

# ART AND TRICKS.

A RESEARCH PROJECT AIMED AT INTERNATIONAL KNOWLEDGE  
ABOUT URBAN SPORTS AND ART IN PUBLIC SPACE.



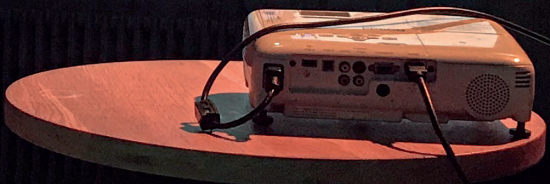


Work by Raphaël Zarka. Picture by: Maxime Verret









Andy Vasquez - USA, Pennsylvania

# **ART & TRICKS IN PUBLIC SPACE**

Research project 'Art & Tricks in Public Space' was born out of a desire to bring knowledge about the applicability of urban sports in public space.

Inspired by Copenhagen's Superkilen city park and works by French artist Raphaël Zarka, we wondered how such projects would manifest themselves in the Netherlands.

**"Places where artists or architects went all out  
always attract lots of skateboarders"**

Rinse Staal, executive director Skatehall Pier 15, Breda.



# INTRODUCTION

Together with Pier 15 skate park in Breda we saw connections between art, design, architecture and urban sports. Internationally this is deliberately being implemented in various places. Take for example Copenhagen, Denmark's Superkilenpark, in which landscape architecture, art and urban culture are combined in a leading way, or French visual artist Raphaël Zarka, who transformed a museum hall into a skate park. In collaboration with Boyscout Designer Bouke Bruins (project manager Buitenspelen KOP) we designed a plan to research this combination in Brabant's public space.

Supperkillen by Topotek Picture by: Iwam Baum





In 2020 we found artist Luca Claveau and designer Mathijs van Gageldonk via an 'open call'. Under Bouke's guidance, these two young professionals engaged in a research trajectory, which was comprised of several 'pressure cooker sessions' in collaboration with domestic as well as international experts. Thanks to a contribution by Kunstloc, KOP was able to implement its scheme internationally.

As a kickstarter for art- and design talent, KOP organises guidance trajectories and either initiates or (co)produces art projects. As such we are a flywheel for startups within the arts.

'Art & Tricks' is the first project of the 'Buitenspelen' (Play Outside) series, in which KOP aims to research the impact of art in public space. Besides coaching startups we also look to inspire, share knowledge and create paid projects for these young professionals.

We're very proud of this first, intense trajectory's results. Together with Luca and Mathijs, we share our findings by means of this publication. Our research and its results left us wanting more, and thus we're currently looking for possibilities to realise and test our models and designs.

To be continued!

*Meike Veldhuijsen*  
*Director KOP Foundation*

# **WHY? MORE ART AND SPORTS IN PUBLIC SPACE**

Because of constant urban development, growth of cities and housing shortages, good 'bottom-up' initiatives will eventually disappear. Skate parks, walls of fame and alternative playgrounds are replaced by apartment complexes or rigidly designed parks, slowly pushing them out towards, or sometimes even outside of, city limits. We set out to look for urban/design/art expertise, skate or leisure spots, skateable or adjustable shapes and functions, which we aim to combine with sports applications within an urban context.



Leo Valls - Bordeaux



Leo Valls and Nicolas Malinowsky – Bordeaux

What all is needed to integrate urban sports culture into urban development? And how can we give them a permanent place within public space?

Why aren't city benches designed to skate as well as sit on? Why doesn't a city park such as Breda's Valkenbergpark offer any integrated options for urban sporters to discover and develop their talents, and what does a playground for adults look like?

With this project we set out to research how art and design are to be utilised to permanently integrate urban sports into public spaces. Is there something like a series of designs in which the ideal urban space is merged with permanent, captivating, skateable objects?



Pierre Descamps – Sculpture for Kottbusser Tor"





Picture by - Jan Vollmann  
Instagram - wastingfilmisnotacrime  
Skater - Juan Peter Gomez  
Instagram - Juancopy



## **URBAN SPORTS & CULTURE:**

'Urban sports' is a collective term describing various sports which are performed in the streets, such as freerunning, BMX'ing, breakdancing, skateboarding and football. They're sports in which creativity is highly important.

