

AR+D AWARDS FOR EMERGING ARCHITECTURE 2013

Edging into the wider architectural firmament, with projects from locales as diverse as Bloomsbury and the Himalayas, the architects shown in these pages are the stars of tomorrow. Around 350 schemes were whittled down to four winners who share the prize fund of £10,000. There are also 10 Highly Commended schemes. Now in their 15th year, the Awards continue to astonish us with their range and resourcefulness. Only built work is eligible for submission as we know that architecture cannot simply be confined to paper or computerised theorising, but is a compact with society to build well and to build responsibly. Offering a compelling snapshot of design activity from around the world, we hope that the schemes shown here will be a powerful incentive for others to go out and do even better. Austin Williams profiles the winners overleaf.

ATELIER DE LYON/RAAAF THE NETHERLANDS

This award is shared between RAAAF and Atelier de Lyon for their Bunker 599 project near Maastricht. This is an artistic intervention along the new Dutch Waterline commissioned by the Dutch Service for Land and Water Management.

By slicing open one of the historic concrete defence bunkers to reveal its spartan interior, the team wants to create a 'public domain out of them'. This bomb-resistant pillbox is bisected with a boardwalk that runs down some steps, through the middle and out to the water. The architects say the project 'unorthodoxly questions the Dutch and UNESCO policies on cultural heritage'.

Previously known as Rietveld Landscape until the end of October 2013, RAAAF (Rietveld Architecture-Art-Affordances) – which presumably works better as a Dutch acronym – is the new name. It has been chosen, say the architects, to better reflect a practice 'at the crossroads of architecture, art and science'.

If that sentence wasn't evidence enough of their creativity, their research into the potential of the growing number of vacant government buildings in the Netherlands led them to launch the new discipline of 'Vacancy Studies'. In 2012, this discipline was included in the Knowledge and Innovation Agenda of the government's Creative Industry sector; and vacancy has subsequently been particularly prevalent in the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research too, it seems.

The founding partners of RAAAF are *Prix de Rome* architecture laureate Ronald Rietveld and his brother, philosopher Erik Rietveld. Erik regularly publishes in international philosophical



Erick de Lyon, architect of Bunker 599

journals about 'acting skilfully without thinking about it'.

RAAAF's partner on this winning project is Erick de Lyon, of arts practice Atelier de Lyon. De Lyon's work finds its expression in the Dutch landscape and he collaborates with landscape architects, town planners, hydraulic engineers and technicians among others to achieve the best results. The starting point of his work comes from 'contextual knowledge about the site' acquired by 'combining observations of the environment with relevant knowledge of others'. The common aspect of the two practices' philosophical approach to working, it seems, is that, in line with Rietveld's unthinking creativity, de Lyon also says that his work emerges 'almost spontaneously'.



