



Zuider Gymnasium

RAP
WINNER
JURY PRIZE
2023

JURY ESSAY

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ARCHITECTURE THAT GIVES BACK

Essay on behalf of the jury
by Catja Edens

Architecture has a special relationship with time. Often, there are many years between the initial planning of a building and the moment it is occupied. In a sense, the Rotterdam Architecture Prize jury is looking back in time when it considers the buildings submitted and all the desires, needs and ideals they represent. In these times of profound societal and environmental change in which the taken-for-granted is constantly being questioned, it is important to relate to the factor of time in. How can the buildings submitted for this year's Rotterdam Architecture Prize contribute to Rotterdam today? How do they relate to the city's past, as it is reflected in existing buildings, streets and parks? And what new perspectives do they open up for a future in which Rotterdam will have to find ever better solutions to major challenges like climate adaptation, biodiversity, social inclusion, health and happiness? Architecture in the service of the city; architecture that considers these issues and addresses them through ingenuity, craftsmanship and productive collaboration between clients, architects, builders and users; architecture that shows respect for the existing and optimism for the future: that is laudable architecture, according to the jury.

Het is duidelijk dat de wooncrisis ook Rotterdam voor It is clear that the housing crisis is a major challenge for Rotterdam, as it is for other cities. Among this year's entries for the Rotterdam Architecture Prize, the jury once again found many answers to the question of how Rotterdam can provide its citizens with suitable housing. Projects like Cooltoren, Casanova, Zalmhaven and Our Domain that have been sent in for this year's edition, show that the stakes are high for residential towers.

In recent years ambitious efforts have been made to develop and enrich this form of housing, not only by adding communal facilities such as roof terraces, but also by paying close attention to the design and programming of the base and its connection to the urban domain. At the same time, the jury notes that living in residential towers remains less suitable and accessible for families and people with modest housing budgets – a large group in Rotterdam society. The towers provide a spectacular degree of densification and contribute to the Rotterdam skyline, but should they not give back more to the city, its people and its living environment? And is the significant environmental impact of high-rise construction still justifiable? Based on these considerations, the jury decided not to include these residential towers in its selection.

Resuscitating architecture

The highest gains in architectural sustainability are to be made through renovation and transformation projects - after all, what is not torn down does not need to be rebuilt. Still, the proportion of transformation projects in this edition is, at 30 per cent, quite modest. In this context, the jury particularly appreciated the renovation of the Gouverneblok, a 1970s complex that is part of an underappreciated layer of time in the built city. It forms a reminder of the turbulent period of urban renewal when residents of Rotterdam West took to the streets to demand their right to good housing. At the time, these blocks were carefully integrated into the early twentieth-century fabric of Rotterdam West, where they also brought renewal with their yellow brick, distinctive rounded gateways, and triangular bays. Over the years, the complex underwent several renovations, each of which eroded the original look a little more. Original colours and fenestration were adapted, and some architectural details disappeared altogether. For a new round of renovations, Woonstad Housing Association decided on a different approach. It commissioned DaF Architects, which specialises in 1970s buildings, to draw up a renovation plan based on the original architectural features. To do this, the architects consulted old plans and photographs and talked to Ben Hoek, the architect of the complex. This offered the basis for a renovation plan that restored the original intentions and qualities of the Gouverneblok, although never rigidly.

Replacing the plastic window frames reinstated the old window division, restoring the original expression of the façade. The original paintwork, which accentuated the structure and spatial organization of the façade, provided the starting point for a new colour palette, which was chosen together with the residents on the basis of test installations. The housing association and residents also collaborated in funding a solution for closing the gallery, which was desired for reasons of social security. Now, a newly designed fence with

a lantern and doorbell panels forms the entrance on street level. The jury feels that this intervention shows a sense of realism but is somewhat detrimental to the gradation between public and private space, which is such an important feature of the Gouverneblok. It notes that a valuable 1970s housing complex has been adapted to present times and has regained its optimistic aura. The project shows that it pays off to carry out a seemingly modest refurbishment of occupied housing with care and skill.

