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It sounds so obvious that it almost passes unnoticed, but the theme of this architecture biennale marks a turning point in its history. After more than thirty years of mainly asking the public to look at architecture, this time the focus is on something that the rest of the world has known about for a long time: that architecture is in the first place intended as a place to meet. Kazuyo Sejima has turned architecture into a verb: a good building makes something happen that goes beyond the building itself. What the building itself wants to say, is of secondary importance. This biennale tones down the importance of the architectural expression in order to give increased prominence to the architectural performance. At the same time it makes architecture extremely relevant again, because if there is anything that this profession needs at the present time, it is the proof that it matters not only in the Arsenale and the Giardini, but also in the everyday lives of people—in fact, that it can enhance the quality of those lives.

We can call this shift from individual expression to collective performance the Architecture of Consequence. The NAI launched its innovation agenda at the end of 2008 in which the terrains are determined on which this performance can be made very substantial. Architecture was presented that formulates answers in an improbably creative way to the existential questions that challenge us all over the world. It is an architecture that is no longer a social liability by the choices that it makes of the wrong materials and building techniques, the wrong way to climatize environments, the wrong locations, the wrong investment horizons, and by producing outdated typologies, but is a social benefactor by making the right choice on all those fronts.

Architecture was also shown that helps people to meet one

another in a way that promotes increasing mutual acceptance. To put it mildly, there is plenty of need for that at the moment. That is also why we chose Rietveld Landscape for the Dutch contribution. The firm stands out for designs that, rather than presenting themselves, solve problems – if possible even a couple of problems at the same time, no matter if they do not appear to have much connection with one another at first sight. Sometimes those problems cannot be solved with new architecture at all; sometimes they are problems that can be solved with old architecture – architecture that has been in existence for a long time and is no longer appreciated by anybody, or has fallen into disuse. You would not normally expect to see this architecture at a biennale because it was written off long ago. That is why we are doing precisely that as a radical homage to Sejima. People meet in architecture of the past for the future's sake. Is there so much unused architecture in the Netherlands? Few people think that a lot is left empty in the Netherlands. On the contrary, many in the Netherlands and abroad regard the country as densely populated and heavily occupied. Some even regard the Netherlands as full: there is hardly any room left for anything or anyone. It might therefore come as a surprise for them to know that a large part of the Netherlands is indeed vacant and is growing more vacant by the day. Millions of square metres to which no one pays any heed are at stake. And they are often beautiful buildings.

The Dutch contribution to this biennale brings this forgotten treasure back in circulation. Entirely in the spirit of Architecture of Consequence, it does so not in order to rescue the architecture of the past from a certain death, but to drastically improve the future that lies before us. This is where the Netherlands and the

world meet one another. This is the innovation that we have in mind, an innovation that starts with the right environment and that, if you ask us, could not succeed at all without that environment. It is an environment that is so inexpensive to inhabit, that it saves you time to rethink the world, an environment that makes it easy to meet other people who are involved in the same thought process and to be stimulated by that encounter, an environment that is easy for people to cherish, an environment that is immediately sustainable by recycling alone, an environment that uses well-considered reuse to stimulate the craftsmanlike capacity to make unique details, an environment that helps to preserve historical awareness.

The future that still has to be written, with thanks to the past that seemed to have been written off.

The Dutch pavilion at this biennale is an offer to the world, that even takes our own breath away. Occupy our empty space with your ideas and receive an original Dutch architecture in return, making both you and us happy.

Welcome to Vacant NL.