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Commissioned by the county Noord-Holland
In collaboration with Cultuurcompagnie Noord-Holland



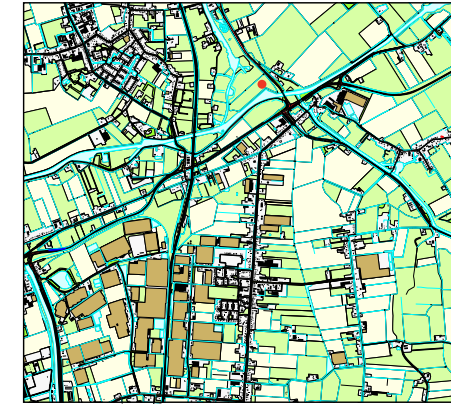
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A work of art near node N242/N241 Noord-Holland
In collaboration with PARKLAAN Landscape architects

GEHEUGENSPOOR MEMORY TRACE

PAUL DE KORT

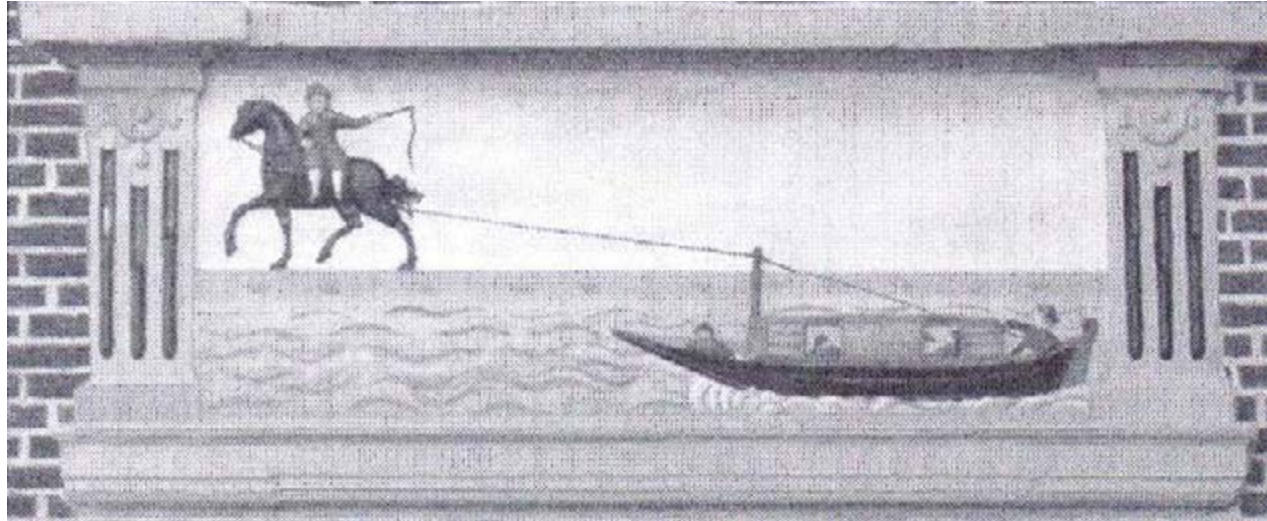
DE HEER HUYGEN WAERT



the development of the landscape near Niederper from the reclamation of the Heerhugowaard in the 17th century until the reconstruction of junction N242/N241 in 2013.

Around the year 800, the area that is now Heerhugowaard was covered in peat. Because of mining of the peat and storm surges, this area became covered in lakes. During this time, the area looked more like a mudflat area, but this changed when the old (lower) dyke was built higher. This dyke was later named after Sir ('Heer') Hugo of Assendelft and was called the Heer Huygen Dijk, now Huijgendijk. The region became Westflinge, also known as De Waert. Later, these two were combined into the Huygen Waert and in 1630 the area was impoldered and called the Heerhugowaard.

