

# Rotterdam, large and small

Despite the current recession in the Dutch building industry, construction – of both the large-scale high-rise projects typical of this city and more modest ‘infill’ architecture – continues apace in **Rotterdam**.

THE NETHERLANDS — TEXT: EMIEL LAMERS, PHOTOGRAPHY: SONIA MANGIAPANE, ILLUSTRATION: LOULOU & TUMMIE

Rotterdam is one of the few old cities in Europe characterized by massive high-rise in the centre of the city. In one night of heavy bombing on 14 May 1940, at the beginning of World War II, Rotterdam lost its entire historical city centre. After the war, it was decided not to restore the damaged buildings, save for three structures – the late medieval Sint Laurens church, the 17th-century Schielandhuis and the monumental town hall built in 1920. The rest of the ravaged centre was demolished and cleared away. What the city authorities had in mind for Rotterdam was a new and modern city. The canals were filled in with rubble from the bombed-out buildings in order to make room for a generously laid out street plan. Since the reconstruction plans, drawn up by urban designer Cornelis van Traa, could not be implemented all at once, the centre was for decades an open expanse dotted with buildings. Until 1981, for example, there was a large deer park opposite the city's main train station. Rotterdam is still a spacious city by Dutch standards, with a very un-Dutch sky-

line. Since the construction of the Erasmus Bridge in 1996, the centre has expanded across the river to the poorer, southern part of the city where two new districts, Kop van Zuid and Wilhelminapier, now boast some impressive high-rise buildings. Hundreds of square metres of office space continue to be built here, even while elsewhere in the city many office buildings stand empty. The Schieblock near Centraal Station provides one example of how that problem is being tackled.

In some areas the city is an aggregate of big, discrete buildings. This still patchy coherence at the level of urban design is a focal point of Rotterdam's architectural policy. The city is investing more in the design of public space and prioritizing small-scale interventions. And, despite the crisis, housing projects are still being built in the city centre in an effort to bring more people and vitality into the city, which tends to shut down at the end of the work day.

We begin our architectural tour at Central Station where, if you want to do it in true Dutch style, you can hire a bicycle.

No one arriving in Rotterdam by train can miss the massive reconstruction of **Centraal Station (1)**. The original station hall designed by Sybold van Ravesteyn in 1957, has made way for a much more spacious, raked concourse. The elegant concrete platform roofs have also been demolished and replaced by a single glass canopy of almost 30,000 m<sup>2</sup> with integrated PV cells. The whole structure was designed by **Team CS**, an ad hoc consortium made up of Benthem Crouwel, Meyer en Van Schooten and West 8, working with city architect **Maarten Struijs**. The public transport interchange is scheduled for completion in late 2013.

Not far from the central post office building renovated by Claus en Kaan, stands the **Schieblock (2)**, an empty 1950s office building that is in the throes of a temporary transformation initiated by **Architectenbureau ZUS** and supported by both the owner and the city council. It now houses a dynamic ‘city laboratory’ made up of mainly young businesses in the creative sector. Architecture lectures and debates are held in the ground-floor ‘Dépendance’. During the next Architecture Biennale (April–August 2012), provided sufficient sponsors can be found, a temporary pedestrian bridge will be built through the Schieblock, linking the train station with the Hofbogen on the other side of Hofplein. A Mini Mall installed at one end of this disused rail viaduct in September 2010 was the first step in the redevelopment of the entire Hofplein line viaduct.

Heading west from Hofplein along the south side of the Weena, one comes to the beginning of the **Lijnbaan (3)** the Netherlands' first shopping mall, designed in 1953 by **Van den Broek en Bakema**. From today's perspective, the small-scale pedestrian streets lined by low-rise shops against a backdrop of tall apartment buildings arranged around public parks look more like a suburban shopping centre than the retail hub of a major city. Plans for the reconfiguration of the public space, drawn up by **Paul Achterberg (Quadrat)** are gradually being implemented. The run-down town hall square will in due course be redesigned to match the beautifully refurbished town hall.

