Mobility

A Room with a View

In 1976, in his book The Joyless Economy, the economist and welfare theorist Tibor Scitovsky predicted that an excess of standard goods would lead to increasing social dissatisfaction, because these goods are devoid of real sensory stimulation for human beings.¹ Scitovsky’s predictions about a cheerless and tasteless economy leaving deep traces throughout Europe are directly borne out in the physical planning, urban development and architecture of the last few decades. The mobility axes illustrate this clearly. Add to that more than 400 km of noise-protection barriers and you have a model of the bad taste inherent in the most visited public space in the Netherlands: the motorway.

In my book Composition, Contrast, Complexity, I submit that architecture cannot be put into words.² The book describes twenty projects. Ten statements – on thin, fragile Japanese paper – encapsulate the views upon which I base this proposition. Or to put it a better way, perhaps, they clarify what I am seeking. The fifth statement is on the aesthetics of mobility. The twentieth project describes ‘A room with a view’. I will attempt to explain why the architect of the Library and the Master Plan of the Technical University of Delft is introducing a subject like the aesthetics of mobility.

¹ mecanoo
mobility

² mecanoo
mobility
As a member of the VROM council, I become involved in the political discussion about the future layout of the Netherlands. One of the topics is corridor development – I oppose this. Mobility is part of modern society; it is a daily pursuit, just like housing, work and recreation. Mobility is not just about traffic jams, asphalt, delays and tollgates, but also about people deriving a sensory experience from their everyday mobility. Every day, travelling along roads and railways, millions of people experience the changes of the city and countryside. For them, the train and the car are also ‘a room with a view’.

One might wonder whether the traditional methods of urban planners, in the form of future scenarios depicted statically in maps coloured red, blue, yellow and green, are truly appropriate. These maps are not merely static – they are two-dimensional. The third dimension is missing, as are the dynamics of motion. One might be well-advised to view the Netherlands from the moving perspective of the everyday mobile person. Perhaps it is the combination of mobility, city and countryside that has given rise to the population’s increasing sense of saturation.

On the VROM council, beautifully put together when it comes to disciplines, I am the only architect. To me, an architect’s task is to imagine, to be a visionary, to propose and disseminate ideas, to inspire – not to fixate on that which is wrong or ugly, but to go in search of what is in fact possible.

That is the moment the adventure begins.
At the invitation of the Minister for Transport, Public Works and Water Management, I give a lecture entitled ‘The Art of Integral Engineering and the Aesthetics of Mobility’. Before an audience composed almost entirely of engineers and administrators, I propose viewing the motorway as a design brief. A brief that requires both a cultural turnaround and a new set of instruments. This is because existing urban development practice is not up to the task.

To give the aesthetics of mobility some form, I introduce six typologies that can deal with the alternation from the scale of the city to that of the countryside. Three relate to the countryside: the panoramic landscape, the eco-viaduct and the Bali model. The other three relate to the city: the Ruhr area, Las Vegas and La Défense. They form a series running from utmost rural to urban in the extreme. As a symbol for the cultural turnaround needed, the roads may be seen as routes and given names, such as the Louis Couperus Route, the Erasmus Route, the Rembrandt Route and the Zuiderzee Route. The routes need not just vision and direction, but more importantly a client to commission them.

In the period that follows, administrators in the Netherlands seem to rise to the challenge and accept the responsibility of taking on the role of client in commissioning the great mobility axes. To me, this illustrates the unique architectural climate in the Netherlands, so admired abroad.
Eight municipalities jointly request advice about a fragment of the Louis Couperus Route. At issue is accommodating the eastern section of the HSL (High Speed Rail Line) between Utrecht and Maarn in conjunction with the widening of the A12 motorway. At the meeting, I suggest to the mayors that they take their seats according to the order in which their municipalities lie along the route. This is not comfortable. One can sense they are tense and ill at ease. Administrators are not accustomed to peering over one another’s borders. But water systems, infrastructure, Belvedere areas, ecological structures, cultural landscapes, housing construction and economics do not stop at provincial and municipal boundaries; on the contrary, they cross them.

