

Press Release, 20 April 2017

## **Dutch Government Architect Floris Alkemade, Flemish Government Architect Leo Van Broeck and architect Joachim Declerck appointed curators of two-part IABR**

**Chief Government Architect of the Netherlands Floris Alkemade (FAA - Floris Alkemade Architect), Flemish Government Architect Leo Van Broeck (Bogdan & Van Broeck) and Belgian architect Joachim Declerck (AWB – Architecture Workroom Brussels) have been appointed the curators of the next two editions of the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam (IABR) in 2018 and 2020.**

**IABR–2018+2020 is a two-part Biennale that has the Netherlands and Belgium as its workspace and the world as its source of inspiration. From the spring of 2017 until the summer of 2020, the IABR will focus on what the qualitative leap forward for our cities and landscapes is that the necessary response to today’s major challenges enables us to make.**

### **Architecture, Climate Change, and Society**

IABR–2018+2020 starts from the challenge that was put on the agenda of the world community in 2015 by the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (COP21). They clearly marked a spot on the horizon. This allows an actual change of direction, a fundamental transition. But how do we advance? How do we activate our societies, and not in a defensive but in a positive way? What does the qualitative leap forward that this transition will allow our cities and landscape to make actually involve?

Flemish Government Architect Leo Van Broeck: *‘The intention is to bring architectural quality, spatial quality and ecological quality together in one single narrative.’*

### **Looking for Social and Ecological Profit**

The three curators Alkemade, Van Broeck and Declerck will explore in what ways spatial transformation can respond to our major challenges.

The workspace is the unique urban ecological and economic system of the Rhine-Meuse-Scheldt Delta, the Low Countries where excessive land use is the norm and where we share many challenges. If we redesign the way we live, work, and dwell together in our urbanized delta we can proactively make space for the energy transition, for the transition to a circular economy, for inclusive urban development, and for an innovative approach to mobility problems, health care issues, and the food production and water challenges.

IABR–2018+2020 provides a workspace as well as a platform for a future agenda. It will be a call to architects worldwide to help us link social themes to spatial problems that are urgent because of the climate change and the ensuing question of how to redesign space for the greater physical and social resilience of our cities and landscapes.

In times of radical uncertainty, the IABR–2018+2020 deliberately focuses on offering action perspectives, on the design of that which we *can* want, and on the imagination and presentation of that which we can achieve as a society.

Government Architect Floris Alkemade: *‘We need to look for the social value that each design challenge can add. To think about the future in terms of social and ecological profits, rather than imminent losses.’*

## **Designing for the Future: Weaving Quality into a Narrative**

The IABR is both a knowledge institute and a cultural platform and uses the power of imagination and design for goal-oriented work on actual change. Its methodology makes it possible to bring together many local and regional initiatives and challenges, to share existing insights, to develop new knowledge, and to test it in practice.

More than ever before, the curators will take the opportunity of the IABR to create a shared space that stimulates meeting and interacting. With each other and with the world. One main objective is to bridge the gap between the many small-scale initiatives on the one hand and the huge scale of the social challenges that we face on the other. New socio-spatial practices can and must increase the speed, capacity, and quality of social transitions.

## **Culture as a Catalyst for Change**

Paris marked a spot on the horizon and that forces us to step up our efforts to bridge the gap between research and implementation and to apply all of the knowledge we have more boldly and more effectively. That is why a two-part Biennale is a fitting format. The 2018 edition, a 'work' Biennale, will mainly be dedicated to research and knowledge exchange, debate and brainstorming sessions, whereas the burden of proof rests with the 2020 edition.

IABR president George Brugmans: *'I really look forward to collaborate with this unique Curator Team and to see all of its knowledge, networks, and research capacity put to great use in over three years of intensive, goal-oriented designing for the future. The appointment of these three curators and the format of a two-part edition allow the IABR to profit more than before from the fact that it is a twenty-first-century Biennale. We have definitely moved beyond the format of "a festival of good projects," key for us is to position the cultural platform as a catalyst for actual change in our delta and in the world.'*

## **The Partners**

The IABR is lead partner of the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment in the context of the Action Agenda Spatial Design.

The IABR has entered into a long-term collaboration with the Belgian organization Architecture Workroom Brussels. The parties will be active in each other's domains and benefit from each other's expertise. The focus is on taking research by design to the next level and on showing and more specifically helping to implement its results in the Netherlands and Belgium.

