

Shaping Intuition HofmanDujardin

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Architecture and Interior Design

TERRA

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PREFACE

We founded HofmanDujardin, an international architectural firm based in Amsterdam, in 1999. We've completed a range of prize-winning architectural, interior and product-design projects. We create innovative spaces, helping people to feel their best. We've grown into a large team of expert architects, designers and draftsmen. No project is too big and none too small, and each project is unique.

Our approach to architecture focuses on the well-being of the human being in his environment. Over the years, a guiding concept we call **Shaping Intuition®** has emerged naturally from our work.

Intuition is the natural balance of the human being in nature—the needs every human being has in their surroundings that may be fulfilled by architecture. These basic needs are:

Spaciousness. Spaciousness is the experience of freedom in a space; the ability to “breathe.” The presence of light and air animates a feeling of spaciousness.

Groundedness. Groundedness is the feeling of security in a space. Feeling at ease in a setting is the experience of peace and comfort.

Expression. Expression is what commands our attention and stimulates us. Like art, it is a trigger or surprise that stimulates feeling and insight or enhances creativity. Expression is powerful.

Connection. Connection is the sequential relation between spaces, both interior and exterior. Connection may be physical and visual. Connection stimulates

the interaction between spaces, between interior and exterior and among people. Connection creates an adventurous experience of one's surroundings.

We all need a natural balance among these elements. In our work, we give people the individual opportunity to harmonize the qualities of spaciousness, groundedness, expression and connection.

Shaping corresponds to culture, and to the creation of an environment that meets those intuitive needs. Our work is guided by the following cultural values:

Clarity. Clarity is the beauty of simplicity. What we do must be easy to perceive, and be understood in a natural way. The elegance of simplicity is the sign of successful design.

Quality. Quality is value. We build what will last. We have high standards, and aim for timelessness.

Personality. Personality is the authentic character of a project. This emerges from context, setting or client identity. Personality is also the unique expression of our customized service.

Inspiration. Inspiration sparks all of us. It touches everybody who is involved in the creation and use of the buildings, interiors and products we design. Inspiration is both the foundation of what we do and the result we wish to achieve.

With this book, we present projects related to our philosophy, Shaping Intuition. We hope you find inspiration here.



INTERVIEW

Susan de Sola: *Would you tell us about the title of the book, “Shaping Intuition”?*

HofmanDujardin: Intuition is central to our work. Intuition corresponds to nature, to how people feel in their surroundings, and to what they need, both consciously and unconsciously. Shaping corresponds to culture. That’s what we do, creating optimal environments that speak to those needs. If you can imagine people in their surroundings, you can create a balance between what they would seek in nature, intuitively, and what we can build for them.

SdS: *Would you elaborate more on Intuition?*

HD: People seek a sense of safety and trust in their environment, and there is a sense in which an environment works best when it works naturally, and without effort. The first element is feeling grounded and secure. We use sightlines in our designs to create intimacy and security. People need to feel grounded, but they also need to have an overview of their surroundings. They need space, light and air, and a feeling that they can breathe. We are conscious of creating a balance between being grounded and a feeling of spaciousness.

SdS: *How is this balance related to the configuration of spaces?*

HD: A space is successful if there is a sense of “flow”—the internal flow within a building—but also a relation between inside and outside, and between the building and the environment. Finally, while the best buildings achieve these aims transparently, without visible effort, there should also be a spark of excitement in one’s surroundings. This might be a stimulating element that captures the attention and spurs creativity, or that expresses a particular form of creativity. Ideally, there is a balance between feelings of serenity and stimulation: the qualities of security, space, flow and stimulation.

SdS: *How specific is your approach?*

HD: One of our cornerstones is “Personality.” Our approach is always personalized. We start our projects with intense client interviews. To work on a personalized design, we need to understand the identity and

the needs of our client. Architecture and interior design projects are always about making a change. We want to understand the required change in order to optimize the design and create the maximum result.

SdS: *What is your work method?*

HD: The first steps are research, analysis and studying the context. From these, we gain an understanding of what is needed, and what makes sense. From there, we move to sketches, in the interest of clarity, and 3D models and projections as well. Our approach is thorough and also holistic. We brainstorm with the team. We find the basic idea that will carry and inform the project.

