

# Up to You

**Yona Friedman**  
**Thomas Lommée**  
**Navid Nuur**

## exhibition notes

Our society is built on security, represented by ideal images and ideal numbers. All in vain, because security is an illusion. Allowing insecurity to enter the design process creates a sense of freedom. There is room for change, surprise and appropriation. The architect **Yona Friedman**, the designer **Thomas Lommée** and the artist **Navid Nuur** make an inviting gesture, encouraging the public, resident or user to give his or her own interpretation of the work. Friedman's *Ville Spatiale*, Lommée's *OpenStructures* and Nuur's *interimodules* provide a point of departure, but don't comment on the final image. Very consciously they deploy aspects such as temporariness, coincidence, process and openness in order to arrive at another city, at another understanding of sustainable design, or at another awareness of the world around us. From us it demands being prepared to become active ourselves.

### Upcycling

'Up to You' is part one of 'Upcycling', a program which will run over the course of several years. Its aim is to investigate alternatives in creating value and meaning. The potential of the individual, the object, building or city to become familiar with something or adapt to changing conditions is an important fact in this respect. Consequently it is the footing of 'Up to You'.

**A. Yona Friedman / Theories, methods, manuals, models: Softening the City, Continent-cities, Le Grand Paris, Green Architecture, The Flatwriter, Space Chain, Ville Spatiale**

*In the late fifties and in the sixties I was regarded by some people as a utopian. But I see myself as a realist. In all of my work I have been trying to demonstrate that everything people experience as utopian can actually be realized. So I see my role as that of someone who passes on ideas to reflect on. To make people think. And when I succeed I'm very happy!* (Yona Friedman in the documentary *Erratic City*, 1997/1998)

**Yona Friedman** (1923) is convinced that the development of cities is unpredictable, which makes it impossible for an urban planner to design a proper city for its inhabitants. In the fifties this principle led to his manifesto *L'Architecture Mobile* (Mobile Architecture) where he enunciates a new architecture in ten points. Friedman focuses on the user; he determines how and where he wants to live. To make that possible Friedman anticipates a city of flexible structures within which residents themselves can design their own living environment. He elaborates on this in *La Ville Spatiale* (The Spatial City), a spatial infrastructure consisting of a layered grid, elevated to 10 metres above street level and supported by columns set 40 to 60 metres apart. The grid is based on modules of 6 x 6 metres in which there is space for all possible functions. Within the grid the residents enjoy maximum freedom to design their own dwelling as long as they keep to a small number of rules, such as enough sunlight for the neighbours. Throughout the years Friedman developed several of the '*Villes Spatiales*', among other places for Paris, New York and now for the Binckhorst in The Hague (see basement).

In order to help residents to design their own apartments Friedman developed an interactive tool for 'self planning' – the *Flatwriter* (literally the apartment writer). With this future residents could determine the shape and arrangement for their own dwellings by way of a typewriter while taking into account the consequences of their choices for their own lifestyles and those of their neighbours. In the seventies he also started to write manuals in the form of cartoons, a

method he also employs to demonstrate his ideas about urban planning (e.g. *Softening the City*) and architecture (e.g. *Green architecture*). With the so-called *manuals for the self-planner*, Friedman wants to provide the future resident with confidence in their own potential as a decider, planner and designer. He also wrote about a hundred manuals for the Communication Centre of Scientific Knowledge for Self-Reliance. This centre, set up by Friedman in the early eighties, originated under the auspices of the United Nations University and was established with the aid of the International Council of Scientific Unions and supported by Indira Gandhi. Most activities took place in Madras, India, where the manuals – about cooking with sunlight, collecting rain water and drying food, growing food and preventing diseases – were disseminated as wall posters. In this way he showed how to build with simple techniques and relatively cheap material. He also made models to study a variety of construction methods, like the circles in the so-called space-chains. The model in this exhibition dates from 1959 and is on loan from Mels Crouwel.

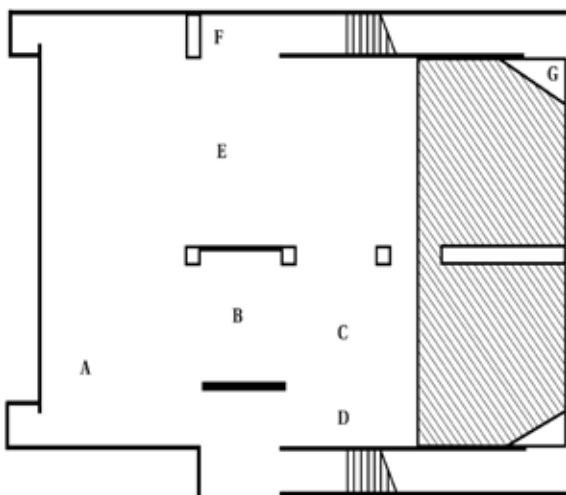
That Friedman is still active is demonstrated by *Le "Grand Paris" c'est une erreur* (Le "Grand Paris" is a big mistake), his reaction to the French president Sarkozy's 2009 plan for 'Le Grand Paris'. This reaction is in keeping with his opinions about the European Union which he formulated and presented in *Continent-cities* (1994).

