



#### PROJECT NAME

Watervilla "IJburg"

#### PROJECT TEAM

Waterstudio.NL  
(<http://waterstudio.nl>)

#### PROJECT AREA

1,883 square feet

#### LOCATION

IJburg, Amsterdam,  
The Netherlands

#### PROJECT YEAR

2008

#### APPROXIMATE COST

\$390,000

PHOTO: Waterstudio.NL

# 5.3

## Watervilla "IJburg"

A floating home in Amsterdam takes advantage of the water-based site, easily adapting to fluctuations in water levels.

The people of The Netherlands and all along the North Sea coast have been working to fight back the rising and falling of the tides with dykes and pumps for thousands of years. As the sea level rises from climate change, holding back the tides will become even more challenging. So rather than fighting the water, why not adapt and learn to live with it? Floating homes provide a surprisingly simple alternative to living on land, and in densely populated Amsterdam, sometimes the water is the only available place to build. Technology and experience have improved considerably in recent years, making the construction of sturdy, stable floating homes possible, so that living on the water is not very different from living on the land.

Dutch architecture firm Waterstudio.NL has

been designing and building water-based structures for more than a decade and has over a hundred floating homes under their belt. These water architects envision a future in which urban environments expand out onto the water as a way to cope with the changing climate and to provide more housing for our ever-growing population. One of their more recent floating homes is the Watervilla "IJburg" on the eastern outskirts of Amsterdam. The clients wanted to be able to travel into the city via the waterways, so living on the water made a lot of sense for them.

Floating houses remain buoyant just like a ship or a boat—the weight of the house pushing down on the water is equal to the weight of the water displaced. As long as that balance is maintained, it will float. Watervilla "IJburg" is a three-story

#### OPPOSITE

Watervilla "IJburg" sits at the end of a long pier.

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#### ADAPTABLE HOUSING

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the home is cornered by other watervillas. To afford the clients privacy from their neighbors and views of the water beyond, the side facing the other watervillas is solid white stucco with no windows. It features an inscription that reads *cum grege non gradior* . . . , which roughly translates to "I do not walk with the flock." The inscription is both the name of the floating house, just like a boat that has been christened, and a reference to the clients' desire for a somewhat unconventional lifestyle on the water.

Inside, the lowest floor, which is partially below the water level, holds three bedrooms and a bathroom. The ground floor is accessed directly from the pier and contains a bathroom, storage space, and an open-plan living and kitchen area with large sliding glass doors that lead to an attachable deck. A neatly designed cabinet stores the television and other items out of sight. The ceiling is covered in the same wood as that used on the exterior to carry the concept through from the outside to the inside. Two sets of stairs along the back wall access the bedrooms below and the work area and open-air deck above.

home with a square concrete foundation designed so that only the lower portion of the lowest level is underwater. Regardless of whether the water rises or falls, the home will float at the same level and remain stable. The house was constructed in Lelystad, forty miles from Amsterdam, over a seven-month period and when it was finished, it was towed over the water to IJburg.

The home's steel superstructure is covered with white stucco, wood, and floor-to-ceiling glass on three sides. Located at the end of a long pier,

#### TOP LEFT

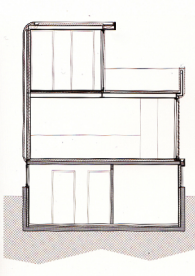
The first floor contains a work area and an open deck.

#### ABOVE LEFT

The ground floor is a large open space with a kitchen tucked against the wall and storage and the entertainment center hidden away.

#### TOP RIGHT

The home was prefabricated and then tugged to its final home on the eastern outskirts of Amsterdam.



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floating buildings are flood-proof. As long as the structures are located in a sheltered location, floodwaters will not cause damage, regardless of the tides or sea level. As sea levels continue to rise, floating buildings may become a necessity, especially for countries like the Maldives, which may be completely submerged in the near future.

Waterstudio.NL is on the cutting edge of water-based architecture, designing floating homes, developments, and even master plans for entire water-based neighborhoods and cities. These floating developments would look and feel very much like their land-based counterparts, but would rest on a large floating foundation and successfully and sustainably cope with the fluctuations of our oceans.

#### LEFT

Cross section of Watervilla "IJburg"

#### RIGHT

An outdoor deck expands the living space outdoors.