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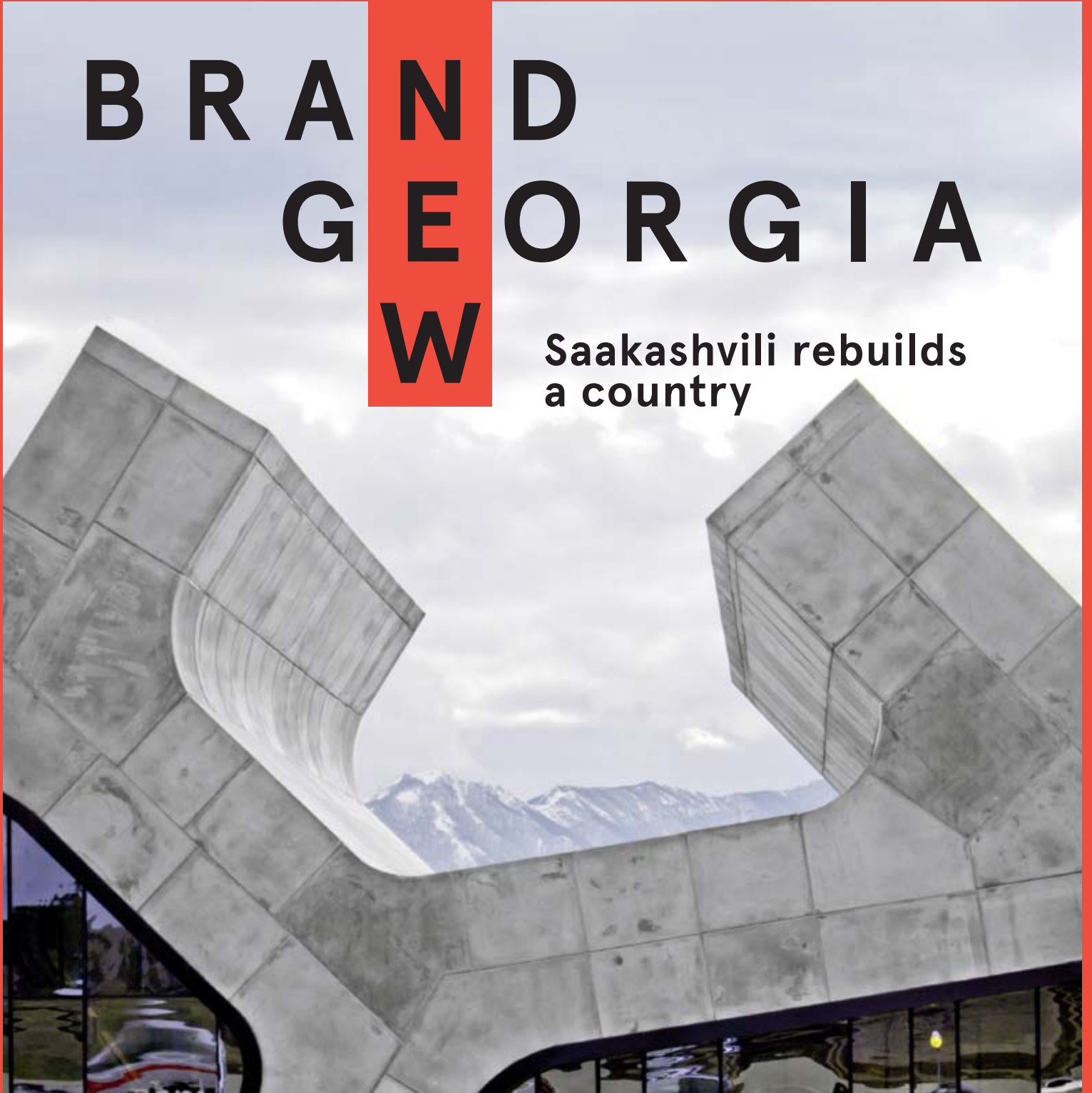
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Rudolf Teunissen

manipulates light and dark



Text [Fabrizia Vecchione](#)
Photo [Rudolf Teunissen](#)

Atjehstraat, a street in Rotterdam, has been converted into an interior-like space, a sort of second reality projected on pavements and façades. Broken Light, a project by Dutch artist and lighting designer Rudolf Teunissen, imbues a rather run-down area of the city with the aesthetic of an art installation. A horizontal spider web – like a shadowy camouflage pattern – covers pavements on both sides of the street, while vertical light beams cast a virtual structure of abstract lines on building façades.

An art installation as permanent street lighting – can you tell us about it?

[Rudolf Teunissen](#): In public spaces, light is generally used only for safety reasons or to draw attention to commercial messages. It's hard to introduce aesthetic and sensuous interpretations of light. Our design radically subverts conventional rules; it is based on a glare-free system

which produces light that is far less intense than normal public lighting. It allows people to experience the surrounding architecture without being blinded by light. The dual intention – an installation that is functional yet artistic – is physically expressed in the shape of the fittings: vertical and horizontal projections are operated by 6-m-high custom-designed fixtures (in collaboration with MAX Designers), each of which features 50 handmade mirrors, while a lower lamp provides the street with regular light.

The design is beautiful, but has it prompted a change in social interaction?

If you google 'lighting design', most of what you find pertains to glossy new-build projects, like museums, and posh neighbourhoods that need to be upgraded. In the case of our Rotterdam project, we faced the needs of a neglected area – a peninsula surrounded

by former harbour activities – looking for a new identity. What's more, the street in question was overlooked in recent redevelopment activities on the peninsula. There was nothing to be upgraded; it had to be reinvented. We envisioned this project as a social sculpture. Residents showed immediate interest, followed the entire installation process, learned what we were doing – and now they're not only proud of Broken Light but also experiencing it.

You've shown that public lighting can be designed in a new and unusual way. Do you think others will follow suit?

I'm positive they will. We've been nominated for several awards and asked to give lectures abroad. A number of municipalities have expressed an interest in exploring similar interventions.

brokenLight.org