**B. Navid Nuur, Rise above reason (2007), 16mm loop** (Courtesy Galeria PLAN B, Berlin and Galerie Martin van Zomerem, Amsterdam)

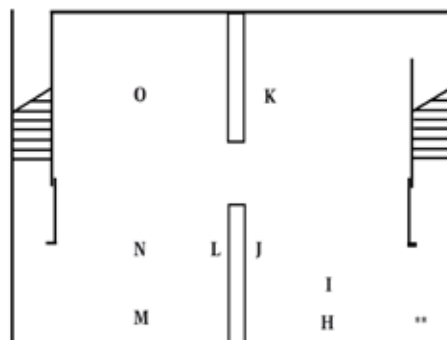
*I hope that people recognize themselves partly in my use of language and material. Because it's important to me that my work is reducible in a visual way I'm not very hi-tech in my choice of materials. I feel that Navid Nuur is not a way of looking: I only tolerate what I actually feel intensely. There is a code, but rather in the way of thinking than in the outward appearance.* (Navid Nuur in conversation with Freek Lomme, Matter materializing, 2008)

**Navid Nuur** (1976) explores and changes the way we perceive and experience a certain space starting from

**ground floor**



**basement**



**\*\*Against Irony, Jonas Staal and Vincent van Gerven Oei, four bluestone plates. Taken in semi-permanent loan by Stroom Den Haag in 2008.**

his interest in what we record unconsciously or risk missing because we are focusing on something else. His installations, drawings and objects are best described as modules of thought. He himself prefers to call them *interimodules*. They demonstrate a way of thinking attuned to the temporary, the situation of things in an in-between stage and focused on transience and mutual connection.

For 'Up To You' Navid Nuur made a series of works in relation to and making use of the work of Yona Friedman and Thomas Lommée and the space's architecture.

**C. Navid Nuur, These are the days (2004-2010), mixed media**

Picking up and looking through the objects is allowed. (Courtesy Galeria PLAN B, Berlin and Galerie Martin van Zomeren, Amsterdam)

**D. Navid Nuur, 'MY PREIM' (2002-2010)**

'MY PREIM' stands for My Pre-Interimodule Map II. Navid Nuur mapped a 'periodic system', as it were, the elements from which his works originate. The series of posters is for sale as an edition (101 copies). (Courtesy Navid Nuur and Stroom Den Haag)

**E. Thomas Lommée, OpenStructures**

*Intrastructures focuses on the renewal of existing infrastructures, not by reinventing them but by organizing them in a different way and connecting them to what is already there, by 'hacking' society in search of perfect, strange combinations.*  
(www.intrastructures.net)

In the work of **Thomas Lommée** (1979) systems, structures and the way individuals can use them collectively and individually play a central role. During his working period at the Institute without Boundaries in Toronto (Canada) he initiated a research project around open modularity. He developed this further with his design studio Intrastructures (Brussels) in collaboration with various partners which resulted in OpenStructures.

OpenStructures (OS) is a new standard for sustainable and democratic design based on 'open source' principles, modular building systems, recycling objects, parts and components. The core consists of the grid which can be used in an analogue as well as a digital way. This grid is the common metric means shared by all designers involved, which makes it possible to design compatible parts, components and structures independently of each other. The ultimate goal is generating a universal collaborative puzzle with the most diverse groups of people – from craftsmen to multinationals – being able to design, build and exchange the most diverse modular components.

The installation consists of a series of modules, two objects made on the basis of the OS, a series of slides showing the process of making a number of objects and the four versions of the grid since the beginning of the project.

**F. Navid Nuur, The lateral lump (2007-2010), mixed media** (Courtesy Navid Nuur)

**G. Navid Nuur, Tentacle Thought nr.9 (2006 – 2009)**  
(Courtesy Galeria PLAN B, Berlin and Galerie Martin van Zomeren, Amsterdam)

**H. Yona Friedman, Ville Spatiale**

Animation and explanation of the background of the *Ville Spatiale* by Helene Fentener van Vlissingen.

**I. Yona Friedman, various publications**

**J. Navid Nuur, 'Hold on the hollow' (2007)**  
Invitation card for his exhibition at Stroom Den Haag  
You are allowed to take one.  
(Courtesy Navid Nuur and Stroom Den Haag)

**K. Yona Friedman, Erratic City (documentary, 1997/1998)**

Documentary made especially for the exhibition *Mastering the city* in the Netherlands Architecture Institute (Rotterdam), by Esther Agricola and Helene Fentener van Vlissingen.