The intensive labour involved in drawing up plans, coming up with alternatives and consulting with the engineers of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, in addition to the give-and-take required among the desires of the various municipalities, reminds me of the urban renewal process of the 1970s. A lot of discussion, little vision of the whole – this cannot yield a good result.

June 1999

Louis Couperus Route

infrastructure lines

High of the magnetic suspension track
October 1999
Zuiderzee Route

Four provincial authorities request advice about the Zuiderzee Route from Amsterdam to Groningen. For the meetings, we have devised a special table, 6 m by 6 m, topped by a huge land map of the area, with the Zuiderzee line as a snaking tube of fluorescent orange. The meeting table symbolises and stimulates a new form of cooperation and communication among provinces and municipalities.

Collages graphically depict the influence of motion on city and countryside. The high-speed train accelerates in the countryside, shortening both travel time and the time in which the landscape is perceived. In the cities the train slows down, extending the perception of the urban area along the journey. The combination of motion with the actual expansion of the cities and the actual shrinking of the countryside produces an exponential effect on the traveller’s perception.
A characteristic of the route to the north is the interplay of infrastructure lines – motorway, railway, power lines, waterways and dikes. A conspicuous feature of the polder landscape is that the motorway network runs not quite parallel to the other lines. The railway, the motorway and the power lines play a sort of game of ‘attract and repel’ with one another. As you ride along, at times you see them all and at times they suddenly disappear. The variations in height for the magnetic suspension track – we introduce five heights: mole high, knee high, cow high, tree high and mast high – allow even greater possibilities for composition.

Research into the future development and identity of various landscapes and seven cities (Amsterdam, Almere, Lelystad, Emmeloord, Heerenveen, Drachten and Groningen) situated along the Zuiderzee Route provides dramatic evidence of much more extensive use of space in the northern provinces, compared to the Randstad, the densely built urban conglomeration in the west of the Netherlands. Our advice is to use the construction of a rapid-transit Zuiderzee Route to bring about a change from extensive to more intensive land use.

*Land is a valuable possession. The Netherlands is known for its scarcity of space. Yet land in the Netherlands is squandered because the price of land is far too low, which obviates the need for intelligent solutions, such as dual land use, inventive combinations of, and with, infrastructure.* This is the first statement in my book, cited earlier.
In this study we research the route from Delft to Leiden, Amsterdam, Utrecht, Gouda, Rotterdam and back to Delft – the Randstad Circuit – in terms of the relationship between ecology and infrastructure. On a map, colour hand symbols indicate where zones of transition and communication between different ecosystems are needed. The motorway blocks ecological exchange between areas on either side of the road. In this way the Randstad Circuit creates a large area of inbreeding for flora and fauna. By raising the road somewhat in places, we can perforate it with ecological passages that re-establish contact between the two sides of the road in this watery area.

Another map shows the panoramas seen by motorists along the Randstad Circuit. The minimum measure of a panorama is set at one km. The longest panorama, 8.5 km, lies in the Haarlemmermeer polder. At a speed of 100 km per hour, one sees it in five minutes. We call the series of panoramas the Hollandse Meesters (Dutch Masters), after Jacob van Ruisdael, Jan van Goyen and Aelbert Cuyp, landscape painters from our Golden Age.

The analysis shows that the panoramas and perforations can often share the same locations. There are building commissions to advise on cityscapes and the appearance of villages, but there is no one to keep an eye on the appearance of entire motorways. A coherent administrative policy designed to protect and maintain the panoramas could make the locations of the ecological passages instantly visible to the traveller.
The Zuiderzee Line and the Louis Couperus Route are two of nine ‘major projects’ included in the government’s policy document *Designing The Netherlands: Architectural Policy 2001-2004.* This policy document is issued by four ministers: Education, Culture and Science; Housing, Physical Planning and the Environment; Transport, Public Works and Water Management; and Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries. This shows that the ministers are taking on their joint responsibility. This unique cooperation means a breakthrough in the practice of physical planning.
November 2000
Design of the Magnetic Suspension Track

