
DP6
Distinctive and controlled
7

Eighteen projects

Dynamo Hall, Delft
Reserved restoration
14

Zuiderpark bridges, Rotterdam
Modest cross-channel
connections
132

Projects
189

Walterbos Complex, Apeldoorn
Glass high-rise with a view out
across the Veluwe
22

Extension to Rietveld Lyceum,
Doetinchem
Rediscovering Rietveld
142

Bibliography
196

List of members of staff
198

Deelplan 14, Ypenburg,
The Hague
Pre-programmed extensions
38

Accommodation for elderly
Turkish people, Haarlem
A large kitchen and a communal
exterior space
148

Colophon
200

CineMec, Ede
Red boxes in a noise barrier
48

Het Noorderdok Healthcare
Centre, Almere
Well-being while waiting
154

De Groene Stad, Hoofddorp
Building becomes landscape,
landscape becomes building
58

New Arts Centre and Theatre,
Sundsvall, Sweden
A theatre becomes an urban
landscape
164

Klaverkamp, Bemmelen
Tradition as a source of
inspiration
70

Volkerak Locks control building,
Willemstad
Glass volume with tropical roof
170

Utopolis, Emmen
Spatial organization as a
landmark
80

Radix, Wageningen
Sustainable innovations
176

Hoog en Laag, Heiloo
Apartment block inside out
90

De Stadstuinen, Amsterdam
Coming to terms with Van
Eesteren
98

Lyceum Ypenburg, The Hague
Getting to know the user
110

Villa Schipper - De Leeuw,
Driebergen
Living room in the woods
122

DP6 Distinctive and controlled

At the end of the nineties, without being aware of one another's intentions, Chris de Weijer and Robert Alewijnse nurtured plans to leave the Mecanoo architectural office and to begin his own business. Alewijnse had reached the stage when he felt he was more than ready to manifest himself as an independent architect after investing his talents in relative anonymity in the service of others for ten years. Before arriving at Mecanoo, he had worked at OD 205 and Verheijen/Verkoren/De Haan. For De Weijer, things were different. He had never languished in anonymity. He and his four co-founders were still very young – they had not even graduated – when they crossed the footlights by winning the architectural competition for the Kruisplein in Rotterdam, and had given Mecanoo a flying start.

Mecanoo developed to become one of the most successful offices in the eighties and nineties. However, that success also cast its shadow in the course of time. As the office expanded, the organization acquired an increasing number of layers and the distance to the 'workfloor' increased. In addition, much of the mutual chemistry had vanished with the pioneering spirit of the early years. After Roelf Steenhuis and Erick van Egeraat, De Weijer was the third partner who had decided to go his own way. He envisaged an office that would again be transparent and efficient, a horizontal organization without intermediate layers.

When they told one another about their intentions, Alewijnse and De Weijer had already formulated their own advanced plans; the latter was even busy with the layout of new premises. But they soon decided to combine forces. They had got to know one another's qualities at Mecanoo and there was no reason to suppose that they would not be successful partners.

Accordingly, De Weijer and Alewijnse, along with several members of staff who also came from Mecanoo, moved into their new office at Doelenplein 6 in Delft on 1 October 1999. That address also gave the company its name - DP6. It still bears this name, although the firm relocated to the former Dynamo Hall of the University of Technology a few years ago. In the Dynamo Hall, it is evident that DP6 has been able to maintain the original idea of a transparent office, without intermediate layers. Although the number of staff members has grown, everyone still works in one and the same space. But with 25 to 30 employees, the limit has been reached. If there is more work, a part of this is tendered out.

The structure of the office has not essentially changed in those ten years, apart from the fact that the management has been extended with Harrie Hupperts in 2006. Hupperts, who gained much experience with the supervision of complex building projects as the director of Bureau Bouwkunde Rotterdam, has been responsible for the technical and financial management of DP6 since that time. In this way, Alewijnse and De Weijer can devote their energy to the content-related part of the architectural profession.

Looking back on ten years of DP6, two kinds of narratives can be told. Besides the visible story of the realized work, there is the more concealed story of what precedes this. DP6 derives its vitality not only from the

design talent in the narrow sense of the term, but also from the expertise with which 'the process' is organized.

It begins with an investigation of the assignment. Even if this is clearly defined at first sight, DP6 will still make an effort to get to know more about the assignment. Behind a brief, there are almost always hidden motives and considerations that have not yet been made explicit. In addition, the client is often not the same instance as the future user. The board of an educational institution will probably see a school building differently from the people who will come to work there. One of the ways in which DP6 can discover what users – who may be the school management or elderly Turkish people, for example – want from a building is to organize workshops. In sessions lasting three or four hours, the users are not only presented with a list of questions but also with spatial variants to which they can react.

It becomes more difficult when contact with the client is not easy to establish. That situation occurs with multiple assignments and with the increasing amount of European contracts, which soon come into play with governmental assignments of any consequence. An architectural office that competes for a European contract can only initially react to the information in the dossier. Further contact with the client is not allowed because every office that competes for the contract must have access to the same information. In such situations, DP6 will attempt to discover more about the backgrounds and circumstances of the assignment via other means. For example, much relevant information can be traced via internet. It may also be worthwhile examining other realized projects of the same client.