**L. Navid Nuur**

Work of which the title cannot be mentioned.

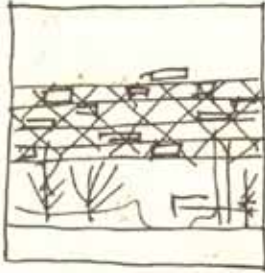
**M/N. Yona Friedman, Ville Spatiale in the Binckhorst**

Stroom Den Haag commissioned Yona Friedman to make a proposal for the Binckhorst. A manual was sent by fax of how to install the grid and a series of photomontages on which the *Ville Spatiale* is drawn by Friedman. The Binckhorst is an urban industrial area in The Hague which will be changed completely over the next twenty years. The car-related and industrial activity will largely be replaced by houses, offices, public facilities and a park. For a start this involves major demolition and outplacement of existing buildings and companies. Friedman proposes an experiment which can lead to a future image of the Binckhorst as conceived by its residents. For the *Ville Spatiale* no demolition is needed: the new city can be built directly over the existing one.

**O. Ville Spatiale in the Binckhorst**

Filmmaker Angelique van Grootel asked various inhabitants of The Hague how they envisage the *Ville Spatiale*. Visitors are invited to represent their own ideas in images and text, using a computer or a piece of paper. The results will be presented in the exhibition.

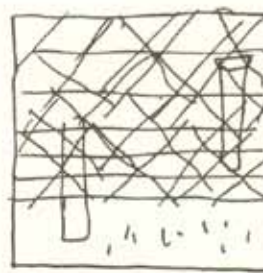
## THE "VILLE SPATIALE"



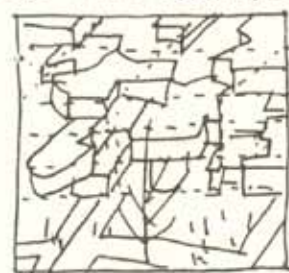
LAST, BUT NOT LEAST,  
I GET BACK TO MY  
FAVORITE IDEA:  
THE "VILLE SPATIALE"



IT MEANS A  
PARTICULAR MIXTURE  
OF RULES  
AND IRREGULARITY



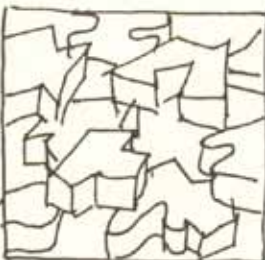
THE "VILLE SPATIALE"  
CONSISTS OF A MORE  
OR LESS REGULAR  
RIGID SUPPORTING GRID:  
THE "INFRASTRUCTURE"



WITHIN WHICH INDIVIDUAL  
HOMES ARE INSERTED  
FORMING AN IRREGULAR  
PATTERN



AS FOR THE SHAPE  
OF THOSE INDIVIDUAL  
HOMES  
ANYTHING GOES



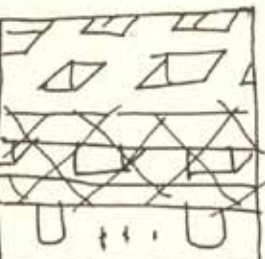
THUS THE "VILLE  
SPATIAL"  
IS A "MERZSTRAßE"  
AT URBAN SCALE  
FOR A MASS-SOCIETY  
CONSISTING OF  
INDIVIDUALISTS



THIS IS OUR SOCIETY  
TODAY:  
A CROWD



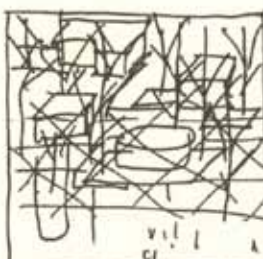
I DO NOT KNOW  
HOW A "VILLE SPATIALE"  
WILL LOOK



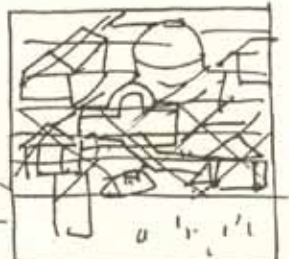
IT CAN BE THIS



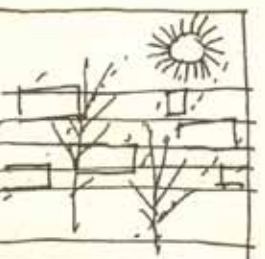
OR THIS



OR THIS



OR ANYTHING ELSE



THERE IS NO GRAMMAR  
TO THE "VILLE SPATIALE"  
EXCEPT RESPECT  
OF DAY-LIGHT



IT CAN LOOK AS WELL  
AS THE CITY YOU  
LIVE IN



OR IT CAN BE  
COMPLETELY  
UNLIKE  
TO ANY CITY



IT CANNOT BE  
PLANNED,  
IT CAN ONLY HAPPEN