

*OASE 28* ('speed and gravity') was published in December 1990. At the time, architecture and architecture criticism were experiencing the after-effects of the deliberate confrontation with other intellectual disciplines including cinema, literature and, above all, philosophy. Tschumi, Eisenman and Derrida, the pioneers of this debate, were keen to see architecture 'put itself on the line' by opening up to other practices. This would help architecture, put forward as a metaphor for slowness and stasis, meet the major challenges posed by mobility and the new media. During this process, two different approaches are in constant conflict. The first ascribes to the politics of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, positing architecture as a kind of slate for these other arguments. The second, more or less classic approach accepts slowness as a sobriquet: Giorgio Grassi's article on education as the basis for an architectural community, which appeared in this issue, can be read as such, as well as De Nijl's design study with its emphasis on typology as the theory of architecture.

The article by Wim Nijenhuis formed the theoretical core of *OASE 28*. Drawing on philosophical terminology, it outlines the development of an 'aesthetics of disappearance' prompted by the general acceleration caused by the revolution of means of transport and the media. The order of transport and mass communication is characterised by the destruction of place, distance and 'presence'. After all: amid general mobilisation everything is always moving (on). Nijenhuis claims that this puts great pressure on architecture and urbanism as disciplines of 'appearance' and 'presence'. What's more, he argues, the set of instruments deployed by architecture has become obsolete. After all, since the Renaissance it has been used for the production of a transparent, objective and stable spatial order, a order that is material, solid, slow and sustainable and formed by physical elements such as thresholds, walls and floors and dependent on land surveying and perspectival insight.

Any architect will recognise in Nijenhuis's argument the deliberate and provocative – because somewhat caricaturing – (lack of) insight of his discipline that appears to be inherent to philosophy. The philosopher Hegel once described architecture as the 'lowest', because heaviest, most physical form of art, the kind of art that sees the mind struggle to overcome matter (a vision masterfully parodied in Peter Greenaway's *The Belly of an Architect*).

The hyperbolic finds its paradoxical expression in Nijenhuis's 'calm reasoning': his argument is entirely plausible. The more the architect is prepared to pursue Nijenhuis's train of thought, the more he will be provoked. But it is precisely this provocation that leads to reflection on the architect's part, to the need to formulate his own answer to the question posed, or to phrase it as an architectural question. The fact that architecture has succeeded in doing so is evidenced by the extent to which it has itself become immaterial and 'de-realising', targeting the in-between and the hiatus, and prepared to carve its own way amid the new media . . .

Frans Sturkenboom  
Member of the editorial board  
from *OASE 14* to *22* and  
from *28* to *34*

*Translated by Laura Vroomen*