Westergasfabriek, a nineteenth-century factory on the outskirts of central Amsterdam, halted operations and in 1981 the site was rezoned as recreation space. Kathryn Gustafson won the commission with “Changement,” a proposal produced in collaboration with Francine Houben of Mecanoo architects. In 1997, Gustafson opened an office in London and with partner Neil Porter began to translate concept into detailed design.

Cultuurpark Westergasfabriek is one of Gustafson Porter + Bowman’s defining projects, and is considered as a model of brownfield reclamation within a physically dense urban context and a complex set of stakeholders. Using ‘Changement’ as a foundation, the scheme establishes a delicate balance between contamination and accessibility, invention and interpretation, restoration (of contaminated land) and revelation (of the potential of a post-productive site). Today it is a vibrant cultural center for the arts and a meeting place for surrounding communities.

The success of the project can be attributed to an effective design process which incorporated public input and site-specificity from its beginnings. The process of design included a full year of well-organized public consultation process and also incorporated the transformation of industrial areas to the south of the site into a mixed use housing development.

“...The new park on the Westergasfabriek is certainly a fantastic new amenity. It is a meeting place for everyone, a park which is open all day every day, year in and year out. It forms a seamless whole with the buildings it surrounds... The buildings themselves were designed over one hundred years ago by Isaac Gosschalk. Kathryn Gustafson has been supremely successful in reflecting and complementing their form and character in the surrounding grounds, with all the beautiful and very special areas she has created.”

— Evert Verhagen, Project Manager, Westergasfabriek Culture Park, 1993-2003