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Collaborations for Archiving, Presenting and Researching Architecture: Topics of Shared Interest

History of the Collection

Over a hundred years ago, architect J.H.W. Leliman published an article proposing the establishment of an independent museum of architecture. The Amsterdam architects’ association Architectura et Amicitia set up a committee to look into the viability of such a museum. Although the findings of the committee supported the creation of an independent institute dedicated to architecture, these plans failed to materialize due to the economic constraints of the day.

It was not until the 1980s that such an institute finally appeared, created by the merging of three cultural institutes. These were the Netherlands Architecture Documentation Centre (NDB), the Architecture Museum Foundation (SAM) and Stichting Wonen foundation.

After controversy concerning the location of the architecture museum – Amsterdam or Rotterdam – the NAI temporarily occupied premises on the Westersingel in Rotterdam prior to the construction of a new building.

The Netherlands Architecture Documentation Centre (NDB), the Architecture Museum Foundation (SAM) and Stichting Wonen foundation placed their collections in the care of the NAI. Today, this collection is one of the world's largest architectural collections, and is entrusted to Het Nieuwe Instituut.

Archives

Spanning the period 1850-1980, the collection includes over 500 archives and collections of Dutch architects, urban planners, professional associations and training institutes. In addition to museum quality drawings, these archives include personal and business correspondence, preliminary designs, sketches, working drawings, photographs, models, posters, press clippings and published articles. The collection traces developments within Dutch architecture and urbanism from the mid-1800s to the present day. The artistic quality and uniqueness of many archives and the added value of the complete collection give the archives of Het Nieuwe Instituut their great cultural and historical significance. The library holds some 60,000 volumes, and focuses on international advances in the field. Each year, reading room and library welcomes over 3000 researchers, students, PhD students and people with an interest in architecture.

In the Netherlands, architectural training as we know it today had its beginnings in
the mid-19th century when the Maatschappij tot Bevordering der Bouwkunst (Society for the Promotion of Architecture) was instituted. This also marked the establishment of architectural archives. The archives of the firm P.J.H. Cuypers and his son J.Th. Cuypers, are prominent 19th century components of the collection of Het Nieuwe Instituut. The main bulk of the collection dates from the period 1900 to 1940, and comprises the archives of H.P. Berlage, K.P.C. de Bazal, W. Kromhout, M. de Klerk, J.J.P. Oud, W.M. Dudok, J. Duiker, J.A. Brinkman and L.C. van der Vlugt, T. van Doesburg, H. Th. Wijdeveld, G. Th. Rietveld and C. van Eesteren. Another important archive from the same period is that of the Royal Institute of Dutch Architects (BNA). The post-war reconstruction period (1940-1965) is well-represented by the archives of J.H. van den Broek and J.B. Bakema, H. Maaskant, and W. Wissing. More recent archives include those of T. Bosch, M. van Schijndel and the early work of OMA.

Library Collection

Het Nieuwe Instituut collects publications about Dutch and international architecture, urban design, and related design fields such as housing, spatial planning, landscape architecture, and interior architecture. The library’s main focus lies on the modern era, from the 19th century onwards. In addition to architecture and urbanism, the library also holds information art, photography and design, as well as on social topics such as globalization, the new economy, the network society, and the entertainment industry. By following contemporary social developments, Het Nieuwe Instituut strives to offer wide-ranging insights into trends relevant to designing the space around us.

The collection consists of approximately 55,000 books and brochures, and nearly 1,000 periodical titles both Dutch and foreign, including 125 current subscriptions. The clippings collection comprises articles and news reports from the major Dutch dailies and weeklies. Het Nieuwe Instituut furthermore has a fine collection of rare books and magazines dating from 1920 to 1940, and folios from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Each year, the collection grows with a shelf length of 20 meters – through purchases from modern and antiquarian booksellers, as well as objects gifted by institutions and individuals, and through the acquisition of libraries forming part of the estates of Dutch architects. Items in the collection may be viewed but are not available for lending.

Acquisitions Policy

After World War II, the members of the Architecture Museum Foundation (SAM) began to find the effective management of their archives increasingly difficult. The task of managing the SAM archive was transferred to the state-founded body the NDB and, together, the SAM and the NDB continued to build the collection by acquiring archives and a library. The NDB employed collection professionals and curators to oversee collection-building, although at this stage there was no form of structural acquisitions policy. As the need for such a strategy became ever clearer, the NDB drew up a list of acquisitions criteria. In line with the new strategy, the
collection would only acquire the archives of the most important Dutch architects; architects with completed projects throughout the country, architects who were significant figures within architectural movements, whose work and commissions were discussed in books and periodicals and so on.