SdS: *The key concepts of your company values are “Clarity, Quality, Inspiration and Personality.” How do these values connect to Shaping Intuition?*

HD: These values are actually our “Shaping.” The value “Inspiration” is the most powerful tool. The French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry said,

“Si tu veux construire un bateau, ne rassemble pas tes hommes et femmes pour leur donner des ordres, pour expliquer chaque détail, pour leur dire où trouver chaque chose... Si tu veux construire un bateau, fais naître dans le cœur de tes hommes et femmes le désir de la mer.”

If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up people to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the immensity of the sea.

A beautiful and striking quotation from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Metaphorically, we aim to stimulate in our clients and colleagues a “longing for the immensity of the sea”—that is, to inspire and motivate them. We consider a great idea the most powerful tool in each project. Our Bloomframe® window is a clear and inspiring idea. The clarity and purity of the concept—the ideal of flexible indoor/outdoor space, even in urban settings—is so inspiring, it motivated others to help make it possible. And our value, Quality, is of course a given. We believe in making things that are worthwhile, that are worth making. And this is also related to our commitment to sustainability. Quality lasts.

SdS: *You might also say that integrity is an aspect of quality?*

HD: Integrity is fundamental. We value the personal relations we've built. This is also the spur to our creativity, because in getting to know our clients, we build what will work for them. Our architecture is "bottom-up." We believe the human factor is the basis for architecture. But we also work "top-down," whereby the clarity of the concept guides us. Our ideal is a combination of the two, both the big picture and the details.

SdS: *Are you drawn to large-scale projects? I notice that your projects take into account the needs of large groups of people.*

HD: That's right, it's central to our thinking, and also to our ambitions. We know that we can solve challenges relating to comfort and flow at the level of a house, and at the level of an office building. We also know we can apply our insight and expertise in yet larger projects. We are developing ideas for large-scale architecture such as airports, shopping malls, and hospitals, where we could make a meaningful impact on the experiences of thousands of people.

SdS: *Why large-scale architectural projects such as airports?*

HD: We can implement our philosophy on a large scale, using the same bottom-up approach. The human being in his environment is the focus. We can restore a sense of pleasure and humanity to these spaces, while improving their functionality. We've built up expertise with traffic flows, circulation, and zoning "identity areas." Above all, our understanding of what people need also works in the very biggest settings. A personal approach on a big scale.

SdS: *You are an ambitious team.*

HD: Yes, we are. We never say "yes, but...". We try to pick up all the signals of a project and improve it. We are more likely to say, "yes, interesting..." and to ask questions. What is the client's situation? What is needed? What is desired? We create value, and approach every project with a high level of ambition.

SdS: *You are open to many kinds of building?*

HD: Yes. Architecture is about people. Just as there are many kinds of clients, there are many kinds of projects, whether an office, a school, a villa or an offshore ship.

SdS: *Are you interested in restoration projects?*

HD: Absolutely. Whether the building is old or new, we always try to ascertain, "what is the authentic spirit of the building?"

SdS: *When did each of you first know that you wanted to become an architect?*

HD: I (Barbara) was 18 when I decided to study architecture. I grew up in a classical French family where a passion for work was essential. Architects and artists were always present in my environment. During my education I was more attracted by historical buildings, having grown up in the Loire region of France. In Milan, where I met Michiel, I encountered more modern design. I'm interested in both small-scale and large-scale elements. For me, architecture is about direct contact with people, and helping them to realize their dreams.

(Michiel) My father was an engineer and my mother a gallery owner, so I was influenced by both technology and fine art, and architecture is really a hybrid of these. Architecture is both an art and a science.

SdS: *You met while studying in Milan. What made you think you would be a good team? Are you complementary?*

HD: We are definitely complementary. We are man and woman, with different sensibilities and sensitivities. Because we are a couple, we have complete trust and can be direct with each other, both critical and supportive at the same time. I (Barbara) am more intuitive in my approach, Michiel is more logical. He takes the end responsibility for our projects, which frees me to take a fresh look at every aspect from a more fluid perspective. Every project gets special attention; a specific touch that is distinctive for each client and project. I mix it up in creative ways. This is a very good combination. If you want to put it in terms of our backgrounds, I am French "beaux-arts" and Michiel would stand for "Dutch practicality."