The magnetic suspension track that will take someone from Amsterdam to Groningen at a speed of 500 km per hour is to give one the sensation of a glider flying low above the ground. Nearby residents and politicians fear the magnetic suspension track will become a hulking structure with a concrete trough on fat concrete pylons, at an exorbitant cost. The old discussion about horizon pollution, typical of the Netherlands, resurfaces. This is odd, really. As though infrastructure were something shameful, something one should camouflage. Show it off with pride, design it. Just as the polder landscape was designed. Set the magnetic suspension track on a steel and concrete structure, under which the landscape flows. Fast line, slow landscape – it can interrelate quite beautifully.
November 2000

Dutch Mountains

The Netherlands has long been an urban country. Relatively small cities are set at short distances from one another. The Randstad is a Delta Metropolis of some 5 million inhabitants, most of it below sea level. Our highest point, the Vaalserberg, 322 m high, is the southernmost point of the country. We share this highest point with Belgium and Germany. Next in line is the Posbank, on the Veluwe near Arnhem, at a height of 100 m.

A study into high-rise building policy in the Delta Metropolis opens with the premise that high-rise building is a relative concept. An overview of all the towers around the world lists name, year and height, such as the Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank in Hong Kong (1985, 179 m), the Empire State Building in New York (1931, 381 m), the Sears Tower in Chicago (1974, 442 m) and the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur (1998, 452 m). Rotterdam’s high-rise buildings are projected among them and show what height is in Dutch terms. Mecanoo’s Montevideo at the head of the Wilhelmina pier, at 151.5 m, will briefly be the tallest building in Rotterdam and thus in the Netherlands. The National Physical Planning Agency asks us to consult on a high-rise building policy for the entire Delta Metropolis for buildings up to 300 m high. I use the terms from my book *Composition, Contrast, Complexity.*
North American cities such as Chicago and Toronto largely consist of a huge sea of suburban houses surrounding a composition of high-rise buildings, where public transport is also concentrated. The city’s identity, its logo, is the skyline. Contemporary Dutch cities increasingly consist of suburban neighbourhoods, with dwellings that stand barely higher than the top of a full-grown tree. This is in contrast to such European cities as Berlin, Paris or Madrid. In general, high-rise buildings in the Netherlands are set down as if incidentally, as if they were no more than church towers. They stand staring out in solitude, and whether beautiful or ugly they add nothing to the identity of their city. Rotterdam has successfully pursued a high-rise policy for its city centre for many years, and the residents of Rotterdam are proud of their expanding skyline.
Contrast: The effect of high-rise building on the Netherlands skyline is ruthless. It has an impact on the landscape for miles around. How does high-rise construction in the city relate to the exodus out of the city to the country, in search of peace and quiet? Rotterdam is the case study. From the urban side of the Kralingse Plas (Lake), one can sense how one might escape, via the lake and the River Rotte, to the Groene Hart (Green Heart), the protected rural area encircled by the cities and roadways of the Randstad. From the rural side of the lake one can see the Rotterdam skyline. A collage shows Rotterdam’s skyline expanding over the next 10 years. This skyline grows steadily more beautiful and does not spoil the escape-from-the-city feeling. Beauty in architecture, urban planning and landscape design is partly defined through proportions. This drawing shows the increasing heights from a starting point at the Kralingse Plas right up to the high-rise buildings in the city centre – a range from 0 to 320 m.
Complexity The heights of the Kralingse Plas model are projected on to the Green Heart within the Delta Metropolis – the contours of the Dutch Mountains emerge. The panoramas and perforations form the valleys. Of course some local-level fine-tuning will be needed. Flags indicate where intensive public transport is to be provided in the Delta Metropolis in years to come. Logically, high-rise buildings and intensive land use are found where good public transport brings them together. They form the peaks in the landscape of the Dutch Mountains. Each city can choose its own height, befitting its own identity. And naturally Rotterdam is the Mount Everest of the Dutch Mountains. This can give high-rise buildings, in the form of the Dutch Mountains, visual significance within the mobility landscape and turn them into the link between motoring and public transport. Imagine that you are driving along the Randstad Circuit. At Utrecht, you see the Domtoren (Dom Tower), at 112 m the highest peak. The buildings that vault the A2 between the old town and the new Leidsche Rijn area form Utrecht’s hillcrest. In Amsterdam, you drive between the mountains of the Zuidas, with its development plans around the World Trade Center metro station. This might become a tunnel at some point. You see The Hague lying in the distance. The skyline is evolving above the Utrechtse Baan motorway into the city and around the Central Station. Delft proudly shows off its University of Technology, and rightly considers the height of its historic inner city untouchable. From Delft, you can already see Rotterdam looming on the horizon. Right in the curve of the Kleinpolderplein the Mount Everest of the Dutch Mountains stands majestically.
The task of the study *De Leuke Weg* (The Fun Road) commissioned by the Directorate-General of Public Works and Water Management – the Roads of the Future – is to research the point of view of the daily road-user. The Randstad Circuit becomes the case study – the most intensively visited public space in the Netherlands. It is explicitly not a design brief, but an exercise in reflection on the Future of the Roads.

