

Quotes from reviews and juries

Selected press quotations, jury statements and review excerpts

Vacant NL, Venice Biennale 2010

Dutch Pavilion, Giardini

The New York Times

“Another highlight is the Dutch Pavilion. The makers of the installation [...] use cheeky math to introduce their striking research into vacant state-owned buildings in the Netherlands. Every one of the more than 1,000 empty buildings was rebuilt as a miniature blue foam model and suspended from the pavilion’s double-height ceiling. The curators [...] propose to develop a strategy for temporary use, to make these buildings available to the public, particularly to the creative industries on which the Dutch government is banking its future prosperity.”

The Wall Street Journal

“The Dutch, Japanese and French national entries each examine the notion of the void in modern cities. The Netherlands pavilion does it in the most straightforward manner, simply pointing out that the building lies empty for almost nine months of the year. As you enter an empty room, there is a suspended blue foam ceiling that, when one proceeds to the upper level, turns out from above to be a model of a city. It provides a neat visual example of the percentage of empty space in European urban spaces.”

The Guardian

“The Dutch present models of empty buildings highlighting the gormless enormity of architectural waste; how we concrete over anywhere we can for short-term gain, while governments prattle on about sustainability and building shortages.”

Metropolis Magazine NYC

“RAAAF often presents these ideas in confrontational ways. For example, Vacant NL, the Dutch pavilion at the 2010 Venice Architecture Biennale, was composed of 10,000 models of government-owned vacant structures, making clear the magnitude of idle property in a nation facing an ever-present housing shortage.... In the end, the genius of RAAAF is in its strategic interventions that, though small, invite viewers to imagine a completely different way of living.”

The Architectural Review

“The practice, which was founded by Ronald and Erik Rietveld in 2006 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.”

Jury Rotterdam Design Prize 2011

“The project displays a social and cultural approach, integrates several disciplines, and links forms of design to cooperation with a variety of parties. Also, the manifesto offers a vision: it is successful as visualization, installation and political statement. It is expressly not a once only event.”

Trouw

“Het is natuurlijk een statement van jewelste om het publiek van de architectuuriënnale te confronteren met een ogenschijnlijk leeg Rietveldpaviljoen. Maar achter die leegte gaat een pakkende tentoonstelling schuil, verzorgd door het bureau RAAAF.”

NRC Handelsblad

“Vanaf een hogergelegen tussenverdieping kijk je uit over een zee van gebouwen met een publieke functie: vuurtorens en watertorens, steenfabrieken en sportzalen, bunkers en forten, kerken en kloosters, zwembaden en ziekenhuizen. Het is een tot de verbeelding sprekende oproep aan de politiek.”

Archined

“De Parels van de Biennale [...] Natuurlijk moet er ook een bezoek worden gebracht aan het Nederlandse paviljoen, al is het alleen maar om mee te kunnen discussiëren over de vragen of het een goed of briljant paviljoen is.”

NRC Next

“Lef of lafheid? [...] Dit jaar is het thema ‘People meet in architecture’. ‘Vacant NL’ gaat een stap verder: maak intelligent gebruik van de gebouwen die we hebben. Een soort ‘consuminderen’ in de architectuur. Lef, dus.”

de Volkskrant

“Een sterk, eenduidig beeld.”

de Architect

“Beste tentoonstelling 2010: Installatie ‘Vacant NL’, gemaakt door RAAAF voor het NAI in Venetië, een bewijs te meer dat Ole Bouman vooral zou moeten doen waar hij goed in is, namelijk boeiende tentoonstellingen samenstellen. Een fascinerend overzicht [...] van de publieke leegstaande gebouwen in Nederland die volgens Ronald en Erik Rietveld een enorm potentieel vertegenwoordigen.”

Resources

[Jury report — full report \(PDF\)](#)

[Jury report — summary \(PDF\)](#)

Deltawerk //

Land Art Flevoland, national monument Waterloopbos

De Standaard — Belgium

“Is art meant to last forever? The colossal Delta Works // in the Dutch Waterloopbos impressively demonstrate that this is not the case. And what about the eternal value of human beings?”

Metropolis Magazine NYC

“Hardcore Heritage”: RAAAF Reveals Its Latest Experiment in Historical Preservation

BK — 100 Keywords

“Deltawerk // listed as one of 100 key artworks.”