SdS: *Your firm is international, with architects from many countries, and you are able to work all over the world, in several languages. You describe your company structure as non-hierarchical, horizontal. How does that work in practice?*

HD: We promote and educate architects from within the company. We have senior and junior architects, draftsmen and interns, who grow within the team. Everyone has the opportunity to come up with the best approach, best idea or best concept. We value the creativity and originality from everybody involved in the projects.

We lead the design and are always present in every project, beginning to end, and all of our projects are team efforts. We have well-rounded multi-disciplinary teams. Because of the variety of what we do, ranging from products to large-scale architectural projects, we attract motivated talents from all over the world.

I (Barbara) think the creation of a family culture within the company is of high value. We encourage our team to be pro-active, aware, and to have the ambition to bring things to the next level.

I (Michiel) find the relation between personal and team performance a useful model. This is an insight I learned from playing baseball for many years. You balance individual performance with the team. Openness counts, as do persistence and optimism.

SdS: *What keeps your creativity flowing?*

HD: We regularly spend time sketching, brainstorming, and working out ideas. And we always study our surroundings and experiences, often making sketches of new ideas on the spot. We are engaged with our work. Architecture influences lived experience.

SdS: *You do interiors as well as exteriors?*

HD: Yes, we see these as integrally connected. As in the modular scales of Le Corbusier, we imagine the human being in his environment. Both architecture and interior design have impact on the perception of our surroundings. They contribute to the atmosphere, the flow, the routing and the natural hierarchies and transitions between areas. A sense of rhythm and proportion. One of our hallmarks is our skill in creating clearly distinguished zones. We used color coding in the Eneco building, for example, and we used contrasting materials, especially flooring, to organize the Yin Yang offices. The creation of zones relates to the diversity within a building, and to the basic needs for spaciousness, groundedness, connection and expression.

SdS: *What is the biggest technical challenge you've faced?*

HD: The Bloomframe® window. It was years of work from concept to realization. The idea was so strong, it simply had to come into being. Making it happen brought us into an advanced technical arena, but also into the areas of marketing and creating demand. It touched on every aspect of architectural practice on an international scale, as building requirements and codes vary from country to country.

SdS: *This also indicates resolve of character and a capacity for steady commitment. Are there projects or*

creations that are meant to remain theoretical? Would you talk a bit about the ONO Charity Chair?

HD: For the Charity Chair, fifty architects were asked to re-envision the ONO chair for a charity auction. Our approach was to change the context. We put the original chair on a carpet-map of the Cape Town township, plotting the exact coordinates where the chair really could stand. It became much more than a chair. It became a building, an aspect of the city. In the projection, it is a thousand times bigger than the actual chair. Rather than "change the chair," we changed how it is experienced. The answer to the question often lies before the question, as it were.

SdS: *This seems characteristic of how you work—you do more than decorate or aestheticize a space—you re-contextualize and reconfigure it. And again, your economies of scale work, whether at the level of a chair, or of a whole town. It speaks of your ability to "zoom out," think creatively, and see the big picture.*

HD: We stay open to new strategies, which is what makes every project exciting. When we started, we did all the projects that came to us, and every new project brought new circumstances, new concepts, and growth. For our vision of a new pedestrian/bicycle route to unify Amsterdam, "Oamsterdam," we thought holistically. We saw how you could build an inner ring connecting the northern and southern halves of the city.

SdS: *Do you prefer large-scale projects?*

HD: We like the variety of projects we do, and we are especially attracted to the diversity of challenges in large-scale projects. The larger it is, the more people are involved, and because we are focused on the well-being of the human being, this is very gratifying. It's like the analogy of an orchestra conductor and a symphony. We are focused on the synergy that produces maximum well-being and functionality.

