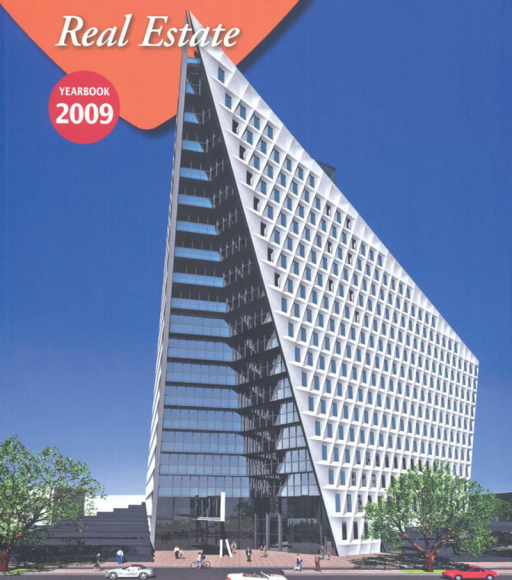


# Holland Real Estate

YEARBOOK  
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EDITORIAL

## Building with water

Two water villas in IJburg were designed by architect Koen Olthuis who is considered one of the inventors of living in, on and along the water in the Netherlands and beyond. With his firm Waterstudio.NL, he has totally committed himself to the notion of building with water. The three-story water villas are austere, modern designs with plenty of glass and a relatively light steel construction. Olthuis' design for a rotating, floating 100-meter-high hotel tower in the waters of Dubai is absolutely spectacular. It looks like some fantasy building from a science fiction film. "You can totally let loose with this kind of assignment," he observes. "In Dubai they want one of those eye-catchers that will attract tourists." No less risky is Olthuis' design for a floating mosque or a gigantic floating cruise-ship terminal in the waters off this rich oil nation.

## Floating funding

Olthuis is also closely associated with the planning for the Westlandse Poelpolder, where the development project Het Nieuwe Water will commence in 2010 with the construction of a

new district of some 1,200 housing units, of which 500 will be floating homes. The ONW (Ontwikkelingsmaatschappij Het Nieuwe Westland) commissioned the project.

"This is the first polder in the Netherlands that is going to be flooded in order to build floating foundations on a large scale. And it is not just limited to housing; there will also be floating foundations for facilities such as a

school. This is a large step forward compared to the individual water villas.

These will be normal homes that just happen to be floating, just like all the houses in Amsterdam are built on poles and those in Amersfoort are built on sand," Olthuis commented, "the homes rise and fall with the water levels, but that happens so slowly – a maximum of 10 centimeters per 24-hour period – that you barely notice anything. Some of the homes have water on three sides, while others on only one side, just like current homes built along the water. The water is an extra feature that homeowners receive because who doesn't want to live on the water?"

Floating construction in Westland is seen as nothing more than a technique that is just as safe as building on ordinary land. The stability, according to Olthuis, is no problem; there is



Architect Koen Olthuis' design of a gigantic floating cruise ship terminal.

PHOTO: WATERSTUDIO.NL/DUTCH DOCKLANDS

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300 homes of which 500 will float by the rise and fall of the water, just about 10 cm in a 24-hour period.

PHOTO: WATERSTUDIO.NL/RAM

no rocking. "We can actually construct floating buildings on the sea, even if that is more difficult and more expensive, but technically it's possible. Just look at those massive oil platforms, those are also stable. Or take a large cruise ship, for instance, that is also basically a city. And the larger it is, the more stable it becomes."

## A practical solution

Olthuis sees floating housing districts as the solution for the water problems that the Netherlands will have to increasingly deal with. He is opposed to architectonic designs that immediately convert every building into something bizarre and unusual. "The home that turns along with the sun is water cooled, and energy neutral... of course that's real nice, but that can all be done on land as well and, unconsciously, this slows down the development of the market for floating homes. While flotation is plainly the

most practical solution for our country where, in a few years, 200,000 hectares of land will have to serve as an overflow area.

If we want to realize a goal of 10% of all homes to be floating homes in 10 to 15 years, then we have to start seeing floating homes as normal homes with a parking space for the car in front of the house and with a floating garden around the house.

Otherwise, the floating home will just remain a niche market of houseboats and villas."



A three-story water villa in Amsterdam's IJburg.

PHOTO: WATERSTUDIO.NL

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