

Constant
Immersive Installations

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Table of Contents

I	Introduction	1
II	Constant: A Mere Provocateur	6
	II.I Art and Display	6
III	Syntheses	9
	III.I Towards a synthesis of arts	9
	III.II Unitary Urbanism	9
IV	The Dialectics of Experiment	12
	IV.I Immersive Installations	12
	IV.II T-T $\sqrt{2}$ Omgang	13
	IV.III Experiment Studio Rotterdam	18
	IV.IV Deurenlabyrint	23
	IV.V Retrospective	26
	IV.VI Framework	27
V	Conclusion	30

I. Introduction

Constant was as an artist, most known for his interdisciplinary work and magnum opus *New Babylon*. A future potential society without labour, unbound by place and time, inhabited by man at play; the 'homo ludens'.¹ He worked extensively on the project between 1956 and 1974. During this period he experimented with installations emphasizing on its user and spectator, which will form the centre point of this thesis.

While working towards this era that revolved around a synthesis of arts, Constant participated in many diverse projects and disciplines that find their roots in De Stijl. De Stijl lost its main exponents in the 1930's, but after the Dutch liberation, the interest in abstraction grew again. Especially younger artists tried to move away from realism.² New life was breathed into avant-garde and international connections were restored. The tendency of experiment and abstraction persevered and from around the 1950's on, experimental art collectives started to emerge in which Constant had been deeply invested. In 1948, he founded the *Experimentele Groep (Experimental Group)* together with Appel, Corneille, Brands and more. They put out a magazine in which Constant published his manifest on behalf of the group. The group's members, and Constant, however soon joined an international movement that had been established within the same year: CoBrA (Copenhagen, Bruxelles, Amsterdam).³ The group used the experiment as an element in their creativity, and put the old standards of to question; to start over. They envisioned a lifestyle that allowed every one to surrender to creativity. Art and life should become one.⁴

After the Cobra period, Constant significantly changes in artistic and intellectual development. His work became even more abstract and he now wanted to take it a step further than collaborative art; a synthesis of arts. He tries to break the boundaries between different art professions like sculpting and architecture.⁵ Constant looks for connection with fellow thinkers, among whom members of CIAM and architects van

¹ Huizinga, J. (1939). *Homo ludens: Proeve eener bepaling van het spel-element der cultuur*.

² Twenthe, R., Blotkamp, C., Fritz-Jobse, J., Van Burkom, F., Netherlands. Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, & Rijksmuseum Twenthe (Netherlands). (1988). *Een Nieuwe synthese*. Sdu. p. 10

³ Stokvis, W. (2001). *Cobra: De weg naar spontaniteit*. V+K Publishing. p. 175, 189 - 194

⁴ Constant. (1955) 'Art et Habitat'. RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 288

⁵ Tummers, N. (1965) *De New Babylon informatief 1*. RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 423

Eyck and Rietveld. Together, from 1952 onwards, they worked on exhibitions accentuating on the relationship of art and architecture, and space and colour.⁶ Constant slowly moved away from painting and started to convey his theories with sculptures and maquettes. In the meanwhile, he meets writer and filmmaker Debord and joins the *Internationale Situationniste*. Together they develop the 'unitary urbanism', a theory describing the rejection of an utilitarian society and focussing on liberty and play.⁷ It was at this point that *New Babylon* became a project in progress and found its definite name.

After roughly five years of working on *New Babylon* and shaping it on an architectural and urbanist scale, Constant introduces his first installation together with sculptor Nic. Tummers, also calling it 'experiment spaces'.⁸ He tries to bring the New Babylonian lifestyle closer and states that he provides an environment where there is no more 'art' or 'aesthetic', but a broader concept: a transformation of society.⁹ He continues to work with Tummers and exhibits *Experiment Studio Rotterdam (E.S.R)*, a course consisting of eleven different 'experiment spaces'; from a scent room to a labyrinth, emphasizing on sensory experiences. Constant presents the remainder of these experiments solo. In 1974, he exhibits at the Haags Gemeentemuseum and wants to display *New Babylon* in its entirety a final time, to officially put an end to it. Constant thinks the project cannot be realized on short-term and a long period of confusion and destruction lies ahead. He installs a labyrinth of doors symbolizing this period.¹⁰

This thesis is a study on Constant's installations during his *New Babylon* period from 1956 and 1974 as a standalone subject; discussing its concept and purpose. What was Constant's aim with these experiments and what was he trying to convey? These installations are also covered as a subject to be put in a broader context that up until now has been overlooked or not been published: How do these installations relate to other art and architecture movements; a broader context?

Earlier movements that Constant was strongly inspired by, or has taken part of are retraced with regards to the relationship with his experimental installations.

⁶ Constant, Van Eyck, A (1952). "voor een spatiaal colorisme". Published in "voor een spatiaal colorisme" exhibition catalogue, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 412

⁷ Constant, Debord, G. (1958). " Déclaration d'Amsterdam" published in *Internationale Situationniste #2*. RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 309

⁸ Laura, S., & Stokvis, W. (2016). *Constant New Babylon HB* (1ste editie). Hannibal. p. 120 - 121

⁹ Constant. (1965) 'De dialektiek van het experiment', published in: Constant, tent.cat. Den Haag (Haags Gemeentemuseum). RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 374

¹⁰ Constant. (1974). *New Babylon for the exhibition catalogue*, Haags Gemeente Museum. RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 390

These predominantly involve De Stijl and constructivism, where Constant is compared to e.g. Baljeu; being the only ones who brought art and architecture to a single entity.¹¹ This guideline could be extended to *omgevingskunst*; open air spatial art that merged into the environment that had artists like Struycken and Dekkers as pioneers. A relevant connection to Schöffer and the art of human habitat can also be made here. Within this theme of syntheses of arts, architectural input has been remarkably important for Constant. Research will also cover the relationship of Constant's work to the vision of architectural groups CIAM and *Liga Nieuw Beelden*, where he connected with its members and other architects profoundly.

Constant has been acknowledged largely in the last few decades, with a significant amount of publications, books and monographs on CoBrA and his *New Babylon*. Some of the noteworthy authors and contributors to literature are Mark Wigley, Willemijn Stokvis, Laura Stamps and Constant's wife Trudy Nieuwenhuys. Wigley published *Constant's New Babylon: The Hyper-Architecture of Desire* (1998), and co-edited *The Activist Drawing: Retracing Situationist Architectures from Constant's New Babylon to Beyond* (2001), with the first one being the largest monography. Stokvis published *CoBrA: De weg naar spontaniteit* and contributed together with Stamps to *Constant: New Babylon. Aan ons de vrijheid*. Both books providing a wide range of information on works of Constant. However, we do not find very explicit information on Constant's installations regarding New Babylon nor the relationship to a broader context.

The thesis will be made by means of a literary and archival research. First, a digital analysis will be conducted in order to what material can be gathered to work with directly and to find out where analogue material can be obtained such as libraries and physical archives. Ultimately, these locations are visited and the sources directly used. The thesis, following this introduction, consists of four more chapters. These follow a chronological procedure.