SdS: *What is the biggest project so far?*

HD: De Resident, the complex that houses the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, is 62,000 square meters (670,000 square feet). That's another example of "thinking outside the box." We saw a link between elements of classic Dutch art and architecture and the existing post-modern architecture of these buildings. We designed custom carpets which reference iconic Dutch paintings, which contribute to the animation of a large and complex workspace.



SdS: *The smallest project?*

HD: That must be the Bloomframe® window, and the smallest dwelling, the garden pod for Casense.

SdS: *Do you see a social role for the architect?*

HD: The architect contributes to the well-being of human beings, whether in a home, an office or among the crowds in public spaces. Well-planned architecture encourages harmony among people.

SdS: *How do you approach sustainability?*

HD: We have a two-fold approach. One is top-down, where we look at how resources are created and used: solar power, electricity, water, insulation techniques, etc., with a view to the responsible use of materials and energy. We have a team of specialists we work with to keep up with the latest innovations and to meet certification standards, such as BREEAM®. The other is a bottom-up approach where we ask, what features may encourage responsible use of resources? We think of features to stimulate better health and environmental awareness. Again, we are about stimulating and caring for the human being in his surroundings. This is one of the most profound forms of sustainability.

SdS: *How do you approach collaborations?*

HD: We welcome them. We work with everybody from contractors to advisors. We work with sustainability experts, lighting specialists, 3D visualizers, photographers, cost-consultants, and specialists in smart-building technology. They become part of the team which fills out what we do. Here too, our approach is horizontal and collaborative.

SdS: *How do you see the buildings of the future?*

HD: The human being is always intuitively a being in relation to nature. I (Barbara) see that in the future there will be many further advances in sustainability, which is also related to the enhancement of the human being in nature.

To that end, I (Michiel) see advances going in two directions. One is advances in technology, and we are active in implementing smart-building technologies whenever they are desired. The other is that in an increasingly technological society, there will be a commensurate desire to experience the elements of nature.

SdS: *How do you feel about collections, or even clutter?*

HD: We try to create a structure that creates freedom. Form and function working together. For collections, we try to create an structure that both organizes the collection and enhances feeling. For clutter, we don't dictate preferences. We can help the client create facilities, or a process that is optimized and clean.

SdS: *What is your preferred city in which to create a building? Which skyline in the world would you most like to enhance?*

HD: I (Michiel) would choose New York. A great city, with a tremendous amount of ambition and innovation. The New York skyline would be enhanced by a transparent Bloomframe® building. It would be the next step in creating a dynamic façade answering to the needs of people in high-density urban areas. For me, (Barbara) it would be Tokyo. It is a magical city, and the level of architectural accomplishment in Japan is very high.

SdS: *What are your favorite buildings?*

I (Barbara) like the Statue of Liberty very much. The first thing you see is this monumental woman. It is so iconic. It represents a beautiful historical moment, and a promise. The technical accomplishment it represents is still astonishing. And I appreciate the oeuvres of Le Corbusier and Oscar Niemeyer. And, closer to us, I am very much inspired by Kengo Kuma.

I (Michiel) love the Museum of Modern Art in Brazil by Lina Bo Bardi. It's a city hall, but also creates a covered shaded market. It's a strong structure that bespeaks the power of architecture in a social context. I also admire the work of Mies van der Rohe. It's spacious, and makes a large gesture with clarity and pure lines.

SdS: *If you could make any kind of building, without any regard to limitations, what would it be?*

I (Barbara) would love to create a building that was completely self-sufficient, generating its own resources. Imagine such a structure on the moon, that you could see from the earth.

I (Michiel) think that would be something—and better yet if it has a function—a useful, positive function for us down here. I'd say we welcome limitations. They are often the catalyst to create the solution. A good idea can overcome every limitation.

Cape Town, including the
Charity Chair shadow printed on a
carpet, scale 1:1000.

