Artroute Rotterdam

from Central Station to Overschie

post-war reconstruction art & architecture

















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Platform Wederopbouw Rotterdam

Artroute Rotterdam

from Central Station to Overschie



- 1 Artwork
- A Architecture
- Difficult to see from the outside
- On the route, visit our website www.bkor.nl
- Museum Overschie
  Overschiese Dorpstraat 136



1. J.H. Baas
‘SPECULAASJES’ (1975)
‘I might as well do it myself then,’ is what assistant J.H. Baas must have thought when rail station architect Van Ravesteyn informed him about the astronomic prices charged by the famous sculptor Henry Moore, whom he had consulted. Baas therefore decided to create two Moore-like sculptures himself to flank the entrance. These were later repurposed in the current station, where they also make an appearance in the shape of a decorative pattern.



2. Huib Noorlander
THOMAS MORE (1970)
The famous 16th-century humanist Thomas More once criticizingly said: ‘One of the greatest problems of our time is that many are schooled but few are educated.’ And that is also how he appears to be looking at all the students passing him in this location. In his hand he may be holding the manuscript for his book *Utopia*, which describes the political system of a fictitious state of ideal perfection.



A. Margry en Jacobs
R.K. JONGENSWEEKSCHOOL
‘THOMAS MORUS’ (1958-1965)
The design for this reinforced concrete school building included a lot of glass. This led to a building with an open character that encourages an interaction between indoor and outdoor life — important for adolescents, who must venture out into the world. While the exterior walls are dynamic, the interior walls, surrounding a courtyard garden full of flowers, have a more subdued character. After all, relaxation is important too. As this still holds true today, the garden surrounding the premises was recently redesigned.



3. Gust Romijn
UITVLIEGENDE VOGEL (1960)
‘One may recognize something of a bird in it, but also of a budding flower. And when one looks up while standing underneath it, it serves as a bronze pair of glasses to gaze at the heavens,’ the architect Bakema said about Romijn’s *Fledgling*. Described as a ‘one-man art life’, this flamboyant artist himself had also fledged the nest to set up his artistic practice in a farm house on the edge of the city.



B. Van Den Broek & Bakema
MONTESSORILYCEUM
(1951-1959)
On this small strip next to the railway tracks, Van den Broek & Bakema had no other option than to place an equally elongated school building. These concrete-loving architects became famous for designing the Lijnbaan shopping centre, which according to the New York Times was the only truly innovative project in Europe. This two-storeyed school was designed in the shape of a long corridor that becomes increasingly narrow towards the end and has classrooms on either side.



4. Leendert Bolle
ZONDER TITEL (1940)
This undulating fence, with animal figures incorporated in the wrought-iron work, was designed by the architect Van Ravesteyn, a master of the curved line. It was topped with sculptures that, contrastingly, are actually rather flat, designed by the artist Leendert Bolle. Due to illness Bolle was no longer able to sculpt them himself. He therefore drew the animal silhouettes for others to execute in concrete and finish with a coat of gold paint.



C. Sybold van Ravesteyn
DIERGAARDE BLIJDORP
(1937-1940)
The construction of the new zoological garden, an elegant promenade which opened its gates in December 1940, had already begun before the war. Sybold van Ravesteyn had designed it as a Gesamtkunstwerk, with lots of buildings and art, but only a few cages. He designed every single detail, right down to the giraffe logo. Today some parts of the park have been given the status of national monuments.



5. Han Rehm
FANNY BLANKERS-KOEN (1956)
Here the four-time Olympic champion has been immortalized in a powerful pose, crossing the imaginary finishing line in 1948. Even though this is a bronze sculpture, the artist skilfully suggests a precarious balance by using this pose. The local residents carefully watch over the athletics legend, who may sometimes suddenly be wearing a sports jersey. A note attached to the sculpture read: ‘Mrs. Blankers, we gave you a quick clean today as you were covered in bird droppings.’