The Mecanoo-team is composed of English, Belgian, New Zealand and Dutch architects and landscape designers. The operational language is English, in debate and in writing. We define the concepts in English as well. Often they cannot be literally translated into Dutch. That is actually a good thing, for is it not crucial, in fact, that we define words and concepts for an international audience of professionals? The team’s variety of cultural backgrounds makes clear that appreciation for the infrastructure and the landscape of the Randstad varies. Apparently there is such a thing as ‘Dutch genes’, rooted in Dutch clay.

‘Hardware’, facts and figures are collected relating to past, present and future: engineering preconditions, ownership, responsibility and commissioning of the roads. The rise in car ownership, the cost of cars and petrol, the most popular car. Increases in mobility in terms of mode, motivations for travel and average distances. Speed, traffic jams, traffic density, environmental pollution and safety. All these facts help us to understand our task.

The facts stand unadorned, side by side. The facts and figures make it perfectly clear that a rich society is a mobile society. Car ownership is much cheaper, in relative terms, than it was twenty years ago. Fuel-efficient cars, in spite of the rise in petrol prices, have considerably lowered the cost per km.

The Dutch network of motorways is – in contrast with other countries – mostly an upgrading of former provincial roads. The motorways are also the only routes between the cities. Even in a country like the Netherlands, with reasonable public transport, the car remains by far the most common means of transport. The most important motivation for motoring is not commuting to and from work, but rather private use. Most distances covered are less than five km, a distance that could be also be covered by bicycle.

‘Software’ is collected. On 12 July 2001, four cameras are installed in a car at the driver’s eyelevel. The tapes of 105 minutes of film for each camera are used to analyse 153 km’s of motorway.
Data is included such as:
- The number of lanes and the speed limit – Overschie has since become an 80 km-per-hour zone.
- The tempo of the exits – an average of 1 exit per 2.8 km. Is that a lot or a few?
- The petrol stations – there is one every 15 km. What will happen to these stations in the future?
- Overpasses and viaducts – 70 of them over 153 km of motorway.
- The programme. In architecture, we are used to analysing programmes. We make a stab at it for the motorway – noise barriers, noise embankments, business areas, greenhouses, housing, parking areas, grass and crops, planting, tunnels. We differentiate between what one can see to the left and to the right. If the Green Heart lies in the middle of the Randstad, and the cities lie along its edge, then we should be able to read that from the programme. This is not borne out by analysis.
- Depth of field. Openness is a characteristic of the Randstad. Where and how far can you see? We work with 6 categories from 0 to 2,000 m. As a motorist, do you experience the Green Heart?
- Once the petrol stations are projected onto the depth of field diagram, most of them turn out to be within our panorama areas. What does this entail for the design of future petrol stations?
- Landmarks. We recorded as landmarks striking infrastructural works, noteworthy buildings and properties and urban panoramas. The Randstad Circuit proves not very expressive. When you roll the film, it is actually very boring. Of the seven cities, only Rotterdam displays a strong panorama when viewed from the road.