Skateboarding is both something to watch, as well as to participate in. Nowadays it's a great after-school activity for many teens, which keeps them active, helps strengthen their social skills and makes them feel more involved with the urban outdoors, adding to their sense of ownership regarding public space. It's a culture, Olympic sport and even a source of income for an increasing number of people.



Andy Vasquez - Parking blocks



## **WHO? INITIATORS AND PRACTITIONERS**

As a kickstarter for art- and design talent, KOP Foundation organises activities and projects through which startups are matched with professionals, platforms and sponsors. Besides art shows, we also set up guidance trajectories, initiate or (co)produce art projects and sell works made by young designers and artists in our KOPshop.

In October 2020 we held an 'open call' for young professionals to research the applicability of urban sports in public space, in which multifunctionality, meetings and aesthetics lie at the forefront.

A jury consisting of Dennis Elbers (Blind Walls Gallery, Breda), Jasper van Es (Mr Vains and E-Moves, Eindhoven), Rinse Staal (Pier 15 skate park, Breda), Bouke Bruins (Boyscout Designer, Eindhoven) and Meike Veldhuijsen (KOP, Breda) analysed all of the submissions, from which Luca Claveau and Mathijs van Gageldonk, two young graduates with a connection to urban sports in public space, were eventually selected.

Under Bouke's guidance they delved into the world of skateboard obstacle design and the usage of public space.

## RESEARCH TEAM

**Luca Claveau (1995, graduated from the Maastricht Academy Of Fine Arts & Design in 2020).** For his graduation project 'Meeting The Other', Luca researched the possibilities of redefining public space. As a skateboarder he experienced first hand how certain groups of people are excluded from this process. By means of interventions, Claveau initiated dialogues with passers by, trying to find out who 'owns' these spaces and how to make them inclusive to all.

With Art & Tricks he aims to find a way to change people's negative perception of skateboarders into something more positive, as a lot of them think there's no room for skateboarding in public space. How do we make these places more inclusive for everyone? And how do we find solutions for a wider variety of target groups, whilst taking into account a diversity of visions and opinions? In other words; to transform public space into a playground for people to meet, and learn to better understand one another.





**Mathijs van Gageldonk (1991, graduated from Design Academy, Eindhoven in 2020).** In his graduation project 'Exercise Through Navigation', Mathijs focussed on adding movement to public space: "a place where everyone is moving, yet still motionless". Inspired by parkour and freerunning, in which athletes use nothing but their own bodies, van Gageldonk designed objects of his own as well as using already existing ones, in order to add movement to people's daily routines.

With Art & Tricks he hopes to continue the concept of a more active urban lifestyle and integrate sports into public space. Imagine being able to achieve your daily workout during lunch, or whilst moving from A to B. In today's working lifestyle, people spend an average of 7 to 9 hours a day sitting down, which increases the risk of diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and depression. A mere 10 minutes of exercise per day already lowers these odds.







**Bouke Bruins (1989, graduated from Design Academy, Eindhoven in 2017).** As Boyscout Designer, Bouke Bruins' area of expertise lies in the fringes of public space. Fundamental to his work is the 'conflict of interest' created by overly planned out public spaces, which often leads to excessive regulations, rendering its users to become passive. By evoking interaction and reaction, he aims to reactivate users.

Shaped by urban surroundings, Bouke knows, like none other, how urban culture can positively add to a person or city's development. His practical knowledge as a designer, combined with his expertise on urban culture make him a perfect guide for this project. Together with Luca and Mathijs he set out to find new ways to combine art and design with urban sports in public space.



## **INSIGHTS AND INTENSIFICATION IN TIMES OF A PANDEMIC**

The initial plans for Art & Tricks were made before the Covid pandemic. Because of this, its term has been extended from November 2020 to March 2021.