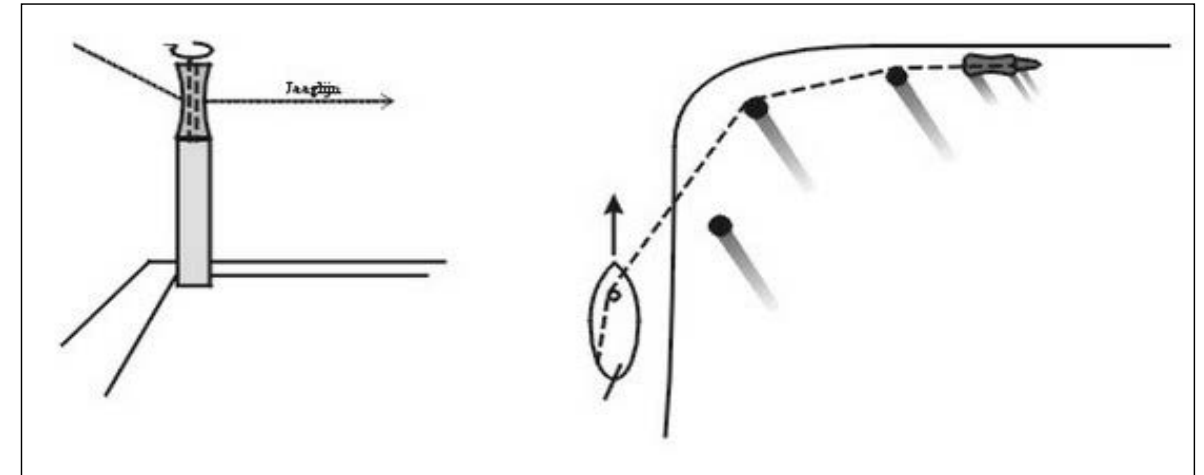
A polder always has a ring ditch or a canal ring that surrounds the entire area and gives discharge water from lower located areas a place to go. Niederper Verlaat is the most northern point of the Heerhugowaard. A 'verlaat' is a lock that enables ships to go from one water level to another. Until the end of the 19th century the canal ring had a sharp curve going south-east, this is now called Wester Langereis. Today, the provincial roads N241 and N242 cross each other in exactly this place. This junction was reconstructed in 2013 and the redesign of this area prompted the cause for this art project.



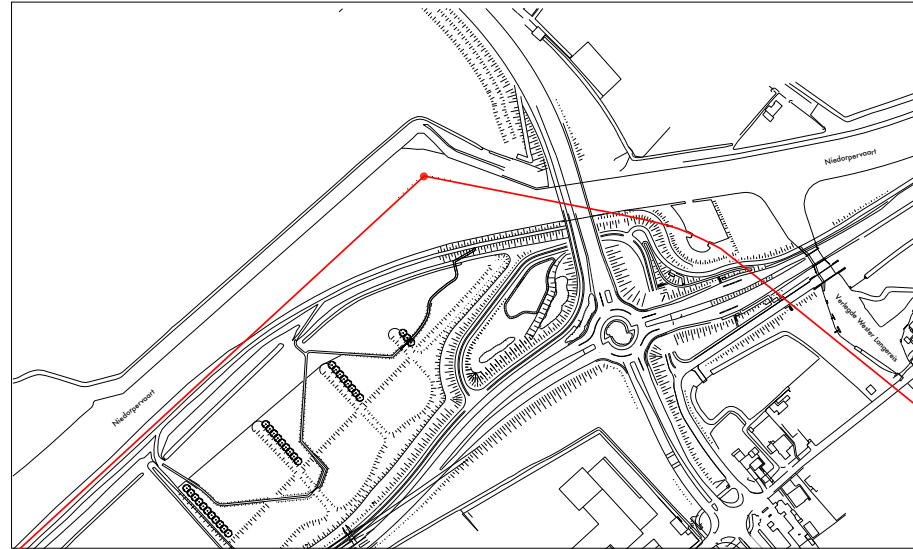
Polder roads used to be practically impassable and this is why transport of people and goods usually happened over the water. This often happened with the aid of a so-called barge. This (usually) involved a horse walking alongside the canal ring and pulling the barge with it. This way of transport caused very specific landscape elements like the 'towpath' and the 'roll-pole'. A towpath is a small path that leads directly alongside the shore and parallel to the stream. A roll-pole was an essential object during the passing of a sharp turn in the stream. This is why there has had to be a roll-pole in the curve at Verlaat, but we are not exactly sure where it was. The only thing that reminds of this roll-pole is the naming of the Oude- and the Nieuwe Rolpaalbrug ('The Old- and New 'Rolpaal' bridge).



Images of a classic barge with horse, a towpath alongside the Kromme Rijn and the workings of a roll-pole (rolpaal).