¹¹ Twenthe, R., Blotkamp, C., Fritz-Jobse, J., Van Burkom, F., Netherlands. Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, & Rijksmuseum Twenthe (Netherlands). (1988). Een Nieuwe synthese. Sdu. p. 28-30

Chapter II (*Constant: A Mere Provocateur*)

II.I (*Art and Display*)

It provides context to the early years of Constant with regards to the art culture and visions in the museum where his first significant exhibitions take place: Stedelijk Museum with director Sandberg.

Chapter III (*Syntheses*)

III.I (*Towards a synthesis of arts*)

Describes Constant's increasing interest and involvement in architecture. It highlights his collaboration with architects like van Eyck and Rietveld. His relationship with van Eyck played a major role in these years of his development. It also covers art-cultural context with regards to museums.

III.II (*Unitary Urbanism*)

About Constant developing his utopian ideas that can be seen as the preamble to *New Babylon* and his parting with past collaborators.

Chapter IV (*The Dialectics of Experiment*)

IV.I (*Immersive Installations*)

Dedicated to Constant's exhibited experimental installations. It describes what Constant's aim and purpose with these projects were and how they came about in terms of technology and emotionally.

IV.II (*T-T $\sqrt{2}$ Omgang*)

Describes Constant's first immersive installation together with Nic. H. M. Tummers at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.

IV.III (*Experiment Studio Rotterdam*)

Describes Constant's most complex installation as interdisciplinary collaborative at Bouwcentrum Rotterdam.

IV.IV (*Deurenlabyrint*)

Describes Constant's last installation during his final *New Babylon* exhibition as a whole. It also covers the importance of the labyrinth as a central motive throughout his work, and as symbol for the ending of the project.

IV.V (*Retrospective*)

Covers an extensive look back of Constant on the *New Babylon* project and what it has become as a product, and in the context of society at the time.

IV.VI (*Framework*)

Discusses how Constant's installations ultimately link to further context and (previously covered) art and architecture themes and movements.

Chapter V (*Conclusion*)

This chapter discusses the main findings and arguments throughout the thesis, and answers to the research questions. Finally, a further research of the subject is recommended.

II: Constant: A Mere Provocateur

II.I Art and Display

In late 1947, Karel Appel and Corneille contact Constant because they feel affinity among their work. Only a year later, they organized a meeting together with Theo Wolvecamp, as they wanted to establish a group with equivalent guys.¹² They formed the *Experimentele Groep*. More joined, including Eugene Brands and Constants brother Jan Nieuwenhuys. Together, they publish the magazine *Reflex* and in the first edition, Constants manifest is published; he opposes to surrealism and pleats for the primitive expression and intuition. The process of creation would be more important than the creation itself.¹³ Constant was considered the theorist of the group, and throughout his entire career he continued to critically express himself on society. Later that year, Constant establishes the CoBrA movement in Paris, together with fellow revolutionists Asger Jorn and Dotremont. Commonly influenced by Marx, CoBrA went a step further in expressionism. Only when aesthetic values of society are abolished, the primitive urge to expression is introduced. Inspirations like mental illness and the children's drawings were derived from experiment and spontaneity.

In 1949, Brands and Willem Sandberg, the director of Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and admirer of Brands' work, agree on an exhibition. However Brands invites the *Experimentele Groep* to join for him for a larger exhibition, that later turned out to be dedicated to CoBrA.¹⁴ Sandberg realises that most involved artists are financially not able to produce large enough works for the space offered, and supports them to create huge works within a week. The exhibition is unconventional; the individual works as well as the way they are displayed. Both critics and visitors considered it childish and the artists scribblers. It would have shown "*definite evidence of Sandberg's incompetence.*"¹⁵ Sandberg had been familiar with abstract art for a longer period. In 1938, one of his first manifestations for Stedelijk was the large exhibition *Abstracte Kunst (Abstract Art)*, where he also presented works of De Stijl, Braque and Klee. He wanted positive attention for modern art in that time, while Hitlers *Entartete Kunst (Degenerated Art)* was displayed throughout Germany in order for the public to taunt modern art.

This utopian, collaborative striving of Constant and companions can be paralleled to De Stijl, that had already ended for almost two decades. The works of art show kinship as well, even though representing a different abstraction; the expression of colour, visual tension and its interpretation, that also van Doesburg was interested in. In the

¹² Interview with Theo Wolvecamp in 'Kunstbeeld'. (1985). Volume 9

¹³ Constant. (1948). 'Manifest' published in Reflex no. 1. RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 272

¹⁴ Interview with Eugene Brands in Haagsche Courant. (2000)

¹⁵ Stokvis, W., Bokhoven, J.. (1994). Cobra en het Stedelijk. Luxemburg

meanwhile, this movement is also closely related to CIAM. Within the same period, architects of CIAM discussed the integration of the aesthetic aspect, and the function of visual arts to architectural expression. They wanted to create a physical environment that would satisfy emotional needs and stimulate spiritual growth.¹⁶ Architect and CIAM member Aldo van Eyck was involved in the project as well; he designed the interior of the exhibition. He stated that '*it is not about building new or not, it is about being an artist or not.*'¹⁷ This collaboration can symbolize the development of synthesizing art and architecture.

¹⁶ Twenthe, R., Blotkamp, C., Fritz-Jobse, J., Van Burkom, F., Netherlands. Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, & Rijksmuseum Twenthe (Netherlands). (1988). Een Nieuwe synthese. Sdu. p.34

¹⁷ Idem



Kokkorris-Syrie, E. (1949). *Cobra artists bringing their work to the "International Exhibition of Experimental Artist.* [Photo] © Cobra Museum, Amstelveen

III: Syntheses

III.I Towards a synthesis of Arts

After Constant's CoBrA period, his work becomes noticeably more abstract. He continues developing a spatial intellect, and begins studying architecture with books of van Eyck. Where in previous years Constant focused on collective art and rejected the independent artist, he now takes it a step further by striving for a total synthesis of arts. Boundaries between art different professions like painting, sculpting, architecture and technology need to be eradicated. He deems that this is absolutely necessary to break through the monotony of modern architecture, its pragmatism, boredom and the underlying political position. They offer minimal to no offer for a playful and creative way of life. In 1952, Constant collaborates with Van Eyck, whom he was already familiar with. They publish "*spatial colorisme*" ("*spatial colorism*"). A manifest that unites art and architecture by emphasizing on the unavailability of colour; "*Colour is nothing but the colour of the form and form is nothing but the form of the colour.*"¹⁸ Shortly after, they exhibit a room immersed with colour which resulted in art and architecture being one entity. They received the Sikkens Award for the project. A year later Constant collaborates with another acknowledged architect and CIAM acquaintance, Gerrit Rietveld. They are requested to determine colours for a life size interior displayed at Bijenkorf. Their approach would adopt the "*spatial colorism*" method; the architect and artist choose colours simultaneously. It is not a question whether they should interfere with each others work, but rather if the contribution can be beneficial for the other. In this period, Constant starts to progressively interest himself in architecture, creating very abstract compositions and even designs pieces of furniture. Constant continuously attempts to achieve true synthesis, and in the process he allies with sculptors Schoffer and Gilbert to establish *Neovision* where they would focus on the human habitat with "*spatio-dynamic*" art forms. However, it soon became clear they had other aims.

