

**'We make space', space that matters.**

### **inter-architecture**

For more than ninety years, spatial design has been taught at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie (and former crafts school). The name of the department for spatial design has changed over the years. This is how the Interior Design Department became the Architectural Design department, which was later shortened to Architectural Design. The names reflect the different views on the profession.

Described in the text below we explain what we mean by inter-architecture and why we have chosen the new name inter-architecture.

In 2013 the department is again undergoing a change of name and a change of course. Again motivated by a changing view on the subject. On the one hand, this was determined by changes in legislation and registration of the title of Architect. As a result graduate students are not registered directly as interior architects after enrolment. On the other hand, because of the developments in the field and a desire to deal with more social issues.

The need to achieve the goal of the department, is to keep formulating more precisely the recurring questions about where we stand as a department. This started with: "We don't do building, we do space", in order to explain to the Rietveld students that it is not so much about designing buildings, but designing spaces. The next step is: 'We make space, space that matters'. Spaces that are about something, space with social significance. The urge to create not only beautiful spaces, but also positive spaces, spaces that generate better environments.

inter-architecture means the choreography of space. Or in the words of George Perec (Species of Spaces): "The problem is not to invent, and certainly not to reinvent the space again, our ambition is to interrogate the space or even simpler, to read the space and give it meaning." In short: 'We make space, space that matters'.

Henri A. Snel, head of inter-architecture, Gerrit Rietveld Academie

## **Purpose and vision**

### **Department of inter-architecture**

The department of inter-architecture at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie trains students to become spatial designers/artists. At the Academy we embrace a broad interpretation of the profession. This means that the outcome of an assignment does not always have to be a building. It can also be an installation, an intervention in public space, a set designed for a dance performance or a garment. The whole realm of inter-architecture is discussed: furniture design, design for dance, theatre, exhibition and set design, interior architecture, installations, architecture and designing for public space, where there is regular collaboration with other creative disciplines. The department of inter-architecture is therefore well placed at an art institution such as the Gerrit Rietveld Academie.

### **Choreography of space**

inter-architecture is the choreography of the space. The starting point of a design at our department is always 'the space': the designing, reading and analysing of the space. We call this 'the choreography of the space'. Characteristics of this 'choreography' are: the making of, the experimentation with, the perception and experience of the space.

An essential question we ask within our department is what the making process of tangible things teaches us about ourselves and about society. Experimenting, making, experiencing and reflecting on this leads to answers. This process of change, consisting of a set of infinite unobserved changes, is different for each student.

The starting point is the student as maker, in which craftsmanship, sensoriality, materials, techniques, workshops, tools, production and experimentation with these, are key concepts.

The 'making' matures, it becomes ingrained through practice, its' development takes time. Time offers the possibility of reflection and imagination. Not just telling but also showing.

### **Emphasis on choice**

Students are encouraged to develop their own vision on the profession of spatial designer in complete freedom, thereby taking a critical and independent attitude towards the profession and the social context of the profession.

The assignments will primarily develop spatial awareness, expressive capacity, social responsibility and conceptual thinking. A solid technical foundation will be laid by paying attention to architectural aspects, materials and structures. Attention to sustainability in the field of materials and the production process, as well as social sustainability, are important principles which will be included in the curriculum.

### **Individually tailored education**

The education in the department is focused on the individual. Teaching in small groups enables direct contact between student and tutor, as well as between the students the. The

tutors are from professional practices - spatial design, architecture, visual art, art and architecture history and theory - and confront the students with different views, professional practices and current developments. The assignments vary in duration, complexity, and levels of collaboration with other students, and in relation to the profession and society.

### **Craftsmanship**

Craftsmanship is developed through making and refining by hand. The repetition of sketching, drawing, model making, and working locally ensures that the student undergoes and experiences sensory and tactile qualities, sense of scale and proportions, different functions and applications, and makes them their own.

The development of a personal signature is in our view, stimulated by putting emphasis on sensoriality and experimentation.

### **Sensoriality**

The spatial designer translates their ideas into shape, space and time. All these aspects have a direct link to the senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, balance.

*According to professor of neuropsychology Edward de Haan, "the senses are peripherals". Often a single sense is predominant: the tongue of the chef, the skin of one who touches something, and the nose of the perfumer.*

Some material can light or shine, but how does it feel, how does it smell, what sound does it make, what are the properties of that material and what effects does it have on people?

How can we help people to experience 'space' differently to our present fleeting perception?

### **Experimentation**

Traditionally the experiment plays an important role within the education at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie. The development of personal interests and the discovery of their own signature and working method are developed through trying and testing. We experiment through unorthodox research. Uncommon research often yields surprising answers and new experiences.

*Ira Koers, renowned interior architect and former inter-architecture student, puts it this way: "It is partially anchored in the Dutch system, but it really belongs at the Rietveld Academie as well. You have to decide what is important to you. Art is not an attitude, it is part of who you are and what you experience."*

The question of the 'why' of the projects is asked time and time again. As an artist you have the right and duty to spatially present the dreams that society needs.