In each case – as notes on the actual analyses – points of interest for future design specifications are defined. The hardware and software are published in the research road atlas.

‘Visioware’ (visionary design) is proposed. The design atlas attempts to develop a design approach to the motorway from the point of view of the road user. The design atlas is compiled as a catalogue, with the suggestion that – as with any catalogue – it may be partly extended and superseded. The structure is built around three concepts, three spatial domains – road, verge, field – which together form the perspective of the road user. Sometimes the domains intersect one another. This is an attempt to develop a conceptual language to help a designer with the brief.
The Randstad Circuit
Service stations
The Road
This is the slab of asphalt or concrete on which one drives. The road surface itself is a subject of study in terms of engineering and communication. At issue is the form of the road, but also the road that becomes a building and the building that becomes a road, under-the-road programmes, above-the-road programmes, stacked roads, and tunnel roads.

The Verge
This is not only the shoulder that runs from the edge of the asphalt to the drainage ditch, but also the entire area within the sphere of influence of the road. It looks like a piece of no man’s land; you experience it as a non-place. Parts of it are owned by the Directorate-General of Public Works and Water Management and other parts by third parties. With ‘Purge the verge’ we suggest abolishing the no man’s land. Let the rural landscape or the landscape of buildings connect directly to the road. With ‘Identify the verge’ we suggest giving this non-place an identity of its own by adding a programme, or by turning it into a specifically designed landscape. Petrol stations could be placed on or under the road, for example, or as large green hills alongside; or noise barriers could be equipped with digital information displays. And of course we should not overlook any of the possibilities offered by landscape architecture.

The Field
This is the area that stretches to the horizon, the area that influences your field of vision. The area of the panoramas of the Dutch Masters and the Dutch Mountains. The area that lies outside the sphere of influence of the motorway, outside the purview of the Directorate-General of Public Works and Water Management. Great measures are at issue here, both in height and in depth.

The sequence
All the design proposals for road, verge and field together form a route – a route which reveals the Randstad: cities, countryside and ecology, economics and development, know-how and culture, recreation and amusement. The comic strip De avonturen van de Leuke Weg (Adventures on the Fun Road) shows the Roads of the Future. The study, originally given De Leuke Weg as a working title by the Directorate-General of Public Works and Water Management, evolves into a mature Holland Avenue. And during the final preparations for the Rotterdam Architecture Biennale the study gets an international sequel.
Requests for lectures and interviews about the aesthetics of mobility are coming in from all over the world. I go to Italy, for instance, and Ireland, Norway, Canada, the United States, Malaysia, Australia and Mexico to talk about mobility aesthetics. It amazes me. The studies are typically Dutch – what use are they to them?

The international interest allows me to travel with new eyes. I photograph and film the cities, from taxis, cars, trains and buses, and I talk about them with local architects and universities. The cultural differences among the various countries in how to deal with mobility are significant. In Tokyo, I behold the literal expression of my idea of the Dutch Mountains. From my hotel room I can see, towering above Shibuya train station like a huge mountain, the next great train station, Shinyuku. And it pleases me to see how completely train and car are absorbed, in Tokyo, into the mobility landscape of this cosmopolitan village. Buildings stand atop and under stations, atop and under railways. The most beautiful buildings stand right next to the city motorway, which almost seems to go through the buildings.

In late February 2002, I am asked to direct the first International Architecture Biennale in Rotterdam, with mobility as the theme. In consultation with the TU Delft, I decide to accept and to do it under the aegis of the Chair of Aesthetics of Mobility. The next day I leave for Mexico, for lectures and workshops. On the way from Mexico City to Queretaro, I drive past the artwork of five coloured towers by the architect Luis Barragán. It stands midway between the motorways – in Mexico they set their great works of art and monuments right where everyone can see them!

