

CULTURE AND COASTAL TRANSITIONS

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INNOVATIVE HERITAGE

The Netherlands has a rich cultural and innovative relationship with the sea.

The continuing need for coastal defence due to rising sea level in past, present and future is important for everyone. Reflections on the past teach us that the great flood of the southern parts of The Netherlands in 1953 instigated 60 years of Delta Works with dikes and dams (so called: 'building against nature'), which have been recently completed. As Emmy Bolsius, director of the governments Coastal affairs of the Delta program recently stated: 'As a result ecology suffered profoundly because of this strong focus on safety. We rigidly cut salt from fresh water and brought water that moved to a standstill. Water quality became low in some areas behind the dikes and dams. Every area of the country has its water problems: there is too much or too little water depending on the season or water is too salty for certain purposes. Salt water intrusion, salt water seepage, too little water in the rivers for freight traffic in dry periods. And on top of it all coastal erosion, the rise of the sea-level, stronger storms that last longer and a dipping country.'

So, we recently made a complete turn around in the way that we now invite the sea as a partner to help shape the coastal protection with the sands we put in front of the shores; we call this Sand Engine, 'building with nature', rather than 'building against nature'. Sand is the future strategy for coastal protection. It contributes to our most innovative heritage and is the newest Dutch export product.

While discovering and conquering the seas elsewhere, the Dutch shore has been the inspiration of our famous and innovative Dutch painters ever since the 17th century. The myth of 'Dutch Light' attracted international artists to the Netherlands, but, as the famous German artist Joseph Beuys stated, the Dutch light lost its extraordinary radiance after the reclamation of large parts of the Zuyder Zee (now called IJsselmeer) in the mid - 1950's. Of great value is to grasp this concept of 'cultural landscape' as a characterization of our coasts.

This strives to make the coast appear natural so that coastal interventions are not directly visible to the casual seaside visitor. Transparency – making this 'man-made' landscape visible and understandable - in the past, present and future is the aim of Satellietgroep. Transparency contributes to the public and professional awareness of our culture and this particular innovative heritage.

IDENTITY IS FLUID

So, the Netherlands is a country with an innovative historical and artistic relationship with the sea. The resilient way of life in the Netherlands has been the inspiration for artists and scientists for centuries. These resilient Dutch people forever compete with the sea, recover from floods, gain lands from the sea, build dikes and invent innovative strategies to survive in our country below sea level.

The offside of this brave Dutch tale is that overall public use of waterfronts is under great pressure. Urban coastal developments seem to neglect the public, social and cultural importance of urban life at these seafronts. These developments show a tendency to focus on strategies that exclude local people and migration movements from the shores and emphasize tourism as a more interesting source of revenues. That may lead to

conflicts, estrangements, a loss of heritage and a loss of more informal cultural and economic uses of public coastal space.

As the esteemed ethnologist Prof. Dr Gerard Rooijakkers states, identity has 3 locations: in the heart (feeling), in the head (knowledge), in the head of the other person (projection).

Identity also has 3 domains: it is territorial (we connect to spaces as the topographic sense of belonging), it is a construction of the past (we manipulate history and heritage and use rituals to deal with this) and the construction of blood (race, regional or national character, locality).

Arts and science can express the spatial and social qualities - as well as the problems - of our coastal areas, and make them engagingly accessible to the public. These works can transform a destination normally marked by consumption and recreation into a platform for critical communication and serious reflection. This timely reflection of art and culture on spatial transition processes may act as a strong catalyst in generating public and professional awareness and connect contemporary research and new works to historic and future coastal developments.

ART AS STRATEGY FOR CHANGE

Since 2006 Satellietgroep connects arts and science, architecture, film, urban developments and innovative heritage to coastal transitions. We research how the sea and waterways influence cities, people, communities and environments.

We connect to the latest governmental and scientific developments on coastal protection by Deltaprogramma Kust (Coastal affairs of the Delta program) in association with Atelier Kustkwaliteit (Studio on Coastal Quality by the Technical University Delft). Deltaprogramma Kust is the Dutch government's program that aims to protect the Netherlands this century against high water and keep the freshwater supply up to sufficient level. 'The National Perspective for the Coast' will be completed in the beginning of 2013 and it will be the guidelines for the next decades.

Satellietgroep developed a new method, an 'artist in residency program' for research and exchange of local knowledge on a global level. We invite international artists and scientists to jointly develop and present research articulating a cultural, innovative and sustainable significance of the sea and its coasts by doing on-site research, engaging with local communities, collaborating with local experts and connecting to international networks. The results are the production of new works related to coastal transitions and the development of new insights that contribute to future coastal scenarios.

Among our Dutch partners is Trans Artist (a platform for international artist in residence programs), Domein voor Kunstkritiek (Domain for Artcriticism) and Reinwardt Academy (AHK, Museology and Heritage).

BADGAST

Satellietgroep programs Badgast, a research based artist in residence program, outdoor Cinema with screenings and Talks at the coast and develops international cultural exchange projects, all concerning the sea. Badgast is located in the middle of the surfing village FAST, the Urban Beach Community at the hinge point of the promenade and harbour in The Hague at Scheveningen. During the residency period new works - both conceptual and documentary - are developed that reflect upon the complex and layered coastal transitions and urban developments. With these works they contribute to the International Contemporary Collection On Coastal Transitions of Satellietgroep to be shared with broader audiences.

NOW WAKES THE SEA (NWTs)

Starting in 2012 Satellietgroep exported the concept and methods of our embedded research based artist in residence program Badgast for the first time abroad. We initiated the project 'Now Wakes The Sea' (NWTs), which involves research based artist in residence programs for artists /architects / filmmakers in coastal transition areas. We focus on countries surrounding the Black Sea and North Sea, encouraging artist to develop new works, to select existing works and to program travelling film festivals for public screenings and debates at venues, on both coasts.

'Now Wakes the Sea' (NWTs) combines architecture, arts and sciences in pursuit of local knowledge on a global level. Artist in residencies are used as a research method. NWTs enables artists to do fieldwork and to work on site with local partners in order to map out, collect and research the current status of coastal transitions and to generate new perspectives. This embedded research contributes to public and professional awareness. Thus, our project brings together different views and opens up dialogue. This new method of artist in residency program connects to the international development of artist residencies as cells of knowledge and as alternative academies.

INTERNATIONAL CONTEMPORARY COLLECTION ON COASTAL TRANSITIONS

In close collaboration with international artists, scientists, curators and guest curators, Satellietgroep develops an 'International Contemporary Collection On Coastal Transitions'. Through exchange projects in The Netherlands and abroad, Satellietgroep interconnects coastal communities.

'ZEESPIEGEL' ('MIRROR ON THE SEA')

One of the results of the program is the free open air photo exhibition 'Zeespiegel - Mirror on the Sea' on the new boulevard of The Hague at Scheveningen. Composed by Satellietgroep with artworks of 25 artists in residence of Badgast, locals en professionals. Contributions about innovative coastal protection, including the Sand Engine, complete the tales about our relationship with the sea and make them accessible to everyone.

Exchange of local knowledge on a global level - Art as strategy for change.

Satellietgroep was founded in 2006 in The Hague, The Netherlands. We have an embedded art and cultural approach in researching how the sea and waterways influence cities, people, communities and environments. We research the pressures placed upon the public, social and cultural use of waterfronts, and develop new concepts and sustainable strategies for a new approach to future sea and coastal urban areas.