This last course of action took place with the multiple assignment for the Utopolis cinema complex in Emmen. A close analysis of the cinemas of the concern indicated that this company always opted for a particular spatial set-up from the point of view of efficiency. On this basis, DP6 decided to create a design vision that took this spatial set-up as the point of departure, resulting in a layout in which all the auditoriums could be served from one projection room.

DP6 also devoted much attention to the process further on in the process of designing and building, too. Documentation and information processing play an important role in this context. Keeping up to date with the background to a project and knowledge of contracts give the architects a more or less self-evident advantage here.

Nevertheless, it is ultimately not the process but the built results with which DP6 presents itself to the world. In the realization of their designs, Alewijnse and De Weijer themselves distinguish between two ways of thinking and creating – which correspond with two stages to a certain extent. It begins with an analysis of the assignment that is as rational as possible. What are the functions and how can they be spatially ordered in a logical manner? And what is the significance of other programmatic demands, such as sustainability or the relationship with the surroundings? This analysis, which is guided by considerations of rationality and efficiency, is followed by a second stage. This is more intuitive and less tangible, because the emphasis lies more on associative factors. This is the moment at which the spatial programme of the school complex in Bemmelen suddenly takes on the structure of a constellation of barns,

at which the columns of Radix in Wageningen assume the shape of a stalk, and at which the cinema turns into the noise barrier in the penetrating image of a green dike with red boxes.

It is as if the designs, which are initially developed on a functional basis, are suddenly animated by means of this associative operation. The effect is even stronger because the associative aspect at DP6 is an integrated quality that is fused with the functionality of the building, rather than being a layer that is simply added to the design. The iconic images of the cinema complex in Emmen and the operation unit of the Volkerak Locks attach themselves to one's retina because they coincide with the functionality – in the first case, the most efficient layout of the auditoriums, in the other, the sloping façades and the tropical roof that ensure that the lock-keepers are not troubled by heat or reflecting sunlight.

It is indisputable that a major part of the associative power of the architecture of DP6 lies in its sensory qualities. It is as if you can feel the buildings without having to touch them. This is partly due to the refined choice of materials. For example, DP6 applies much wood, often in a combination rich in contrast with large surfaces of cool, clear glass. The way in which the material is treated also contributes to the tactility. For instance, the stainless-steel façade panels of the Lyceum Ypenburg are mounted in such a way that deliberately leaves them a little bumpy.

If the work of DP6 had to be described in two words, a combination of idiosyncratic and controlled would be applicable. It is idiosyncratic because there is always something that undermines the predictability of the work, so that it strays from the beaten path. The school complex in Bommel resembles a constellation of barns, but the façades mainly consist of glass that has apparently been installed 'framelessly' in the wooden construction. Something similar is also the case with the villa in Driebergen. In the glass towers of the Walterbos complex in Apeldoorn, it is the winding façades and the core that is not at the centre – not on the basis of an imposition of form but rather to give each workstation the best view. The cinema in the noise barrier at Ede and the variation in the houses of Deelplan 14 in Ypenburg are also uniquely idiosyncratic.

The work can be described as being controlled because it never presents itself as being more impressive or interesting than it really is. Although the idiosyncrasy ensures that DP6 buildings seldom remain unnoticed, they always seem to want to harmonize with their surroundings. And that may be a fifty-year-old urban structure by Van Eesteren, as in the case of Stadstuinen and Vrankendijke in Amsterdam Osdorp, or the building traditions of the region, such as with Klaverkamp in Bommel.

It is remarkable how often this connection with the surroundings in the landscape is sought. The fact that they can assume numerous shapes became evident in the temporary constructions of the De Groene Stad (The Green City). The project (a part of the Floriade of 2002 in Hoofddorp) could be regarded as a laboratory in which various kinds of relationships between 'building' and 'landscape' were explored. The fascination with the landscape had already become apparent previously, in the Mecanoo period, when a demonstration of an unprecedented fusion of building and landscape had been given with the library for Delft University of Technology.

DP6 has continued along this path, full of conviction, with the landscape in

consistently changing roles. In two projects that represent extremes in scale levels to a certain degree – namely, the office blocks of the Walterbos complex and the villa in Driebergen – the architecture is aligned to making the landscape so strongly tangible that you tend to forget that you are situated in a building. This is primarily due to the large glass façades stretching from the floor to the ceiling, while the perception in the case of the villa is emphasized by frames that can hardly be distinguished as such.

The artificial landscape of the noise barrier in Ede is completely different from these more or less natural wooded landscapes. It is exactly because the noise barrier is a created landscape that the architects can play a game with it. While the boxes of the cinema auditoriums burst out of the barrier, the rest of the complex follows the contours of the body of the dike. A part is clearly recognizable as a building, but there are also sections – such as the extra cinema auditorium and the recently built car park – that are completely concealed in the green barrier.

