The Market Hall (De Markthal) Rotterdam by MVRDV

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in collaboration with rotterdam-woont.nl

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A new icon in the heart of Rotterdam

The Rotterdam Market Hall is already before the completion an international hit. It is a fresh new icon in the historic heart of the city. The building is placed 200 meters parallel to the late medieval Lawrence Church and stands also at the former banks of the River Rotte. This river was filled up in the late 19th century and diverted for the benefit of the rail link across the river. By tunneling the train route in the 90s of the 20th century an oblong square has been formed where twice a week the outdoor food market takes place.

Because of its public function the new Market Hall is the centrepiece of the Laurensquarter that after 1945 is crammed with all types of architecture. Apart from just a few more empty lots, the Market Hall is the copestone of new infill’s of the city centre, bombed in 1940. It is exactly the location of the first settlements of Rotterdam in the 13th century.

The Market Hall is an easily understandable building. Partly due to the simple form; half a hollow tube with a height of 45 meters and partly to the clear separation of functions; an indoor food market which is covered by a construction with apartments. Under the building is a large car park.

The hall is covered by constructions that bow to each other with luxury penthouses in the roof. The properties are accessible via three entrances on the outside of both bowlegs. Half the apartments have a view on the indoor market through a well-insulated window. The market takes place 7 days a week in the main hall. Permanent stalls are in preparation.

The ground floor and first floor on both sides of the hall are designed for permanent shops and restaurants; terraces can placed on the outside of the building facing the streets. The front and rear of the building resemble huge horseshoes with in between a large stressed glass front.

Through the glass façade a huge work of art placed on acoustic panels against the curved roof can be seen, which reflects the function of the hall. This colourful image of artist Arno Coenen is a waterfall of huge photos of fruits, vegetables, flowers and some animals like fish and butterflies. “If you would lie on your back on the market floor is as if you are lying in the grass with light from the sun from above”, says the artist. For the passer-by the image reflects the expected high quality fresh food that will be sold in the hall.

The Market Hall in Rotterdam

The new Market Hall is a statement of the Rotterdam firm MVRDV. It is a contemporary interpretation of the 18th century passage; an type of covered shopping galleries, originated in Paris; streets with storefronts on both sides. These were inspired by oriental bazaars and Southern European markets filled with stalls for temporary entrepreneurs. The French ‘galeries marchandes’ were the meeting place for the beau monde, the place in town to acquire clothing.
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and food in permanent luxurious shops, relax in a casino or to meet people in a grand café. These arcades were social meeting places, and in the 19th century popular in Western Europe, followed in big cities like Brussels and London. The arcades were built higher over time with office floors or dwellings above the shops and with a transparent roof. Three years later, he built the still existing arcade opposite the Binnenhof in The Hague, with shops and upstairs apartments along three interior streets meeting each other in the middle. The Rotterdam Passage is almost completely destroyed during the bombing in 1940 and was situated on the site of the current C&A building, parallel to the Koopgoot (‘shopping gutter’) from the Coolsingel almost to the Schielandshuis. Besides shops there has been a bathhouse and a hotel with 42 rooms. The first to the third floor situated apartments and maisonettes which - contrary to the Market Hall - had access from the interior street. Until 1948 in the urban reconstruction plan for the city took rebuilding a similar arcade into account. Nearly 65 years later, it is there in a renewed form and not far from its original location.

Development and Design Market Hall
The ideas for the development of the Market Hall stem from bringing together needs. On the one hand there was the need to expand the market with a covered hall. On the other hand the government of Rotterdam encourages the building of luxurious dwellings in the city centre. Real Estate developer Provast worked together with architecture firm MVRDV to develop ideas for the combination in this prime location, right next to the public transport hub station Blaak.

The range of approximately 20 different apartment types, location, and 1200 parking places will definitely improve the vibrancy in the city centre. Residents and business owners will deliberately choose a place in this complex, meeting all current comfort requirements. By proper measures in the façade the apartments will not have noise and odours nuisance from the market. For prospective residents there is a great diversity of housing types, from open-plan loft apartments to duplexes with several bedrooms.

The penthouses on the roof are accessible by lift and have the front door on the floor below. The penthouse has space reserved for a private elevator. This solution made it possible to avoid visible lift shafts on the roof.