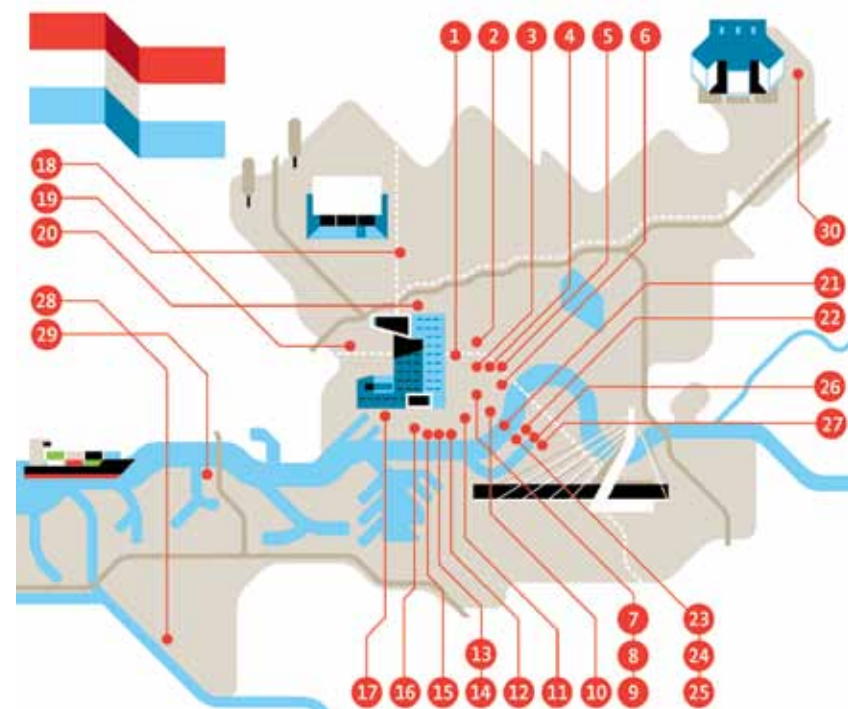
Behind this town hall stands the old public works office, the **Stadstimmerhuis**, which

is regarded as a monument of the post-war reconstruction of the city. If all goes according to plan, it will be integrated with the new **municipal offices (4)**, scheduled to open here in March 2015. The soaring block-shaped design is by **Rem Koolhaas (OMA)**, who won a controversial design competition from four other Dutch architectural firms in 2009. The ground floor will contain a public arcade and council services, while the two towers will house some 90 different apartments, the more expensive with generous square terraces. Until construction actually starts, the future building site has been laid out as a neighbourhood playground and meeting place to a design by **2012Architecten**, who also designed a temporary ‘vertical garden’ on the rear elevation of the **Stadstimmerhuis**.

Between the St Laurens church and the Delftsevaart waterway lies **Grotekerkplein**. In an attempt to liven up this somewhat bleak square, the city council commissioned **Atelier Kempe Thill** to design a theatre pavilion. The **Urban Podium (5)**, built in 2009, stands beside the water's edge and directly opposite the church tower. The slightly curved, precast concrete roof spans a thirty-metre space between two service blocks. During performances, a curtain can be hung from the rails by way of backdrop. The pavilion is well lit at night, contributing to the social safety of the usually deserted square.

Between the Boompjes and the Blaak, on the tip of a former finger wharf known as **Wijnhaveneiland**, stands an eye-catching red tower (see A10#29), nicknamed the **Red Apple (6)**. This 124-metre-tall apartment tower plus residential/office block was realized in 2009 by **Kees Christiaanse, KCAP**. As the building rises, the anodized aluminium panels in front of the load-bearing facade columns become narrower and the areas of glazing become bigger. All the living rooms in the tower are corner rooms with two fully glazed walls affording spectacular views. →

‘Despite the crisis, housing projects are still being built in the city centre.’



