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One Architecture

Six under a Tennis Court

Designing does not involve the projection of things into "natural space", but rather the opposite, to project "natural space" into a design.

Architecture can reflect the processes and events of our world. And that is something quite different than a simple formulation of these events and processes in a three-dimensional, perspectivist, natural, human, all too human, humanist, but endlessly three-dimensional space. The processes and events of our world are not necessarily spatial.

That means that for the new architecture space is not something that simply extends itself, but something that can still be determined: it is not something extensive, but an intensity.

If it had to be formulated theoretically, our definition of space is linked to Gilles Deleuze. Following a very modest and very simple 19th-century Kantian approach, Deleuze affirmed that space is an intensity, not an extensivity. There is, however, the possibility of extensivity from that point or, as he says, from that amount only. Extensive space would be only one out of four

lines of thought needed to conceive of extensive space. Being not a category or an idea on its own, a categoric definition of extensive space would rely on the rather Nietzschean question of: "What is extending the space?" or even, "Who is extending the space?". That way, the extensivity of space is always connected to some specific reality.

According to Deleuze, these other lines of thought are the fact that a specific extension of space is always limited (real extension, or confined extension); second, the fact that such a real, confined extension is specified by a certain quality or filling in of that real extension, and third, that its being there must not remain undiscovered – it must be recognized. The latter concept Deleuze calls *quale* or: What? It's the possibility of denominating the extension, which would define space as a point or a thing or a chimney piece – not as a phenomenon! – or better, as a non-space.¹

From this rather elaborate quadrifold space definition, which is certainly difficult to understand, follows that in his view it is impossible to think extensive space from extensive space only. That is not only a rejection of phenomenology, it is also and above all about empirical reality. As space would be part of empirical reality, it would have no extension at all.

Six under a Tennis Court

One Architecture was asked to develop new housing models within the Leidsche Rijn frame, models which not only demonstrated new possibilities to consumers and developers, but which would also attract white, rich and young people to the area. This is propagated by State planning so that their older houses would become available for the immigrants, which is a beautiful and politically correct goal for our architecture. It was immediately clear that because both young, white partners work and do the housework together, they would need two studies. The house should be symmetrical. It would have to be emancipated. Because these people are already emancipated. Now the house is next. The other point was that it should not look like social housing. Symmetrical, emancipated and without density or at least without an expression of density.

That is why at our office we speak only of "thin-ity" instead of density. Why not? The number remains the same. The number still is 37 per hectare. So why should we speak of density? If we speak of thinity, the feeling about it changes. It becomes better and more blissful. The third aspect is that with TV and the Internet the inside of such a house becomes much more public as the street has ever been. The public/private relationship had to be formulated

in a new way. In order to reformulate this relationship we had to put forward the possibility – and that is what we have formulated as a hypothesis, as a programmatic point – that the house and its environment could be 100% private and 100% public simultaneously.

To that we have to add that the client wanted 37 houses per hectare, such that neither an urban nor a park – nor a rural model was possible. The idea within this project was now to designate the private and the public as two simultaneous vectors (we call them extensivities) that extend themselves into each other.

Instead of space we now have two extensivities.

Instead of projecting something in space now two points extend themselves, one point of the public and one point of the private, whose relationship can still be negotiated. But this only works when one does not approach space itself as extensive. The naturalism of natural space should be discarded.

In this project we have attempted to not see the public and the private as two opposites in space but as two simultaneous extensivities that can extend themselves into each other. Theoretically there is the possibility to do the same by introducing three or four or even one extensivity. But we have chosen two in this project.

All houses have a tennis court on the roof. The entire area can be thought of as a tennis park but simultaneously as a strictly residential area.

An architectural result of this simple thought is that the fences of the tennis courts give the houses a colossal order, as it is called in classical architecture, which systematically resolves the problem of the expression of stories in the facade – a typical housing problem for which there are presently no solutions in design –. The solution might be called a simple increase in size.

Instead of two stories in the house we now have two things, house and tennis fence. That means that, liberated from the need to express the stories, the architectural elements – windows and doors – can be determined freely and individually. Two things on top of each other make the order within the things unimportant.

