

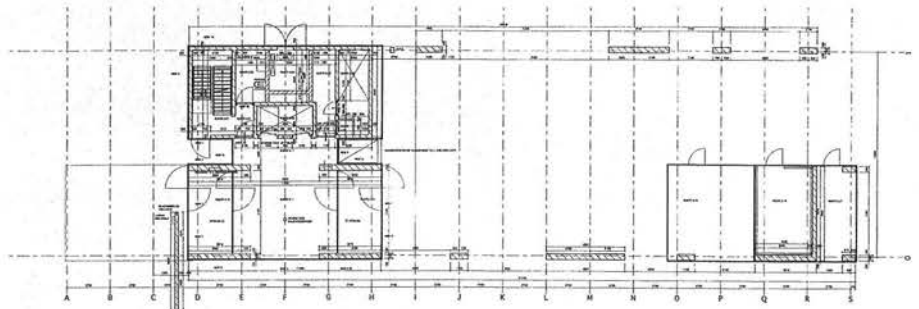
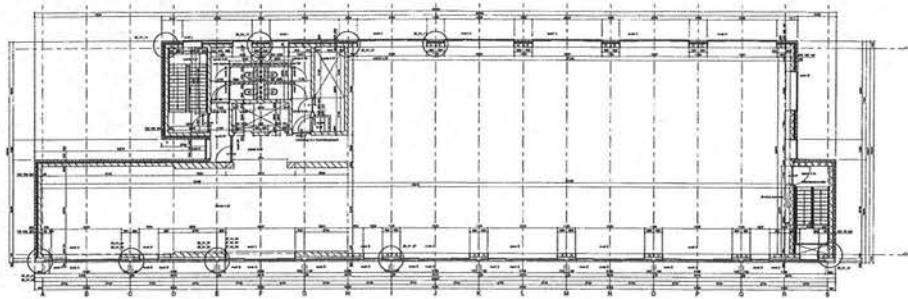
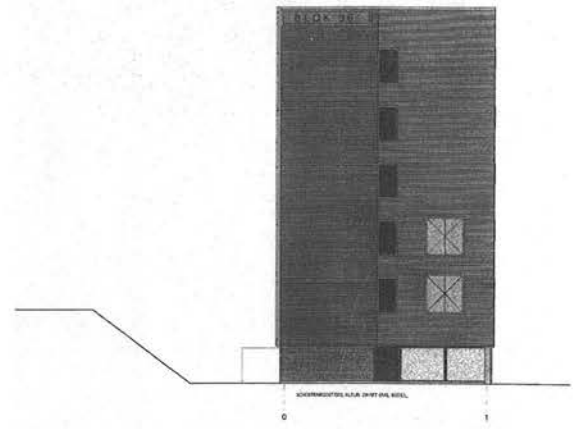
“The plan sites the office building parallel to the motorway across the Maas River, which is taken as a point of orientation and verification. The design contains a parking deck which slices through the site like a wedge and forces the building upward, so to speak, freeing it of its weight.

“The building itself consists of two wings shifted out of alignment, one of which juts across the road linking the Sphinx-C ramique grounds to the Randwijck area of Maastricht. In this way the building marks the intersection of two roads. A pedestrian ramp underscores the link between building and intersection. Accordingly the building should be treated as a function of the road.”¹

“As in the classic temples and in minimalist art, Arets’ work is not a mimetic, literal obedience to the guidelines of the site but rather an interpretation and link with it; it has no meaning outside the point where it is inserted. ‘We want our buildings to merge into the existing context, but at the same time, to be flexible and open to changes,’ Arets has written. For this purpose, as Greg Lynn explains, Arets uses two tactics: disappearance and foldability. Both movements are expressed with the materiality of skins that act like alabaster—half transparent, half translucent, like a chameleonic reflection of the surroundings....”²

“Architecture may be considered a desire for purity, a striving for perfection. The principal color white marks a process in which the undecidable is respected; it is not a question of meaningful or meaningless.

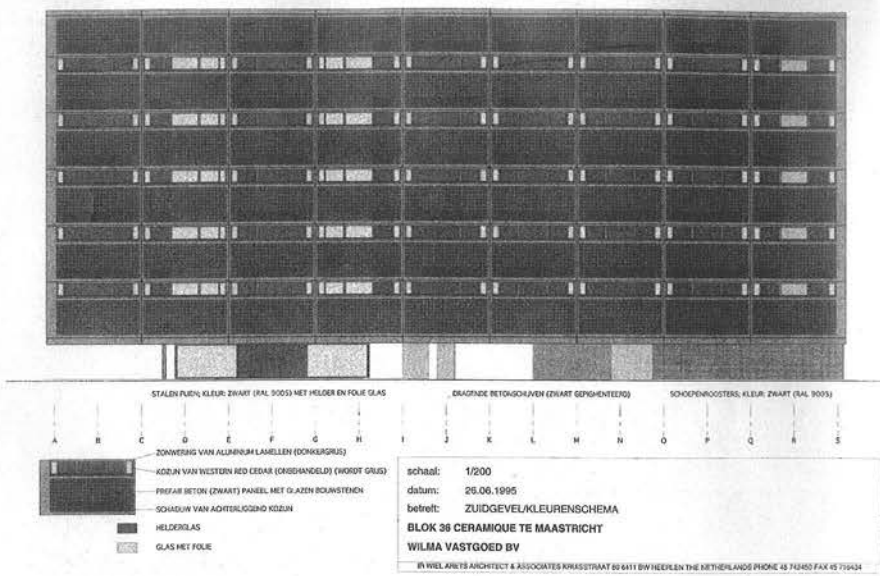
“The whiteness of newly fallen snow in the morning light, the white of perfect skin, the white paper on which the design will be sketched—white is everywhere and may be considered the color of origin and beginning. White is the color of the between: between conception and execution, between unblemished and defiled, between innocence and seduction, between virginity and marriage.”³



