

1.01. Never-ending architecture

'If you allow everything and everyone to go their own way you'll end up with chaos.'

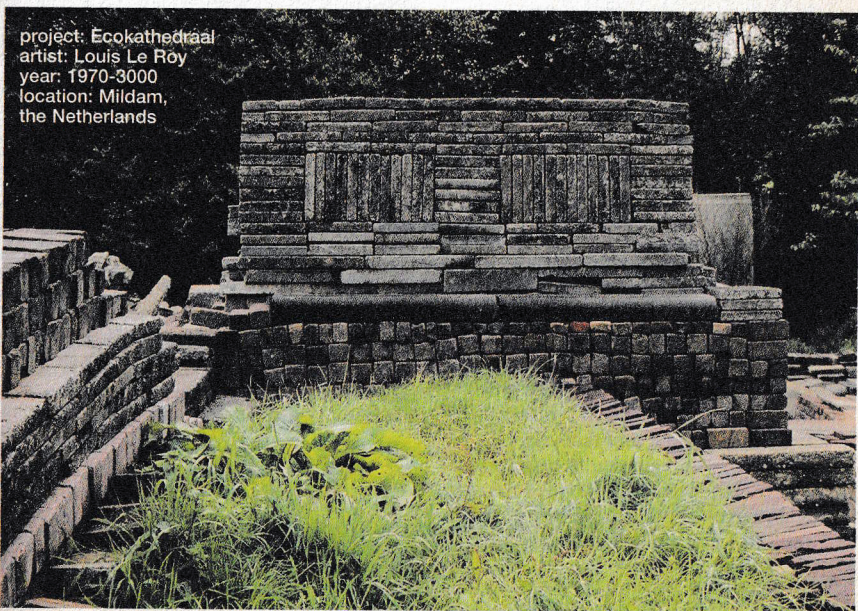
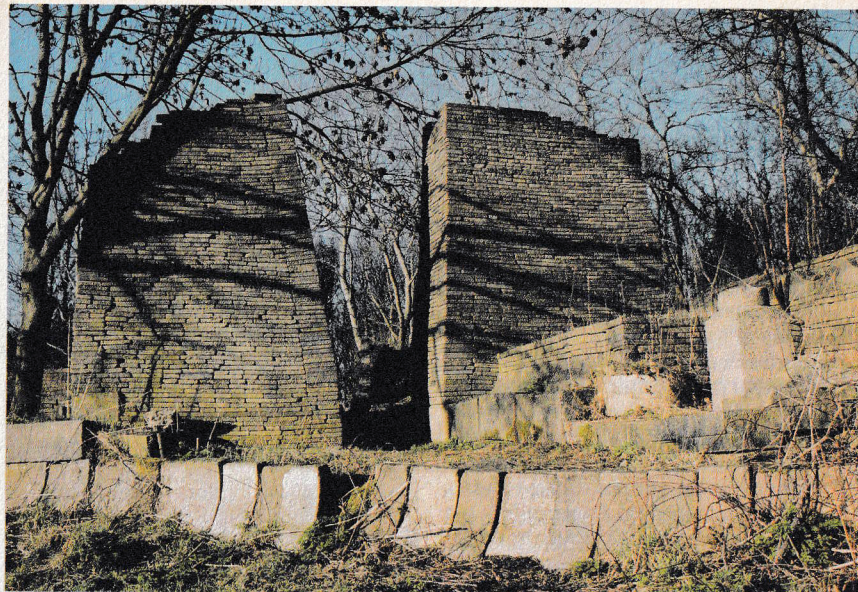
'Exactly,' will be Louis Le Roy's reply to the usual criticism of his work, 'that is the whole idea, for only in complex dynamic systems can everything and everybody go their own way. Only in systems like that do I have the guarantee that my freedom is optimized and only then can I go on permanently, exploiting my free creative energy in a continuous flow of time.'

Louis – 'The Wild Gardener' – Le Roy is a Dutch artist, who became well known for his ongoing building and gardening projects. He refuses to even consider the end of the processes he sets in motion. His work consists of trying to free a piece of land in a city and consequently get the neighbourhood inhabitants involved in a continuous process of changing it by building stacks of rubble and seeding plants at will, for years on end. His main enemies are civil servants. They obviously expect some kind of definitive arty creation, but become scared of a loss of control as soon as they begin to realize that there is no end. Le Roy is interested in ongoing processes and a complex entanglement of systems.

His most successful project to date is the Eco-cathedral in Mildam in the north of the Netherlands. At first sight it looks like a neglected forest with a landfill of street rubble. But there is more to it. A closer look shows that there are paths through the wilderness. Between trees and shrub-

bery you'll find stacked buildings overgrown by vegetation. Louis Le Roy is at work there, has been at work there for 30 years on every day when weather conditions allow it, constantly rearranging pavement tiles, bricks, drains, curbs and all other stony street materials. The stacks, all in balance without any cement, have their own beauty. Le Roy has developed a special skill for this. The paradox is that even though his work looks natural it is man-made. Culture and nature have become one.

Le Roy's work is not, as one might think, naive architecture. He is not making his utopian dream come true. It is the process and its complexity that he is after. He is fighting urban monoculture with vigour. In an article entitled 'Our spectacular society' (1975) he explains his philosophy by strongly criticizing La Grande Borne, an urban planning feat by Emile Aillaud. Despite its many 'cultural' tile tableaux and interesting objects, this neighbourhood is dead. Time is switched off and the inhabitants are not allowed to contribute. In Le Roy's view such a project is doomed, and time has proved that he was right. He based this article mainly on Henri Bergson's 'L'Evolution créatrice', in which the philosopher places man as an active centre in a creative evolutionary process in space and time. Shortlived actions or 'spectacles' can release creative powers for a while, but in the end they have to take place in a time continuum to bring about a true 'évolution créatrice'. Bergson's words are almost literally put into practice by Le Roy. Ironically, it is what mankind does too. It is just that evolution acts up regularly. But the time awareness that Louis Le Roy brings in is quite important. The Eco-cathedral process is due to continue for at least 1000 years.



project: Ecokathedraal
artist: Louis Le Roy
year: 1970-3000
location: Mildam,
the Netherlands