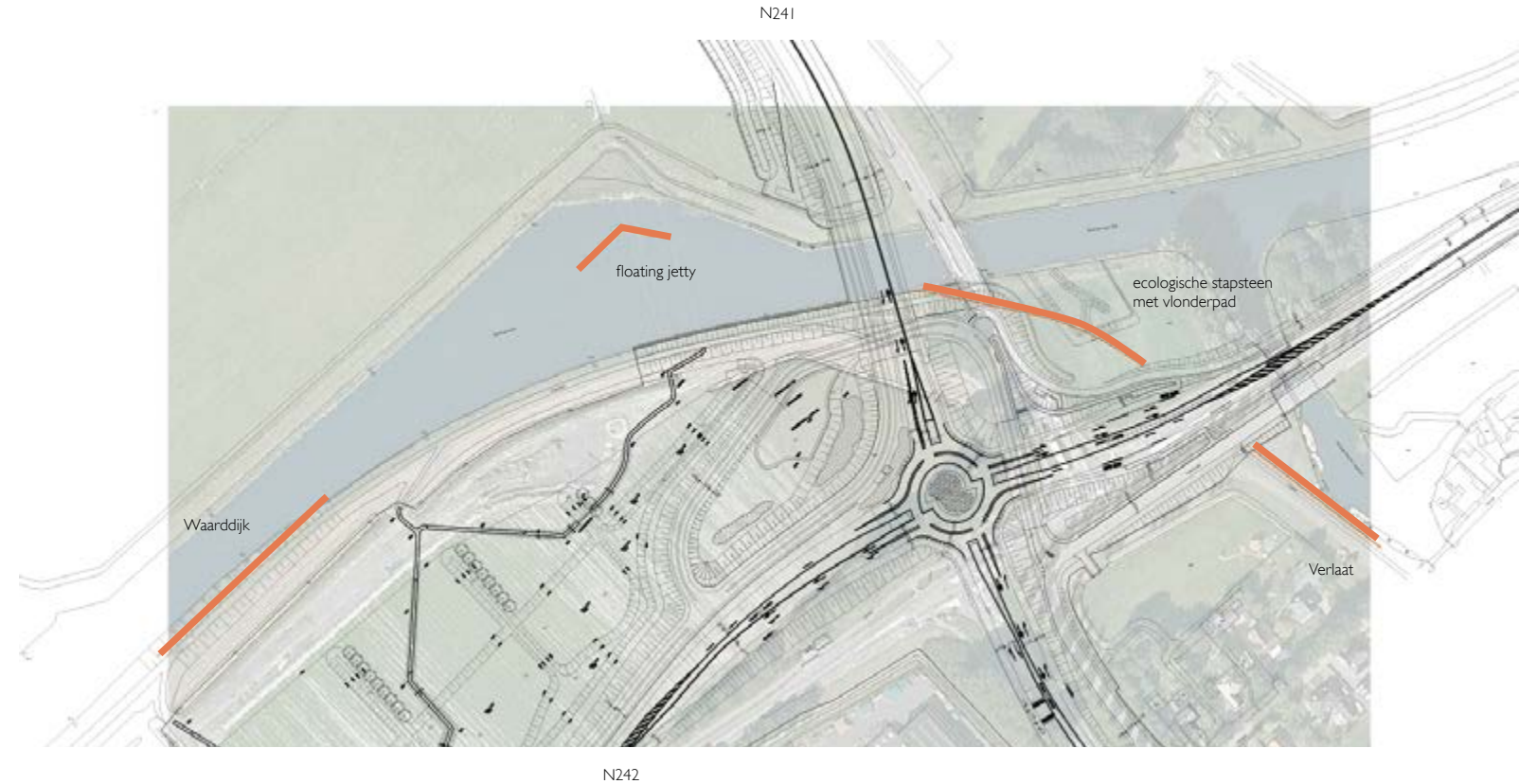


THE RINGSLOOT



the line of the towpath along the ringsloot with the kink where the roll-pole has stood on the plan drawing for the reconstruction of node N242/N241.

A map from 1850 shows us the traces of the route of the towpath alongside the shore of the ring ditch. If we project this line on a recent aerial photo, we can see that, in various places, today's landscape shows strong similarities to the landscape around the time of the use of barges. But we can also see that the corner of the former ring ditch, then the location of the roll-pole, has almost completely disappeared into the broadening of the Niedorpervaart.



This project makes the track of the former towpath alongside the Ringsloot of the 'Heer Huygen Waert' perceptible as a memory trace in today's landscape.

