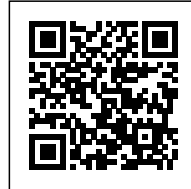


On Timmerhuis.
Interview with
Reinier de Graaf, OMA

ON TIMMERHUIS

Posted on January 20, 2016 by Urban UrbanNext



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What future do you see for Rotterdam?

Reinier de Graaf The great thing about Rotterdam is that you can actually never tell where things are going. Each time Rotterdam seems enthusiastically to head into one direction, it only abandons that path a decade later with the same enthusiasm. Rotterdam is a collision of all the architectural and urban 'en vagues' that have emerged since the Second World War: the modernism of the postwar reconstruction; the humanism of the seventies; the postmodernism of the eighties; high-rise buildings and the compact city in the nineties and a sort of free-for-all in the new millennium. The future of Rotterdam is unforeseeable and therefore exciting. Actually, Rotterdam will never be completed.

How does the Timmerhuis fit in?

Reinier de Graaf The Timmerhuis does not aim to add a new architectural style to the existing medley of styles, but is actually a sort of 'surrender to the chaos', (I am using the word chaos here positively), a sort of unformed heap which is a representation of the city in its current (and probably also future) state. The building is an echo of the city and its mood.

What does it mean for OMA?

Reinier de Graaf The Timmerhuis fits well in the tradition of mixed-use buildings (buildings with multiple functions) such as the recently completed De Rotterdam, also from OMA. This time we have primarily made an effort to do something special with the housing: high-rise, high density, but without giving the residents the feeling that they are living in a flat. The roof terraces create a sense of having a house with a garden, in the middle of the city on the twelfth floor. This is really something new for residential building in the Netherlands: a sort of humanization after years of flat facades and concealed outdoor spaces.

What is your connection with Rotterdam?

Reinier de Graaf I come from the vicinity of Rotterdam, was born in Schiedam, a city in the same agglomeration, in the Rijnmond area. As such I know Rotterdam well. As a child I visited the cinema here with my parents (at that time, there were still just small independent cinemas) and Diergaarde Blijdorp. I have seen the city change through the years: denser, livelier, more (multi)cultural. When I was little, the Weena was still an empty area, and take a look there now... I have seen things under construction which now have (or deserve) the status of monument, as well as things disappear such as the old central train station and the railway viaduct through the city, to which I was strangely attached.

What would you tell / show or let your audience experience if you would give a lecture on the Timmerhuis project?

Reinier de Graaf I rarely give lectures about buildings in themselves. I just talk about our projects in a broader societal or cultural context. So I would rather give a lecture about Rotterdam, in which the Timmerhuis could play a modest role. If I would talk about the Timmerhuis, I would narrate the origins of the building and the process: the winning of the competition, the unusual client constellation in which the commission was shared between the municipality of Rotterdam and the contractor Heijmans. I would not try to capture in words the building in its final state, simply because the building is around the corner and everyone can go and see it with his or her own eyes. Everyone can form an opinion for themselves. I am convinced the building will evoke many comments. Also in this respect the building will be an echo of the city. And now it's simply waiting to get a typical Rotterdam nickname.

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ISSN : 2575-5374