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## COMMITMENT TO INNOVATION

The Lessons to be Learned from the Dutch PTT

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## CONTENTS

List of Illustrations

INTRODUCTION		1
CHAPTER ONE :	The Netherlands and Design	3
CHAPTER TWO:	1. A Tradition of Innovation	5
	2. The D.E.V	10
	3. 1981 House Style	12
CHAPTER THREE:	1. Corporate Identity	14
	2. The PTT Corporate Identity	15
	3. Logotype	16
	4. Postboxes	22
	5. Phone Boxes	24
	6. Vehicle Livery	25
CHAPTER FOUR:	The K&V	28
CONCLUSION		33
BIBLIOGRAPHY		34



## CHAPTER TWO:

Fig 2.0 J.F. Van Royen

- 2.1 Cover of 'De Stijl' magazine
- 2.2 Cover of 'Wendingen' magazine
- 2.3 Booklet on phone systems by Vilmos Huzar
- 2.4 Programme for a Radio Conference by Piet Zwart
- 2.5 Poster by Gerard Kiljan
- 2.6 Telephone Kiosk by Brinkman/van der Vlugt
- 2.7 Wall plaque thanking the PTT for their help in WWII
- 2.8 Stamp design by Sem Hartz
- 2.9 Stamp designs by Wim Crouwel
- 2.10 Stamp designs by the Centre of Cubic Constructions
- 2.11 Stamp designs by R.D.E. Oxenaar
- 2.12 1981 PTT Corporate Colour Scheme
- 2.13 1981 House Style of PTT Telecommunicatie
- 2.14 1981 House Style of PTT Post
- 2.15 PTT Telecommunicatie's personal logotype

## CHAPTER THREE:

Fig 3.1 Corporate Colour of PTT Post

- 3.2 Corporate Colour of PTT Telecom
- 3.3 Corporate Colour of Holding Company and all other divisions
- 3.4 PTT Nederland logotype
- 3.5 PTT Post logotype
- 3.6 PTT Telecom logotype
- 3.7 Logotype layout grid
- 3.8 Grid of PTT box design



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS (CONTINUED)

- Fig 3.9 Koninklijke PTT Nederland logotype
- 3.10 PTT logotypes in a single colour
- 3.11 PTT Canteen Crockery
- 3.12-3.15 Manipulation of core symbols of PTT logo
- 3.16 Swiss PTT logotype
- 3.17 Swiss PTT logotype in a single colour
- 3.18 Swiss PTT Post logotype
- 3.19 Correos y Telegrafos logotype
- 3.20 Deutsche BundesPost logotype
- 3.21 Denmark P&T Post logotype
- 3.22 Denmark P&T Telecom logotype
- 3.23 Denmark P&T holding logotype
- 3.24 Telecom Eireann logotype
- 3.25 An Post logotype
- 3.26 British Telecom logotype
- 3.27 PTT Nederland single postbox
- 3.28 PTT Nederland double postbox
- 3.29 Unloading double postbox
- 3.30 Correos y Telegrafos postbox
- 3.31 An Post King Edward VII postbox
- 3.32 Modern copy of this pillar box
- 3.33 An Post's most recently designed postbox
- 3.34 An Post's damaged postboxes
- 3.35 PTT Nederland's Triangular phone booth
- 3.36 PTT Nederland's singular rectangular booths
- 3.37 PTT Nederland phone unit with four terminals
- 3.38 Swiss PTT phone box
- 3.39 Swiss PTT phone cubicles



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS (CONTINUED)

- Fig 3.40 Telecom Eireann phone boxes with brown frame and panels  
3.41 Telecom Eireann phone boxes with grey frame  
3.42 Telecom Eireann phone boxes with brass effect surround  
3.43 Old Telecom Eireann Phone box with new imagery applied  
3.44 PTT Telecom van  
3.45 PTT Post truck  
3.46 PTT Nederland car  
3.47 PTT Post train  
3.48 Swiss PTT Postal train  
3.49 Telecom Eireann identity mis-use  
3.50 Telecom Eireann with correct identity  
3.51 Muddy Telecom Eireann van

## CHAPTER FOUR;

- Fig 4.1 The wall design of Peter Struycken  
4.2 Wild Plakken stamp design for the Trade Union movement  
4.3 Jo Coenen's philatelic counter



## INTRODUCTION

The Royal PTT Nederland NV has a design culture like no other European post and telecommunications company. This thesis aims to show how this commercial organisation has retained a genuine belief in the necessity of quality design and how it brings this design into daily life. The thesis outlines possible reasons for the significant stature of design in the Netherlands, illustrates the way in which the PTT became a forum for Modernist design; it looks at the evolution of the PTT's design department and its unique characteristics and follows the development of the company towards a corporate identity. Furthermore, the thesis will assess the quality of the PTT Nederland's current corporate identity.

On a visit to Holland I was particularly struck by the way in which the manifestations of PTT design are prominent in the urban and rural landscape. Equally significant was the fundamental quality of this design. This encouraged me to research this subject further.

The research has led me to draw direct comparison between elements of a number of European P&T organisations and the Dutch PTT. The majority of this information was gleaned from primary source material sent by these European P&T companies. As well as consulting many books and periodicals, I interviewed P.J. Banks an employee with special responsibility for design, with the Irish postal company "An Post". During a number of visits to Holland, I made a photographic record of the architecture and street furniture of the PTT Nederland. My visit to the PTT Museum in the Hague gave a vital historical and social perspective for the thesis.

Nine European P&T companies were contacted. Of these nine Britain, France and Sweden failed to respond. Information was sent by the P&T companies from the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, Denmark, Switzerland and Ireland, however, in some cases the information was incomplete.

The thesis compares aspects of the corporate identities of the aforementioned European companies and is mainly restricted to the areas of logotype, street furniture and vehicle livery. An in depth examination of the design policies of each European P&T com-



pany was not possible within the scope of this thesis. By placing the design of the Dutch PTT in a social and historical context, the thesis seeks to shed some light on the reasons for the consistently outstanding quality of the company's design.



## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. DESIGN QUALITY IN THE NETHERLANDS

The supposed identity of Dutch design is not due to design faculties and academics. The influences of Dutch cultural history, the flat geometric landscape, the climate and the [...] people's stiff character are of greater importance. (Aldersey-Williams, 1992, p. 40)

The Netherlands, a country of 41,000 square kilometres, holds a population of over fourteen million people. As much of it lies below sea level, it has to be constantly protected from turning into an extensive mud-flat. The Dutch are faced with the problem of a small area of land and disproportionately large population. They exert their influence over their physical environment by reclaiming land from the sea, and constructing dams and polders to preserve it. The constant battle with the sea has created an awareness of man's ability to control his surroundings. This is a consciousness peculiar to the Dutch, who are unique in the extent to which they have redesigned the fabric of their landscape. The people control the land, rather than the reverse, designing the land to suit their purpose. This is an integral part of the Dutch psyche, which contrasts with other European peoples. For example, the inhabitants of the west of Ireland perceive the land and climate as the major dictating forces in their lives. They feel that no attempt can be made to improve the poor quality land which directly affects their prosperity.

There are two distinct aspects of the Dutch psyche which underlie Dutch attitudes to design. The first of these is an awareness that design is a practical means of problem solving. The second is a feeling that each Dutchman is part of a larger collective which has the power to implement these design solutions. "It is perhaps, because the Dutch have had to unite against the sea that they are more accepting of the idea of the overall plan, the grand design, in other aspects of their lives." (Aldersey-Williams, 1992, p. 40) The Dutch have a pride in their problem solving ability, which lets them accept nothing less than the highest quality of design. Design is an central part of Dutch society.

The Netherlands has a history of avant garde design. It is not surprising that the Functionalist aspect of Modernism took a firm foothold in the country, as demonstrated in



the work of Piet Zwart and Theo Van Doesburg. Supporters of Functionalism regarded design as a solution to social problems. In the city of Amsterdam, where overcrowding could have developed into a large mass of disorganised slum-dwelling, the problem was tackled from a design point of view. The architect, Berlage, designed an entire hexagonal scheme for the south city which greatly helped to alleviate the problem of over-population. He followed the central modernist credo, that "form follows function", an ideal which permeates all levels of Dutch design.

This Functionalist movement was concurrent with the rise of socialism in Europe in the 1920s and '30s. The Dutch translation of the works of William Morris and Walter Crane at this time had raised the debate of the role of art and design in society. Morris' theory of 'social art' proposed that quality design in art be integrated into society in order to enrich the quality of people's lives. As will be shown, the PTT is an excellent example of the success of this theory when applied in practice.

During the first decades of the twentieth century there was also a feeling of responsibility towards society. Socialism and a striving for a just distribution of material and spiritual goods led in the Netherlands to a wish for communal art - beautiful design available to all - even in graphic design. (Broos, 1993, p. 11)

Because design has historically been an element of every stratum of Dutch society, the designer holds a unique and prestigious position in Holland. There is a mutual respect between client and designer in contemporary corporate culture. This healthy working relationship facilitates the exploration of original design solutions and ensures that quality design is to the forefront of Dutch corporate strategy.



## CHAPTER TWO

This thesis will assess the contribution the PTT has made to the Dutch art and design world and to Dutch society in general. The corporate identity of the PTT will be analysed along with a number of its manifestations. The thesis will examine the current role of the Art and Design Department and trace its development since the 1940s. Initially the PTT's history in the design field will be discussed to establish whether the company's background influences its current design policy.

### 1. A TRADITION OF INNOVATION

The Dutch PTT was probably the first Government organisation in the world to adopt a policy of good design embracing all its visual manifestation. (Hefting, 1990, p.61)

Quality design permeates every facet of the PTT Nederland, from the structure of the company itself to the design on the canteen carpet of its Amsterdam sorting office. For seventy years this organisation has eclipsed its European counter-parts with its commitment to commissioning outstanding avant garde design. The vision of one man, early this century, set the precedent for the long history of design innovation in the PTT Nederland. The man responsible for this policy was Jean Francois Van Royen (1878-1942).

#### 1929 - 1942

Jean Francois Van Royen (Fig 2.0), a law graduate with an avid interest in printing and book publishing joined the PTT in 1904 as a clerical assistant in the legal office of the board of directors. He was very influenced by many of the ideals of William Morris and Walter Crane, who believed that art and craft should be integrated into mainstream society (Forde, 1991, p. 8). Van Royen believed that a development of the aesthetic awareness of the general public would raise the quality of their lives.

In 1912, though still only a legal clerk, he criticised the poor quality of the Government's design:

The Government's printed matter is ugly, ugly, ugly - thrice ugly - ugly



in the typeface, ugly in typesetting and ugly in paper, the three main elements which determine the attractiveness of printed matter.  
(Hefting, 1991, p.60)

With this outspoken attack, Van Royen began a campaign to improve the standard of design in the PTT and wider society.

Ironically, it was Van Royen's involvement with outside interests that ensured him a greater influence in the design policy of the PTT. He was a member of "The Netherlands Association for crafts and Industrial Art", which was known as the V.A.N.K., and he had also become involved in private publishing. In 1915, after a long campaign for Government recognition, the V.A.N.K. created an advisory board for commissions which the Government could use when undertaking design projects. Van Royen, as Secretary of this advisory board, found himself in a perfect position to offer guidance when, in 1916, the PTT sought a new signage system.