HET GEHEUGENSPOOR (the memory trace)

Like most towpaths, Het Geheugenspoor is a sand path. But instead of ordinary sand, this particular path is made with steel sand. Steel sand colours the track an intense reddish-brown which gives it a stark contrast to the surrounding green grass. The Memory Track shows us the occasional hoof prints of a walking horse, to remind us of the draught horses that once pulled a barge along.



In places where Het Geheugenspoor crosses the water, such as in the ecological steppingstone and in the corner of the Niedorpervaart, the track is carried by wooden platforms or a floating jetty. Once the steel sand starts to rust it is subject to a hygroscopic force, attaching it to the layer below. The patterns and tracks that are imprinted onto the steel sand in the first couple of days are thus recorded in the memory of the track forever.

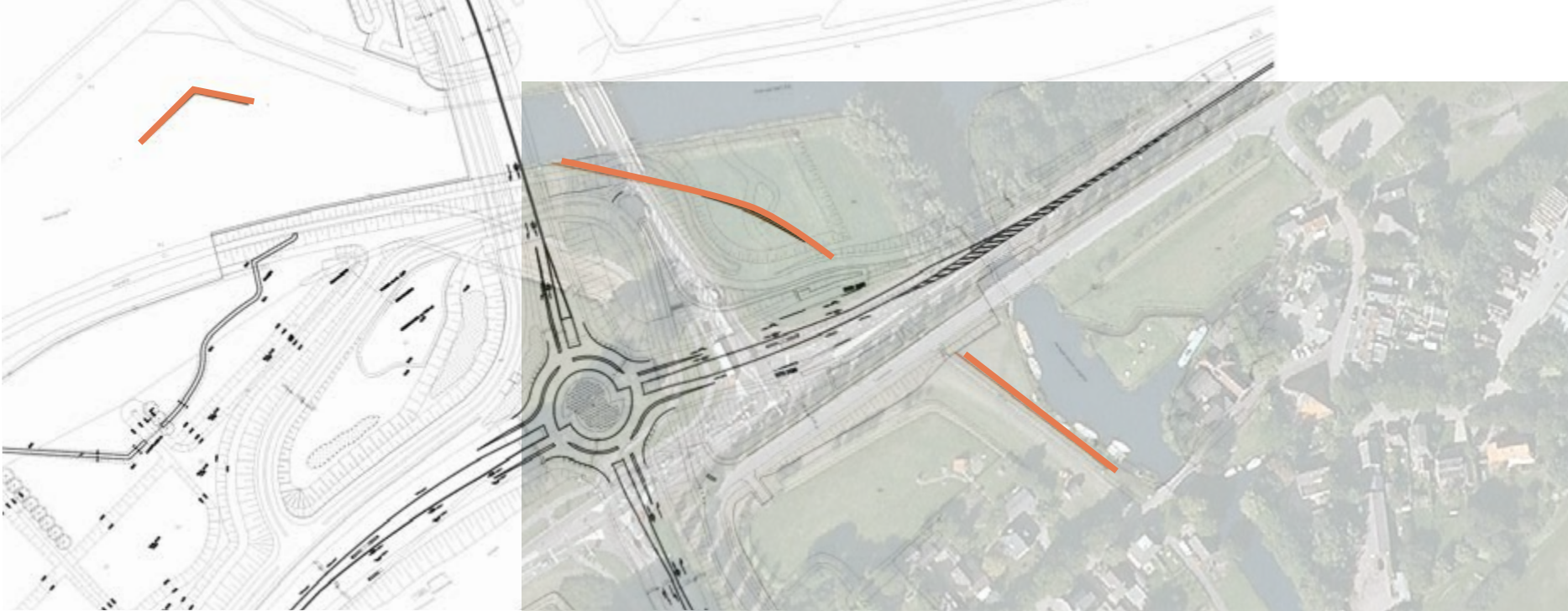


Het Geheugenspoor follows the Waarddijk for a while in the direction of Verlaat until it slowly disappears into the a curtain of reeds alongside the Niedorpervaart. A bit further down it resurfaces on a floating pier that marks the former corner in the ring ditch. This pier also functions as a place to moor your boat, enjoy the vastness or peace and quiet of the area, or to just simply go fishing.



