

RESTORATION OF HET WITTE DORP/DE KIEFHOEK

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J.J.P. OUD, ROTTERDAM 1987/1990

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The preference of the board for the architecture of De Stijl and functionalism was expressed this year in the support which was provided for a publication to document the White Village of J.J.P. Oud, which was destined to be demolished.

Until the 1920s there was a polder between Rotterdam and Schiedam. In 1922 the first part of the polder was built up. The famous architect J.J.P. Oud, who had proved himself in his work in the Spangen district, designed a sort of temporary village intended to provide deprived families with a healthy environment. There was a comparable project in the Kiefhoek in Rotterdam-Zuid. Small white workers' dwellings were built based on a symmetrical street plan. It soon became known as the White Village. Ten years later, the remaining fields between Rotterdam and Schiedam were built up with the Oud Mathenesse district.

The White Village was intended to be a temporary solution, but the district was left. When the council announced in about 1985 that the houses – which were by this time very outdated – were to be demolished, this met with a storm of protest because the residents were strongly attached to the individual village character of the district. As the houses had already passed their latest sell-by date by about the war years, it was not possible to stop the demolition in the end. However, there was some response to the protests by leaving the street plan intact and once again building small, affordable white houses there. To honor the architect Oud, a fine replica of the management hut was built in 1989 in the De Stijl style. The original hut had been demolished in the winter of hunger during the war to be used as firewood.

In September 1990, the Sikkens Foundation also supported the restoration of the Kiefhoek by J.J.P. Oud. The original houses were all opened up to comply with the modern requirements of hygiene and comfort. However, one house was restored to its original condition. The furnishing of this “museum house” was funded by the Sikkens Foundation and was accompanied by a publication.