

www.pauldekort.nl

www.parklaan.nl

© 2016

'Silent Witnesses Hard Facts' is an art project at the former Twente airbase.
commissioned by the municipality of Enschede and Area Development Twente ADT
in collaboration with PARKLAAN Landscape architects



SILENT WITNESSES

HARD FACTS

SILENT WITNESSES HARD FACTS

Four historical and monumental objects at the former Twente airbase have been transformed into meaningful places in a 'guilty landscape'.

A memorial path runs parallel to the newly dug stream valley, partly through the forest, partly through the open area. Walking one experiences the buildings and objects that have fallen into disuse, which in silence still bear witness to the hard facts that this landscape experienced in the last century. The path strings the objects together into a rich and here and there sensitive story and connects this to the new nature in a 21st century landscape.



AFSZ PARALLAX

On three places in the area were fuel tanks for the F16 fighter jets, AFS (Air Fuel Station).

An AFS consists of two large concrete storage tanks that were completely buried in a ground body.

Two of the three AFS at Twente Air Base were demolished, but AFS south was so beautifully situated in relation to the area that it screamed to be preserved as a 'silent witness'. It has been transferred to an observation post for birdwatchers and nature lovers.

The tanks have been partially excavated and the thick concrete walls have been partially 'nibbled off'. The east side of the object 'turns its back' on the former military airbase, while the west side opens up to the landscape, the stream valley and the new nature.







Secret tunnels gave access to the hidden tanks. Now the tunnels are closed by a steel door, but small lenses give a 'fish eye' view of their interior.





C26 DOPPLER

In this monumental building, a so called 'run-up', jet engines of among others the F-16 fighter jets were tested. Because of the heavily insulated cladding, the building was virtually soundproof. At the rear of the building was a gigantic tube that propelled the thumping of the jet engines upwards.

Just as AFSZ PARALLAX has *seeing* and *space* as its themes, so in C26 DOPPLER *time* and *sound* is central.



The Doppler effect is the physical phenomenon through which approaching sound seems to have a higher tone than sound that moves away. This landscape was an airbase and now becomes a nature development area. The time moving away from us has a different 'sound' than the time ahead of us.



Silently testify...

The sound-absorbing wall covering has been completely removed. The metal frame of the building is now the framework within which all kinds of sounds can be experienced.

In the large hall (Basilica) there are tubes. From some of the tubes comes the sound of an overflying airplane, while from other tubes comes the singing of birds.

...about hard facts

From the 'silencers' at the back of the hall a soft murmur seems to emerge. Between the lamellae there are some hidden, sometimes painful stories, the 'oral history' of this landscape.

There is a story about the regained wreckage of a crashed plane, in which the remains of the crew were still present. A story tells of peasants who were chased from their farms by the German occupier 'rücksichtslos'.

There is the 'soul-cutting' story of (and by) a daughter whose father has been missing since the 2nd World War and of whom nothing has been found to this day.





Crown jewel

When the whole of C26 Doppler evokes the image of a sacred space, the 'tail' of the building, where the sound of the jet engines used to be propelled towards heaven, evokes the association of an apse, the 'holy of holies'.

A 'deafening' silence reigns here, but every now and then you hear the characteristic call of the skylark, the 'crowning' of the nature development project.





An upright taxiway cuts like a monumental axis through the wooded area of Twente Air Base and connects C26 DOPPLER with the tracking object on our walk, **TARGET**. This 'bullet-catcher' lies like a mysterious, chapel-shaped object hidden in the forest against the slopes of Lonnekerberg. During the 2nd World War German fighter planes used this object to align their onboard weapons.

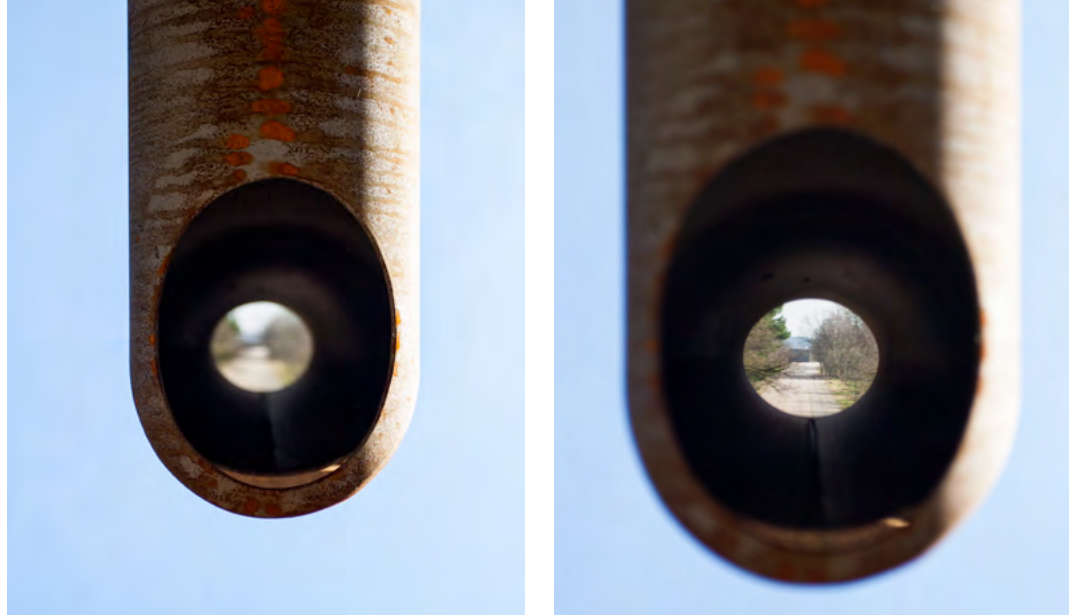




Shockwave

A new fence now ensures that the vulnerable inner space with the sand bed is not accessible to the public. At the same time, the bars of the fence still seem to thump from the grenades that were fired here with great force. A sand bed has been slid against the back wall up to the ceiling to catch the grenades and bullets. From the darkness 5 silver balls now light up.





