spent a lot of time at the busy market helping his grandfather.

His first installations consisted of playful combinations of orange crates and other containers he found at the market. He also enjoyed drawing and had his first group show in an art museum when he was 11 years old.

## Furniture & Building

Bout studied architecture at the Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands. During his studies he worked in Linz, Austria. There he met his future Finnish wife, Riitta.

After graduation, he moved to Finland and worked for the Department of Architecture at the University of Otaniemi in Helsinki. Eventually the couple moved together to the Netherlands.

All the while, Bout designed and produced furniture in small series. He had his first furniture presentation and began exploring his creativity as an architect-builder.

His furniture got exhibited at various locations in the Netherlands like the Puntgaaf (Groningen), the Frozen Fountain (Amsterdam), the Goethe Institute (Rotterdam), and other galleries in Antwerpen

and Brussels, including the Utrecht Furniture Fair. Other international furniture fairs included Kortrijk, Belgium and Tokyo, Japan.

In addition, his entry " Table No 1" for the furniture competition in Asahikawa, Japan got the jury's special award and it also drew a lot of attention at the Tokyo Furniture Fair in 1993.

## A growing interest in Art

Bout frequently visited prominent art galleries like de Venster in Rotterdam and Zeno X, 121, and Montevideo in Antwerp, Belgium.

During the eighties he travelled extensively in California and New York.

He met artists like Robert Frank and Robert Irwin and he spent time with Sharon Avery Fahlstrom and Carolee Schneeman. Inspired by what he saw, heard and read there, he decided to follow his intuition, cancel ongoing architectural projects and start expressing ideas in his own way.

With a new creative team, he participated in architectural competitions (like for the extension of Teylers Museum in Haarlem, 1989). He began making installations like the "House" (1990) that was built out of thousands of colourful plastic bakery crates in the Unie ("3x12" Rotterdam Art Foundation).

## Museum and Gallery work

In the late 1980's and early 1990's he continued to initiate and realise installations at home and abroad, working with a large and diverse array of people and disciplines.

These included the HCAK in the Hague, the Argument Space in Tilburg, and the Artist's Museum Nylistsavnid in Reykjavik, Iceland.

Some examples of international collaboration include: the House Project, Pori Art Museum (Pori, Finland); the Magic Restaurant with the Oulu Art Museum (Oulu, Finland); The Transparent Dream with the Wäinö Aaltosen; Ars Nova and Aboa Vetus museums (Turku, Finland).

He has been inspired by meetings with influential people like Keith Häring, Dennis Oppenheim, Erro, and Cristo & Jean Claude.

## Public Art Projects

At the end of the nineties, Bout submitted proposals for additional projects in Helsinki, Haifa, Antwerp, Rotterdam, Tallinn, Berlin, and Rovaniemi.

He still had in mind to realise a House, a Table & 4 Chairs, and a Fisherman: all large scale 3D drawings, meant for openspaces, made of steel.

The “House” did get realised in Turku with massive public support and an interesting national public debate. The “Table and 4 Chairs” took off in Antwerp, Belgium. Although this project received a warm welcome in the press, it still has yet to be realised.

The “Fisherman” got started in Helsinki as part of the Cultural Capital program but after hundreds of meetings, the project was declared impossible by the city council of Helsinki

After this false start, the project received a warm new welcome in Rotterdam. Hundreds of students from vocational schools helped design and build the “Fisherman”, just as Bout had imagined. Since September 2006, it can be seen on the south side of the Maas river nearby the entrance to the pedestrian tunnel.

## The Tulips

The “Tulips” project was initiated and organised in close collaboration with Mart Bechtold in 2007. It’s a long term project in which thousands of young and old participants continue to design and create man-sized fantasy tulips, which are made of steel and painted in bright colours.

The collaboration of all of the different people working together on the project has been successful: a ribbon of Tulips is now growing

in the southern part of Rotterdam, from the Highway in the East to the Harbour in the West.

## Presentations

Bout gets his ideas realised in unconventional public art projects and spaces with the help of many different people to bring these to life. Gradually the participants were allowed to express their own ideas: learning, stimulating, and helping each other to realise their own dreams while executing his projects.

He learned he was able to reach many people with his work, even complete cities: people who had never had anything to do with art became key players in the making of his works, both in concept and sculptural form.

## A solo Artist

Bout gradually found that the images he presented played an important role in his projects.

With just a few images and hardly any explanation, the proposals he submitted were met with enthusiasm wherever he went, even by people he had never met before.

He created new buildings – new installations – and in that way, also new images.

Some projects existed for only 24 hours, while others seem to stay forever.

Images have always played an essential role in his work and in his contacts with others. They still do.

After working with many people on large scale international projects for more than 25 years, Bout has begun to concentrate on images themselves and to work as a solo artist.

## Pictures as pictures

Since he was a young boy, Bout has been

busy with photography. First with limited resources: simple camera's and homebuilt darkroom equipment set up in his parent's converted bathroom. Now, many years later, he uses old fashioned large format camera's and modern digital camera's and printers.

In the old days he would invite other people to photograph his work, but more and more he began documenting it himself.

With time, his attention has again shifted from photography as a medium for documentation to photography as an independent way of creating images.

## Now

Today Bout concentrates completely on images as ideas and their effects.

The first new work can be seen in his books with pictures from "The Trees We Can See From Our Window Every Day", "Flowers XS", "BeyondtheMoon" and soon "RedsandGreens", and "TheOranges".

\*Bout has been awarded several grants from the Dutch Government and many other Institutions. You can find his work in private and institutional collections in Europe, Japan, and the United States.