As part of its multiyear policy plan 2017-2020, *Towards a Resilient City*, the IABR has entered into action-oriented collaboration agreements with Resilient Rotterdam (Department of Urban Development, City of Rotterdam) and with the Special Envoy for International Water Affairs (Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment).

Important (research) partners involved in the realization of the IABR-2018+2020 are the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, the Atelier of the Dutch Government Architect, the Team of the Flemish Government Architect, AIR and the Veldacademie.

The IABR receives multiyear subsidies from the city of Rotterdam and from the Creative Industries Fund NL.

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### *Note to Editors*

*For more information, please contact the program manager of IABR, Marieke Francke, at [mfrancke@iabr.nl](mailto:mfrancke@iabr.nl) or +31 (0)10 2060033*

## ABOUT THE CURATORS

### **Floris Alkemade**

Floris Alkemade (1961) is an architect and urban designer. After completing his studies with Rem Koolhaas at Delft University of Technology (NL) he worked at the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) for 18 years, the last eight years as a partner. He contributed to major projects and studies around the world, both at the level of architecture and that of urban planning. Among his most famous accomplishments are Euralille, a major development around Lille, France's new TGV station; the Ruhr Museum in Essen, Germany and the new city centre of Almere in the Netherlands.

Working on projects in the Netherlands and abroad Floris Alkemade has been heading FAA (Floris Alkemade Architect) since 2008. His work with FAA includes large-scale architectural projects in France, such as the transformation and new construction of the 600-m-long Macdonald bonded warehouse in Paris.

As guest professor Alkemade was associated with Ghent University for nine years and he has been lecturing at the Academy of Architecture in Amsterdam since 2014.

On 1 September 2015, Floris Alkemade was appointed the Netherlands Government Architect and as such he is chairman of the Board of Government Advisors. The Government Architect advises the Minister of the Interior and the Director-General of the Central Government Real Estate Agency. He monitors and promotes the architectural and urban planning quality of government projects, including the disposal and redevelopment of central government real estate. The Government Architect offers central government solicited and unsolicited advice on issues of architectural quality as well as on major spatial themes. He also plays an important role in the informing of the professional discourse. On his Netherlands Government Architect's agenda, Floris Alkemade has included the ambition to search for the social value of every design challenge.

### **Leo Van Broeck**

Leo Van Broeck (1958) was appointed Flemish Government Architect by the government of Flanders in September 2016.

Van Broeck graduated as an engineer-architect from the University of Leuven (BE) in 1981, and has been a Professor of Architectural and Urban Design in Leuven since 2006. In 1997 he founded the non-profit organization Stad en Architectuur (City and Architecture), a foundation that promotes architecture in Belgium by means of debates, lectures and exhibitions. In 2007 he established architecture office Bogdan & Van Broeck together with Oana Bogdan. The office is primarily research-oriented and distinguishes itself by its active social engagement. In addition, Van Broeck was the chairman of the Royal Federation of Architecture Associations in Belgium (FAB) between 2013 and 2016.

As the Flemish Government Architect, Leo Van Broeck dedicates his mandate to the transition to full sustainability. He stresses the importance of making a more careful use of space in addressing the climate change challenge. His objective is the development of a building and design agenda aimed at a more comfortable, healthy, better-equipped and more inclusive environment, coupled with a more careful and sustainable treatment of that environment and its natural resources. Architecture and research by design can make an important contribution to that transition by imagining and testing both visions for the future and innovative solutions and by concretizing them in realizations. Leo Van Broeck aims to bring architectural quality, spatial quality and ecological quality together in one single narrative.

## **Joachim Declerck**

Joachim Declerck (1979) is an engineer-architect and founding partner of Architecture Workroom Brussels (AWB) – a European think-and-do tank for innovation in the field of architecture and urban and regional development. As a guest professor he has been associated with Ghent University (BE) since 2014. The main theme of his work is the use of design and spatial development as levers for the realization of important social transitions.

Declerck graduated from Ghent University. Later he attended the international postgraduate course at the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam. He remained associated with the Berlage from 2005 until 2010, and headed its professional research and development programme. He worked on the 3<sup>rd</sup> IABR: *Power – Producing the Contemporary City* (2007), that the Berlage Institute curated, and co-curated the exhibition 'A Vision for Brussels – Imagining the Capital of Europe' in 2007.

Since its inception in 2010, Architecture Workroom Brussels has been an initiator, a mediator and a platform to create space and conditions for innovative architecture and for research by design. AWB has a team of ten architect-researchers and is led by three partners: Roeland Dudal, Els Vervloesem and Joachim Declerck. The objectives of AWB's long-term strategic work lines include visionary housing, productive landscapes, caring neighbourhoods and the productive city. As a platform for research by design and knowledge sharing, AWB contributes to broad public debate, to the professional practice and to knowledge development as well as to innovation in urban development and urban policy.

