

## **Introduction Beachlife**

### **Text by Satellietgroep**

The sea belongs to everyone and thus to no one – words that not only define the world's largest public space but also leave it unarticulated. Oceans, seas and coastal regions are under tremendous pressure, worldwide. Faced with the prospect of global warming, economic and functional interests are competing for space. The changes anticipated are not only gargantuan but also geographically, ecologically, conceptually and philosophically unique. Shifting circumstances raise questions about new land, new (coastal) landscapes, new forms of urbanization and new offshore projects of various types. But the sea has a cultural significance as well. Its infinite space, timeless aura, tidal currents and empty horizon appeal to universal feelings of freedom and adventure. As our oceans stand on the threshold of great change, opportunities are emerging for new uses, different meanings and unprecedented approaches. This is the moment for a qualitative stimulus based on the development of specific characteristics of the sea from a cultural perspective. Artists, designers, architects and scientists are at the forefront of a different kind of thinking about – and a new way of experiencing – the qualities and problems of the sea. From nature to culture . . . and from concept to materiality.

Much of the Netherlands lies below sea level. Houseboats have been accommodating the Dutch since time immemorial. Holland is not, however, the only nation threatened by rising sea levels. Climate change and the encroaching seas have made aquatic living a topical subject in all parts of the globe. Architect Anthony Lau has responded to the climate changes with a proposal for floating communities that use decommissioned ships and recycled oil rigs as platforms for a new type of residential life on the water, a project the architect envisions as reality by 2050. Lau favours the unique character of his residential typology over that of modular mass-produced housing. It may be far in the future before his plan is appreciated, but some architects have already taken steps to counter the threat posed by global warming. Anderson Anderson Architects, for example, has designed the Alluvial Sponge Comb – a water absorbing landscape element that can be implemented at the edge of the Mississippi River to control flood and erosion. Dutch firm Waterstudio.NL, has designed Stilt Houses in IJburg – dwellings that promise to keep occupants high and dry even in the event of a flood.

For the time being, however, the shores of the mainland remain a popular spot 'on the water'. Vast vistas, unspoilt nature, and a sense of peace draw many to the coast – some who live there only during the summer and others who stay the year round. Certain seaside dwellings grab our attention because of their striking designs, such as The Distributed House, by OMA, on an island in the Bahamas. Each part of the residential complex has a distinct location, a situation that promotes the relationship between occupant and environment, as moving from one room to another requires an exploration of outdoor space that ranges from 'thick jungle' to 'the island's pink shores'.

People without holiday homes or permanent seaside residences can enjoy large-scale commercial and recreational functions on the world's beaches, such as seaside resorts, beach pavilions, waterside attractions and special events. Holiday-makers flock en masse to such touristic delights during the summer. A dining experience enhanced by a view of the water is possible thanks to an endless selection of seaside restaurants, cafés and picnic tables. Those looking for a bit more action can have great fun splashing in contemporary sea baths or practising their moves in coastal skate parks. When there is no seaside nearby, the urban beaches are a welcome alternative. Riversides are

covered with sand, well designed – often temporary – beach clubs are installed, and the city is ready for the sun to come out.

Works of art play an important role in today's seaside experience as well. Art is often able to express the spatial and social qualities – as well as the problems – of our coastal areas, and to make them surprisingly accessible to the public. An example is the melting ice-cream van that The Glue Society exhibited at Australia's Sculpture by the Sea Festival in an attempt to draw attention to global warming. Less amusing is the work of photographer Barbara Visser, whose photographic collection of posters, *The World Belongs to Early Risers*, gives an entirely different twist to a day at the beach. It's works of art such as these that transform a destination normally marked by consumption and recreation into a platform for serious communication.

The diversity of coast and sea – and everything involved in that diversity – is fully covered in *Beachlife*. Here you will find a broad selection of art; architecture; and interior, landscape and product design; from exciting projects already completed to high-profile proposals for the future. The aim of the book is to inspire readers and to raise interest in the continued creation of quality seaside projects throughout the world.

### **Satellietgroep**

Satellietgroep is an artists' initiative created in 2006 in The Hague, The Netherlands for the purpose of studying the cultural significance of oceans and seas from the perspective of the arts and science. The group's founders are Jacqueline Heerema (visual artist), Marianne Volleberg (anthropologist), Andries Micke (architect), Bas de Koning and Hederik van der Kolk (the graphic designers of creative collective Duel), and adviser Denis Oudendijk (architect). They challenge artists, designers, (landscape) architects and scientists to develop new concepts and projects that articulate a cultural, innovative and sustainable significance of the sea and her coasts.

Satellietgroep's projects include Satellieteiland, Zeedelijk, *S.MAG* (Sea Magazine) and EXOOT, all of which are aimed at securing a position for art and culture on seas and in coastal areas across the globe.

**[www.satellietgroep.nl](http://www.satellietgroep.nl)**  
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