**1** **CENTRAAL STATION (\*\*\*\*–2013)**  
Architect: Team CS met Maarten Struijs  
Address: Stationsplein 1



**2** **SCHIEBLOCK (2011)**  
Architect: ZUS (Zones Urbaines Sensibles)  
Address: Schiedade 189



**3** **LIJNBAAN (1953 / 2012)**  
Architect: Van den Broek Bakema / Quadrat  
Address: Lijnbaan



**4** **STADSKANTOOR (\*\*\*\*–2014)**  
Architect: Rem Koolhaas OMA  
Address: Rodezand



**5** **URBAN PODIUM (2009)**  
Architect: Atelier Kempe Thill  
Address: Grotekerkplein 27



**6** **RED APPLE (2009)**  
Architect: KCAP Architects & Planners  
Address: Wijnbrugstraat 200



**7** **CULTUURCENTRUM WORM (2011)**  
Architect: Architectenbureau Kühne & Co  
Address: Boomgaardstraat 71



**8** **KANTOOR & BEDRIJFSWONING (2009)**  
Architect: Architectenbureau Kühne & Co  
Address: Boomgaardstraat 34



**9** **WONING & KANTOOR (2011)**  
Architect: Architectenbureau Kühne & Co  
Address: Boomgaardhof 73



**10** **HOGHE HEREN (2005)**  
Architect: Wiel Arets Architects  
Address: Gedempte Zalmhaven 179



**11** **KUNSTHAL (1992)**  
Architect: Rem Koolhaas, Fumi Hoshino OMA  
Address: Westzeedijk 341



**12** **OT-THEATER (2004)**  
Architect: Franz Ziegler  
Address: Sint-Jobsweg 3



**13** **JOBSVEEM (2007)**  
Architect: Mei Architecten i.s.m. Wessel de Jonge  
Address: Lloydstraat 138



**14** **SCHIEPVAART & TRANSPORTCOLLEGE (2005)**  
Architect: Neutelings Riedijk Architects  
Address: Lloydstraat 300



**15** **ZEECONTAINER RESTAURANT (2005)**  
Architect: Bijvoet architectuur & Stadsontwerp  
Address: Loods Celebes 101



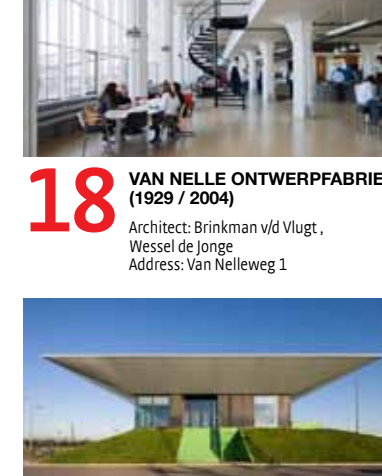
**16** **ACHTERHAVEN (2011)**  
Architect: Studio Sputnik  
Address: Achterhaven



**17** **LE MEDI (2008)**  
Architect: Geurst & Schulze Architecten  
Address: Oaseplein



**18** **VAN NELLE ONTWERPFABRIEK (1929 / 2004)**  
Architect: Brinkman v/d Vlugt, Wessel de Jonge  
Address: Van Nelleweg 1



**19** **SPORTPAVILJOEN (2010)**  
Architect: MoederscheimMoonen Architects  
Address: v/d Duijn van Maasdamweg 601





**20 METRO STATION BLIJDDORP (2010)**  
Architect: Maarten Struijs / Gemeente Werken R'dam  
Address: Van der Meydestraat