THE CHARITY CHAIR

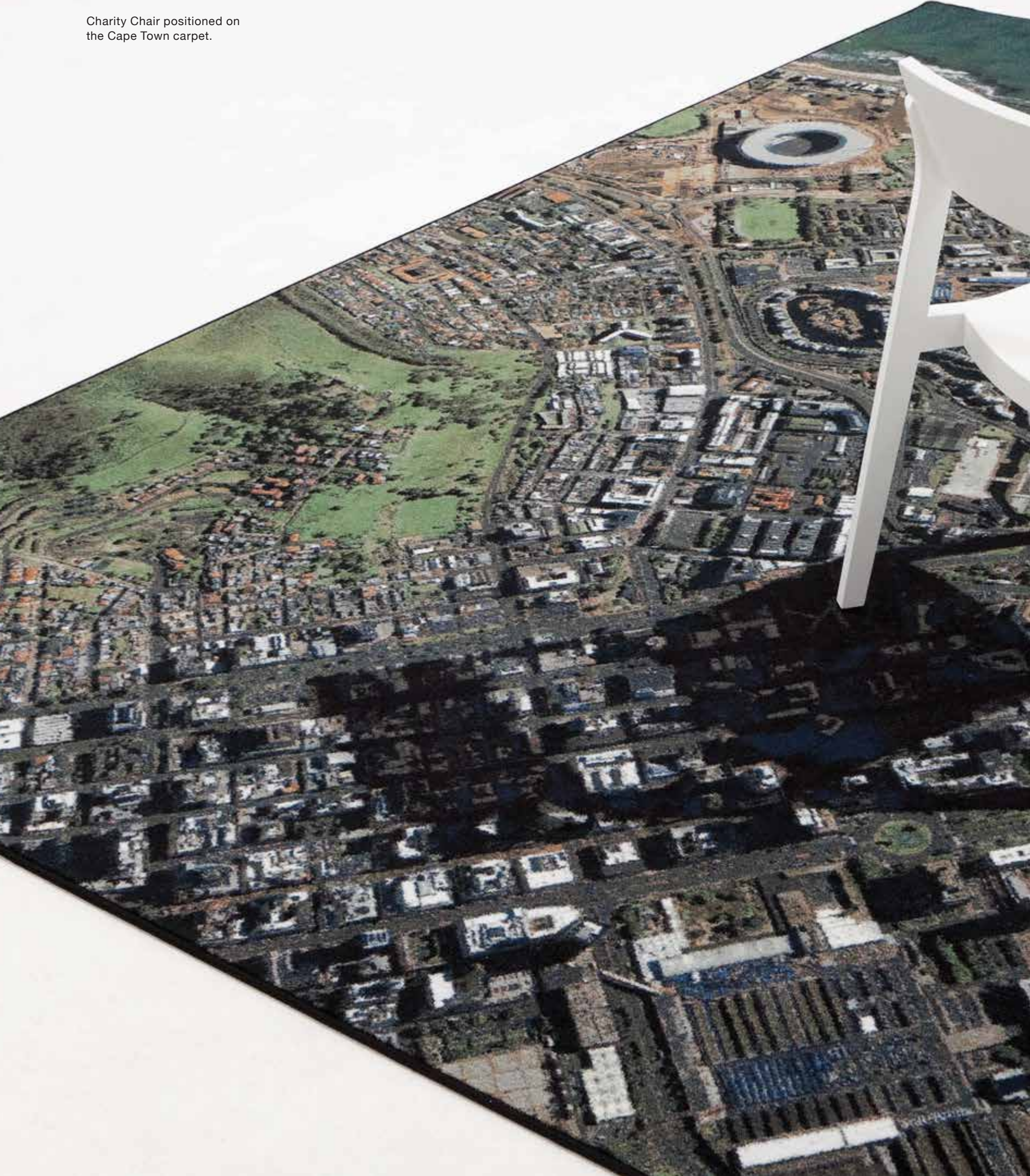
Don't change the chair, change the question. We were among a select number of architects asked to re-envision the ONO chair as a fundraising effort for Cape Town township. Instead of embellishing the chair, we took a step back and changed the context, thus creating a new perception of the chair. By

