

# MARLIES ROHMER ARCHITECTURE & URBANISM

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WATERHOUSES - IJBURG 2011



BOLO - AMSTERDAM 2016



NOORDKOP - AMSTERDAM 2007

Marlies Rohmer Architecture & Urbanism is a professional architecture office which presently has a staff of 10 enthusiastic members. We undertake projects both in the Netherlands and abroad. The portfolio is diverse, with projects ranging across from urban planning, housing, nonresidential buildings like schools and residential care facilities to interior design. We have won prizes for a several projects, including the Scholenbouwprijs (for national and international educational architecture) in 2002 and 2008, the Gouden Piramide ("Golden Pyramid") in 2009, the Zuiderkerk Prize in 2007 and 2010, the Gouden Baksteen ("Golden Brick") and the BNA Building of the Year (North region) in 2011, and the Dutch Design Award and the FIABCI Award in 2012. Marlies Rohmer won the Amsterdam Prize for the Arts for her contributions to the arts in Amsterdam in 2008.

## From the broadest gesture to the smallest detail

The oeuvre consists of numerous striking buildings, each with a distinct character, and each forming a specific answer to the brief. Ultimate beauty results when form, program, context, all the requirements on structural elements, installations and sustainability and - last but not least - social aspects come together in a single building and together create new meaning. One building may adapt timelessly and modestly to its surroundings, while another is clearly a statement, a refined custom solution. At every scale, from the broad gesture to the tiniest detail, there is something waiting to be discovered.



HOUSINGEXHIBITION - ALMERE 2001



DE ZANDLOPER PRIMARY SCHOOL - ZOMEREM 2015

context association detail craft  
culture ambition quality dialogue  
participation sustainability research

## Dialogue

Our approach is both analytical and intuitive. We consider each new project from a fresh perspective, as a way of homing in on the ultimate, unique solution. Impulses for our work do not only come from the dialogue with our client and professional advisors, but also from consultations with the residents or users. The results of our various forms of research, for example into youth culture, new educational formats, changing ideas on elderly care and so on, are implemented in our projects. With this, we strive to expand on the requirements of the brief wherever possible.



HOUSING - IJHUIZEN 2003



SMARTIES - LITHOE 2009

## Prominent signature

The result of this approach is a characteristic architecture with a strong architectural signature. Broad gestures and multi-layering are equally important here: we elaborate the design with great care down to the last detail and supervise the construction process to its final stage, in order to realize the best possible result.



VIOLENSTRAAT - GRONINGEN 2015



KOP VAN LOMBOK - UTRECHT 2014



# CRAFTSMANSHIP

*"The designs of Marlies Rohmer are tender and are made with love" (from the jury report, Amsterdam Prize for the Arts 2008.*

## Architecture with a deeper meaning

"A one-dimensional building is a carbon copy which has been placed out of context. The charm of a multi-dimensional building is that, without being too explicit, it radiates the wealth of different layers from context to detail – in the same way a person can radiate a mysterious beauty which defies definition. A personality."

What appeals to us in architecture is the unexpected. "Architecture must not be categorical, but it must seduce and surprise us. To us this is a mainspring of architectural quality. Our work contains many apparent contradictions; multilayering goes hand-in-hand with the broad gesture. We incorporate all those layers into a total concept that is more than the sum of its parts. We do not start with preconceived ideas regarding either the

concept or the building materials. One design may be clad in robust, deep-relief brickwork, while another has a finespun membrane of steel and glass. Sometimes we adopt materials from the surroundings, in other cases we explicitly don't.

## Enrichment and generosity

"Details are there to reinforce the concept. Some details almost lead a life of their own and are prominently present, while others are less conspicuous and enrich the building in a more subtle way. Detail may amount to an explicit or an implicit enrichment."

"By enrichment, I think of the multidimensional character of a building. This generosity, from context to detail, ensures that the building will stand the test of time, because people will naturally hesitate to demolish a building of this quality and will instead seek a new purpose for it. Durability does not arise from stinginess but from abundance and generosity: rich architecture, one which is elaborated down to the finest detail. If the architecture has character and it commands respect, the user will maintain it better."



Facade cladding of large, white fibre-reinforced polyester cassettes in relief. These cassettes make up horizontal facade bands which, together with the horizontal fenestration, reinforce the open character of the building. In future, the building can be extended by an additional storey. The moulds for the facade elements will remain available for use.



An interesting point is that the rosettes were hand made by the mentally handicapped users. All the 275 rosettes hence differ slightly in colour and form.

details  
enrichment  
context

beautifully  
pattern

aging  
generosity  
robust



The facade-filling elements made in relief pattern brickwork were prefabricated with a concrete backing. Paradoxically, the result is a massive, richly detailed building which simultaneously has something of a lightweight "Meccano-built" box, made up of the elements separated by UNP Standard steel channelling. The time gained by the relatively quick and simple (and hence inexpensive) assembly process for the cladding components was invested in the designing of the brickwork pattern and the technical detailing of the elements. The elements alternate with floor-to-ceiling window frames, making expansion joints superfluous.





# SCHOOLS

## The community school, the new heart of the neighbourhood

A community school fulfils a new function for its surrounding district. This is apparent from its location: no longer on the periphery but is an urban beacon in the centre of the district. The school increasingly comes to act as the social and cultural focus of a neighbourhood, a platform for the city; a place to encounter and interchange. Now that churches have lost their social role and have mostly been repurposed, a community school makes up for the resulting loss. This is reflected in the outward aura and positioning of the school. It presents itself as a recognizable, easily accessible platform. As a (semi-)public building with a variety of social and cultural amenities, the community school is part of daily urban life. The aura of the school can range from intimate to extravert. For primary school pupils, the building needs to have an intimate, almost residential character. After all, if these children also attend after-school care there, they will spend the whole day in the same building.