During my visit to Monterey Tec University, the idea emerges to invite other large cities from around the world, with their universities, each to do a study of – like Holland Avenue – a route of about 100 km long. Los Angeles, Tokyo, Beijing, Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta, Jakarta, Beirut, Budapest, the Ruhr area and, of course, Mexico City and the Randstad are selected – ten cities with totally divergent cultural and economic backgrounds, problems and perspectives on the future.

In June 2002, all the cities come to Rotterdam and Delft, meet, present their cities with their specific problems and exchange information. All of them receive the same round wooden platform on which the four cameras are to be mounted, as well as detailed instructions on how to carry out and record the research. They will further supplement the research in their own ways and define their own design briefs.
Voyage around the world

In August 2002 we travel around the world in 20 and a half days. In Los Angeles – at the beginning of the automobile era – motorways were once laid out as ‘scenic parkways’, to allow full enjoyment of the city and landscape. These days you can only tell which part of the city you’re driving through by the graffiti on the numerous noise barriers made out of the same concrete blocks. The radio is on, and the station you pick defines the world in which you imagine yourself.

Nowhere is the motorway landscape as breath-taking as in Tokyo. The roads snake through the city on two, three and sometimes even five levels, skirting the most beautiful of buildings. Yet Tokyo is actually a train town, in which you can tell you’ve reached your destination when you hear the tune specific to the station. Around the stations, you see multiple uses of space in their ultimate form.

Upon arrival in Beijing we discover that the myth of the bicycle metropolis is almost extinct. Each year car ownership rises by 20 percent, and when you know that 70 percent of China’s population still lives in the countryside, you realise that this rapidly sprawling urban wasteland is merely poised on the eve of a virtually unfathomable flood tide of automobile traffic. Hong Kong. A greater contrast with Beijing is hardly conceivable. City and mobility have been lumped together on this island into one gigantic and compact edifice with a view out onto a breath-taking natural harbour. From Hong Kong we cross the border – like 90 million people every year – into China. In the border city of Shenzen you feel and see the bubbling energy of China. We take the Gungzhou Shenzen Superhighway, a 100-km private road on pillars, high above the swarming urban sprawl alternating with rice paddies. We are surrounded exclusively by lorry traffic. This road is in fact the conveyor belt of the Pearl River Delta – the area that produces 90 percent of everything ‘made in China’. No torrents of commuters speeding back and forth between home and employer, for this motorway itself is simultaneously dormitory town and work town. From the road you can see the factories flanked by the dormitories for the young women who work in them.

In Jakarta we slice through a thick layer of brown smog as we come in to land. The roads are gorgeous, but mobility has nearly ground to a halt here. Rich or poor, everyone wages a daily struggle to reach his destination. Three hours to get to work and another three hours to get home in the evening is not a rarity. In the tropics, this means a life spent in darkness for many.
Mexico City, Beirut, Budapest and the Ruhr area

We visit the other Biennale cities individually. In Mexico City, in an effort to reduce air pollution, the motorways have been transformed into park-like ribbons. And they are used that way, here and there proudly decorated with artwork and feats of architecture. And always a forest of advertising along the access roads.

In Beirut there aren’t even footpaths. Everyone in this city, thousands of years old and surprisingly cosmopolitan, is dependent on the car. On fine days the populace cruises in an endless line of cars along the Cortiche, an esplanade along the beach. For Beirut residents the car is part of the ego.

Back in Europe we see how Budapest, despite its good public transport system, is in danger of suffocating in its severely swollen automobile traffic, an upheaval this city on the border between East and West had not counted on. Freedom and economic growth mean cars. Residents are beginning to move further away from the city, and the city is not able to address the problem. A parallel to what happened to European cities in the 1960s and ‘70s is easily drawn.

You can drive forever in the Ruhr area without noticing that you are in one of the most densely populated areas of the world. In the Ruhr area you can’t see the city for the trees. Since the dismantling of the old mining industry, nature has taken possession of this diffuse metropolis.