For chief designer Winy Maas, educated as a landscape architect, the building is like a local big fold in the pavement. The cladding of the building is therefore grey coloured natural stone, similar to the surrounding street pavement. The long façades of the building are therefore in great contrast to the colourful, vibrant public mall. Because of the chosen form of the building
continuous technical and spatial solutions had to be devised by the architect; ‘Technics follow form’. Directed by MVRDV, the process is carried out to the last detail.

MVRDV will until and after the completion work to guard the principles of the design. By now the buyers and tenants will find their place in the building, developer Provast will found The Market Hall Rotterdam PLC. This PLC will manage and guard the design of the building and will act for users and residents as their representative for desired changes. For major changes MVRDV will manage the control. The inside of the apartments is of course free to be organized by the dwellers.

Approximately 100 permanent steel fresh food stalls in the main hall are designed by the architect in three types. Stall tenants can opt for advertising, plants or even a roof terrace. A tenant may combine several stalls. The stalls in the Market Hall will generally sell products that do not compete with the current open air market and will appeal to a different public.

The expedition layer
The simple shape of the building, as it manifests itself above ground, has been made possible by the quality of the logistics of the functions of the building on the first basement level. This is the top layer of four underground parking levels with a ramp access to the Westblaak. Shops and stalls can be supplied through a separate service road where shops have their own storage or refrigeration rooms. This ‘expedition layer’ locates also the storages, bicycle parking and permanent parking for the residents.

In the middle of the hall is a large void to level -4 with escalators. Visitors arriving by car in the building will be conducted on all parking levels towards the light of the void. For visitors entering the hall through the central staircase it is a warm, colourful and aromatic welcome into the city. Along the escalators objects from recent excavations, found on this historic site in the city, will be exhibited.

Urban context
The Market Hall is a tribute to the past and recent city history. The basic form of the building fits in between both the iconic buildings of the urban renewal period, the library and the Cubehouses (the first ‘urban roof’ in Rotterdam), and between the more recent, distinctive architecture, for example the Blaak station, the Statendam, the Hofdame and slightly further away the Red Apple.

If the public space in the immediate vicinity of the new Market Hall will benefit from its aura remains to be seen. On the market side, the recognizable front façade is visible from afar. On the west side, the back side, the similar wall is too close to the surrounding buildings to experience the façade as a whole.
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The apartments on the south side stands in the shadow of the (also by Provast developed) office building Blaak 31- which also blocks the view to the south. On the north side, between the Market Hall and the Hoogstraat , a building will be constructed that that is even higher than the Market Hall. This project, the RottaNova, will block the view of the Market Hall from the bustling Hoogstraat. How the connection to the surrounding streets and public spaces in the future will develop is still a challenge. For example, a scenic route to the Hoogstraat or Vlasmarkt can be developed along the water. This water is actually a rearrangement of the River Rotte.

With a height of 45 meters, the Market Hall is an impressive spectacle that will take his space and place in the area over the near future. During the initial design sessions Winny Maas created the image in his team of architects of a 'cathedral'. This ambition is striking, the result successful, even if this building stands on three sides tight in its surroundings.

MVRDV

The strength of the method of the architects is to involve consultants in an early phase of the design. For example civil engineers were invited during the first sketching sessions to consult about shape in relation to layout. A second successful strategy is the communication in the media about the design. Carefully tantalizing images, resembling reality, have been brought out. Now, as the building is getting finished, the striking similarity appears. One notable difference is the lighting which in the pictures seems to shine from the hall. Perhaps this is the effect of the artwork that originally was to be executed in LED lighting. The design of a continuing skylight as in the predecessor the Passage, should give natural and equal light in the hall in daytime.

Although realization from concept to completion took a long time, it looks as if the Market Hall has been designed and built with much ease. The result and the design process offer perspectives for the development of hybrid urban challenges in the future. The building is and will remain a clear statement in an urban structure with a high diversity of icons from the reconstruction and urban renewal period. New projects developed in the immediate vicinity can hardly ignore the presence of the Market Hall. The building is a vibrant addition to Rotterdam that will have influence on the development of the city centre in the near future.

The Market Hall in 2015 as one of the 25 projects Rotterdam housing at the exhibition pavilion in the Marq Buenos Aires. More information will be available later this year on http://www.socearq.org/2.0/marq

Translations in Dutch and Spanish on http://www.rotterdamwoont.nl/items/view/179/Markthal