Van Royen recognised there was much room for aesthetic improvement at the PTT. He envisaged an attractive working environment as he believed that this would raise the quality of life of the PTT employees and therefore increase their productivity. This, in turn, would improve loyalty and commitment to the company. Because of his interests outside the PTT, he had befriended many of the members of of Holland's contemporary art and design world. He acted as an intermediary between the company and artists, who through his actions, gained many commissions for graphic and industrial design products.

In 1920, Van Royen was appointed Secretary General of the PTT, and in 1922 he became chairman of the V.A.N.K.. Leading both of these organisations, his mission to bring quality design to the PTT and the public seemed unstoppable. In his position as controller of the PTT, Van Royen felt that the company should set an example for all other companies. He was strongly of the opinion that all manifestations of design in the PTT should be synonymous with quality, in order to improve the services for the customer, the working conditions of employees and the environment as a whole. Van Royen instigated extensive changes in the PTT, such as improved design of stationery, annual reports, lettering and advertising on delivery vans and buildings. He also over-saw the design of new post boxes, a new signage system, office furniture and interiors as well as influencing the design of PTT buildings. Due to his close links with contemporary designers, Van



Royen wished to bring quality avant garde design into the public arena.

The Dutch avant garde of the 1920s emerged from two distinct design traditions. These characterised Dutch Art and Design before the war. One of these was a decorative craft tradition called 'Nieuwe Kunst' which was the geometric and ordered version of Art Nouveau. This was most evident in the group that came to be known as the Amsterdam School. These designers, the majority of whom had trained as artists, used this decorative approach in their designs of books, posters, calendars and advertising.

The other prominent style of the time was an idealisation of purity and geometry that became known as 'De Stijl'. In 1917, the first issues of two magazines called "De Stijl" and "Wendigen" were published in the Netherlands. "De Stijl" (Fig 2.1) saw itself as the international mouthpiece of the avant garde which included a wide variety of styles. It was published by the painter Theo Van Doesburg and in a manifesto written in the publication in 1918, he expressed a wish for an "international oneness in living, art and culture" (Broos, 1993, p. 56). Van Doesburg sought individualism and a new vision. These new ideas were to be seen in the work of Piet Mondrian, Bart Van der Leek and Vilmos Huszar and were eventually extended into architecture. "De Stijl" wished to achieve "constructive oneness regarding content and form" (Broos, 1993, p. 63) through the use of simple geometric shapes and basic colours. They saw this whittling down to essentials as attaining balance and harmony.

"Wendigen" (Fig 2.2), published by the architect H. T. Wijdeveld, conversely promoted the re-emergence of the decorative style in art and architecture practiced by the Amsterdam School. It was printed on rice paper and bound with raffia. Wijdeveld's style had certain similarities with Art Nouveau in its decorative expression.

The extent of Van Royen's vision is evident in his repeated commissioning of work from both these schools of design. Neither of these two groups was part of the mainstream art and design world in the Netherlands. 'De Stijl' had links with the Dada movement. Van Doesburg even published his own Dadaist magazine, "Mecano". The movements would not have been readily accepted by the Dutch public.

Van Royen's highly developed aesthetic judgement recognised worth in both the ideals and work of these groups and used his influential position to expose the public to



these new exciting movements. He persevered, often in the face of controversy, so strong was his belief in the “elevation of the aesthetic tone of everyday objects for the benefit of the spiritual well-being of the user.” (Hefting, 1990, p. 61)

An example of Van Royen’s commitment to the patronage of avant garde designers is his continual commissioning of work from Vilmos Huszar during the 1920s, such as the booklet on telephone systems (Fig 2.3). Huszar had a series of serious arguments with Theo Van Doesburg, the head of the ‘De Stijl’ group between 1918 and 1921, during which time none of his work was published in “De Stijl” magazine, and which resulted in his break from the group in 1923. In spite of this, Van Royen persisted in commissioning the controversial designer Huszar.

In his design of the telephone systems booklet, Huszar distills the visual and typographic information to a minimum. Rather than depicting an entire telephone, Huszar creates a simplified design of the telephone receiver, using a combination of simple solid shapes. He uses a series of narrow vertical lines under the receiver which are suggestive of the purpose of the phone - the transmission and reception of sound waves. A strong diagonal line of typography bisects the cover and adds vitality to the design. In the upper left hand corner, two concentric circles containing the logotype of the new telephone balance the image in the lower right hand corner. This design contains many of the principles of ‘De Stijl’. It attains harmony through its geometric composition and includes no extraneous material.

The opposition that Van Royen encountered during the 1920s was mild compared with the outrage he faced in the 1930s, because of his commissioning of radical designers. In 1928 a designer named Kurt Schwitters formed the ‘Ring Neuer Werbegestatter’, a circle of twelve graphic designers who championed what was to become known as ‘The New Typography’. Schwitters, in 1924, said:

Countless rules can be written about Typography. The most important is never to do it the same way as someone before you. The impersonal printed type is better than the signature of the artist. Simplicity implies clarity, straightforwardness and functional form [...]. Beauty signifies well balanced proportions. (Broos, 1993 p. 76)

The Dutch members of Schwitters’ group were Cesar Domela, Piet Zwart and Paul Schuitema. Their radical style, which they called “typofoto”, combined the previously



unknown technique of photomontage with type.

In the late 1920s, Van Royen commissioned Piet Zwart to do many designs, including invitations, programmes and menus for an International Radio Communications conference that was to be held in the Hague. Zwart had been experimenting since the mid-1920s with the possibility of a universal typeface which would make typesetting far quicker as no capitals need be used. The design of typewriters and typesetting machines would be far more economical if there was a simple standard typeface. Zwart's designs for the conference caused a furore. He designed all the conference literature using only lower case (Fig 2.4). Zwart agreed with the architect Adolf Loos who said, "one cannot speak a capital letter" (Forde, 1991, p. 29) and therefore felt that capitals served little function. One of the main objections to Zwart's designs for the Radio Conference was to the invitations. There were people who were incensed at being invited to the event in the lower case. The format of the invitations was changed to the uppercase, which was subsequently accepted and highly commended. Later, Zwart said with characteristic sarcasm that he "couldn't have foreseen that there would be such a close affinity between Roman Capitals, carolingian miniscules and pure undiluted Dutch blood" (Forde, 1991, p. 29).

In spite of this controversy, Van Royen continued to commission Zwart and other practitioners of the 'New Functionalism', as he was of the same belief as Zwart, "that design is not a question of taste, but an expression of our attitude to life." (Forde, 1991, p.29)

In 1931, Van Royen asked an associate of Zwart's, Gerard Kiljan, to design the new series of child welfare stamps. Issued annually, these stamps carried a surcharge in aid of sick, disabled and neglected children. In the past, the stamps had depicted lively and healthy children. As Kiljan felt this was hypocritical he designed the series and an accompanying poster depicting photographs of children with various handicaps (Fig 2.5). The designs caused a national scandal and the work was much criticised. Not only was his choice of subject a new departure, but photography was an entirely novel medium for stamp design. Photography was popular with New Functionalists, as they deemed it to be 'realistic' and an element of a 'universal visual language'. (Broos, 1993, p. 76)

Van Royen's patronage of avant garde designers was not confined to those who



designed in two dimensions. He commissioned many works of industrial and interior design, from street furniture to new office interiors. One such commission was the Telephone Kiosk designed by J. A.. Brinkman and L. C. Van der Vlugt in 1932 (Fig 2.6). It was much complimented in retrospect for its transparency and lightness. Though this telephone box is 63 years old, it still retains a modernistic appearance due to the simplicity and quality of its design.

For almost forty years, Van Royen pursued his vision, officially endorsing avant garde design to raise the aesthetic tone of everyday objects for the benefit of the public. He was responsible for the first 'visual style' of the PTT Nederland. Rather than opting for corporate uniformity he chose to unify the image of the PTT under a banner of quality design. He felt that if each object was of a high standard of design, the public would always associate the PTT name with quality. The legacy of this patronage of avant garde design is a rich visual culture, encompassing all main areas of design from architecture to stamps. Quality design, as embodied by the PTT, is now an integral part of the Dutch culture. Because of the pervasiveness of the PTT's products in Dutch society, Van Royen achieved his goal of bringing quality design into the daily life of the public.

Van Royen's programme would surely have continued had it not been for the Nazi invasion of the Netherlands in 1940. Van Royen was captured and died in a concentration camp in Amersfoort in 1942 at the age of sixty-four.

## 2. THE D.E.V.

World War II had a devastating affect on the Dutch artistic community and consequently on the design policy of the PTT. The Nazi regime did not support avant garde ideals, forcing many artists underground. Many of these artists employed their graphics skills forging identification documents.(Fig 2.7). A large number were murdered or incarcerated for their resistance activities. The V.A.N.K. was disbanded at the outbreak of war. The untimely death of Van Royen meant the death of an empowering force behind the Dutch design community.

In 1945, three years after Van Royen's death, the PTT set up a design department



to deal with "all activities undertaken by and on behalf of the company that involved presenting the company to the public." This department was called the Department of Aesthetic Design (D.E.V.), and intended to continue Van Royen's work, providing a channel to bring art and design into the community. The list of the D.E.V.'s undertakings included:

Any internal and external company manifestation involving design. This includes buildings, interiors of buildings, rooms, wall ornaments and decorations, printed matter, exhibitions, postage stamps, signs, stamps[sic], post boxes, bookbindings, photographs, films...  
(Hefting, 1990, p.62)

All of these activities were to be carried out in consultation with the department's Aesthetic Advisor. Having a design department made the PTT unique, not only among its European counterparts, but in industry in general. The D.E.V. had a fragile beginning. It had to rebuild the confidence it had lost during the war. The department had to define its position within the company. The first Aesthetic Advisor F. F. Spanjaard retired after a year due to ill health. There was a solemnity in the design work commissioned by the two consecutive advisorships, those of Christiaan De Moor and W. F. Gouwe. Both advisors followed a relatively cautious design policy which resulted in the re-emergence of an illustrative, painterly style in the design work of the PTT Nederland.

Gouwe established a stamp design course in 1951 which promoted this style of design along with the traditional skill of engraving. Photography was rarely used in stamp design during this period. Most of the experimentation that took place during the 1950s was technical rather than aesthetic. An example of this is the 1953 stamp of Sem Hartz, bearing a portrait of Queen Juliana. (Fig 2.8) Hartz decided to engrave on perspex rather than onto a metal plate (Haaren, 1972, p. 44). While the execution was unusual, the design itself is conventional

The cautiousness of this period was reversed when in 1967 Gouwe's Stamp course was disbanded under the authority of the new Aesthetic Advisor, Hein Van Haaren. The emphasis was, once again, placed on innovation rather than tradition. The radical cultural and artistic developments of the 1960s began to emerge in the design work of the PTT. Van Haaren's design approach is best illustrated by the stamps of the time, such as those of Wim Crouwel. They combine ordered typography, photomechanical imagery and flat

pages 12-16  
out of  
place.