Destination Art — Amy Dempsey

“A ‘new’ industrial ruin has been turned into a powerful artwork which is thought-provoking, intense and beautiful. The water entwines and reflects the interactions of the viewer, the sculpture and the landscape.”

Britta Peters

“My first impression was that Deltawerk // was a colossal wall, and I found it hugely ... monumental. As we walked closer to this wall, we suddenly saw that there was an entrance to the space...”

L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui

“RAAAF and Atelier de Lyon make the best of the Delta Works' monumentality by indeed embracing their Star Wars aesthetics.... Deltawerk //, project underlining a vision on heritage far from any museification logic.”

The Architectural Review

“Dutch Delta Works: from engineering feat to cultural statement. Dealing with obsolete and vacant architecture represents a global challenge for the profession, and demands a site-specific approach of carefully designed interventions. Deltawerk 1:1 is a monumental tribute to the majestic architecture of indestructible Holland.”

NRC Handelsblad

“Deltawerk // — Best visual art of 2018 internationally.”

Archined

“Eco-political trenches of Dutch land art [...] Deltawerk // embodies an important shift: it acknowledges human impact while inviting nature to heal and take over, transforming what was once a symbol of control into one of symbiosis.”

Dezeen

“Monument by RAAAF and Atelier de Lyon will commemorate ‘Dutch struggle against water’.”

ArchDaily

“RAAAF and Atelier de Lyon Reveal a Monumental Tribute to the Dutch Delta Works in Waterloopbos.”

de Volkskrant

“Waterloopbos wordt bruut Rijksmonument.”

Trouw

“Natuurmonumenten heeft grote plannen met de Deltahal. De betonnen sleuf wordt onderdeel van het Deltamonument.”

NRC Handelsblad

“Als je hier over duizend jaar terugkeert, dan staat Deltawerk // er waarschijnlijk nog, als baken van onverwoestbaarheid.”

Land Art Flevoland

“Interview Ronald Rietveld, RAAAF.”

Bunker 599

Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie — UNESCO monument

BK — 100 Sleutelwerken

“Bunker 599 op de lijst van 100 Sleutelwerken.”

Trouw, De Verdieping (PDF)

“Net zo compromisloos experimenteren in de architectuur als Constant, wie volgt?”

Bunker 599, UNESCO Werelderfgoed

“Bunker 599 officieel aangemerkt als een UNESCO-werelderfgoedlocatie als onderdeel van de Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie.”

Jury Architectural Review Award 2013 — Emerging Architecture

“It clearly stood out because of its simplicity, beauty and capacity to situate itself between visual art, landscape and architecture.” (Jury AR: Sir Peter Cook, Manuelle Gautrand, Eric Owen Moss, Catherine Slessor)

Metropolis Magazine NYC, New Talent issue

“The union of design and philosophy results in strangely poetic, if haunting, projects. For Bunker 599, RAAAF, together with Atelier de Lyon, cut a concrete 19th-century pillbox in half, revealing its cramped interior spaces and metaphorically reopening a closed chapter of Dutch history.”

Jury Dutch Design Award, 2011

“Exploded view.” “An educational intervention of removing and adding with a great sense of poetry.”

Still Life

Het HEM, Amsterdam

NRC Handelsblad

“De eerste grote kunstaankoop van Het Hem is Still Life, een imposant locatiespecifiek kunstwerk van RAAAF.”

de Volkskrant

“De kunstenaars van RAAAF reageren met de spectaculaire installatie Still Life op de geschiedenis van de Kogelfabriek.”

Art Tribune

“The work, entitled Still Life, perfectly represents the cumbersome past and the creative future of space, from a converted ammunition factory to a cultural and artistic center.”

Het HEM — 9 dates with Still Life

“9 dates with Still Life by Ko van 't Hek.”

The End of Sitting

Outstanding Landscape of Affordances — Looiersgracht 60, Amsterdam

Wired USA

“The Weirdest Proposal Yet for the Office of the Future. RAAAF turned in blueprints for ‘The End of Sitting,’ a glacier-like series of boulders and surfaces that would replace traditional office furniture. The maze-like series of angled and tapered frames create an infinite number of leaning spots, for workers of any height.”

Financial Times

“Much contemporary workspace is the result of lazy thinking and is making us ill... RAAAF recently proposed a radical, conceptual alternative.”

