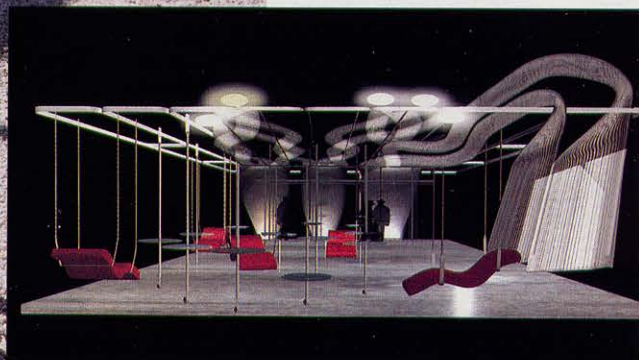


People are Talking about

the twin towers

Two emerging architects, Philip Nobel writes, are giving the maleness of modernism a shot of Madonna feminism.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: LINDY ROY PHOTOGRAPHED IN FRONT OF *SUBWAVE*, HER INSTALLATION AT P.S. 1; A DESIGN FOR A BAR IN THE MEATPACKING DISTRICT; AND A DIGITAL SKETCH OF THE SAGAPONAC HOUSE.

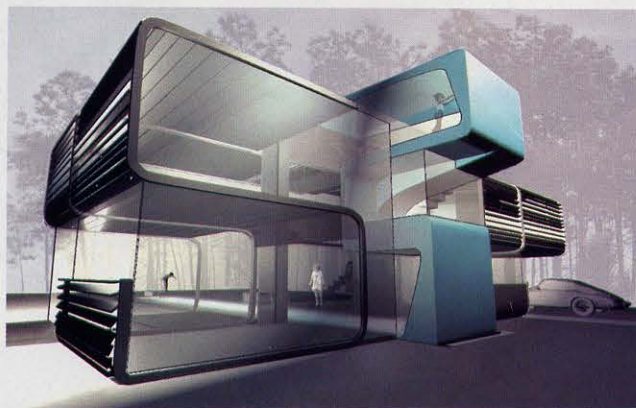
Like its kissing cousin, the art world, the inner circle of New York architecture has its own peculiar dress code. Personal embellishment defaults to funny eyeglasses and downtown black—no bow ties need apply—and at the openings and lectures and cocktails that bring this clique together, the crowd can merge into an undifferentiated mass of deliberate hip. Winka Dubbeldam and Lindy Roy defy such easy conformity. Among their colleagues, up-and-coming architects of a decidedly *avant* bent, they can always be spotted at a glance. At an even six feet tall, and with a spate of recent successes between them, each rises literally and figuratively above the crowd.

Aiming to claim a seat on the cutting edge, the two have traveled separate but similar paths: arrival in New York from abroad

(Dubbeldam from Holland and Roy from South Africa), high-profile teaching gigs, promising projects, suggestive competition entries, and the eventual establishment of their own offices. This course has naturally brought them to the attention of

Terence Riley, the all-seeing chief curator of the department of architecture and design at the Museum of Modern Art. For his 1999 “Un-Private House” show, Riley selected Dubbeldam’s intricately conceived Millbrook Residence—a leaning, ramped house designed for work and play on a Catskill hilltop—and he was on the committee that chose Roy to design an environment for this year’s “Warm Up,” the annual series of outdoor dance parties at P.S. 1, in Queens. “I *architecture* ▶468

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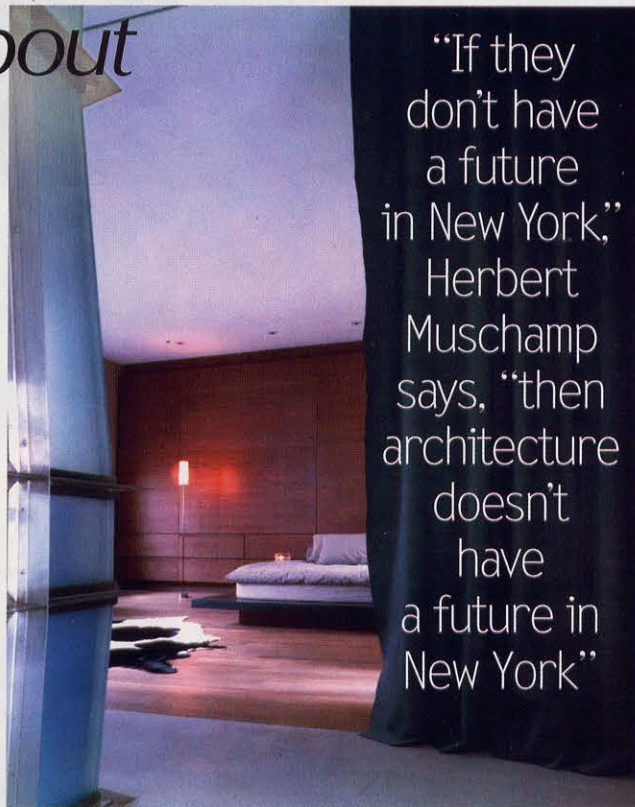


