



## Embassy of the Netherlands

*Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*



<i>Architect:</i>	Dick Van Gameren, Bjarne Mastenbroek
<i>Client:</i>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands
<i>Built Area:</i>	3'300 m <sup>2</sup>
<i>Cost:</i>	US\$ 7'332'000

A new European embassy in Africa is often an imposed (or at least imported) affair, using materials and human resources brought from outside. The Dutch Embassy in Addis Ababa is different. It was realised entirely by local contractors, using the only widely available local construction material, concrete, coupled with Ethiopian stone and timber for the interior finishes. The brief required new buildings for the ambassador's residence, chancellery and staff housing, and the renovation of the existing deputy ambassador's house. Along the way (the project took eight years to realise) a small school was added to the programme.



## 2007 On Site Review Report

3295.ETH

*by Aydan Balamir*

# Embassy of the Netherlands

*Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*



### **Architect**

*Dick Van Gameren, Bjarne Mastenbroek*

### **Client**

*Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands*

### **Design**

*1998 - 2002*

### **Completed**

*2005*



## **Embassy of the Netherlands**

*Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

### **I. Introduction**

The Dutch embassy in Ethiopia lies on the southern outskirts of Addis Ababa, in a eucalyptus grove set amidst urban sprawl. The main building, an elongated horizontal volume of 140 by 15 metres, cuts across the sloping terrain on an east-west axis. Around one third of the way down its length, a driveway passes through it at first-floor level, separating the ambassador's residence from the chancellery. The flat roof that unites the two parts is a roof garden accessed, where the topography permits, from elevated pathways. Inside the chancellery, offices flank a ramped corridor that climbs the gradient of the site, ending in a patio linked to the roof. Pigmented the same red-ochre as the Ethiopian earth, the walls, floors and ceilings are all composed of the same material, creating the effect of a cavernous space in concrete. While this is reminiscent of the rock-hewn architecture of Ethiopia, the roof garden, with its network of shallow pools, alludes to a Dutch water landscape. Other contemporary Dutch themes are expressed in the building's programmatic diversity, transparency and daring cantilevers – the totemic sight of the cantilevering roof marks the entry porch at the eastern end.

### **II. Contextual Information**

#### *A. Historical background*

Ethiopia, one of the oldest nations in the world, proudly claims to be 'the only African country that has never been colonised'. Addis Ababa became its capital in 1886, when Menelik II became Emperor of Ethiopia. Before Menelik came, the land was known by the Oromo name Finfinne. Menelik's Imperial Palace remains the seat of government to this day.

The Emperor Haile Selassie was enthroned in 1930, but was forced into exile when Italian troops occupied Addis Ababa from 1936 to 1939, and made it the capital of Italian East Africa. After the Italians were defeated, Haile Selassie returned to Addis Ababa and ruled until 1974, when he was deposed by a pro-Soviet military regime, the 'Derg', who established a one-party communist state that lasted until 1991. Following a period of turmoil, a new constitution was adopted and Ethiopia's first multi-party elections were held in 1994. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was formed in 1963, with its headquarters in Addis Ababa. The OAU was dissolved in 2002 and replaced by the African Union (AU). As headquarters of the AU and the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the city is the setting for many international conferences.

#### *B. Local architectural character*

Addis Ababa is a modern town of extreme contrasts. Its central district, with parks and avenues lined with modern buildings, historic churches, palaces and monuments, co-exists with sprawling shantytowns and the old city's impoverished quarters. Alongside an elaborate

modernist heritage, today's mainstream architecture is of variable quality, with a mainly derivative character. The three main groups that make up the country's population – Muslims, Christians and indigenous tribes – can roughly be associated with three distinct settlement types. The predominantly Muslim town of Harar in the east has a character reminiscent of Mediterranean coastal towns, with features that can be observed in Christian church architecture as well. The northern town of Lalibela, the seat of the Orthodox Christians, is renowned for its dramatic rock-hewn churches, an eminent symbol of Ethiopia's cultural heritage. The beehive-shaped homes of the Dorze are the best known of ethnic tribal images, and thatch-roofed indigenous dwellings have been reproduced in countless variations in 'regionalist'-themed architecture.

*C. Site and surroundings*

The site of the diplomatic compound is a densely wooded eucalyptus grove that slopes into a valley on the west and is bordered on the east by a ring road, from where vehicle access is taken. Two other embassies – those of Saudi Arabia and Cameron – are located to the south of the five-hectare site. The rest of the neighbourhood consists of humble low-cost houses and small shops. This is a Muslim-dominated area, home to the Islamic Supreme Council of Ethiopia. On the eastern side of the ring road, across from the embassy entrance, is the local mosque. The site is close to the Merkato, a major market to the north of the ring road.

*D. Climatic conditions*

Addis Ababa lies at the foot of Mount Entoto in the central Highlands of Ethiopia, on the western ridge of the Great Rift Valley. Though the city is at 9.03°N 38.74°E, its high altitude (some 2,355 metres above sea level) gives it a mild, pleasant climate. Average temperatures range from a maximum of 25°C in the summer to a minimum of 6°C in the winter. Precipitation reaches 300 millimetres in the rainy season from mid-June to mid-September, when it may rain for up to 28 days in a month. This has given Addis Ababa a lush vegetation.

**III. Programme**

*A. History of the inception of the project*

The compound of the embassy in Addis Ababa has been in use by the Dutch since the 1940s. However, the chancellery was housed in a temporary building, and the old residence was in a very poor condition. The brief called for a new chancellery and ambassador's residence, along with the renovation and extension of the existing villa (which now serves as the deputy ambassador's house) and the addition of three staff houses. As the project developed, a small school building and a new gatehouse were added to the programme.

*B. General programme objectives*

The project was commissioned in 1998 by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of a special programme to construct new embassy buildings that represent contemporary Dutch culture while paying due respect to the country in which they are based. Especially in Third World countries, the desire to respond to local culture, climate and sensitivities makes

collaboration with local professionals a prerequisite for a project.

C. *How were the architects and specialists chosen?*

The commission was awarded to the Amsterdam-based partnership of Dick van Gameren and Bjarne Mastenbroek. The architects belong to a generation of prominent Dutch architects that includes MVRDV, UN Studio and Neutelings Riedijk, and they are known for their imaginative schemes. While they share with this generation the same motivated approach to formal and technological novelty, their projects manifest a ‘quieter, less demonstrative disposition’ (Slessor, 2006), which made them responsive to the programme objectives set out for the new embassy constructions. Following a careful selection process, ABBA Associates (principal architect Rahel Shawl, later with RAAS Architects) and Elmi Olindo & Co Plc., both from Addis Ababa, were chosen as local architect and contractor, respectively. Arup Associates served as main engineering firm and consultancy.

D. *Functional requirements*

The major programme elements are:

Main building: 2,100 square metres (including ambassador’s residence and chancellery)

Deputy ambassador’s house: 540 square metres

Staff houses: 224 square metres

School: 190 square metres

Gatehouse: 65 square metres

**IV. Description**

A. *Project data*

The site covers 55,000 square metres and the total combined floor area is 3,300 square metres. The existing villa on the site (listed as a ‘historically relevant building’ by the newly established Heritage Trust) was expanded and reconstructed, and four new elements were added – chancellery, ambassador’s residence, three staff houses, school and entrance pavilion.

B. *Evolution of design concepts*

1. *Response to physical constraints*

The compound is a small natural reserve surrounded by urban sprawl. The architects’ guiding theme has been the preservation of this site, minimising the impact of the new construction. The existing topography has been respected, keeping the contour lines unchanged. Care was taken not to disturb the original flora or wildlife. The disposition of the individual programme elements is designed to create maximum privacy, as if each building stood alone in this beautiful natural setting.

The first impression of the compound from the busy ring road is well described by Slessor

(2006): 'diplomatic presence is signposted by the gatehouse decked out in the bright colours of the Dutch tricolor, a playful Pop Art twist on flag-waving expressions of national identity'. The main building's projecting roof comes into view even before the moment of entry, through the perforated panel at the gate. The building is reached by a long and indirect driveway, which allows one to experience the lavish greenery of the site and leave the urban sprawl behind. The visitor is distanced from the building before entry, and made to view it from different angles. Then the road intersects the building, passing underneath its roof, to connect with the deputy ambassador's house at the western end of the site.

The horizontal volume of the main building sits on the ridge of sloping ground, cutting into this topography at this ridgeline and adapting its base to the rest. The small school building and three staff houses mark the northern boundary of the site; the houses are placed behind a wall, one behind the other like a terrace, so that occupants enjoy unobstructed views. The deputy ambassador's residence was accommodated in the old villa through the addition of a new ground floor. Set on its new, red-ochre plinth, the reconstructed house seems to float above the garden.

## 2. *Response to user requirements*

The driveway that passes through the building divides it into two: the smaller portion to the west (30 metres) contains the ambassador's residence, the portion to the east (100 metres) the chancellery. The two parts are united by a roof garden, the surface of which is a contoured hard landscape with a series of shallow indentations for pools. Accessed from several elevated paths, and by a stair from the gap between the residence and the chancellery, the roof provides an open space for 'rooftop/poolside contemplation' (Slessor, 2006). At its eastern extremity, the roof juts out to form a daring canopy, defining the emblematic public face of the building as well as the point of arrival and entry. The ample double-height porch created by this overhead plane accommodates the reception counter and certain consular functions.

The eastern third of the chancellery is two storeys high; the ambassador's offices are upstairs, commanding views of both the porch outside and the long corridor/hallway inside. The ambassador's offices are also linked directly to the residence via a rooftop path. The chancellery itself is organised on one floor; a ramped corridor flanked by offices gently climbs the gradient of the site, from the entry hall to the far end of the building. The course of this corridor changes twice, first enlarging where it meets a patio on two sides, to become a small foyer in eye contact with the ambassador's apartment, then deviating slightly towards the middle, to accommodate the swelling of office sizes on one side. The corridor terminates in a sloped patio that smoothly connects to the roof/pool garden.

The two-storey residence at the western end of the building contains the private quarters of the ambassador at the lower level, and formal reception spaces above. As the building conforms to the gradated terrain, both levels can be entered from various points outside. The formal entrance to the upper floor is from the road that penetrates the building, while the reception space also opens to the outdoors. The private floor can be accessed from a lower entrance or from the veranda at the western end of the building. A sloped patio at the core of the residence links lower and upper levels right at the formal entrance, from where a flight of

stairs leads to the roof/pool level. The two floors are linked internally by three concealed staircases (for the ambassador, his family and staff).

While in the chancellery the 15-metre-width of the block is planned as double-loaded corridor, in the residence this width allows a tripartite layout with internalised core spaces – namely the formal dining upstairs and the private living downstairs. Daylight is funnelled to these spaces by the sloped patio cut deeply into the building mass. There are a number of further incisions throughout the length of the block, which draw in indirect northern and southern light through their transparent edges. Apart from these incisions and the restrained fenestration, the building mass is almost monolithic. The walls and ceilings are pigmented the same red-ochre as the Ethiopian earth and have a rough texture created by misalignments in the concrete formwork. The floors in the public spaces are also of the same material, but now polished. The overall effect is reminiscent of a cave space – an invocation of rock-hewn architecture in a modern vocabulary.

The architects have said that the formal vocabulary of the design stems from an encounter of traditional Ethiopian architecture with Dutch cultural and architectural themes, with the aim of inspiring ‘an exchange of ideas between two worlds, Europe and Africa’. The primary cultural reference is rock-hewn architecture of Coptic churches in Lalibela, which are dug down to a depth of two to three storeys, interconnecting with the landscape and vanishing into it. The building seems to have been carved out of the ground, ‘suggesting archaic solidity, stillness and mystery’, according to Slessor. She adds a telling observation: ‘Like a lost temple or abandoned monument, the building is partially engulfed by the landscape, a move that reinforces its already powerful topographic quality.’

The second cultural reference comes from the homeland of the architects. The sculptural rivulets of the ‘roof/pool’ allude to the Dutch way of managing water and the Netherlands polder landscape (Slessor, 2006). During the rainy season the roof is transformed into a shallow pool; at other times it resembles more a dried-up riverbed. Influences from contemporary Dutch architecture have also found their way into the design, in the form of the monolithic structure of the main building, with its densification of programmatic diversity, its crisp transparencies and its oversailing cantilevers.

### 3. *Landscaping*

Eucalyptus trees originated in Australia but are now well established in Ethiopia. In this project, indigenous plants makes up more than 50 per cent of the new landscaping, encompassing assorted trees, bushes, climbers, flowers and grass. Climbers are used especially for the fences and walls around the staff houses, as well as for sloping patios, in order to retain the soil. Bushes are preferred in the front. In the swampy area beside the entrance (to the west), 150 trees are planted. This is also the location of the dispersion pit for surface water.

## C. *Structure, materials, technology*

### 1. *Structural systems and materials*

All buildings in the compound have reinforced concrete structures of varying spans and dimensions. The added basement in the old villa is also realised mainly in reinforced concrete, though the original quoins and mouldings were re-used in the reconstruction.

The structure of the main building is a reinforced concrete flat slab and shear wall system, unencumbered by columns or beams. The 140-metre-long building mass is structurally divided into four parts, with three expansion joints. The concrete technology is straightforward, almost conventional, except for the entrance cantilever, which projects 11 metres. About half of this covers the recessed part of the porch, and from the outside what you see is the perimeter beam that supports the cantilever from its middle. (In the course of the construction, an extra beam was added at the centre of the 15-metre width.) The rest of the cantilever is a two-storey-high overhang with a double curve in a hyperbolic paraboloid form.

The exposed walls in intense red-ochre are made of pigmented concrete. In colouring the concrete, the proportion of pigment (ferrous oxide) to cement is 1:20. The exposed concrete is finished with clear protective varnish. Floors in public circulation spaces are of the same material, but the final 70-millimetre layer of pigmented concrete is polished. Floor coverings of office spaces are in grey epoxy or in some cases timber with recessed skirting.

The inner partition walls are made of hollow concrete blocks, finished with gypsum plaster or plasterboard. Window frames are specially designed, opening outwards with a push-and-slide movement.

## 2. *Construction technology*

All concrete work was poured in place, using a handmade formwork in natural wood. To give the concrete an individual touch, each of the 14-15 centimetre planks was slightly tilted to make recesses and projections and create a striated texture, which is accentuated under the play of sunlight and shadow. No standardised measure was specified for this purpose; the misalignment of the planks was done with a stick or by hand.

## 3. *Building services*

The building has no mechanical heating, ventilation or air-conditioning system, except in the reception spaces of the ambassador's residence where there is a limited HVAC system (a later addition, used only for ventilation to minimise energy consumption). Environmental control systems are generally solved in a natural way, mainly through the insulation of walls, ceilings and floors. Chimneys are provided in every space, some with fireplaces, in case the need arises for additional heating.

The building is connected to the city's main service for water and power. Electricity feeders and generators are in the service building. There is as yet no central sewage; waste is collected periodically. The technical plant room is located next to the school, and is equipped with a standby generator and transformer, water storage and purification and fuel pumps (also added later). There is an underground cistern for emergency use and gardening. The recycling of rainwater was an initial goal, later abandoned on grounds of cost.

*D. Origin of technology, materials, professionals, labour force*

A major objective of the project was to engage with the local workforce and building industry. This inevitably led to the choice of concrete as the main construction material. To minimise the use of imported materials, technical installations were kept to the bare essentials. Materials imported from Italy include pigment, sanitary fixtures, accessories, electrical fixtures (such as protected wire and sockets), security glass, steel frames, gypsum cladding, and the office floor coverings (epoxy). Materials from local sources include cement, marble, timber doors/floors and interior finishing materials such as stone claddings and windowsills. Reinforcement was mixed: some elements were imported to meet Arup's standards, especially for the foundations.

The architects from the Netherlands collaborated with a local firm on the supervision of the work and urgent revision drawings. Local engineers oversaw the engineering aspects of the construction. Arup of London was the main engineering consultant. A local project manager liaised between local and international consultants, client and final users. The project was wholly realised by local contractors. The labour force was all local. Interior decoration was realised by an in-house professional of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The architects visited the construction site every four to five months.

**V. Construction Schedule and Costs**

*A. History of the project*

The project took eight years to realise. The delay between the start of the design and the actual construction was necessary for the two sides involved to become familiar with each other's way of working and for the Dutch procedures of tendering to be adapted to local ones. The building was commissioned in May 1998, the design phase lasted until 2002, while construction ran from December 2002 to April 2006. Occupancy was from June 2005.

*B. Total costs and financing*

The land was originally a gift of Emperor Menelik. The project was financed by the Dutch government.

Infrastructure: USD 681,000

Materials: USD 5,435,000

Landscaping: USD 96,000

Professional fees: USD 1,120,000

Total actual cost (without land): USD 7,332,000 (64,506,936 Birr)

Actual cost per square metre: USD 2,221 (19,540 Birr)

(All costs calculated according to an exchange rate of 8.79 Birr = USD 1.)

*C. Comparative costs*

The cost per square metre for a public building in Addis Ababa is around USD 900, excluding the land and the professional fees. This was the cost of a prestige building for a recent

embassy structure.

*D. Maintenance and ongoing costs*

It is not easy to calculate the maintenance costs due to their merging with ongoing costs associated with the new landscaping and with difficulties in the construction sector. Another obstacle to setting a comparison is that the old embassy covered less than one fourth of the present floor area (750 vs. 3,300 square metres). The general impression, however, is that costs are at desirable levels. The materials used throughout the building are durable, require little maintenance, and are expected to perform well over time.