The Huffington Post

“In The Office Of The Future, You Will NEVER Sit Down. We all know that sitting at a desk all day can kill. So what if we just banned chairs at work altogether? The experiment took things a step further by actually hosting real workers over several days. The professionals performed a variety of tasks, including designing, writing and sketching.”

ScienceAlert

“Welcome to the office of the future. Are plain old standing desks about to become a thing of the past... already?”

de Groene Amsterdammer

“Een kantoorlandschap dat beweging uitlokt. Zien we daar de toekomst van ons werk verbeeld? Dat zou heel goed kunnen. De omgeving waarin veel mensen werken verandert ingrijpend. We staan nog maar aan het begin van een radicale verandering.”

Medical Daily

“Office Space Reimagined: ‘The End Of Sitting’ Art Installation Offers an Alternative. Maybe we’ll never see — or live to see — workspaces reimagined in the way ‘The End of Sitting’ shows, but the premise is striking.”

NRC Handelsblad

“Dit is je nieuwe kantoor.”

De Morgen

“De klassieke kantoorstoel is een monster. RAAAF ontwikkelt met ‘The End of Sitting’ een werkruimte die je dwingt om je benen te strekken.”

Vrij Nederland

“Nooit meer zitten. The End of Sitting moet juist het zitgedrag van de Nederlandse kantoorclerk aan de kaak stellen. Hoognodig.”

de Volkskrant

“Het einde van het zitten is aangebroken, vanaf nu hangen we op kantoor.”

FOCUS.de

“Radikaler Entwurf. Ohne Tische und Stühle: Sieht so das Büro der Zukunft aus?”

O Globo — Brazil

“Um escritório onde a regra é não trabalhar sentado. No espaço, não há mesas nem cadeiras, mas rampas e plataformas onde as pessoas podem se recostar ou trabalhar em pé.”

Harvard Design Magazine

“From studies on affordances in dynamic systems theory we know that offering a large variety of affordances can help create an environment that invites roaming within a certain area.”

Metropolis Magazine NYC

“The studio presented a 40-foot ‘cutout’ of The End of Sitting at this year’s Chicago Architecture Biennial, and is working on yet another revelation, this time underground.... In the end, the genius of RAAAF is in its strategic interventions that, though small, invite viewers to imagine a completely different way of living.”

Black Water

Zeeburgereiland, Amsterdam

Best Visual Art internationally, 2021 — NRC Handelsblad

“Black Water by artist duo RAAAF (Ronald and Erik Rietveld). One of the most impressive works I saw this year: a very subtle installation in a huge, vast former sewer treatment silo — breathtaking.”

NRC — Beeldende Kunst

“Kunststudio RAAAF zaagde eerder een bunker en een testinstallatie voor de Deltawerken in stukken. Nu laat het je in een oude rioolzuiveringsinstallatie duisternis, ruimte en leegte ervaren – middenin een kersverse Amsterdamse woonwijk.”

de Volkskrant — Beeldende Kunst

“In de bagger van Amsterdam biedt ‘Black Water’ stilte en contemplatie.”

Het Parool — Reportage

“De poëzie van de leegte heerst in Megasilo Zeeburgereiland. Een tijdelijke installatie van het kunstenaarscollectief RAAAF.”

Amsterdamprijs voor de Kunst 2022 — Het Parool

“Kunstenaarscollectief RAAAF: ‘Geef jong talent tijdelijk toegang tot die enorme zee van leegstand’.”

Secret Operation 610

Former NATO Airbase, Soesterberg

Aaron Betsky — The Journal of the American Institute of Architects, 2013

“Mobile Sculpture Memorializes American Air Force Base. Defensive structures reminiscent of mid-century war technology offer new landscape perspectives.”

Freunde von Freunden

“Experiments in Spatial Dynamics.” “A monstrous arthropod made out of steel with two spindly legs stares vacuously out of its white glassy eyes. Every attempt to name this mechanical being fails, it merely appears as a collision of past and future—science fiction in flesh and blood.”

Metropolis Magazine NYC — New Talent issue

“For Secret Operation 610, the team built a gigantic robot in an abandoned hangar, its acute angles and sinister forms taking cues from Cold War-era military design.... In the end, the genius of RAAAF is in its strategic interventions that, though small, invite viewers to imagine a completely different way of living.”

