

In the late 1980s, architecture in the Netherlands found itself in an ambiguous, yet interesting position. In the knowledge that an outline based on a series of 'isms' could hardly do justice to the extraordinary character of those years, I would like to describe them as follows. With the storms of postmodernism and deconstruction seemingly confined to the international scene, in the Netherlands the worn-out 'structuralism' of the Forum generation is quietly replaced by a light-hearted neo-modernism, which fuses effortlessly with the emerging visual culture of those years. With the arrival in Rotterdam of 'super-hero' Rem Koolhaas the storms, or their aftermath, finally reach our shores, to the delight of a new generation of architects.

The youthful *OASE* editors with their varied, burgeoning ideas about architecture are part of this generation and, from their deliberate position on the sidelines, use a series of special issues to try and find some depth amid all the hype.

Erik Terlouw played an important role in all this. He has, without doubt, been one of the most prolific editors in the magazine's history. With few exceptions, his texts and translations are lengthy and erudite. Through a meticulous analysis of historical precedents, they focus on the essence of architecture and architectural thought. They use history as a source: it would be a mistake therefore to read his texts purely as historical tracts. His articles explore several closely linked themes. These themes tie in with the contemporary architectural development outlined in his article 'Image building' (*OASE* 28), in which the old architectural categories 'presence' and 'place' make way for 'representation' and 'time'.

For Erik Terlouw the dissatisfaction with this development triggered his search for the roots of architecture's visual culture. His study of the source material and the connections he establishes were impressive and yielded a series of three lengthy articles published in three issues of *OASE*: 29, 30 and 42. To some extent they rewrite the history of Western architecture as a history of the concept of

style. (The text included here is the first in the series.) It is a fascinating history, precisely because of Erik's meticulous and nuanced account of his search and the understated style of his fierce criticism. Perhaps this is why these texts have lost none of their value.

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Member of the editorial board  
from *OASE* 18 to 41

*Translated by Laura Vroomen*