D. Van den Broek & Bakema
KANTOOR EN WERKPLAATS
GEMEENTELIJKE VERVOER- EN
MOTORDIENST (1951-1954)
Austere, no fuss, carry on working, folks. This describes Van den Broek & Bakema approach to designing the post-war Netherlands, starting in Overschie. In modern, rigid concrete, and with sawtooth roofs, they also realized company workshops for ROTEB: Reiniging [sanitation], Ontsmetting [decontamination], Transport, En [and] Brandweer [fire department].



6. DRIE KUNSTWERKEN
At later dates, a couple of artworks were added to this hyper-functional building from the reconstruction period after all, although these completely lack any mutual correlation. A small bronze sculpture (1976), a staff gift, was followed by a sculpture made from recycled rubbish: *Roteb Eco Monument* (2011) by Jan Eric Visser. And later on, a glorious line of poetry *Cities don’t shelter from the rain* (2013) by Joseph Brodsky was added to the edge of the roof.



7. Observatorium
DIE BOCHT (2011)
The way in which the bend in this motorway suddenly opens up into a view of the Rotterdam skyline served as inspiration for a poem by Martin Bril, which was later translated into this motorway sculpture by the artists’ group Observatorium. It speculates on a possible future for the junction, when it will no longer be used for traffic and might have become a park for peaceful strolls.



E. VERKEERSKNOOPPUNT
KLEINPOLDERPLEIN (1967-1971)
The Van Brienenoord bridge (1965), Beneluxtunnel (1968), and this traffic junction are all part of the so-called ‘Diamond around Rotterdam’. Constructed from prefab concrete elements across four levels of elevation, the project finally cost € 50 million — a lot more than originally budgeted. However, it was completed on time and greatly appreciated. The Vrije Volk newspaper wrote: ‘The new Kleinpolderplein is a groovy ensemble of bridges and underpasses.’



8. MUSEUM VOOR VERWEESDE BEELDEN (2012)
Tucked away underneath the motorway is a small park for orphaned sculptures. They were uprooted due to urban development and had to be relocated. Some of these sculptures date from the post-war reconstruction period, just like the fly-over. Together with their fifteen pedestals, they look like a brutalist museum of discarded progress that simultaneously serves as a flooding area in case of emergency.



9. Joan Bakker
VOGELS (1959)
Abstract art? Not at all! This sculpture depicts two stacked birds that are flying away from each other. The line following their bodies continues along their tails. The students of the neighbouring school had joyfully and enthusiastically decorated the sculpture in bright colours, but that had not been the artist's intention. That layer of colour has since been removed and the sculpture is now painted gold. As a result, we are still unable to see its original stone colour.



10. Van Schagen Architecten
MONUMENT WELSCHEN 7 (1990-1993)
Although demolition had long served as the motto for urban transformation, the architect Henk van Schagen decided to repurpose this neighbourhood in order to preserve its beautiful clear lines. Most of the blocks dating from 1951 were modernized. A single characteristic concrete façade of the complex Welschen 7 was kept intact to serve as a monument to the once brand-new reconstruction project, even though it is now looking rather run-down.



F. WONINGBOUW WELSCHEN (1947-1955)
Architect and pioneer of modular construction Frans Welschen planned this on-site construction of seven low-rise residential blocks. As Welschen did not have 'sufficient aesthetic qualities', architects De Jonge were called in to further develop the project. This was devised by architect Lotte Stam-Beese, who had worked in the USSR. Similar to industrial Soviet cities, she surrounded the strips of plattenbau buildings with plenty of greenery, openness, and supervision.



11. René Jacobs en Micha de Bie
STAALKAART VAN DE SCHIE (2022)
Following the renovation of homes in Van Noortwijkstraat, work started on the council houses in and around Patijnstraat. To celebrate this renovation, the artists René Jacobs and Micha de Bie created artworks for the porches. These were indoors, following the tradition of the reconstruction period. The artists chose to repurpose materials, painting old sheets of wall cladding in all the colours of the sunrises and sunsets over the Schie canal.



