

Rethinking the embassy Eindhoven University of Technology

Exhibition: 24.01.2020 — 22.03.2020, Opening: 22.02.2020, 19:00 hrs

Location: West Den Haag in the former American Embassy, Lange Voorhout 102, The Hague

More info: www.westdenhaag.nl

The former American Embassy was designed by Bauhaus architect Marcel Breuer and completed in 1959. The consistently implemented trapezium-shaped windows give the building an iconic appearance. The national monument has a unique architectural and substantive meaning. With the auditorium, the library and the special window/facade construction, the building is just as special as the MET-Breuer museum in New York.

The National Monument of Breuer is a symbol of the Cold War and the terrorist threat after 9/11. The former Embassy has everything it takes to become such an authentic, iconic place. But icons are not conceived, designed or built. They emerge with the passage of time. Often buildings become icons because the architecture contains something that other buildings lack.

In its coalition agreement, the city council in The Hague has decided that the building will have a function that contributes to the Museumkwartier. The presentation of the intensive study project 'Rethinking the Embassy' by Eindhoven University of Technology shows how a combined museum function can make an optimal contribution to a special part of the city. In the twentieth century, museums had the role of collecting, documenting, conserving and presenting works of art to the public. This gave the buildings a static, vertical and sequential arrangement. However, in the twenty-first century, museums will be much more dynamic, horizontal and simultaneous. The museum will become a network instead of a container, and the Breuer building on Lange Voorhout has the potential to facilitate that development.

Designing for art requires a special attitude. With this project, the students show the research into this specialization. They studied how the architect, as an 'artist', starts from sketches, case studies and practical examples. They looked at the role of 'physical models' in the handwriting of the architect. After a typological and historical study, the young architects starting working on the project. Considerations such as those about contemporary society have led to questions such as: Is there still time for art? For which duo functions is a museum building the most suitable? What is the role of a museum now?

The designs have been made from different perspectives in which the public domain, the user and the architect are addressed. The public space and the characteristic facade part and their appearance on the surroundings are also important. By means of bold statements, case studies and location analyses, all students individually came to a design in which they distilled the qualities of the building and improved its weaknesses.

The breathing space created in the meantime offers a rare moment to create something new. This moment offers the opportunity to turn the building into a place that is full of meaning. An exquisite and rare opportunity to show space that responds to changes in the world of art and culture. Of course, under the motto of Marcel Breuer: 'Form follows function - but not always'.

If you have any questions, please contact MJ Sondeijker: marie-jose@westdenhaag.nl or (0)70.3925359

The former American embassy 'Onze Ambassade' is managed by ANNA Vastgoed & Cultuur and Art Institute West Den Haag. The program of West is supported by the municipality of The Hague and the Ministry of Education, Cultural Affairs and Science.