



Grondstoffenstation Afrikaanderplein

RAP
WINNER
JURY PRIZE
2024

THE CITY, A LANDSCAPE

Essay on behalf of the Jury
by Catja Edens

This spring, on the occasion of the Rotterdam Public Library Lecture, the chair of the Rotterdam Architecture Prize 2024 jury, Maike van Stiphout, delivered a lecture about the city as a place of ‘humans and non-humans’. She explained what it might mean if we designed and built for and with a wide range of city dwellers – humans and other animals, trees and plants. The audience was fascinated, but a little confused afterwards: Was this still about architecture?

Van Stiphout based her talk of that evening on the fact that the urban environment is characterized by comprehensive coherence. In such an environment, buildings do not stand alone, but are part of a coherent urban (eco)system that is connected to soil, water and atmosphere, and in which humans and other animals, trees and plants find space to live. This system, with all its social, physical and natural qualities, evolves over time, driven by natural conditions and by the actions of its inhabitants. Through architecture, Humans make an important contribution to this evolution, through architecture.

The jury of the Rotterdam Architecture Prize 2024 supports this broad view of architecture, believing that architecture is as much about social, ecological and cultural-historical values as it is about the materials and design intelligence used. The jury sees Rotterdam as an urban landscape where buildings, streets, parks and waterways form an integrated whole. All the new buildings and building conversions submitted for the Rotterdam Architecture Prize are additions to this urban landscape. They create space and new connections, and they make the city work better. Doing justice to the diversity and complexity of Rotterdam’s urban landscape requires dedication, knowledge and good design based on a regenerative approach. After all, architecture should fundamentally improve the city by creating apt and beautiful additions and treating the existing with care. Achieving this is an exercise in integral thinking. How can architecture support all of its inhabitants and their networks? How can it support the culture and identity that the city embodies? How can it manage the city’s flows of materials, water, energy, food and waste? And what is the significance of architectural beauty in this context? The climate crisis, the biodiversity crisis, the housing shortage and the increasing polarization of society are some of the issues that bring these questions into focus. But the 2024 entries also show that these crises are fuelling the ingenuity and vision of all of the clients, architects, builders and users who continue to build on the city.

Building on What Already Exists

The jury recognizes that continuing with what exists poses a key challenge. Existing buildings have material value as structures that can be reused rather than demolished, reducing carbon emissions and relieving pressure on ecosystems elsewhere, but they also have cultural value as they embody the history of the city. These material and cultural values may not have been obvious in the case of [Olympia College](#) in IJsselmonde. When it was completed in 1968, the school, consisting of three pavilions, must have looked striking with its half-timbered construction of black-painted steel frames filled with white Trespa panels. But more than 50 years later, its qualities were hard to discern. The Trespa had turned grey from decades of staining, and the building was tucked away in some rather un-idyllic greenery. The interior of the school was also worn. The thermal bridging effect of the steel was causing major problems with the indoor climate and the layout no longer met the needs of modern teaching. Teachers and students in Practical Training, Preparatory Courses for Vocational Secondary Education or International Transition classes had to make do with a building that worked against their development rather than supporting it. If the building had not been listed, the decision to demolish and rebuild would probably have been made in a heartbeat. But because preservation was a given, the client, BOOR, decided to work with Spring Architecten and WDJArchitecten to renovate and modernize the school building, while the landscape architects of RRog were called in to create a new outdoor design. The characteristic exterior façade survived the transformation, while new wooden interior walls improved the indoor climate. However, this did not mean that the interior and exterior worlds were completely separated. The black steel structure has remained visible inside, and changes were made to

connect the school’s outdoor and indoor areas. The auditorium now has a terrace overlooking the water, and each department has its own outdoor area directly linked to its practical training rooms for subjects such as forklift driving, nature education and metalwork. The school is surrounded by greenhouses and vegetable gardens, connected by a walkway.