Automobile Association. The rich blue of the holding company was selected for its strength and impact when used with the other colours. It was considered preferable to the dull brown of the 1981 house style. The logotypes for PTT Nederland (Fig 3.4), PTT Post (Fig 3.5), and PTT Telecom (Fig 3.6) all use a lowercase, modified Univers 65 typeface in white reversed out of a coloured background. Lowercase was chosen as it projects a more informal image for a bureaucratic and monolithic company and for the practical reason that the letters 'PTT' in uppercase create an unbalanced gap between the "T's" unless the type is highly condensed. (Forde, 1991, p.64).

The core logotype is a square box containing the letters 'PTT'. A thin line separates this from another box three units long, which contains the name of the division. This longer box also contains a row of five dots. These are spaced according to the grid (Fig 3.7) and are used as register marks when further titles are necessary. These further specifications, generally longer texts, are set in the more compact typeface Plantijn and are in white reversed out of a black box.

The box containing the letters 'PTT' is based on a grid system of sixteen smaller boxes (Fig 3.8), three of which, in the case of the PTT Nederland logo, are visible in the bottom right-hand corner of the logotype (Fig 3.4). A red box fills the upper right hand square to signify Post, a green box in the lower left-hand square signifies Telecom. The third square is left blank which gives a suggestion of the possibilities of deconstruction this logotype offers.

In the Post's logo (Fig 3.5) the green square disappears and the red one is replaced by blue to show Post's relationship to the holding. Similarly, in the Telecom logo the red box disappears and the green is replaced by blue (Fig 3.6).

The Netherlands overall symbol for the holding (Fig 3.9) depicts a crown emphasising the standing of the company as the Royal PTT Netherlands. This recent addition is not as successful as the other logotypes. It uses an image that is over complicated when combined with the deconstructed simplicity of the PTT Nederland logotype. The crown's uneven curves and frilly decorations seem completely out of context set against the gridded geometry and pure forms of the basic PTT logo.

With this system of identity, Studio Dumbar fulfils all the requirements of the



brief. The logotypes give each division an individual identity while simultaneously showing that each is a part of the larger unified organisation. Although the colours add impact to the design, all of the logotypes can be printed in a single colour (Fig 3.10) or in an embossed form using horizontal and vertical lines to represent the blue, red or green squares. One of the cleverest aspects of this identity system is the fact that it is recognisable without the logotypes being present. A selection of lines, dots, squares and right angles are an integral part of the identity and are associated with the company even in the absence of the logotype. One example of this is the PTT canteen crockery (Fig 3.11), designed by Dawn Barratt, an American working at Studio Dumbar. The company felt it would be overbearing to emblazon the crockery with the corporate logotypes as it is used by the employee when on coffee break. Instead, they opted for a lively combination of lines, dots and squares in corporate colours. They are instantly identifiable with the PTT. As Hugh Aldersey-Williams says of it "It may not be the most reliable measure of the success of a new corporate identity but the most stolen crockery in the Netherlands is that of the PTT." (Aldersey-Williams, 1990, p.56).

This is just one example of the flexibility of the PTT corporate identity. Examples of the variations are endless (Fig 3.13-3.15). Gert Dumbar says of the design "It was totally anti-clarity because clarity can be very boring. This brings the new clarity of uniqueness, with dogmatic forms you can play with in a non-dogmatic way. It's remarkable what variations other design groups can come up with." (Aldersey-Williams, 1990, p.56). However, Dumbar's core designs and their permutations are in fact clear. The 'clarity' Dumbar finds 'boring' is a situation where there is uniformity in a corporate identity with no scope for innovation. This is the scenario Dumbar was determined and managed to avoid in his development of the PTT identity. The system is one of deconstruction and reconstruction. The basic logotypes give a suggestion of the possibilities for manipulation by removal and addition of elements.

The extent of the success of this design is more evident when it is compared to the corporate designs of other similar organisations in Europe. Of the organisations the author assessed, none achieves the flexibility of the corporate identity of the PTT.

The Swiss PTT is quite similar to the PTT Nederland in structure. Like the Dutch,



the Swiss company controls both Telecom and Post. It too has opted for a monolithic identity. Strong defenders of the grid, the Swiss logo (Fig 3.16) is pared down to a bare geometric minimum, with only verticals and horizontals (excluding the bowl of the 'p'). The Swiss chose to design the type in uppercase using the typeface Frutiger bold. They make use of the awkward negative space between the uppercase "T's" that the Dutch rejected to form the top section of their nationally symbolic cross. It is carefully constructed so that it works in a single colour (Fig 3.17) or in principal corporate colours red and black. When used to represent Telecom it appears on a stark white background (Fig 3.16). Post uses a yellow background (Fig 3.18). Unlike the PTT Nederland's logotype it is rigid and inflexible. It must appear in its entirety on any object the Swiss PTT wish to brand their own. The Swiss PTT attempted to make some exceptions in the implementation of their identity, which will be discussed in the section entitled *VEHICLE LIVERY*. The exceptional designs bear little visual relation to the company's corporate identity and do not make the vehicles easily recognisable as belonging to the the organisation. Though the Swiss PTT's core design is balanced and uses a clever typographic device, its overall appearance is one of static uniformity.

The Spanish, German and Danish PTT organisations all use the traditional 'post horn' symbol in their corporate logotypes. The Spanish PTT bears the quality assurance of the Royal family and combines the post horn with the image of a crown (Fig 3.19). The post horn appears in a greatly simplified form and is represented in a light grey colour upon a yellow background. The name of the company "Correos y Telegrafos" is set in an italicised version of the typeface Garamond, with Helvetica light used as a secondary typeface. Their treatment of the post horn is attractive in its simplicity, however, the over-adorned silhouette of the crown is not in keeping with the simple, clean shape of the post horn.

The German corporate logotype (Fig 3.20) contains all of these elements. The "Deutsche BundesPost" identity also consists of a modernised post horn silhouette rendered in black rather than grey, mounted on the exact yellow colour (Pantone 116) used by the Spanish company. The typeface used by the Deutsche BundesPost is Helvetica. As the company itself remarks:



The DBP yellow colour can only be recognised as the specific postal colour if it occurs in connection with the business logo and trade name. If used alone, the yellow colour is inter-changeable and may be assigned to any other organisation that has chosen yellow as its firm specific colour.....(Graffe, 1986, p.51)

It is evident that the elements of the DBP corporate identity do not function in isolation. As they themselves have noted use of the "firm-specific" colour has to be accompanied by the logo and company name in order to be recognised as belonging to the DBP. It seems that the yellow colour is not synonymous with the company identity, as colour is in the Dutch PTT. This monolithic identity could not be regarded as flexible. The logo must always appear in its entirety and always in black or with a black outline giving the company an imposing and perhaps it could be said, unfriendly image. The logotype, because of its use of the outmoded Helvetica typeface seems over dominant and out of date when compared with the vibrancy and progressive appearance of the PTT Nederland's identity. Helvetica became very fashionable for corporate identities during the 1970s and '80s and therefore looks dated when used for a modern corporate identity.

While the Spanish logotype does not appear so heavy-handed it also is relatively inflexible. At least two of the three elements of the core logotype must be present so that it is recognised as the Correos y Telegrafos logo. The Spanish Post and Telecommunications company have the additional problem that the name of the company has to appear in Catalan in Catalonia and in Castellano in the rest of Spain. This does not assist uniformity in its corporate image. The fact that the two companies' identities have such similarities shows a distinct lack of individuality in the companies' approach to corporate identity. Post and Telecommunication companies are usually the only organisations of their kind operating in the country where they are situated, and could therefore be seen as national organisations. Generally, they are long established companies with a wealth of tradition. This puts them in a perfect position to develop a distinct corporate identity which reflects chosen facets of their company or nation's unique characteristics.

The manner in which the Danes use the post horn and crown symbols is completely different from that of its European counterparts. They use a more ornate version of the post horn depicted in yellow (coincidentally also Pantone 116) on a red



background to represent Post (Fig 3.21) and on green to signify Telecom (Fig 3.22). The Queen's monogram (Fig 3.23) represents the overall holding and was designed by the Margarethe II of Denmark herself. The Danish "Post Og Telegraf" has decided to represent its organisation in a traditional manner which it claims is the preference of the nation it serves. Although Post Og Telegraf's identity has a distinct national and traditional flavour it runs the risk of not being associated with an idea of progress which could be damaging, especially in the area of telecommunications.

Ireland has two separate companies controlling post and telecom. Since the joint company divided in the '80s, the two maintain no links with each other and in some areas of their business regard each other as direct competition. The Telecom Eireann logo (Fig 3.24) is cleverly designed combining the initial letters 't' and 'e' in a modified Irish script to create a unified, rounded logotype. The corporate colour is blue combined with grey and white and the corporate typeface is 'Stone Sans'. The basic logotype design is appealingly and uniquely Irish although the corporate colours are subdued and unimaginative. In isolation they do not suggest Telecom Eireann's corporate identity with the result that the corporate image is under exploited and less successful than it might be.

The 'An Post' logo (Fig 3.25) is a modified Irish typeface, based on tenth century Irish manuscript uncials, specifically developed for the company. A ligature is made from the 's' and the 't' and the descender of the 'p' is dropped slightly below the line of the other letters. The cancellation mark next to the 'p' is in (Pantone 116) yellow which has proved a popular colour with European PTT companies. The base colour of the logo is postbox green suggested by the colour of the post boxes previous to the development of the corporate identity. An Post is slightly different from many of the other European Post Organisation's that have been mentioned, in that it has an 'Endorsed' identity system whereby each subsidiary has a separate name and identity. "In an organisation with an endorsed structure [...] each part needs to feel its own power and strength, to find its own place in the sun." (Olins, 1989, p.79). This contributes to An Post's many identity problems. Most of the energy that should be going into the application and maintenance of the core designs seems to be lost in bad communications between departments, arguing with independently minded subsidiaries and trying to influence an unconvinced



management who are reluctant to allocate an adequate design budget. (Farrelly, 1994, Dublin).

While some of the logotypes of the European PTT companies that have been assessed meet a number of the criteria for a quality corporate identity, the only company whose logotype far outweighs its counterparts on the basis of concept, quality, flexibility and appeal is that of the PTT Nederland.

#### 4. POSTBOXES

The standard PTT postbox in the Netherlands is a beautiful object, a neatly turned out shiny red box on stilts, compared with which the French yellow wall-hung box is a definition of ugliness. The PTT's minimalist graphics make BT's 'prancing fairy' logo (Fig 3.26) seem obscene. (Pearman, 1994, p. 17)

Ninabar/ Peters/ Krouwel designed the single post box (Fig 3.27) for the PTT in 1987. It is made from an extremely durable polycarbonate textile fibre. It is both fire-proof and vandalproof, which means that only one out of every fifty postboxes has to be replaced annually (Glas, 1989, p. 33). The box is a balanced and simple shape with a sloping back and rounded corners. Its red colour is applied as a special finish in the production procedure and not painted on after the postbox is made so that it does not fade or lose its lustre. Because of its sturdy construction, it generally has a ten year life-span. The upward angle of the recessed letter slot not only serves to keep rain out, but also makes inserting objects such as fireworks difficult. This is an annual problem the PTT have to face. Fireworks are very popular at New Year and sometimes get posted into letter boxes. Although the boxes themselves could withstand the blast, the letters are always destroyed.

