

History - Portrait of location and architect

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1815



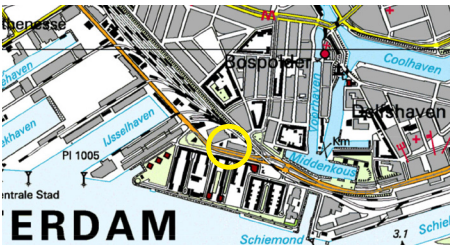
1850



1900



1950



2000



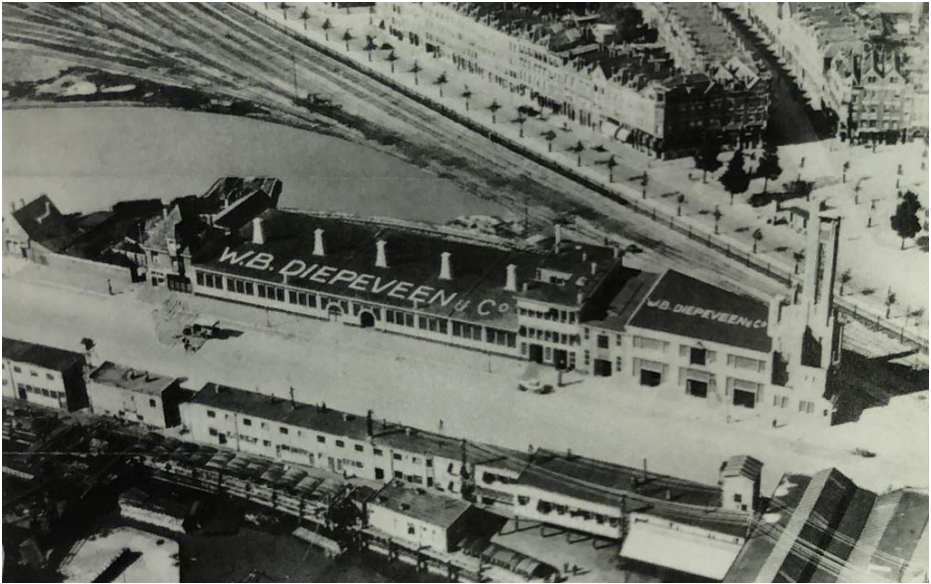
2019

Brief history of the area

A collection of maps of the area of Delfshaven is collected. On the maps can be seen that the location of the current plot around 1815 was mainly from undeveloped watery areas. The port of Delft was created in this area, which served to transport goods to and from Delft. In 1886, the village was annexed by Rotterdam. The map made in 1900 shows an island

created in the river, showing a lot of agriculture and a single road. Around 1950 the area was built-up and the loose island on the mainland came attached to the land. This is also the first map on which the Diepeveen & Co building is visible.

The maps from 2000 to 2019 show that a number of large new construction projects have been completed. This required dampening



Diepeveen & Co building

part of the river, so that the tower of the Diepeveen & Co building is no longer visible from the river.

Diepeveen & Co

"The warehouse with the small, spicy advertising tower," noted a Dutch daily newspaper when it recalled Kromhout's last work (De telegraaf, 1934). With this observation, the most important character of the Diepeveen building has been established. In 1929 Kromhout received the commission for "Warehouse, house and advertising tower for the Rotterdam N.V. Handelsmaatschappij W.B. Diepeveen & Co". This was because of the preference of director C.K. Diepeveen for the work of the architect. Kromhout's creations so far

were mainly robust and monumental creations. For the new hardware store, however, he mainly thought in terms such as "straightforward". Connection was required to the warehouses already available to the trading company in the port area (NRC, 1989).

Design principles

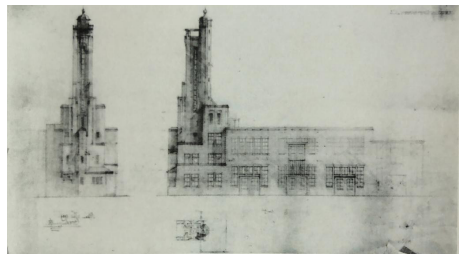
Because of the economic crisis, optimal functionality was the first design principle. The most important requirement was that the warehouse spaces on both the north and south facades should be accessible for the hardware supplied. This wish was easily to accomplish because the architect had to deal with a narrow lot. The piece of land is in the form

of a stretched triangle with the top cut off. At this point there already was a transport route 'Hudsonstraat – Pelgrimsstraat', between which the Diepeveen is placed. Although the rectangular building unfolds largely along the Pelgrimsstraat (32 meters), the visual efficiency of Diepeveen & Co is stored in the block-shaped corner formation. In the corner is a brick base for a 30-meter-high square advertising tower. In his fascination for the tower, Kromhout want to compete with the towers of profane Italian buildings such as the Palazzo Vecchio in Siena. Kromhout and his contemporary architect Berlage, were both captivated for a lifetime by these Italian buildings. The Diepeveen & Co building has not become more than competing, because there is no balance in the relationship between the low, modestly elaborated warehouse section and the pronounced corner part (Jager, 1992).