The jury members felt that Olympia College was an excellent example of what can be achieved when the budgetary logic of demolition and rebuilding is rejected and the possibilities of an existing school building are diligently explored. This building, with its old-fashioned high and wide spaces, offered unique opportunities to create an uncluttered and low-stimulus educational

Continuing to build the city is an exercise in integral thinking

environment well suited to the needs of its specific pupil population. But perhaps more importantly, the transformation sent an implicit message to its users that a historical building and its natural surroundings are worthy of preservation and care. Designers saw similar opportunities in the case of [The Lobby](#), in the heart of the city. This is a transformation project by developer Manhave Vastgoed, which has been based and active in the area for many years. The company is working with admirable commitment and stamina to transform the area around the Maaskant tower block, where it has its offices. The Dreamhouse shop premises and the northern part of the nearby Lijnbaan are Manhave transformations that were previously selected by the jury of the Rotterdam Architecture Prize. The former Crystal Palace is the next in the series.

Until recently, the building with its 1980s façade of mirrored glass and red window frames was a somewhat curious and misunderstood figure. KAAN Architects were therefore commissioned to carry out a radical transformation, stripping the building down to its concrete structure and adding a new façade that relates to its surroundings. With this new sand-lime brick façade and its anodized aluminium window frames, The Lobby now blends in beautifully with the reconstruction style of Kruiskade – it looks as if it has always been there. On the Kruiskadehof side, the now sleek white building façade with its large windows brings a dusty alley back to urban life. The design of the tree-covered rooftop terrace, the building’s ‘fifth façade’, is in line with ongoing efforts to activate the city centre’s rooftop landscape that have been underway for some time and are intended to make a desert of bitumen and air conditioning cabinets bloom. The jury greatly appreciates that the design recognizes and utilizes the value of the existing structure and makes the sustainable choice not to demolish it. Although the historical core of the building is not evidently present in the street, the high canopy and mezzanine of the old concrete structure are important spatial features befitting the planned high-end shops and hospitality outlets. Thus, the link to the past is preserved. The jury considers The Lobby a project in which commercial logic and client commitment come together in a particularly successful way, resulting in cultural and material sustainability.

Dwelling for everyone

As the much-discussed demolition of social housing in the Tweebosbuurt in Afrikaanderwijk shows, not all old buildings are preserved in Rotterdam. A significant portion of the former Tweebosbuurt residents have now found new homes in Roseknoop, a new urban block with a residential tower and ground-floor dwellings. The jury appreciates the ambition and drive it must have taken to achieve high-quality architecture here, given the limited budgets for social housing. [Roseknoop,] designed by LEVS Architects and commissioned by the Hef Wonen housing association, is part of a series of new developments in the Parkstad district of Rotterdam-Zuid. This extensively used former harbour area provided space to meet the huge demand for housing in Rotterdam. Roseknoop is one of the largest developments on this site. The urban block consists of 113 one- and two-bedroom apartments and 24 ground-floor dwellings with a maximum of five rooms for larger families. The high-quality brickwork, the apartments' corner balconies and various communal facilities such as a spacious entrance, a bicycle storage room and a green courtyard – which unfortunately does not achieve optimal spatial and ecological quality due to the many fences – also exude care and attention. The jury was pleased to see that the designers had put so much focus and ambition into the construction of social housing. The jury believes that it is important at all times and in all places to ensure that good housing in

An opportunity for everyone to live in the city

the city remains accessible to all members of society, but certainly in this location, where the demolition of the Tweebosbuurt has inflicted deep wounds. It remains to be seen whether Roseknoop will also give rise to the emergence of new social networks to replace those that were damaged or disappeared along with the Tweebosbuurt. Time will tell.