**VI. Technical Assessment**

*A. Functional assessment*

The internal organisation of the main building is remarkably simple yet full of surprises. The architectural promenade is convenient and very pleasing, leading in and out of a variety of spaces, and up and down between the levels. Submerging the block partially into the ground minimises its scale on all sides. The building connects well to the ground and to the greenery of the enclave, even revealing a 'fifth facade' in the form of the roof/pool. Because of the gradient of the site, both floors of the ambassador's residence are accessible from the ground and can be used independently of one another. The interior circulation, with the three hidden staircases, captures the intended mood very strongly, though the users find it constraining. In the chancellery, the corridor climbing the gradient of the site is also both functional and pleasant. However, the small thresholds between the offices and ramped corridor (though they surpass Dutch standards slightly) were a source of complaint, on account of the Dutch sensibility concerning disabled access. Concerns were also voiced about the shortage of space for some functions, such as the lack of staff dining, general storage and showers; it is assumed that these omissions were probably due to the brief.

Other design features *concerning massing, volume, spatial articulation and integration into the site* are covered in the sections below. The reconstruction of the villa, and the new designs for the gatehouse, school and three staff houses, are found to be successful in all respects, but are considered to be outside the scope of this report.

*B. Climatic performance*

The use of natural light constitutes a major source of design ideas in this project. The intention to create a cavernous interior is perfectly attained, especially in the murky hallway of the chancellery. This comes at a cost, however, as the lights in this area are switched on during the day. (This extra lighting applies only to the hallway.) Originally, only criss-crossing lamps near the floor level were planned; light sources from above are a recent addition. Elsewhere, carefully dimensioned fenestration, deep skylights and small patios allow in daylight without the glare of direct sun. The south- and north-facing fenestration is designed as picture windows, of an efficient scale for the offices and sizeable in the residence. To create 'frameless' picture windows, the architects designed a special window casing that works by pushing out and sliding up. This contributes much to the picture window effect from

the inside, while the green-tinted glass panes look like dark eyeglasses from the outside. However, the operating mechanism is not so smooth, and opening outwards is impractical in the heavy rain. During downpours the windows need to be closed, blocking natural ventilation. To maintain natural ventilation in the reception hall of the residence, the skylight has been raised and perforated steel added to its casing. The use of mechanical ventilation in reception spaces is understandable, given the formalities and crowds at social functions. The grills of the system are almost unnoticeable.

During the visit to the building, the high temperature outside was not felt indoors, due to the efficient use of passive systems. The building is said to perform well in the summer heat, owing to the controlled natural lighting and the insulating properties of the earth as well as the added layers of insulation. These measures work well for cold weather too; the building has so far managed without a heating system. Besides the use of fireplaces when required, the curtains are said to help warm the space. The building is well insulated against noise and dust, as it is set away from the traffic, in a densely wooded environment. Concerns about insect control have caused doubts about the poetic roof/pool landscape, and the need for a quicker dispersal of the rainwater from the pools has been met by slightly lowering the roof drainage pipes. Still, the concept of the roof/pool is powerfully maintained when the rain falls, and for a while afterwards, until the water drains away. Concerning all climatic issues, patience has been advised, as any modifications will await reliable feedback after at least two years of use.

C. *Response to treatment of water and rainfall*

The collecting and recycling of rainwater was considered, but was not a part of the final project. The waterproofing of the building seems successful, given the lack of efflorescence or similar water-based problems on building surfaces. Apart from a single leak at a construction joint, the flat roof with its pool landscape is performing well. The drainage of excess rainwater from the roof has been successfully handled with details that are foolproof and finely executed. It is not likely that water and humidity can travel inside the building; previous problems caused by the steeply sloping ground in a patio have been resolved by terracing the ground to prevent slippage of the soil during heavy rains.

D. *Impact of the project on the site*

The project is intended to set an example for a sensitive and sustainable approach towards existing natural and landscape values in Ethiopia. Flowers, shrubs and taller plants have all grown lush in this climate. The architects' main concern – to refrain from the 'manicuring' tendencies in landscaping – has been fulfilled to a great extent. The compound raises the profile of the district, adding prestige with its diplomatic presence and demonstrating the possibility of creating a refined architecture without the use of refined materials. The building does indeed make a case for real architecture as opposed to the kitsch revivalism that abounds in the world at large.

E. *Choice of materials, level of technology*

The choice of concrete was based on the local availability of the material and the labour to form it, as well as climatic and seismic considerations. The use of shear walls and flat slabs,

without columns or beams, is apt for the intended expression. The reinforced concrete technology is straightforward, though the cantilever required some technological ingenuity – and seems worth the effort. The pigmented concrete, with its striated texture animating the otherwise stern surfaces, is entirely suited to its context. Slessor has remarked that it could be ‘romantically interpreted as a return to primeval arcadia’, on account of its evident refraining from an obsessive perfection (that may well be out of place).

Overall, the local professionals were able to effectively translate the architects’ intentions into reality.

*F. Response to, and planning for, emergency situations*

Arup’s consultancy included provisions for earthquake hazards and additional stability against seismic forces, wind behaviour, flood control and a fire fighting system. The scheme is designed according to the fire prevention codes, providing an automatic alarm system that works with a combination of smoke detectors. The bullet-proof glass in some windows is an indicator of pressing contemporary concerns about security, which indeed ‘add to the challenge of trying to create a dignified and genuinely open diplomatic presence’ (Slessor 2006). The low-key security at the entrance, which carries an architectural statement, is unfortunately bound to change. The neighbours in the vicinity are still in contact with the building via its transparent gate. Despite all the understandable pressures for security precautions, the architects still wanted the building to be seen (at least through a perforated panel), as a gesture of transparency and accessibility,

*G. Ageing and maintenance problems*

The building is designed for easy maintenance and a long lifespan – ‘like a German bunker’, as the joke went among the professionals involved. The rough texture of the concrete surfaces should age handsomely over time.

*H. Interior design and furnishing*

The interior design of the building is a direct outcome of its architecture, constituting a plain backdrop for the artworks and artefacts on display. There is no tectonic articulation of either structural members or constructional details; it is the minimalist surfaces alone that create an architecture of planes, solid and transparent.

The furnishing was conceived by an in-house interior designer from the Dutch Ministry, with contributions from a photographer and a sculptor. It is impressive, with the artisanal leather bench in the reception of the residence being especially eye-catching. Made of raw leather, skin seasoned with herbs and then modelled on the form, the bench faces a fully glazed surface that opens to the garden, presenting a subtle encounter of the Dutch and Ethiopian cultures.

Post-occupancy decoration in the private spaces may not be in the grain of the austere intent of the architects; the ensemble is pleasing to the eye, yet might repel further loading. Furnishing of the chancellery, on the other hand, is plain and functional. Workplaces, in

contrast to the dramatic atmosphere of the main hall, are whitewashed and well lit.

## VII. Users

### A. *User profile and response by clients*

The building is in use by Dutch and Ethiopian staff, including 18 diplomats, 15 locally engaged staff, 4 drivers, 9 guards, 8 gardeners and 3-5 cleaners (a population rising to 50 maximum). Besides providing workspaces and accommodation, the compound serves as a meeting point in the diplomatic life of Addis Ababa. The embassy staff is aware that they are living in a special building. At first it seemed they were not very keen on its poetic aspects, as complaints converged on shortages and technicalities such as the lack of a staff dining room, the thresholds between ramp and offices, the hidden staircases, or the lack of balustrades on the roof. However, whenever the discussion came round to a question of essence vs. performance, criticisms of performance were set aside, leaving only remarks on beauty. The difficulty of living in an ‘architectural statement’ was voiced. As a token of the building’s conceptual strength, however, the final word was: ‘We are very proud of it’.

### B. *Responses to project*

Publications abroad appreciate the project as an imaginative response to local conditions. The *Journal of the Ethiopian Architects Association* reported on the progress of construction when the local architect Rahel Shawl used to be the editor. Site visits were organised with students towards the end of construction. The architects made two public presentations in the Addis Ababa University, Architecture Department. Positive remarks were voiced on all occasions.

The popular press used to run features on the building with titles such as ‘The Dutch are coming!’ All those who see the building are said to be influenced. They find it surprising, mostly in a positive sense, though at times for the lack of the material opulence that one might normally expect from an embassy building. The sources of response include people going for visas as well as those who have been invited to receptions. Many have called the local architect and contractor to express their opinion about the building.

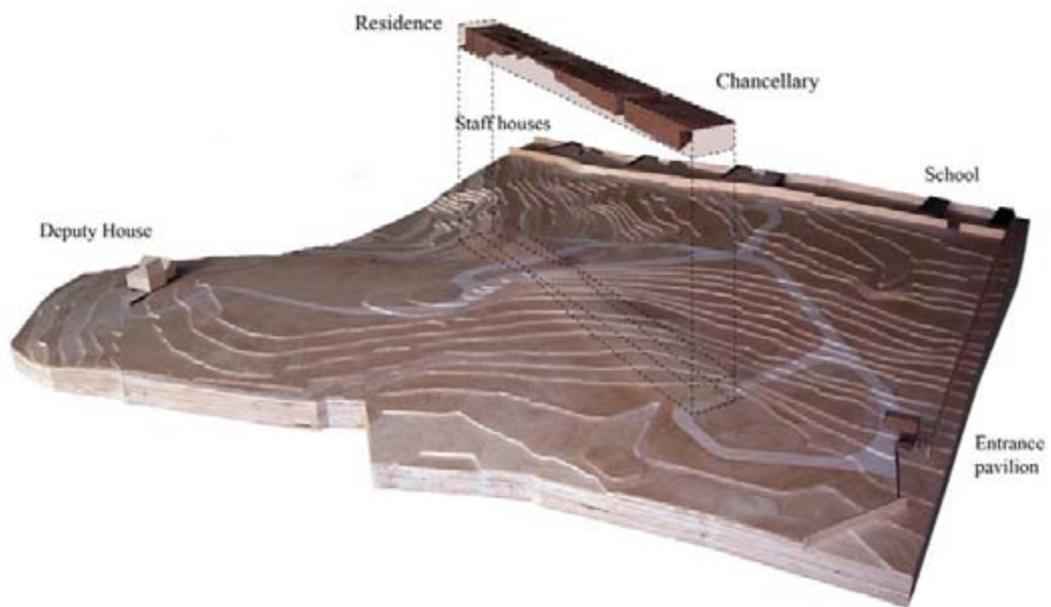
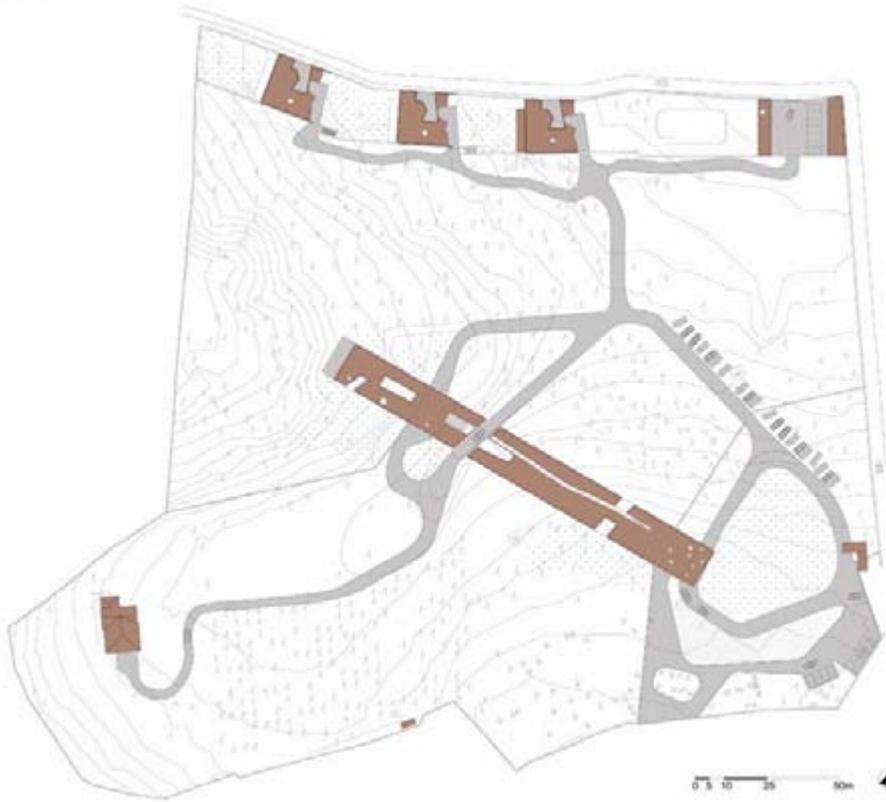
## VIII. Project personnel

Client:	Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Architectural design:	Dick van Gameren and Bjarne Mastenbroek
Local architect:	Rahel Shawl (ABBA/RAAS) <i>chief architectural supervisor for the client</i>
Engineering consultant:	Arup Associates
Local engineers:	Worede Melaku (San-Mech Consult) <i>local sanitary &amp; mechanical engineer</i> Yared Belayneh (Campbell Project Management Services Plc), <i>resident engineer</i> (providing on-site supervision of all