# **HOW? METHODOLOGY**

1. Desk Research
2. Expert Sessions
3. Making Sessions
4. Field research
5. Intervention research
6. What's next!



# **1. DESK RESEARCH**

Because initially there were no options of physically coming together due to the pandemic, we decided to start off desk research in the research team's respective hometowns (Maastricht, Eindhoven, Tilburg and Antwerp), leading to a more complete view on the current situation.

Our first meeting took place in early December 2020. International experts were included in the sessions via video calls, and we were able to come together with a small group of people after all.

One advantage to come out of this period though, is that the goal of our project has become even more essential, as to a lot of people public spaces have gained new appreciation. Now that going for a walk or playing outside are about the only ways to get enough exercise, the importance of redefining public space has become even more evident.



Antwerpen – Belgium



Antwerpen – Belgium



Breda – The Netherlands



Breda – Nederland





Maastricht – The Netherlands



Maastricht – The Netherlands

## CONCLUSIONS OF OBSERVATIONS:

- Many skateable spots in all cities.  
Sharing space with other users.
- Because of their many users, it is often difficult to claim objects as skate spots.
- Attractive looking objects are more appealing to skate.
- Lots of different materials can be skated.

## **2. EXPERT SESSIONS (PRESSURE COOKER)**

In order to inspire and inform newly graduated artists, KOP organised two workshop sessions for which various speakers were invited to outline a broader vision from both a designer's as well as a user's perspective. These two sessions gave an impression about the world of skateboarding, the design process behind skate parks and obstacles and its social impact on cities.

The first 'pressure cooker session' took place on December 3rd 2020, in which inspiration and exchange of knowledge were the main objectives. Hosted at an inspiring location, Pier 15 skate park in Breda, we conversed with local as well as international skate design experts.





Janne Saario – Helsinki Finland

## **SPEAKERS DURING SESSION 1**

**Janne Saario:** Landscape architect, skatepark designer and professional skater. (Helsinki, Finland)

**Nine Yards** (Jeroen van Eggermond): Skatepark designer, constructor, skater. (Breda, the Netherlands)

**Oppercaes** (Bruce Tsai-Meu-Chong): Designer and maker of skate installations, skater. (Rotterdam, the Netherlands)

**Andy Vasquez:** Product designer, skate interventions, skater. (Philadelphia, USA)















## CONCLUSIONS OF OBSERVATIONS:

- Boundaries fade between functions.
- More locations which blend nature, skate parks and objects.
- Parks are embedded into cities and natural surroundings, for which locally sourced materials are used.
- Certain locations can serve different roles at different times.
- Skate spots contribute to the development of urban areas.
- Way more knowledge, materials and techniques are available to the construction of skateable objects..
- One can find steel skateparks in decay in pretty much every town in the Netherlands, because they don't offer enough of a challenge to their intended users.

### 3. MAKING (AND EXPERT) SESSION

During our second session we researched what a broader spectrum of skateboarding actually looks like. In order to do so, we also included experts who talked about skateboarding's social aspects. What kind of an impact can a park have, how does it come into existence, and what can one do to create situations which allow for skateboarding to take place? How does the usage of certain materials influence the user's experience? In doing so, we try to stimulate discussions about the way skateboarding influences public space.

After an inspiration and information-filled morning, the research team set out to determine a variety of features and possibilities in a creative way, by means of a memory game which they themselves developed. They then got to work with all the ideas and input that came out of the presentations and conversations, eventually realising the first test models.

### SPEAKERS DURING SESSION

- **Ruud Scheerens:** Architect, filmer, designer, inline skater (Eindhoven, the Netherlands)
- **Gilberto Cannarozzi:** Social designer, DIY skatepark maker, skater (Pisa, Italy)