The project Curves, Colours and Cutouts shows that working with existing housing can take many inspiring forms. Here, too, existing architecture has received a new future thanks to attention and design skill. Like many young families in Rotterdam, the owners of this 1990s house had been looking for a home for a long time. This semi-detached house in Hillegersberg-Schiebroek had a good location and a large garden, but its layout and aesthetics didn't raise much enthusiasm. Instead of allowing themselves to be put off by the low ceilings, awkward corners and limited lighting, the owners teamed up with an architect friend to find solutions. In a single sweep, Lagado Architects managed to transform a colourless and traditional house into an elegant and comfortable living environment. By moving the kitchen to the garden side and reducing the size of the garage, space was created to naturally connect the living room with the

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back garden. All the angularity and awkwardness of the house was resolved by colourful rounded walls that reorganize the interior. Well-placed openings brought in light and views, and clever cut-outs created extras such as a seating area in the hallway and an open cupboard. A modest assignment that, according to the jury, radiates design joy. Curves, Colours and Cutouts convincingly shows how a not-so-modern home can be resuscitated. This opens up hopeful prospects for Rotterdam's existing housing stock.

Through Today's Eyes

The jury believes that it is useful to consider what the existing city has to offer and what it still needs when judging new building projects submitted for the Rotterdam Architecture Prize. One of these new developments is De Houten Kop, a small-scale project in Katendrecht that was the result of a seven-year collective private commission (CPO) process, designed by Architectuur Maken. Against the blind wall of a 1980s social housing project, a striking three-sided, three-storey end building has been created with a view of the Kaappark. It has a shell of cross-linked timber (CLT), sustainable timber cladding and solar panels on the roof, providing a sustainable alternative to standard

concrete or lime-sand brick construction. The balconies and roof are designed to support the thick layers of soil in which trees and nectar-rich plants have been planted to complement the surrounding flora and fauna. Inside there are three comfortable apartments, the lower of which is used as a design studio. The extra floor height creates well-dimensioned rooms with large windows overlooking the park and the SS Rotterdam. The jury looks with admiration at this sustainable and skilfully designed project that offers fantastic living and working spaces for the completion of which the clients and the architect have shown a remarkable degree of perseverance. However, the jury also wonders how much this combination of programme and location gives back to the city. De Houten Kop does indeed create ‘eyes on the park’, but aren’t other people, such as the residents of the neighbouring housing estate, also entitled to enjoy this beautiful view? Does the project not accentuate the differences in the neighbourhood? And would this not have been an excellent opportunity to activate community life in the area by adding a neighbourhood function? In considering the combination of programme and building, the jury took a step back in time, as time was also a factor in this case. De Houten Kop originated in the context of Pak je ruimte, an earlier municipal initiative that identified small, unusual building sites in the city and invited parties to develop projects for them. At the time, this was a two-way street. The world

the Hudsons adds a new time layer to Bospolder-Tussendijken

of architecture and construction, still reeling from the credit crunch, was given small opportunities to develop unusual architecture. The city benefited from architectural trendsetters to complete Rotterdam. The jury is enthusiastic about the fact that Pak je ruimte has created the opportunity for this CPO project with its special architecture. However, it also believes in reviewing this initiative with the knowledge and insights of the present. Now that the credit crunch is a thing of the past, the construction industry is in full swing and the conversation about social equality is more acute, the jury feels including some public programming would have been a good fit.

Attention to Context

The spatial and temporal context is also relevant to the assessment of the larger residential projects Parkbuurt and The Hudsons. [Parkbuurt] is a new addition to the suburb of Hoogvliet, consisting of 137 large, affordable owner-occupied dwellings in a park-like setting. The five residential clusters are grouped around a series of green wedges that form part of a large green structure running from Meeuwenplaat via Parkbuurt to Oedevlietsepark and Visserijgriend. That this design did not take greenery for granted is evident from the care taken to build around existing trees in some

places. Also a water retention system has been built to provide water for the front and rear gardens, and wadis collect excess rainwater.