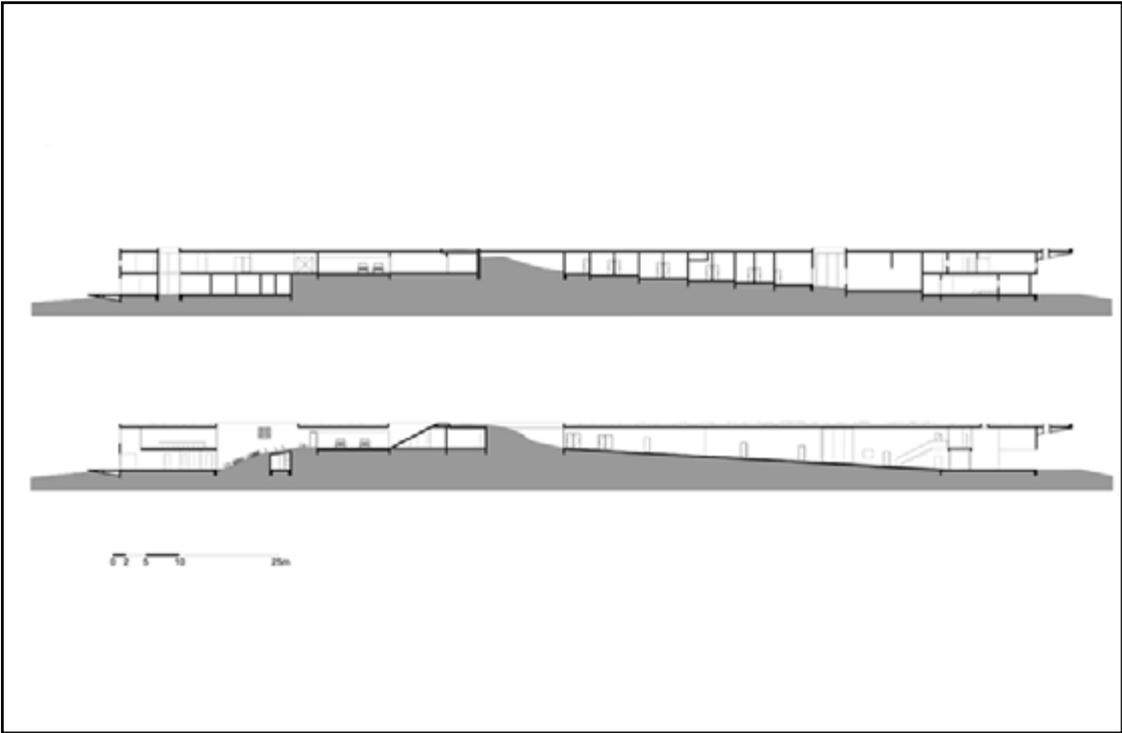




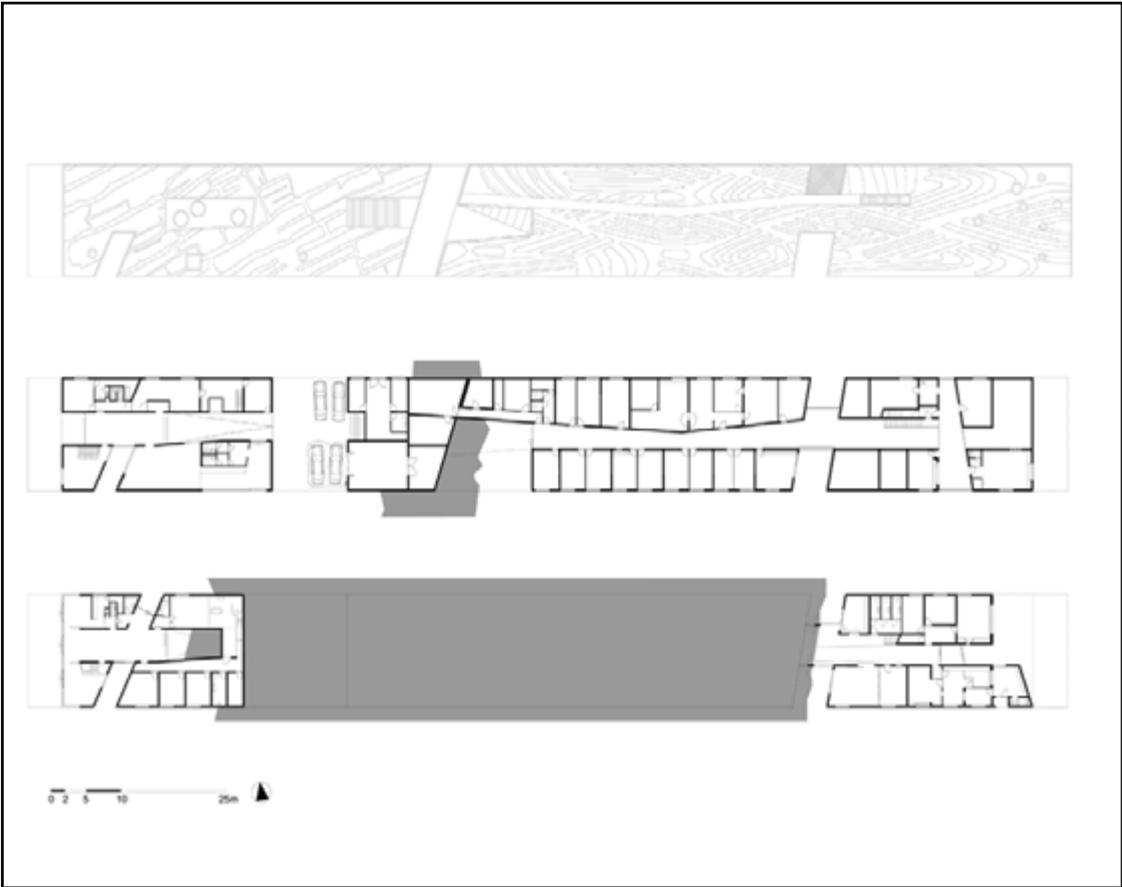
Site Plan



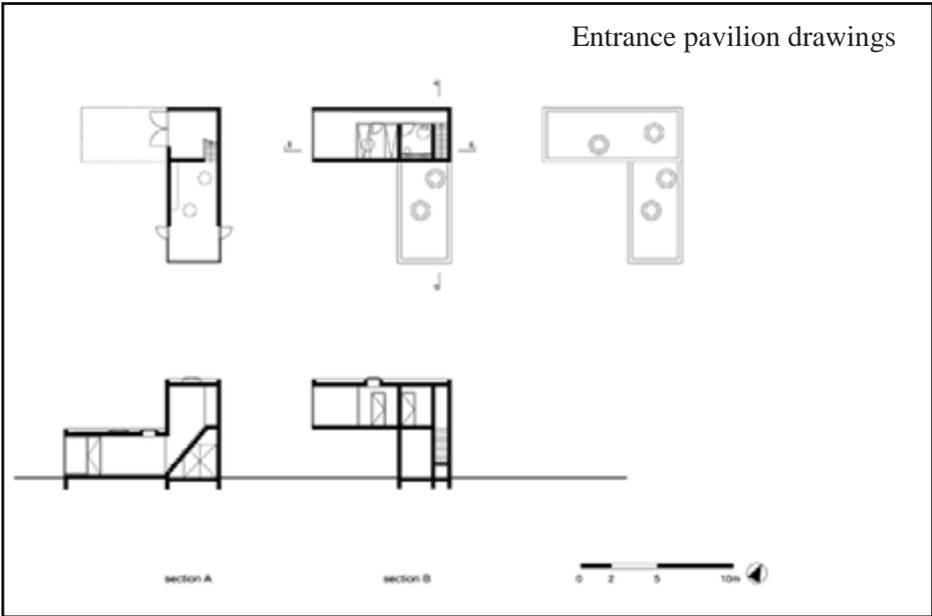
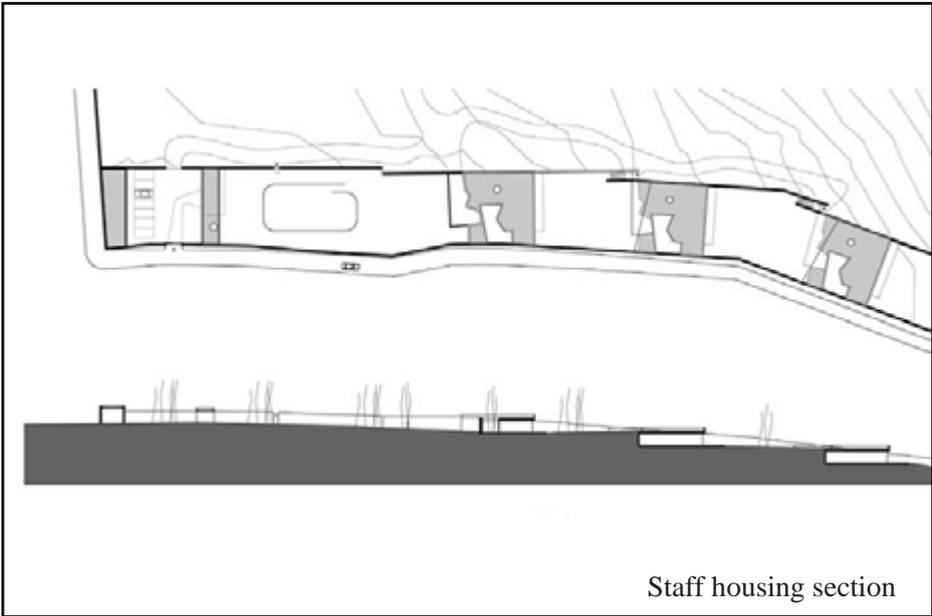
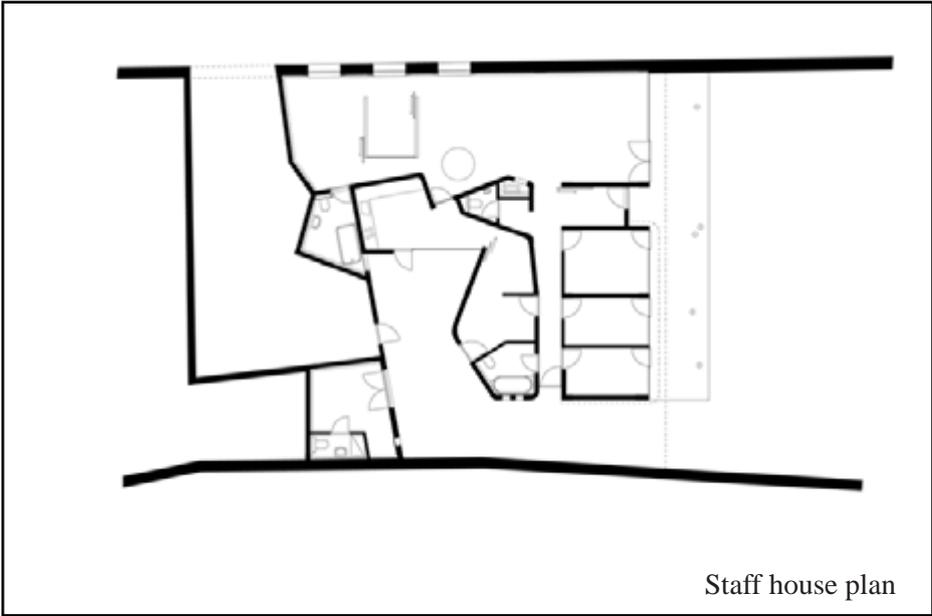
Concept



Chancellery and residence sections.



Chancellery and residence floorplans.





Entrance pavilion.

South view of the chancellery.





South east view of the chancellery.

North elevation of the chancellery.





South side of the chancellery.

South side of the chancellery.





Chancellery roof landscaping.

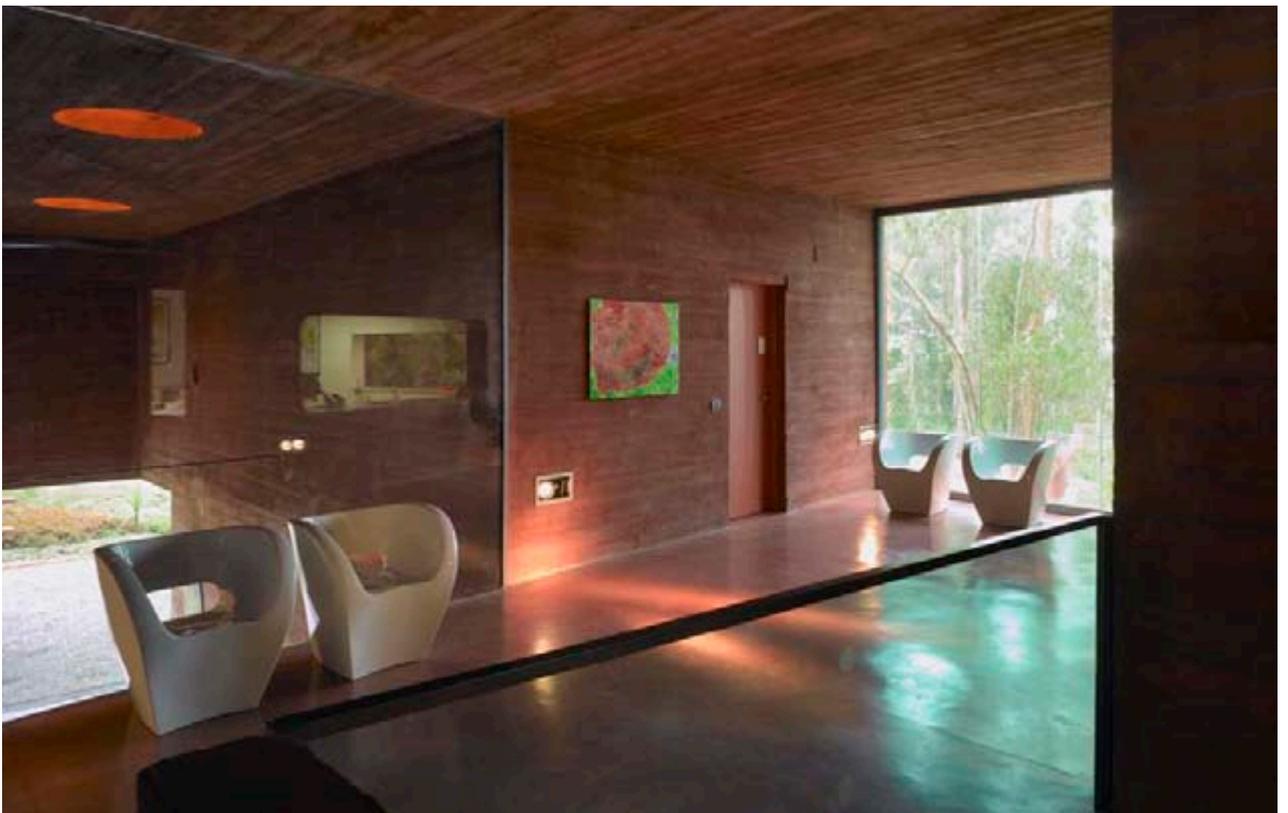
Waiting area.





Chancellery corridor.

Waiting area.

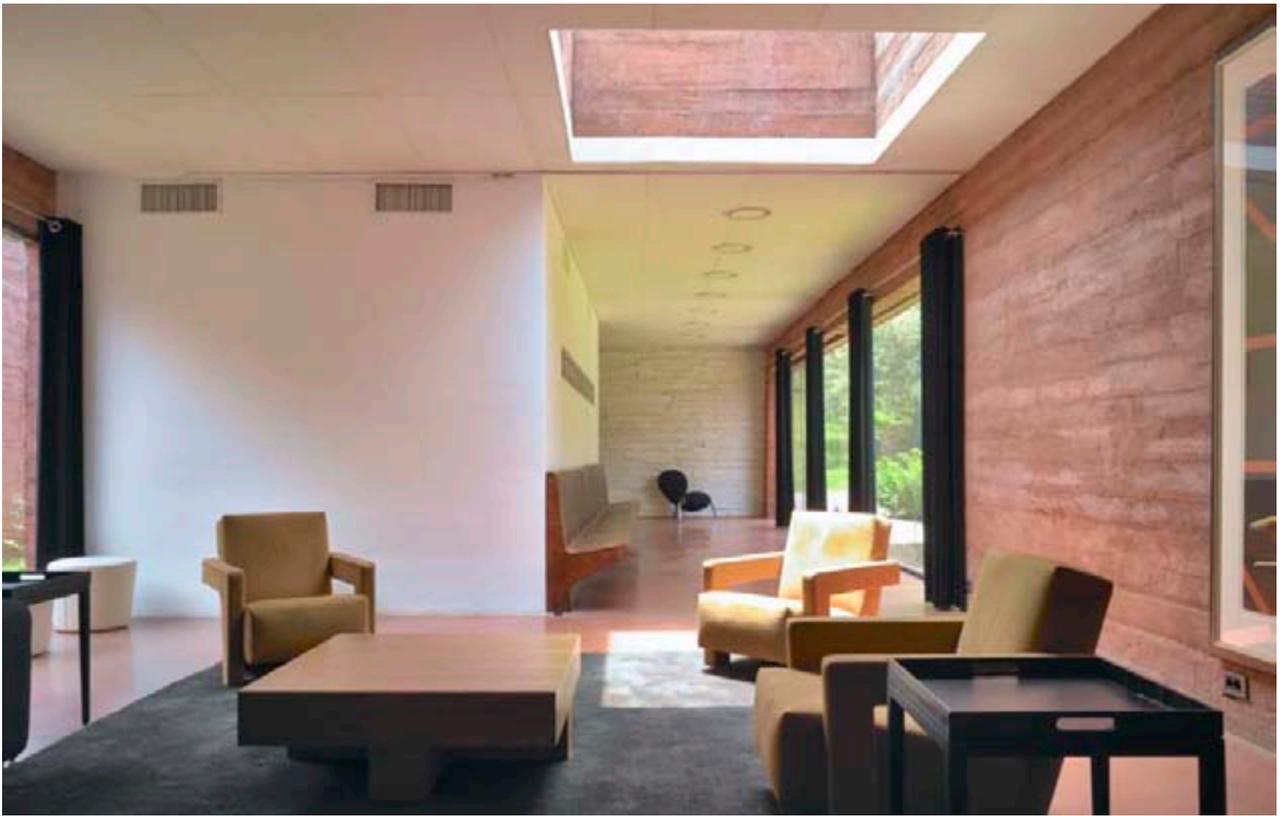




Chancellery corridor and stairs.

South side of the residence.





Interior view of the residence.

Residence dining room.





Deputy house.

School inside the embassy compound.





Staff house.

Staff house living room.



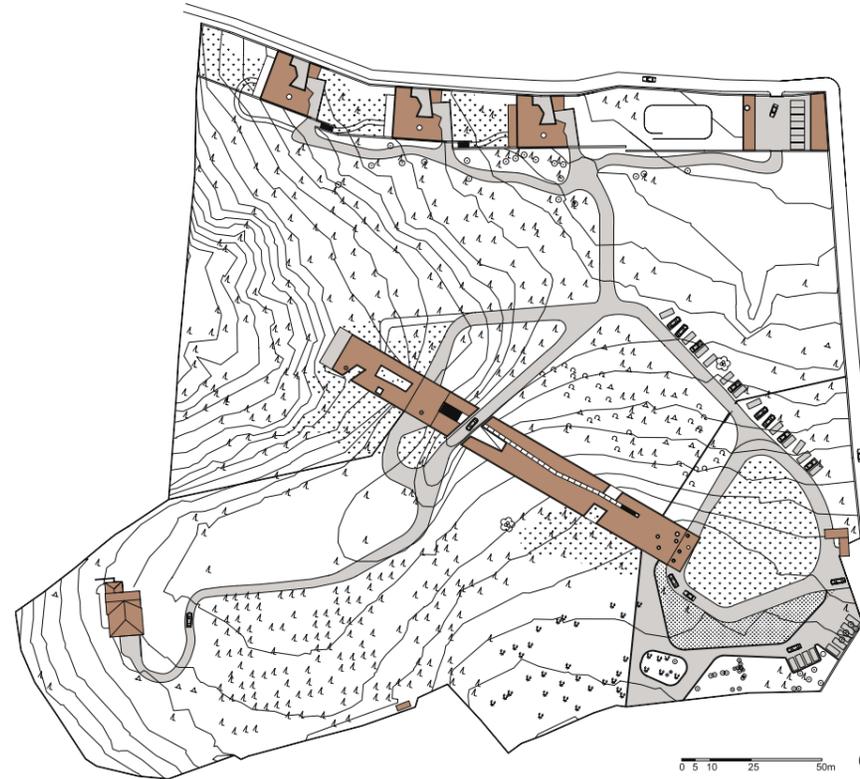
# Embassy of the Netherlands

## Dutch Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

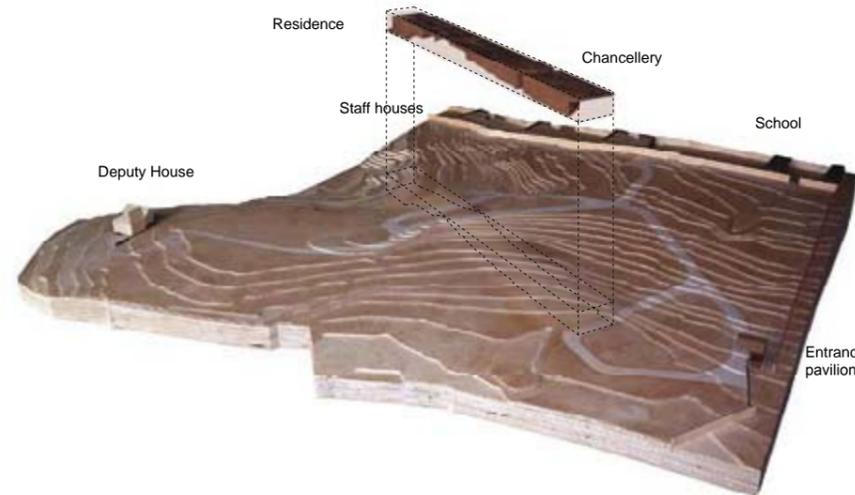
Old Airport Zone W24, K13, House 001  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

<b>Architects</b>	Dick Van Gameren, Bjarne Mastenbroek Amsterdam, The Netherlands
<b>Clients</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands The Hague, The Netherlands
<b>Commission</b>	1998
<b>Design</b>	1998 - 2002
<b>Construction</b>	2002 - 2006
<b>Occupancy</b>	2005
<b>Site</b>	55'000 m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Ground Floor</b>	n.a.
<b>Total Floor</b>	3'300 m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Costs</b>	US\$ 7'332'000

**Programme** A new European embassy in Africa is often an imposed (or at least imported) affair, using materials and human resources brought from outside. The Dutch Embassy in Addis Ababa is different. It was realised entirely by local contractors, using the only widely available local construction material, concrete, coupled with Ethiopian stone and timber for the interior finishes. The brief required new buildings for the ambassador's residence, chancellery and staff housing, and the renovation of the existing deputy ambassador's house. Along the way (the project took eight years to realise) a small school was added to the programme.