III.II Unitary Urbanism

In the summer of 1956, Constant is invited by Jorn to visit a *Mouvement pour un Bauhaus imaginiste (MIBI)* congress. At this congress, Constant meets artist and lettrist Gil Wolman, who lectures on a phenomenon called Unitary Urbanism. It is the theory of the combined use of arts and techniques as means of contributing to the construction of a unified environment, in relation with experiments in behaviour. The key concepts were developed by Guy Debord, who in this period founded *International Lettrist*; he is filmmaker, author and activist. He wants to create a radical movement that abandons fine arts and focuses on psychogeography, in which the boundaries between art and life are

¹⁸ See note 6

completely dissolved.¹⁹ After visiting the congress, Constant creates, what later would be called his first *New Babylonian* model, *Design for a gypsy camp*; it was no simple provision of emergency shelter, nor to fix this mobile population to a definite point. Rather, it sought to metamorphically transform physical deprivation into a sensorial richness, using advanced materials to create a campground as a centre of coordination, which was permanent yet flexible.²⁰ At was a response to the shortage of living space that governments confronted in the post-war period following stagnation of building programs. Also, it was a refusal to the regime of post-war rebuilding. Constant disagreed with the fundamental mobility of populations in the condition of exile.²¹

Later that year Constant meets with Debord, that had allied with Jorn to merge the *MIBI* and *International Lettrist* into the *L'internationale Situationniste (Situationist International) (SI)* and refuse to call it an art movement. Even though Constant shares the same principles on unitary urbanism and the fundamentals of Henri Lefebvre, he does not join as the aim for synthesis of the arts was not implemented; the team did not contain architects and technicians. Eventually Constant joins, and together with Debord they publish the *Declaration d'Amsterdam*. A series of viewpoints describing how the 'situationists' take every opportunity to oppose retrograde forces and ideologies, in culture wherever the meaning of life arises. The unitary and collective creativity is announced in the decomposition of the individual arts, where the SI's program is the development of complete environments.²²

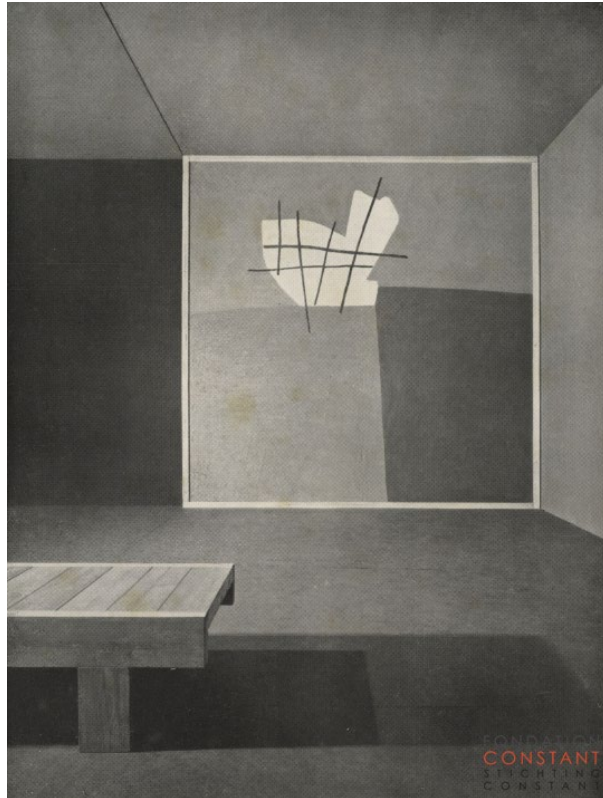
In the meanwhile, Constant had read *Homo ludens* by Johan Huizinga and develops the idea for a futuristic city. Constant had now totally shifted from painting to three-dimensional design and he physically assembled this idea by building constructions and models. They consisted of circular and spiral elements, and remarkable industrial materials like steel and Plexiglas. In 1959, Constant exhibits *New Babylon* for the first time in Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.

¹⁹ Debord, G. (1954). Article published in Potlach #29. RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 295

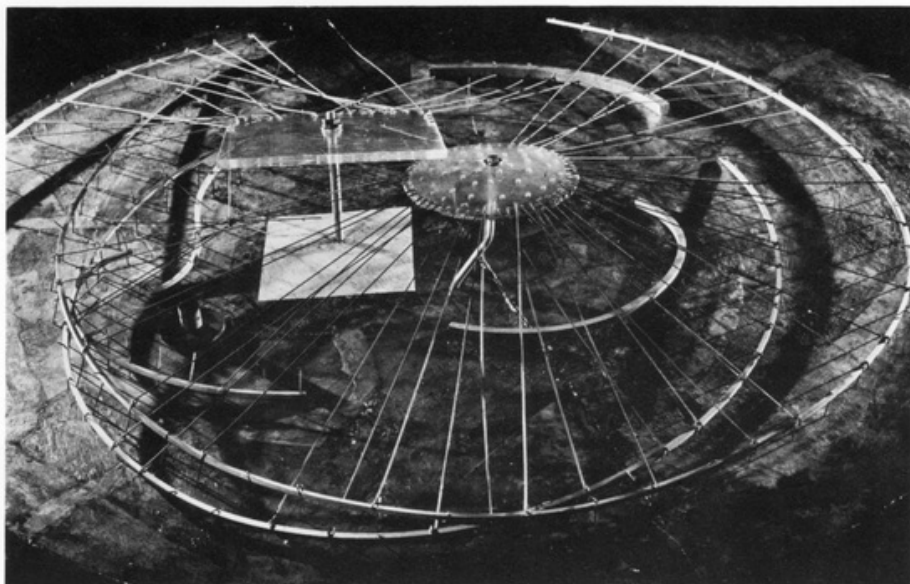
²⁰ McDonough, T. (2008). 'Metastructure: Experimental Utopia and Traumatic Memory in Constant's New Babylon' published in 'Grey Room (Vol. 33). MIT Press. p. 88

²¹ Idem

²² Constant, Debord, G. (1958). " Déclaration d'Amsterdam" published in Internationale Situationniste #2. RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 309



Versnel, J. (1952). *Ruimte in kleur* by Constant and Aldo van Eyck [Exhibition]
©Constant/Fondation Constant c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2022



Nieuwenhuys, V. (1956). Constant, *Design for Gypsy Camp, 1956–1958*, stainless steel, aluminum, Plexiglas, oil paint on wood, collection: Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, The Hague, [Artwork] ©Constant/Fondation Constant c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2022