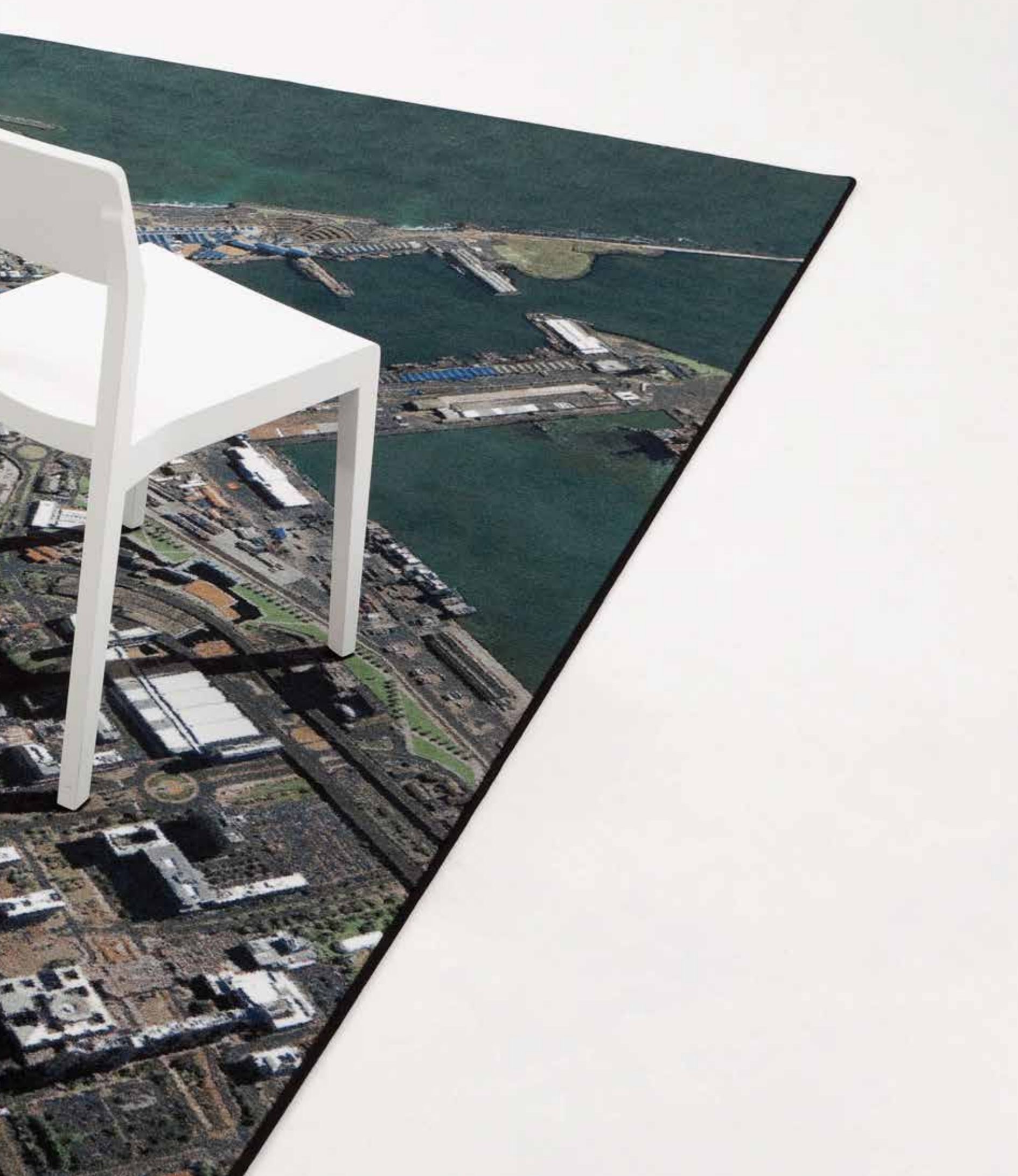
placing the untouched chair on a custom carpet depicting the topography of Cape Town, the chair became, perceptually, a building. The scale of 1:1000 made it, in theory, the biggest building in Cape Town—a fitting contemporary emblem of community and charity. As a structure, it became not only a building,

but an urban center, including both housing and community services. In our projection, each of the four chair legs would come to stand in actual available spaces in Cape Town. Although the Charity Chair remains an ideal, we welcomed the opportunity to think big, think generously, and think outside the box.



Charity Chair positioned on the Cape Town carpet.





The Charity Chair positioned in Cape Town.





The Cape Town skyline at night.