Another large housing complex that caught the jury's attention is located in Katendrecht. This peninsula in the former port area of Rotterdam-Zuid has been undergoing a transformation for decades from a busy harbour and introverted working-class neighbourhood to a hip urban district for families. In addition to the transformation of the distinctive harbour buildings on the north side and the renovation of its early twentieth-century housing, Katendrecht has also seen a lot of new construction in the last 15 years, most of it residential. [Havenkwartier,] which was commissioned by Heijmans Vastgoed and designed by VMX Architects, is the latest major development in the area, a voluminous residential urban block on the quayside of Maashaven consisting of 200 owner-occupied homes, 150 of which are apartments and 50 of which are ground-floor dwellings. Like Roseknoop, Havenkwartier belongs to a tradition of urban design with large urban blocks. The jury regards these as pieces of city rather than buildings and therefore paid close attention to

the distribution of volumes and how they relate to their surroundings. The jury found the layout, with low-rise buildings on the residential side at the rear and high-rise buildings on the side of the quay, both natural and successful. The modulation of the high-rise volumes brings sunlight into the courtyard garden and reflects the building volumes on the opposite quay. In Havenkwartier an impressive variety of dwellings has been achieved, including penthouses, maisonettes, walk-up and gallery flats, single-family homes and so-called shed dwellings. The latter, in particular, were a real find, according to the jury. Situated on the quayside, they have indoor terraces with sliding doors that allow indoor and outdoor living to merge. It turns out that the decision to combine the intimacy of the home directly with the public quayside – a bold one at first glance – works surprisingly well. The environment exudes a relaxed calm. The jury took a deep breath seeing all the concrete that was used for this project. This proves that times and views on sustainable construction and carbon emissions have changed quite a bit since 2017, when this development started. And despite the undoubtedly large budget, the façades do not include any provisions for biodiversity. What remains is a courtyard garden that the residents manage together, and the solid appearance of the block, which makes a modest contribution to the urban 'mountain landscape'.

A much smaller residential building is [De Hoekstee,] a residential care facility for people with autism spectrum disorders, designed by Planet Lab Architecture in collaboration with Theo Kupers Architects and Grip Studio. Much like a lovely modernist villa, it is located at Meidoornsingel in Schiebroek, offering its residents a place at the heart of society. This fits in well with the objectives of the client, residential care organization Middin, which aims to support residents towards greater independence. Designing a residential building for this specific target group is a matter of careful balance – on the one hand, the environment must protect the residents from an excess of stimuli and contact and provide sufficient privacy, while on the other, it must allow for guidance, contact and some degree of autonomy. The jury was impressed by the fact that the designers not only managed to meet these complex requirements, but also achieved a striking architectural quality on a modest budget. De Hoekstee consists of 35 residential studios divided into four residential groups, each of which share an outdoor space in the form of a terrace. Inside, the acoustics, the ratio of daylight to artificial light, the colour scheme and the tactility of the materials are all tailored to the specific needs of the residents. This is reflected, for example, in the generous corridors and staircases that allow people to pass each other without making contact. Meanwhile, benches integrated into the large windows provide space for casual encounters if the residents so wish. The jury is also impressed by the stunning combination of materials and colours on the outside. Here, bright white brick is combined with gold coloured aluminium window frames and undulating ceramic tiles set around the windows. A lived through detail is the bench at the entrance, made from the same materials. The inspiration came from a simple bench near the previous location, which was intended for people waiting for user-requested transport, but also proved to be an unexpected opportunity for contact between residents or with passers-by, a successful element

that has been incorporated into this new design. The jury is pleased to note the importance given by the client and designers to the natural environment, which they describe as providing not only tranquillity, grounding and vitality, but also opportunities for exercise and social interaction. This is reflected in the building's location on a tree-lined canal, the generously proportioned windows, the terraces of the residential groups and the communal garden at the rear. The jury would have liked to see a little more of the love and joy for design that is so evident in this building in the terraces and garden.

