
CHANGE – NEW DIRECTIONS FOR ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM

Floris Alkemade

Chief Government Architect

‘The big challenge for the twenty-first century is the promotion of freedom of thought. The destructive mechanism of the crisis has ensured that exuberance, radicalism and even the longing for utopia have been demolished among architects. I believe these are precisely the qualities we now need in order to innovate.’
Interview with Floris Alkemade, the Chief Government Architect, ArchiNed, 29 March 2016.

Although demands for a new, social role for architecture are growing louder, central government’s time-honoured role as a guiding force has been marginalised and new strategies are called for.

Chief Government Architect Floris Alkemade presents his vision and agenda for the coming four years. Central to his talk is the search for the social element within the architecture brief and innovation through design.

How can architects and planners engage with social issues such as population decline, migration, vacant buildings and an ageing population? What role does research play in this? What are the conditions under which design can have a real influence? What does this mean for the discipline?

CHIEF GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT

The Government Architect advises the Central Government Real Estate Agency on the architecture and urban surroundings, not only of state-owned property, either at the Agency’s request or at his or her own initiative. As an adviser to the State, the Government Architect acts independently.

WHAT DO THE GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT AND HIS OR HER ADVISERS DO?

- Select the architects who will design or renovate state-owned properties.
- Investigate the functional use and potential redesignation of buildings and lands that the State no longer requires.
- Select artists to produce works for new buildings or major renovations, based on the Art Percentage Scheme.
- Encourage the training and professional competences of architects within the context of the Architects Title Act.
- Safeguard the architectural quality of government buildings and how they fit into their urban context.

The Government Architect is a member of the Board of Government Advisers.

HISTORY OF THE GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT

The title of Government Architect was established more than 200 years ago. The first Government Architect, Jean Thomas Thibault, was quickly assigned a far-reaching advisory role in construction-related matters in Dutch society. That role has since been expanded and reinforced. After 1957, the duties of the Government Architect shifted from producing designs to advising the Government Buildings Agency and central government in general on specific construction projects and offering guidance in broad public discussions concerning the discipline. In the past fifteen years, Government Architects Kees Rijnboutt, Wytze Patijn, Jo Coenen, Mels Crouwel, Liesbeth van der Pol, Frits van Dongen and Floris Alkemade (since 2015) have extended their advisory role by counselling the Dutch Government on such general matters as urban planning, heritage sites, architecture, infrastructure, architectural policy and the fine arts.

Floris Alkemade is Chief Government Architect (Rijksbouwmeester) as of 1 September 2015.

The Chief Government Architect protects the architectural quality of the Dutch state property and their incorporation into the urban area as a whole. He is a Dutch architect, urban designer and former partner of Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA). He gives lectures and seminars at universities in the Netherlands, Belgium and France. In August 2006, Alkemade opened his own office and is currently director of FAA and FAA/XDGA. Alkemade works on complex projects both within the Netherlands and abroad. He stands out due to his attention for infrastructure and logistics, as shown by the area development and incorporation of the TGV station in the center of the French city of Lille, as well as studies for the A12 and other Dutch motorways. Themes such as rezoning and urban development are also an important part of his work.

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