Design of a Flemish cultural centre “De Brakke Grond”

Embracing the void

‘De Brakke Grond’ is a Flemish cultural centre which is located in one of the oldest parts of Amsterdam, De Nesc. The main goal are to represent the Flemish arts in the Netherlands and to offer facilities for international exchange, cooperation and gathering.

The building was originally built as a monastery in 1406 and underwent many transformations since then. The architect Arthur Staal gave the building its present appearance in 1981. The emphasis lies on the theatre and leaves little room for activities such as exhibitions and gathering.

Starting point for the new ‘Brakke Grond’ was the ‘grond’, the ground on which it is built, where the plot can be seen as one entire block as part of the town. From the block public spaces are being ‘excavated’ out of the private and facility functions. The spaces and functions created the way find expression by playing with light and proportions, and by the use of different materials, thus making an easy transition from public to private. This variety of spaces each have their own identity, functioning separately, yet interconnecting. There is an interaction between the different materials, between light and dark, between inside and outside, between building and city. This ‘Brakke Grond’ is a place to meet people, to exchange ideas, to develop ambitions, to interconnect with others, and above all to be oneself, embraced by solid ground.