

Press Release, 29 March 2021

## DERK LOORBACH APPOINTED CHIEF CURATOR OF THE 10TH INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE BIENNALE ROTTERDAM IN 2022: SHOCK AND ROLL

The board of the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam (IABR) has appointed director of *Dutch Research Institute for Transitions* (DRIFT) and professor of Socioeconomic Transitions at the Erasmus University Rotterdam's *Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences* DERK LOORBACH as chief curator of the next edition of the IABR, SHOCK AND ROLL.

SHOCK AND ROLL will open in the fall of 2022 and is the first in a new series of biennales that will go all out for transition. The series will focus on the urgent need to put into design practice the all-embracing change to which science incites us, which the Paris climate objectives call for, to which the global community committed itself in the UN's *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and with which the reality of the climate crisis confronts us every single day.

SHOCK AND ROLL will also initiate a long-term collaboration of the IABR, DRIFT, and the Rotterdam Academy of Architecture and Urban Design (RAvB), an alliance of imaginers, transitionists and designers.

IABR president **George Brugmans**: 'The appointment of Derk Loorbach allows the IABR to take a crucial next step: the step from design-driven exploration towards actively putting into practice what the goals of the Paris Agreement call for: all-embracing change. This is all the more urgent now that the corona crisis has revealed our inadequacy and made it clear that we really have to organize society differently if we want to be able to face the rapidly increasing threat of the much more serious climate crisis before it's too late. I have asked Derk to bring together the fields of design and transition with the aim of taking us from *research* by design to *development* by design. Supported by a team of young curators, it is up to Derk to turn the IABR into a *transition design practice*. So that we can accelerate. More action, with a greater socioeconomic impact. We want to show what it means, all-embracing change, what we have to let go of as well as that we can go on, and how. There *is no alternative* – it's time to *shock and roll*.'

**Derk Loorbach**: 'SHOCK AND ROLL intends to fuse imagination, design, and transition science in order to disrupt. To escape routine. To stop what has to stop. To *make* possible what *is* possible. I call it development by design. Improvise yet continue to play. Break down but redesign. Disruption and transition. Always off balance, not falling. *Shock and roll!*'

## Interdisciplinary Transition Design in the Field

SHOCK AND ROLL combines the worlds of creativity, design and transition; chief curator Loorbach puts them to work together in both the practical and the theoretical sense. The listing, analyzing, and presenting of design and transition practices at the biennale, and the organization of the scientific reflection on these practices will take place simultaneously. Loorbach calls this *development by design* – thinking *and* doing. Therefore, an important component of the next biennale is the **collaboration with the Erasmus University Rotterdam** (EUR), a university that has put the exploration of how design and transition-thinking may have a positive impact on its educational agenda. As chief curator and professor Loorbach will connect the EUR's pertinent research and education programs to the making of SHOCK AND ROLL to further develop these towards incorporating design and transition-thinking. IABR and EUR will bring together designers, imaginers and transitionists for academic reflection, debate and the exchange of ideas, culminating in a major international congress to take place during the biennale.

**A long-term collaboration between the IABR, DRIFT, and the Rotterdam Academy of Architecture and Urban Design (RAvB)** starts simultaneously with SHOCK AND ROLL. By linking the exploratory capacity of design education to action-oriented scientific research into sustainable transition within the free space of culture and imagination, the three institutions will together explore how we, by designing, investigating, and imagining, can and have to relate to the major social challenges posed by the climate crisis in an active and activist way. **Thijs van Spaandonk**, head of Urban Design at the RAvB: 'Learning which transitions are necessary and how the strength of design can contribute to creating space for transition and to the acceleration of the transitions we want, is extremely interesting for the next generation of spatial designers.'

## From Practice to Action

With SHOCK AND ROLL, the IABR will sustain its efforts to close the gap between sustainable plans and their real-world implementation in urban design practice, an issue we address in the diptych **THE MISSING LINK** (2018) and **DOWN TO EARTH** (2020-2021), the current edition.

Due to the pandemic, **Down to Earth** has had to largely confine itself to inhouse research projects that take place in the IABR–Ateliers as for this edition it has not been able to invite the rest of the world to Rotterdam. But that very pandemic also functions as a magnifying glass that makes it more clear than ever how necessary and important it is to use the connecting, imaginative, and creative power of research by design, of design, architecture and urban design to move beyond the daily reality of *business as usual*. How to actually walk the talk has become an even more urgent question, as almost everything is stuck. Clearly, good plans alone are not enough. This year, therefore, at the end of the current biennale, the IABR will terminate the IABR–Ateliers. We'll stop making plans. What we need to do next is something that amounts to full commitment to action in practice, to *cultural activism* aimed at real social transition. The IABR has to become a *transition design practice*. In SHOCK AND ROLL, with DRIFT and the RAvB, the IABR will investigate what exactly that is and how we have to go about it.

**George Brugmans:** ‘If we follow the scientists, if *everything has to change*, we need to have the guts to be willing to change everything. And that goes for a cultural organization as well. It calls for what I term *cultural activism*: wanting to take real world action starting from imagining and designing necessary change. And we’re not just talking about technological and infrastructural changes, but also and especially about cultural, socioeconomic, social changes, and about structural system changes. The way capitalism works has to change radically. The relationships between government, the business world, and civil society have to change, especially the underlying power structures. And most of all, we ourselves have to change. We can only change everything, when we’ve become adept at truly believing that we can.’