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respect both of them tremendously, and, of course, they beg comparison for reasons beyond their height," he says. "Their work raises the possibility that there is something emerging that we might call 'Grrrl Architecture.'"

Riley describes Grrrl Architecture as "a way to get beyond the heroic modern ideal." He identifies three traits: a kind of Madonna feminism applied to architecture—toughness wielded as a birthright, not as a shield; a distinctly female eye (e.g., more nuance, less brawn); and a debt to Zaha Hadid, the Iraqi émigrée who wowed the architecture world with her sharp forms, pastel-on-black renderings, taste for tentlike Yohji shifts, and bold off-limits chain-smoking.

If Grrrl architects have their form-giver—their Frank Lloyd Wright, their Mies—Zaha's it. Both Dubbeldam and Roy work within the sphere she reclaimed for the female solo practitioner, and they now have a place of their own in the world of experimental contemporary architecture (an artistic corner of the profession that always seems underserved by *contemporary* and a bit marginalized by *experimental*). Formally, Winka's work cleaves closer to Zaha's model; her Aida hair salon, recently completed on Manhattan's Upper East Side, indulges in the same sumptuous deployment of folded edges and angles, albeit limited to a clinical white-on-white. Lindy, in her fixation with natural science and technology—an unrealized proposal for Issey Miyake's New York headquarters featured optical-fiber cables bundled like locks of hair—veers closer to another proto-Grrrl architect, Liz Diller of the art/architecture crossover duo Diller + Scofidio. Now, Dubbel-



"If they don't have a future in New York," Herbert Muschamp says, "then architecture doesn't have a future in New York"

dam's Archi-Tectonics and Roy's firm, which is named after her, are both at that volatile threshold at which hard-won private visions are beginning to spill out into the world.

Most hours of most days one can find Dubbeldam in her SoHo studio, knee-deep in the sketch models and red-lined drawings that are the inevitable residue of an architect's creative life. She commands her small staff with confidence, and it is not at all surprising to spy a copy of *The Fountainhead* on the bookshelf. But like any lady of the old school, she demurs when asked her age.

Instead she supplies other specifications: "I'm Dutch, and I'm six feet tall." The first part is key. Holland, particularly Rotterdam—home to Rem Koolhaas and the younger generation his office helped spawn—is to architecture at our turn of the century what Paris was at the last. But Dubbeldam prefers the scene in New York. "It is important to develop the theoretical side of architecture," she says. "And there is much more of an emphasis on theory here. Holland can be very freethinking, but for a Dutch person it can feel very tight."

Her work shows how her Dutch architectural instincts have flowered on American soil. In an early project, the Cristine Rose Gallery in SoHo (built in 1994 and since dismantled), the storefront window was etched with a diagram that cheekily traced the life of a star, from birth to supernova. Behind the glass, facing the street, four video monitors showed live images of the furtive art-world activity within. Many of Dubbeldam's early projects share a similar quiet frustration with such modest footprints. For the model Frederique van der Wal, she built a spare NoHo loft, completed in 1995. The open floor is treated like a conceptual cityscape, with sleek kitchen, slate fireplace, and glass-tiled bath appearing as independent architectural acts. *architecture* ▶470



LEFT: WINKA DUBBELDAM ON THE TERRACE OF A LOFT SHE DESIGNED IN SOHO; AND, ABOVE, THE LOFT'S INTERIOR.

Dubbeldam: ANDREW MOORE; Sitings Editor: Amy Hall Browne; hair and makeup: Jim Crawford for Garren New York; inset: Paul Warhol.