The PTT also use a double post box (Fig 3.28) for more densely populated areas. This double box was designed in 1962 by R. Parry and E.A.H. Truyen. It is made from the same material as the single postbox. The front of the postbox opens upwards and outwards for speed and ease of unloading and the letters fall into the postal sack which can be clipped on below. The slot on the left is for mail in the local area, while the one on the right is designated for all other areas. When it is being unloaded (Fig 3.29) the postbox



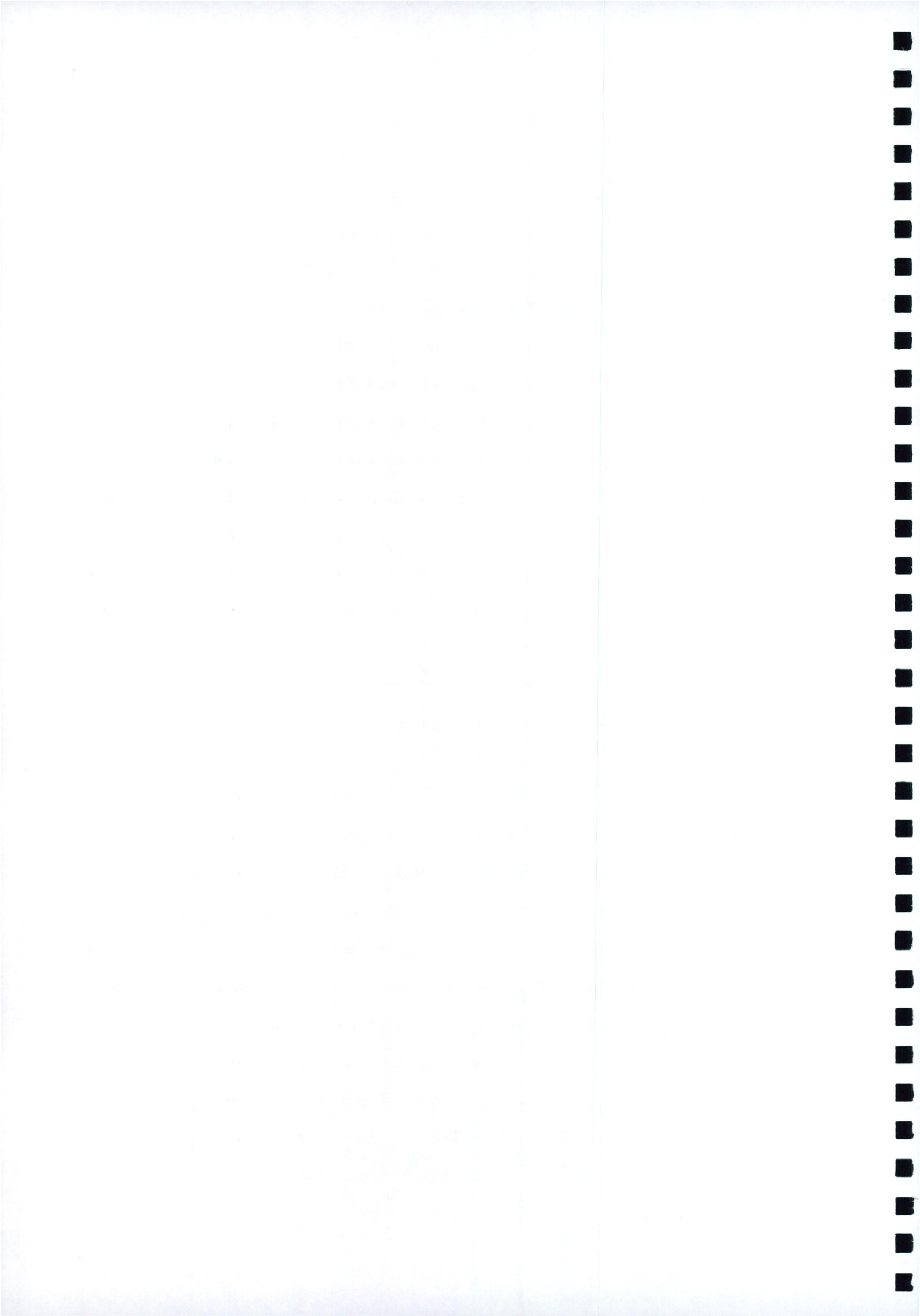
maintains these divisions and the letters fall into the specially designed split postal sack in two separate piles.

The postboxes of the PTT Nederland are a commonly occurring feature of Dutch town and cityscapes. One is instantly struck by their untarnished appearance which is due to their durable nature. It is this quality coupled with their bright red colour and balanced minimal form which makes them perfect agents of corporate identity. They always present the image of the company to the best advantage through their enduring quality of design.

The design of the Dutch postbox is so simple and of such high quality that it consistently overshadows its equivalents in other countries. The Spanish opt for a large rectangular design, painted in their corporate yellow (Fig 3.30). The shape of the box and the shade of yellow are attractive, however the Correos y Telegrafos have to contend with a serious vandalism problem. In major Spanish cities many of the postboxes are almost completely obliterated from bill-posting and graffiti. The construction and maintenance of these boxes are not adequate to combat this problem with the result that it reflects poorly on the company and its corporate identity.

An Post in Ireland makes use of an interesting variety of postboxes. Many bearing the monogram of King Edward VII are still in use (Fig 3.31). Modern day versions of these were installed during the 1970s and '80s (Fig 3.32). The most recent addition is a single or double box mounted on a cruciform leg (Fig 3.33). While the variety is appealing and the company's history can be observed on the street, there is a serious negligence in the company's maintenance programme. Apart from the fact that many of the postboxes are damaged and graffiti covered (Fig 3.34), the diverse types of postbox lack a common thread. The 'An Post' green should be the uniting factor, however, the "corporate" green appears in the traditional forty different shades. No two postboxes are alike. Each is painted a slightly different colour. Corporate colour is one area of corporate identity which must be consistent or it serves no purpose in identification. This type of postbox was not created by a designer, but manufactured from Engineer's drawings (Farrelly, 1994, Dublin). It has none of the grace of the older pillar boxes and is neither vandal-proof nor durable. It appears awkward and top-heavy balancing on its ugly single leg.

The quality of design of the Spanish and Irish postboxes is in sharp contrast with



colour in the Functionalist style (Fig 2.9). Crouwel, strongly influenced by the formality of the Swiss grid believes "Typography must be visually orderly for the purpose of good readability" (Broos, 1993, p. 164).

Van Haaren's preference for abstract design is evident in the two series of stamps produced in 1970. One of the series, designed by the centre for Cubic Constructions, (Fig 2.10) uses a digital typeface and psychedelic colours in strong simple shapes which gives a simple but striking effect.

R.D.E. Oxenaar's stamp series (Fig 2.11) of the same year is executed in an "Op-Art" style, using computer generated imagery designed to create optical illusions. The abstract forms appear three dimensional and seem to move. Though the D.E.V. had difficulties in the post-war years, it managed to resuscitate the ideals that could have died with Van Royen. The department sustained a system of employing contemporary artists and designers and retained the association of quality with all the visual matter the company produced. The D.E.V. managed to ensure that quality design was always to the forefront of the company's agenda, and this gave direction to the Aesthetic Advisor and the designers who were to follow.

### 3. THE 1981 CORPORATE IMAGE

The PTT during Hein Van Haaren's Aesthetic Advisorship was growing and diversifying rapidly. Van Haaren faced increasing difficulty in controlling the volume and range of design that was required by the expanding company and its subsidiaries. This led to an increased volume of design which Van Haaren could no longer personally supervise. The Aesthetic Advisor realised that a unification and standardisation of design was necessary. The PTT, he felt, required a single, well-defined visual identity which would project the message of the company and would inspire confidence in both its employees and customers. The PTT, partly because of its aesthetic traditions, was an ideal candidate for an integrated approach to design. The company conducted an inquiry into the personnel and public perception of the PTT. The findings of the survey were incorporated into the company's general criteria and design brief for a new corporate image (Hefting, 1990, p. 62).



In 1981, the PTT Nederland launched their first 'House Style' which had been developed jointly during the '70s by two different design agencies: Total Design from Amsterdam and Tel Design from the Hague. The PTT's Director General explained in 1981 that a 'House Style' would "contribute to the clear and recognisable presentation of our concern to the public." (Forde, 1991, p. 63) The house style was the result of a decade of research into every angle of the structure and design of the PTT during this time. The two studios had even designed a typeface specifically for the company which was later rejected in favour of the standard typefaces 'Univers 55 and 65' on the grounds of availability and legibility.

The name PTT (Post, Telephone, Telegraf) was retained, as it was felt that even though it no longer accurately described the organisation, it was an integral part of the company's identity. The colours chosen to represent the company were red for post, green for telecommunications and brown for the PTT headquarters (Fig 2.12). An extensive manual was produced with guidelines for the implementation of the house style. Two applications of the house style are shown, PTT Telecommunicatie (Fig 2.13) and PTT Post (Fig 2.14)

Though the research for this corporate image was extensive and of a very high quality, the maintenance of the image was lacking. As the company continued to grow, various departments and subsidiaries sought their own logos. Telecommunication had wanted for some time to have its own logo and wished to use a shortened version of its name. This was developed and the logotype (Fig 2.15) was applied. Once again the PTT was in a situation where there was neither unity nor uniformity in its design. The company was due to privatise on the 1st Jan, 1989, and decided that it would launch an updated version of its corporate identity on that date. As will become evident, the research and development of the 1981 house style proved invaluable in the creation of the second corporate identity. Many of the findings of the initial research were still pertinent eight years later, and some of the core elements of the logotypes were retained. The importance of carefully controlling a consistent corporate image had become evident during these years. This was a valuable lesson on implementing and maintaining corporate identity and the earlier inconsistency does not appear in the contemporary design.



## CHAPTER THREE

### 1. CORPORATE IDENTITY .

"A corporate identity is the circumscription of one's own territory , the act of distinguishing self from other."(Hefting, 1989, p.12)

Historically it seems that a group of people following the same goal have a psychological need to operate under a banner, to declare themselves by the use of symbolism or colour. This appears to permeate all types of pursuits, whether nationalistic, sporting, religious or political. Modern corporate identity could be said to be an extension of that idea. However, a good corporate identity involves much more than just tacking a logo onto each of the products manufactured by a company. There must be a well-conceived underlying concept pervading the entire organisation. "It must be visible, tangible and all embracing" (Olins, 1989, p.7)

Everything the organisation does must be an affirmation of its identity, the quality of the products it makes, the location, furnishing and maintenance of the buildings in which it trades and its advertising, communication and information manuals. To achieve a truly potent corporate identity all of these elements must be consistent in their quality. They must accurately reflect the company's aims and project its standards and values.

A quality corporate image requires a thoroughly conceived and carefully constructed design, a tight organisational structure to introduce, adapt, improve and most importantly police the corporate image and a clear and comprehensible manual. It must be realised by any company contemplating creating a corporate identity that it is a substantial long term investment which requires vision and continual commitment if it is to be a success.

Corporate identity is not solely to attract customers, but also for the benefit of its employees. It should be a clear and visual definition of the company's products and services and should clarify the aims and messages of that company. This serves the dual purpose of focusing the employee on the exact service he strives to provide, and his department's place in the larger organisation, making the company more accessible to the customers.

To make its visual and perceived identity credible, the company must behave in a



manner that befits its identity, not only to its customers but to its staff, and to everybody with whom it comes in contact including suppliers and the host community.