artist impressions

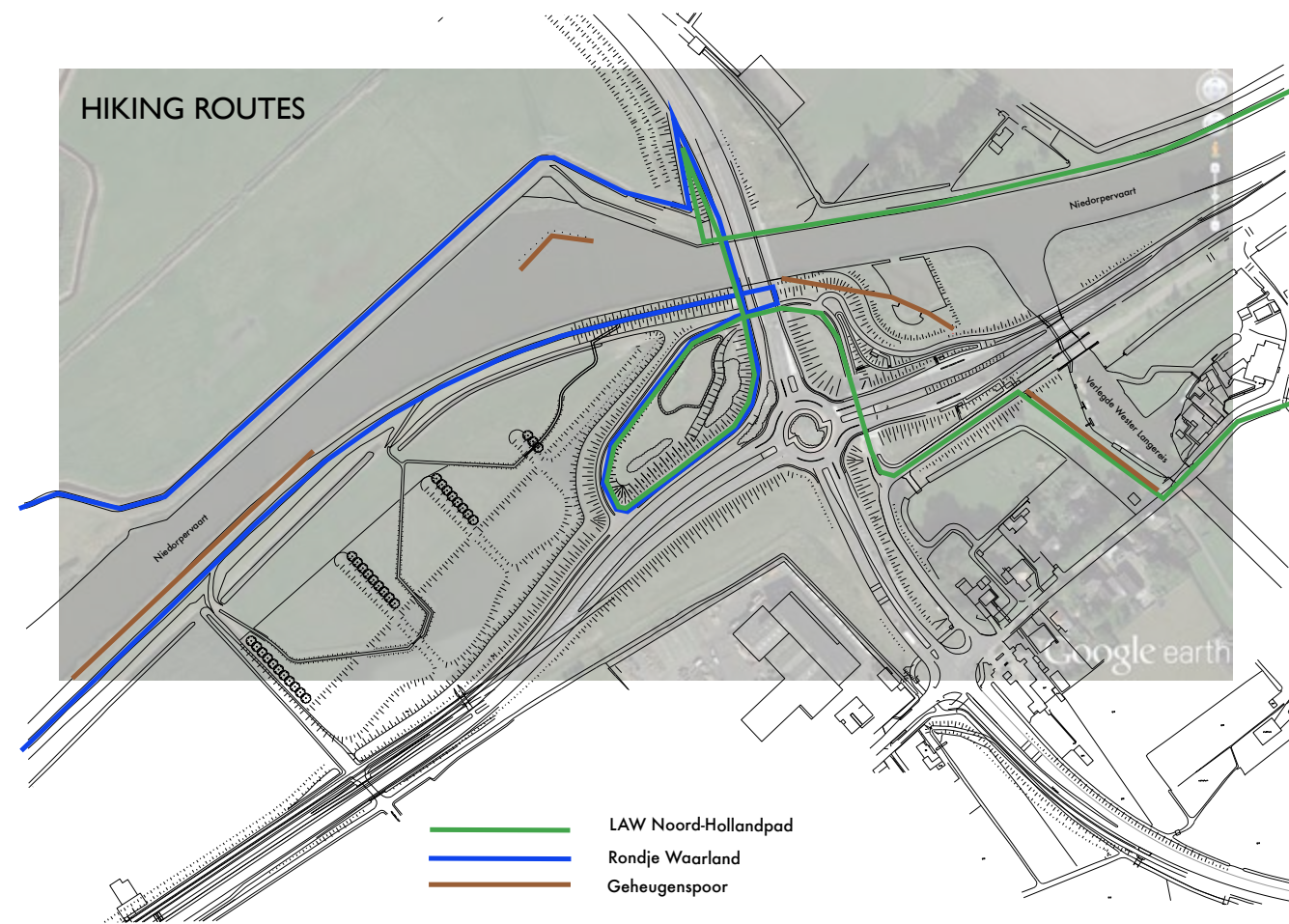




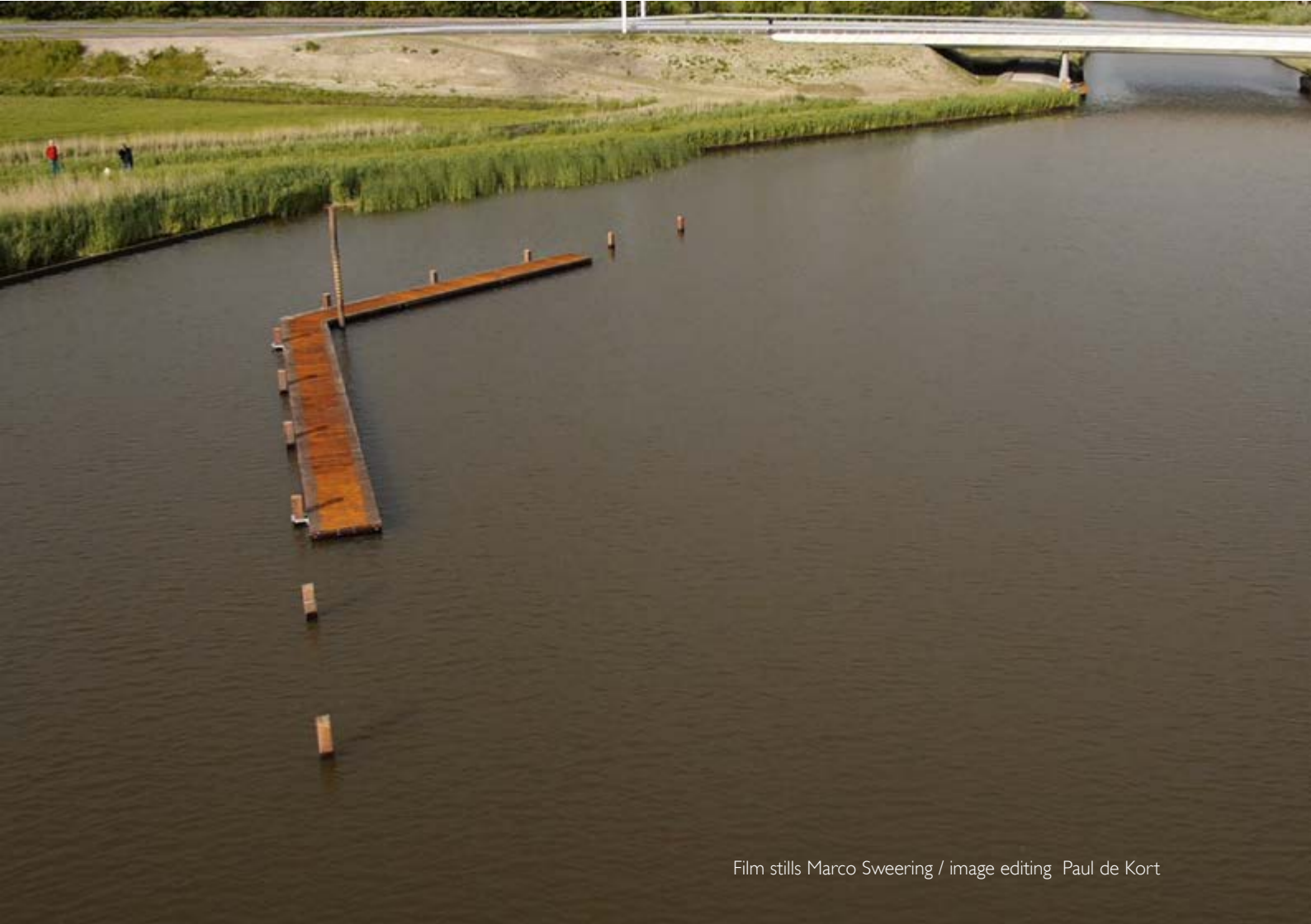
artist impressions



Near the ecological steppingstone Het Geheugenspoor is lead to the other side via a duckboard path. This is a lovely detour during a walk through the landscape of Noord-Holland. Further down the road, the track dives under the main body of the N242 and comes up again on the other side in the direction of Verlaat. Here, the track gets back on to original route of the towpath.



Het Geheugenspoor will mostly be used by the recreational walker, cyclist or boat enthusiast. Most drivers that cross this point on a daily basis will probably be enjoying this area at another time as walkers or cyclists. Once this project has ingrained itself like a memory track in someone's mind, it will forever be a part of the experience of this place.



Film stills Marco Sweering / image editing Paul de Kort



Het Geheugenspoor disappears into the Nidorpervaart, in the background is the new Rolpaalbrug





Film stills Marco Sweering / image editing Paul de Kort



The bus stops near the N242 have a beautiful view over Het Geheugenspoor. A happy coincidence sees that the towpath used to function as a road for public transport too. Another happy coincidence is that Het Geheugenspoor runs almost parallel to today's border between the municipals Heerhugowaard and Hollands Kroon.



Node N242-N241 seen from the air looking southwest and east.