IV: Dialectics of Experiment

IV.1 Immersive Installations

During his *New Babylon* project, Constant zoomed into the socio-spatial aspects of society. He scaled down to installations that were exhibited at various museums and locations like Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Haags Gemeentemuseum and Bouwcentrum Rotterdam. Although it is said that Constant did not specifically transform *New Babylon* into society at the time, there is common ground between his masterpiece and these immersive installations. Constant displayed the first of this series of installations at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam together with Nic. Tummers, the *T-T√2-Omgang*, a 4 x 4 x 5 metres cell where the visitor would climb, crawl, jump and play in. The installation was continued at the Haags Gemeentemuseum a few months later. In that same year, Constant installed a life-size labyrinth constructed out of concrete panels at the Gemeentemuseum which was part of the "*Taal en Teken*" exhibition. In 1966, Constant participated in a larger collaborative that installed Experiment Studio Rotterdam (E.S.R) in Bouwcentrum Rotterdam. A different approach to exhibiting installations, as this venue was not a typical museum. After a few years of silence in terms of these immersive experiments, Constant reappeared with work at the Amsterdams Historisch Museum called *Ludieke trap (Ludic stairs)*. It consisted of stair steps that were fixed to the floor and ceiling by chains only, that could be climbed on by visitors, resulting in a unstable and wiggly piece of playing equipment. Throughout Constant's entire oeuvre a number of motives kept emerging, especially in the post-war period. The wheel has been a clear motive, often twisted and broken, symbolizing destruction. However, the ladder motive in his works could be a connection to the installation. The ladder, which to mythical animals seemed a useful object, but in his post-war work it was broken and bent, became a aggressive barbed wire barrier.²³ The ladder motive kept reappearing during his *New Babylon* period. The playing man was introduced once again. *Ludieke Trap* was recreated in the Kunstmuseum Den Haag in 2016. On Sundays visitors were allowed going up the stairs and explore the installation. In 1974, Constant would exhibit *New Babylon* in its entirety for the last time, including *Deurenlabyrint (Door labyrinth)* at the Haags Gemeentemuseum. In addition to the exhibition, he publishes "*het principe van de desorientatie*" ("*the principle of disorientation*") where he emphasizes on the importance of the labyrinth and disorientation. This chapter will extensively cover *√2-Omgang* and *Experiment Studio Rotterdam* since these were the most complete and complex installations of Constant, which also noticeably impacted society. Thereafter, the labyrinth is covered as it

²³ Stokvis, W. (2001). *Cobra: De weg naar spontaniteit*. V+K Publishing. p. 338

reappeared across multiple installations of Constant and had been an essential element to *New Babylon*. It was also deliberately chosen to install during his final exhibition as it symbolized the ending of *New Babylon*. The chapter is closed by a final look back to the project by Constant himself, describing the experiences he had with criticism on his work and the image it ended up being.

IV.II T-T $\sqrt{2}$ -Omgang

T-T, the name Constant and sculptor Nic. H.M. Tummers gave their collaborative for the *Nieuw Beelden* exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in 1965, consisting of the last letter of Constant and the first of Tummers (Constan(T-T)ummers). The *Nieuw Beelden* exhibition was under the auspices of the *Liga Nieuw Beelden* group of which Tummers was part of, but Constant was not. Constant was requested to participate in the exhibition, but denied as he did not want to figure as an individual genius; the genius had become unthinkable and the individual arts would vanish according to Constant. Teamwork and collaborations would control the image of culture. He then decided to join forces with Tummers to take part in the exhibition.²⁴ The *Liga* represented a typical post-war movement, where the main objective was to synthesize art, architecture and life. Within that endeavour, that Constant and Tummers shared with a strong common political awareness, Constant was in the middle of developing the utopian *New Babylon* from his unitary urbanism, while Tummers increasingly focussed on the 'socio-ruimte', an interdisciplinary interpretation of art, architecture and urbanism from a social perspective. Together, they wanted to create a hallucinative reality that would inspire them to anarchitecture.²⁵ The ironic playful element of anarchitecture seemed very suitable to exhibit during *Nieuw Beelden* to them. Visitors would experience a controlling power to their existence; according to the desire of the experiment.²⁶ The title *$\sqrt{2}$ -Omgang* is derived within that same context; $\sqrt{2}$ symbolizes the diagonal; it figuratively opposes the usual and fixed order, however a diagonal paradoxically also ensures stability (in construction).²⁷ This diagonal is also found in the actual installation, on which they write: *'A decisive step in the installation is when on the first floor, a gap needs to be crossed through a rectangular opening that has been diagonally placed over it, in which the controlling dimension is a helping hand'*. (The helping hand was a metaphor for a

²⁴ Tummers, N. (1965). "Van anarchitectuur tot U.S.R". Published in *De New Babylon* informatief 4. RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 423

²⁵ Anarchitecture wants to question manifest structures and study new ways on how to deal with these. Anarchitecture artists step out of stuck cultural reality and present installations with various media in order to re-evaluate the perception of a building.

²⁶ Constant, Tummers, N. (1965). Description of T-T $\sqrt{2}$ Omgang for Stedelijk. Universiteit van de Socio-Ruimte van Nic. Tummers

²⁷ Tummers, N. (1966). "Experimenten en respons." Published in *Bouw* no. 4. Universiteit van de Socio-Ruimte van Nic. Tummers

diagonally placed handrail). It also indicates the three dimensional route through the installation it is constructed with planes and openings. Prior to the given title $\sqrt{2}$ -Omgang, the installation was initially called *Bestaanscontrole-omgang, een anarchitektuur*, which also translates to that controlling of existence.²⁸ At the same time, this installation was a provocation, a protest and ‘ambiance de jeu’, where clashes were intended as they are experienced in the ‘woningwetwoningen’,²⁹ indicating their social and political input to the project. Tummers stated that it was satire to outdated construction methods that belong to a slave state, and it simultaneously referred to the steel cage in which Louis XI locked up cardinal de la Baleu, which for his turn looked like ‘modern highrise’ to Tummers.³⁰ A year later Tummers wrote: “*This structure seemed like the first piece of New Babylon was standing at a one to one scale.*”³¹ These experiments were not only supposed to undermine the anchored society and daily life, but also for Constant supposedly a scale model of his *New Babylon* and a physical study of the homo ludens.

Constant and Tummers also wrote an instruction manual describing the installation’s route and corresponding features.³² It implies the importance of their theories that needed to be translated: theory into the concept of what emotions and questions the installation needed to evoke; and that concept into tangible structures that ensure the intended experience.

- “*We assume a cell of 4 x 4 metres ground surface and a height of 5 metres*
- *The space within his cell is divided by scaffolding following a grid of 1 x 1 x 1 metres.*
- *Entrance and exit merge together to provoke clashing*
- *By using a metal ladder, one reaches a plateau of 1 square metre at 3 metre height (1)*
- *One drops towards a plateau at a metre lower. This plateau can be only be leaved via the “existence control bridge”. This bridge is placed diagonally over a gap of 1 x 1 metre, with a net underneath. The bridge consists of a T-steel rectangle (side = $\sqrt{2}$ metre) in which a diagonal is welded. (2)*
- *Via the “existence control bridge” one lands on the “hovering chair”, a piece of flooring + wall that pivots around the scaffolding pipe. Two springs ensure that the one standing on here feels oneself hovering. (3)*
- *If one leaves this hovering chair, there will be three options. Firstly, one can go down with a ladder and via a “low passage” of 1.40 metres high(4) leave the space.*
- *Or can with that same ladder go up to 4 metres high and crawl over the at this level placed plateau, after which one drops via a rope into the low passage (4).*
- *If one does not want to use this rope, can finally, via a plateau and ladder placed at 3 metres height level, reach the roof of the low passage.*
- *At the points marked above with (1), (2), (3) and (4), phones are located that are connected to eavesdropping equipment. At (1) one hears a manifest, at (2) a therapy, at (3) a seduction and at (4) a provocation.*
- *Via openings in the covering of the cell, the operations of the ones inside can be seen by spectators outside of this space.”*

Translation of the instructions of $\sqrt{2}$ Omgang

²⁸ See note 26

²⁹ Woningwetwoningen were rental homes for people with low incomes regulated by government standards.