People are Talking about

These days, Dubbeldam is landing jobs that better match her ambition. She is designing a large private home overlooking the Croton Reservoir in Putnam County, and an eleven-story tower rising now on the lower West Side will pack 26 lofts and a gallery behind a self-consciously fractured glass facade. "Everything is done with security cameras and alarms now," Dubbeldam explains.

"So the whole idea of the wall is gone—the building opens up to the city, and the sky collapses in." Her designs for three 30-story towers in Rotterdam, slung out on massive footings over the Maas River, will be equally vertiginous, if they can survive that city's review process.

Asked if her gender and relative youth are causing any problems now that she has moved on to larger projects, Dubbeldam takes comfort in her height: "There is a huge advantage to being six feet tall. If you don't say anything, you look tough."

DUBBELDAM'S DESIGN FOR A LARGE PRIVATE HOME SET ON THE BANKS OF THE CROTON RESERVOIR IN PUTNAM COUNTY, NEW YORK.



and several sites in West Africa; an environmental intervention project in "Cancer Alley," the polluted stretch of the Mississippi between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, in collaboration with the photographer Richard Misrach. Closer to home—her office is located in the meatpacking district—she is designing a bar in the neighborhood

that will merge existing meat hooks and tracks with an optical-fiber system based on the one proposed for Miyake. "There are preservationists who want to protect every piece of timber, and there are more mercantile interests that want to sweep it all away," she says. "We're looking to do something different."

For another tough environment in need of imported comforts—the Hamptons—Roy is designing a feather-light weekend house intersected by a lap pool. Water cascades three levels into the basin from a rooftop steam room; a bar at the lower level will be tucked in behind the

architecture

Commanding stature and overseas influences are also at the heart of Roy's appeal. On a hot summer afternoon, two days before the opening of her *subWave*—a diffuse landscape of bulging swimming pools, taut hammocks, irrigation hoses, suspended fans, and floating iridescent fabric clouds—she is easy to find in the gravel-filled forecourt at

P.S. 1. Her long red hair is pouring out from under a wide-brimmed South African bush hat as she greets visitors, directs her large crew, and buys a sandwich for her contractor. ("I'm sorry," she says, twanging nicely, "but I'm not at all *Vogue* d-out here.") Roy describes the inspiration for *subWave* as equal parts spa and sanatorium, with a dash of the subway. "It's a mildly dystopic urban oasis," she says. "We looked at the movie *Coma*—the idea of your body prone in space and being tended to." Some of her family has been imported from Cape Town for the occasion, and they have been put to work at a table in the shade, threading shoulder straps on the rubber bladder canteens that are part of a product line, including a custom-designed Swatch, that accompanies Roy's elaborate folly. "This is perfect," she says dryly. "My family was in the *shmatte* business back home."

Much of Roy's work comes from what she calls a "safari-camp sensibility"—not rattan and growling taxidermy but "architecture that introduces comfort into extreme environments." A list of past and current projects reads like an atlas of places *not* to go in search of easy living: the Okavango Delta in Botswana, where she designed a spa that floats like a constellation in the reeds; a series of eco-tourism destinations in development on the rim of a Panamanian volcano,

"Their work raises the possibility that there is something emerging that we might call 'Grrrl Architecture,'" says MoMA's Terence Riley

waterfall. The house was commissioned by real-estate impresario Coco Brown for his celebrated Sagaponac development, in which one-off weekend retreats by Richard Meier, Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, and Philip Johnson will rub shoulders with houses built by emerging young architects like Roy, Shigeru Ban, and Marwan Al-Sayed. Asked about his youngest architect, Brown was effusive. "Lindy did a house that I would describe as completely funky and different," he said, adding, "It had nothing to do with why I signed her up, the fact that she's a bombshell."

But of course natural beauty can't be ignored. Dubbeldam and Roy may be fashion models for only a day, but, in style and substance, they are both poised to become role models to a generation of young women entering the profession—a generation that has attained equality in architecture schools but not yet in corner offices. Both are distinctly making it in the crucible of New York architecture, and their success could be an inspiration to young "grrrls" looking to make it anywhere. *New York Times* architecture critic Herbert Muschamp, who has championed Dubbeldam and Roy, offers his own spin on Sinatra's formulation: "If they don't have a future in New York," he declares, "then architecture doesn't have a future in New York." □

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