The identity must spring from the organisation's own roots, its personality, its strengths and its weaknesses [....] When companies lose sight of their individuality, their real purpose, they get deflected - often through peer pressure into making mistakes. (Olins, 1989, p.9).

Corporate identity is more than merely a method of naming elements of a company. It is a profound reflection of the company's image of itself, an indication of that company's internal organisation and conveys the way in which that company does business.

## 2. THE PTT CORPORATE IDENTITY

In a company such as the PTT, design plays a vital role in the public's perception of its corporate identity. This is due to the pervasive physical presence of its elements such as post boxes, telephone boxes and vehicles, in the Dutch environment. The thesis will examine the design of each of these products individually, showing how each contributes to the quality of the company's image.

To ascertain whether the corporate identity system of the PTT is of a high standard, we must analyse not only its logotype, but also its application and the maintenance of the identity, and assess it according to the criteria outlined in the previous section. There are numerous systems of corporate identity. The method chosen by the PTT is significant. It is referred to as "Monolithic" by Wally Olins, the British corporate designer, in his book Corporate Identity. This means that all of the organisation's departments and subsidiaries use the name 'PTT' and variations of a single visual style. The company should project one idea of itself and this idea should be emphasised in everything the company does.

According to Olins, companies that opt for a monolithic identity usually have a reputation for quality, are proud of their achievements, have a belief that their name and reputation are essential elements in the growth of their business and are fanatical in the degree of detail they exercise over all manifestations of their identity. (Olins, 1989, p. 88). All of these characteristics can be applied to the PTT. The fact that the company is



prepared to emblazon its name on all of its products and subsidiaries demonstrates the company's confidence and surety in the quality of its services.

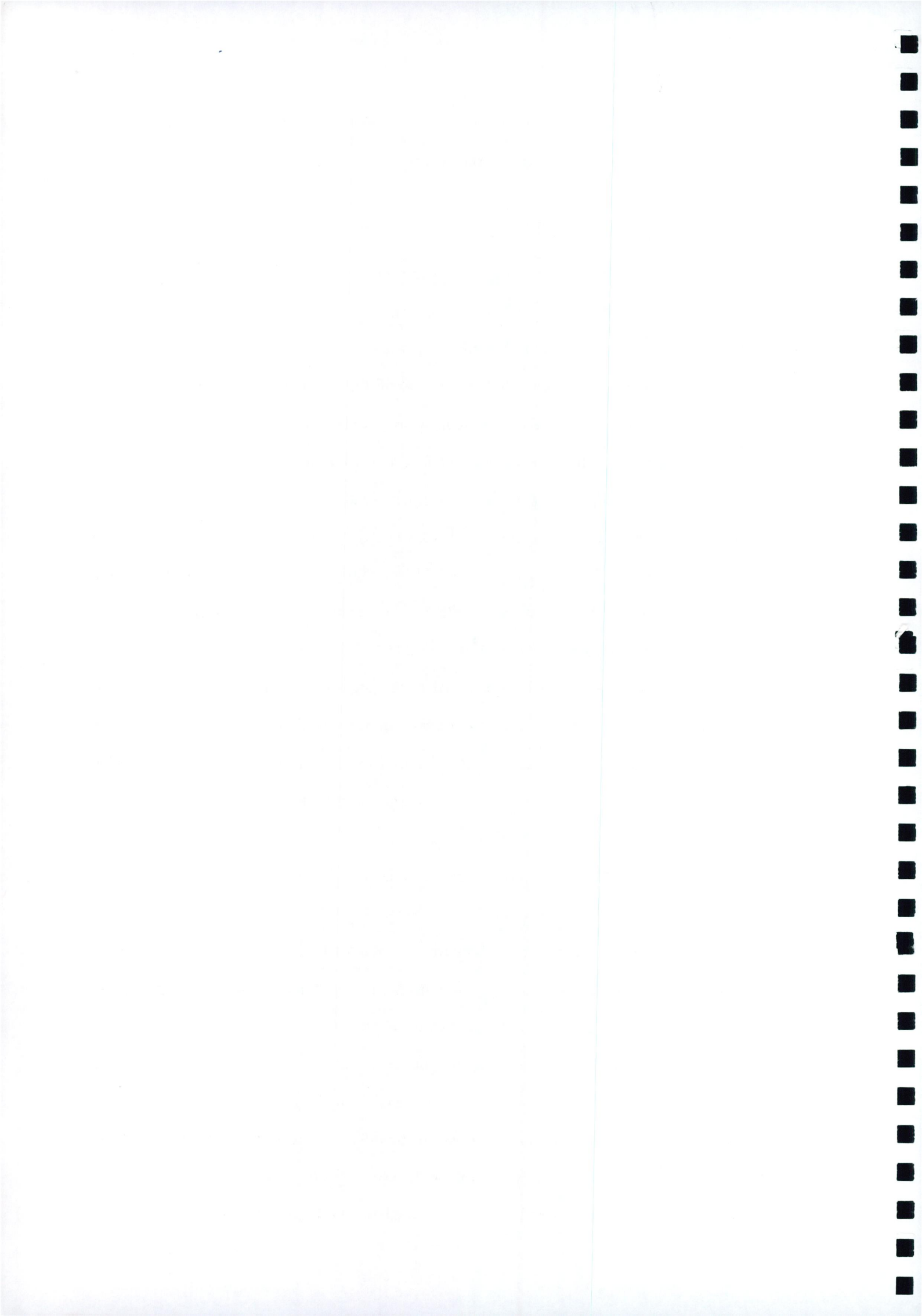
### 3. LOGOTYPE

At the beginning of this chapter it was stated that a corporate identity is more than a symbol applied to various products of a company. However, a well conceived core design that is carefully constructed and flexible is essential to a corporate identity of quality. It must clearly define the merchandise and services of the company it represents.

In the case of the PTT, the corporate identity must unite the many diverse elements of the organisation, making them recognisable in isolation, while also relating each one to the holding company. This was the difficult task assigned to Studio Dumbar in the Hague, in 1988. The owner of this company, Gert Dumbar, invented a highly successful system which Hugh Aldersey-Williams dubbed 'Flexible Geometry' (Aldersey-Williams, 1990, p.54). This system, while it gives the impression of total unity, has plenty of scope for originality and manipulation.

The PTT visual identity is based on a system of geometry and deconstruction which shows clear influences from the 'de Stijl' movement. This is significant because of the contribution of individuals like Piet Zwart to the prestigious design history of the company. PTT Nederland has taken its inspiration from tradition, acknowledging its roots but not becoming entangled in them. The PTT with its long design history could have chosen a traditional and conventional approach, instead, it chose to take a new direction in its continuous pursuit of innovation.

The colours allocated to each division are red for Post (Fig 3.1), green for Telecom (Fig 3.2) and blue for the holding company and all other divisions (Fig 3.3). In the choosing of colours a vibrant red was obvious, as the Dutch Mail Service had been using red since the 19th century. The shade of light green was chosen for Telecom because it has a luminosity which is necessary for that division's vehicles as they are often parked on dangerous street corners. Research carried out by the company in 1970 demonstrated that green was regarded as a utility colour, unobtrusive yet clearly visible. Yellow, the most noticeable colour, was rejected because it is used for the Dutch Railways and the Dutch



that of the PTT. The design, durability and the consistency in corporate identity of the Dutch postbox has been internationally recognised for its superiority.

## 5. PHONE BOXES

In 1988, Philip Rosdorff and Theo Groothwizen designed a 'family of phone boxes for the PTT. All of these are accessible by wheel chair. A range of phone boxes was required for different locations. The most unusual member of this family is the triangular free-standing booth (Fig 3.35). Its dramatically unconventional shape makes a distinct impression on a busy Dutch Street.

The rectangular covered booth (Fig 3.36) is used when a number of telephones are required in one area. The phone boxes shown stand outside the Central Train Station in the Hague. The use of clear glass creates an impression of weightlessness. Elements of the corporate identity are sand blasted onto the glass and these squares, circles and lines also add interest to the base upon which these phone boxes stand.

The third main type in the family (Fig 3.37) is a unit comprising four phone terminals. This type is used in busy indoor areas, such as airports, train stations and shopping complexes. A frosted glass panel, out of which is reversed the PTT Telecom logotype separates each phone unit. This design utilises a minimum of space with a maximum of efficiency.

While each of these designs is composed of different features in order to serve its particular function, they are united as a family by their unquestionable quality of design, consistent usage of exact corporate colour, and attractive application of the Telecom logotype and its derivatives. In comparison to the ingenuity and elegance of these designs, those of other European countries appear clumsy, ill-conceived and poorly executed.

The Swiss PTT's basic freestanding phone box (Fig 3.38) is a large rectangular box. The stainless steel frame supports six panels of glass. When this design is contrasted with the PTT Nederland's triangular phone kiosk, its ungainly proportions and over-dominant structure are clearly evident. The bevelling of the steel frame contributes to the design's heavy countenance. The Swiss PTT added a coloured tubular steel handle in an attempt to



brighten the monochromatic appearance of the phone box. However, the yellow colour selected is the corporate colour assigned to the Swiss PTT Post, not Swiss Telecom and therefore is an incorrect usage of their identity system.

In (Fig 3.39) we see a wall of eight phone cubicles designed by the Swiss PTT in use in a shopping complex. The plate glass doors with their black push-pad handles are separated by panels of steel cladding. The Swiss Telecom division do not have a distinctive corporate colour scheme. This combined with the use of stainless steel and the regimented structure of these phone booths gives them a clinical, colourless appearance.

Telecom Eireann presents a confused array of telephone box designs. There seems to be an endless variety of design, each using a contradicting colour system. The company's use of dark brown tinted glass bears no relation to its corporate colour scheme. Even the use of this dark brown is not consistent. In (Fig 3.40) both the frame and panels are dark brown, (Fig 3.41) shows the tinted panels mounted in a grey steel frame and the design in (Fig 3.42) introduces a completely new brass-effect surround which only serves to add more confusion. (Fig 3.43) shows an old phone box to which the corporate imagery has been applied. The Telecom Eireann blue has been painted on, in an apparently haphazard fashion. The most careless element in this attempt at corporate identity application is the signage. In these old phone boxes the signage is back-lit after dark. The new cardphone sign has been placed over the previous sign which read 'Telefon'. This mistake is visible even in daylight, and when lit from behind at night-time the Cardphone sign is rendered illegible.

Telecom Eireann's application of their identity to their phone boxes is careless and inconsistent. The individual phone box designs can, at best, be described as unimaginative. As Telecom Eireann's phone kiosks are a common feature throughout the Irish environment, their poor attitude to application and maintenance of the corporate identity reflects very badly on the company's corporate image.

From these two examples alone, the superior quality of design and the success of the corporate identity concept of the Dutch PTT is clearly evident. The carefully conceived simple elegance of the PTT's phone box designs far surpass any of those of its European equivalents.



## 6. VEHICLE LIVERY

The corporate colour scheme and the deconstructive concept behind the logotype of the PTT Nederland makes the application of the corporate identity to the company's vehicles an easy task. The strength of the colours chosen for each division have great impact when applied to a large area such as a postal truck.