³⁰ See note 26

³¹ See note 27

³² Constant, Tummers, N. (1965). Floorplan for Exhibition $\sqrt{2}$ Omgang, page 1. RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 231

The installation was constructed out of scaffolding, which made it semi-permanent; it could be built up and broken down easily. Although the structure consisted of a straight-forward grid and building system, a certain level of detail was introduced. The described bridge pivoted around a pipe of which they made a detail drawing describing the mechanism and necessary materials. Constant and Tuumers designed the installation through clear architectural floorplans, axonometric drawings, details and a scale model that demonstrates their knowledge and enthusiasm in architecture throughout the years.

Exhibiting at a prominent museum like Stedelijk, being part of the *Nieuw Beelden* exhibition, made the experiments accessible for all public. This also includes visitors that do not quite come specifically for these experimental and situationist installations. A few years prior to this exhibition in 1965, the *Liga Nieuw Beelden* exhibited at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven with spatial plastics and more aesthetically sensitive work. The involved artists were considered to be young and talented, but also questioned whether their work was actual reputable art. A headline in the *Volkskrant* in 1961 during their exhibition in Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam characteristically said: "*Liga "Nieuw Beelden" Artists or tinkers?"*"³³ Some works were described as being wonderful, while others remained meaningless aestheticism.³⁴ Before Constant and Tuumers displayed in Amsterdam, De Wilde succeeded Sandberg as director of Stedelijk. He extended Sandberg's appreciation for modern art; his policy was to only acquire artworks less than twenty years old. In these year the art at Stedelijk was not only young, it was also often born there.

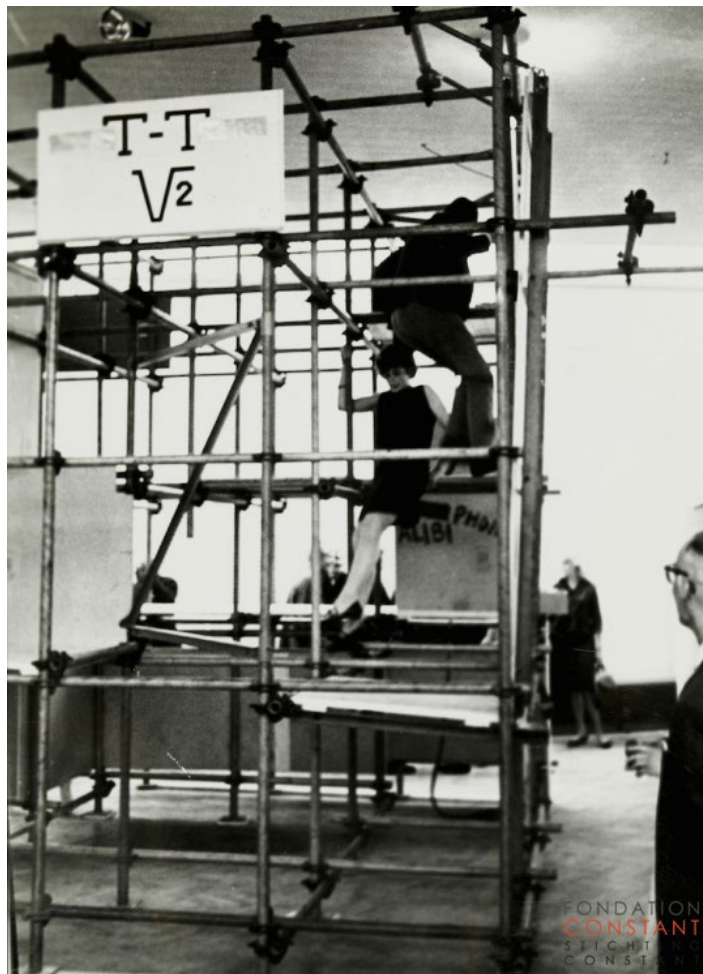
After exhibiting *√2-Omgang* at Stedelijk, there has been published barely on the *Nieuw Beelden* collective including the installation of Constant and Tuumers. However, *De Tijd* published an item on the entire exhibition saying that whenever a work was critiqued, one would be told to stop being so 'childly academic'; just enjoy the playfulness. Also, there were signs that said that the direction of Stedelijk would not be responsible. After all, De Wilde could not take responsibility for his actions, which has been the case during his time at the Van Abbemuseum. "*Yet, the assemblage appears to be a big chaos. Nieuw beelden invited like-minded artists, but that does not make a good exhibition ... Constant's New Babylon only evokes homesickness.*"³⁵ After all, both the public and critics were well aware of the talent and situationist approach of such art

³³: "*Liga "Nieuw Beelden" Kunstenaars of knutselaars?"* (24-10-1961). published in *De Volkskrant*. Retrieved from Delpher on 02-04-2022, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010877192:mpeg21:p009>

³⁴ Idem

³⁵ "*Een Stedelijk vol met grapjes en zeer banale imitatie.*" (2-12-1967). published in *De Tijd*. Retrieved from Delpher on 02-04-2022, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011237973:mpeg21:p005>

collective, however not so much of the effort in terms of complexity and intellect of the installations, including $\sqrt{2}$ -Omgang.



Unknown (1965). *T-T√2*, for the exhibition *Nieuw Beelden* at *Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam*. [Photo] ©Constant/Fondation Constant c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2022

IV.III Experiment Studio Rotterdam (E.S.R)

A year later, Constant and Tummers took the experiment significantly further for the E.S.R exhibition in Bouwcentrum Rotterdam. They set up a interdisciplinary team for the project together with B. Wisman, Henk Peeters, Ben Weehuizen and H.O Eckardt, which also resulted in a more complex and sophisticated installation. The space in Bouwcentrum was intended for experiments on colour, light, sound, movement; all possibilities to trigger the human senses. Both Constant and Tummers delved further into their socio-spatial approach towards art and architecture from which they derived their 'Schematik der Ambientegestaltung'. A scheme subdividing three ambiances further towards sensory triggers. An 'Ambiente' or ambience was the merging of elements of space and its appreciation; architecture, environment, atmosphere.³⁶ Besides the scheme, they subdivided the definition of space as a another fundament for the installation into troglodyticum, geoecicum and uranoecicum; in earth, on earth and above earth.³⁷ The aim for the exhibition was to familiarize the public with contemporary phenomena of art and architecture that had emerged from outside of the usual exhibition space. Bouwcentrum would herewith have an international premier in architecture, that inspired all involved professions to the design of space.

