

Eduard Böhlingk 'I prefer to work the way an author works on a book'

Eduard Böhlingk, Maasland

Training: TH Delft, 1970-1980

Most important projects

Conversion Centre for Musical Education, Rotterdam, 1978-1979, in co-operation with Kees Veth (Van den Broek and Bakema)

Conversion youth-club, Maasland, 1982-1984

Job-centre Oud-Beijerland, 1982-1984

Conversion residence, Maasland, 1984-1985

The first project in which Eduard Böhlingk worked with a certain amount of independence happened while he was still studying at the TH, when he landed up in the Rotterdam Van den Broek and Bakema office for the subject 'practical experience'. Together with Kees Veth he worked there on a design for a centre for musical education. 'I enjoyed choosing a large office that makes designs which always have quality. And I was of course lucky that I could immediately start working on such a large project. In Delft you did not learn much in the area of practical designing. When I started studying, there was the terror of the colour-pencil - if you were seen with a Rotring-pen in your hand, that already meant that you were right-wing. But I thought it important that you would learn how to make a sensible drawing.

Theory was very important in Delft. I don't object to that, but it is generally difficult for me to fit in with it. I don't mind talking about it, but your project also has to be realized. Whatever happened in Delft in those days, I kept rather aloof, in fact. But I believe that you have an advantage later if you concentrated more on the subject during your study. While I was there, in any case, the TH did not have enough connection with the practice. The question of how in hell you manage to get everything done, with the design, a budget and a specification. . . .

If you have just left Delft, and meet a man in the practice, then you immediately get an inferiority complex. That is why I was so pleased when I got the chance to work in the practice and learn something there, while still doing my training. During my study in Delft I went to work for a year in Perth, in Australia, thanks to a grant. And then back again to Van den Broek and Bakema. After my practical experience I worked there another couple of years on contract-basis. Because of the economic situation there came a point where they did not have enough work and I had to leave. Besides that I had the urge to work alone for a while, in those days. I could find temporary work in Maasland, where I live, as supervisor for the conversion of old shop-premises to villagemuseum. During that time I drew the conversion of a youth-club and I designed a sports hall in the evenings, which hasn't been realized, by the way.' Eduard Böhlingk subsequently acquired his first larger commission, from the Government Building Office, for a regional job-centre in Oud-Beijerland. He attracted a lot of attention with this design (a cover story was immediately devoted to it in the magazine *De Architect*). That had to do with a number of constructive innovations, but the building is also noticeable because of its choice of colours and materials.

Böhlingk: 'My getting the commission fitted in of course with the Government's Architects' policy of giving young

architects a chance. When that happens to you, you have to realize that you'll maybe only have *one* chance, and also that you are still nowhere. But for me it was still a moment to decide that I could start as an architect for myself.'

How does Böhlingk develop his ideas for a design like this job-centre? 'Those ideas are mainly determined by the place where it will be situated. That is more important for me than, for example, viewing the work of all sorts of other architects. I am not someone who occupies himself intensively with history. All this talking about references and meanings. . . . It also concerns me, of course, but I do it as selectively and personally as possible. When you see an old column or a stucco ceiling, then that may be called postmodern, but for me it does not have to have a name.

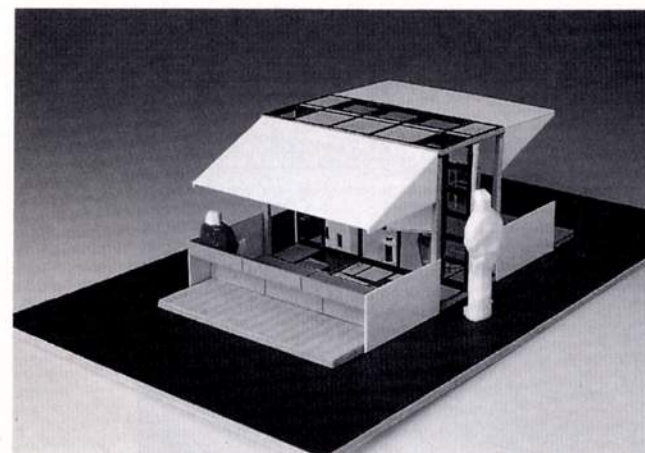
Technique as a sub-division of designing is important, because it can free you from all sorts of compulsory aspects of designing. And you have to be acquainted with technique too, to know what you are doing - there are architects who don't consider how it all has to fit together when they make their drawings, but I think you *do* have to know that. The application of new materials and techniques requires a completely different way of handling buildings. You often see that they are terribly neglected, but you have to treat them like cars: a lot of washing, now and then a good dose of suds. Because of the effect of pollution I have made my job-centre grey, not white.' Böhlingk has a definite opinion of architecture-competitions: 'Some time ago I entered the competition for a farm in Eemland. But I got fed up immediately. You have to work like mad on it, your other work gets neglected. And then if you see how the juries handle it, I often find that highly debatable. It nearly always centres on the quality of your presentation, you have the greatest chance of winning when you design for two weeks and draw for six. I can think up just as well without competitions, the innovations I'm looking for in my work.'

Eduard Böhlingk works as a one-man office on commissions of a modest size. Has he no desire to seek a somewhat broader context?

'My working alone is a result of the circumstances. Moreover I haven't yet met any colleagues with whom I'd like to work. I do, however, enjoy developing my own capabilities and non-capabilities in an individual way. I prefer to work on a design in the way in which an author works on a book: you create your own problems.

It does of course have advantages to have a sounding-board in the shape of other people who co-operate with you - but they might send you into a direction that is not your own.'

RdG



A compact utensil

Although the assignment to develop a mobile exhibition-space for an architect was put in wide terms, I have confined myself to a pretty literal interpretation of it. It has become a design for a compact mobile exhibition-space, the way it suits me best as utensil.

An architect's presentation generally consists of drawings, photographs/slides and maquettes. For each of these presentation-parts a place has been cleared in the middle section. The drawings on the 'open' standing-side, the photographs and slide-projection on the 'closed' sitting-side and the maquettes on the edges; where the public can look at them from all sides.

All these parts are clamped to the frame with an aluminium terminal strip and are therefore interchangeable. This delicate central frame is protected during transport by the folded floors and sides. The sides each consist of two rectangles and two triangles.

When unfolded one triangle points to the standing-area and the other to the sitting-area. The more intimate sitting-area is entered on the sides of the central-frame. In order to make the steel floor-sheet fit to walk on it is covered with multiplex plates, which are hinged in the sitting-area and thus form a bench.

Eduard Böhlingk