In 2010 Declerck was the curator of the exhibition 'Building for Brussels - Architecture and Urban Transformation in Europe' (2010). He was a member of the curatorial team of the 5<sup>th</sup> IABR: *Making City* (2012) and of the Belgian Pavilion at the 13<sup>th</sup> Architecture Biennale in Venice, entitled *The Ambition of the Territory* (2012). He was involved in several IABR-Ateliers as Lead Designer.

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## **ABOUT THE IABR**

The International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam (IABR) was founded in 2001 on the conviction that architecture and especially urban planning are of great social importance. Since 2004, when George Brugmans became its director, the IABR therefore mainly focuses on the future of the city where, in a couple of decades, nearly 80 percent of the world's population will produce more than 90 percent of our wealth—and this will have to be done sustainably.

In its multiyear policy plan 2017-2020: *Towards a Resilient City*, the IABR expressly places the future of the city in the context of climate change and increasing social inequality. In any way it can, the IABR wants to contribute to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations and the achievement of the objectives set out in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. That means well-designed, socially inclusive, resilient cities are of key importance. We can only solve the climate problems if we solve them in the cities first. And to achieve this, good design is crucial.

### **Objective**

The IABR is a knowledge institute as well as a cultural platform and its main objective is to use the power of imagination and design in a goal-oriented way to generate actual change.

How does the IABR do this? By adding value to policymaking and decision making, and by influencing the social agenda. By bringing together key disciplines and sectors to carry out result-oriented research by design into the city of tomorrow, both in the Netherlands and abroad. By bringing the results – knowledge, plans and projects – extensively into the limelight in an international setting once

every two years. And, last but not least, by actively contributing to the realization of these results and actually ‘making city’ that way.

The two most important instruments the IABR uses to achieve its objectives are the IABR–Ateliers and the Biennale itself.

### **Ongoing Research in IABR–Ateliers**

An IABR–Atelier is a long-term research by design project that is always established in collaboration with governments and other stakeholders to work towards concrete, applicable solutions to existing problems. An Atelier uniquely enables involved governments to carry out actual research by design, to bring in extra quality, to explore new ideas and unexpected options, to test and to try, to learn and to exchange knowledge in a free and international setting and concretely take their challenges to the next level.

To achieve this, the IABR has developed a sustainable and open methodology. Every edition, it looks for a new position and a new perspective, but it always builds on what was learned and developed in previous editions. Knowledge and results add up in a continuous research trajectory to ensure that each Atelier can stand on the shoulders of a previous Atelier.

In recent years the IABR produced successful Ateliers in the Netherlands (on Texel, in Brabant and Groningen, Utrecht and Rotterdam, and together with the central government, businesses and environmental organizations in the North Sea) and abroad (in São Paulo, Istanbul, Brussels and Albania).

### **Bridge the Gap between Research and Action**

Cities have to explore the road to a sustainable future together. Even if they can rarely take over each other’s solutions one-on-one, it is imperative that they know how to learn from each other and exchange experiences as resourcefully as they can. The IABR is one place where this can happen, and where research and researchers, design and designers, administrators and policymakers, doers and thinkers, performers and customers, builders and citizens, the Dutch and foreigners, and professionals and their audiences meet.

The first two editions, *Mobility* (2003) and *The Flood* (2005) have put the IABR on the map internationally, profiling it as a manifestation focusing on the future of our cities. The editions *Power* (2007), *Open City* (2009) and *Making City* (2012) have explored ongoing rapid urbanization and its consequences, while staking out a position for urban design and making a case for how it can tangibly contribute. The 6th and 7th editions have taken this agenda one step further. The need to design our future habitat in terms of a sustainable balance between demographic, ecological and economic concerns have given direction to IABR–2014–URBAN BY NATURE and IABR–2016–THE NEXT ECONOMY.

Now, rather than a goal in itself, the Biennale is a means: an international podium for the transfer of knowledge among designers, among cities, among governments, and among professionals and the general public to bridge the gap between research and action, between imagination and realization. Instruments the IABR uses to that end include exhibitions, conferences, films, books, lectures, debates, workshops, and master classes that together comprise the Biennale program. Using the free cultural space this way – coupling research by design to public presentations in a work process that is always insisting on concrete application – makes the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam unique in the world.