

na de oorlog als nieuwe en vernieuwende bouwmate-  
riaal werd gepresenteerd, bleek niet zelden na verloop  
van tijd toch minder ideaal dan aanvankelijk gedacht.  
Die onvoorspelde problemen golden voor bepaalde  
isolatie- en plaatmaterialen, maar vooral voor asbest.  
Dit wondermateriaal van de wederopbouw, is inmid-  
dels de paria aller bouwmaterialen. Sinds 2005 is toe-  
passing van asbest verboden. Daarom moeten we ons,  
hoe we verder ook over de esthetische kwaliteiten van  
de (asbesthoudende) glasal platen denken, niet veel il-  
lusies te maken over het behoud daarvan.

Laat ik afsluiten met een voorbeeld waarbij het boek  
zijn nut al heeft bewezen: Weverij De Ploeg in Bergeijk  
(1957-1958). Projectarchitect Gerrit Beltman jr. tekende  
de betonskeletconstructie en toparchitect Gerrit Riet-  
veld zorgde voor de esthetische vormgeving (terwijl

medewerkers wekenlang ventilatiepijpen van asbest  
schuurden). Rietveld paste diverse moderne bouwma-  
terialen toe. Uit dit boek ben ik meer te weten gekomen  
over het door hen gebruikte dubbelglas met patent-  
sluiting. Dat blijkt net over de grens te zijn gemaakt in  
de Glaver-fabriek te Mol. Een deel van de bekleding van  
de weverij bestond uit platen van Eternit uit Kapelle-  
op-den-Bos. Die platen zijn bij de renovatie vervangen  
door nieuwe in oude vormgeving. Asbestvezels in de  
platen, maar ook in de kit van het glas, zorgden bij de  
restauratie voor de nodige problemen. Uiteindelijk  
heeft de weverij een prachtige herbestemming gekre-  
gen. Onontkoombaar werd wel een flink deel van de  
oorspronkelijke bekledingsmaterialen vervangen. Maar  
inmiddels weten we om welke materialen het ging.

RONALD STENVERT



FREEK SCHMIDT

**PASSION AND CONTROL**  
DUTCH ARCHITECTURAL CULTURE OF  
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, Vermont (Ashgate)

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The culture of the Netherlands is so closely identified  
with its seventeenth-century Golden Age that it is easy  
to forget that this did not merge seamlessly with its  
reimagining in nineteenth-century historicism, seen  
in architectural terms in the Rijksmuseum and many  
other civic structures. Yet, anyone who takes a stroll  
along the Amsterdam canals soon notices among the  
tall, gabled houses of seventeenth-century merchants  
a large number of buildings that follow an obviously  
different logic associated in various ways with the  
eighteenth century. They are all different, of course,  
but many have flat, corniced rooflines, often topped by  
a balustrade. Many are quite wide, compared to their  
predecessors. They are more likely to employ cut stone  
façades, rather than brick ones, and important build-  
ings might have porches with freestanding columns,  
rather than pediments placed above pilasters. The or-  
nament is quite variable, but rocaille forms found

more or less across Europe in the eighteenth century  
are also present here.

Many of these buildings suggest a wealthy society  
deeply engaged with architecture that outside of the  
Netherlands is hardly known. Indeed, it is twice re-  
moved from the Dutch arts as they are best known.  
First, the eighteenth century has usually been seen as  
something of an afterthought, and very often under-  
stood in relation to the seventeenth century. Second,  
for the post-medieval period, paintings (and, to some  
degree, prints) dominate all of the other arts in presen-  
tations of Netherlandish culture. The often-outstand-  
ing architecture (and sculpture) remain largely unfa-  
miliar, especially for the non-Dutch audience, while  
museums around the world generally display a sam-  
pling of the portraits, still lifes, landscapes, genre  
scenes, and other images produced in great quantity  
in the seventeenth century. Freek Schmidt takes on

this material in an accessible book written primarily for those more familiar with architecture elsewhere.