The jury is charmed by the design quality of the raised verandas, which are separated by steel wires with vegetation. They are the face of the project and create a soft transition between the private and public areas. The 6-m width of the nave allows for the French doors that give the apartments direct access to the verandas and greenery via the kitchen. The front doors are also on this side, but as the verandas are only accessible on foot, the jury expects that in practice the back of the dwellings will be used as an entrance more frequently. At the back, on the inside of the blocks, the jury found a very different world, which has little to do with the green character and design qualities of the front. It is an informal environment for parking cars, with sheds and back gardens hidden behind fences. Perhaps this is to some extent part of a typical suburban living environment as created in Parkbuurt, the jury reflected. The large and affordable houses, with their beautiful brickwork by RoosRos Architects, set in a green environment designed by Echo Urban Design, are an important addition to Hoogvliet’s housing stock, says the jury. From a housing strategy point of view, the fact that 75 per cent of the buyers were already Hoogvliet residents and would therefore remain in the district, is seen as an important achievement by client Heijmans and the municipality of Rotterdam.

The Hudsons, the other large-scale housing project selected by the jury, is located in the Bospolder-Tussendijken district. This is a traditionally poor neighbourhood, where the damage caused by accidental bombing during the Second World War has been repaired over the years with housing and public spaces of different generations between the 1950s and the present. The Hudsons adds a new time layer alongside the Dakpark, that with its watersteps, barbecue areas and community garden, is a major attraction in the area. In The Hudsons, the transition from public to private has a characteristic stepped layout. At the front doors, a difference in paving marks an entrance zone where residents can place flowerpots and benches, a subtle transition from public to private that the jury feels could have profited from a little more design. The parking garages are located inside the blocks, surmounted by spacious courtyard gardens, which the residents have agreed to use either as communal spaces or to parcel out as private gardens. Half paved areas between the blocks offer a kind of semi-public street that are accessible to all passers by but feel like the domain of those whose homes surround them. A nice touch, the jury finds. The two corners on either side of Schippersstraat will house social facilities contributing to the range of facilities and vibrancy of the neighbourhood.

The Hudsons takes full advantage of the greenery of Dakpark and the monumental plane trees along Hudsonweg. At the same time, the open layout with green areas in between ensures that the Dakpark is better connected to the district as a whole; the residential blocks placed like fitting pieces between the district and the park. The jury is enthusiastic about the way The Hudsons respects and enriches the existing social and spatial structures of Bospolder. The project offers a variety of housing types that are a welcome addition to the housing stock of Bospolder-Tussendijken. In addition, the carefully designed and executed urban blocks, with their expressive brickwork

in darker shades on the district side and progressively lighter shades on the park side, contribute to the architectural quality of the surroundings. The jury appreciates the way The Hudsons enriches the city by being attentive and respectful to its context. Orange Architects and clients ERA Contour and BPD Gebiedsontwikkeling have gone the extra mile on all fronts. Every reason for an honourable mention for The Hudsons.

What is architecture?

The purpose of architecture is to take root in its surroundings, but some of the entries for the Rotterdam Architecture Prize have very different intentions. The [Rotterdam Rooftop Walk] was a temporary project that, in the summer of 2022, offered a view of the city’s rooftops to anyone who wanted one (and wasn’t too afraid of heights). It was an initiative of Rotterdamse Dakendagen (Rotterdam Rooftop Days), an organization that programmes an annual event to make the public aware of the spaces and possibilities of the city’s rooftops. After organizing a tightrope walk in 2018 and a zip line in 2019, it pulled out all the stops in 2022, presenting a publicly accessible rooftop route over the Coolsingel. It was a technical feat, with supports on the Coolsingel and a scaffolding staircase attached to a façade, a joint design by Rotterdam Roof Days and MVRDV. This project got the jury thinking about the definition of architecture. Is it strictly about physical constructions, or can architecture also be a deed, a statement—engaging, in the case of the Rotterdam Rooftop Walk, the widest possible audience with the city? The jury greatly appreciated the educational value of the Rotterdam Rooftop Walk, which included an exhibition and was linked to a substantive programme on Kennisdag (Day of Knowledge). The event is part of a tradition through which the organizers of the Rotterdam Rooftop Days have been building an international network since 2016, with the aim of exchanging and sharing knowledge about the use of roofs with the general public. The strength of this project, therefore, according to the jury, lies in the combination of architecture as a construction and architecture as a deed, in this case a deed of educational value, that attracted the unlikely number of 205,000 visitors. Another project that the jury felt stretched the definition of architecture was the Getijdenpark Eiland van Brienoord. The jury considers this tidal park to be a natural construction. Since 2000, the management of Eiland van Brienoord has focused on the development of nature. With the construction of the Buitenplaats Brienoord and the Maaspoints: Water Woud pavilion, the area developed into a nature park for the people of Rotterdam; the realization of the Getijdenpark was the grand finale. The Getijdenpark is part of a larger programme of tidal parks on the banks of the Nieuwe Waterweg, Hollandse IJssel and Nieuwe Maas. In this context, Keilehaven and Feyenoord City will also be redeveloped in the coming years. The city of Rotterdam is thus taking strategic measures to take advantage of the exceptional tidal nature of the Zuid-Holland delta.