For the first few years, the acquisitions policy of the NDB proved quite successful. However, the archivists and curators soon realized that they needed to devise a framework to deal with questions relating to the archives of individual architects. They began to compile a list of selection criteria. After researching architectural developments spanning three periods (1945-1965, 1965-1980 and 1980-1990) a list of notable architects was drawn up to be used as a tool for selecting archives and collections.

The collection of the NAI, one of the largest architecture collections in the world, is now managed by Het Nieuwe Instituut, which was inaugurated on 1 January 2013. Het Nieuwe Instituut arose from the merger of three Dutch cultural institutions the Netherlands Architecture Institute, Premsela, the Netherlands Institute for Design and Fashion and Virtueel Platform, the e-culture knowledge institute.

The collection maintains its focus on architecture and urban design archives and has always aimed to collect complete archives. As stated above, the collection holds an array of preparatory sketches and museum quality drawings, as well as correspondence, photographs, models, collections of press clippings, and published articles and so on.

While the NAI existed, the collection focused on the cultural and social significance of architecture rather than its technical or legal aspects. The collection was not subject to any specific acquisitions policy. At Het Nieuwe Instituut we continue to highlight the cultural importance or the creative, reflective aspect of architecture. This determines the uniqueness and quality of Het Nieuwe Instituut’s collection and distinguishes it from other archive collections in the area of the Dutch built environment, such as municipal archives or city archives.

Prior to 2013, our acquisitions strategy generally focused around five themes: housing, office space, public buildings, public space, urban regeneration projects and so on. Today, the acquisitions policy emphasizes a social and thematic approach, rather than following the development of an individual architect. In 2013, we reviewed and restructured our acquisitions strategy. Our policy currently highlights three core policy themes:

1. Year theme, (2014 hundred year of innovation and conflict, 2015 world exhibitions, 2016 Olympic Games)
2. Interior and landscape
3. Objects and materials
These three themes also underpin acquisitions, research and presentations and can be clearly connected to projects and stakeholders (and eventually thus archives).

**Project: Objects and Materials**

This autumn, Het Nieuwe Instituut will begin a project investigating the unexplored possibilities of plastic. Once seen as the material of the future, in the last few decades, plastic has become synonymous with environmental pollution. Today, more plastic is produced locally, and through recycling.

The conflict between market, politics and society is far from over. With an exhibition, program of lectures and online dossier, Het Nieuwe Instituut offers insights in current developments and invites members of the public to join the debate.

The project is being developed in collaboration with researcher and designer Tal Erez who is affiliated as fellow to Het Nieuwe Instituut. As a designer, Erez focuses on socio-political and economic transformations in times of technological and political flux. He studied at the Holon Institute of Technology and the Design Academy Eindhoven.

**Het Nieuwe Instituut’s New Policy and Introduction of the New Methods**

On its formation, Het Nieuwe Instituut assigned the collection a central role in its functioning. Archival research is connected to the long-term programming the institute aims to pursue. A new Research & Development Centre, known as the Jaap Bakema Study Centre has been founded. The new centre is a collaboration between Het Nieuwe Instituut and Technical University of Delft and is based on partnerships with knowledge institutes and so-called fellows. The both parties are responsible for the financing of Jaap Bakema Study Centre. It will organize projects on themes of common interest.

The archive now serves an even greater function: as a vital resource in developing programs and activities. New approaches and aspects of acquisitions policy have generated new ways of approaching the archives. This will benefit research, and also improve the accessibility of our archives.

We no longer believe that archives should primary be acquired for their historical significance. In the years ahead, Het Nieuwe Instituut will link the acquisition program to the scheduled program of exhibitions and events, and to the program of the newly-created Jaap Bakema Study Centre. The themes covered by our general policy (as set out by our acquisitions policy) correspond both with the programming of Het Nieuwe Instituut and the agenda of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre.

The Jaap Bakema Study Centre will allow the TU Delft and Het Nieuwe Instituut to profit from each other’s expertise, resources and contacts. The first joint research program is a broadly conceived study of the history and contemporary relevance of
Dutch Structuralism. Hertzberger’s archive forms an important resource for the study of the emergence and meaning of Dutch Structuralism being conducted by the two founding bodies at the Jaap Bakema Study Centre.

The Institute’s acquisition of the archive of Herman Hertzberger, one of the most famous and important architects of the late 20th century, has been fundamental in our research into Structuralism.

The research findings, published by Dirk van de Heuvel, head of the Bakema Research Study Centre and Associate Professor of Architecture TU Delft prompted the institute to mount an exhibition reflecting on Structuralism. The exhibition on Structuralism not only presented an investigation of the principle tenets of Structuralism, but played a key part in legitimizing the new methods introduced by our institute, and in the collaboration between the archive owners and the BRSC. As the owner of the archive, Herman Hertzberger not only donated it to the institute, but also participated in the Structuralism research project. He also acted as one of the two curators of the Structuralism exhibition.