Location

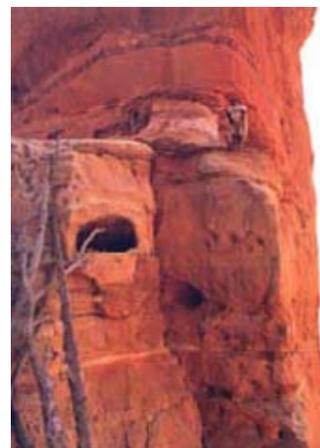


Concept



Approach road to the residence

The site of the Dutch embassy on the outskirts of Addis Ababa consists of five hectares of eucalyptus woods, dropping into a valley. The historic villa on the site has been expanded, while the embassy and residence of the ambassador, three homes for members of staff and the entrance are new. The extension of the villa, which is occupied by the Vice Ambassador, has been placed beneath the existing house, which now seems to float above the garden. The three homes for staff are situated behind a wall. They are placed one behind the other like terraces so all residents enjoy an unobstructed view. The embassy with ambassador's residence is situated in the centre of the terrain in a long, horizontal volume that seems to have been carved out of the landscape, like traditional Ethiopian architecture. The outside walls are of rough concrete in the same red colour as the ground. The landscape intersects the volume on the borderline of the two functions. The roof, that comes into sight at the moment that the road intersects the building, has been implemented as a shallow pond, a reference to the Dutch landscape. The embassy is simple in structure, with offices on either side of a central corridor. This corridor rises with the gradient of the site. At the entrance there is enough space for an intermediate level for the ambassador's office. It is connected via a stairway to the rooftop path leading to the residence. The upper floor of the residence contains the formal reception rooms, while the lower one contains the private rooms. Patios link the areas inside and outside the building. Because of the gradient of the site, both floors are at ground level, so that they can be used entirely independently of one another.



Ethiopian landscape



Dutch water landscape



Roof landscape

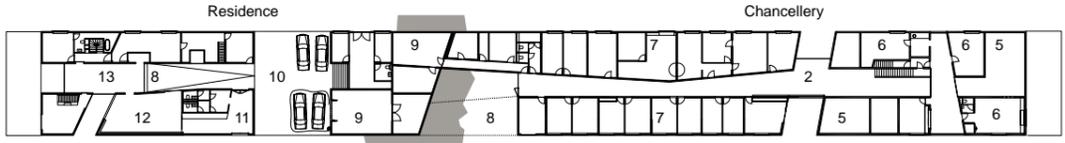


Main entrance of the chancellery

# Main building



Roof landscape

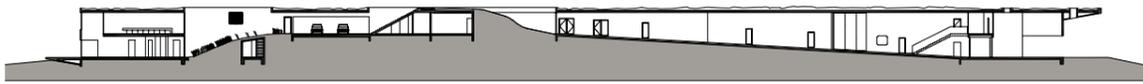
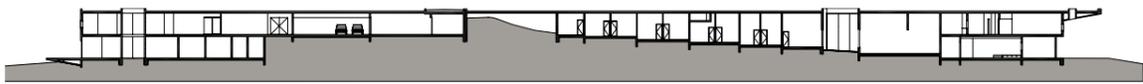


Upper level



Lower level

- 1 Main entrance
- 2 Central hall
- 3 Reception counter
- 4 Library
- 5 Void
- 6 Ambassador's offices
- 7 Administration
- 8 Patio
- 9 Technical
- 10 Approach road
- 11 Reception
- 12 Salon
- 13 Dining room
- 14 Ambassador's private living