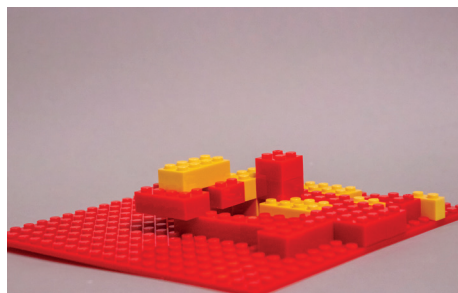
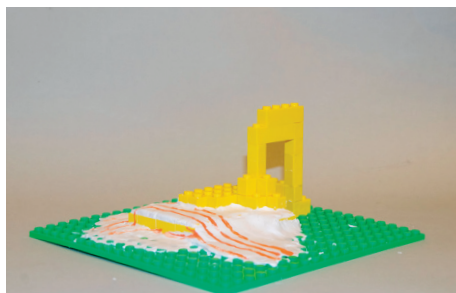
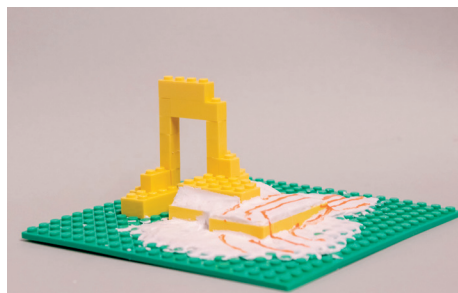
Memory spel - Inspiratie tool





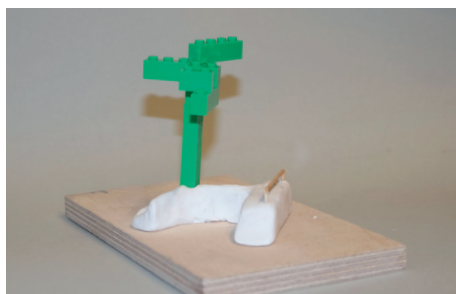
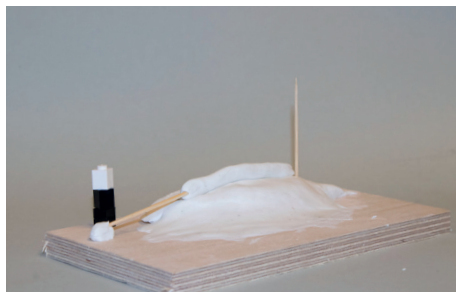
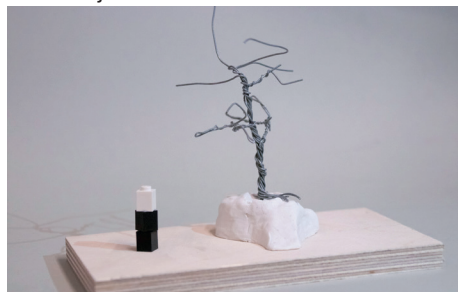






Modelletjes - Lego

Modelletjes - Plasticine



## **CONCLUSIONS OF OBSERVATIONS:**

- Photogenic locations (exceptional designs or places) tend to increase an object's popularity amongst skateboarders.
- Skateboarders like to maintain their spots, clean up and are open to interact with their surroundings.
- Street skating spots need a proper run-up.
- Good and not necessarily expensive materials (concrete/steel/marble) add to a more durable existence of the obstacles.
- One creates exercises based on what your surroundings have to offer.
- Challenges are important, moving your boundaries.
- Importance of a spot's accessibility.