DE VIJVER SCHOOL COMPLEX - THE HAGUE 2001



DE MATRIX COMMUNITY SCHOOL - HARDENBERG 2007

## The schoolyard: a meeting place for everyone

The school grounds should not be turned into an unimaginative flat plane paved with concrete tiles, where the pupils just hang around waiting for the break to end. The grounds can be turned into adventurous green zones with an educational garden, an orchard or a playground, combined with a sports field. The staircases leading to the grounds can function as playground elements or as an open air theatre. With stairways, grandstands and a play tower, the grounds can merge smoothly into the building. The building itself turns into an exciting, climbable playing object. Instead of treating play and exercise as a mere adjunct, we can take them as a starting point of the design and create a building that holds out an invitation to activity and movement. The school grounds could be combined with an independent association-run playground or a neighbourhood public garden, thereby facilitating organization and management. Making the school grounds accessible outside school hours enhances the school's social role. The community school will then become a meeting place for everyone.



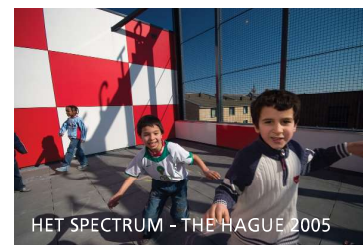
DE MATRIX COMMUNITY SCHOOL - HARDENBERG 2007



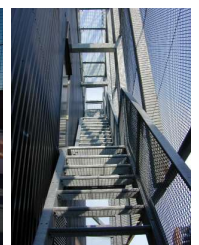
adventuring meeting sport  
and game discovery sportstower  
childhood obesity social  
development exploring  
boundaries back-seat generation  
butterfly garden recognizable  
educational gardens climbable  
sports ground



DE COMBINATIE COMMUNITY SCHOOL - VLISSINGEN 2011



HET SPECTRUM - THE HAGUE 2005



DE ZANDLOPER PRIMARY SCHOOL - ZOMERGEM 2015



DE VIJVER SCHOOL COMPLEX - THE HAGUE 2001



't KOESCHIP KINDERGARTEN AND PRIMARY SCHOOL - EDEGEM 2015



DE MATRIX COMMUNITY SCHOOL - HARDENBERG 2007



# LIVELY CITY DISTRICTS

## City districts and the importance of the immediate surroundings; the way from school to home

The book "Building for the NEXT GENERATION" (*Bouwen voor de NEXT GENERATION*, NAI Publishers 2007) reflects the research that MR A&U has conducted into the changing experiential world of young people. The results of this investigation are integrated in our architecture and urban plans.

The vitality of city districts can be boosted by very simple means, for example the connection between the home and the pavement. The pavement is the place where it all happens – the street as a village. Residents retake the pavement by means of benches and greenery, more people keep an eye on the street, it becomes safer, *there is more contact between neighbours*, resulting vital and lively networks. The way from school to home is an important design task and needs to become once again a pleasant journey that children can undertake themselves.

city families with children urban  
residential area street culture  
interchange between private  
and public zones contacts on the  
sidewalk differentiated demography  
sense of porch sidewalk as a  
village public consultation



### The street as a village: the role of a wide pavement

Working parents no longer accompany their children to neighbourhood playgrounds, because they lack the time to do so. That is why the climate of the street – particularly for play – becomes so important. Street and neighbourhood parties boost the vitality of the public space, but liveability begins primarily in the

immediate vicinity of the home: the shared entrance hall and the pavement. It is a zone where indoors and outdoors, private and public, blend together. A zone of this kind can be designed in various ways: as an entrance hall, a niche, a veranda or an "Amsterdam stoop" (a semi-private raised pavement before the house). Residents can appropriate this zone with bench seats and potted plants, thereby retaking the public space. The area in front of the house is a place where parents can keep a lookout while working on a laptop; combining two worlds - child care and work.

### Street culture: the transition between private and public

A transition from the home to the street, in the form of a niche, a retreating facade or a canopy over the door, gives a secure feeling. This makes it pleasant for people to sit outdoors and make contact with neighbours or to keep an eye on their playing children.



### Welcome in My Backyard – A New Past for the Dobbelman Site

The site of the former Dobbelman detergent factory is located in the district of Bottendael, close to Nijmegen's city centre. The master plan for redevelopment of this zone consists of a composition of volumes on different scales which relate to the original organization of the factory site, and a programme of functions that stimulates a mixing of cultures, religions and social classes. The plan was developed in consultation with neighbourhood residents. Three industrial-looking buildings offer differentiated dwelling space for families with children, students, two-income couples, ethnic minorities and prosperous young professionals.

The block is internally accessible from the welcoming courtyard which the apartment entrances adjoin through front yards. The resulting in-between space generates liveliness on the street and social interaction. This public space is organized as a single, long strip which corresponds to the detergent production line of the former factory. This "factory street" is paved with Stelcon (steel-framed concrete) flooring plates reutilized from the former factory site. The no-nonsense strip has been annexed by the residents, who are free to choose what use to make of it. It recalls the impenetrable mystique of the former factory – "enter at your own risk". The annexation amounts to an endless continuation of the consultation process.