Organizational Depth

Over the tennis fences, up higher – and one should always go up when the program evolves, one should always, following the footsteps of the German architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel, go further when the building or the city or the landscape has stopped. Further still, such that going further is already formulated within the building, within the city or the landscape, such that the projects rises above itself and opens up new possibilities.

Every project needs to surpass itself, needs its transcendental moment, because the world is always bigger. Even an XL project by Rem Koolhaas is smaller than the world; it can even be considered tiny compared to it. That sounds romantic, and it is. Schinkel is the architect of the Romantic era. But it is also a design technique that can be used now.

There is a transcendental point that is already there. There is a point that surpasses the project, a point that needs to be discovered and which one does not really need to design. The sun is already there. We don't have to design it anymore.

The only question is: does the sun belong to the realm of architecture? Are the stars part of architecture? From a principal discussion within architectural theory – about this issue much debate was going on at the end of the 18th century – one could expect any answer, but in a concrete project such as this one it still has to be formulated.

If we take it that the sun can be part of architecture – and why not? – we can architecturally stress it, but the next question would then be if we, in this project, do actually need or use the sun as an architectural element. The important question is thus: Does the sun belong to the project or not? And the logical answer to this question is of course yes. Yes, the sun belongs to the project or not.

It remains the same. And this similarity has its functionality. Above the tennis fences there are only moving points; tennis balls hit too high and the tops of the fast-growing conical trees moving in the wind. If we had to design lampposts in order to have light on the fields, the sharpness of this image would be destroyed – however beautiful these lampposts would be designed. Therefore we attached these lamps to the high-tension power cables which happen to crisscross the area. These high tension power cables and their pylons are already there. They need not be designed. The sun also needs not be designed. It's already there. It's already there without costing a penny.

We call this design technique *It's already there*. It is the laziest design technique there is. So that one does not need to think. Most things are already there. There already are power cables in the landscape. Only these give no light, although they are very capable of it. When one thinks about it, something is missing. The power cables give no light.

Why don't they give light?

The power lines could give light. It would be more beautiful if they did. When the high tension cables would give light, they would undo themselves of their purely technical appearance, their appearance as if they are something technical from the First Machine Age, as if there is some technical secret about which they are mute, as if they are there just as a medium, as a medium that communicates something that one does not know. Would they give light, they would gain a new function.

There are forms on the lookout for a function. In general all technical systems, be it the water management system or the highway, all systems that only appear technical, are, because we don't live in the First Machine Age anymore, always judged negatively. But they can be taken up in the landscape this way, instead of just aesthetically crossing it.

This design technique has nothing to do with collage, not only because the elements are already there before their relationship could be determined, but also because they react on each other, that is to say that they are taken up in each others movements.

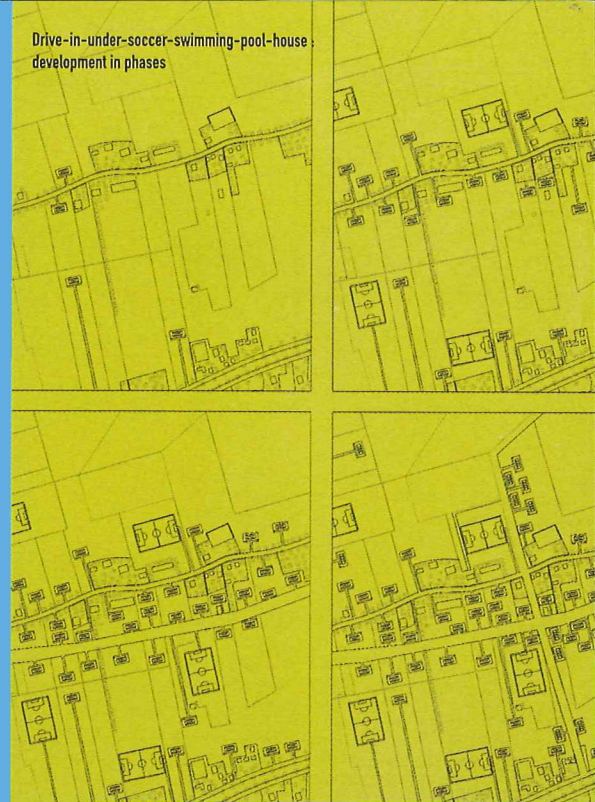
A thing that has to be designed will never – and that is the important thing – be projected in empty or bare natural space, but in a, what we will call it, non-consistent series of movement – the wind, the sun, the moon, stars, cars, electricity, TV-images, growing plants, water levels. The point for architecture and urbanism is to develop an understanding of this. Following Schinkel it is the same thing that, as he calls it, moves into infinity.² In this project we have called it the Karl-Friedrich-Schinkel series. First, one has a tennis net with a small, yellow tennis ball. Secondly, one has the tennis net with a large, yellow tennis ball, the light above the tennis courts. Thirdly, one has the high tension net with the large, yellow tennis balls. The high tension net produces light. And fourth, one has the high tension net with the XL yellow tennis ball, the sun – the high tension energy. The sun which, just as the large tennis ball, gives light.

