

How the Rietveld Schröder House intrigues and inspires as an actor.

Note from the organiser, **Maarten Dekker**

My intuition to start a project on the Rietveld Schröder House (RSH) led to this exhibition. This urge didn't come out of nowhere. I have made works inspired by Rietveld's designs before, including most recently – in 2023 – a series of paintings based on the famous corner window of the Rietveld Schröder House. The 100th anniversary of the RSH stimulated my intuition.

While this anniversary deserves full attention, it is important to take an artistic view as well, to celebrate this house as a source of inspiration, as actor. How to relate to this as an artist anno 2024?

'A real tradition is not the relic of a past that is irretrievably gone; it is a living force that animates and informs the present.' In this quote by Igor Stravinsky, I read a call to bring your inspirations from the past into the present. Work with it, move with it, because its potential needs to be unwrapped again and again.

Inspiring is like breathing: a constant movement from outside to inside and vice versa. When the exchange stops, life stagnates. This movement is, in a way, the essence of the RSH. The walls of the house create a rhythm of various rectangles, opening up the boundaries of the space. The inside is connected to the outside and vice versa. The walls of a house protect against the elements and give shelter to its inhabitants by shielding a human-scaled piece of space, but too much emphasis on the indoors is unhealthy. An enclosed, airless room smothers the orientation on the wider world. The parallel with inspiration is clear; the ability to connect inside and outside is also the ability to be receptive to the other perspective, which sometimes shocks or surprises, but fascinates too.

'To experience a space, one must move in it, even better, one must inhabit the space.' said Truus Schröder, as the house's occupant. One wonders to what extent that space in the RSH, being a museum now, still breathes and can be experienced that way.

The RSH was thoroughly renovated by architect Bertus Mulder: the exterior in 1975 and the interior of the house in 1985. A radical yet necessary restoration to save the house from ruin. Mulder's idea was to transform the house to its 'most original state' (as it must have been between 1925 and 1930). This means that several adjustments Rietveld made after 1930 have been removed and much of the history and experience of living in the house has disappeared.

An interesting artistic question arises: what is the house without this residential history? A concept? And what image does this create? How can we, as visitors, relate to the house now? As a museum the RSH has come to a kind of 'standstill', it is preserved as a first version of itself, a version no one has ever lived in: an icon in our time. In what other ways can it inspire us?

Inspiration is about making a connection. Much of the inspiration for this exhibition sprung from conversations about the house in relation to the various oeuvres and experiences of the artists involved. In these conversations new and different perspectives unfolded, allowing me to adjust my own image of the house more than once. Is the RSH an icon of De Stijl or not? This is not a clear cut issue. It is precisely in breaking assumptions that I understand the significance of the house as a source of inspiration. As a layered phenomenon, with a rich history, receptive to many perspectives. The house as movement, which needs to be in constant motion, to see and feel the different layers of meaning.

The artworks and events in this exhibition might be starting points for experiences and conversations. They aim to be new, embodied perspectives: seeing, tasting and feeling. Hopefully, this artistic approach will create space for new experiences and conversations in you too.

Some works in the exhibition link directly to the Rietveld Schröder House, others more indirectly or metaphorically.