



Lecture on 12 July 2006, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
"Maintenance and Decay in the Post-Materialist Society"

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The goal of this talk is to show you a little bit of my mind, which hopefully represents the way Dutch designers are thinking. Dutch Designs are not made out of a deliberate argumentation, but start with a more or less intuitive concept. How does a concept arise? It can start with an associative flow of mind, triggered by an image. Thoughts, words, images, sketches, tendencies and models are connected together, and the design is often no more than a frozen moment in that process. Like Aaron Betsky states: 'Seeing is knowing is making'. The design is not trying to solve a problem or a briefing, but just indicates the way the situation is interpreted. So let's start with two mind-boggling pictures, reflect on it in a social-economical level, see what design examples pop-up and alongside try to connect it to some mental consequences:



Two pictures. Every year the mosque in Djenné, Mali, receives a new layer of clay to protect the building of rinsing away. It is beautiful to see how the design already anticipates on the repairing work by expanding the wooden beams out of the façade. Maintenance is the work that has to be done to keep things in the right condition. Distinguished Londoners continue to use the library while the building is demolished by German bombing. They rather keep their intelligence in the right condition than preserving their vulnerable paperwork-sources from putrefaction. What are these pictures

about? Two words: Maintenance and neglect; or Preservation and decay. These images might look like representing two different ways of maintenance, one preserving the physical body, the other preserving the mental mind. In reality, in both situations body and mind are taken care of. In Mali culture repairing the Mosque has a spiritual value and the English discipline finally prevailed in war. Nevertheless these captured moments show a different mentality and relation to the build environment. In Mali mental and physical maintenance are unified, in London they are separated.

Social-Economical reflection. Let's think about this divided mindset: The mentality of functional diversity is part of the industrialized society. Machine has taken over the hard physical work and so man is left comfortably at ease. In the meanwhile, maintenance has gotten more labour-intensive than production of new devices and so the growing economy leaves a trace of pollution. Secondly, due to the overload of mental professions people have to compensate their physical inactivity and engage themselves in sports. On the other hand mental stress has to be balanced by and mental relaxations. Two questions arise here: How to engage physically and ecologically with our environment and how to cope with our mental and physical pollution.



Design Examples. Interior Design has been anticipating these questions in an idealistic approach for long time. The future of science and technology has inspired to design all kind of robot-like-interiors. Interiors seem to become 'gravity-less' and machinery was smoothly integrated. This is almost 'virtuality' before it was invented. On the counter side there is a realistic nostalgia: Seeing the beauty of the old. And secondly: Showing the beauty of the machinery. In Dutch design the approach is not so much idealistic but more instantly reflective. Mirroring and mapping out the situation. These designs are about the fantasy that is needed to revalue situations and make use of it in other ways. It implies a participation of the user who can no longer be the neutral objective spectator, watching from a distance expecting not to influence the situation. And so maintenance is entering the scene in another appearance. The user is not just the one who prolongs the ultimate timeless design. He is involved in the execution. Sometimes even by demolishing a semi-manufactured

product. **Conclusion.** Perhaps in today's world, maintenance is no longer a suitable concept for engaging with our environment. Let 's talk about participation as a way of engaging in a process of constantly changing arrangements. Thanks for your attention, may the meeting of our minds blossom in our ideas and designs.