*As the Norwegian architect Christian Norberg-Schulz once said: imagination is desirable in a world where rationalism and materialism are no longer adequate.*

### **inter-architecture**

inter-architecture refers to the continual re-examining, determining and defining of the concepts of spatial design, architecture and the spaces between. It also represents the broadening of the concept of architecture. inter-architecture is also about establishing relationships with other (creative) disciplines. The meaning, definition, interpretation and handling of 'inter-architecture' is broadening and changing constantly. This determines the strength of the continuous search for what spatial design is and can be.

inter-architecture responds to the changes in the professional field of spatial design. For the development of a solid professional perspective, a broad orientation is necessary.

### **Inter-disciplinary**

Different disciplines use different scale, approach and execution. The student is trained to explore the space on all levels in order to design it. The various parts of the course can vary in scale, in approach and execution. In all areas engagement, commitment, craftsmanship, conceptual thinking, experimentation, research and strategy are the essential principles. The history of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie shows the influences of the Bauhaus in the curriculum, with the desire to allow students to learn versatile skills and the ability to identify interrelationships. Operating between, beside, over and beyond existing disciplines enriches the thinking and design process and is in line with trends in society and professional practices.

### **Inter-spatial**

George Perec, in his book *Species of Spaces*, examines the question 'what is space'? The subject is not the void in the strict sense, but rather what is in it or around it. He notes that there is not a single space, but that the space has multiplied, become fragmented and multiform. Space exists in all shapes and sizes, for each use and for all purposes.

### **Inter-national**

We live in a globalized society, work with international students and operate in an international professional field; the challenges of the profession transcend national borders. Urbanisation, immigration, aging, developments relating to changing composition of the population, inter-culturalism, in a changing climate and in the field of (social) sustainability are international developments. The challenges for spatial designers relate to these international developments.

### **Inter-cultural**

Partly because of internationalisation, the exchange of ideas, beliefs and practices of different cultures is enriching the thinking about spatial design.

### **Inter-ego**

Both the personal development of the students as artist/designer as well as the relationship of the individual (individual student) with others (teachers, fellow students,

place in the world / relationship with social issues) rises above the ego of the individual. The freedom of the individual remains central. A good designer relates themselves to the social issues and gives it meaning.

### **Inter-vention**

Gaining cultural and historical knowledge, interpreting current events, learning to deal with institutions and the use of design methods, lead to interventions in the design and thought process. Interventions determine the personal (work-) attitude in a broader social field and thus the relationship with social and current topics.

### **Inter-ception**

Students are encouraged to reflect on their own development. Armed with this knowledge they are asked to perform interventions, interceptions and changes.

### **Architecture in a changing world**

Changes are taking place in all parts of our field. In addressing vacancy we see for example the demand for temporary and flexible use increase, with an emphasis on the design of the interior. Social development, expansion, re-use, and privatisation of public space, ensure that spatial designers and artists must find new answers and solutions. In order to be able to work properly under these circumstances, it is necessary to adopt a wide (and experimental) approach.

It must be possible to switch between scale levels with attention to the interaction between the general and the specific. More than ever, students are trained to explore the space on all scale levels in order to design it. Not only the interior but also the theatre and public space are subject to investigation, experimentation and design. This is visible in specific situations, such as assignments from professional practice, and in the more contemplative study components such as theorising about the profession and examining hypotheses. Space does not stop at the city and country borders. We live in a globalised society, work with international students and operate in an international field. The issues of the profession rise above national boundaries. Urbanisation, immigration, greying and aging, developments in changing composition of the population, multiculturalism, changing climate and the field of (social) sustainability are all international developments.

The challenges for spatial designers and artists relate to these international developments. Partly because of globalisation, we see the exchange of ideas, beliefs and practices of different cultures as enriching the thinking about our field.

### **Outside the Department**

In principle, everything that happens within the academy has a relationship to the vocation. The assignments are aimed to provide insight into the profession. The department regularly ventures outside of the academy to attend exhibitions, performances, workshops and other activities.

### **(Op)position**

We occupy a special position among the existing architecture courses because we are based in an art academy. It's a position that gives us the freedom to study the full breadth of the field.

*Arna Mackic, a former student of the department of inter-architecture puts it this way: The freedom of thought which I have received and that I've learned I have to take, has not only contributed greatly to my development on a professional level, but also to my personal development. This freedom in thinking and the questioning of things is something the Rietveld Academie sets itself apart with from other academies, and is a valuable thing to which, in my further career and Masters course, I am trying to hold on to.*

We can act as a catalyst in an (un)orthodox way to find new solutions inside and outside our field.

We approach the field as a coherent whole with great attention to craft, sensory, experimentation, concept, positioning and social objectives.