The design of the [Getijdenpark Eiland van Brienoord] aims to give nature and all the associated flora and fauna as much space as possible

and to allow visitors to experience it undisturbed and undirected. The jury appreciates the restraint of the design, which embraces the nature and history of the site. Rather than making a design statement, a modest design language has been used that blends into an environment where industry and nature sit side by side. In addition to the development of natural shorelines and the sandbank on the west side, the main components of the park design are two bridges and several decks. The result is an urban natural environment where marsh marigolds, spoonbills and even beavers feel at home, and where the people of Rotterdam can navigate through tidal nature. The jury highly appreciates Rotterdam’s decision to make the river, the ancient lifeline and ecosystem in the middle of the city visible and tangible. The combination of industry on the quays of Feijenoord and nature on the Eiland van Brienoord arouses amazement and a little concern, but also has an unexpected educational value. After all, the Getijdenpark shows that nature is resilient and dynamic, and will seize any opportunity to gain ground. The jury is pleasantly surprised that the park provides space for flora and fauna, as well as for the dynamics of the river, which allows sediments to wash up and the banks to change. In this project, ‘letting go’ prevails over ‘doing’. In more ways than one, the Getijdenpark Eiland van Brienoord opens up new perspectives on the city and architecture, more than enough reasons for an honourable mention according to the jury.

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Architecture as a Learning Resource

Looking at the future of Rotterdam and the contribution that architecture can make to it, one inevitably ends up looking at educational architecture. The places where our children, teenagers and young adults receive their education and spend a significant part of their time make an essential contribution to their relationship with each other, nature, and natural resources. The [Langeveld Building], a multifunctional educational building, continues EUR Campus Woudestein’s young tradition of sustainable architecture, which includes both transformation projects such as the University Library (winner of the 2017 Public Award) and the many new construction projects on campus. The jury notes that a consistent commitment to sustainable and climate-adapted building leads to a learning capacity that seems to induce acceleration here. Paul de Ruiter, architect of the Langeveld Building, has already designed two highly sustainable buildings for the campus: the Polak Building in 2015 and the Hogeschool Rotterdam Business School in 2017. The Langeveld Building shows what can be achieved with a steady course and intensive collaboration between client, builder, and architect. It is an energy-generating building with a revolutionary climate system in which

air is brought in from above, cooled with groundwater and then circulated before leaving the building via a solar chimney with a Venturi flue. The building's climate performance is enhanced by solar panels on the roof and a water buffer to supply water to the lush internal planting. The core of the building is largely constructed from timber and logs from the Crown Estate, which have been used as structural elements, all for CO₂ storage and spatial quality. Some materials for the Langeveld building were sourced from other demolished properties, including campus buildings, and the wood used is MFC certified.

The jury is impressed by the performance of the building. The use of the Earth, Wind and Fire climate system is not only highly sustainable, but also low maintenance and results in a significant increase in available floor space. The jury is also excited about the qualities of the study landscape at the heart of the building, a generous space with pleasant atmosphere and acoustics that was immediately embraced by the student population. The fact that this building incorporates both qualities is a remarkable achievement, the jury states. It would have been even better if the inside and outside had fused in a more coherent architectural gesture. Perhaps the plants on the canopy, the planters on the façade, and the completion of the outdoor space on the south side will help in achieving this.

the secret of the Fridtjof Nansen School is the collaboration of the architect, the builder, the client and the dedicated school team.