**21 ERASMUSBRUG (1996)**  
Architect: Ben van Berkel UN-Studio  
Address: Erasmusbrug Nieuwe Maas



**22 NIEUWE LUXOR THEATER (2001)**  
Architect: Bolles & Wilson  
Address: Posthumalaan 1

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A floating pedestrian bridge links Wijnhaveniland with the fashionable Witte de Withstraat. The building at number 63 was built in 1874 for the Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant newspaper. Since 1993 it has housed various Rotterdam cultural institutes, including the Nederlandse Fotomuseum. When that institute moved to the Kop van Zuid district (see no. 24), the section of the building on the corner with Boomgaardstraat was left vacant. Last October saw the opening here of **Cultuurcentrum WORM (7)**, designed by **2012Architecten** together with **Atelier van Lieshout**. Of particular note is the new entrance on Boomgaardstraat where a bite has been taken out of the building and the old facade rebuilt stone by stone two metres in front of the old building line. Opposite this entrance, an elongated **office and company dwelling (8)** looks as if it has been here for ever. In fact, the 54-metre-long building was built in 2009 over an existing parking lot, which limited its depth to five metres. Designed and developed by **Architectenbureau Kühne & Co.** it has a dwelling for architect Joost Kühne on the top floor (see A10#28). Two years later, on the north side of Westblaak, the same firm built a **home-work unit (9)** above the entrance to an existing courtyard, making use of the provision for a gateway building in the old zoning plan. Access to the dwelling is via a narrow stair/lift-well built against the building to the left of the entryway. The first floor contains the bedroom, bathroom and a spacious kitchen, the floor above the living room and office, while the roof boasts a generous 100 m<sup>2</sup> terrace.

Since 2000, the northern end of the Erasmus Bridge has been marked by two stately black apartment towers known as **De Hoge**



**23 DE ROTTERDAM (2013)**  
Architect: Rem Koolhaas OMA  
Address: Wilhelminakade



**24 LAS PALMAS (2007)**  
Architect: Benhem Crouwel Architecten  
Address: Wilhelminakade 332



**25 MAASTOREN (2009)**  
Architect: Dam & Partners Architecten  
Address: Wilhelminakade 1

**Heren (10)**, which is to say 'the tall gentlemen'. Designed by **Wiel Arets**, the two 104-metre-high towers sit on top of a six-storey podium containing street-level shops, a four-storey carpark with green-coloured glass elevations and, on the fifth floor, a fitness centre and swimming pool for the residents of the 290 apartments. The elegant flat elevations were achieved by placing the outdoor spaces – loggias – behind the black, basalt-like pre-cast concrete facade elements.

On the north side of the Westzeedijk, at the end of the recently reopened Museum Park, is the celebrated **Kunsthal (11)**. Designed jointly with **Fumi Hoshino**, it was **Rem Koolhaas's** first built project in Rotterdam. It remains an important reference for many architecture students and architects. The design principles behind the visible and uncompromising confrontation between the various functions of the building, the visitor flows and passers-by, as well as the combination of everyday and luxury materials, are still relevant today.

Following the Westzeedijk westwards, keeping the 185-metre-high Euromast from 1960 on your right, we arrive at the Lloydskwartier, a new district built on the site of the shipping terminal from where passenger ships to the Dutch East Indies once set sail. Way back in 1985, the **OT-theatre (12)**, an independent theatre company, took over the 1915 brick harbour master's building and the room where dock workers once queued for their wages became a black box theatre. In 2004 **Franz Ziegler** designed an orthogonal extension within which he placed a free-standing, all-timber 180-seat auditorium modelled on the old theatre. When the sun is low in the sky, a lively moiré pattern plays



**26 HOGESCHOOL INHOLLAND (2000 + 2008)**  
Architect: Erick van Egeraat  
Address: Posthumalaan 90



**27 JONGERENHUISVESTING ZUIDERSTERBLOK (2010)**  
Architect: Groosman Partners Architecten  
Address: Hillelaan 31



**28 SCHOOL PARASITE LAMPION (2004)**  
Architect: Christoph Seyferth  
Address: Lengweg 146

across the steel side elevations. On Sint-Jobshaven stands a heritage-listed former warehouse, **Jobsveem (13)**, which was fully renovated in 2007 to a design by **Mei architecten** working with **Wessel de Jonge** (see A10#20). The creation of three generous atria has brought ample daylight into the previously dark, 25-metre-deep building. From the access staircases located in these atria, people can peek into the interiors of the various apartments and offices. On the ground floor are office spaces with a clear height of six metres, while the roof contains ten spacious penthouses for the happy few.

On the edge of the Lloydskwartier, standing proudly along the waterfront, is the **Scheepvaart- en Transportcollege (14)**. This trade school designed in 2005 by **Neutelings Riedijk Architects** is full of references to the port and to shipbuilding, starting with the chequered facade pattern inspired by passing container ships. A notable feature is the seventy-metre-high tower, served by dozens of escalators, from which the lecture room (with red interior) protrudes like a periscope, providing views of the Port of Rotterdam and beyond it, the North Sea.