Cross sections



South elevation



Terrace of residence



Waiting area of the chancellery



North elevation



Residence living room



Dining room of the residence

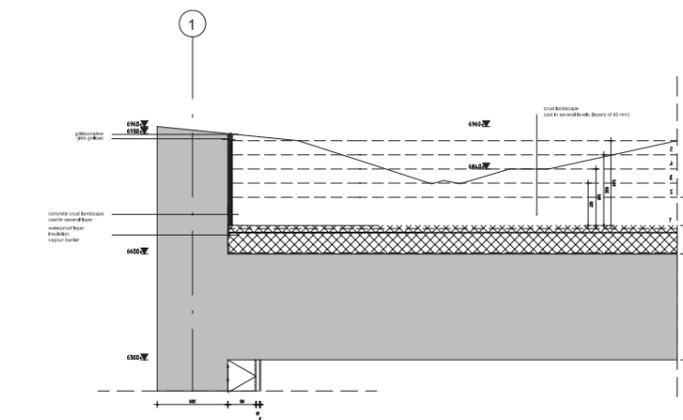


Stairway to the roof from the residence

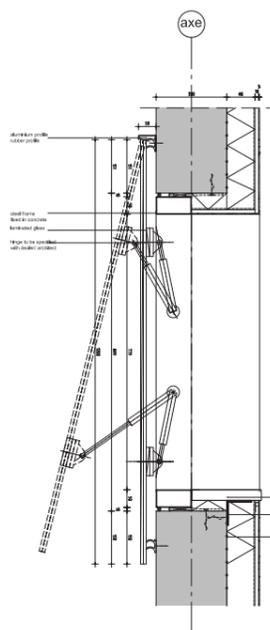


Staff house living room

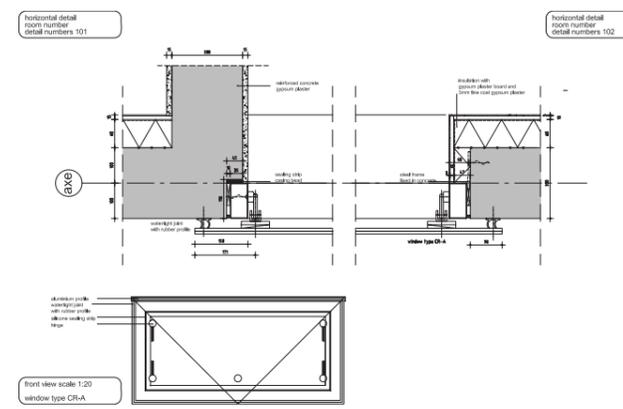
# Chancellery



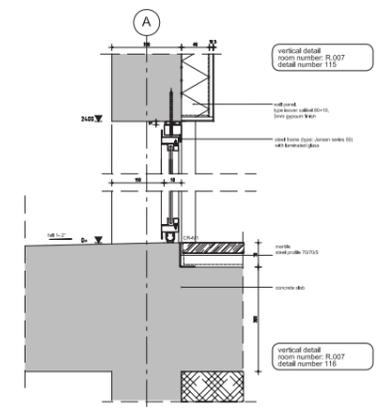
Detail 1:20



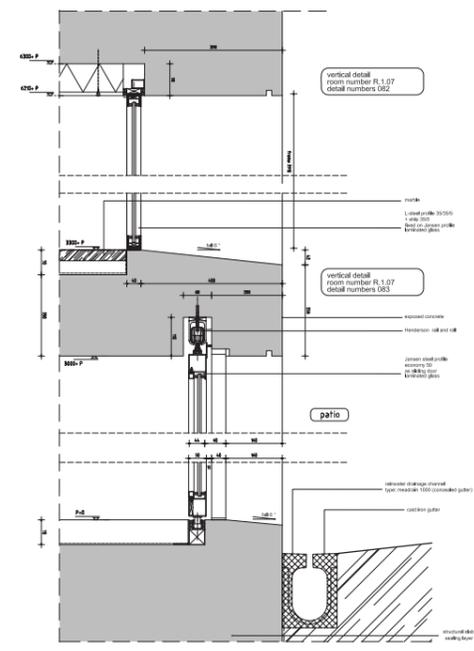
Detail 1:20



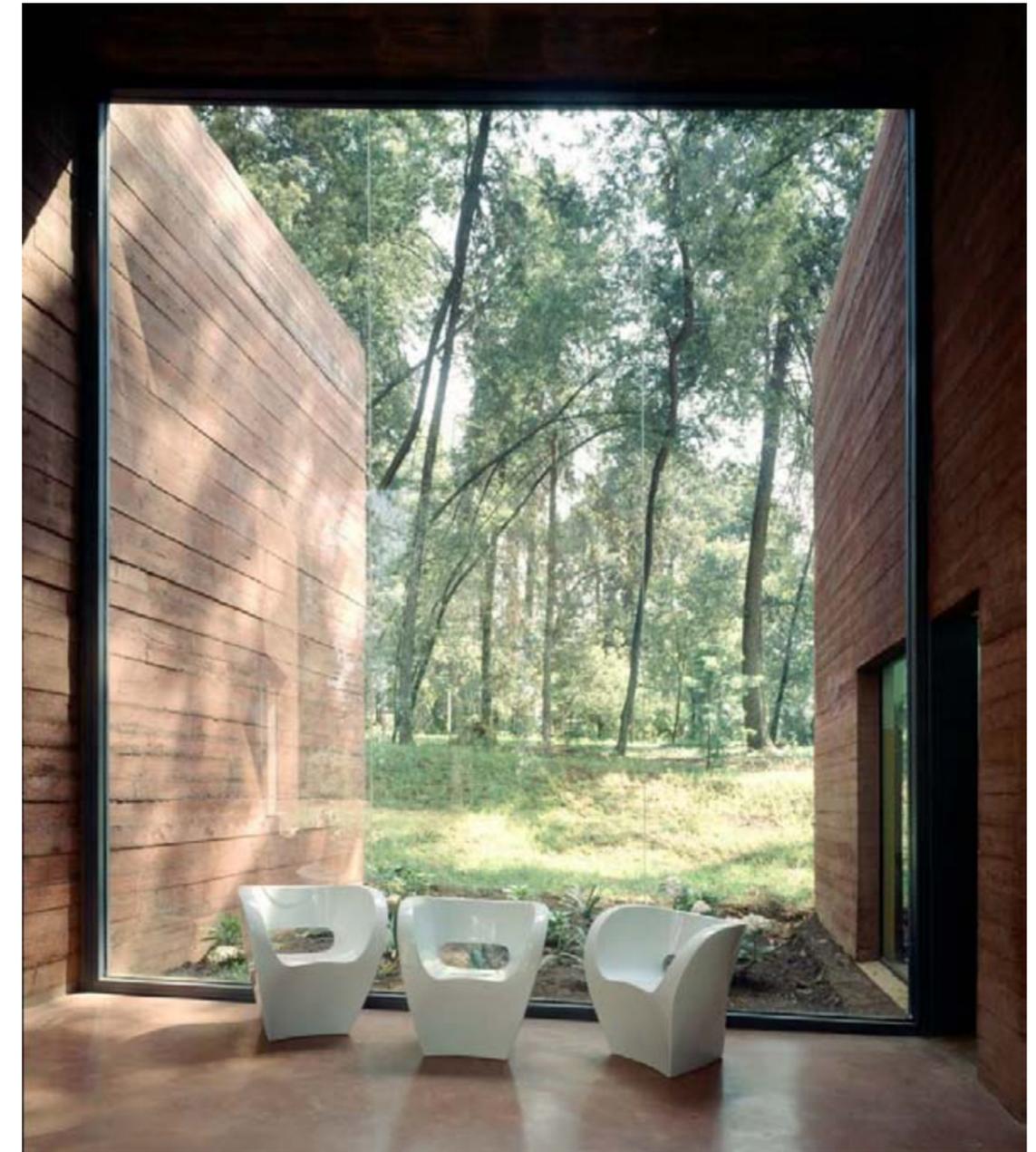
Detail 1:20



Detail 1:20



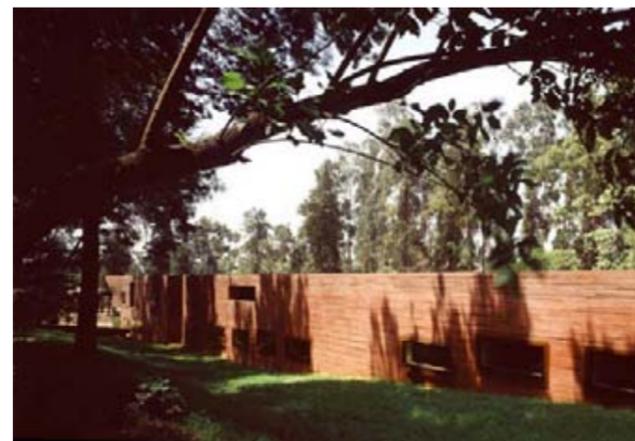
Detail 1:20



Waiting area of the chancellery



Main entrance



North elevation



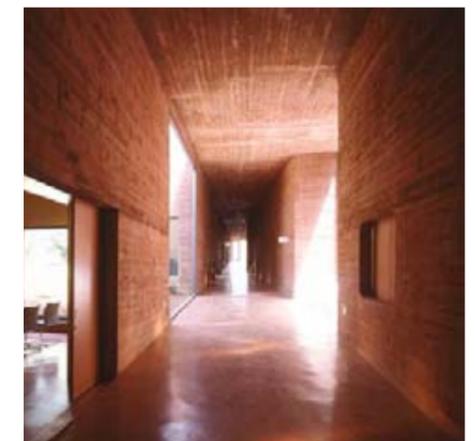
Facade detail



South elevation

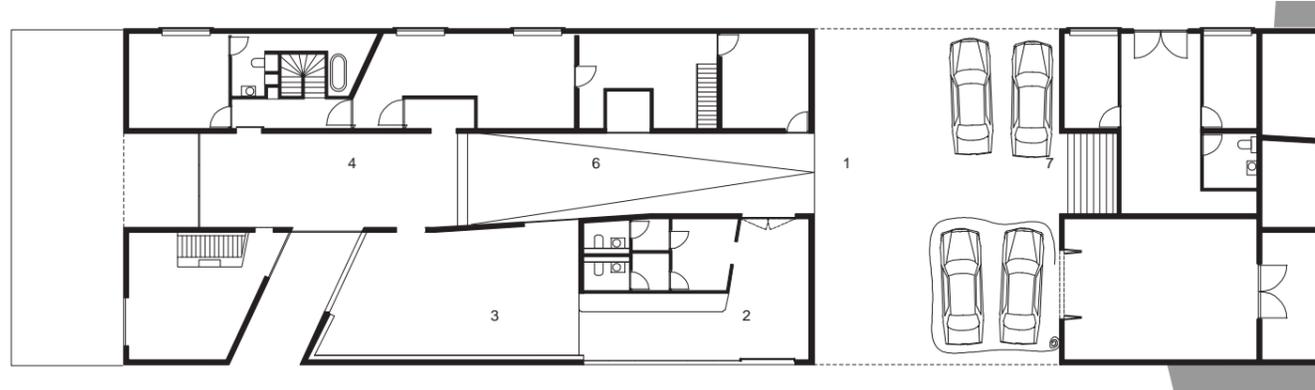


Central hall

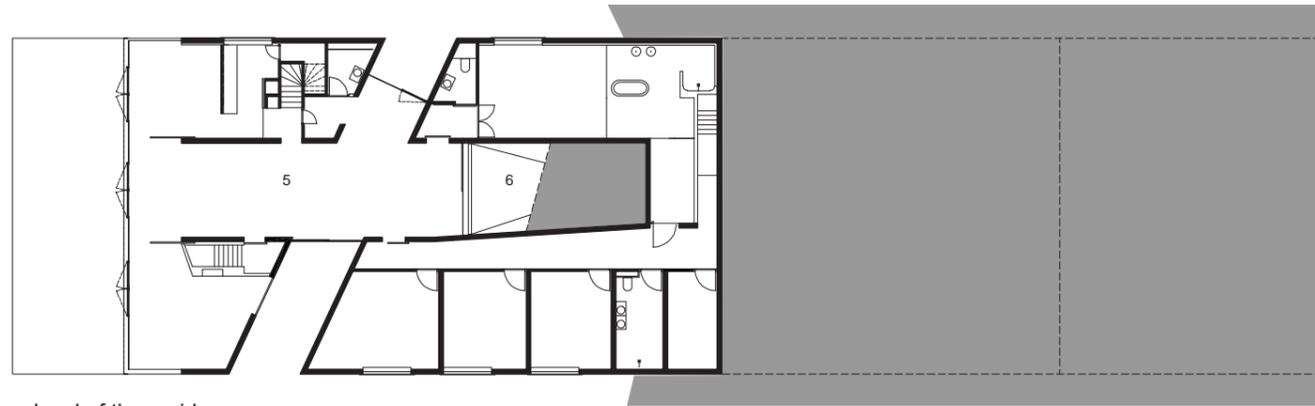


Central hall

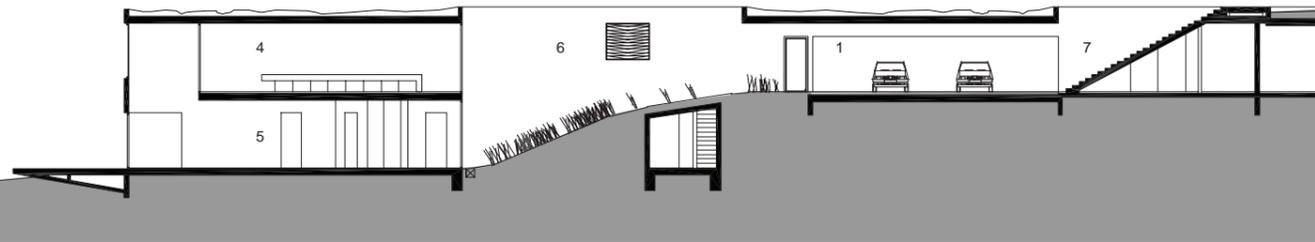
# Residence



Upper level of the residence



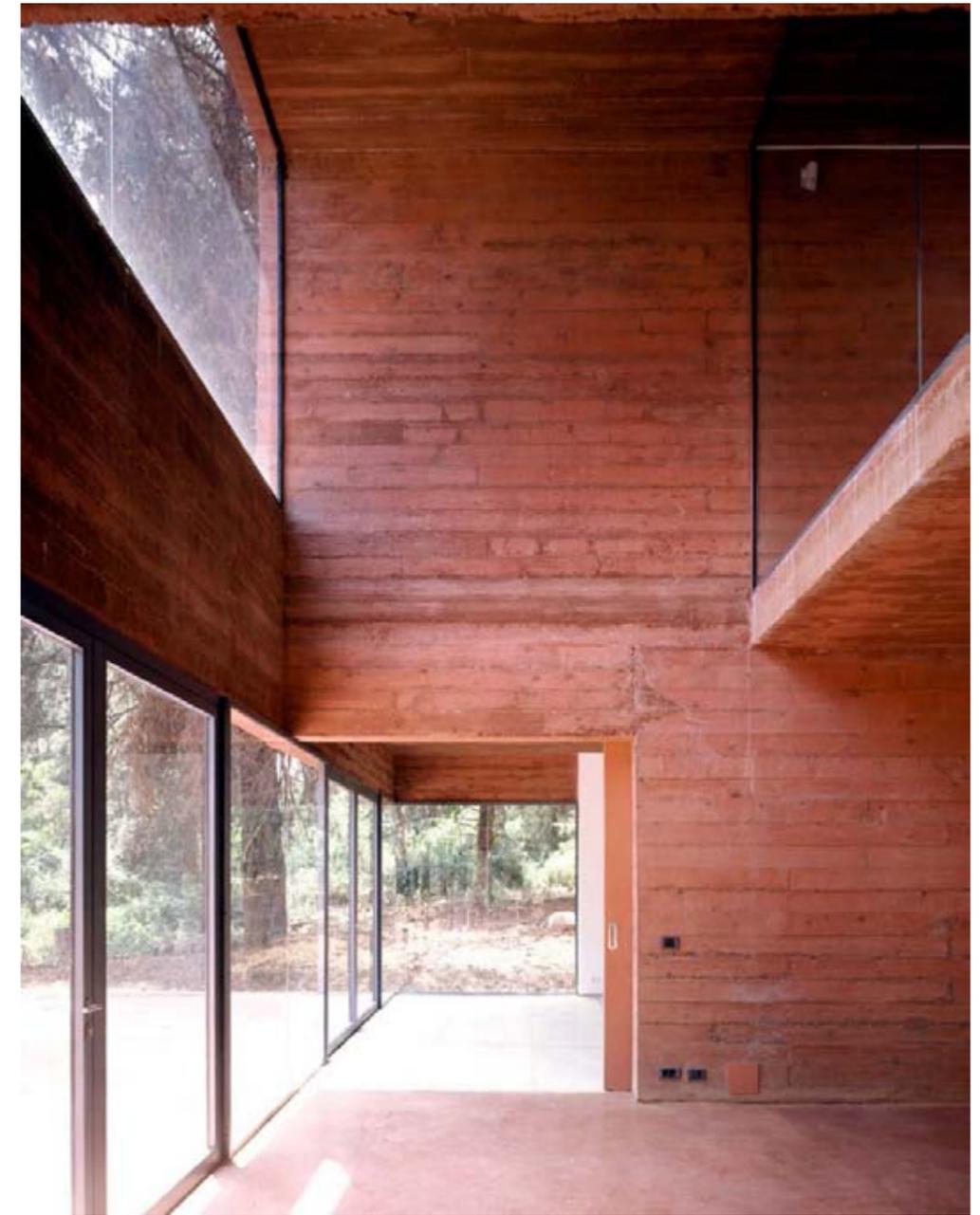
Lower level of the residence



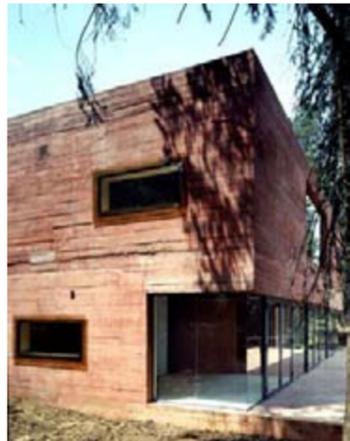
Section of the residence



- 1 Residence entrance
- 2 Reception
- 3 Salon
- 4 Dining room
- 5 Ambassador's private living
- 6 Patio
- 7 Stairway to the roof from the residence



Residence living room



Northwest corner



Terrace of residence



Residence entrance



Salon, reception

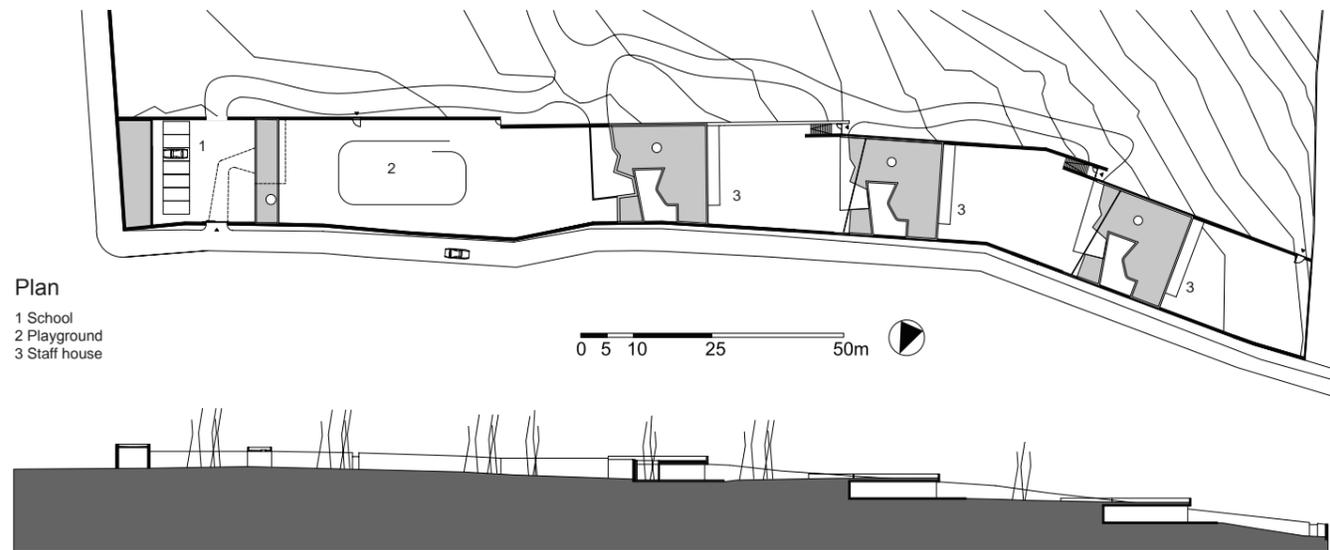


Dining room of the residence



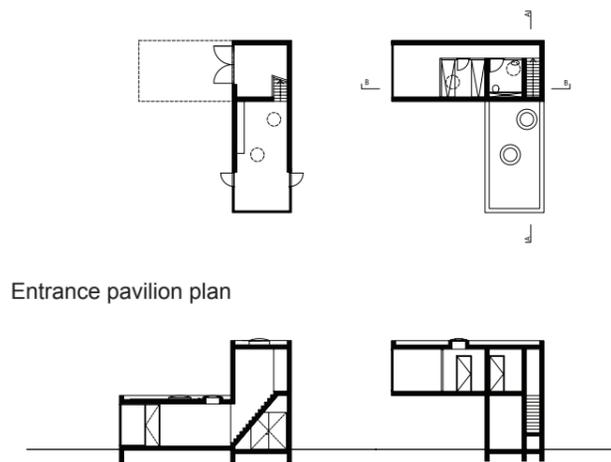
View through the dining room

# Staff houses and entrance pavilion



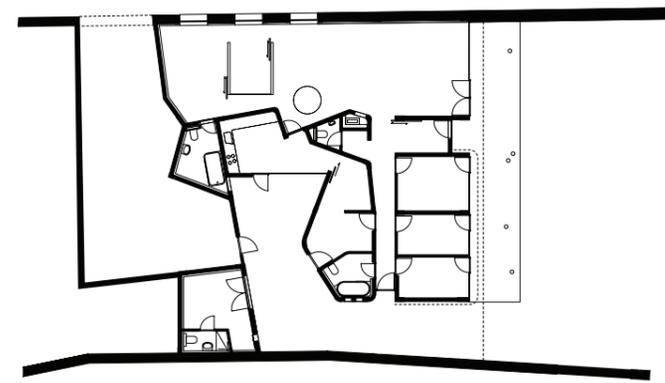
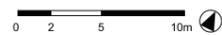
Plan  
 1 School  
 2 Playground  
 3 Staff house

Section



Entrance pavilion plan

Entrance pavilion section



Plan of staff house



Living room



Entrance pavilion



Entrance pavilion



Staff house garden

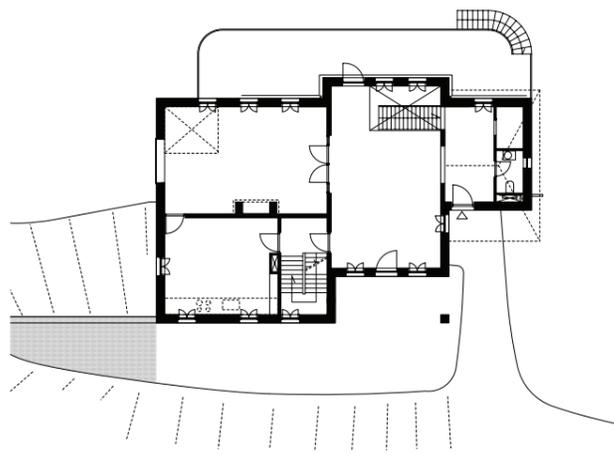


Staff houses on the perimeter wall

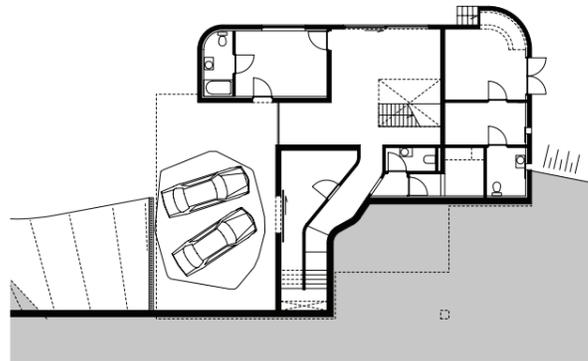


Staff house living room

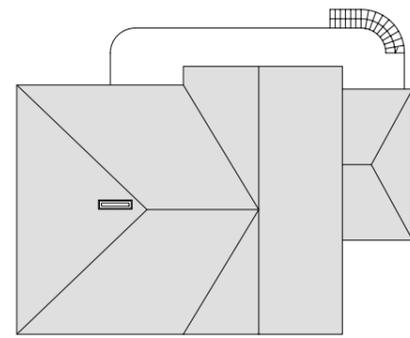
# Deputy House



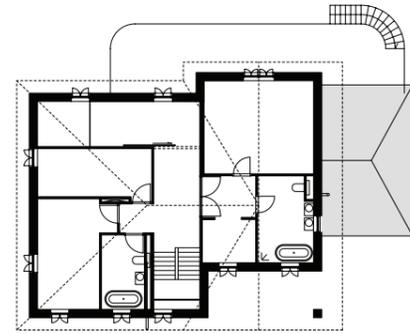
Groundfloor



Basement



Roof



Attic



Deputy House west elevation



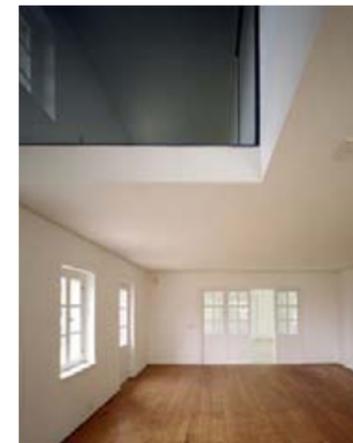
Driving lane



North east view



Facade detail



Living room



Central hall



## Aga Khan Award for Architecture

## ARCHITECT'S RECORD

## 2007 AWARD CYCLE

## I. IDENTIFICATION

Project Title The Royal Netherlands Embassy  
 Street Address Old Airport Zone W24, K13, House 001  
 City Addis Ababa Country Ethiopia

## II. PERSONS RESPONSIBLE

## A. Architect/Planner

Name Dick van Gameren & Bjarne Mastenbroek  
 Mailing Address Barentszplein 7  
 City Amsterdam Postal Code 1013 NJ  
 Country The Netherlands Telephone 00.31.20.5304850  
 Facsimile 00.31.20.5304860 E-mail info@vangameren.com  
 Principal Designer Dick van Gameren & Bjarne Mastenbroek

## B. Client

Name Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
 Mailing Address P.O. Box 20061  
 City The Hague Postal Code 2500 EB  
 Country The Netherlands Telephone 00.31.70.3486486  
 Facsimile 00.31.70.3486569 E-mail info@minbuza.nl

## C. Project Affiliates / Consultants

Please list those involved in the project and indicate their roles and areas of responsibility (e.g. engineers, contractors, economists, master craftsmen, other architects, clients, etc.). Please cite addresses and telephone numbers separately.

Name	Role
<u>ABBA Associats/Architects</u>	<u>Local Architect</u>
<u>Arup bv</u>	<u>Leading Engineer</u>
<u>Elmi Olindo &amp; Co Plc</u>	<u>Contractor</u>
<u>Gary Campbell</u>	<u>Local Projectmanager</u>
<u>MH Engineers Pvt.Ltd.</u>	<u>Local Engineer</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Addresses and telephone numbers of the Project Affiliates/Consultants

ABBA Associates/Architects  
P o Box 12358  
ADDIS ABABA  
T 002511513331  
F 002511533658  
E abbaarch@telecom.net.et

Arup bv  
Ove Arup & Partners  
13 Fitzroy Street  
W1P 6BQ LONDON  
T. 00442076361531  
F 00442074653667  
E fred.ilidio@arup.com

Elmi Olindo & co plc  
P o Box 4215  
ADDIS ABABA  
T 00251116637690  
F 00251116637689  
E paolo@elmiconstruction.com

Gary Campbell  
Project Manager  
P o. Box 56377  
ADDIS ABABA  
T 00251- 01711260  
F. 002511711577  
E gary.campbell@turntown.co.uk

MH Engineering Pvt Ltd Co  
P.o Box 1553  
ADDIS ABABA  
T. 002511511767  
F 002511508590  
E messele.haile@telecom.net.et

**III. TIMETABLE**

(please specify year and month)

A Commission	<u>May 1998</u>		
B Design	Commencement	<u>May 1998</u>	Completion <u>May 2002</u>
C Construction	Commencement	<u>December 2002</u>	Completion <u>April 2006</u>
D Occupancy	<u>June 2005</u>		

Remarks, if any:

**IV. AREAS AND SURFACES**

(please indicate in square metres)

A Total Site Area	<u>55.000 m<sup>2</sup></u>
B Ground Floor Area	_____
C Total Combined Floor Area (including basement(s), ground floors) and all upper floors)	<u>3.300 m<sup>2</sup> (chancellery, residence, deputy residence, 3 staffhouses, school &amp; gatehouse)</u>

Remarks, if any:

**V. ECONOMICS**

(please specify the amounts in local currencies and provide the equivalents in US dollars. Specify the dates and the rates of exchange in US dollars at the time.)