The book is composed of an introduction, seven chapters, and a short epilogue. It does not proceed chronologically or geographically, but rather takes up a series of discreet topics that illustrate aspects of eighteenth-century architectural culture. The first chapter examines domestic structures, and the second *buitenplaatsen*, or villa-like country residences. The third chapter focuses on efforts to create a royal milieu on behalf of the court, and the fourth the architectural ambitions of amateurs. Chapter five takes up the innovative efforts of eighteenth-century officials to rehabilitate criminals through work, which resulted in the construction of remarkably grand workhouses. Chapter six explores efforts to support scientific experimentation through the Teylers Society, which became the Teylers Museum, and lays bare the tensions inherent in an institution attempting to be both a laboratory and a museum. The final chapter focuses on learned societies through the example of Felix Meritis (Happy through Merit) in Amsterdam. The epilogue shows how this society came crashing down with the rise of Napoleon. All of these chapters are conceived around case studies of individual projects that are discussed in some depth, with contextualizing introductions.

This book thus makes no claim to comprehensiveness. Rather, its goal is to introduce some of the main facets of the society within which and for which these structures were conceived and built. Indeed, it is to some extent a cultural history presented through architecture, rather than an architectural history in the conventional sense. This is particularly evident in several aspects of the work. First, this is not a book about architects. Indeed, architects in any familiar sense are almost entirely absent here. It is true that names of builders and designers turn up here and there, but they are almost incidental to the narrative. Schmidt points out that the period 1720-1750 is often referred to as the 'era without architects' (p. 12-17). This comes as something of a surprise in the century after Jacob van Campen, Pieter Post, and Philips Vingboons published their designs with a very clear sense of architectural authorship. (Hendrick de Keyser's drawings were likewise published by his colleagues in 1631, after his death.) Yet, there is a logic to this historical sequence, for the buildings and publications of these seventeenth-century architects helped establish a high standard of architectural knowledge in Dutch society that fostered a generation of amateurs that was often quite capable of designing, or at least participating in the design of, the buildings in which they would live and work.

For most readers, the seventeenth century will always lurk behind this material. In some ways, this is appropriate. Many of those who built the grander resi-

dences or other structures of the eighteenth century were the grandchildren of successful burghers of the previous century who inherited the fortune and position achieved earlier. Likewise, many of the eighteenth-century canal residences were reconstructions and expansions of earlier buildings on the sites. However, Schmidt very refreshingly does not emphasize this. There is no sense of nostalgia or lost greatness among the characters in the book. They are eighteenth-century individuals pursuing the concerns of their day.

Schmidt also declines to take up one other convention of eighteenth-century art history: routine comparisons to the traditions and innovations in play in France. References to France are not entirely absent – for instance, Daniel Marot, son of the Parisian designer and engraver Jean Marot, worked in the Low Countries and provided many designs that, not surprisingly, are comparable to monuments in France. However, these are not used as normative models, or as measuring sticks to determine architectural quality. Here, too, this society is allowed to pursue its own interests within its natural contexts and limitations. Rather, France and England are more prominent in the form of methodology. Schmidt has looked to recent scholarship on these places for starting points for his own questions (p. 2). In this sense, the material is very well grounded in a broader European history of architecture.

All of this material is presented in a very clear manner that is engaging and easy to read. It is well gauged to its intended audience, which will not be lost or put off by references to unfamiliar works or arcane academic debates. It is in no way a synthetic textbook, however. There are many new ideas here, and the notes are full of references to primary sources. Altogether, this makes excellent reading for scholars and students in a number of fields. Many of those with deep knowledge of the more familiar aspects of Netherlandish art history will enjoy a chronological expansion of their knowledge. And many with expertise in eighteenth-century art and architecture will be able to fill out the geographical scope of their knowledge. On both of these fronts, Schmidt has done much to counter this overlooked material.

KRISTOFFER NEVILLE