Mobility Laboratory

During the Rotterdam Architecture Biennale we are holding a mobility laboratory (Mob_Lab) for architects, engineers and artists from all over the world, to exhibit their ideas about mobility, with themes such as architecture, public transport, urban planning, environment and health, technological innovations, cars and transport systems, art and mobility. An international selection is to be exhibited, showing an overview of the new ideas thriving around the world in architecture and design in relation to mobility.
Holland Avenue Design Task
Twelve international architecture schools will also present their vision and design proposals for Holland Avenue, namely the section between Delft and Overschie. There will be documentaries on culture and mobility made in association with the public broadcasting network. During the Biennale, the academic world and the architecture profession will present their worldwide research into the topic of mobility simultaneously.

Future
In the last 25 years, mobility and automobility have shown explosive growth. The motorways get a culture of their own, a trend that Reyner Banham describes as early as 1971 in his book Los Angeles, the Architecture of Four Ecologies. The design discipline, along with administrators, seems to shut its eyes to the issue throughout this 25-year period. The topic of automobility and the motorist is politically incorrect. Designers must see to it that everyone make use of public transport. My generation is brought up on this attitude, which incorporates a noble motive – the environment, the landscape, the public space of cities and villages would suffer because of the car. However correct in itself this observation may be, it just leads to stalemates. The task for the future is to fully develop the environment, the economy and technology in the right balance. This means the architects’ task is to come up with solutions that break new ground – to produce designs that answer the steadily growing demand for mobility. This demand should not be resisted, but rather channelled along the right lines. It is vital that work be done on public transport and motorways, as well as on bike-, skate- and footpaths. Wonderful transfer junctions between train, metro, bus, car and bicycle must be designed. The landscape angle must be combined with an awareness that mobility routes are public spaces with a culture, code of conduct and aesthetics of their own. Research and design must lead to the development of a new set of instruments. I have shown you the opening gambit.
And this is of course possible in the Netherlands, where we create buildings as landscape and landscape as buildings. We add to this inspiration from Tokyo, the cosmopolitan village that has fully absorbed the train and the car into its urban mobility landscape, and a touch of Mexican culture, such as the splendid artwork by Barragán.

We set off to explore the world in search of more inspiration, so that the aesthetics of mobility may conquer the negative influence of the ‘joyless economy’.

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3. From 1997 to 2000, Francine Houben was a member of the VROM council, an advisory council to the government and the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament about policy in public housing, physical planning and environmental management. The VROM council issued, among others, the following publications: Stedenland-Plus, Advies over ‘Nederland 2030 – Verkenning ruimtelijke perspectieven’ en de ‘Woonverkenningen 2020’ (The Hague, 1998); Corridors in balans: Van ongeplande corridorvorming naar geplande corridorontwikkeling (The Hague, 1999); Sterk en mooi platteland, Strategieën voor de landelijke gebieden (The Hague, 1999) and ‘Mobiliteit met beleid’ (The Hague, 2000).
4. Adri Duivesteijn reminds us, in his speech at the opening of the exhibition ‘Mecanoo architecten. 1:20 – 1:200 – 1:200.000. Stoel, Schuur, Streek.’ in the ABC architecture centre in Haarlem (20 May 1999), that it is completely logical that Francine Houben is getting going with the aesthetics of mobility. As early as the time of the urban renewal, she said about housing construction, ‘May it be beautiful as well?’
6. HSL-oost is a study commissioned by Bestuurs Regio Utrecht regional administration (1999).
7. De Zuiderzeeroute is a study commissioned by the provinces of Flevoland, Friesland, Groningen and Drenthe (1999-2000).
10. The design for the magnetic suspension track was commissioned by the Consortium Siemens Nederland N.V., Ballast Nedam, ABN AMRO Bank, Hollandse Beton Groep (2000).
12. The residential-commercial Montevideo tower on the Wilhelmina pier in Rotterdam (Kop van Zuid) was designed by commission of ING Real Estate Development, The Hague. Construction started in March 2003; completion is due in 2005.
13. Even the city of New York has two clearly identifiable high-rise building clusters: Lower Manhattan and Midtown.
15. Architect Luis Barragán, in collaboration with artist Mathias Goeritz, created the artwork Torres Satellite (1957) in Queretaro, Mexico.