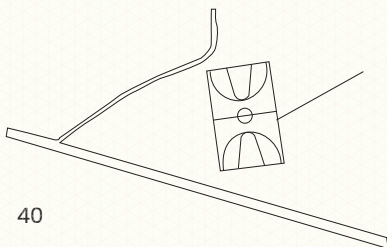
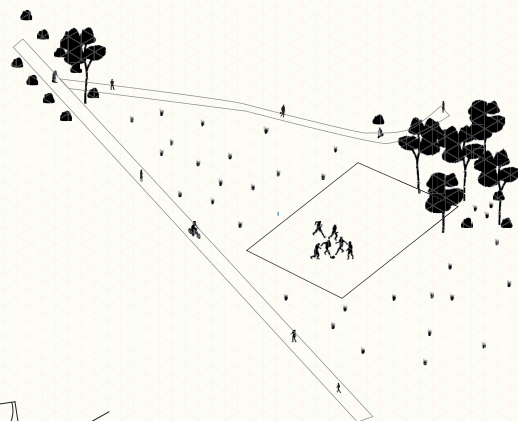
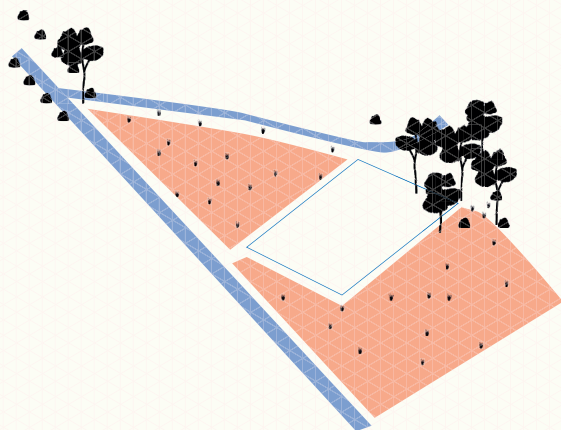
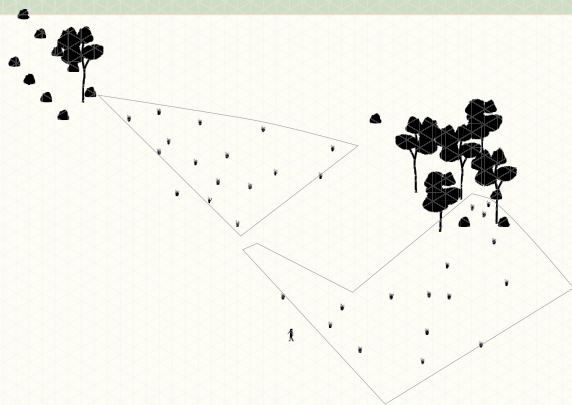








# Arts & Tricks



## **4. FIELD RESEARCH 1**

After collecting all the information and inspiration during the workshop sessions, we looked at how we could best link our ideas to specific locations in a city. To map this out, Mathijs and Luca walked and skated through Breda to observe various locations. They specifically set out to look for recurring or contextually related situations in which skateability would be of added value. Included on the previous page is an illustration of one the locations they visited.

## **CONCLUSIONS OF OBSERVATIONS/ INSPIRATION**

- A lot of parks have a basketball or football court which is placed on a barren strip of concrete.
- They remain unused for many hours per day.
- Combine these barren strips of concrete with another sport or leisure activity to increase their usefulness
- Encourage different sports at different times.
- Lots of options for children to play, yet very few things to help engage adults to exercise.

