

Winder- grond



river

public art work development
programme ot sluisbuurt

(47)

amsterdam, the netherlands
by carly rose bedford

public art work programme is a project by (nellyE)theo van doesburg stichting

hydrogeology

artist carly rose bedford and the (nelly&)theo vain doesburg foundation reintroduce how built environments are related to water, and tap into their potential to inform cultural meaning-making and contemporary mythology. the “underground river” proposes a glass sculpture made from the grains of sand drilled from the many layers of the amsterdam’s sluisbuurt soil, marking the temporary ferry stop that takes people from central amsterdam to the sluisbuurt area.

the discovery of an underground aquifer, or river, paused and subsequently influenced the development of the sluisbuurt area in 2022. an underground river, or aquifer, flows beneath the site of the sluisbuurt as it has done for millennia. although the surface water, (now known as the ij river) was migrated, the subterranean waters that echo its aboveground sister remained running its ancient trajectory. therefore the pace at which the sluisbuurt has been able to develop has been impeded by the constant surfacing of the water at each deep drill site.

the development of the sluisbuurt is largely enabled by the historic rerouting of the ij river. much of the “island’s” material consists of remainders left over from dredging, a process that fixed a nomadic waterway in place. in preparation for this cultivated landmass’s development, the soft shifting ground must be stabilised to bear the weight of construction and infrastructure. in these initial stages deep drilling that plunges beyond the soft substrata of soils is part of the engineering process. water is intrinsic to the dutch landscape and synonymous with dutch culture. we can observe it in the dutch master’s watery vistas, throughout dutch infrastructure and city planning, to the eventual global export of water management technologies – in the sense the dutch urban, ecological and cultural landscape – is in a gordian knot with water.

stored in water

looking at a cross-section that shows a topography of hydrogeological history each layer can be referred to as an archive, like the pages of a book, detailing the ecology



illustration of glass sculpture at ferry dock sluisbuurt



jan jacobo zuidema broos (1833–1882) "romance along the canal, amsterdam", oil on panel 29 × 21 cm, signed lower left. collection simonis _ louunk, the netherlands

and river that once flowed there. in mid-2023 more deep drilling will occur as part of the development for sluisbuurt, it will pass through two of these layers (bodies of water and sand) one at 20 meters dating from approximately 120 000 years ago, the other at 70 meters dating from around 238 000 years ago.

the river(s) flow from east to west, in geological terms, they are what is known as "pristine" – this translates to as yet to be affected by human intervention. the clay layer above it acts as a shield, sheltering this ancient body of water from human interference while the water flows through a mediator, a layer of sand, that holds the river in its subterranean trajectory. the disturbance and contamination of groundwater globally and in the netherlands continue to have huge negative implications, yet the focus of this proposal will not be on detailing this crisis but rather on examining how we can reformulate the entanglement of narrative and ecology.

ferry tales

myths are lenses through which we can symbolically reckon with aspects of reality we otherwise grapple with. in contemporary northern europe culture, we have strayed from the chimera and para-human iconography of ancient mythology, yet the mechanism of a collective imaginary remains. it surfaces in the interpretation of landscapes, the way we can decode and read a city, and how this shapes human behaviour. bedford wonders, in a time where we strain to cope with the rapidly shifting conditions of our environment, and our agency within it, how can we revitalise mythic ontologies as a way to metabolise our current reality?

three existing mythic beings that juncture within the sluisbuurt development and its interaction with the underground river are the starting point of the public art works shape: the river styx, charon the ferryman, and cerberus – the three-headed dog. this guardian (with the tail of a snake) patrolled one bank of styx. although its demeanour seems fierce, it's charged with the essential task of maintaining the order of the underworld – protecting both sides of the river from trespass, in or out of the underworld.



guardian dog charon



sluisbuurt dike location visit

charon the ferryman

genus loki as material mythology –
genus loki roughly translated means the spirit of a place. it is the culmination of that which grows, flows, or composes a geographic location and is believed to carry a quintessential essence – the material murmuring of spirit. genus loki infers that by working with this essence we can experience a greater sense of connection and symbiosis with our environment.

using genus loki and the pristine, yet fragile, underground river that causes beneath sluisbuurt as a departure point, bedford proposes a large glass sculpture made from the sand extracted directly from the underground rivers to form a sculpture of cerberus on the bank of the new sluisbuurt ferry.

cerberus will not be in its usual state of threatening posture, inciting us to battle or grapple with it, instead, it is in repose, sleeping on the bank of the (new) sister river. this pose is very much in concert with the saying, let sleeping dogs lie. in this case cautioning us to take a careful position to the river, as it lay crystallised in cerberus's form. the scale of the sculpture creates an affective imposition, cautioning that this is not a guardian we wish to disturb yet also seemingly a gentle giant. the passive nature of cerberus invites tenderness, kin rather than domestic – united in the shared vulnerability.



previous work of artist carly rose bedford at project space looiersgracht

from sand to sculpture

there are three separate stages of development within the development and production of the public art work at sluisbuurt ferry dock:

first – underground river glass – for the 1st step of this project we have to develop a technique with glass artist marc barredra and geologist michiel van der meulen that transforms the extracted glass a deep drilling site and convert it to glass. in mid 2023 drilling company juo kavel undertakes deep drilling at both the 20 and 70 meter level on the sluisbuurt directly over the top of the underground river. during this time large samples of the sand will be extracted and collected directly from the mouth of the drill site. clay will also be extracted from the site for future use as bricks as the base of the sculpture.

for the base of the public art work, both these samples are taken with the assistance of geologist michiel van der meulen and then transferred to his lab for analysis of the mineral competes present – this will allow us to decoded the history of the river and its flow trajectory. these minerals will be vastly different between the two layers of river which will result in vastly different outcomes within the glass.

the production of glass requires sand (silica) in combination with flux (a material that lowers the melting point of the sand and stabilises it). this chemical reaction is unique to each batch and will require rigorous testing by firing the sand and flux to around 1150 degrees for approximately 8 hours.

marc barredra and carly rose bedford plan to work together in a glass studio to build a kiln capable of taking this level of heat for such a sustained amount of time. due to the volatile nature of glass making, multiple tests and firings will eventually reveal the colour and nature of each substrate of the river.

in 2024 – after the recipe for glass has been stabilised then begins the experimenting with having the glass take form. as a test, coins will be sculpted in wax and then cast in the glass. a small amount of them will be then be distributed to the public during a performance where the “ferryman” dressed in a cloaks designed by dragadina will ride backwards and forward across the river while choral composition of the ferryman will be sung – this performative intervention will activate the materiality of the glass creating a link with the final sculpture. this can possibly be developed in collaboration with the ferry festival amsterdam.

further development will continue on sculpting the form of the three headed dog cerberus. trips to the rijksmuseum amsterdam and the plaster archive in the art and history museum in brussels will inform the studies and final form of the sculpture.

in the final stage, imagined in 2025, we aim to collaborate with glass blowers peter bremers and marc barredra to have the glass cast in sections and stabilised. the sculpture will then be placed in its location at the ferry.



artist carly rose bedford in glass workshop



artist carly rose bedford

“underground river”

(53)

by carly rose bedford



sketch for glass sculpture charon

for more information visit
www.theovandoesburgstichting.nl

network

the (nelly&)theo van doesburg foundation and carly rose bedford welcome responses and ideas to further develop, prototype and finance the "underground river proposal". especially the expertise and interest of the following parties is required: nto geologist michiel van der meulen, glass artist peter bremers, sculptor and glass blower marc barredat, drilling company juo kavel, municipal transport company gvlo and Waternet.

colophon

design and typeface: opsd
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