Joy in Design and Innovation

The jury wonders whether [Babel] could be called a 'residential tower'. Architect Laurens Boodt himself refers to it as a mountain village. He designed this building of single-family dwellings that breaks with all known conventions in collaboration with developer AM. Together they proved that real innovation in housing construction is still possible, and this came as a pleasant surprise to the jury. Babel, inspired by Pieter Bruegel's painting The Tower of Babel, is a tapered tower of terraced houses, semi-detached dwellings and a 'mountaintop' villa. An upward-spiralling, plant-lined street leads around the outside to the entrances of the 24 dwellings, forming a vertical neighbourhood with terraces and seating areas for socializing. It did not surprise the jury that the concept was developed at a time when housing conditions in Rotterdam were very different from today. In 2015, the City of Rotterdam launched an open call for single-family apartments, which was won by Laurens Boodt and AM. The idea behind the competition was to develop attractive housing for (traditional and non-traditional) families in Rotterdam, a city that was starting to gain popularity at the time. The open call proved to be a successful strategy, although it took another nine years before the building was finally completed.

Meanwhile, developments in Rotterdam continued. A building boom had begun. This meant that Babel eventually ended up in a densely built-up area on Lloydpier, where the strength of the design was nevertheless maintained. On the south side, Babel found itself adjacent to a later-planned courtyard garden which can also be used by its residents. The jury noted that even the limited space between Babel and a newly realized neighbouring building made little difference to its cheerful functioning. The jury believes that there are important lessons to be learned from Babel. The project demonstrates that an instrument such as an open call with a timeframe that allows for sufficient time for designers, builders and developers has provided opportunities for joy in design and a well-tested result. The jury considers Babel to be not only an architectural but also a social construction, offering substantial quality to the city and its residents.

Joy in design is also a feature of the [Trappenhuis,] an outsider in this year's selection. Although the jury deliberately focused on buildings that contribute to Rotterdam's coherent urban landscape in different ways, this is a project that is located within a dwelling: a house inside a house. The private clients, a graphic designer and an artist, realized their dwelling through a collective private commission together with a handful

of neighbours. As the process progressed, they started longing to reinvent their own home and decided to invite an architect friend to work with them on a plan. This led to the decision to have the new house delivered as a shell without stairs. The 13-m-high opening at its heart provided space for new thoughts and ideas, and ultimately for a physical intervention. The Trappenhuis became a house inside a house, a project that once again shows what a design process based on curiosity and an authentic desire for the unknown can produce. As an undetermined, function free space the Trappenhuis is the autonomous heart of the building, designed as a system of diagonal wooden stairs with walls, openings and shutters and plenty of space for the owners' art collection. The Trappenhuis offers the possibility of repeatedly occupying and

Babel is not just an architectonic but also a social construction

redefining the adjacent rooms, of moving through the house in different ways, of stopping and meeting in different places throughout the day and over the years. The jury sees the Trappenhuis as an example of how we interact with space. It hopes that the curiosity, courage and joy in design with which the client and the architect collaborated to develop not only the design, but also the design challenge, will inspire those who design on the scale of the urban landscape.

Regenerative, with Knowledge and Dedication

This essay concludes with the winners of the Rotterdam Architecture Prize 2024, three projects that each in their own way demonstrate how a regenerative attitude, knowledge and dedication can be expressed through an architecture that contributes to the integrated quality of the urban landscape. According to the jury, the [Prinsessenflats] are conclusive evidence of the democratizing power of an architecture that allows the city to take care of all of its inhabitants. In the 1960s, the Palladioflat, the Madernaflat, the Berniniflat and the Prinses Margrietflat were built as a single ensemble, a neighbourhood composed of apartment blocks of the type that was once being built all over the Netherlands as an efficient response to the post-war housing shortage. Some 50 years later, in 2015, the Prinses Margrietflat was the only one of the four to undergo an ambitious renovation. An extensive shell renovation by Groosman and Finnbar McComb Architects, on behalf of client Woonstad, merged the apartments, improved and activated the base of the building, and redesigned the façade to provide residents with larger outdoor spaces with more privacy. However, the new comfort and twenty-first-century appeal of De Nieuwe Margriet, which incidentally also won the building the Rotterdam Architecture Prize Audience Award 2015, was not attainable for everyone. The renovated apartments became available on the open market and were rented out at higher rents.