The building at this location could had a high visual reach, due to the combination of the maximum use of the construction site and the urban planning situation at the time. Already at a great distance, both for ships entering Rotterdam and for incoming traffic from the Westzeedijk, the company name announced itself in large white letters. The letters were applied against a background of cobalt blue tiles in the recessed spaces of the tiles. The first sketch designs of July 1929 show that



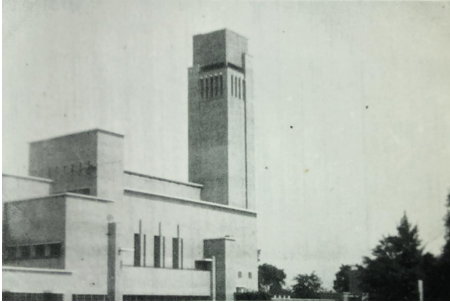
Willem Kromhout



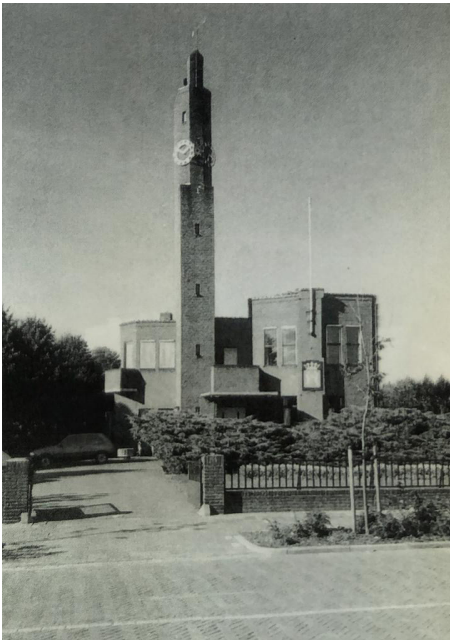
Sketch design W. Kromhout

Kromhout has persistently attempted to close the gap between the tower mass and the warehouses. However, he failed to conceal the dividing line between the two different functions. For the warehouse section, the architect limited himself to a building volume with almost identical facades.

For the eastern-oriented office-residential part, the aim was a play of interlocked blocks, from which the tower developed as an independent expressive element.



Berlage: city hall



Town Hall: Usquert 1929

Despite the numerous renovations that have been proclaimed on this piece of industrial architecture, characteristics such as the warehouse doors and the use of concrete for the cover strips, supports, lintels and window sills remained unchanged. Concrete is also the main part of the predominantly traditional construction: the floors and the flat roof are in reinforced concrete, plateaus on the outside bear the brick-masonry walls. The entrance in the eastern wall plane (6 meters long) provides access to the offices and the house of the warehouse master. The office space was located on the ground floor and the house was located on the first floor. Director Diepeveen made one change on the finished building, the balcony of this house. Diepeveen was drinking a cup of tea on the terrace and noticed that the high balcony wall obstructed the view of the river.

Design and building material

In choosing the building material, Kromhout used "the beautiful national brick that is the cause of entirely new series of shapes and color compositions". At the time, inexpensive black-sintered bricks were considered useful at the beginning of the century for paving and cellar work.

With this design, the architect has subjected his motto "modeling the cubic mass" to a different interpretation. The decorative solution

is no longer contained in the detailing of the mass, but in a measured arrangement of building volumes. The Hilversum town hall (1924-1930) by colleague W.M. Dudok appears on screen. Remarkable similarities occur between the expressionist-cubic construction of the two designs, the concrete plates drawn over the wall and the elongated incisions in the tower tops.

Kromhout was fascinated by Berlage's work. In a 1935 exhibition discussion, he described the building as a combination of technique and form. If Kromhout has taken Dudok's town hall as a guideline, he has not been able to achieve the balance that this design confers (Jager, 1992).

In later periods, Kromhout and Berlage searched for an acceptable connection between functionalist and constructive principles. Kromhout also looked for a combination in technique and form. Berlage struggled with this in his Usquert town hall, completed at the end of 1929. In that year, Kromhout realized the Diepeveen & CO building. Both looked for a catchy expression, but in addition to a spatial arrangement of building volumes, they ended up on thin towers. Both were kept away from the tectonic and spatial aspects. In the end, both architects were haunted by their creation; Berlage did not find his tower exciting enough and raised it



photo taken after completion of the building



sign on facade in memory of restoration

at its own expense upon completion, Kromhout's tower suffered severe leakage for years (Taverne, 1890).

Renovations till current situation

Renovations took place in 1947, 1953, 1955, 1973, 1981, 1989. In 1953, an improvement in the reinforced concrete construction was carried out. The offices on the ground floor were expanded. The interior has also been thoroughly addressed. The American pine floors and paneling and the decorative tile work disappeared. A new element was a spiral staircase in the warehouse section, which connected the ground floor to the first floor. In 1973 Diepeveen &



Current picture (2020)



Current picture (2020)

Co left Rotterdam after a merger. In 1976, the municipality purchased the building with the intention of demolishing it for housing. Due to the immediate proximity of a railway, the houses never got off the ground. From 1981 to 1985, the former Diepeveen was home to a youth center. For this, both the office and the house were thoroughly changed. The building was completely nailed and decayed in 1985. In the end, 'Art Constructions' managed to renovate the building into office spaces in collaboration with a ground company. On August 31, 1989, the completely renovated office building was put into use again. (Jager, 1992)