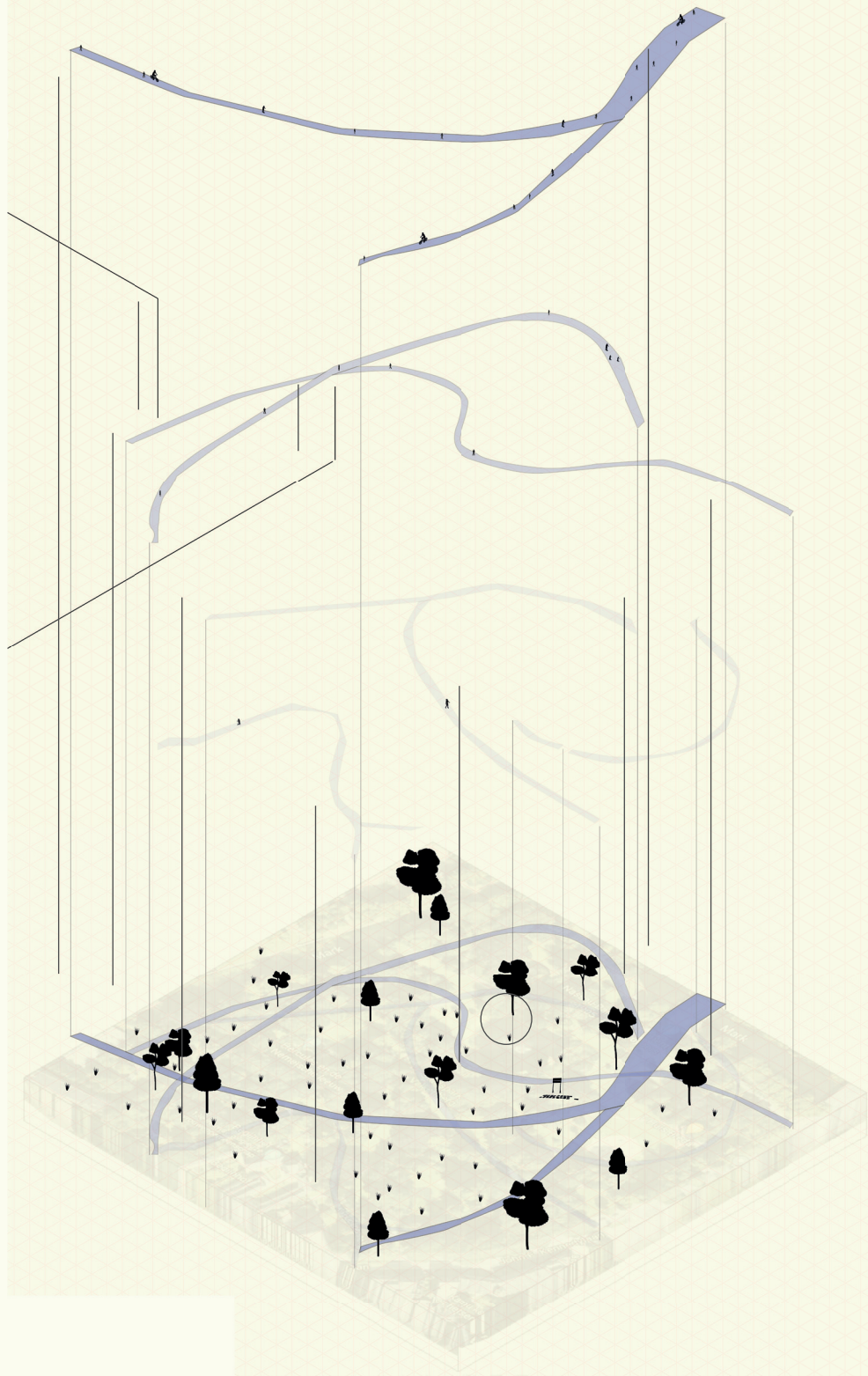


## 4. FIELD RESEARCH 2

We set out to examine people's opinions and thoughts regarding art, design and skateboarding by means of an intervention in Breda's Valkenbergpark.

We enlarged the memory game, which was also used in our expertise sessions, to attract passers-by in a playful way, and in doing so engaged in conversation about more integrated sports facilities within cities.

















## CONCLUSIONS OF OBSERVATIONS

- During these conversations, it became evident that 'playing' is mostly associated with kids.
- Playing outside is, in turn, mostly associated with objects made specifically for kids.
- Within public space, adults mostly like to be challenged in a sporty, sometimes easily accessible or competitive way.
- Objects that are coloured, made out of natural materials or have a playful appearance tend to be the most favoured ones.
- People prefer objects that are suitable for a variety of target groups.



## **INSIGHTS**

After completing our first round of research, we can conclude, from conversations with experts and residents, but also through field research, that there's a growing need for urban sports. In combination with art, design or architecture it can help solve social topics. Most notably, urban areas, where one can 'taste' a city's identity, tend to lack these combinations. In these times of restrictions, caused by the Covid pandemic, outdoor activities have grown in importance!

Art & Tricks provided us with a number of insights regarding the possibilities of merging art, design, architecture and urban sports in ways that positively affect their surroundings and the people using them. Our conclusions are as follows:

- More objects, for a wider variety of target groups, provide better usage of public space and better connects to the diversity of a city's residents.
- Designed/aesthetic additions to already existing objects (city hacks) make for an added surprise factor and a unique identity, upping a city's photogenic value, thus persuading more people to visit it.
- Embedding skate- and sporting facilities into urban areas by means of artistic and architectural interventions, makes for more recognition of these sports and provides permanent training grounds for beginners and seasoned veterans alike.
- Combining art- and sport objects makes for something nice to look at, even when said place is not actually in use.
- Blurring boundaries between nature, leisure and sports is more inviting to usage for sporting purposes.
- The growing usage by urban residents of parks as 'gardens', heightens the need for new applications and new/different policies to be developed, so as to better connect them to this ever expanding group of users.
- Building more skate- and urban sports facilities helps create new flows of people who will feel more ownership towards these locations, further accelerating area development.