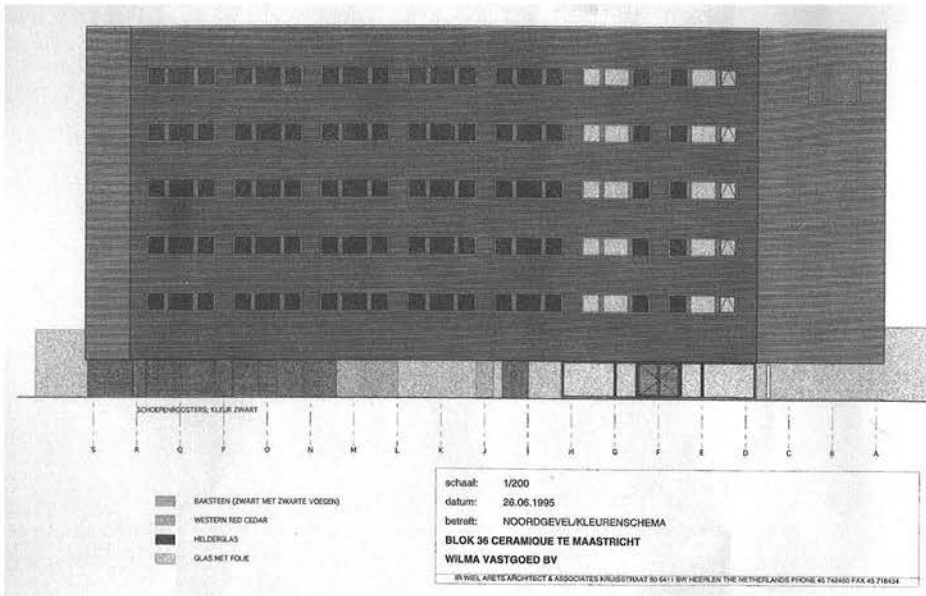
C RAMIQUE OFFICE BUILDING MAASTRICHT, THE NETHERLANDS

Wiel Arets

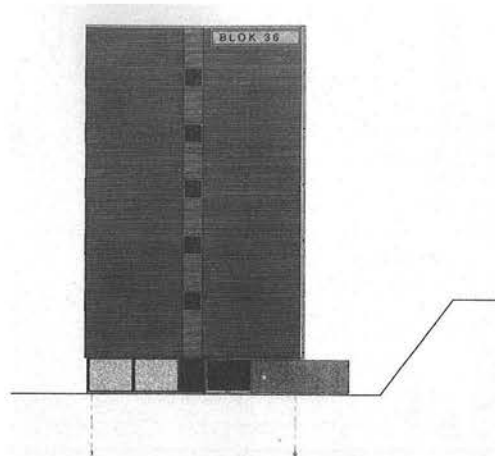
“Architecture is therefore a between, a membrane, an alabaster skin, at once opaque and transparent, meaningful and meaningless, real and unreal. To become itself architecture must lose its innocence; it must accept a violent transgression. It can only become part of the world by entering into marriage with its surroundings...”⁴



“Fifty years ago technology brought us reality. Now it is destroying it. The design of the thirties already contributed to a series of man-made communications; today architecture has reach the status of an interface. It is architecture’s task to *mediate* between man and everything that befalls him.”⁵



“When you talk about ‘skin’, for example, most people quickly translate the skin as a façade or as the surface of the body which has an inherent ‘thinness’. My idea in *Alabaster Skin* was to explain that skin actually involves ‘thickness’, even when you talk about the skin of a city, its political and economical circumstances and its culture. However when you talk about the building in the city, the thickness has to do with the air in front of the building, the building itself and the air behind it. The façade is no longer just a kind of representational act but has a multiplicity, a complexity which goes beyond the first reading. You are no longer looking at the human body just in terms of the skin but also in terms of the movement of the skin ...”⁶



1. “C eramique Office Building,” *El Croquis* 85 (1997): 100.
2. Josep Maria Montaner, “Wiel Arets: European Architecture after Postmodernism,” *El Croquis* 85 (1997): 30.
3. Wiel Arets, “An Alabaster Skin,” *D: Columbia Documents of Architecture and Theory*, vol. 2 (1993): 35.
4. Wiel Arets, “An Alabaster Skin,” 36.
5. Wiel Arets, “An Alabaster Skin,” 39.
6. Wiel Arets in Dominic Papa, “A Conversation with Wiel Arets,” *El Croquis* 85 (1997): 15.