What is important is not the simple sublime of the sun as, what Immanuel Kant called it, "Rohe Natur". It is not the 18th century sublime, but a contemporary sublime, a sublime which has its organizational depth.⁴ Because this electricity flows in our landscape from power pylon to power pylon, the sun becomes menacing. It is a purely affective series.

The Outside

In order to reach a new, more contemporary determination (not tied to social housing) of the relation between the public and the private in the exterior – that means a new quality, a new filling, and not a different quan-

Drive-in-under-soccer-swimming-pool-house development in phases



titative distribution of land in the usual allotments, on the basis of a fixed determination of what is public and what is private – we have initially thought of this space as 100% private and 100% public from the start. Every limitation, every restriction between the public and the private is dissolved. There are no gardens with fences, although everyone can make a garden as he wishes. It is only not part of our plan. There are also villas with no front doors.

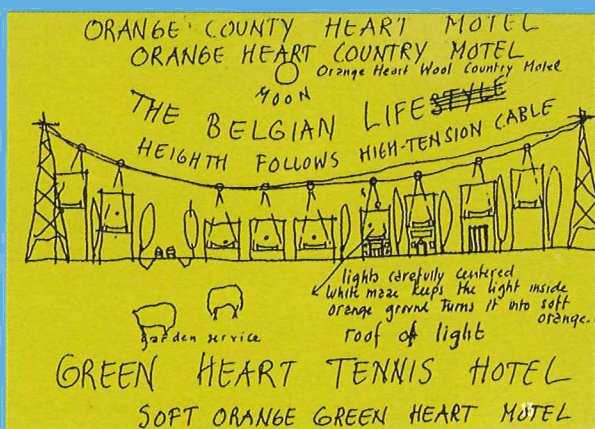
Now playing tennis on the roof, however privately it is played, always has the quality of giving one the feeling of being on television. In general, of all sports which are not, such as football, collective and which are not, such as track, individual, tennis mostly provokes the feeling of being on television.

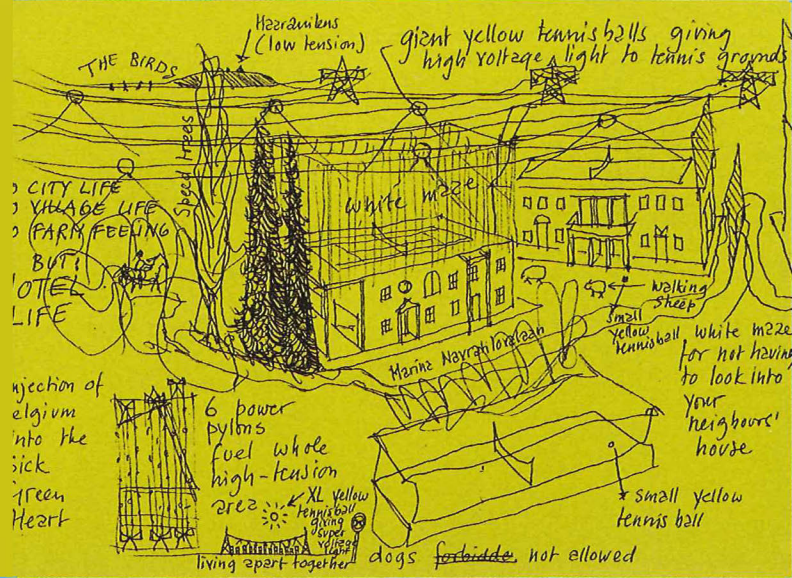
Even people who do not play tennis get this feeling. The exterior is a medium, but the medium is you. The medium is us. One is the medium. One should always have the feeling of being on television instead of being secured by a security camera. The program of the exterior should always be a television program, because TV images are without "discipline and punishment". The only thing that is important for TV is that you can always switch it off. It needs not have a duration.