In contrast, in two other projects, it was DP6's intention to disrupt the landscape as little as possible. For example, the extension to the Rietveld Lyceum in Doetinchem was carried out largely underground. As a consequence, the original layout of the architect Rietveld could be restored to its original form: the park behind the building can again be seen through the transparent ground floor level of the existing school building – over the roof of the extension. This kind of approach, which means that the architecture makes itself less visible, did not lend itself for the bridges for the Zuider Park in Rotterdam. Here, it is not the design itself that harmonizes with the park landscape. The contours of the bridgeheads merge into the form of the banks. Viewing the bridges from the side, the profile of the bridge deck is so fragile that the bridges seem to dissolve into thin air. For Deelplan 14 of Ypenburg, the landscape of the adjoining Delftse Hout was the main source of inspiration. In the urban plan drawn up by DP6, the most important features of that landscape, water and bulrush, also determine the vision of the new residential estate.

The Floriande Midden school and sports complex in Hoofddorp provides a last example of the way in which DP6 combines building and landscape. Because the elongated building lies in a green zone, the roof itself has been laid out as a publicly accessible park that is connected on either side to the ground level via slopes.

Perhaps DP6's urge not to fall back on standard solutions but to come up with new discoveries wherever possible can be characterized as a form of idiosyncrasy. Inventions or discoveries can occasionally be immediately recognized as such; others are more concealed. For the climate system of its own office in the Dynamo Hall, no voluminous air ducts need to be installed; air ducts could be created from the channels that had once been installed in the floor for another reason. Other discoveries have also ensured that facilities can be omitted instead of having to be added. For example, single glazing was sufficient for the foyer of the cinema complex in Emmen because the film projectors produce so much superfluous heat that heat-loss through the façade meant no problem at all. In the CineMec cinema in Ede, no extra sound-proof facilities were needed along the motorway; the standard sound insulation for cinema auditoriums turned out to be adequate.

Reserved restoration

If there is one place where architects can express their vision on their own organization that is in the realization of their own accommodation. With DP6, the open communication between the members of staff has always been an important element of that vision. Therefore, when the office became too large for the original accommodation on the Doelenplein in Delft, a search was carried out for one large working space with place for everyone. This space was found in the former Dynamo Hall of Delft University of Technology. For dozens of years, when the University was still called a college, the Electrotechnics Department tested dynamos here. Later the hall was used as a carpenter's workplace and as a sports hall. The Dynamo Hall dates from the beginning of the twentieth century and was designed by Chief Government Architect Jacobus van Lokhorst. In the meantime, the building has been placed on the List of Protected Buildings; its exceptional architecture lies above all in the combination of the massive basis of heavy stone walls and the light transparent steel construction with much glass on top.

The starting point of the reconstruction was the intention to leave the hall as intact as possible. After all, it offered

exactly what DP6 wanted: a large unbroken space where everyone could find a place to work. The interventions were oriented to restoration work. For example, the zinc of the roof was replaced and parts of the construction were repaired where necessary. The steel construction was in a reasonable state and could be retained, although new steel frames with double glazing were installed. A more conspicuous intervention was the replacement of a wooden partition by a glass balustrade. The entresol thus created has made the hall lighter and more open. An extra strip of windows has also been inserted, making it possible to obtain a view of outside from the work places.

Few extra facilities were needed, even for the climatization, because convenient use could be made of the properties of the building. The height of the hall makes it easy to lose excess warmth. The existent recesses and channels in the floor could be made suitable as air ducts without too much difficulty. Finally, a cooling installation could be omitted. The costs of heating are also acceptable. The large windows allow the incidence of warmth from the sun, even in the winter months.





Living room in the woods

In the Dutch climate there will always be a distinction between inside and out. With its architecture, DP6 has managed to deal with this distinction in such a way that you scarcely experience it. For example, the wooded environment surrounding the villa in Driebergen is experienced just as vividly in the living room as on the terrace outside. The resources that have been applied to achieve this effect frequently recur in the work of the office. Large windows stretching the full height of the story – in the case of the voids they even reach up to the roof – are only interrupted by the construction. Because the frames have been placed with great precision in the same plane as the constructive beams and posts, they can scarcely be distinguished from them. Due to the visual convergence of the frames and the construction, it is as if the glass has been mounted directly in the construction. As such, the contact with the outdoor world has been stripped of almost every visual obstacle.

Vice versa, the villa dovetails with its environment with great self-assurance. This is partly due to the choice of wood as the most important building material. In addition, simple form plays a role at first sight: with a sloping roof of corrugated material above a rectangular box, it has all the characteristics of the archetypical house. The wish to remain free of all disruptive elements is demonstrated by the absence of roof gutters, so that the image of the roof with corrugated sheets gains in intensity. The rainwater falls directly from the roof on to ground below where it is caught in a gutter covered with steel grids. In the interior, a surprisingly varied space has been created with these apparently uncomplicated basis elements. By accommodating the more secluded functions, such as the bedrooms and the bathrooms, in closed volumes on the first floor, a continuous living area has been created in which high and low, closed and open, alternate attractively.