Erik Rietveld (top) and Ronald Rietveld

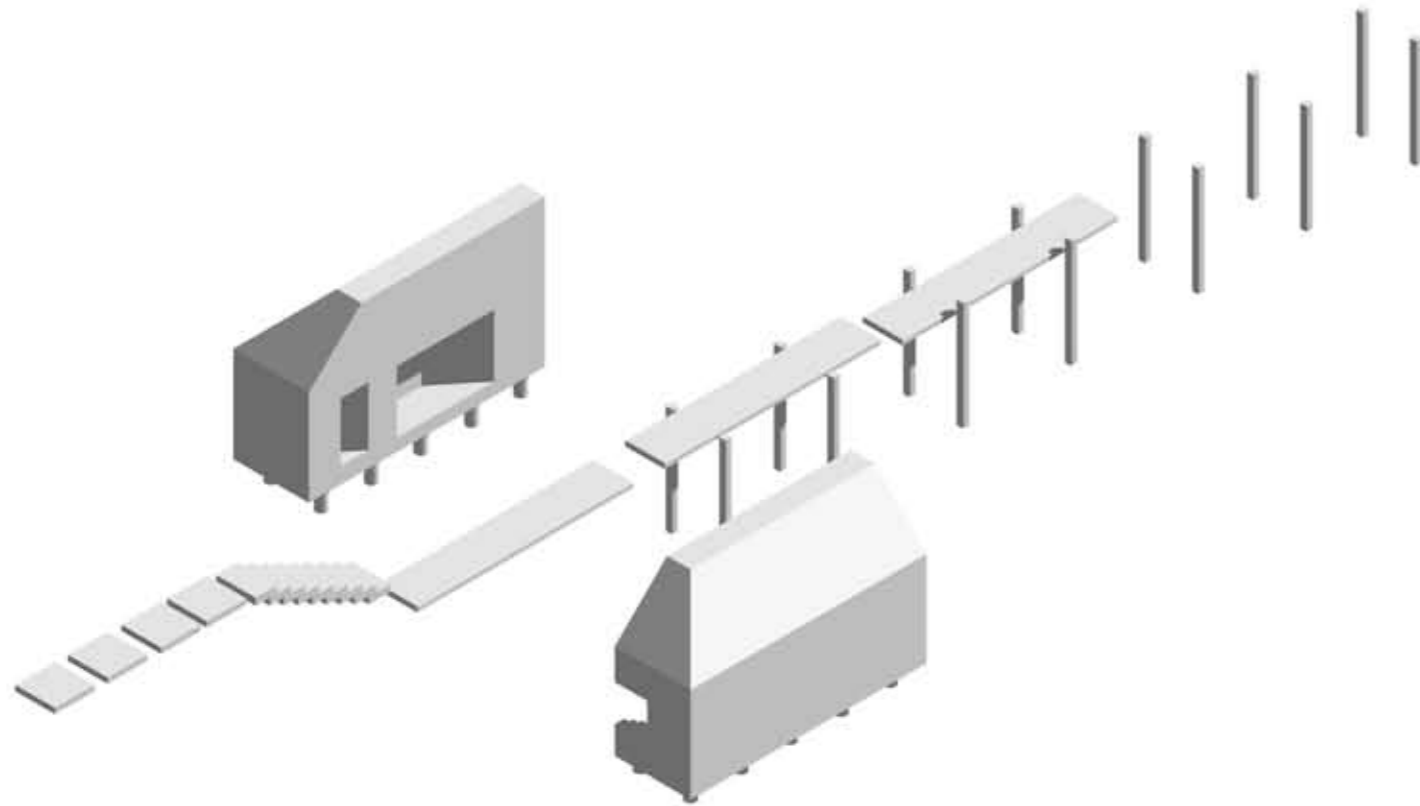


**Bunker 599,
Culemborg,
The Netherlands,
RAAAF/Atelier
de Lyon**

WINNER

SPLIT INFINITY

A bisected pillbox on the bank of a dyke opens a way through the sometimes impenetrable memories of war to a future of broader horizons



isometric render

COMMENTARY

JONATHAN GLANCEY

It is not the most beautiful or obviously inspiring location in Holland, Europe, or the world, and yet the dot on the map at Culemborg where Bunker 599 broods alongside the lugubrious waters of the 13th-century Diefdijk, and faces the relentless mechanised roar of the Amsterdam-Maastricht motorway, is poignant, and oddly moving.

This reinforced-concrete bunker, erected in early 1940 as part of Holland's defences against military invasion, has been split in two – cut through by steel wires like some giant, and untypically hard, Dutch cheese – and now acts as a framed viewpoint for passers-by who, stepping down from the roadway, pass through its mournful bulk out onto a wooden jetty, set between timber piles, to the very edge of the *dijk*, and a view across the motorway, electricity pylons and flat levels stretching away into an infinitely big sky.

There is no meaning here other than stopping to stare. Certainly, the remodelled Bunker 599 catches the eyes of walkers and cyclists. It is at once, or so it seems, a large-scale contemporary sculpture, or, perhaps – seen from a distance – some Neolithic standing stone. And just as those

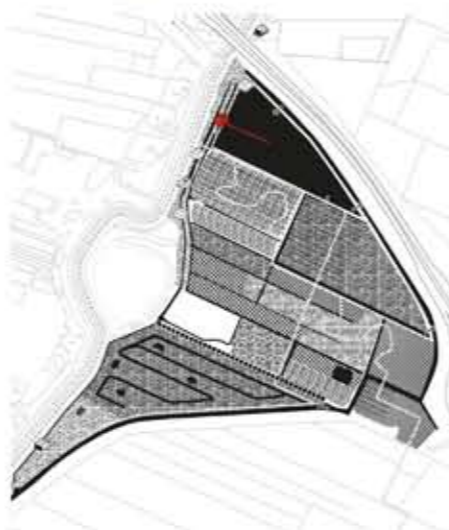
ancient and ineffable monuments draw us to them, as if magnetically, so this split concrete bunker, reconceived by Rietveld Landscape, with Atelier de Lyon, commands attention. Walkers, this way, if you please. Cyclists, dismount.