Rotterdam is now Rotterdam by the Sea

Seven years later, when suspicions arose about the condition of the concrete reinforcement in the balconies and galleries of the other three apartment buildings, they too had to be refurbished. What began as a specific necessity for structural improvement became the reason for a comprehensive renovation. De Nieuwe Margriet served as an inspiration, with the important difference that the second renovation was carried out while the apartments were occupied and without a subsequent rent increase.

Structural issues were addressed and the apartments were insulated, fitted with HR++ glazing and connected to the heating grid. An additional support structure allowed the balconies and galleries to be widened. The fact that the galleries are now more spacious is a big plus, but the biggest gain in space was realized in the balconies at the front of the apartments. These so-called 'window washers' balconies, with barely room for two chairs, have been transformed into fully-fledged outdoor spaces with room for lounge furniture or a dining table. In addition, the need for the new load-bearing structure was used as an opportunity to create two new care apartments and a mobility scooter storage space on the ground floor, as well as an additional rear entrance with direct access to the park. The jury greatly appreciates the principled decision of the Woonstad housing association to make the three Prinsessenflats available to the original target group of senior citizens dependent on social housing. The renovation has

become much more than just a sensible intervention. With a limited budget, the team has managed to go beyond solving the existing structural and energy problems and significantly improve the appearance and comfort of the building. The jury considers this to be a real feat. By matching the appearance of the three renovated Prinsessenflats to that of De Nieuwe Margriet, the ensemble is now complete again. This not only enhances the urban quality of the neighbourhood, but also sends the message that social housing is more than worth the effort. It is with great pleasure that the jury awards an honourable mention to the Prinsessenflats.

Of all this year's entries, **Metrostation Strand** is by far the project that will benefit the most people. The station is the terminus of the Hoekse Lijn, a former railway line that has been converted into a metro line and extended to provide direct access to the Hook of Holland beach. It is evident that providing Rotterdam with a direct metro link to the beach is an irresistible idea, but the practical implementation of this plan required a great deal of effort. The result, commissioned by the City of Rotterdam and designed by Marc Verheijen and De Architectenploeg Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam, is a carefully designed piece of infrastructure that the jury would like to commend in its entirety. The Hoekse Lijn carries passengers from Rotterdam via Schiedam to Hook of Holland, with a series of stations along the way forming a family in appearance and materiality, ranging

in colour from soft yellow in Schiedam to dusk red in Hook of Holland. The Natura 2000 coastal landscape that the line traverses was spared by tunnelling a section of the route. The *pièce de résistance* is Metrostation Strand in Hook of Holland. This terminal, the actual entry for the Rotterdam Architecture Prize 2024, is shaped as a short tunnel with concrete walls, painted red with a graphic pattern by Eric Sandifort. It stages the arrival at the beach, while at the same time solving various technical problems related to wind and windblown sand. The focal point of this design is the travelling public. A corner turned away from the wind and slits in the concrete ensure a gradual transition from platform to beach, so that beachgoers are not blown over as they arrive. Sloping concrete walls on either side of the tracks separate the metro from the dunes and provide a barrier against windblown sand that can cause problems on the tracks. In addition, the tracks have been raised so that any sand that ends up here can pass underneath them.

The station and square have been designed as a whole and in harmony with the surrounding landscape, so that the cars are out of sight and the dune vegetation grows right up to the platform. All this makes for a surprisingly comfortable destination that combines the pleasures of a day at the beach with the natural qualities of the site. Maurits van de Sande's intelligent design for the square includes retaining walls for the windblown sand, which double as benches for arriving and departing beachgoers to swap their shoes for slippers or to enjoy an ice cream in the setting sun. Rotterdam is many cities, and now it is also Rotterdam by the Sea with a direct connection to the beach, accessible to all, as a nature reserve and place for relaxation. This is an important achievement in itself, but combined with the integral technical, architectural and landscape quality of this project, it warrants an honourable mention.

