

VAN NELLE 21,

Re ÷ INVENT

international and interdisciplinary workshop

- Rotterdam Academy of Architecture

- SG99/Willem de Kooning Academy

Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 11 - 15 May 1999

3x3 studios

In the workshop there will be 9 studios in total. Their subjects can be divided in three thematic groups. All assignments will find their definitive shape in discussion with the tutors, and also you: the students.

The first group deals with the Van Nelle factory in a way that emphasizes the physical qualities of the monument. It sets out to find what it is that makes the building architecturally so unique. The context in which the studios will be set up is given by Kees Kaan and Pierre Gautier in the text: KG studios.

The second group of three aims to find out what the actually proposed reprogramming of the building, the 'DesignFactory', will mean for the building. By taking a programmatic approach they will try to find out about the new life of the Van Nelle factory. Guus Vreeburg describes these studios in the text: GV studios.

A third group will deal with subjects that connect these first two approaches and attempt to bridge the physical potential of the building with the programmatic demands for the future. In agreement with: 1/ the owner of the complex, 2/ Rotterdam Cultural Capital 2001 organisation and 3/ a potential corporate user, three assignments will be formulated. These studios are described by Christiaan Weiler in the text: CW studios

KG studios

General approach

The Van Nelle factory; a symbol of the Modern Movement in architecture. It expresses the search for new values within production activities in the beginning of this century and new ways of social human relations in particular. The numerous buildings which form the complex can be divided into monumental, architecturally important and less important expressions of a production process which had been developed over the preceding years. The (in its time) very modern approach concerning the use of the factory, together with its international fame, brings up the question of reusing buildings, and factories in particular, for more than just containing production processes. Nowadays production processes are more and more interiorised within neutrally designed boxes scattered around modern infrastructure. The quality of well designed, expressive and optimistic architecture as of the Van Nelle, might bring about a reinterpretation of ideas from the Modern Movement in architecture. The meaning of purely economy based short term buildings can be reformulated after learning from Van Nelle. Maybe most importantly, the reorganisation of former industrial space offers the chance for a new and contemporary coexistence between people of all kind. The main question to be analysed in three studios, is how to intergrate new, modern and future oriented activity within this exceptional building complex. How can one optimise the expression and splendour of the different buildings without losing its original, brutal and at the same time extremely delicate detailing and materialisation. Three studios will work on themes that are based on these general observations described above. Discussion of the studio tutors and the students will lead to more concrete assignments. The assignments should all deal with two major questions: a. Which catalysing role can be defined for the factory on either local and urban level? b. How can a perfect balance be found between its actual charisma and necessary modifications due to new activity? The actual idea of making a 'DesignFactory', grouping all sorts of activities having to do with creation in the widest meaning, will have to be tested and compared with other possible functions and activities.

studio 1.

studio 2.

studio 3.

GV studios

Three programmatical/conceptualizing studios

The Van Nelle factory is scheduled to be re-developed into a 'design factory', concentrating designers and design-related companies. This can stimulate multidisciplinary cooperation and interdisciplinary approaches.

Three studios will be asked to consider conceptual-programmatic aspects of the concept of a 'DesignFactory'. Each of these studios' participants-teams will be composed of three students of visual arts, plus two students of architecture.

studio 4.

What is a 'DesignFactory'?

At first glance, the very idea of concentrating designers into one huge complex might seem a bit absurd, given CadCam procedures that require ever less floorspace, and unlimited communication through phone, fax and www; if physical space is no longer an argument, what could convince designers of various disciplines and trades to move into such a place? It's likely a matter of 'ambiance': what could be the added value, what conditions could/ should/ must be created to further communication and cooperation? In other words: what are we really talking about when thinking of VAN NELLE21 as a 'design factory'?

studio 5.

How to re-present a 'DesignFactory'?

The present owners/re-developers have reserved the top floors of VAN NELLE's central building (the former coffee-factory) for exhibition purposes; of course, VAN NELLE21 as a 'design factory' would need some sort of 'interface' between the high-end design companies located

there, and their various audiences; what programme, atmosphere and image can you imagine for such an 'interface' to fit the 'state of the art' ambitions of the project?

studio 6.

'DesignFactory': food and drinks

What could be the role of eating and drinking to optimize a 'design factory'? the hundreds of designers working in the complex need to eat lunch and/or dinner and/of snacks during late-nite workouts, maybe in the company of clients and other regular visitors; visitors at occasional presentations, manifestations and events must be catered, too; should all of this be performed from within conventional catering-concepts, or could you imagine other solutions more fitting and desirable? in other words: come up with a 'culinary concept' for a 'designfactory'.

CW studios

studio 7.

RCH2001 studio

In the year 2001 Rotterdam will be one of the two Cultural Capitals of Europe, together with Porto. For their programme they are interested in using the Van Nelle factory as one of their manifestation areas. As a typical icon of the history of Rotterdam, representing the city's industrious character and its architectural avantgardism, it is an identity piece for the city. The location outside the city allows for a contemplative distance from which one can see the skyline of the city. However, the distance from the city center requires special access solutions, which must be considered within the urban fabric. The Cultural Capital organisation is now discussing possibilities to have events take place there in the spring, summer and fall of 2001. The fall subject would be Rotterdam in the Interbellum. The manifestation will offer conventional exhibition presentations, but also the showing of film and live performances. About 1000 people a day are expected. The public character of this use of the building brings up questions about the access and internal traffic solutions, as well as security issues. How can it be combined with a predominantly corporate use. It also offers the chance to study the feasibility for the building to play a role as a Modernist Monument to be enjoyed by the public after 2001.