A part of the poignancy lies in the fact that, like its many sibling bunkers, pillboxes and canal-side defences, Fort 599 did nothing to stop the Germans from invading Holland in May 1940 and occupying the country in a few days. For all its ingenuity, the extensive system of water defences built from the mid-17th century to 1940 was unable to hold up an enemy who simply bypassed it. German paratroopers were dropped in their thousands on the other side of the 85 kilometre long Dutch Waterline, while the Luftwaffe reduced much of Rotterdam to rubble, threatening the same treatment for Amsterdam and other key cities unless the Dutch surrendered. They had no choice. So, all the ingenuity that went into the creation of a vast waterworks designed to flood the eastern Netherlands and so hold back invasions by Spanish, French and German armies, was ultimately to no effect.

Even then, the defences were shored up again after the Second World War, as if they might restrain the might of the Soviet armed forces at the outbreak of a much-feared Third World War. Holland may have fought

1. (Previous spread) passers-by are invited to enter the bunker by steps
2. (Opposite) the project collides abstract form and historical relic to evocative effect

Bunker 599, Culemborg, The Netherlands, RAAAF | Atelier de Lyon



location plan





3 (Opposite) the visitor is drawn out onto the water
4. The sliced concrete takes on a sky-reflecting sheen, making the manmade material feel like funereal granite and the apertures, catacombs

**Bunker 599,
Culemborg,
The Netherlands,
RAAAF/Atelier
de Lyon**

Architect
RAAAF/Atelier de Lyon
Photographs
Courtesy of the architect

'Despite the project's small scale, it is very powerful. It has a mix of delicateness, strength and impertinence, which is rare to observe, and is cleverly inserted in the site, linking landscape and water. It clearly stood out because of its simplicity, beauty and capacity to situate itself between art, landscape and architecture.'

MANUELLE GAUTRAND

brilliantly against the Spanish in the 17th century, but – especially because of its flat geography – it was to be no match for the sheer might of Napoleon and, later, Adolf Hitler. And, yet, today, the trade borne by all those articulated lorries thundering along the A2 motorway in view of Bunker 599 is a symbol of a Europe at peace, of boundaries pushed aside, of infinite possibilities. This, too, is something to contemplate while looking through the fissure Rietveld Landscape have excavated through the warless concrete bunker, out into that level economic playing field, that boundless sky.

Unlike the German Atlantic Wall bunkers built by the Todt Organisation as a defence against the Allied invasion of mainland Europe, the Dutch fortifications seem, if not innocent, unthreatening. One bunker – Fort Hoofddijk – is now a part of the botanical garden at the University of Utrecht, while others serve as cafés and bed-and-breakfast hostels. Their picturesque quality, and, of course, their historical importance, was fully recognised in 1999 when a central, regional and local government masterplan was drawn up to re-imagine the Dutch Waterline, old and new, as a kind of national park, or trail. The Hungarian-born, New York artist, Agnes Denes, was charged with overall artistic control, and now the plan is unfolding,

'Today there remains a whole world of redundant structures, technologies and landscapes that can yet be transformed, no matter how seemingly naïve or banal, into something moving or quietly contemplative'

over a 20-year period from 2000, the length of this haunting, and, for many visitors to Holland, still unexpected military landscape.

Bunker 599 is just one of the 'strategic interventions' Rietveld Landscape have made across Holland. The practice, which was founded by Ronald and Erik Rietveld in 2006 and has recently been renamed RAAAF (Rietveld Architecture-Art-Affordances), came to international attention at the 2010 Venice Biennale. Its project there, Vacant NL, was a strangely compelling study of 10,000 empty government buildings – an enormous number in a small country – with imaginative ideas of what could be done with them: the Dutch government has been listening.

For this year's Peace of Utrecht Festival, RAAAF unveiled its Secret Operation 610. This proved to be another meditation on defence, its impact on the landscape and its possible futility against overwhelming odds.



Again, it is hard to know quite what to make of this RAAAF project, and yet there is something strangely thrilling in the sight of the most unexpected think-tank studio you will ever have encountered emerging on caterpillar tracks – in the guise of some monstrous Cold War warrior, Captain Condor space vehicle, or giant mechanical crow – from an abandoned F-15 military jet interceptor hangar at Soesterberg airbase. The jet black machine trundles in sinister fashion along a concrete runway that never saw Cold War aircraft taking off in anger with a circle of Delft university engineers inside its belly working on their 'CleanEra' project, a quest for 'no noise, no carbon, just fly' aircraft of the future.

Architects have long created 'interventions' in the landscape – townscape, too – that raise buildings of whatever purpose above the level of pure functionality, from domes and spires to triumphal arches and even – think of Inigo Jones – masques and other theatrical diversions. Today, though, there remains a whole world of redundant structures, technologies and landscapes that can yet be transformed, no matter how seemingly naïve or banal, into something moving or quietly contemplative, and whether overlooking some lyrical valley or grinding Dutch motorway.