The installation was a steel, two-story structure that consisted of eleven consecutive sensorial spaces; a documentation room, a sonorium, a low passage, a metal structure connecting the floors, a door labyrinth, a "canary floor," a mirror room, a crawlspace, an odoratorium, a module space, and a workspace. The documentation room and the labyrinth were the most complicated ones; Tummers and Constant had also respectively put in most individual effort in these. In the documentation room, visitors sat behind a chessboard with a gypsum brain model on top, that contained three to be rotated dice. The three digit number the dice gave, lead to references of spatial experiences (troglodyticum, geoecicum, uranoecicum.³⁸ The chessboard itself referred to the ancient "wheat and chessboard problem"³⁹, however the entire installation in this room preceded the computer (and its future potential). The labyrinth was an important exponent to Constant as he showcased in his pre-*New Babylon* works. Constant used the

³⁶ Constant, Tummers, N. (1966). 'Schematik der Ambientegestaltung' published in catalogue E.S.R.. Universiteit van de Socio-Ruimte van Nic. Tummers

³⁷ Idem

³⁸ Tummers, N. (1966). Sketch for documentation room in E.S.R Bouwcentrum Rotterdam. Universiteit van de Socio-Ruimte van Nic. Tummers

³⁹ The wheat and chessboard problem is a mathematical problem expressed in textual form as: If a chessboard were to have wheat placed upon each square such that one grain were placed on the first square, two on the second, four on the third, and so, how many grains of wheat would be on the chessboard at the finish?

labyrinth as an experience, or the experimental display of his experiences.⁴⁰ When he understood the problem with society and its prevailing conception, he wanted a new beau-ideal, which required his full commitment: 'ars totum requirit hominem'. Constant sought for his inner 'homo totus' and found him in the labyrinth and liberated him afterwards. This liberation made way for *New Babylon*. Constants exhibited labyrinths were also experimental displays of his experiences.⁴¹ In addition, *New Babylon* itself was not a labyrinth, but a spatial structure in the manifold of the definition of the word.⁴²

In that same year, Tummers wrote about how *New Babylon* was not an out-of-doors project and Constants home mimicked it as he lived with pets (woolly monkey, parrots and a dog) that corresponded with the models that he made as parallels and illustrations for his written outline of a culture. The doors in the hallway would be arranged like a labyrinth. However, Tummers doubted whether the E.S.R should be compared to *New Babylon* as it contained elementary structural that had not yet been introduced by society.⁴³ A year later architect H.O Eckardt later wrote: "*For me it is particularly not a miniature quartier a New Babylon or imitation of the troglodyticum. I see a sequence of spaces, that evoke physical and psychological reactions.*"⁴⁴ The installation was after all a team effort, where each individual member had different answers to what the goal of E.S.R was as they also all practised different professions. This contributes to the centrality of synthesis of arts and equal positions among the team. Constant was particularly keen on this as he reminded his team members systematically; they needed to prevent the representation of individual experiments. The merging of professions was not just collaborating, but complimenting forces. It was about the collective creativity that abolished restrictions of separate professions.⁴⁵ B. Wisman, who was a photographer, had started building an early study model for the installation,⁴⁶ while Tummers, a sculptor of origin, was drawing the first architectural sketches for the team that were later corrected by Eckardt.⁴⁷ Constant also demanded that the conceptualization and execution of the spaces was solely left the team and not to external employees that would improvise.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ Tummers, N. (1965). De New Babylon informatief 1. RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 423

⁴¹ Idem

⁴² Tummers, N. (1964). "Titanisch Puin" published in Cobouw. (13-10-1964). p.5 Universiteit van de Socio-Ruimte van Nic. Tummers

⁴³ See note 24

⁴⁴ H.O Eckardt. (1966). 'Drie maanden E.S.R' published in Bouw no. 4. Universiteit van de Socio-Ruimte van Nic. Tummers

⁴⁵ Constant in a letter to H.O. Eckardt. (1966) RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 355

⁴⁶ Constant in a letter to Tummers. (1965). Universiteit van de Socio-Ruimte van Nic. Tummers

⁴⁷ H.O Eckardt in a letter to Constant. (1966) RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 355

⁴⁸ See note 46

As the E.S.R studied and experimented with behavioural sciences, the team was very keen on the reaction and experience of the visitors. So-called alibiphones were placed inside the installation where messages could be left, surveys were distributed throughout the exhibition, and students from the university of Delft were asked to question the visitors. From feedback it could be concluded that the rooms intended for cerebral reaction were less appreciated than the ones that were intended for physical reaction. Likewise, the documentation room and the labyrinth were least enjoyed. The team admitted because of a lack of financial resources the documentation room remained in a provisional stage. Visitors were not so pleased with such 'serious business' at the start of the installation; they often had too little time and patience for composing texts, which was certainly not easy and gave up halfway. The labyrinth was uncomfortable as it was low ceiling and dark. Visitors would lose their orientation entirely, and felt claustrophobic at some point. To Constant, the visitors reacted in the most favourable manner to the labyrinth as disorientation does not only create feelings of uncertainty, but also excites the desire to explore.⁴⁹

The majority of overall feedback on the installation was claimed to be very positive; crawling, climbing, the allowance to touch everything and exploring new spaces had been a pleasure,⁵⁰ which corresponds to the success of the physical activity the installation provoked. Constant did not expect that the "*homo faber would immediately transform into homo ludens by simply entering a certain space.*"⁵¹ Though, some elasticity of the mind was required to appreciate the installation which was mostly seen in students and the older intellects. Aside from elasticity, a bit of humour had to be present as well. Visitors without humour questioned whether real artists worked on the project, and claimed that it gave a distorted image of modern art.⁵² After opening the studio, it appeared that some things left room for improvement, like lighting and the tools to orientate like floorplans and arrows but most importantly an introduction to what the visitor was about to explore.⁵³

Art critics cursed at the collaborative and their experiment. It had been a ridiculous boy game "while others were suffering in Vietnam."⁵⁴ After all, the E.S.R had not been a museum exhibition about fantastic or visionary art, where only one sense is stimulated and nothing can be touched. E.S.R had been curse for the better, an

⁴⁹ De Bruyn, E. C. H. (2019). 'Constructed Situations, Dynamic Labyrinths, and Learning Mazes: Behavioral Topologies of the Cold War' published in 'Grey Room (Vol. 74). MIT Press. p. 72

⁵⁰ See note 44

⁵¹ Constant, "Experiment Studio Rotterdam," in Constant, exh. cat. (The Hague: Gemeentemuseum, 1974), p. 68

⁵² See note 40

⁵³ Idem

⁵⁴ Vriend, J.J. (1966) review of E.S.R. 'En dan maar klagen over miskennenning'. published in De Groene Amsterdammer. Universiteit van de Socio-Ruimte van Nic. Tummings

unhonoured work, emerged from a critical attitude of a creative collective towards a damned society.⁵⁵

Collaborating in the Bouwcentrum Rotterdam implied a different approach to exhibiting. The Bouwcentrum was established as derivative of the BOUW foundation, which was set up in 1945, the beginning of the Dutch post-war period. The aim of BOUW was to release a weekly magazine that provided publications in the field of construction and reconstruction and the economic recovery of the Netherlands. This led to the establishment of Bouwcentrum, as the ambition to also provide an educational function with regards to construction to both professionals and the general public. As Rotterdam already had existing plans for permanent display of construction materials, which made it an appropriate location. The foundation developed the following aim: *"providing illustrative, verbal and written objective information regarding the construction industry; the collection, collecting and study of data for the purpose of this information, arousing interest therein and everything related thereto"*.⁵⁶ Over the years, multiple foundations with individual buildings were built within the same area which resulted in a large complex. Each foundation remained independent but together they profiled as one; Bouwcentrum Rotterdam. Exhibiting at the Bouwcentrum is therefore very different than in a typical museum like Constant did in Stedelijk. Tuumers emphasized on the E.S.R was not an art exhibition. He stated that a museum collects and displays art, acquires art for own possession and with this crowns imposed works that are shown now and then, and promotes to a passive atmosphere.⁵⁷ The studio in Rotterdam was something different, if not the opposite; selling and acquiring is not spoken of. E.S.R does want to stimulate to put their concepts into execution elsewhere. The setup is about discussion in terms of collaboration. *"Exploration is more important than exploitation!"*⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Tuumers, N. (1966) 'Experimenten en respons' published in Bouw no.4. Universiteit van de Socio-Ruimte van Nic. Tuumers