## PROCES EVALUATION

"In hindsight, I think we were overthinking things. Just looking at shapes made by Pierre Descamps shows it can be done way more simple, yet more efficiently. A test scenario could consist of as little as a few different modules that speak to one's imagination and invite potential users" **Mathijs**

"For me, the next step would be to create something, a module of sorts, which we can actually place somewhere, and then test it. Not just one of course, but a couple of them!" **Luca**

"Within our research, we could've put more emphasis on its form, and less on what makes 'urban' so important" **Mathijs**

"I sometimes noticed I got stuck in an object's form and function, instead of focussing on the potential possibilities surrounding it. I guess sometimes objects don't need to have more than one function; it can also be merely an art object. As long as it merges with its surroundings, it already fulfills its role" **Luca**



“To me, the experts’ presentations, everything slightly different, were a big plus to this project”

**Mathijs**

“At the end of the day, we’re creators. So that’s what I’d like to do now. To show our research to others and have it tested by a wide audience”

**Luca**

“I’ve learned it’s even more difficult to merely place an object in a city than I already thought it would be beforehand. There’s loads of rules, and in order to get things sorted properly, it helps to know a lot of people” **Mathijs**

“this publication shouldn’t be an ending, I’m actually hoping for it to be the start of a sequel”

**Luca**

## **NOW WHAT? THE SEQUEL**

Most of our research took place behind the scenes. Our next goal is to apply urban culture's 'hands-on' mentality into more research by actually creating in the streets. In this continued research we aim to further delve into finding suitable locations to realise combinations of art, design, architecture and urban sports. We want to experiment at accessible public spaces in urban areas which already contain objects that are suitable to urban sports after applying 'design hacks'. These locations are called 'spots'.

We also long to test objects on location, by both users and residents. Our dream is to see a city as one big 'urban sports club', in which various sports are integrated and residents continuously maintain it.

At these spots we intend to experiment with a series of prototypes which differ in form and function. Everything has to be accessible to a variety of audiences and different forms of urban sports, focussing on people of all ages. By means of short-term design hacks and involving experts in observing these hacks, we intend to test how suitable they are for sports. During these observations we'll also try to create dialogues with local residents and passers-by, in order to further evaluate their functionality and find out what they think about the installations' appearances.

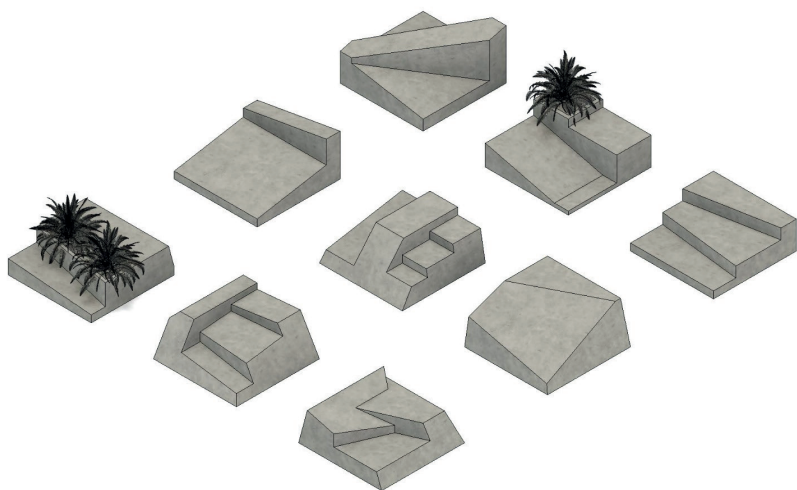
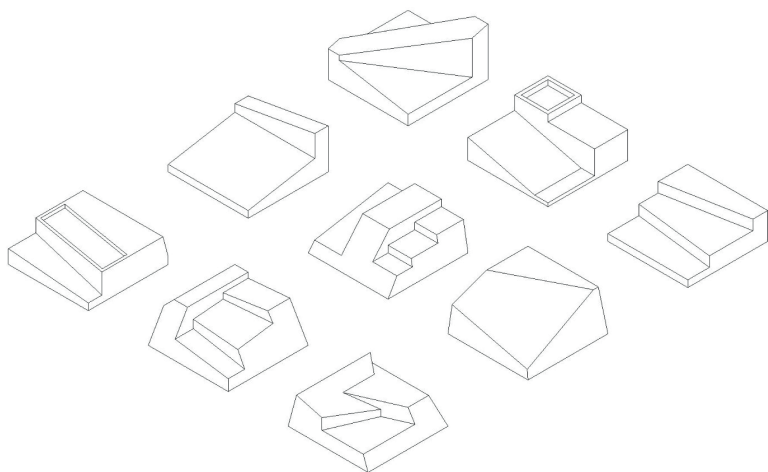
It could, for example, be a module which can be used to skate as well as sit on, and we think it might be interesting to research the possibilities of different objects, from skateable green space up to neatly designed dancing benches.

