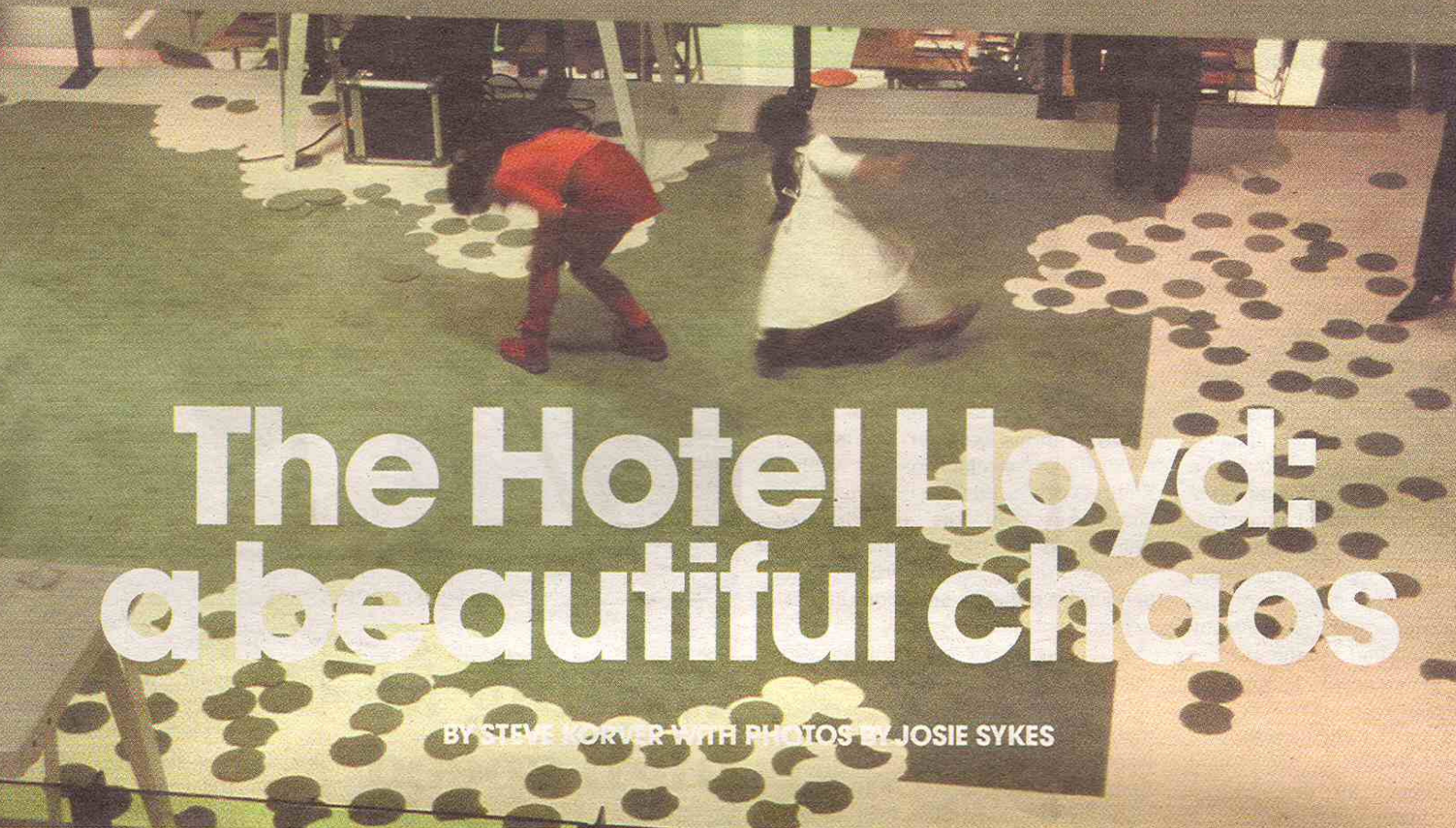


A building that was once a claustrophobic hell-hole has been opened up. The non-grim elements of the original building—stained glass windows, tiled walls, exposed timbers, and raggedly pored concrete floors—have been retained.



The Hotel Lloyd: a beautiful chaos

BY STEVE KORVER WITH PHOTOS BY JOSIE SYKES

While I'm a fan of the Disneyland of modern Dutch architecture along the Oostelijke Handelskade and east along the IJ, I have to admit that the overall effect is a bit clinical, and the cultural squat on the planet, which was traumatically at this area in 1998.

certainly this most constructed of could do with some more nature—fast some more of the 'natural'. The is, with its inflatable flowers on the floor and its clutch of caravan ers on the ground floor, was a truly ist's paradise that grew organically the chaos. It was *natural*. What this neighbourhood needs is more both of the cultural and biological nature would then start occurring, ore naturally.