**Derk Loorbach:** ‘The pandemic has indeed acted as a magnifying glass and is contributing to a significant growth in support for transformative change. Now it’s a question of linking the momentum to collective action. Of unlocking the lessons and experiences of effective transition practices for a large audience. Showing people that it works and how it works. This is what we need to do. In concrete terms, it means that we are going to make transition as well as make transition practice visible. SHOCK AND ROLL will be one big transition experiment and action research project.’

## About Derk Loorbach

Derk Loorbach is director of DRIFT, the *Dutch Research Institute for Transitions*, and professor of Socioeconomic Transitions at the *Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences*, both at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. He is one of the founders of the transition management approach as a new form of governance for sustainable development. He has to his name over 100 publications in this area and has been involved as an action researcher in numerous transition processes with government, business, civil society and science.

## About DRIFT

DRIFT, founded in 2004 under the umbrella organization of the Erasmus University Rotterdam, is a leading research institute in the field of sustainability transitions and transition management. DRIFT develops and shares transformative knowledge to support people, cities, sectors, and organizations to engage proactively with transitions.

DRIFT has four main activities that complement, ground, and inspire each other: academic research, advice, education, and public dialogue & debate. A strong link between all these activities allows DRIFT to combine theory development with critical feedback and various ways of testing and validating their insights. Together with the people, organizations, and institutions with which DRIFT works, the aim is to accelerate the transitions to fairer, sustainable, and resilient societies.

The DRIFT team is an international and interdisciplinary group of researchers and advisors. Backgrounds range widely and include environmental science, innovation studies, public administration, sociology, political studies, engineering, cultural analysis, and anthropology. DRIFT combines academic rigor with reflexive activism. The team is socially engaged, open-minded, curious, and occasionally provocative. A perfect match with the IABR team. Together it definitely will be shock and roll!

## About IABR

IABR was founded in 2001 in the conviction that architecture, and especially urban design, is of great social importance. IABR therefore focuses entirely on the future of the city, where, by 2050, almost 80 percent of the world's population will produce more than 90 percent of our wealth – and this will *have to* be done sustainably. We can best solve the global climate crisis if we start in the city – where we live, work, learn and play. The crucial role of design is evident: well-designed, socially inclusive, resilient cities are our gateway to the future.

The challenge is clear. And it is now or never. IABR has therefore wholeheartedly endorsed the United Nations' *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and its main objective is to contribute to the realization of the *Sustainable Development Goals* to the best of its ability. Every edition of the biennale wants to bridge the gap between imagination, design and action, between plans and ideas and societal conception and support. Purposefully using the free cultural space, linking research by design to public presentations in a continuous open and cultural work process aimed at the real-world implementation of results, makes IABR unique in the world.

The first two editions, **Mobility** (2003) and **The Flood** (2005) have put the IABR on the map

internationally, profiling it as a manifestation focusing on the future of our cities by advancing an outspoken and forward-looking agenda.

From 2006 until 2012 the editions **Power: Producing the Contemporary City**, **Open City: Designing Coexistence** and **Making City** have explored ongoing rapid urbanization and its consequences, while staking out a position for architecture and making a case for what design may achieve.

The next two editions took this agenda one step further. The need to design our future habitat in terms of a sustainable balance between demographic, ecological and economic concerns, between people, planet and profit, gave direction to IABR's research program. In 2014 **Urban by Nature** explored the relationship between spatial design and the ecological agenda, between city and nature. Necessary because *"We can only solve our ecological problems when we solve our urban problems first."* **The Next Economy** (2016) investigated the relationship between spatial design and the (future development of a) sustainable economy and asked how design can anticipate the transitions that are radically changing the world as we know it.

In 2015, the IABR joined the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* of the United Nations, giving its research agenda the focus and deadline that charged the program with even more urgency. In the diptych **The Missing Link** (2018) and **Down to Earth** (2020-21), it explores how to concretely escape the current *surplace* and close the gap between excellent plans and sustainable implementation in urban planning practice. With water and energy transition as levers for truly transformative change and social inclusivity a priority on its agenda.

Now it's time to *shock and roll*.

## DOWN TO EARTH

Subject to a softening of the lockdown measures now in place, the current, 9th edition of IABR, **Down to Earth**, will re-open its doors from the middle of May until the middle of July. Around mid-May, we plan to open the doors for the exhibition **RECLAIMING THE COMMONS** (curated by George Brugmans, Eva Pfannes and Thijs van Spaandonk) and the **WATERSCHOOL M4H+** (curated by Rianne Makkink and Jurgen Bey).

In June, the IABR will open an exhibition in the city of Dordrecht, where we will present the results of the IABR–Atelier Dordrecht: *Water Safety as Leverage for Sustainable Urban Development*.

But first, in April, the students of the Rotterdam Academy of Architecture and Urban Design and the Royal Academy of Visual Arts in The Hague launch **NOW! DESIGNING IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CRISIS**, an exhibition made for **Down to Earth** that will take place in the digital domain.

More information about **Down to Earth** on our website, <https://iabr.nl/en>

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*Note to editors:*

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