Meanwhile, a tight circle of experts has come into being, supported by professionals. In combination with KOP, Pier 15 and Boyscout Designer Bouke Bruins' lead, we want to set up continued research, titled 'Art & Tricks – Experiment Park'.





A couple of examples/sketches of various, easily relocatable, modular objects.



Schetch Mathijs en Luca

"Example of different modules comming together"







## **WHERE? LOCATION**

Nowadays we often see skateboarding and other urban sports being pushed to the fringes of cities, sometimes even beyond city limits. During the research we did for Art & Tricks, we regularly heard about skateboarders accidentally, and sometimes even purposely, contributing to area development. In Sweden for example, skateboarders are employed to upgrade neighbourhoods. The city of Malmö even created a special civil servant for this purpose: “project manager skateboarding & urban development” Gustav Edén, who has roots in both the worlds of skateboarding and design. Park Pompenburg in Rotterdam is an example a little closer to home, in which skateable letters designed by Opperclae contribute to an improved quality of life. Frequented by skateboarders practising their skills, cleaning the plaza and conversing with locals. Plus, the letters contribute to a cheerful and nice image for the area.

During our workshop sessions we were told skateboarders are mostly shunned from the inner cities. Skate parks disappear as soon as skateboarders have done their job, only to be replaced by residential areas, like in Breda’s ‘Havengebied’. Which is why we want to focus on permanently integrating urban sports facilities in urban areas throughout Brabant. It would be ideal for us to have access to a number of permanent locations within Breda’s inner city or a residential area, allowing for long term trials.

## **HOW LONG? THE TERM**

Every series of modules will be available on location over a 4 to 6 week time span. The first trial will be an exploration to try and uncover what the process will be like. Following on from this, the modules will be placed in different locations at the same time.

During this period we'll conduct observational research in cooperation with skaters and local residents. We'll also ask them to frequently share pictures and answer a number of questions. This way, we aim to simultaneously stimulate a sense of ownership, as well as letting both skateboarders and residents actively think along about the possibilities and realisation of the objects. The trial will be terminated with, for example, a small scale skateboarding contest and an opportunity for everyone involved to share a meal, in order for them to actively get to know one another.

For the foreseeable future, KOP will converse with potential partners to realise this research's continued trajectory.

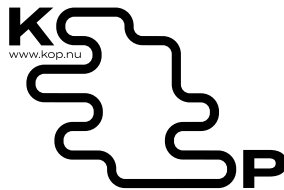




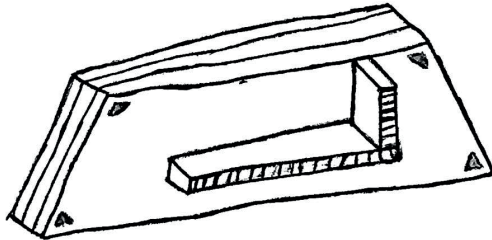
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