	Amount in Local Currency	Amount in US dollars	Exchange Rate	Date
A Total Initial Budget	<u>54.653.176</u>	<u>6.212.000</u>	<u>8,798</u>	<u>04-12-2002</u>
B Cost of Land	<u>not available</u>	<u>not available</u>	_____	_____
C Analysis of Actual Costs				
1 Infrastructure	<u>5.991.438</u>	<u>681.000</u>	<u>8,798</u>	<u>04-12-2002</u>
2 Labour	_____	_____	_____	_____
3 Materials	<u>47.817.130</u>	<u>5.435.000</u>	<u>8,798</u>	<u>04-12-2002</u>
4 Landscaping	<u>844.608</u>	<u>96.000</u>	<u>8,798</u>	<u>04-12-2002</u>
5 Professional Fees	<u>9.853.760</u>	<u>1.120.000</u>	<u>8,798</u>	<u>04-12-2002</u>
6 Other	_____	_____	_____	_____
D Total Actual Costs (without land)	<u>64.506.936</u>	<u>7.332.000</u>	<u>8,798</u>	<u>04-12-2002</u>
E Actual Cost (per sq meter)	<u>19.540</u>	<u>2.221</u>	<u>8,798</u>	<u>04-12-2002</u>

Remarks, if any, on costs:

## VI. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project was commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of a special program to construct new embassies as a way to represent contemporary Dutch culture and at the same time to pay respect to the country where the embassy is based

The compound of the embassy in Addis Ababa is in use by the Dutch since the 1940's

As the chancery was housed in a temporary building, and the old residence was not used any more because of its very bad condition, the Ministry made a brief for the new construction of both buildings, a renovation and extension of the existing deputy ambassador's house, and the addition of three staff houses

During the process, a small school building was added to the program

The realization of the project took 8 years. There was a large time span between the start of the design phase and the actual construction

Due to our point of departure to realize the project with local parties (advisers, contractors etc.), this time was needed to get acquainted with local customs and way of working, and to adapt the Dutch procedures of tendering to the local ones

The project is now in use by the Dutch embassy staff and the local Ethiopian staff. Besides providing work space and living accommodation, it serves as a meeting point in the diplomatic life of Addis, as a central place for all Dutch people living and working in Ethiopia, and most of all as a meeting point of Ethiopians and the Dutch and their respective cultures

## VII. MATERIALS, STRUCTURE, AND CONSTRUCTION

One of the main objectives of the project was to engage as much as possible the local workforce and building industry. This led inevitably to a choice for concrete as the major construction material, as all others had to be imported

This choice was also well suited to the specific climate and the seismic conditions of the site

All concrete was made in situ, in handmade formwork

The interior finishing materials, like stone claddings, wooden claddings and floors, etc. are from Ethiopian sources

### VIII. PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT

Important aspects of the project are:

- A response to the site and landscape: the compound of the embassy can be considered as a small natural reserve surrounded by the urban sprawl of Addis. Guiding theme of the design as a whole has been the preservation of the site and to make the impact of the new construction as small as possible. The existing topography/contour lines have been respected, the original vegetation has been maintained as much as possible. Care was taken not to disturb the animal life.

All buildings have been situated in such a way that every building has maximum privacy and seems to be standing alone in the beautiful, forested compound. The project is to set an example for a more sensitive and sustainable approach toward existing natural and landscape values in Ethiopia.

- Sustainable construction and buildings: sustainability has been an important theme. The buildings have been realized nearly completely with local materials and have been designed with a minimum of technical installations.

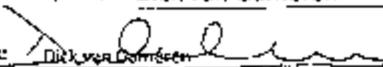
The theme of sustainability has also been applied to the social and economic factors. The project has been completely realized by local contractors. The investments to realize this building have benefited the local economy. Often projects like this are mostly imported, in terms of materials but also of human resources, from Europe.

- Cultural Aspects: The design has been inspired by traditional Ethiopian architecture and confronts this with Dutch cultural and architectural themes, as for example transparency. The respect for Ethiopian tradition but at the same time the introduction of contemporary themes from the Netherlands, wants to inspire an exchange of ideas from two worlds, Europe and Africa.

---

**Please note:** The submission of this Record is a prerequisite to candidacy for the Award. All information contained in and submitted with the Record will be kept strictly confidential until announcement of the Award is made. Subsequently, such material may be made available by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture and you hereby grant the Aga Khan Award for Architecture a non-exclusive licence for the duration of the legal term of copyright (and all rights in the nature of copyright) in the Material submitted to reproduce the Material or licence the reproduction of the same throughout the world.