studio 8

corporate habitat

Central theme for this assignment are the possible motives of a tenant for choosing the Van Nelle as its new residence. How do we imagine the situation of a tenant that wishes to rent a space in the Van Nelle? How does Van Nelle proliferate itself as being an attractive business centre? There is a hint in the name 'Design Factory', but what specific considerations can there be? Is accessibility still the issue it used to be? Creative enterprises don't depend on people passing by their shop but on steady business relations. Their choice of residence is not made in favour of the public presence of their firm. What are the advantages of business centres in general? The multi-disciplinary configuration of tenants makes it possible for them to make use of each others services. The market mechanism remains the same however. The current state of the art package and date communications allow for a creative business to reside at distance of its facility services. Maintaining relations and staying in touch with the latest developments in ones business is easier in a multi-disciplinary group of tenants. Innovations are even facilitated by the respective proximity because the necessary collaborations require a close physical contact. The appeal of the Van Nelle has great attractive power for young and dynamic offices. They want to be identified with a project that proposes new business strategies and which tries to stimulate a growing culture of design in Rotterdam. The success of the 'Design Factory' project lies in the future ambiance of the business centre. The question that arise is how we can make the right fertile soil for technical innovations to grow on. Organizing internal and external relations is of crucial importance. It might induce a new creative society within the factory and outside it as well

studio 9.

A new logic. (the developer's vision)

Coherence in the entire complex is a central issue to this assignment. There was an iron logic behind the design of the Van Nelle complex, being one of logistics, production, processing and distributing products of the factory. The factory had been organized according to the latest industrial innovations. Its evidence is still visible. But the logics of a monument, which it is now, differ greatly from those of a 1930-ies factory.

The characteristic glass bridges protruding from the facade were a solution for keeping the ground free for traffic. The bales of tobacco could then travel uninterrupted from the production halls to the distribution centre. What purpose will those bridges serve in the future? They suggest an intrinsic contact between all parts of the complex and how can that be functional later? The aesthetic appearances mustn't only be conserved, they must each acquire a new life. Filling the building with wide range of creative - corporate and public tenants, introduces a complicated structure of management. While the Van Nelle factory used to serve a single policy, now it must follow the requirements of many different corporations. Will every visitor be able to walk freely through the complex? Will they have to find their own way in the buildings? The coming and going of the visitors will have to be organized. But what places and routes will have a strategic position, and how can one design them? The appearance of the building is made up of mostly its shape and materiality. The invisible aura is not easily described however. Maybe it is the lonesome machinality that still seems very modern. How can we conserve or rather reanimate a building, that has been been frozen for years, back to its dynamic earlier life? How might we even propel it to a new durable, selfcontaining en once again hypermodern working environment for the 21st century.

The current owner has his own ideas about how to organize a Mega-monument into a buzzing 'DesignFactory'. On the basis of his visions about the entire complex and surrounding area, the subject for this studio is set out. The location of the Van Nelle factory in an infrastructural area and its surrounding urban fabric, is one of the main issues that come up when thinking of the complex as a functional centre. More will follow...

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME DD 220499

Each day has fixed times: lunch from 13:00 - 14:00 and dinner from 19:00 - 20:00. The building will be closed from 23:00 o'clock. According to the developments during the workshop, the presentations will be scheduled more in detail and presented to you there.

- di 11 May 99 21:00 reception and acquaintance
On the night before the work starts all those who have arrived will be received. There will be a possibility to get acquainted with each other and the building.
- wo 12 May 99 09:00 opening - 4 lectures and a film
- introducing Kees Kaan and Pierre Gautier, moderators
words of welcome by E. Gude and P. Bosse
Introduction to the history and current role for the Van Nelle factory
- by Marieke Kuipers (DOCOMOMO and Rijksdienst voor Monumentenzorg)
Lecture on cultural industries and their network behaviour
- by Jan Verwijnen (Dir. Univ. Art & Design, Helsinki)
videofilm: historic footage of the Van Nelle factory
Presentation of the renovation project 'Barentzplein'
- by Bjarne Mastenbroek (Architectengroep, Amsterdam)
Introduction in the current urban development around the Van Nelle
- by Liesbeth Poot (Urban Planning, Rotterdam)
- 14:00 2 excursions
A busride from and to the Van Nelle factory with comments provided
- by Guus Vreeburg
Tour through the Groothandelsgebouw (1940 business centre)
- by Michelle Provoost (Crimson, Rotterdam)
Tour and project presentation in the Las Palmas building on the Kop van Zuid
- by Rene Mareij (MVRDV, Rotterdam)
- 19:00 tutor presentation dinner - Each tutor will reveal his
perspective by means of two slides and two statements and 5 minutes.
- 21:30 1e studio assembly - Tutors and their group get acquainted and start discussing...
- do 13 May 99 09:00 guided tour through the complex
10:00 studio assembly (programme according to studio)
14:00 studio assembly (programme according to studio)
20:00 group presentations - The first outlines of concepts from the studios will be
presented by the studios' tutors.
- vrij 14 May 99 09:00 studio assembly (programme according to studio)
14:00 studio assembly (programme according to studio)
20:00 studio assembly (programme according to studio)
- za 15 May 99 09:00 presentation preparation - preparing the works
11:00 studio presentations - a number of critics will comment on the works.
14:00 lunch
19:00 critics forum - the critics and the audience will discuss the results
20:00 diner, conclusion, party - after the presentations there will be a group dinner lit by
special effects.
reflections - Kees Kaan and Pierre Gautier