The corporate identity is shown here applied to a Telecom van (Fig 3.44), a post truck (Fig 3.45) and a car belonging to the holding (Fig 3.46). The 10,000 vehicles belonging to the company (Hefting, 1989, p.71) are seen so frequently on the streets and motorways of the Netherlands, their appearance makes a strong impression and reflects the image of the company. A logo had to be applied to each side of every one of these vehicles. The vehicles always appear in good condition, neither dust nor scratch covered. The strength of the the colour and the quality of the logotype ensure that these vehicles consistently promote the quality image of the company.

The most exciting application of the corporate logo is to the trains owned by PTT Post. Elements of corporate imagery are used to great effect and layered over each to produce a visually interesting object (Fig 3.47). The standard yellow of the train company (which had to be retained at each end of the carriage) compliments the bright red of the PTT Post. The logo of PTT Post appears in different sizes and at diverse angles in combination with a number of symbols associated with the company: circles, squares and lines.

The Swiss PTT company attempt a similar approach on their postal train (Fig 3.48). This design, however, bears little relation to Swiss PTT's logotype. They do not maintain the standard relation of the individual letters to each other. Nor do they retain the core colours of the identity, using white for the letter 'p'. White is a colour that should be used for Swiss Telecom vehicles alone. Their corporate symbol, the cross, appears nowhere on the design. Rather than building on their existing imagery the Swiss ptt in this instance have applied a new core design which appears unrelated to their core logotype.

Telecom Eireann have made the serious mistake of applying the new logotype to a vehicle which is painted in the colours of the company's previous identity (Fig 3.49).



Fig 3.49 shows this van as it should appear. Before 1984 Ireland had a joint post and telecom company named P&T. Telecom Eireann in this example simply stuck a plastic sticker with their present logotype over that of the previous company. This reflects poorly on the amount of importance Telecom Eireann places in its corporate image. It can be interpreted as the company demonstrating a lack of conviction in the necessity of its own corporate colour scheme. Telecom Eireann's vehicles are often driven in public places covered in a film of dust (Fig 3.50). It is important, that a company takes pride in the appearance of their vehicles. the corporate imagery can not be expected to shine through a shoddy vehicle maintenance policy.

Once again it is evident that the PTT's application of their corporate identity scheme surpasses that of these competitors. PTT Nederland does not display negligence or inconsistency in its corporate identity programme.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE K & V

Hein Van Haaren was succeeded by R.D.E. Oxenaar to the Aesthetic Advisership of the D.E.V. in 1976, a position he holds to this day. When the PTT privatised on January 1st, 1989, the department was renamed the K&V. Today, the K&V employs a team of fifteen, comprising designers, historians and consultants who together ensure that the quality of the PTT's design is maintained to the highest standards. As Oxenaar says: "If you really want to make your mark on the market you need the best design and the best quality." (Bezemer/ Hefting, 1987, p.40) The K&V is a tiny department, relative to the total size of the company, which employs over 100,000 people (KPN, 1994, p. 15), yet it is responsible for PTT design country-wide.

The small size of the K&V allows for a very tight control of the company's creative output. This design department, which solely exists to promote quality in design, is unique among European P&T organisations. Its individuality lies in the fact that its concern for quality extends beyond the PTT; it seeks to improve standards of design on a national level, raising the aesthetic tone of the everyday environment. Like J.F. Van Royen, this department acts as a mediator between laymen and designers keeping itself constantly informed of current developments in design and art. The K&V's responsibilities cover three main areas: Visual Arts, Graphic Design, and Spatial and Industrial Design.

The Visual Arts section is given a yearly budget for the buying and commissioning of art for the PTT offices country-wide. A portion of this is used for the purchase of prints and smaller works of art. The largest part of the budget is invested in two- and three-dimensional artwork for buildings. In 1951, a new Dutch law required that one percent of the construction budget of new federal building projects be set aside for art commissions (Cahen, 1979, p. 38). This ruling has facilitated "some of the most exciting experiments in environmental design in the Netherlands, producing artworks of startling originality and diversity." (Forde, 1991, p. 54) One such innovation is Peter Struycken's 1984 commission for the Utrecht sorting office.



A vast concrete wall serves the dual purpose of connecting the main building with its annex, as well as separating the noisy railway sidings from a nearby residential estate. Attached to both sides of the wall are coloured hemispheres of metal, arranged in complex patterns. The configuration of these patterns is determined by two computer programmes which project waves across a grid of 1,428 horizontal rows and 92 vertical columns. The high and low points are marked by colour changes, moving in intensity across the wall. There are 10,080 hemispheres in nine colours on one side of the wall and 3,644 in four colours on the reverse. (Forde, 1991, p. 56)

The PTT had been concerned about the unattractiveness of this blank concrete to an extent that prompted the company to apply a design solution to improve the functional wall's appearance. Many companies might have opted for the cheaper solution of simply painting it, or more likely, not considered it a concern. The PTT invested time and money in solving this design problem, and rendered a functional object aesthetically pleasing.

It is in examples such as this that the breadth of the company's aesthetic programme is evident.. We see the strong influence of Van Royen, in the company's patronage of contemporary designers, who increase the aesthetic quality of functional objects, thereby bringing quality design into daily life.

The section of the PTT concerned with graphic design has authority over all printed matter including postage stamps, annual reports and telephone directories. It is also responsible for issuing typographic guidelines for the entire organisation.

The postage stamps of the K&V are internationally renowned. Their design policy in this area is such that Dutch stamps could be said to be a barometer of the main developments, both historical and contemporary in the Netherlands design world. "In Dutch stamps you see the styles and design developments as a mirror of the culture both in image and in typography." (Oxenaar, 1994, p.38)

The stamp designs of the PTT are so numerous and of such variety that choosing a single example proves a difficult task. However, a stamp designed by Wild Plakken in 1989 goes some way to explaining how, in such a minute area, characteristics of a style or movement can be displayed. The name of this design group, Wild Plakken, can be translated as 'Wild Postering' or 'Unauthorised Bill-Posting'. It describes both the studio



members' practice of pasting illegal political posters throughout Amsterdam and the unconventional design style of this group.

Wild Plakken works only for clients 'whose underlying values and purposes are compatible with the Studio's political and ethical beliefs' They consistently refuse to work for what they call 'merely commercial' accounts ( Meggs, 1991, p.100 )

One such political client is the Dutch Trade Union movement and this stamp ( Fig 4.2 ) was designed for them in 1989. It depicts five hands making different gestures. The palm of each hand is an expressive mouth with a red slash running behind it which adds emphasis to the expression. The stamp is executed in a bold photomontage style typical of Wild Plakken. The hands seem representative of the workers in the different organisations that make up the Trade Union. The mouths mean each one has a voice.

A space 2.5 cms x 3.5 cms, captures not only the essence of the Trade Union movement, but also this style and elements of the ideology of the design group. This is an example of the way in which, despite their size, stamps can have so great an impact. By continually commissioning driven an innovative design group groups such as Wild Plakken, the Graphic Arts section of the K&V maintains the spirit of originality and a strength of design for which the PTT is unique.

The Spatial and Industrial Design section of the K&V has a responsibility for the design of office interiors, furniture, postboxes and telephone boxes. This section is also involved in telecommunication research, in collaboration with Industrial Design students at the Delft Technical University to develop new systems, such as one which combines telephone, word processor, electronic directory and personal organiser.( Forde, 1991, p.50 ) These projects are carried out in consultation with technical and ergonomics experts.

This section of the K&V exists as a direct result of the ideals of Van Royen regarding aesthetics and the environment. The Spatial Industrial Design section seeks to raise the design quality of interiors of PTT buildings for the benefit of the company's image, the PTT staff and for the aesthetic enrichment of the wider public.

An interesting project undertaken by this section, is the dramatic design for a new philatelic counter for the Coolsingel Post Office in Rotterdam ( Fig 4.3 ) It was designed by Jo Coenen in 1985.



[ Coenen's ] hyperbolic pavilion is suspended from a central mast which responds harmoniously to the parabolic hall of the original 1924 building by G.C. Bremer. At floor level, the customer's perception of the architectural space of the original counter is considerably altered by the imposition of the new counter, although the relative transparency of the upper portion maintains the overall sense of monumentality. ( Forde, 1991, p.57 )

Despite its small number of staff the K&V has a profound influence on Dutch culture. The aesthetic programme of this department reflects a genuine commitment to the value of art and design as a vital element of daily life. Oxenaar, the Aesthetic Adviser was made an associate professor of Industrial Design in the Technical University at Delft, and has made a huge impact on the Netherlands with his highly unorthodox design of the Dutch paper currency ( Broos, 1993, p.171 ). Paul Hefting, head of the Graphic Design section, was formerly a curator of the world famous Kroller Muller museum at Otterloo and has written extensively on many aspects of art and design.

It is noteworthy that the K&V no longer handles advertising and marketing. Historically this was dealt with by a department known as the Press and Propaganda Department or ' PPD ' and the advertising work was submitted to the K&V to be vetted on aesthetic grounds. A large volume of advertising had to be processed at a fast rate, which meant that the input of the K&V was an unworkable delaying factor. The PPD and K&V inevitably split causing friction between departments. Advertising and marketing is currently handled by specialist external agencies. This separation reflects a general split between design and advertising nationwide. In the late 1940s an advertising design association was formed named the VRI. There already was a design association in existence which was named the GKF. The GKF regarded advertising as an 'endorsement of the capitalist system.' ( Forde, 1989, p.51 ) The GKF's poor opinion of advertising designers was not aided by the fact that a member of the VRI had been on the ' wrong side ' during the Second World War. There was a large amount amount of antagonism between the two groups. Even today many Dutch designers still bluntly refuse to accept any advertising work.

The K&V sets the PTT apart from its European counterparts and other similar organisations internationally. It is a small department in a very large private company that feels it has a duty to improve the quality of design. The aim is not only to improve the



profits and image of the company, but to maintain the reputation of original and quality design in the nation as a whole. Perhaps most importantly, the K&V seem to have remained true to many of Van Royen's ideas and are interested in the promotion of quality art and design in society to enrich the lives of the public. In the pursuit of its policies the K&V plays a profound role in the Netherland's art and design world.



## CONCLUSION

There is no one exclusive reason why the Dutch PTT's attitude to design seems superior to that of the European P&T companies assessed by this thesis. It has developed from a combination of factors. The stature of design in the nation and the attitude of the PTT to design are interdependent. As Henri Ritzen of Studio Dumbar says: "The Dutch belief in design is because of companies like the PTT and companies look like the PTT because of Dutch belief in design." (Aldersey-Williams, 1992, p.46). The Netherlands has a sensitivity to design partly because of the vision of men like J.F. Van Royen who was able to achieve many of his ideals because of the structure and attitudes in Holland.

The PTT Nederland is an integral part of Dutch Society and Dutch cultural history. The majority of designers of quality in the country have, at some stage, been commissioned by the PTT. A mutually beneficial situation is created where the PTT publicises the designer's work and the designer becomes associated with a company of quality. In commissioning the designer the PTT reinforces its renown, as it will accept nothing less than the highest standards of design.

The Royal PTT Nederland NV is an excellent example of the way in which a traditional design ideal can be successfully maintained and integrated into a modern corporate strategy. The PTT is acutely aware of the value of its design history. In bearing out its reputation for innovation and quality the company contributes to this history, lengthening the list of its successful design projects.