The Architectural Review, 2013

“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...”

de Volkskrant

“Insect op rupsbanden.” “Met hun kunstwerk stellen de makers leegstaand erfgoed ter discussie.”

NRC Handelsblad

“Als in een geheimzinnige filmscene, zo openden afgelopen vrijdag de deuren van een hangar op vliegbasis Soesterberg.”

Quotes from various juries

Global Award for Sustainable Architecture 2023, under the patronage of UNESCO

“The theme of the Global Award for Sustainable Architecture 2023 is: ‘Architecture is experimentation.’ Experimentation: ‘the action or process of trying out new ideas, methods, or activities.’ Should architecture be an experiment? And if so — and this need is more urgent than ever — how can architects be redefined as long-term explorers, as they were in the time of the Bauhaus? The brothers Ronald and Erik Rietveld (RAAAF), from Amsterdam — one a landscape architect and artist, the other a philosopher — experiment with what already exists in order to give new meaning to our historical contexts.”

Jury Architectural Review — Emerging Architecture Award 2013

“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.”

Jury Prix de Rome Architecture 2006

“As in the preliminary round, Rietveld was successful with his approach to the assignment in the final round by using processes and elements that were already present. What is more, he demonstrated that he can also initiate more complicated systems with this approach, and integrate them with each other. Certain elements appear rather surrealistic, but do give the project a powerful identity. And because Rietveld has thought through absolutely everything, it seems that all those elements eventually meld into a model for a place with true stature.”

Aaron Betsky — The Journal of the American Institute of Architects, 2013

“What interests me in particular about the firm’s work is that they have chosen to make or propose exactly the kind of projects I think are so vital for the development of our built environment. In all their work, the Rietveld brothers make use of the power of what is empty, unused, or gone. Perhaps it is because of Ronald’s landscape perspective, but what they offer is simple, yet invaluable. Rather than ignoring what does not point to itself as a showy structure; rather than filling voids; and rather than forgetting a past that might trouble us, they show us how we can find ways to make us aware of what is not. In the voids, turned into temporary objects or just marked, we can find what might be missing in a world so filled with stuff and images. RAAAF is bringing a necessary poetry of absence to a world of built clichés and unnecessary objects.”

Edwin Jacobs — collection policy, Centraal Museum Utrecht, 2012

“Director Edwin Jacobs characterized RAAAF as the talents in the field of designing spatial interventions, who are absolutely free from any existing architectural or theoretical stance. They are genuine new-thinkers in images that express architecture and design.”

Jury Rotterdam Design Prize about Vacant NL

“The jury regards RAAAF’s Vacant NL as a political statement with a bold format and a clear aesthetic. Vacant NL thus also serves as an enrichment tool for society. It brings insight and is immediately understandable and human. It also offers the rest of the world a new model. In short, Vacant NL shows that these times of cultural short-sightedness and budget cuts actually call out for one thing: space. Space to work, live and create – space for art, but also, above all, space for the spirit. And now we know that that space exists!”

Jury The Great Indoors Award 2015 — The End of Sitting

“Although all submissions to the competition are thoughtful and well executed, not all of them push the boundaries and show us new ideas. This project is a prototype and a wonderfully creative attempt to think spatially about future workspaces. Formally reminiscent of Zaha Hadid’s early paintings, the design is not about taste but about the subject being addressed. Will we, in 20 or 50 years, be working while leaning over, lying down or standing up?”

Jury New Talent 2015 — Metropolis Magazine, New York City

“RAAAF operates at the intersection of visual art, architecture, and landscape, which has interested me for many years. I first came to know Ronald Rietveld’s work when he won the Dutch Prix de Rome, and have followed the practice he built up with his brother, the philosopher Erik Rietveld, ever since. Their interventions have the power to evoke the nature of a place, whether the flat polders of the Netherlands or defensive bunkers and former U.S. Air Force bases, with simple abstract forms. Their conceptual installations have made space — in particular, empty and unused space — visible. They have been at the forefront in the development of an architecture of affordances, designing potentials and activators rather than mere enclosures.” — Aaron Betsky

Jury Dutch Architect of the Year 2013

“The jury appreciates RAAAF as a unique and headstrong architecture studio. Focusing on relevant issues RAAAF sets its own agenda, explores hidden layers within these themes, and creates unprecedented possibilities in the places touched. Their work expresses craftsmanship, is concrete, visually strong, optimistic, and beautifully detailed.”