Hindsight

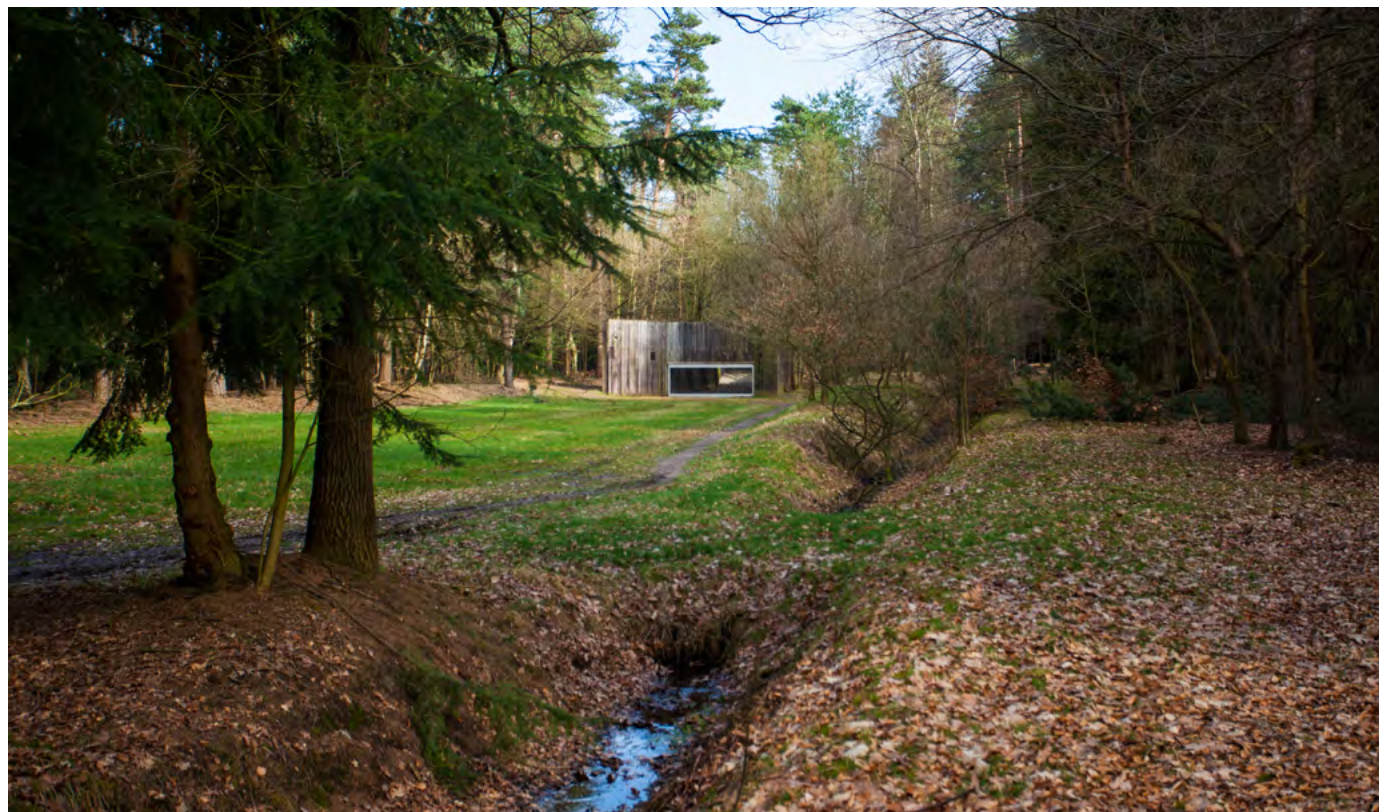
You can climb the roof via the earth walls to the left and right of the bullet catcher. This raised plateau offers a beautiful view over the stream valley and the ferns in the forest at the foot of the Lonnekerberg.

A 2-metre high wall blocks the view of the former fighter aircraft stand, the taxiway towards C26 Doppler and the open landscape of the former airbase. On top of the wall, however, is an instrument that functions as a periscope. Through an opening at the bottom of the steel tube and by an ingenious system of mirrors one can look back over the wall in the line of sight of the taxiway to C26 DOPPLER.



RICOCHET

A little further on, even deeper hidden in the forest, we find another mysterious object. This is the bullet-catcher of the shooting range for practicing shooting with handguns.





Splinters

In the wooden walls of the bullet-catcher we see countless 'grazing shots' that remind us of shooting with sharp, the speed and destructive power of the bullets, 'scars in the wood as silent witnesses'.



Sharp notches in the bars that now protect the vulnerable interior space of the bullet-catcher remind us of the speed and energy of the bullets flying around. The surface of the bars is matted, but the lying surfaces of the notches have been polished. The incoming sunlight splashes on the notches.