Ribbon Development

The exterior space has to follow a passive urban and architectural model. Inspiration can be found in the urban- and architectural design techniques that have been developed for the urban block.

The urban block passively follows a street pattern. Is the pattern triangular, then the block is triangular as well. Is the street pattern rectangular, so is





own front door under the middle of the field. It can happen that these partners only meet at the swimming pool.

Under the more than 60 meters wide football-field the symmetrical house is stretched such that not only the bathroom becomes a swimming pool but also such that the visual appearance of the symmetry disappears, in favor of a wholly different emancipatory element, namely possible distance. The swimming pool and the other wet elements divide the house. They are the distance in what actually are two houses, as is already pointed out by the cars on the ground floor. Living apart together, but with the benefit of being able to swim to each other.

What is the point though is that such houses in themselves –and that is the idea on which the following urbanistic solution is based– in no way formulate an urbanistic difference between front and back.

Are the houses symmetrical, urbanistically they are a point, the tennis court is a point and no line. That means that it becomes possible in this way to overcome the saddening perspectivism of the 19th century city, with its streets, its lines and its visual points of disappearance. The house is no longer passively placed along the street but as a point part of the extensivity of the landscape.

That is why we have tried to place the houses directly into the landscape, along the existing streets, without adding too many new streets. The result was that the house and the driveway could be placed at any position on an existing lot, lots that have been there since the 12th or the 13th century, in the same way as a Mies van der Rohe door could be at any position near the entrance area. It is never over determined. Or, to speak with Kandinsky, the house as point determines the lot as a field, as an individual extension, instead of it being part of a romantic and endless landscape and its endless sadness. Because each lot is defined as an extension of the house, house and landscape could be said to coincide.

One could think of it as a restoration of this 12th and 13th century landscape, which is now a saddening ruin where even agriculture has moved out of. Agriculture, at least in this part of Holland, will not last long. The most recent data suggest that it contributes 6 billion Guilders to the national product, and that is not little, but in order to realize this contribution it needs 7.2 billion Guilders in Government and EC subsidies.⁵

But the issue here is that the coincidence of house and landscape can happen at any lot, but does not have to coincide at every lot. Density does not play an aesthetic role anymore.

That is why it is important to have a tennis court or a football field on the roof. We are now working on houses under a baseball field and that is extraordinarily difficult because a baseball field already formulates itself as both a point as well as an extension whose end is undetermined.

Arithmetic

Tennis court and football field are important because one needs not express the number of dwellings under it in the facade. Even when

there are six doors in the house under a tennis court, the density remains a density of tennis courts and not of dwellings. That means that density as a feature of social housing is removed from the visual. A density of tennis courts has no meaning. But this density of tennis courts is not determined by tennis but by dwelling. The density only becomes visual as the density of something else.

Just as the symmetrical house is simply two houses, with wetness in between, in this case density also becomes a simple number, six or five or seven under a tennis court.

Here, space consist of numbers and not of spatiality. Space is not formulated naturalistically anymore.



Six under a Tennis Court : model view

1 /Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition* (Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1972), p. 298

2 /Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *Briefe, Tagebücher, Gedanken*. Ausgewählt, eingeleitet und erläutert von Hans Mackowsky (Berlin : Propyläen Verlag, 1922, Reprint 1981), p. 192

3 /Für eine Diskussion der einfachen Erhabenheit, in Zusammenhang mit der Phantasie in Anschauung roher Natur, siehe Éliane Escoubas, 'Kant ou la simplicité du sublime', *Imago Mundi. Topologie de l'art* (Paris: Galilée, 1986), auch aufgenommen in Jean-François Courtine, Michel Deguy, Éliane Escoubas, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-François Lyotard, Louis Marin, Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacob Rogozinski, *Du sublime* (Paris : Belin, 1988), S. 77-95