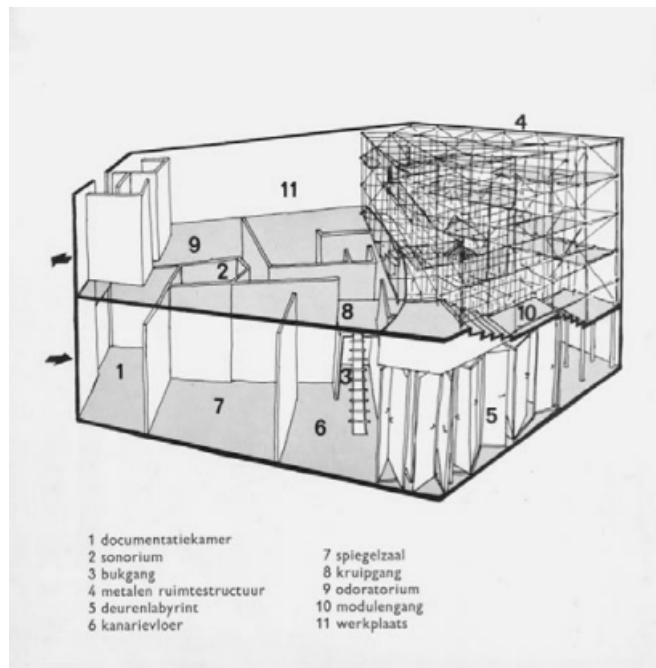
⁵⁶ Oprichting – Bouwcentrum Rotterdam. (n.d.). Bouwcentrum Rotterdam. Retrieved April 6, 2022, from https://bouwcentrumrotterdam.nl/?page_id=35

⁵⁷ See note 55

⁵⁸ Idem



Unknown (1966). *The collaborative team of E.S.R at Bouwcentrum Rotterdam*
 [Photo] © Universiteit van de Socio-Ruimte van Nic. Tummers.



Constant, Tummers, N. (1966). *Schematic perspective drawing of E.S.R*
 [Drawing] © Universiteit van de Socio-Ruimte van Nic. Tummers.

IV.IV Deurenlabyrint

Constant installed another labyrinth in the Haags Gemeentemuseum in 1974 during a final time to exhibit *New Babylon* as a whole. It is not just a static labyrinth; it contains rotating doors. A significant difference and nuance to Constant and the principle of orientation. He installed such a labyrinth as part of the E.S.R installation as well, but it was now an independent, more complex piece. Also, it was only at this point Constant explained the underlying importance with a publication in the exhibition catalogue. He starts with his interpretation of 'static space' that describes the shortcoming of the homo faber and its environment, which is focussed on efficiency in terms of time and spatial organization. He is only after being productive. Constant directly opposes with 'dynamic space'; static organization is pointless, and ludic activities serve to dynamize space. *"The opportunities for disorientation will increase the potential for exploration."*⁵⁹ The adding of rotating doors as an element to the installation of the labyrinth transforms space into an entire different environment for Constant. He continues how the classic labyrinth only ensures every path being visited once. It admits no choice. It remains a static construction with passive behaviour where there is one 'right' path; the shortest route. If we contemplate creative interventions and unpredictable inventiveness, the spatial structure becomes more complicated and changes shape into a dynamic labyrinth. This labyrinth cannot be designed by an individual, it arises as a non-stop process initiated by simultaneous activity of many individuals. It implies social freedom and creative potential that are inconceivable in the utilitarian society. The ludic society however, would automatically take shape as a dynamic labyrinth.⁶⁰ Constant works his way towards a larger scale in which disorientation could exist and be implemented by society. It requires the vanishing of human labour and the reason for home base. He then states: *"A new urban structure that facilitates exploration at every turn will be needed in place of the well-organized but now meaningless work environment."*⁶¹

Constant clearly transforms the purpose of this installation into the scale and utopia of *New Babylon*. Another sign of reference to the project by experimenting with society at the time. We can see the labyrinth occurring particularly more often in the latter stages of this period as Constant starts to return to painting. The paintings displayed in the exhibition gradually become more obscure; labyrinthic structures containing occasional partitions and ladders resulting in unseen deep and wide landscapes. Vague paint blots figure as unclear individuals that seem to have experienced something

⁵⁹ Constant. (1974). "het principe van de desorientatie". Published in *New Babylon* for the exhibition catalogue, Haags Gemeente Museum. p. 65-70. RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 390

⁶⁰ Idem

⁶¹ Idem

macabre. A bloody red smudge at the entrance of a deep labyrinth suggests an impossible task to enter the space.⁶² Constant expresses an forlorn sadness through the exhibition in Den Haag. It has been a mistake of the Gemeentemuseum's director Wijsenbeek to display *New Babylon* again at this point. "*His vow has been a nice talk.*"⁶³ Publications after this display harshly criticize the project as the revolutionary rescue of society. However, they do believe the project could be useful as a model, even it would just create awareness with regard to the disastrous developing society. The project does leave behind wonderful works of art.^{64 65}

⁶² Van Ginneken, L. (1978). "Constant: 'Gewoon maar bezig blijven met 't een en ander'" published in *De Volkskrant* (25-3-1978). p. 39. Retrieved from Delpher on 06-04-2022, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010880952:mpeg21:p039>

⁶³ Tegenbosch, L. (1974). "New Babylon 'n mooi praatje" published in *De Volkskrant* (15-6-1974). RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 390

⁶⁴ Idem

⁶⁵ Duister, F. (1974). "constant tussen nu en dan" published in *TS* (22-6-1974). RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 390



Unknown (1974). *Deurenlabyrint* for exhibition *New Babylon*, Gemeentemuseum.
[Photo] © Gemeentemuseum Den Haag

IV.V Retrospective

Years later, in 1980, Constant finds the right time to look back on the entire *New Babylon* period in a lecture for the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Technology in Delft. He says that *New Babylon* has been dogged by criticism throughout its history and seldom encountered sympathy for the ideas underpinning the project.⁶⁶ *New Babylon* seemed a long way off. It focussed on the discussion whether automation would be achieved, and might have been converted into creativity. He admits that these were no longer questions; energy was being withdrawn from labour, however it only finds outlet in aggression prompted by dissatisfaction. The relevance of the project had disappeared or postponed to some shadowy future. Constant ends the lecture with the following words: *"Up to this point, it is possible to form a fairly clear idea of an as yet uninhabited world. It is more difficult to populate this world with people who live so very differently from ourselves: we can neither dictate nor design their playful or inventive behaviour in advance. We can only invoke our fantasy and switch from science to art. It was this insight that prompted me to stop work on the models and to attempt in paintings and drawings, however approximately, to create some New Babylonian life. This was as far as I could go. The project exists. It is safely stored away in a museum, waiting for more favourable times when it will once again arouse interest among future urban designers."*⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Lecture by Constant at the University of Technology in Delft. (1980). "New Babylon – na tien jaren" RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 349

⁶⁷ Idem

IV.VI Framework

Constant is predominantly known for his magnum-opus *New Babylon* as his career had lead up to the 20 years long project of which he also could never distanced himself from afterwards. The described 'immersive installations' were particularly peculiar experiments he exhibited during his *New Babylon* project. It is important to map the context to which these installations in specific relate to. The opportunity for Constant to display his perspective on society by means of creativity has been essential. In other words the functioning of museum that endorsed his principles. In the period Constant would install these experiments, a shift in museum culture developed. In the general discussion on the function of the museum which has been revived since the end of the 1960's, two museums have been mentioned conspicuously often: Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. Willem Sandberg (director of Stedelijk between 1945-1963) had personified the progressive museum of the 1950's, and these progressive forces were later typically represented by Jean Leering (director of Van Abbemuseum between 1964 and 1973) in the 1960's. An image that is strengthened by the work of Constant, of which his years of exhibiting these installations runs parallel to the directing years of Leering.

