

Two trends had a decisive effect on the development of the journal *O*, later *OASE*: the re-establishment of the autonomy of architecture at Delft University of Technology, on the one hand, and the economic recession of the 1980s on the other. For a decade after the student protests of 1968, social rather than architectural questions had the upper hand in Delft. The architecture from that period, especially within the process of urban renewal, may have been a critique of the modernism of the earlier period, but yielded few architectural statements and was not very evocative. The subsequent generation struggled to define a relationship to its predecessors and therefore had little choice but to hark back to the heroic, modernist period.

The 1984 article 'stadsbeeld en massawoningbouw' (Cityscape and Mass Housing) by architect Henk Engel and researcher Jan de Heer does not just epitomize Delft's response to this situation, but also long shaped editorial developments at *OASE*. The professional response can be summed up with the words 'academic depth' and 'detachment'.

At the time, writing about architecture was not expected to offer direct criticism on other people's work or propaganda for one's own work, as in the writing of Loos or Le Corbusier; instead it was seen as a quest for the architecture that drew the right conclusions from history. Never before had young architects immersed themselves so deeply in the formal, but above all ideological motivations of earlier generations. It is not surprising, therefore, that we see the footnote forcing its way into these texts.

Such architects' studies, however, should be explicit about their objectives. Their focus can vary from a more applied and critical-historical question, an autonomous architectural question or the clarification of one's design motives, or the architectural analysis itself can be the study's focus. Unless their focus is outlined clearly, these studies may easily degenerate into articles aimed at a small group of insiders and hence slide into academism. Readers are left with the impression that these stud-

ies promise more than they deliver, that they fail to cross a certain barrier or continue a certain line. To their credit, these studies provoke readers' curiosity, such as Engel and De Heer's study into the schism between the romantic and rationalistic approach to urban planning. But the study of architecture wants more, its scope extends beyond curiosity. Its ultimate aim is to find arguments for arranging stones in a particular way during a particular era here on earth.

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