One of the principal things that sets the PTT Nederland apart is the fact that it has, for the most part, remained consistent in its treatment of art and design. For three quarters of a century the company has striven for excellence in all of its design work. Such a commitment to the pursuit of design excellence clearly indicates where the company's priorities lie. The PTT sees design as a problem solving device that can be used to promote the company. More unusually there is a genuine awareness in the PTT of the importance of design in society. The company is interested in promoting design for design's own sake. This seems a very idealistic notion to encounter in a profit making commercial organisation and is perhaps the most important legacy of Jean Francois van Royen.



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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

## VOLUME 2

## CHAPTER TWO:

- Fig 2.0 J.F. Van Royen
- 2.1 Cover of 'De Stijl' magazine
  - 2.2 Cover of 'Wendingen' magazine
  - 2.3 Booklet on phone systems by Vilmos Huzar
  - 2.4 Programme for a Radio Conference by Piet Zwart
  - 2.5 Poster by Gerard Kiljan
  - 2.6 Telephone Kiosk by Brinkman/van der Vlugt
  - 2.7 Wall plaque thanking the PTT for their help in WWII
  - 2.8 Stamp design by Sem Hartz
  - 2.9 Stamp designs by Wim Crouwel
  - 2.10 Stamp designs by the Centre of Cubic Constructions
  - 2.11 Stamp designs by R.D.E. Oxenaar
  - 2.12 1981 PTT Corporate Colour Scheme
  - 2.13 1981 House Style of PTT Telecommunicatie
  - 2.14 1981 House Style of PTT Post
  - 2.15 PTT Telecommunicatie's personal logotype

## CHAPTER THREE:

- 3.1 Corporate Colour of PTT Post
- 3.2 Corporate Colour of PTT Telecom
- 3.3 Corporate Colour of Holding Company and all other divisions
- 3.4 PTT Nederland logotype
- 3.5 PTT Post logotype
- 3.6 PTT Telecom logotype
- 3.7 Logotype layout grid
- 3.8 Grid of PTT box design



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS (CONTINUED)

- Fig 3.9 Koninklijke PTT Nederland logotype
- 3.10 PTT logotypes in a single colour
- 3.11 PTT Canteen Crockery
- 3.12-3.15 Manipulation of core symbols of PTT logo
- 3.16 Swiss PTT logotype
- 3.17 Swiss PTT logotype in a single colour
- 3.18 Swiss PTT Post logotype
- 3.19 Correos y Telegrafos logotype
- 3.20 Deutsche BundesPost logotype
- 3.21 Denmark P&T Post logotype
- 3.22 Denmark P&T Telecom logotype
- 3.23 Denmark P&T holding logotype
- 3.24 Telecom Eireann logotype
- 3.25 An Post logotype
- 3.26 British Telecom logotype
- 3.27 PTT Nederland single postbox
- 3.28 PTT Nederland double postbox
- 3.29 Unloading double postbox
- 3.30 Correos y Telegrafos postboxes
- 3.31 An Post King Edward VII postbox
- 3.32 Modern copy of this pillar box
- 3.33 An Post's most recently designed postbox
- 3.34 An Post's damaged postboxes
- 3.35 PTT Nederland's Triangular phone booth
- 3.36 PTT Nederland's singular rectangular booths
- 3.37 Ptt Nederland phone unit with four terminals
- 3.38 Swiss PTT phone box
- 3.39 Swiss PTT phone cubicles



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS (CONTINUED)

- Fig    3.40 Telecom Eireann phone boxes with brown frame and panels  
       3.41 Telecom Eireann phone boxes with grey frame  
       3.42 Telecom Eireann phone boxes with brass effect surround  
       3.43 Old Telecom Eireann Phone box with new imagery applied  
       3.44 PTT Telecom van  
       3.45 PTT Post truck  
       3.46 PTT Nederland car  
       3.47 PTT Post train  
       3.48 Swiss PTT Postal train  
       3.49 Telecom Eireann identity mis-use  
       3.50 Telecom Eireann with correct identity  
       3.51 Muddy Telecom Eireann van

## CHAPTER FOUR;

- 4.1 The wall design of Peter Struycken  
4.2 Wild Plakken stamp design for the Trade Union movement  
4.3 Jo Coenen's philatelic counter





Fig 2.0 J.F. Van Royen



Fig 2.2 Cover of 'Wendingen' magazine

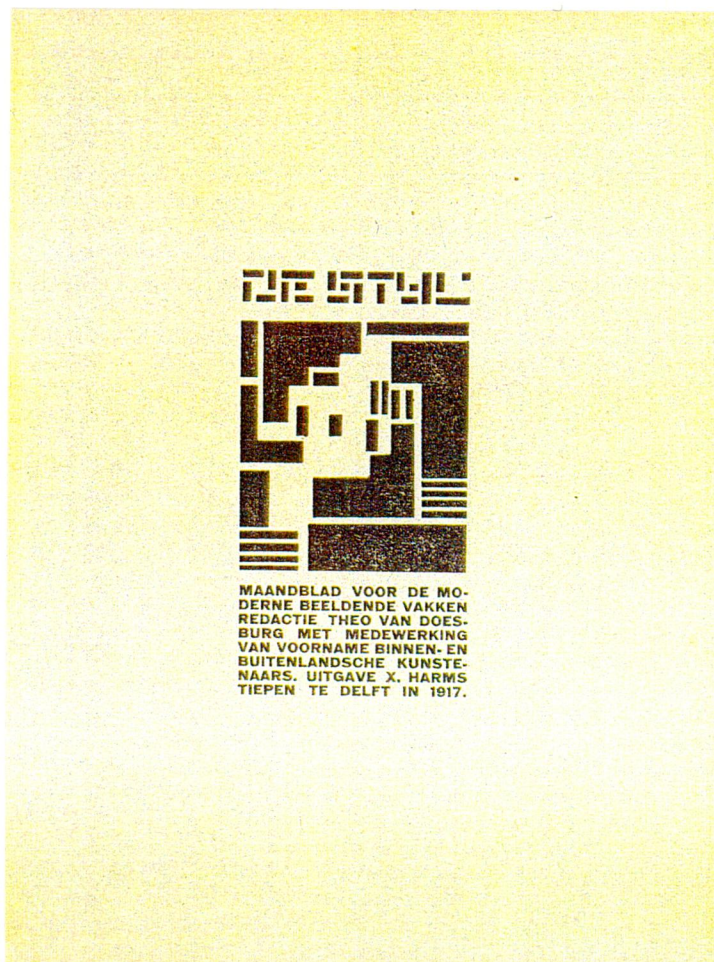


Fig 2.1 Vilmos Huszar: Cover of 'De Stijl' magazine





Fig 2.3 Booklet on phone systems by Vilmos Huzar

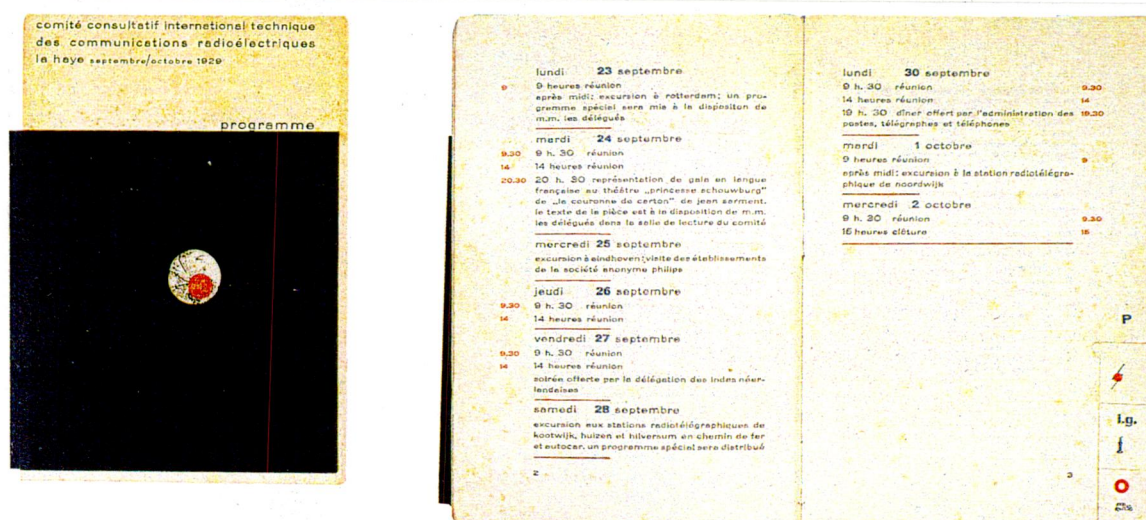


Fig 2.4 Piet Zwart: Programme for a Radio Conference





Fig 2.5 Gerard Kiljan: Poster to accompany stamp series for handicapped children





Fig 2.6 Telephone Kiosk by Brinkman/van der Vlugt 1932





Fig 2.7 Wall plaque thanking the PTT for their help in WWII



Fig 2.8 Stamp design by Sem Hartz



Fig 2.9 Stamp designs by Wim Crowel

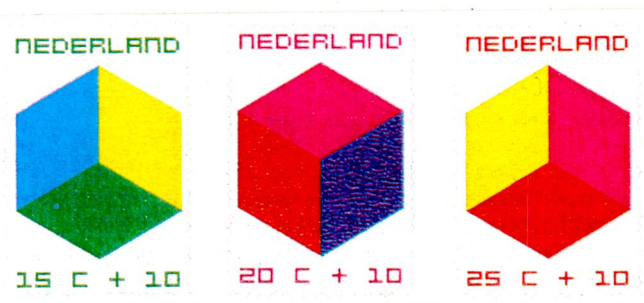


Fig 2.10 Stamp designs by the Centre of Cubic Constructions in a Pop Art style

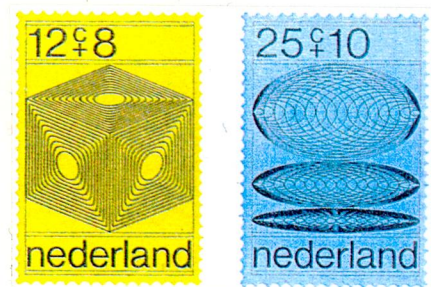


Fig 2.11 Stamp designs by R.D.E. Oxenaar in an Op-Art style. Their use of bright colour and geometric line creates an optical illusion





Fig 2.12 1981 PTT Corporate Colour Scheme



Fig 2.13 1981 House Style of PTT Telecommunicatie



Fig 2.14 1981 House Style of PTT Post



Fig 2.15 PTT Telecommunicatie's personal logotype



Fig 3.2 Corporate Colour green of PTT Telecom



Fig 3.1 Corporate Colour red of PTT Post

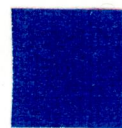


Fig 3.3 Corporate Colour blue of Holding Company



Fig 3.4 PTT Nederland logotype



Fig 3.9 Koninklijke PTT Nederland logotype using crown symbol



Fig 3.5 PTT Post logotype



Fig 3.6 PTT Telecom logotype



Fig 3.10 PTT logotypes in a single colour



Fig 3.7 Logotype layout grid

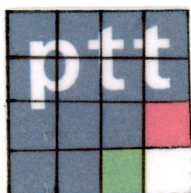


Fig 3.8 Grid of PTT box design



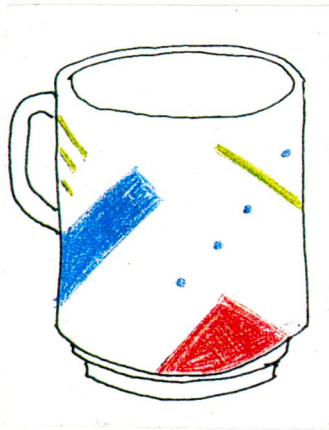


Fig 3.11 Design drawing by Dawn Barrett  
and photograph of PTT Canteen Crockery



Fig 3.12 Hoarding at PTT office using the  
core symbols of the PTT corporate image