Name (please print) Dick van Gameren

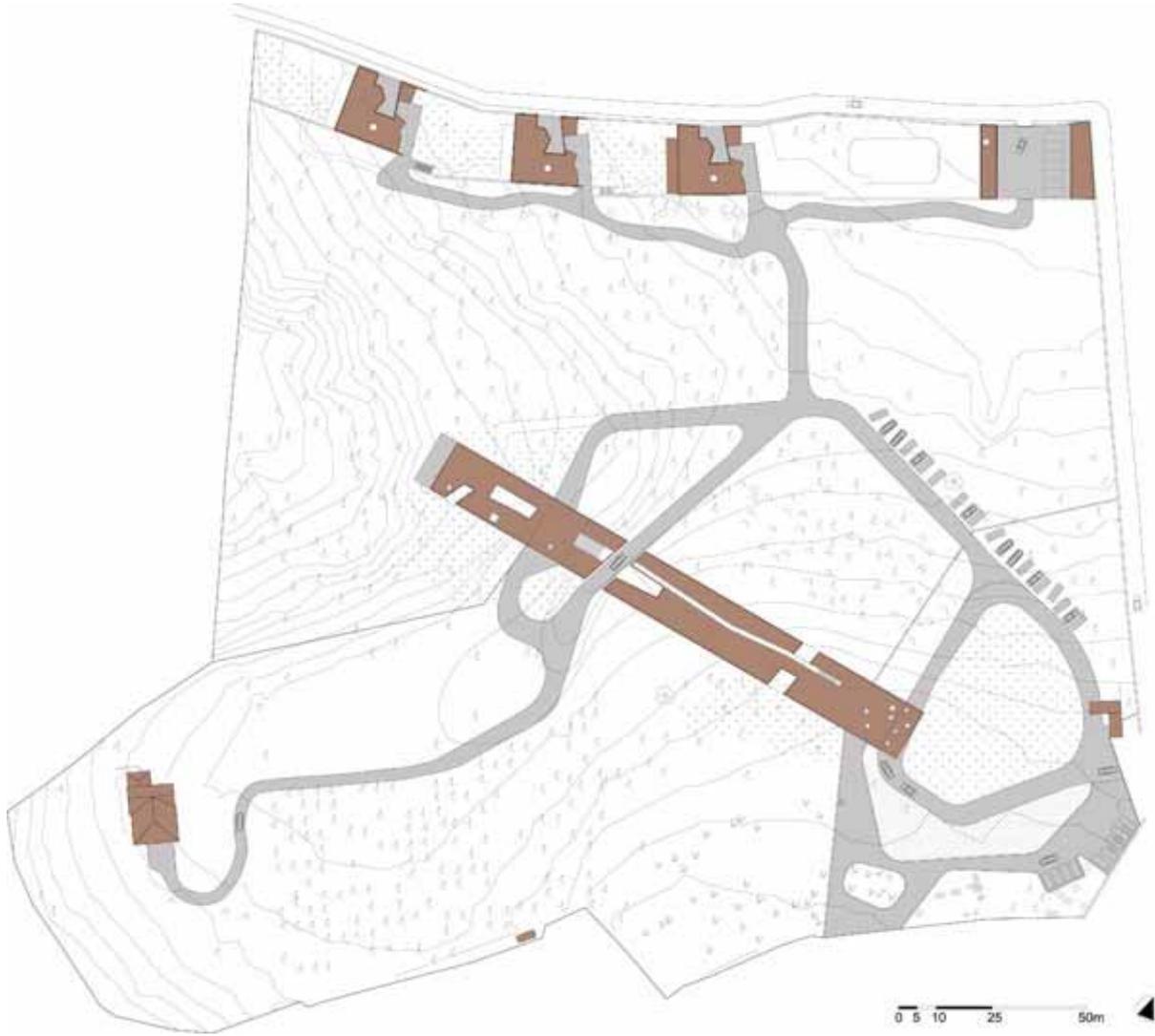
Signature  Dick van Gameren

Date 27th of September 2006

# 9814-Siteplan



# 9814-Siteplan



S327749



S327750



S327751



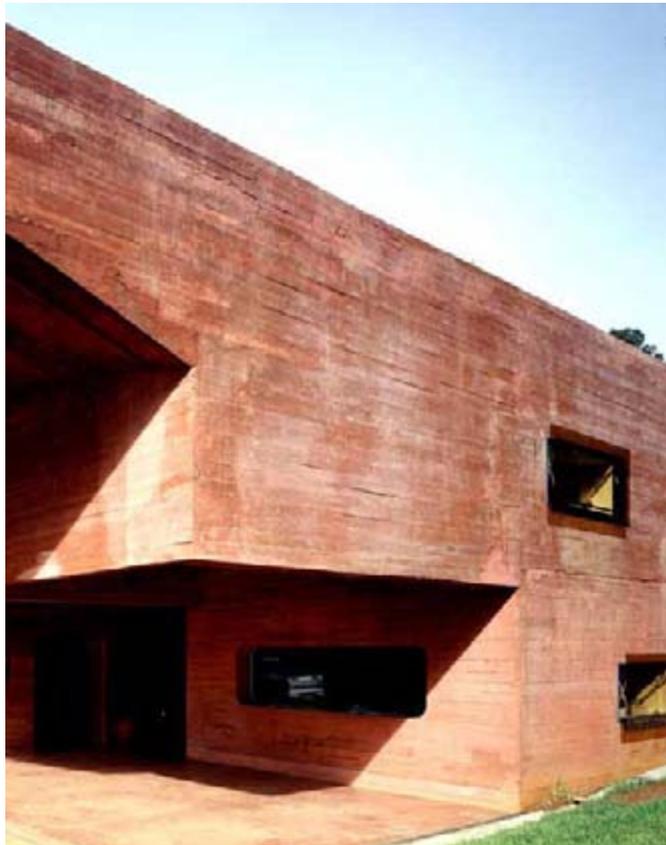
S327752



S327753



S327754



S327755



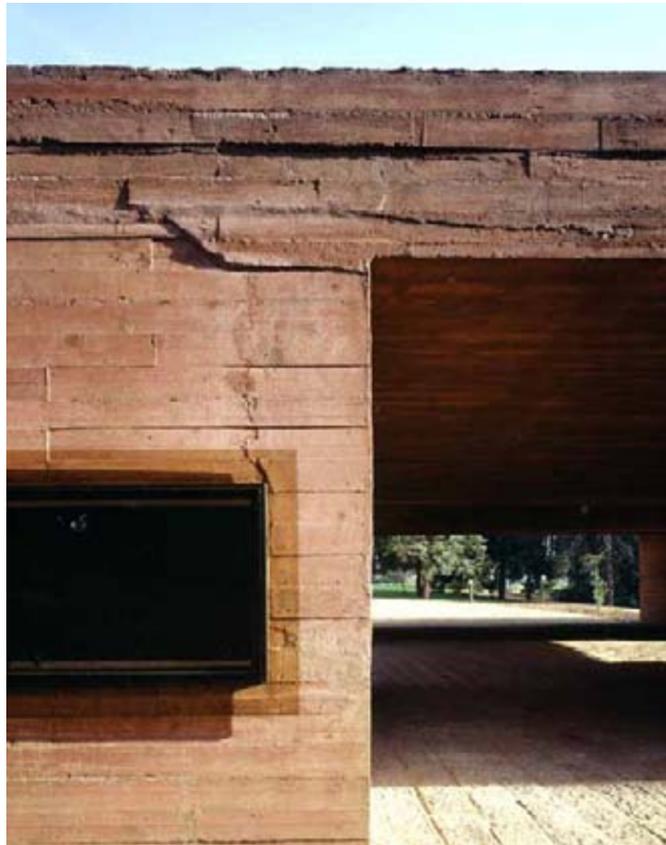
S327756



S327757



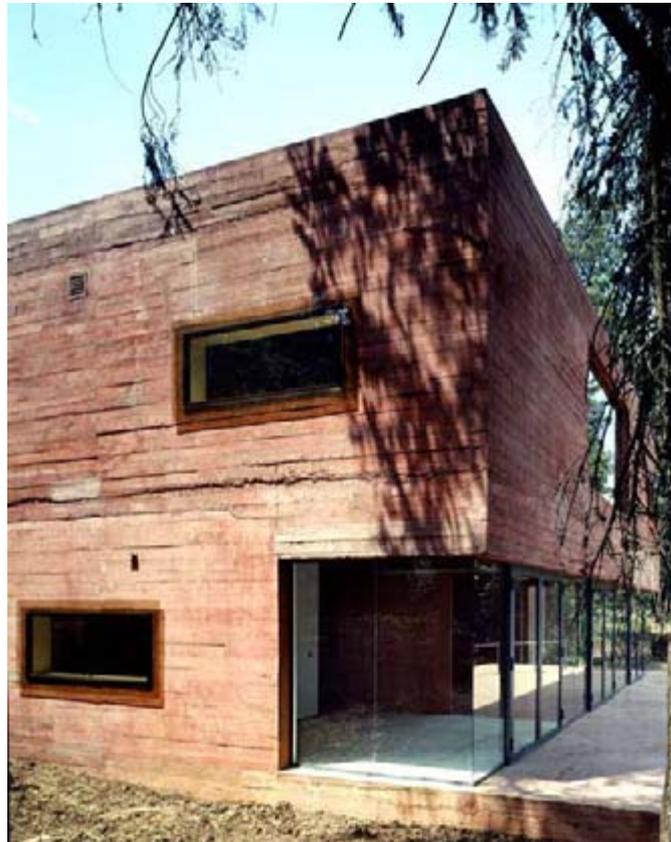
S327758



S327759



S327760



S327761



S327762



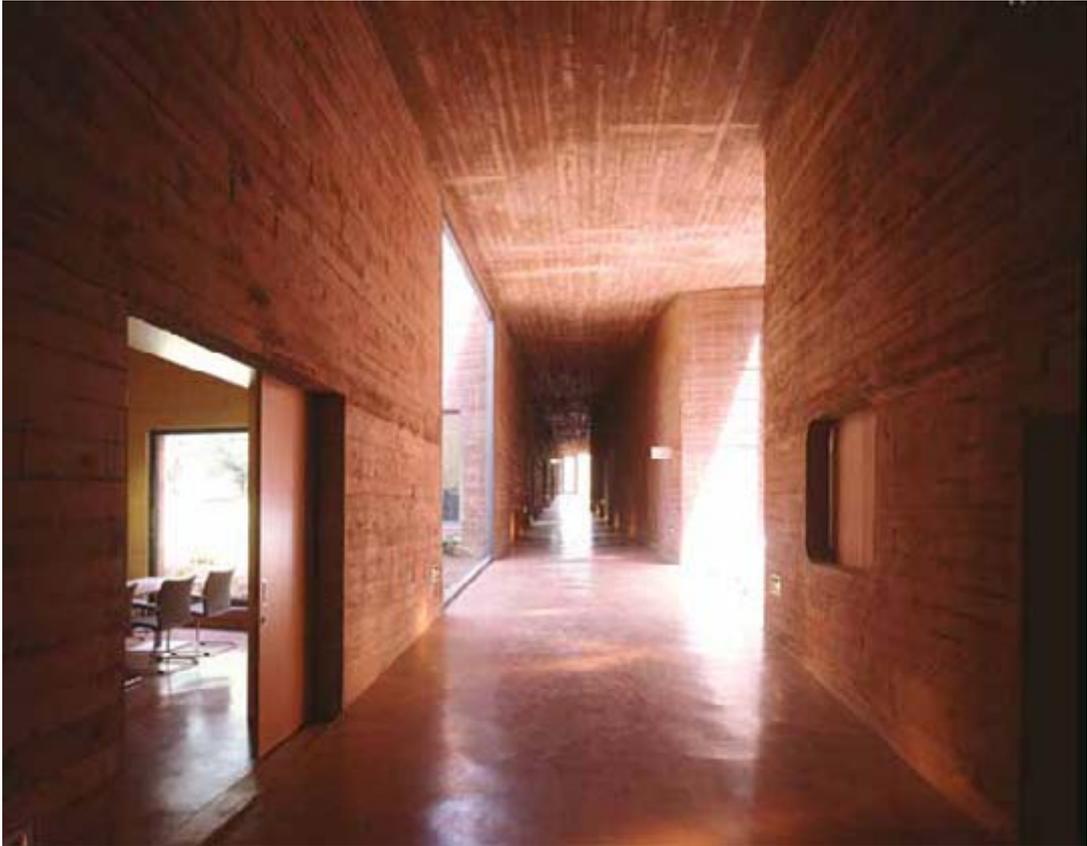
S327763



S327764



S327765



S327766



S327767



S327768



S327769



S327770



S327771



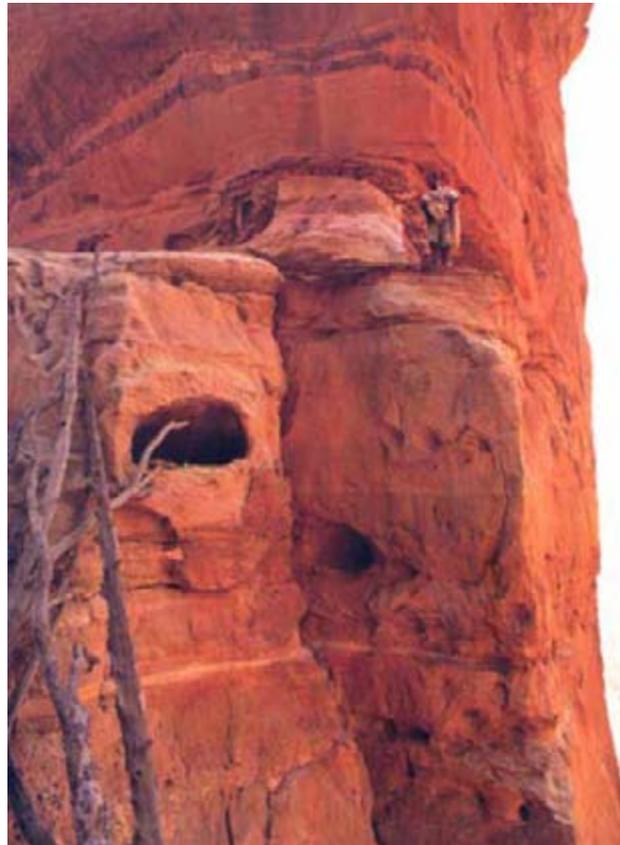
S327772



S327773



S327774



S327775



S327776



S327777



S327778



S327779



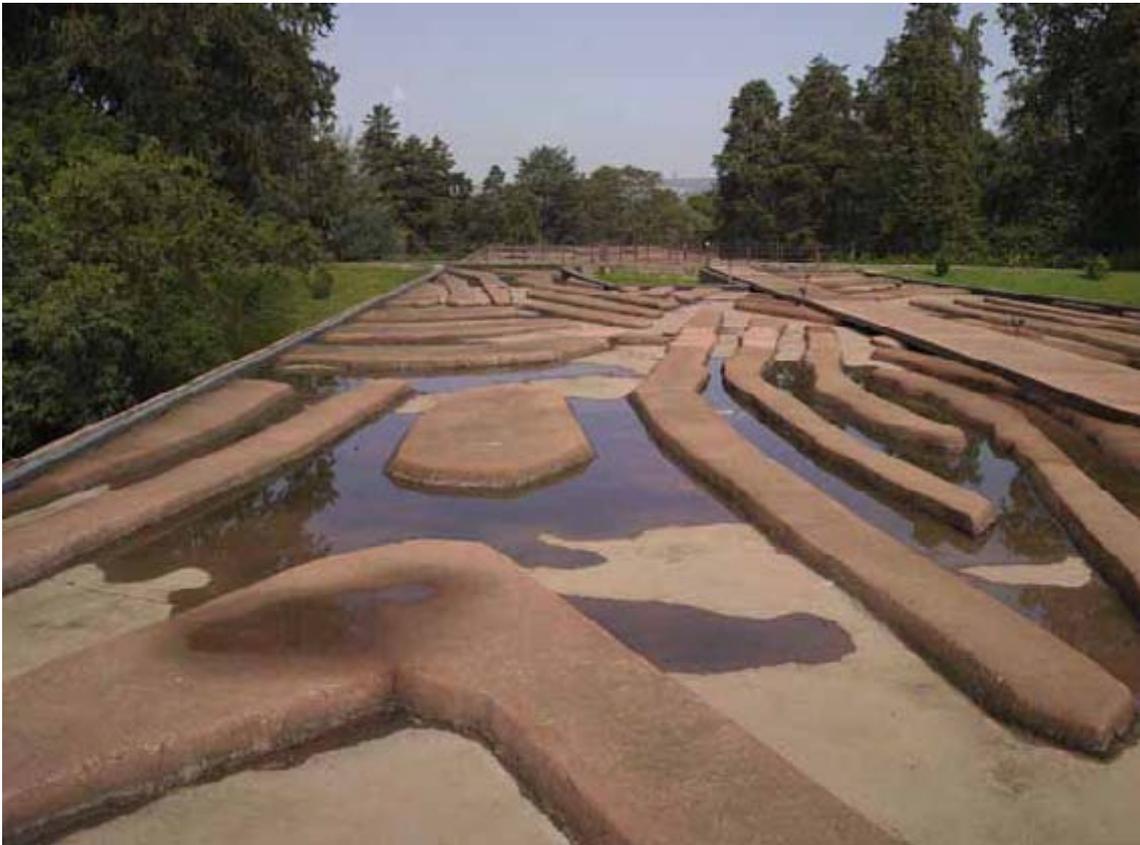
S327780



S337581



S337582



S337583



S337584



S337585



S337586



S337587



S337588



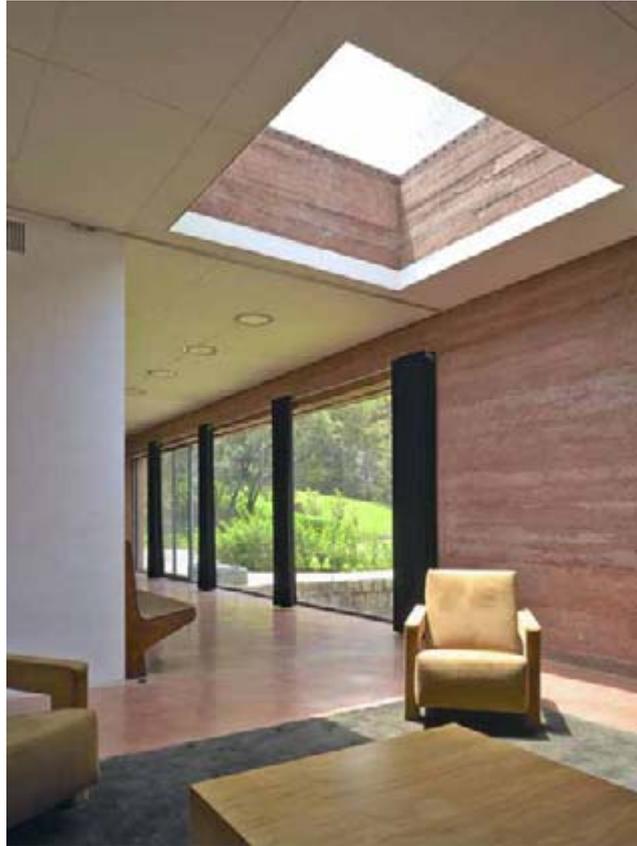
S337589



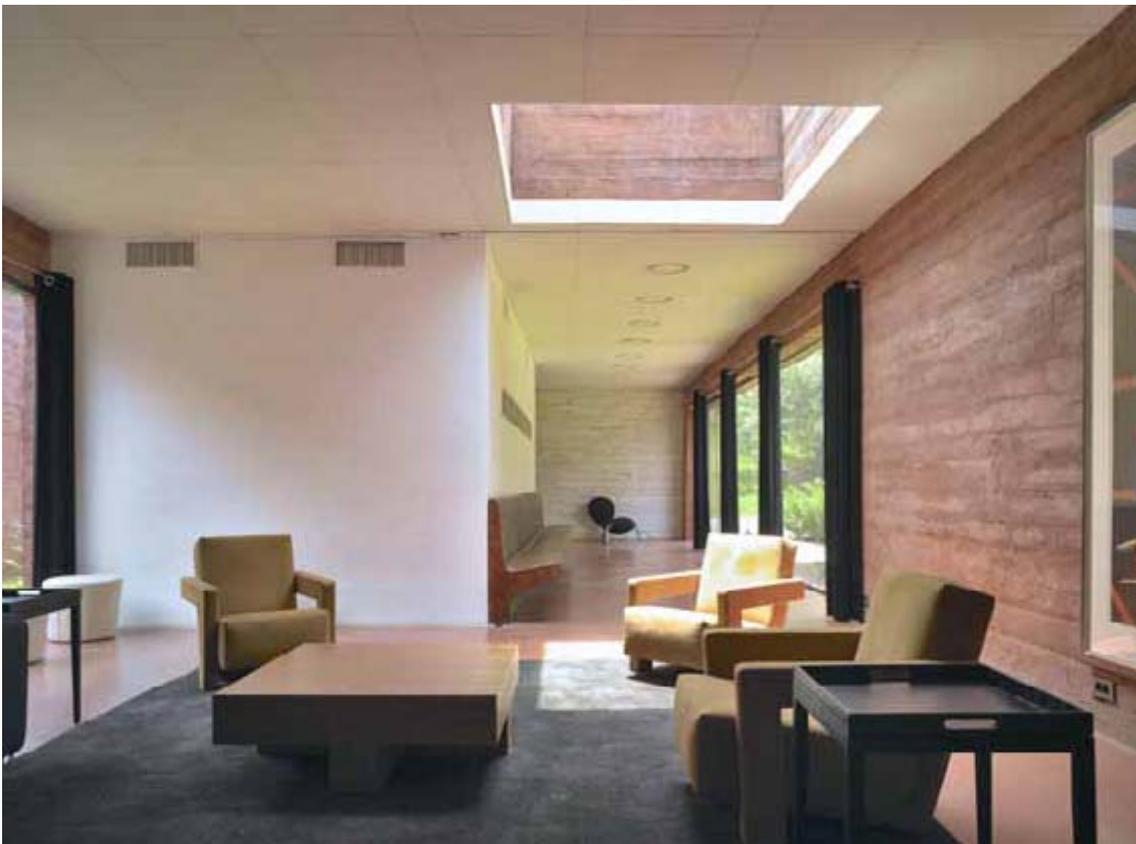
S337590



S337591



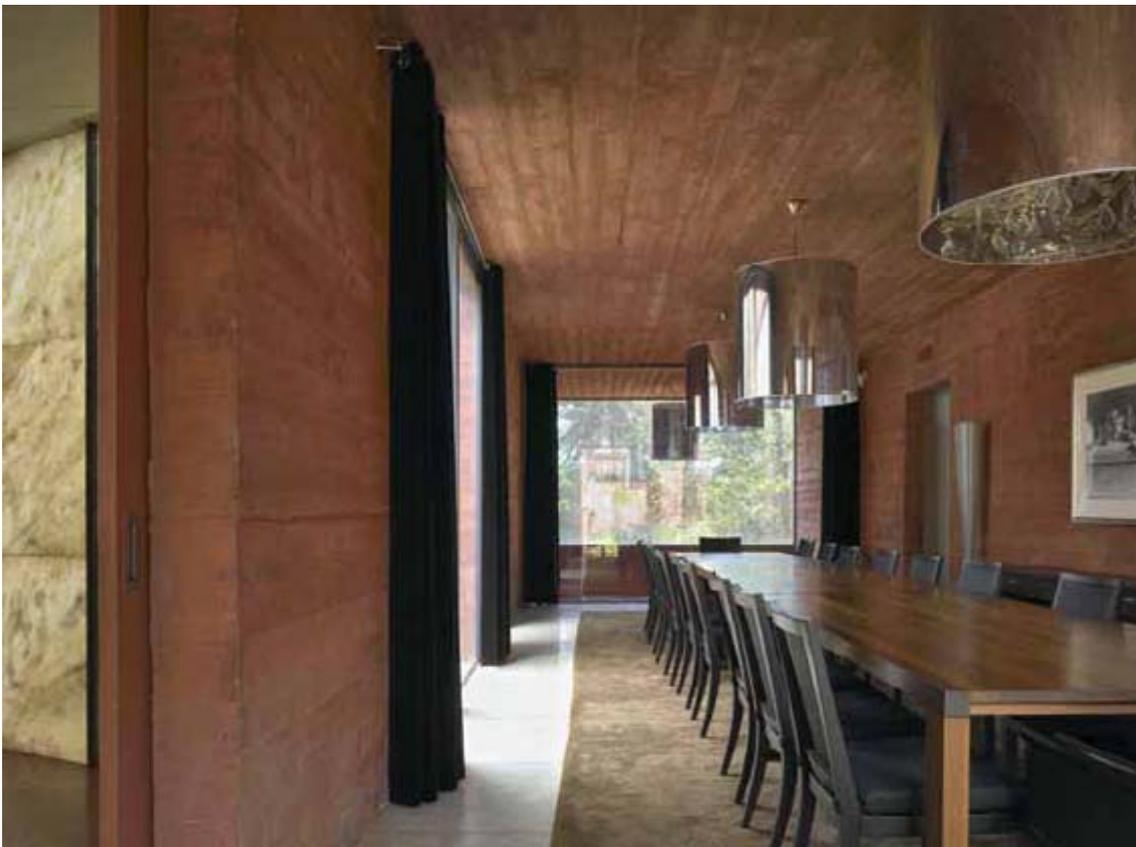
S337592



S337593



S337594



S337595



S337596



S337597



S337598



S337599



S337600



S337601



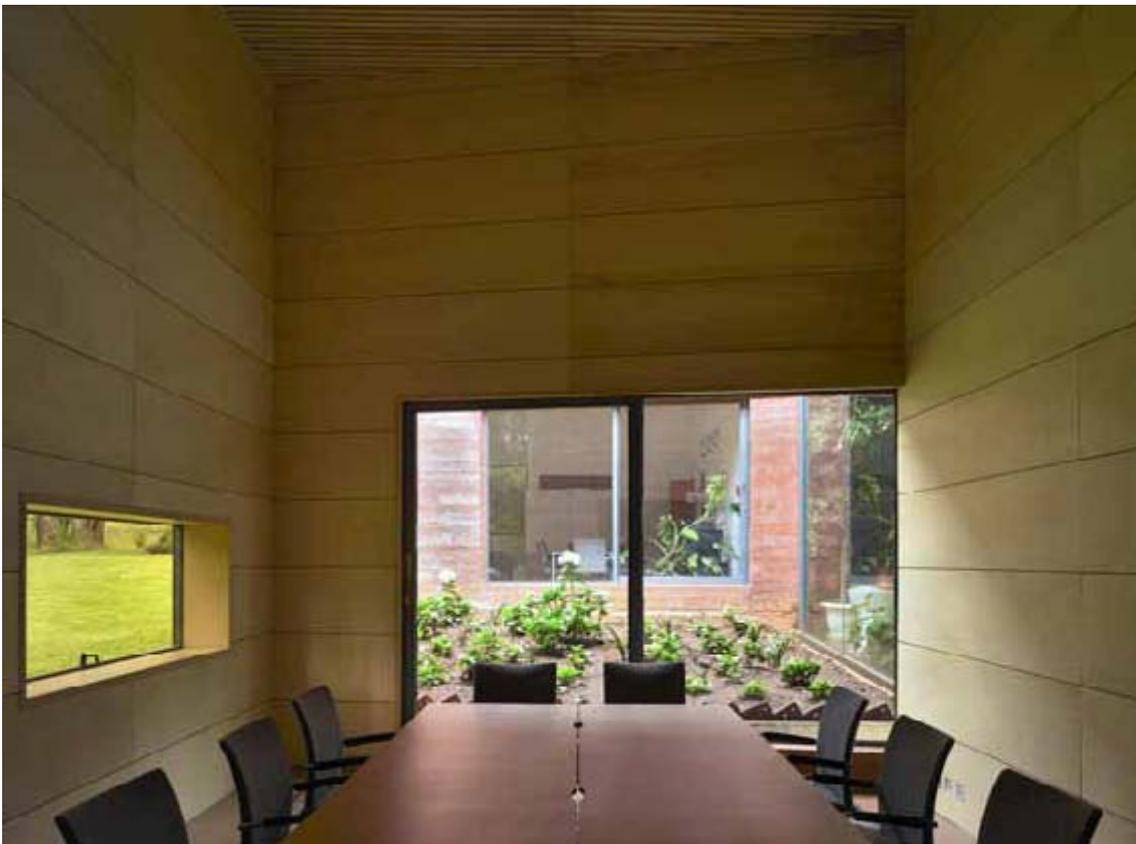
S337602



S337603



S337605



S337606



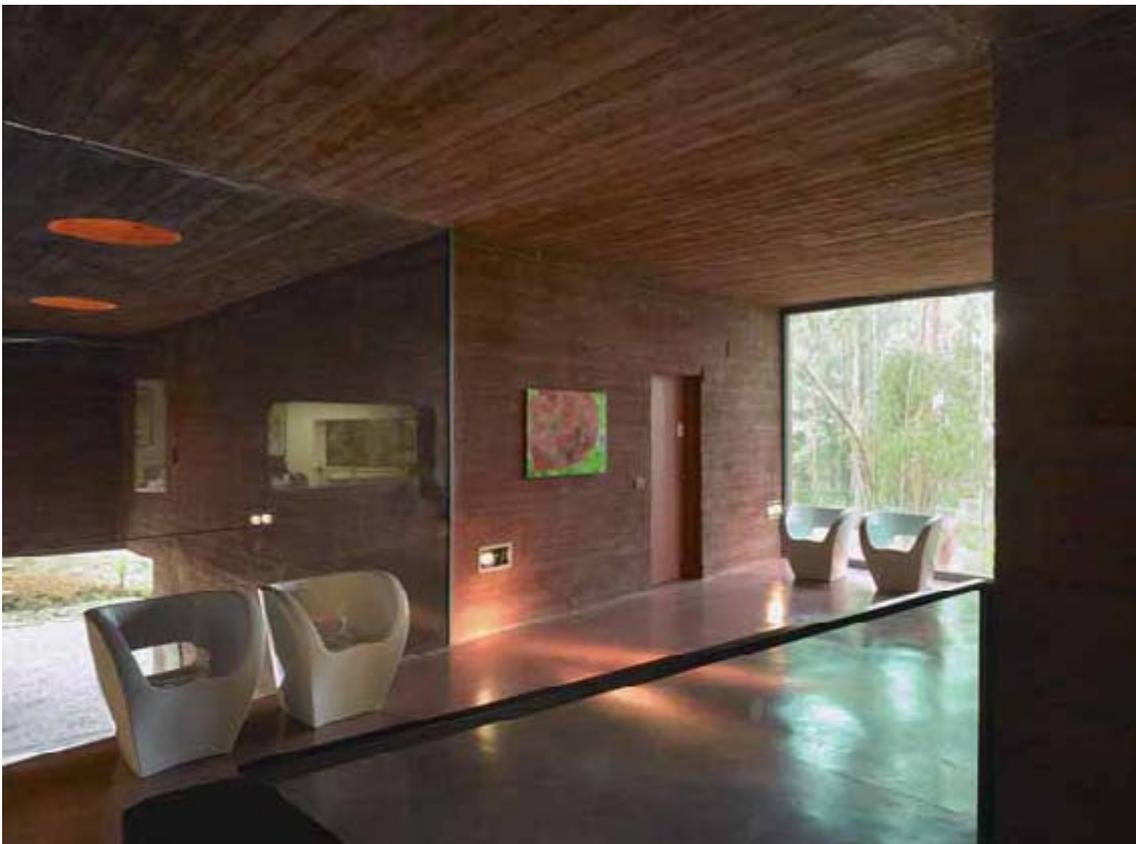
S337607



S337608



S337609



S337610



S337611



S337612



S337613



S337614



S337615



S337616



S337617



S337618



S337619



S337620



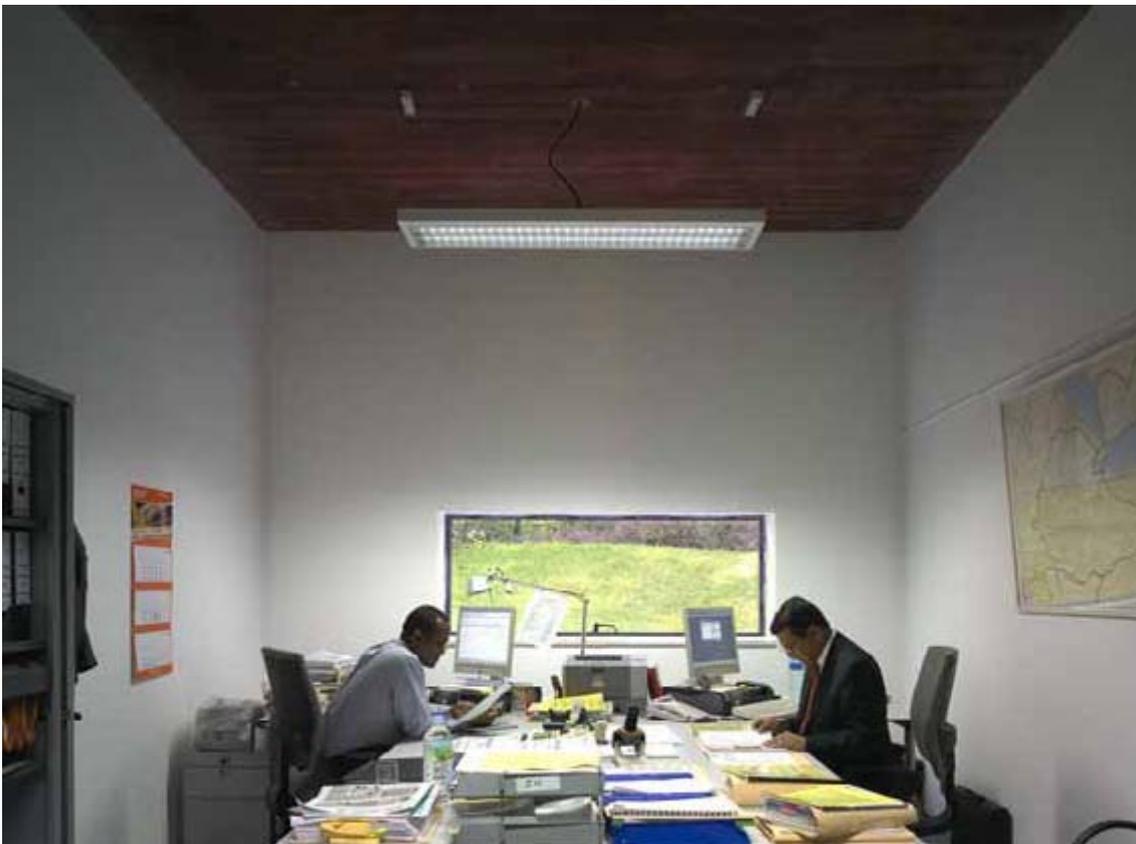
S337621



S337622



S337623



S337624



S337625



S337626



S337627



S337628



S337629



S337630



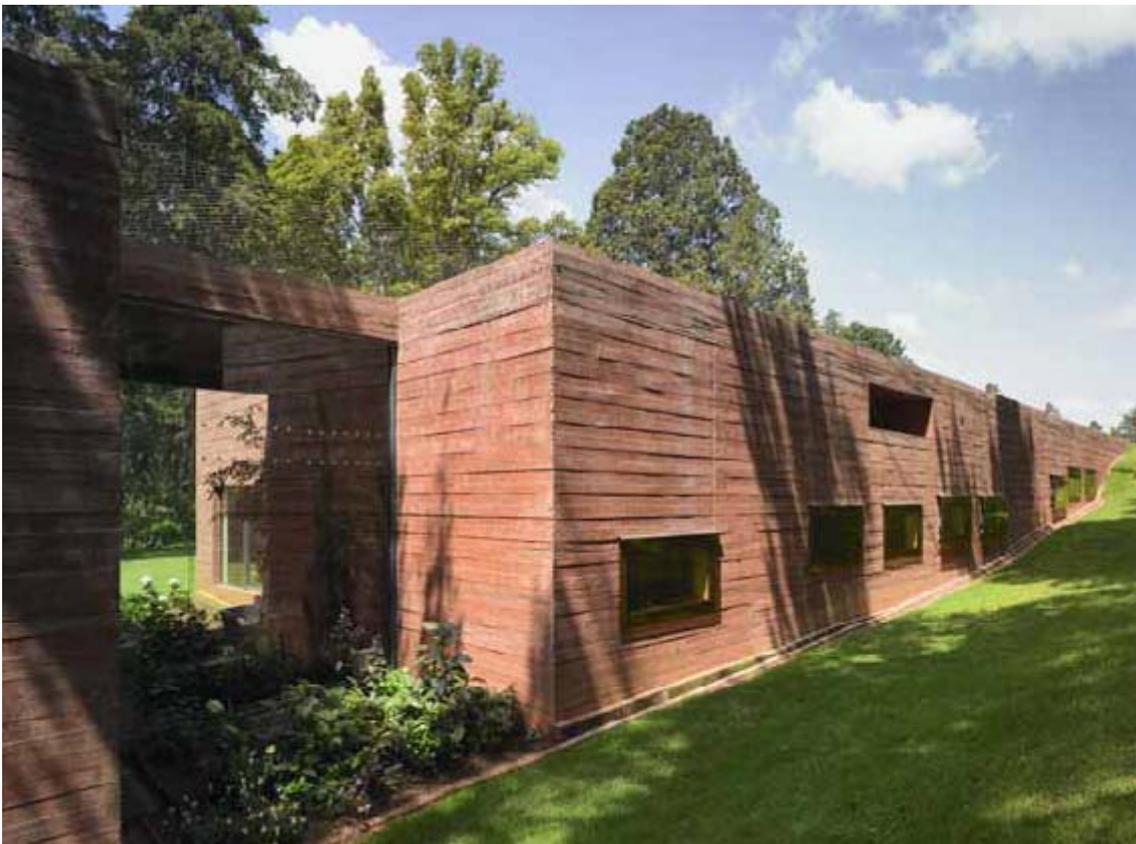
S337631



S337632



S337633



S337634



S337635



S337636



S337637



S337638



S337639



S337640



S337641



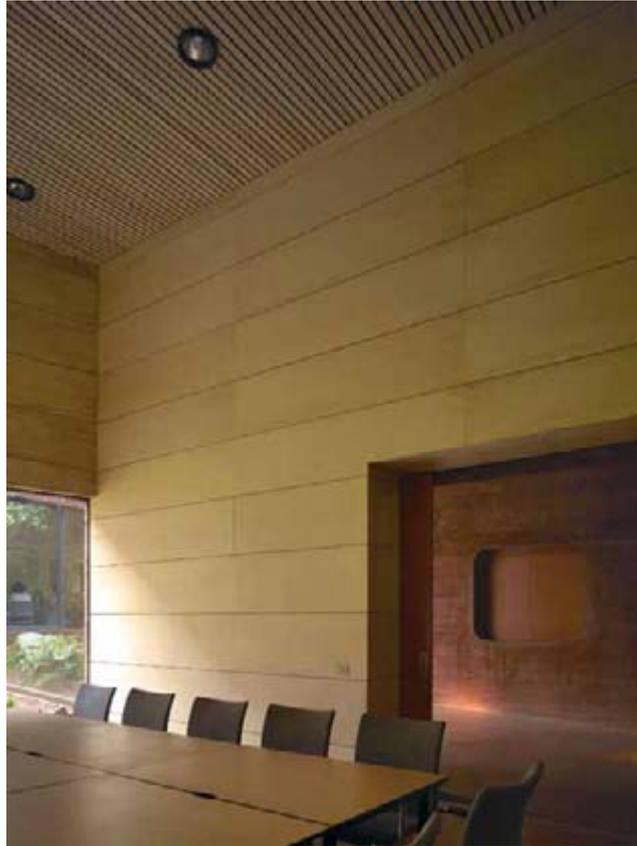
S337642



S337643



S337644



S337645



S337646



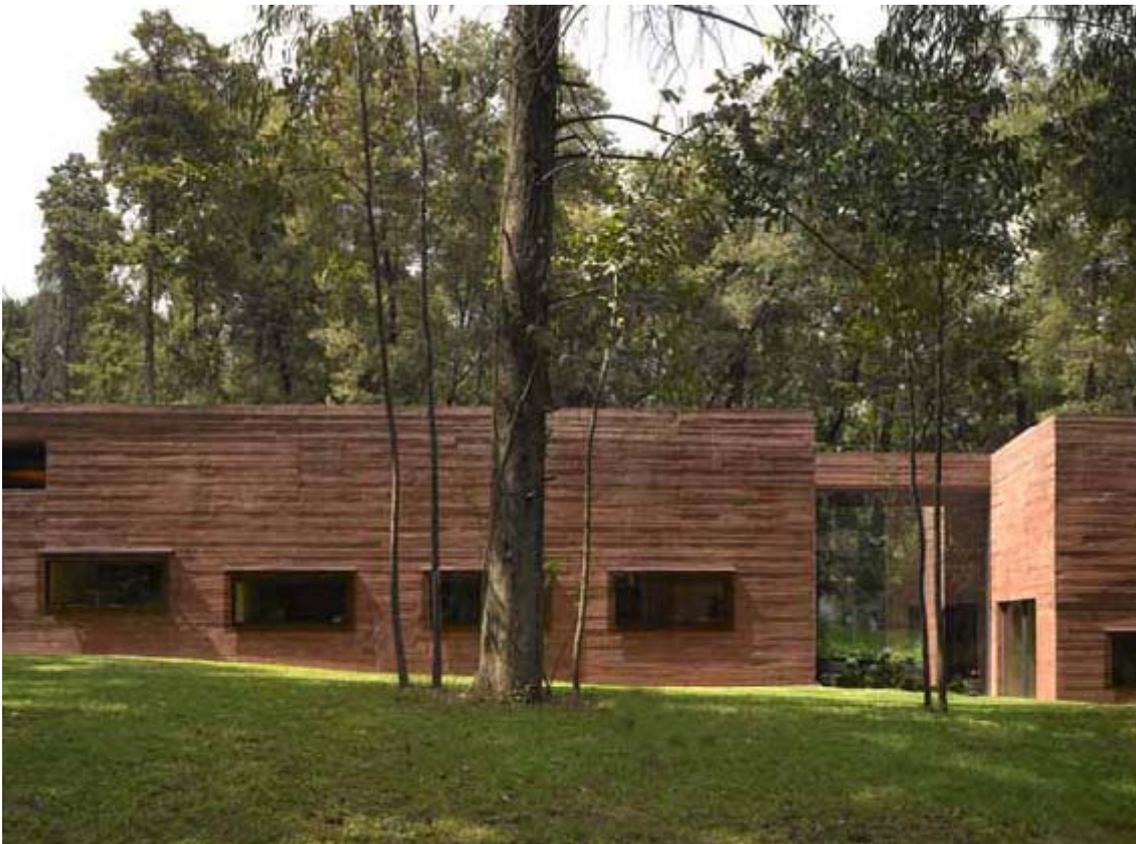
S337647



S337648



S337649



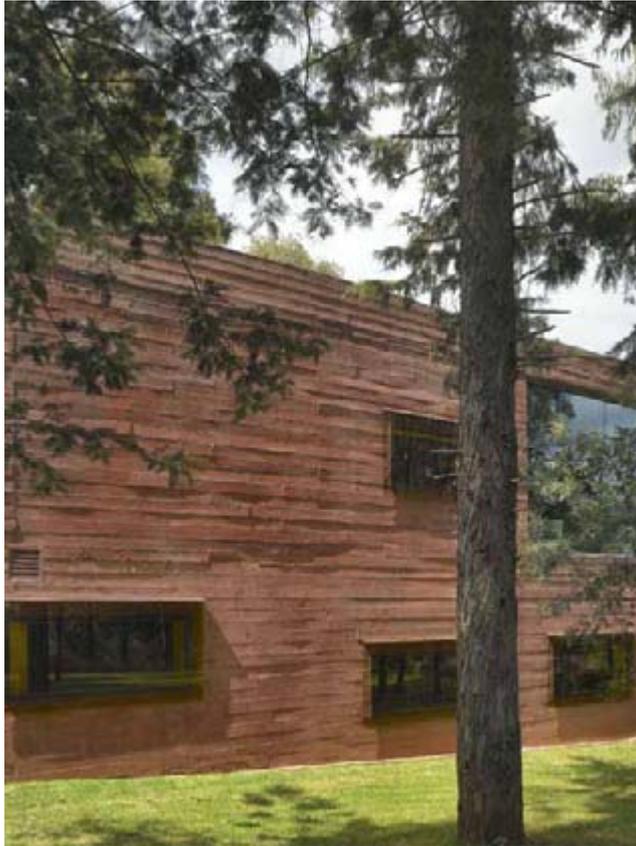
S337650



S337651



S337652



S337653



S337654



### MATERIALS IDENTIFICATION FORM

Provide a full list of all material being submitted

No	Description	Remarks
1	Completed and Signed Architect's Record	
2	Two main A-3 presentation panels (sheet 1 and 2)	
3	DVD with images and digital version of submitted materials	
4	Three images sheets with thumbnails of images	
5	Image Identification Form	
6	Four additional presentation panels (sheet 3 - 6)	
7	CV Dick van Gameren	
8	Set of copies of publications of the project	
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		

Document G

3295 ETH

IMAGE IDENTIFICATION FORM

No	Filename	Description	Photographer	Date
1	3621-05.tif	Staff houses on the perimeter wall	Christian Richters	June 2005
2	3621-06.tif	Entrance pavilion	Christian Richters	June 2005
3	3621-11.tif	Main entrance of the chancellery	Christian Richters	June 2005
4	3621-13.tif	Terrace of residence	Christian Richters	June 2005
5	3621-14.tif	South elevation of the chancellery	Christian Richters	June 2005
6	3621-16.tif	Main entrance of the chancellery	Christian Richters	June 2005
7	3621-17.tif	Approach road to the residence	Christian Richters	June 2005