'Dutch Model' of design has been around the globe—or at least in Japan and Scandinavia—for being both pragmatic and for its easygoing attitude boundaries between building, urban, dscape planning. Still, to my mind it misses the mark by regarding nature as a complex construct that must be nurtured. Holland has the ultimate excuse: ing is fake here anyway. ('No land, ? *Slap gehul!* Hell, we'll just reclaim om a soggy marsh!')

course, the real can be faked. But fake-real still takes time. Nature, complex s of chaos that she is, is really too dimensional to fake in the short term.

eastern docklands. The area is desperate for that certain something that can't be arranged even by the most cutting-edge urban planning on the planet. Maybe the area needs a farm, or a subsidiary of Artis. Perhaps *inburgering* a few more non-human fellow creatures will bring more balance to the humans who live and/or party there.

Humanising a hell-hole

Then again, the other side of the equation also needs attention. To this end the Hotel Lloyd Hotel, once a karmic hell-hole, is being turned into a happening hotel. And it's a good sign that MVRDV, the architects who gave the world Pig City 2001, a skyscraper for pig breeding, and Atelier van Lieshout, the artist/designer responsible for Pioneer Set, a mobile farm, are involved in the hotel's re-invention. With such influences, there's a good chance that the area's also a step closer to humanisation.

I ask Suzanne Oxenaar, one of the project's jump-starters and the person responsible for the hotel's unique Cultural Embassy (more later), what the chances were that the hotel's backyard might become another Pioneer Set complete with blissed-out hogs. 'I certainly wouldn't discount the possibility,' she says, her eyes twinkling. 'In fact, Joep [Van Lieshout] has already suggested it.'

I say bring on the manure. It may be just what this over-shiny 'hood needs.

When they began transforming the Lloyd, there was still a lot of bad voodoo in the hotel's history to transcend. Built in 1921, it began as a European emigrants' hotel, and

would be given a righteous hosing down before going, via an underground tunnel, to the hotel proper.

'The concept of what a "guest" is has changed many times in this building,' says Oxenaar. Obviously this is an understatement.

Later during the Occupation, the Germans re-zoned the Lloyd as a jail, where people arrested during the February Strike were kept. After the war it retained this function, to 'host' collaborators and members of the NSB. But the Lloyd's history was probably at its darkest between 1964 and 1989, when it served as Amsterdam's premier youth prison. (The 'New Lloyd' in Amsterdam-Zuidoost has now taken over this function.) The old Lloyd began its healing process when it became a living/working space for artists in the early 1990s, which lasted until 2001.

The 'old' Lloyd isn't just another 'design hotel', or an attempt to copy the success of New York's Chelsea Hotel or even of Rotterdam's Hotel New York (though the latter does share the Lloyd's immigration-related past and designer present). The birth of the new Hotel Lloyd was in fact—yes, indeed—an organic, complex and slow process that has involved many movers and shakers. (Some of them will be mentioned below, but many won't: there are a lot of them.)

Transforming the place from a youth prison into a hotel and 'cultural embassy' has, in fact, taken over eight years. It began with Oxenaar and a certain Otto Nan, both of whom have impeccable underground culture credentials. Oxenaar was a co-founder

director studied art history and name organising events and she ing the Wild West roller disco and prepark' in Vrieshuis Amerika. H himself as a 'financial autodid business card!')

In 1996 Oxenaar and Nan to city-sponsored competition fo opment of the hotel, which v rotting hulk of a bad-vibed bui to their own surprise—won. Bu they approached were wimp-a took the duo a while to find needed for the redevelopment. Woonstichting de Key agreed and is now the official owner.

'It was never the idea to tu hip hotel or a hip restaurant, l club.' Oxenaar says. 'We were i creating space and freedom— space where people could do wanted. Only then did we th should be a hotel.'

As an organiser of internatio bitions, Oxenaar has obs internationalisation of the globa and the 'eternal emigration', as sl its participants.

'This new concept had to be than the Supperclub, which wa by the hour when food began be she says. 'That's why everything here. No deadlines. And once w the idea of a hotel, we also r existing hotels don't take ad guests with something to share generally just too formal for that.

This is why they're leavin