Fig 3.13 Envelope sticker using symbols derived from logotype

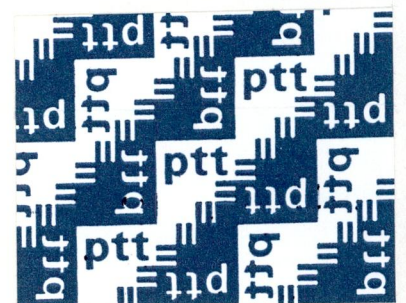


Fig 3.14 Inside of PTT envelope manipulating symbols



**Nieuw adres? Laat het ons één maand van tevoren weten, het is de moeite waard.**

**Nieuw adres? Laat het ons één maand van tevoren weten, het is de moeite waard.**



**ptt post**

Fig 3.15 Leaflet of PTT Post using deconstructive symbols





Fig 3.16 Swiss PTT logotype



Fig 3.17 Swiss PTT logotype in a single colour



Fig 3.18 Swiss PTT Post logotype



Fig 3.19 Correos y Telégrafos logotype



Fig 3.20 Deutsche BundesPost logotype





Fig 3.21 Denmark P&T Post logotype



Fig 3.22 Denmark P&T Telecom logotype



Fig 3.23 Denmark P&T holding company logotype





Fig 3.24 Telecom Eireann logotype

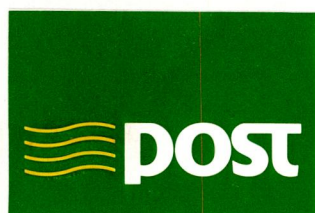


Fig 3.25 An Post logotype



Fig 3.26 British Telecom logotype





Fig 3.28 PTT Nederland double postbox

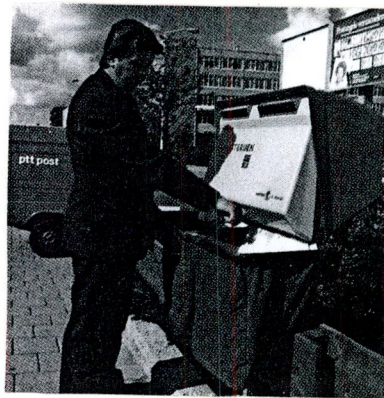


Fig 3.29 Unloading double postbox





Fig 3.30 Correos y Telegrafos postbox



Fig 3.31 An Post King Edward VII postbox





Fig 3.32 Modern copy of this pillar box

Fig 3.33 An Post's most recently designed postbox





Fig 3.34 An Post's damaged postboxes







Fig 3.35 PTT Nederland's Triangular phone booth





Fig 3.36 PTT Nederland's singular rectangular booths



Fig 3.37 PTT Nederland phone unit with four terminals





Fig 3.38 Swiss PTT phone box



Fig 3.39 Swiss PTT phone cubicles





Fig 3.40 Telecom Eireann phone boxes with brown frame and panels



Fig 3.41 Telecom Eireann phone boxes with grey frame



Fig 3.42 Telecom Eireann phone boxes with brass effect surround

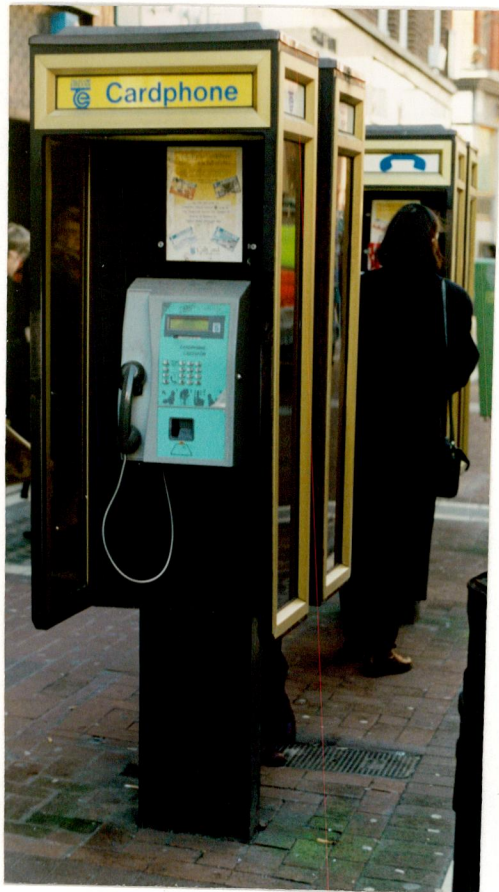


Fig 3.43 Old Telecom Eireann Phone box with new imagery applied;  
note 'Telefon' sign showing through Cardphone sign





Fig 3.44 PTT Telecom van



Fig 3.45 PTT Post truck



Fig 3.46 PTT Nederland car



Fig 3.47 PTT Post train





Fig 3.48 Swiss PTT Postal train



Fig 3.49 Telecom Eireann identity mis-use



Fig 3.50 Telecom Eireann with correct identity





Fig 3.51 Mud covered Telecom Eireann van



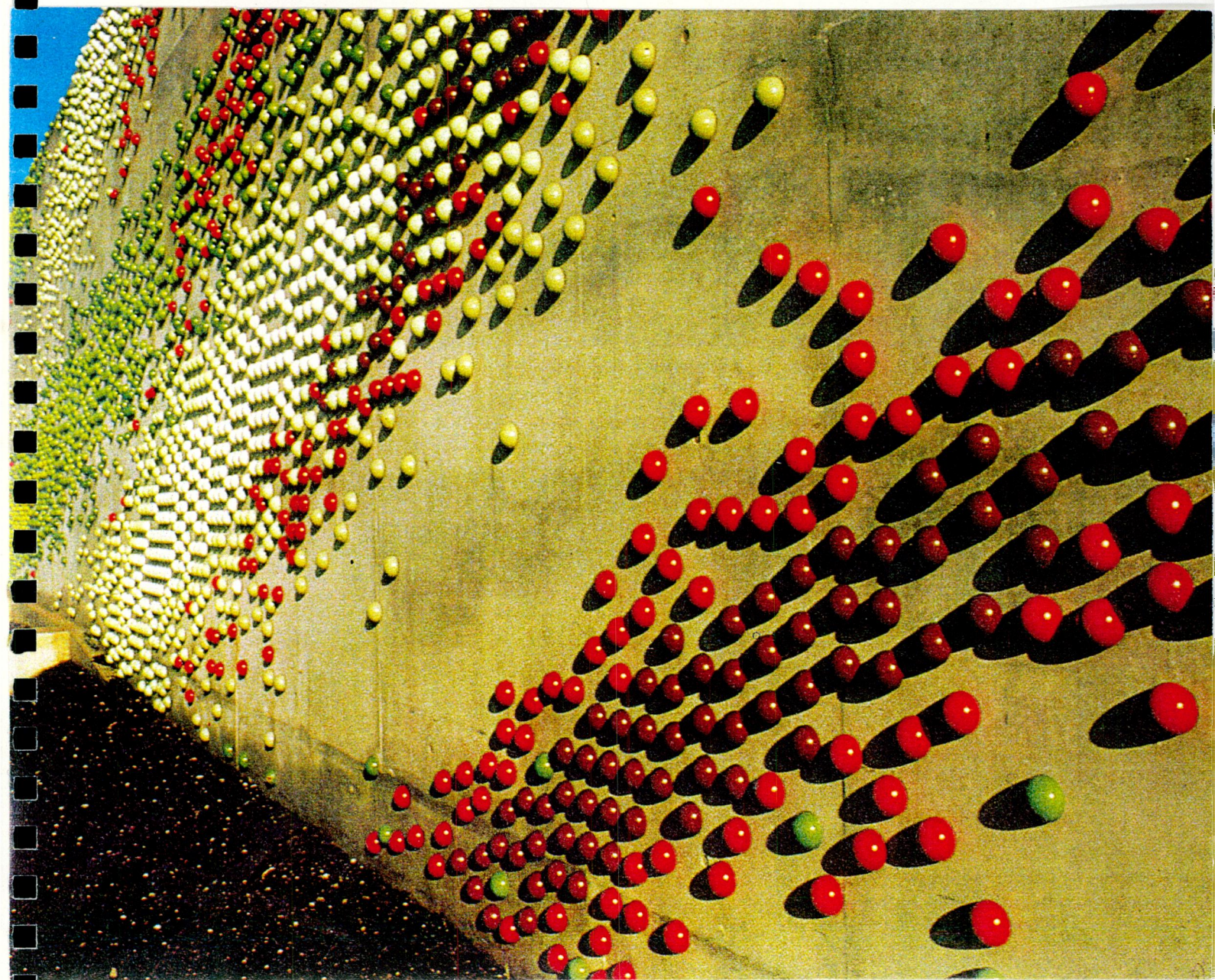


Fig 4.1 The wall design of Peter Struycken



Fig 4.2 Wild Plakken stamp design for the Trade Union movement

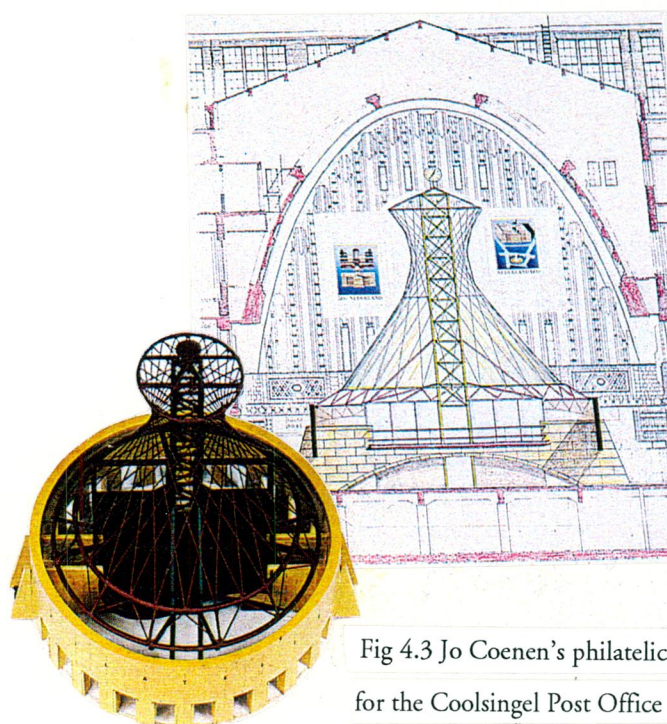


Fig 4.3 Jo Coenen's philatelic counter for the Coolsingel Post Office