It requires serious stamina to contribute to the urban (eco)system through architecture is a lengthy process. The project that won this year's Rotterdam Architecture Prize can serve as resounding proof of this. With admirable perseverance, the architects of Superuse Studios have been working for years on system change in architecture, and this did not go unnoticed in the context of the Rotterdam Architecture Prize. The **Grondstoffenstation Afrikaanderplein** is their sixth building to compete for the Rotterdam Architecture Prize, following the Wikado playground in 2010, the WORM art centre in 2013, the conversion of Tropicana in 2017, Buitenplaats Brienoord in 2019 and the residential building W1555 in 2022. It is as if this series of buildings marks the gradual shift in thinking about architecture in which the questions from the beginning of this essay have become increasingly central. How can architecture support the 'human and non-human' inhabitants of the city and their networks? How do we care for the society, culture and identity that the city embodies? How can we manage the city's flows of materials, water, energy, food and waste? And what is the significance of architectural beauty in this context? The Grondstoffenstation Afrikaanderplein, designed by Superuse Studios on behalf of Afrikaander Wijkcoöperatie, provides an answer to all these questions that is as quirky as it is infectious. The structure forms the heart of Rotterdam's Afrikaandermarkt, which attracts 30,000 visitors to the Afrikaanderplein every week. The Grondstoffenstation

introduces a central place for the collection, separation and recycling of the market's waste flows. It is an initiative of the Afrikaanderwijk Coöperatie, which in 2017 began collecting the market's residual waste on the square and surrounding streets; this led to the ambition for a circular market and the initiative for the Grondstoffenstation. Like other projects by Superuse Studios, the Grondstoffenstation is built from harvested materials, in this case discarded intermediate bulk containers (IBC tanks), reused steel beams and a range of other reused materials. The IBC tanks form the iconic building blocks of a striking pavilion placed on the edge of the Afrikaanderplein. Inside, they separate the market waste collected by local residents through the Afrikaander Wijkcoöperatie. This amounts to 700 tonnes per year, of which the vast majority (675 tonnes) is recycled – for example in the form of jams, sauces and soups from the organic waste and 3D printed products from the plastic. With a capacity of 10 m3, the IBC tanks provide ample capacity for rainwater harvesting, which is used to water the school's rooftop gardens with (edible) plants and the nearby community garden. Together, they contribute to the biodiversity of the area. On the side of the adjacent sports field, the Grondstoffenstation forms a grandstand, and on the side of the drop-off point, there is plenty of space for meeting and socializing.

Rebellious presence that embodies systems thinking, optimism and future orientation

The jury not just enthusiastic but also impressed by the comprehensive way in which the Grondstoffenstation gives substance and architectural expression to a regenerative way of managing the city. It sees the structure as an optimistic manifestation of Rotterdam's larger urban system, in which 'humans and non-humans', the natural and created conditions of a place and all the flows that run through it, come together. The Grondstoffenstation makes the people of Rotterdam pragmatically and explicitly aware of the (eco)system they are part of and the roles and responsibilities they can shoulder within it. In the series of entries for the Rotterdam Architecture Prize 2024, the Grondstoffenstation Afrikaanderwijk may be somewhat rebellious and activist, but the jury recognizes it as a structure that embodies systems thinking, optimism, future orientation and design intelligence in a fantastic way. It is with great pleasure that it awards the Grondstoffenstation Afrikaanderwijk with the Rotterdam Architecture Prize 2024.



The 2024 professional jury with, from left to right, Carien van Hoogevest, Raoul Vleugels, Maike van Stiphout, Karo van Dongen and Pinar Balat.