The interdisciplinary and collaborative projects of Constant can be regarded as pioneering the art scene, where art and architecture were unprecedentedly growing towards each other. The sculptural art form expanded into spatial elements, where at a certain point, it became questionable when work was determined to be art, architecture or everything in between. Leering understandably picked this up as he had a background in architecture, urbanism and areas where art forms would connect with aspects of daily life.⁶⁸ It is evident that relationships can be pointed out between certain movements; dada and surrealism, or minimal art and constructivism, but Leering wanted to show the possibility to compare the theoretical perspectives and social ideologies underlying art between two periods, the 1910's and 20's and 1960's and to draw a lesson from these comparisons to understand contemporary art.⁶⁹

The installations of Constant can be seen as an extension of De Stijl, that had amplified the *gesamtkunstwerk* already in the 1920's. The individual painting was economically, philosophically and aesthetically increasingly becoming unstable, while the painter developed its visual means and exceeded the painted surface. This development from both sides ensures the painter to step into space, and thereby social life. Something that had been initiated by De Stijl.⁷⁰ Constant experiments also link back

⁶⁸ Blotkamp, C. (1979). *Museum in ?motion?* Government Pub. Office. p.39

⁶⁹ Idem. p. 41-42

⁷⁰ Constant in a letter to Rietveld (1954). RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag. Constant, (NL-HaRKD.0095), 352

to exhibitions from the 1920's and 30's of names like Duchamp, Picabia and Lissitzky, that also emphasized on the social function of art and its actualisation.

Constant's ambitious striving for synthesis of arts by spatial structures, was implemented earlier by constructivists Gabo and Pevsner, where the Dutch André Volten connected with them through his work. He also used industrial outstanding materials.⁷¹ As these structures evolved, the question whether it belonged to art or architecture became hard to answer. A question that Manfred Bock was engaged with, that later could be answered with the keyword *Baukultur*; the broad context of building, in which architecture is both described as art and a field of knowledge in its cultural, social and political relation to society.

Art started to merge with environment that is symbolized by works of Baljeu, Visser, Struycken and van Rooijen. They also used this synthesis of arts, that finds its fundamentals in De Stijl, as the main theme of their projects, that can be identified as 'environment art'. Art forms where the visitor dissolves into the installation, that now is a part of the environment. They both become subjects or definitions of space, which can also be applied to Constant's installations. Later, Baljeu had been paralleled to Constant for being the only ones who have brought art and architecture that close to merging into a single entity.⁷² Baljeu also gradually increased the scale of his spatial constructions, and not only intensively pored over the concepts of De Stijl, but also over theories of cubist Gleizes and structuralist Biederman. He believed abstract art could only fulfil its social potential if it would not lose its connection with nature.⁷³ Baljeu later wrote an article titled '*Mondriaan or Miro*', where he explains the language of abstract surrealism and the geometric idiom of De Stijl are two complementary forms of expression. He was not the only one who held this view, as van Eyck, collaborator of Constant, also pointed this out earlier.⁷⁴

From the late 1940's onwards, exhibition design had also drastically changed. Exhibitions started to take on expressive forms and designed to complement the subject. Modular bearing systems were used to display art, and became a detached element; it no longer mainly functioned as bearer, but it became decorative. Good examples of this development are the '*Studi sulle Proporzioni*' at the Triennale of Milan in 1951, or '*Una casa tutta di chimica*' in Montecatini, 1964.⁷⁵ This phenomenal change is also found in its extreme form, where the museum itself defines the relation between art and

⁷¹ Twenthe, R., Blotkamp, C., Fritz-Jobse, J., Van Burkom, F., Netherlands. Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, & Rijksmuseum Twenthe (Netherlands). (1988). *Een Nieuwe synthese*. Sdu. p. 28

⁷² Idem, p. 29

⁷³ Idem

⁷⁴ Jobse, J. (2005). *De Stijl Continued / The Journal Structure (1958–1964)*. An Artists' Debate (1st ed.). 010 Uitgeverij. p. 65

⁷⁵ Blotkamp, C. (1979). *Museum in ?motion?* Government Pub. Office. p. 234

architecture. The Gumma museum in Japan by Isozaki, was a repetitive cubic framework that became the structure of the building itself. The museum was the spatial art form. The installations can also be seen as the concept of a museum within a museum.

Within the context of *New Babylon*, these immersive installations can be regarded as the pinnacle of situationism, where Constant implemented political, social and economic statements to provoke a certain awareness and took the opportunity to attempt to free society from a stuck regime with physical, tangible experiments. The situationists intellect derived from Marxism, emphasizing on the anti-authoritarian and libertarian aspects of it, where the Dada and Surrealism movements had a stake in the development of the situationism; the rejection of logic, aesthetic, realism and the capitalist society. Constant's *New Babylon* and ultimately his installations were rooted with these fundamentals.

V Conclusion

This thesis has provided an extensive study on exhibited installations of Constant within the period of *New Babylon*. The purpose was to treat the installations as a standalone subject, which implies to implement background information in terms of the idea and concept of the exhibitions as well as the context in which they were presented. Additionally, information needs to be presented on the prehistory and preamble to the concerning main subject. Finally, the context to which solely the installations relate to. Here, various art and architecture movements are referred to, in order to give a relevant framework. The following main research questions should be repeated here:

What was Constant's aim with these experiments and what was he trying to convey? As Constant was at his peak of social and political questioning, he intensively displayed his perspective and theories to society. Despite drawing attention with *New Babylon* and proposing an entire new socio-spatial future for society, these installations symbolized his curiosity and hope for new possibilities. Although, he may have had a lot of actual messages to convey, we repeatedly find references to Constant's inquisitiveness towards the homo ludens and his spatial environment: *New Babylon*. Even though *New Babylon* consisted of much more than this, and is in some cases claimed not to be transformed into the installations, it comes suspiciously close.

How do these installations relate to other art and architecture movements; a broader context? We find that Constant's prehistory has entirely accumulated and contributed to the installations. His search for abstraction, the implementation of architecture, his exhaustive searching for synthesis of arts and his unitary urbanism, are all integrated in the exhibited experiments. These installations have been a pioneer for social awareness with regards to art and architecture, that to this day have barely had light shined on. This thesis will hopefully counter the underpublishing and break through the global overshadowing *New Babylon* has had on these comprehensive pieces of work. A recommendation on the subject for the future would be a larger publication in order to bring the narrative of this series of experiments to the surface. The awareness that these projects focus on can be both a revelation and an inspiration to the current, but especially future society.