8	3621-20.tif	North elevation of the chancellery	Christian Richters	June 2005
9	3621-21.tif	North elevation of the residence	Christian Richters	June 2005
10	3621-24.tif	Façade detail	Christian Richters	June 2005
11	3621-25.tif	View through the dining room	Christian Richters	June 2005
12	3621-27.tif	Northwest corner of the residence	Christian Richters	June 2005
13	3621-28.tif	Stairway to the roof from the residence	Christian Richters	June 2005
14	3621-30.tif	Roof landscape	Christian Richters	June 2005
15	3621-33.tif	Waiting area of the chancellery	Christian Richters	June 2005
16	3621-34.tif	Central hall	Christian Richters	June 2005
17	3621-39.tif	Central hall	Christian Richters	June 2005
18	3621-45.tif	Residence living room	Christian Richters	June 2005
19	3621-46.tif	Dining room of the residence	Christian Richters	June 2005
20	3621-50.tif	Salon and reception of the residence	Christian Richters	June 2005
21	3621-53.tif	Staff house living room	Christian Richters	June 2005
22	3621-54.tif	Staff house living room	Christian Richters	June 2005
23	3621-55.tif	Deputy House west elevation	Christian Richters	June 2005
24	3621-57.tif	Living room of the deputy house	Christian Richters	June 2005
25	3621-58.tif	Central hall of the deputy house	Christian	June 2005

			Richters	
26	9814-AKA-Chancellery-Elevations eps	Chancellery elevations	Dick van Gameraen architecten	
27	9814-AKA-Chancellery-Floorplans eps	Chancellery floor plans	Dick van Gameraen architecten	
28	9814-AKA-Chancellery-Sections eps	Chancellery cross sections	Dick van Gameraen architecten	
29	9814-AKA-concept-mq eps	Concept	Dick van Gameraen architecten	
30	9814-AKA-Deputy-House eps	Deputy House floor plans	Dick van Gameraen architecten	
31	9814-AKA-Earth.tif	Ethiopian landscape	Dick van Gameraen	
32	9814-AKA-Entrancepavilion eps	Entrance pavilion floor plans and sections	Dick van Gameraen architecten	
33	9814-AKA-Staffhouse-Plan eps	Staff house floor plan	Dick van Gameraen architecten	
34	9814-AKA-Staffhousing-Section eps	Staff house section	Dick van Gameraen architecten	
35	9814-Construction-site-07.tif	Residence entrance	Dick van Gameraen	June 2005
36	9814-CR439-details 06 eps	Facade detail of the roof	Dick van Gameraen architecten	
37	9814-CR439-details 82-84 eps	Facade detail of residence dining room	Dick van Gameraen architecten	
38	9814-CR439-details 101-102 eps	Facade detail of the yellow windows	Dick van Gameraen architecten	
39	9814-CR439-details 103 eps	Facade detail of the yellow windows	Dick van Gameraen architecten	
40	9814-CR439-details 115-116 eps	Facade detail of residence livingroom	Dick van Gameraen architecten	
41	9814-Deputy-House-01.tif	North east view of the deputy house	Dick van Gameraen	June 2005
42	9814-Entrancepavilion-01.tif	Entrance pavilion	Dick van Gameraen	June 2005
43	9814-REF-Dutch-Waterlandscape-01.tif	Dutch water landscape	Dick van Gameraen	
44	9814-REF-Site-01.tif	Driving lane	Dick van Gameraen	June 2005
45	9814-Siteplan eps	Location	Dick van Gameraen architecten	
46	9814-Staffhousing-02.tif	Staff house garden	Dick van Gameraen	June 2005
47	Untitled-121.jpg	Facade detail of the deputy house	Dick van Gameraen	June 2005