Opposite the school is another typical Rotterdam project, a 'temporary' **container restaurant (15)** called 'Wijn of Water' (Wine or Water), that has been operating now since 2005. The unpretentious ensemble of nine second-hand containers was designed by architect **Caroline Bijvoet**. The clever device of standing one container on-end, campanile-like at the outer edge of an enclosed terrace, lends the small restaurant a distinctive presence.

In the neighbouring historical Delfshaven district, **Studio Sputnik** won the competition



**29 KANTOOR RIJKSWATERSTAAT (2003)**  
Architect: Emiel Lamers Architectures / Rijksgebouwendienst  
Address: Butaanweg 1 Pernis



**30 PERISCOOPWONINGEN (2006)**  
Architect: Joke Vos Architecten  
Address: Marinus van Elswijkkade 18

for a **housing scheme (16)** along the Achterhaven in 2004, but it took until 2011 for the 37 townhouses to be completed. Two narrow white laneways and two raised wide streets (or small squares) divide the housing block into eight separate entities. Along Havenstreet, the white historical facades were renovated and integrated into the block. There is a semi-underground car park below the block and all the dwellings have an extra private outdoor space on the roof.

To the north of Delfshaven, **Geurst & Schulze Architecten** realized a unique housing project, **Le Medi (17)** in 2008. In a neighbourhood populated by many people from southern countries, the architects drew inspiration from the architecture of Andalusia and North Africa. The brick external wall of the housing scheme is conceived as a town wall complete with gates; once inside residents are in their own special world. In the centre is a peaceful stone-paved courtyard with a fountain and water line such as one finds in the Alhambra Palace in Andalusia. The white facades of the dwellings have un-Dutch brick window surrounds.

Beside the Schie canal and directly opposite Carel Weeber's orange penitentiary of 1989, stands the **Van Nelle Ontwerpfabriek (18)**. Built between 1928 and 1931 by Brinkman & Van der Vlugt, the former coffee, tea and tobacco factory is a textbook example of Dutch modernism. At the beginning of

**'Rotterdam is the most down-to-earth of Dutch cities.'**

the twenty-first century, the young monument was converted into a multi-occupancy building for the creative industry by **Wessel de Jonge**. Thanks to the clever way in which necessary changes to the building's envelope (e.g. double glazing) have been carried out, the characteristic slender steel frames have been largely preserved.

Next to Rotterdam's airport, Zestienhoven, a suburb of the same name comprising over 1800 dwellings is currently being built. Between this new residential area and an adjacent parkland, **MoederscheimMoonen** designed a **sports pavilion (19)** for two sports clubs. The changing rooms and storage areas are concealed below a grass-covered mound, while the canteen and boardrooms on the upper floor command an uninterrupted view of the playing fields. At night, the building's large illuminated roof canopy acts as a beacon while also contributing to the safety of the surrounding area.

As of two years ago, the suburb of Blijdorp, forever associated with the zoo designed by Sybold Van Ravensteyn, has been served by the new E metro line, which continues on to The Hague. The new **Blijdorp Station (20)** was designed by **Maarten Struijs**, an architect with Rotterdam's public works department. From the modest entrance building requested by local residents, monumental escalators and stairs lead past glass-tile walls to the platforms eighteen metres below ground, the deepest of any metro station in the Netherlands.

This metro line continues south to Kop van Zuid, the redeveloped district on the south bank of the river Maas. The area is connected to the city centre by the 800-metre-long **Erasmus Bridge (21)** designed by **Ben van Berkel (UN Studio)**, which was opened in 1996. A mere fifteen years later, it is impossible to imagine the skyline of Rotterdam without the cable-stayed bridge and its 139-metre-high asymmetrical pylon: the elegant structure has become the icon of this most down-to-earth of Dutch cities.

Sited in the inner angle of the Wilhelminapier, overlooking the waters of both the Rijnhaven and the Nieuwe Maas, the **Nieuwe Luxor Theater (22)** was completed in 2001. Part of this striking red building, by **Bolles & Wilson**, is a steel ramp specially designed to enable trucks to unload and turn. The compact auditorium seats 1500. The glass wall with sandblasted texts, between the foyer and restaurant, is the work of the artist Milou van Ham.