G. J. Denijs en L.J. Linssen
WOONGEBOUWEN 'DE ZEVEN PROVINCIËN' (1952-1955)
High-rise public housing estates were first introduced to the Netherlands in 1955: seven blocks of flats along the Schie canal (two of which were later demolished), named after the 16th century Seven Provinces. The blocks mainly contained three-room flats. In March 1958, the British Queen Elisabeth II came to the Netherlands and visited one of these newly built flats together with Dutch Queen Juliana and the princesses Beatrix and Irene. Elisabeth commented that she found them very nice, albeit a little small.



12. Luigi de Lerma
MOZAÏEK CENTRALE ENTREEHAL (1955)
De Lerma studied ceramic techniques in Faenza, boosted the ceramics industry on Rhodes, married a Dutch noble woman, and finally settled in the Netherlands after many international ramblings. Here he started decorating buildings from the post-war reconstruction period. Although his works became increasingly austere over time, the boats in this floor may still be reminiscent of the Italian folk art motifs from the artist's youth.



H. J. Hendriks, W. van der Sluys, L. Van den Bosch
ONZE LIEVE VROUW VAN ALTIJDDURENDE BIJSTAND (1952-1953)
The explosive growth of the Overschie neighbourhood led to the need for a new Roman Catholic church. Built in the new shopping centre, this church could accommodate no less than a thousand worshippers. The traditionalist brick building was furnished with columns and Romanesque arches. A structure with 'bell holes' was built by way of a tower, and its octagonal baptistery echoed the age of Charlemagne. In 2022 the church was converted into flats.



13. Lucien den Arend
DIVERGENCE (1975)
Although buildings would still be accompanied by artworks in the post-reconstruction period, these became increasingly objective, abstract, and disconnected from the architecture. Therefore this *minimal art* object, which first stood in a different location, could be effortlessly transferred to this newly built square. In its new surroundings it still adds a touch of understated elegance.



14. Henk de Vos
HAND EN HOOFD (1959)
'If you want to create something, you have to leave Rotterdam,' said De Vos. During the reconstruction period, this global traveller returned to Rotterdam after all, and found a lot of employment. His large-scale reliefs contain simple and elegant shapes. It is a subservient and respectable type of art, as in his view you had to give up 'your experimental impulses' while working on commission. This stone relief both literally and figuratively conveys a gesture while offering depth to the architecture of the former girls' school. Unfortunately the work is now in a bad condition.



I. Lockhorst, Koldewijn en Van Eijk
6E NIJVERHEIDSSCHOOL DE STARRENBURG (1954-1959)
The design for this school for domestic science included class rooms for theoretic subjects as well as cookery and sewing lessons. It was built according to a new concept called the 'hall type': a central hall connecting all the different functions in the school in order to bring people together. The hall simultaneously served as a meeting space, an auditorium, and a space for activities like dancing lessons. After the school moved out, several small businesses temporarily moved in.



15. Kees Timmer
HOND (1960)
This cheerful playground sculpture dates from a time before rubber tiles, when concrete objects were not yet seen as hazardous to little knees and milk teeth. Kees Timmer preferred animals to people, depicting them to warn us against industrialization and commercialization. Unfortunately this dog, which children were meant to climb on, has now been placed behind a fence, resembling the many caged animals the melancholic Timmer painted as well.



16. Henk Sutterland
HERDENKINGSMONUMENT OVERSCHIE '40-'45 (1955)
'H. Sutterland's design rejected once again', the Vrije Volk newspaper reported in 1955, leaving the committee 'For those who fell' at the end of its tether. The municipal architect had already been submitting plans for years. Although funds had been reserved for an eight-metre-high obelisk, that design was rejected as well. The authorities only gave their approval after Sutterland substituted it for a shortened travertine column topped with a bronze planter.



