

now decided the 100 games produced would become part of a sales-promotion campaign and would not be used for the portfolio presentation. Every sales manager would get a game to use as a give-away showing examples of their products.

I was sharp enough to pick up the tangram box on the table, and replace it in its package and say "Thank you" to the 'Boss'; this one would be for my files. Afterwards I did hear from my friend that 'he was not amused' with what had happened, but the same could have been my commentary.

The Tangram

The one I own is perhaps the only complete surviving example, and here it is in all its greatness.



More

Years later, the firm Nova Carta used the same design for one of their products sold to the business-to-business market as a Christmas give-away.



I still have some of these Winterglow versions. If you are interested, put 5 Euro or 5 Dollars in an envelope, mention your address and send it to: Fred Horn, Doornstraat 16, 2584 AM Den Haag, NL-Holland and you will get one. [AGPC](http://www.agpc.org)

STRAAT

An Unusual Unknown GAME from Holland

by Fred Horn

Shortly after coming home from holiday in September 1984, I received a postcard announcing an upcoming game exhibition. It seems one of my colleagues from the "Organisatie-Bureau van de Gemeente Amsterdam" where I had been working, thought that I would be interested in the game exhibit and put my name on the invitation list.



The exhibition of games was to be held in the Gallery BINNEN—Eglantiersgracht 31—a small gallery in the Jordaan (the working man's living section of old-Amsterdam), and the focus would be on only four games.

I was curious about the games because I had never heard of nor had seen them so they might be a nice addition to my collection.

HOUTEBAL and CYCLO were not that interesting, but the other two games, TANG and STRAAT were exactly "my cup of tea" (abstract/strategic games). In the end I did purchase all four games and they are now in the collection at Brugge and documented at the Dutch website: www.hong.vlinden.com.

The complete story about TANG and the small firm Cobrain (Jonathan Schouten & Paul Velleman) is on my future to-do list. But during my research on these games, I tried to also locate the small shop Speel, publisher of the game STRAAT. What I discovered by the late 1990s, was that the store did not exist anymore. Back then as well, searching on the Internet was not something you even knew about.

When Rob van Linden put my information about these four games on HONG, he looked a bit further and found the name of the game's author: Fred Schuurhof. Schuurhof was working as a photographer, so via his website it was easy to 1) locate him, and 2) make contact for more information about him and his game.

When I contacted Schuurhof, this was his response:

"What an extremely surprising message I received from you. Indeed an echo out of the past from a long time ago. Very curious to find out the game STRAAT still does have some place somewhere. For me it is hidden in a dusty corner of my memory, although in some closet in the house I still keep a tangible sample.

In the 1980s, a friend and I were very busy operating Speel, a game-manufacturing company that produced hand-made goods. It was an intense and creative period for the company, but it failed in its business sense. For years I was deeply involved with the board game Carrom, a dexterity game from India (a kind of 'poor-man's billiard'), and tried to give it more attention in the Netherlands, but after a certain point, I could not devote the time to it anymore along with my daily job. Although it was promoted heavily and a good deal of time was spent, the Dutch were apparently not interested in Carrom. We manufactured Carrom boards in the factory, and I organized tournaments, even international ones, with attendees from Germany, Switzerland, India, and even Sri-Lanka. I handled quite a few tasks for the association: secretary; handling the journal, etc., but when it became too much work, I quit. I still have a passion for the game and we have a small group of friends that still play! In 1988 we closed the shop and the factory. I then worked as a photographer for the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam up to my retirement in 2012.



STRAAT—a one-time-game idea by Fred Schuurhof

Returning to STRAAT, this was an idea that came to me when the Gallery asked for something as part of their exhibition on new games. To be fair, I did not play the game very much because it was hard for me to "imagine" both sides during play and to lay down the pieces strategically. We did not produce the game in large amounts, and as far as I remember, it had also sold poorly. In the end, both the game and the firm Speel patiently died. Of course I do like the idea that somewhere the game is remembered, but for me it is something from the past and not a possibility for the future.

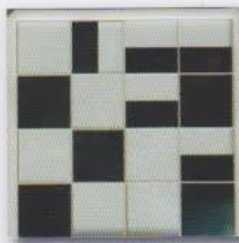
The game Straat was invented and submitted 30 years ago on the spur of the moment, but from that moment on I never looked after it. I think it still needs testing and developing, because it is a game that demands a good memory and abstract thinking to visualize and remember how the 'lines' appear on both sides. For me, the game was (and is) too complicated. If the game could be some inspiration for some young inventor, I will be more than satisfied.

I nearly forget to mention that this game is the only one we, the firm Speel, developed ourselves. Most of the time, we were busy manufacturing luxurious, mostly wooden, designs of well-known board games like backgammon, chess, and halma.

To end, I will mention the name of my friend and partner in business: Rob van der Wardt, still a good friend."



Front side with removable transparent lid



Backside

Pictured above is the example of STRAAT purchased at the Gallery BINNEN. Some time later I also bought a version with blue instead of black faces at "de Bijenkorf," a large department store in Amsterdam. Both are now in the Vlaams Spellen Archief in Brugge.

The idea behind STRAAT, playing on the visible side as well as on the other—not visible—back side of the frame, was for the time innovative.

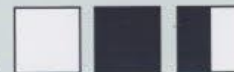
I still do not know many games that explore this principle.

Despite all the complaints by the inventor, the funny thing is, I played the game very often, especially with mathematical interested friends. But it still is an unknown game in the world of abstract/strategic games. The game is nowhere mentioned in works on "Connection-Games," but this omission can now be rectified and corrected on behalf of this article! [AGPG](#)

STRAAT is a puzzle-block game for two players.

Equipment:

• 16 square block pieces: 8 blocks are white on the front side, and 8 blocks are black on the front side. On the back sides of each of the 16 blocks, half is colored black and half is colored white.



Block examples

- Frame of 4 x 4 squares from transparent material (glass/perspex/etc.)
- Transparent lid to cover the blocks after filling the frame.

Rules:

One player has 8 white blocks; the other player has 8 black blocks. White starts first. In turn, each player places one of his pieces anywhere in the frame. The orientation of the block is up to the player, but once placed, the block cannot be altered.

Winning the Game:

When all of the blocks have been placed, each player then counts his **Straten** (Streets)—the connection of his color blocks from one edge of the frame to the opposite edge of the frame. A lid is then placed on the grid and the board is turned over to count any continuous **Straten** on the back side. The player with the highest total of streets (front and rear) is declared the winner.