On the opposite side of Wilhelminapier, next to Renzo Piano's slanted KPN tower from 2000, work is proceeding on **De Rotterdam (23)**, a mixed-use complex designed by **Rem Koolhaas's OMA**. The 150-metre-high complex is set to become a city within a city with 72,000 m<sup>2</sup> of office space, a 285-room hotel, 220 apartments, cinema, fitness centre, shops and a 684-space car park. The three towers standing on top of a podium appear to have been cut through halfway up and slightly displaced. Completion is scheduled for late 2013. One can only hope that by then the demand for new homes and offices will have picked up again.

A little further along this side of Wilhelminapier stands **Las Palmas (24)**. This 1953 workshop building is yet another **Van de Broek & Bakema** creation. The more recent roof structure was added by **Bentham Crouwel** when they renovated the entire building in 2007. Tenants of the 21,000 m<sup>2</sup> complex include the Nederlands Fotomuseum, the

LP2 events space and a fish restaurant. The 'penthouse' structure that is raised above the roof surface on pilotis, is occupied by property developer OVG.

Diagonally opposite the new Luxor Theatre on Rijnhaven stands the country's tallest office tower. Named after the river, the 38,000 m<sup>2</sup>, 44-storey **Maastoren (25)** was designed by **Dam & Partners**. The tower is heated and cooled by a system that uses river water and underground thermal energy storage. At the top of the building is a sky lobby-cum-boardroom.

Also on Rijnhaven is the all-glass building of the **Inholland Hogeschool (26)**, from 2000. The most eye-catching aspect of this **Erick van Egeraat** design is the imposing atrium overlooking the harbour. Its glass facade is partially printed with cobalt blue patterns. In 2008, Egeraat completed a 15,000 m<sup>2</sup> extension behind the main building. It consists of three interconnected volumes, one of which is a nine-storey block with a 35-metre clear span over the underlying metro tunnel.

Right opposite the Rijnhaven metro station is the **Zuidersterblok Youth Accommodation (27)**. This design by **Groosman Partners Architecten** is part of an urban renewal plan for this run-down neighbourhood. Seen from the road and the metro, the facades look very dynamic because the bay windows have been placed at all different angles. The 60 two-person units (two separate tenants share a kitchen and bathroom) could in future be joined together to make three-room apartments.

From Rijnhaven one can take metro line D to Hoogvliet/Zalmplaat where, in the garden of a primary school, there is a free-standing cooking classroom in the shape of green mushroom. This **Parasite Lampion (28)** from 2004 was designed by **Christoph Seyferth**. The mushroom is encircled by a low bench that the architect has compared to the bench around a big tree in African villages, which is often a central meeting point. The green steel facade is made up of 28 prefabricated panels.

From Hoogvliet metro line C travels to the enclave of Pernis, long associated with the petrochemical industry. Beside the river, between a container depot and a stretch of wasteland, stands a **Rijkswaterstaat (Public Works and Water Management) office building (29)** realized in 2003 by **Emiel Lamers Architectures** in collaboration with the Government Buildings Agency's Department of Design and Technology. From the sixty-metre-long, fully glazed corridor there is an unimpeded view of the Nieuwe Maas River. The wilderness around the building is an artwork by Lara Almarcegui and will remain a 'wasteland' until at least 2030.

Metro lines C and B bring us to the final project in this tour guide. In Nesseland, a new leafy suburb northeast of Rotterdam, stand twelve **periscope dwellings (30)** by **Joke Vos Architecten**, the outcome of an invited competition. The dwellings are arranged in four groups of three 'drive-in' dwellings. On the ground floor is a garage and a high-ceilinged 'water room' with a deck out over the water. There is a second living area with veranda on the floor above.

And this is where our tour ends. Of course, there is a lot more interesting new architecture to see in Rotterdam. A visit to the recently expanded and refurbished Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAI), just as the original building a design by Jo Coenen, with its large architecture bookshop, will be a great help to anyone wishing to continue to explore the city. ←