

Observatorium presented five artworks. Their work can indeed be regarded as art at the edge of architecture and landscapedesign. In this lecture however, they describe their work as a very precise spatial and symbolic answer to the very special circumstances of a highway, a park or a prison. The answer however is never definitive, because the artists make sure that their art is being rented, exploited or rearranged by the public.

Dwelling for Seclusion

1997 New York

The capital of capitalism is noisy, crowded, loud and leaves it's inhabitant little privacy and time for rest. Privacy is actually an expensive commodity. The Dwelling for Seclusion was set in a public park. According to the guests of Observatorium it was a most generous offer to enjoy privacy and rest. The motto of artist group Observatorium was to create time and space for focussing attention. The public park was not any longer a place for public events, but also for individual experience. It is a place that pays tribute to the wonderful human right to be left alone.

Observatorium Nieuw Terbregge

2001 Rotterdam

Mobility and capitalism are inseperable. Highways are considered a burden and a neccesity. But it is also a kind of no-mans-land that is only experienced sitting in a car. It is linear space, not connected to surrounding space. There is a tendecy to seperate highways more and more, because of health reasons.

The Observatorium is an enclosed garden with a view on the highway and allows observation of the bloodcirculation of capitalism and economic dynamics. It is a place for confusion because of the continious stream of people and goods passing by. It is a place of distance to the world, because you are the observer being observed by the car-drivers. It is a place of insight, it makes you aware that the world is not steady but fluid and mobile.

Plein voor de Leij

2003 Vught

The prison is a world of it's own. Detached from the world it is a place of morality, safety and education, where money is non-existent and trade is not allowed. It is a socialist society where nobody has to bother about income and where the state defines the rules of behaviour. To allow freedom and individual expression to a certain extend, Observatorium proposed to lay the foundations for an environment that can be designed by staff and prisoners. Moreover the 'building playground' can be seen by the visitors of the prisoners, which creates an opportunity for the juveniles to show what they do instead of just telling about their restricted lives. It can be seen as an invitation to bring individual entrepreneurship and qualities and stimulates a less strict interpretation of the rules of life behind the prison wall.

Hotel Diorama

2003 Rotterdam

When shop doors are open the interior is part of public space of the city. When closed it is just the street that is public space. But shop space can be used for other purposes than buying and selling. The shop can be part of public life during the night if a common interest can be found for the individual commercial shopkeepers. In fact their interest can be of service to the liveliness of the city as a whole. Hotel Diorama was a succesful attempt to redefine public and private in a shopping street. At night the interior served as hotel bedroom, while the shopwindow turned into an attraction for the passer-by. You might observe somebody

sleeping in the semi-public space of a window.

Melancholie und die Braut

2003 Dresden

First the socialist government of Dresden built homes and started restoration of inner-city treasures. Then the capitalist government built new roads, new shops and finished restoration. You don't see much influence of citizens, understandably. Everything is brandnew. Everybody is adapting.

In the middle of the city is a public transport knot that has the looks of 'Wiederaufbau', still. Capitalism doesn't need this space for commercial development yet. Art could be of use as a suggestion for future plans and at the same time introduce play in a not yet totally fixed city. The installation of 30 tons of sandstone remains (1870), concrete slabs (1956), a large red bed and 450 chairs (2003) at Postplatz opposite of Zwinger, served as a temporary theatre while the city is postponing urban planning. It was an invitation to play (now) and to act (later).

Goudkoorts

2005 Rotterdam

Creative capital is the buzz word of 2004. City branders and city governments invest in locations for creative business. Art is regarded a very important quality adding to the general quality of a city. Companies and small businesses share this insight. More and more companies do their bit in social welfare. And social groups become more and more fixated on making profit and being independent from funding. In order to create the possibility of cooperation between the different sectors, Observatorium organized a fair, building bridges between the commercial, the artistic and the social, stating that all parties have a responsibility for well-fare and well-being in Rotterdam.