The Institute was also able to acquire the archive of Van Stigt, another important voice in late 20th century architecture. The Van Stigt archive has also been deployed for the same purpose.

There are, of course, numerous examples of archives collected in alignment with the policy of Het Nieuwe Instituut, and used by Jaap Bakema Study Centre as research material, culminating in a presentation. ‘Open. The Bakema Celebration’, the Dutch entry at this year’s Venice Biennale is one of the ingenious ways in which these methods have been implemented.

The exhibition ‘Open: A Bakema Celebration’ offers a critical reflection on the idea of the open society through Bakema’s work and research. It constitutes one of the inaugural activities of the new Jaap Bakema Study Centre.

The shifting roles of the state and the market, the architect and the individual citizen are scrutinized in a multi-media installation encompassing historical correspondence, photographs, and interviews (with Herman Hertzberger and John Habraken, among others). Also featured is a contemporary ‘Post Box for the Open Society’, an online platform for architects and designers to share new ideas for the open society.

Jaap Bakema (1914–1981) was a leading voice in the post-war avant-gardes of 20th-century architecture: CIAM and its successor Team 10. He sought to build a society that was democratic, egalitarian and all-inclusive. Bakema believed that architecture should accommodate the emancipation of the masses whilst allowing for the self-realization of the individual. ‘Open’ was curated by Guus Beumer, the director of Het Nieuwe Instituut and Dirk van den Heuvel, director of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre. Rem Koolhaas, the chief curator of the Biennale, has chosen the overarching
theme *Absorbing Modernity, 1914–2014*. Koolhaas has cited the First World War as the beginning of modern globalization.

**Collaboration is KEY!**

Research projects initiated and carried out at the Jaap Bakema Study Centre will lead to exhibitions, publications, discussions and specific partial studies related to the activities of Het Nieuwe Instituut and the research program of Delft University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture.

The study centre will also facilitate research conducted by and with third parties. Furthermore, within the new institutional and economic reality, the user-generated content will become increasingly important. As a result of open data, the custodian and owner of an archive will no longer provide the context and facts. Institutes are starting increasingly to operate in networks; user-generated content will be produced as a spin-off of research projects. In the years ahead, we will need to address this in our institute and manage the different sources of information.

In the near future, the Institute aims to pursue and step up collaborations with researchers in the reading room and library (the future physical Study Centre) and with fellows and PhD programs. Through further cooperation, and by connecting and making available the knowledge, material, information and results of research conducted by the aforementioned target groups at the reading room and library or through other channels within and outside the Institute, we hope to track and connect the research carried out so far with the programs of Het Nieuwe Instituut.

The activities of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre will be socially relevant and generate discussion of current issues. The centre will also contribute to fundamental research and knowledge development in the creative industry around design, culture and society.

Het Nieuwe Instituut and Delft University of Technology will facilitate each other in expanding the intellectual infrastructure focused on innovation and the exchange and export of knowledge. Historical materials from Het Nieuwe Instituut’s archive will be expressly available, in the interests of current research and public discourse. Delft University of Technology’s research will strengthen the position of Het Nieuwe Instituut’s collection within a broad, international scholarly network. Het Nieuwe Instituut will provide a platform for the research findings of Delft University of Technology, allowing these to be shared with the general public. Collaboration in the areas of collection management and digitization will also be possible.
Het Nieuwe Instituut’s model for methods, policy-objectives and implementations

Things and materials
Landscape and Interior
Year theme “2014, hundred year of innovation and conflict, 2015 world exhibitions, 2016 Olympic Games”

ACQUISITION

HERITAGE

RESEARCH
Research files
Bakema Research Center
Universities

PRESENTATION
Exhibition
Publications
Platform act.

Bakema Research Center

Universities

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ACQUISITION

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Research files
Jaap Bakema Research Center / Dirk van den Heuvel

PRESENTATION
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Bakema Research Center

Universities

Exhibition Dutch Structuralism:
– Making Space, Leaving Space
– An installation of four presentations on the themes Education, Ideals, Building and The City
Architecture the Dutch Way 1945-2000
(Netherlands-Russia year)
Wood
Designing Scarcely
Flow Process chart in heritage department

Process

Acquisition → Accession → Description Access → Digitization → Collection Management → Service

Active
- Archives
- Library Items
- Objects
- Drawings
- Access & Authorities

Passive
- Storing & Climate management
- Passive preservation
- Handling instructions
- Restoration & Preservation planning
- Risk management & Emergency plans
- Inspections

Collection management & Services

Enrichment & Contextualization

SERVICES

Acquisition → Accession → Description access → Digitization

Storage
- Metadata
- Content

Donor
- Lenders
- Seller

Collection web application
- Web files Het Nieuwe Instituut (topics)
- Portals
- Web 2.0, 3.0
- Social media
- User generated content
- Open Data
- Exhibitions
- Publications
- etc.

User
- Client