4 /Charles Jencks, *The Architecture of the Jumping Universe. A Polemic : How complexity Science is changing Architecture and Culture* (London: Academy Editions, 1995) Wenn Jencks, S. 40-41, organisatorische Tiefe eine multivalenz (Mehrwertigkeit) oder Qualität nennt, versteht er sie als Sprache, deren 'Bedeutung' zu 'entziffern' wäre. Dabei übergeht er leider die drei übrigen von unserer erwähnten, sich jeder Semiosis entziehenden, denn die letztere vorbereitenden Raumkategorien der Ausdehnbarkeit, Ausdehnung und Andeutung. Es sind 'die Wunder der natürlichen und kulturellen Evolution', die wir 'überall um uns herum sehen können, in alles, was wir lieben und versorgen' (S. 75), die von der Zeit produziert worden sind 5 /E.J. Bomhoff, 'Rijnwoude : een tweede Wassenaar', *NRC Handelsblad*, 4. November 1995

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Drive-in-under-soccer-swimming-pool-house :
Living apart together while being able to swim to each other



the block. Passive but visual exterior, and active but invisible interior offers the possibility in the visual determination of the block to characterize the exterior (perspectivist and/or non-perspectivist city). What the building block is to the large city, ribbon development is to suburban or rural environments. Ribbon development also follows a passive model. Unlike the urban block, ribbon development is little appreciated, perhaps because fewer design techniques have been developed for it. Design techniques should be developed for ribbon development.

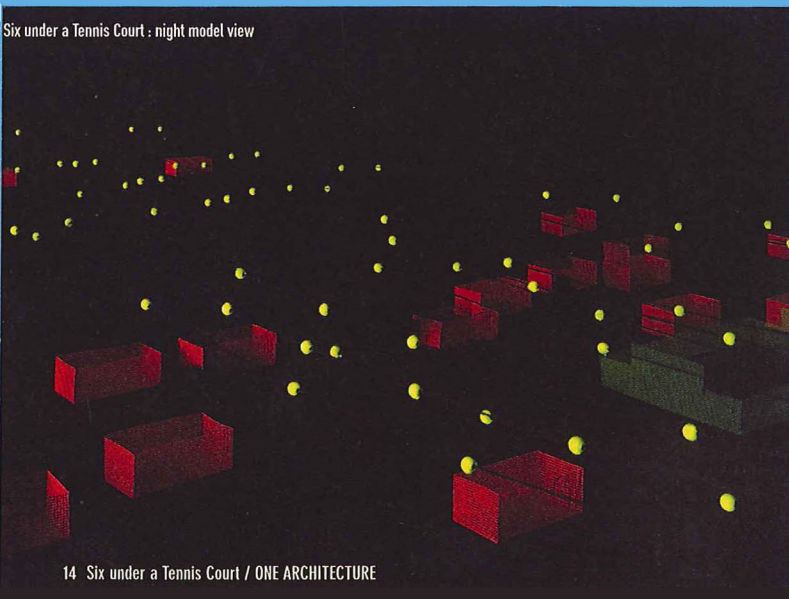
Now, seen from the street, ribbon development ideally has a double depth. The built-up is not, as is the case with the urban block, continuous. It is not a line because it consists of points, of single units – the line, when it is a line, is fractured –. There are houses which are along the street but there are also houses that are made accessible through the space in between the houses along the street. This was still too architectural for us. The houses in between seduced us, because of the symmetry of their access, because of the simplicity of this system, to design architectural ensembles, groups, for instance by differentiating height and symmetry.

In the second phase of the project we have made two more differentiations, first of the building type, by adding houses with other sports than just tennis on top of it, and second of not placing the houses along the street but by also placing the houses more to the back, using the entire depth of the landscape.

Next came the driveway. One could think of the driveway as simply an access, but then the door would also be an access, instead of just a door. Than the whole world would become access. Then everything would become access and then we would not need the notion of access anymore. The driveway designates no distance to the street but designates the movement of the houses in the depth of the landscape.

Twenty-five under a Football Field

Of course the first houses that were added were the houses under a football field, which are fully symmetrical and where the two young, white, rich partners can park their cars each in front of their



Six under a Tennis Court : night model view