The Fridtjof Nansen School in Ommoord is a textbook example of architecture contributing to the development of the next generation of Rotterdam students. Opposite the district park Ommoordse Veld, a new building has been erected on the site of the old school building - its outdoor space is a connecting green link in the area. In addition to the formal client, Stichting BOOR, a highly committed team from the school itself was involved in the design of the new building. The principles of Jenaplan schools and the life of Fridtjof Nansen, the Norwegian explorer for whom the school is named, offered productive sources of inspiration. The result is an optimistic school building that intelligently, yet almost casually, provides space for the solidarity and interaction that are central to Jenaplan schools.

The jury admires the natural way in which the building encourages greater awareness of energy and nature. The solar panels in the glass roof cast a pattern of shadows on the grandstand stairs in sunny weather, making the generation of solar energy visible and tangible to the pupils. The natural, unpaved environment around the school allows the children to play with plants, water, tree trunks and mud. The jury was particularly enticed by a landscaped slope leading up from the ground floor, ensuring that not

only the classrooms on the ground floor but also those on the upper floor have direct access to the outdoor space. This led to the installation of a watercourse with pump to provide an additional opportunity for play and learning. The secret of the Fridtjof Nansen School, according to the jury, lies in the collaboration of BDG Architects, builder BM Houwelingen, client BOOR and the school team. The result is a school that radiates love and dedication.

Building on History

In studying this year's entries, the jury paid close attention to the way in which the buildings relate to Rotterdam's past, present and future. What do these projects ask of Rotterdam, what do they bring, and what kind of city does this lead to, now and in the future? These considerations formed the compass that led the jury to the clear winner of the Rotterdam Architecture Prize 2023: **the Zuider Gymnasium**. With the establishment of the grammar school (in Dutch gymnasium) in the gatehouse of the former Zuiderziekenhuis, a 1939 design by architect Ad van der Steur, this monumental complex has been given a new future. By taking the structure and qualities of the existing gatehouse as a starting point, it was possible to preserve not only the appearance but also the many historical features of its architecture. The former hospital admissions rooms, which flank the gate on the ground floor, are now the entrance area for students. On the upper floors, the original corridor structure has been adapted to create classrooms at the front and a study hall behind. The roof houses a lecture theatre and the former hospital kitchen provides space for theory rooms and laboratories. The old boiler house, with its boiler and plant rooms, has been converted into an attractive assembly hall, and the stump of the old chimney now stands in the school yard as a monumental reminder of times gone by.

The Zuider Gymnasium meets all the technical, spatial, and climatic requirements of a modern school. However, the real strength of this school lies in its historical character, in the monumental staircases, the remains of the technical installations and even a monumental mural, all of which have been given a place in the new school. For the jury, the reuse of an existing building is an obvious sustainable choice from the point of view of material use. However, in the transformation of the gatehouse, it also recognized a touching form of social sustainability. A learning environment in which the history of the community is tangible and palpable makes an invaluable contribution to the education of secondary school students. The Zuider Gymnasium offers them a place with secrets, special corners, doors, passages, and mysterious remnants of the past that can be explored and appropriated. In this way, the school becomes more than just an environment that meets technical, spatial, and climatic requirements: it also stimulates curiosity and fosters an authentic sense of connection with this place.

If things had turned out a little differently, the Zuider Gymnasium would not have been built at all. After a merger, the Zuiderziekenhuis building was sold to a property developer and at one point there were serious plans to demolish it. Thanks to the efforts of local residents, the city and other passionate supporters, including architect Joris Molenaar, this

was narrowly averted. This reignited the age-old question of who owns the city. The Zuiderziekenhuis project shows what the combined efforts of the city and its citizens can do for a society.

Thanks to the collaboration between the client BOEi, the builder Burgy Bouwbedrijf, the architects Molenaar & Co and the user Zuider Gymnasium, it has been

possible to transform this impressive hospital complex and thus preserve an important part of the history of Rotterdam-Zuid. The realization of the first categorial grammar school in Rotterdam-Zuid on this historical site brings connection and an optimistic look to the future. It is with great pleasure that the jury awards the Jury Prize to the Zuider Gymnasium.



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Ninke Happel
VOORZITTER



Mohamed Baba



Shelley Long



Lyongo Juliana



Veerle Alkemade