J. J. Bister (Gemeentewerken)
LUCHTHAVENGEBOUW ZESTIENHOVEN (1956-1970)
To replace Waalhaven airport, which had been destroyed during the war, Zestienhoven airport was opened in 1956, at the urgent request of the Rotterdam 'port barons'. After the extension of the air strip in 1966, and the addition of an airport building in 1967 and a station building in 1970, however, there were mainly debates and protests concerning its imminent closure due to financial losses. And yet Rotterdam The Hague Airport managed to stay open and became a popular location for plane-spotting over a cup of coffee.



17. André Volten
MIKADO (1975)
The realization of this sculpture was delayed due to many discussions about it being too expensive for the already loss-making airport. The renowned artist Volten therefore designed a tubular sculpture consisting of separate components. This meant it would be easier to relocate in case of an actual bankruptcy. Although representing descending and ascending air traffic, staff members who were fearing for their jobs saw it as 'a model of a collapsing airport.'



18. Joop Hekman
ZONDER TITEL (ca.1951-1952)
The architect wanted to add colour and reliefs to the façades, which is why Joop Hekman was commissioned to design these stones. For post-war reconstruction projects, fish were a popular theme to express a harmonious life for human beings and nature, even in the city or in business areas. These small concrete fish are vigorously swimming around the corner and towards the future.



K. WONINGBOUW BECRAMMING EN CANNEMANSTRAAT (1951-1952)
These two small neighbourhoods, with a total of 425 homes, were designed by architect Linssen. Luigi de Lerma furnished them with yellow stripes and colourful doors and alcoves. Although they had very comfortable and spacious interiors, they still were described as 'shoe boxes', with the newspaper even referring to them as 'dark dominos'. They were rather vigorously renovated, with stuccoed walls, synthetic window frames, and loud new entrances.



19. Diet Wiegman
MONUMENT BEVRIJDING EN WEDEROPBOUW (1995)
To mark fifty years of freedom and reconstruction, Diet Wiegman realized this monument in conjunction with six primary schools. From the front it resembles a rigid and tidy apartment building. However, this image disintegrates when looking at the back, which is rough-textured, resembling a cave or archaeological find — or decay. Wiegman enjoyed working with contradictions, cycles, and transformation.

FROM CENTRAL STATION TO OVERSCHIE

The consequences of the 1941 annexation of the small village of Overschie by the big city of Rotterdam only became clear after the war. The city was dealing with housing shortages, but also needed to accommodate its new economy. A great many homes, schools and shops were therefore built at a rapid pace.With its experimental modular constructions, Overschie became an architectural testing ground. Although there was already a road, the village was permanently split up when the A13 motorway was constructed, surrounded by greenery. Blocks of flats reflected in the water, and working people could pass their time pleasantly. It became an urban neighbourhood offering tranquillity and space. When the homes had fallen into disrepair at the end of the last century, architects even protested against their demolition and were in favour of renovation. Although the original village had been gobbled up by progress, Overschie became something a time machine, transporting us to the progressive ideals of the 1950s. Another thing illustrated by this route is that in those days people did not always make clear agreements, for instance about maintenance. As a result, many of the works have been marked by time. Fortunately, today there is a renewed interest in the post-war reconstruction period, which also means that the discussion about what should be preserved is back on the agenda. But without attention, nothing will happen at all.

PLATFORM WEDEROPBOUW ROTTERDAM

This is the central knowledge centre for the reconstruction of Rotterdam after the 1940 bombing, a decisive moment in the city's history. The platform organizes meetings, lectures, guided tours, and exhibitions. It also offers an ever-growing website featuring hundreds of articles. Regarding Rotterdam as a living museum, the platform aims to improve the historical awareness in Rotterdammers of all ages, from resident to city maker, in order to make them more involved in their surroundings.

W Platform Wederopbouw Rotterdam

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