Contemporary developments change the nature and meaning of the university library. Ongoing digitalization and economic restructuring push the book further into the treasuries. At the same time, the need for an environment typically found in libraries is as urgent as ever: as a refuge from everyday life, a place of silence, discipline and concentration, but also as a place to meet people with whom we have things in common, and to feel part of a larger academic world.

Academic life and the city of Amsterdam have a long tradition of being intertwined. Public and academic places were often one and the same. It is therefore appropriate, I felt, that a building for the University of Amsterdam in some way reflects the identity of the city. The thick white frames around the windows in the façade bordering the square are a subtle reference to the canal houses so typical for the city.

Prominence and monumentality are achieved by orienting the building off the street towards a public square. Apart from serving as a podium for the building, this square marks the end of the Roetersstraat, the University campus' link to the city, and creates a visual connection with the HvA campus on the other side of the Singel. Also, venues unrelated to the library draw a broader audience to the vicinity of the building, bringing different social groups in contact with each other, connecting student life and urban life.

The building revolves around two large halls. The first is conceived as an in-between space. Around it, the bits of the program are located that bring about noise and a lot of simultaneous movement. Subtle visual relations with the outside are maintained. The second hall is by contrast an introvert space where silence reigns, completely dedicated to the act of studying.

Even though the building is essentially a large introvert fortress, it still fits naturally within the urban fabric of Amsterdam. By having the flanks lower than the middle part, the continuation of the street line is maintained. In its scale, materialization and façade composition and articulation it establishes a link with the other large institutional buildings along the Singel.