

"The Katoenveem; a tailor-made Theatre"

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Abstract

The subject of this graduation project was the reuse of the Katoenveem building, a cotton warehouse in the old harbour of Rotterdam, built in 1920. My research started with the analysis of both the tangible and intangible values of the existing structure throughout all the different scales, the urban, the architectural and the building technology one. My main focus was on the functionality and, more specifically, the «tailor-made» aspect of the initial design of the Katoenveem and the question «how to utilize the tailor made feature of the existing in order to create tailor made experiences for its future users». This is the reason why I decided to design a Performing Arts Centre with flexible spaces that can serve and adjust to the needs of each performance.

My position in heritage and architecture is to introduce new life by looking at the history of the existing so as to achieve an architectural continuation in my design. The mechanical transit system for the cotton bales is still hanging from the ceiling of the old structure, while it used to be a really significant element representing the innovation and the " tailor-made" aspect of the Katoenveem. My aim was to bring back its central role, by utilizing it again in the proposing function and this why I chose to design a Theatre.

My main points for the new design are:

- To bring back the past water tower as a landmark element of the building in its context, I introduce a contemporary tower in the same position of the old one that will be highlighted with artificial lighting to attract people at the theatre and remind the past situation.

- The theatre is a domain of research and it is constantly changing. Designing a specific theatrical spatial arrangement, in my opinion, would not be efficient for the contemporary needs. Therefore, I chose to design a flexible interior space, offering possibilities to adjust to each particular performance. The relationship between the audience and the performers is not defined and can vary depending on the requirements.

- The sample room is the only element distinguishing itself from the strict repetition of the existing structure. It is placed on the roof and rotated so as to face directly the North. To bring this special geometry and skylight in the interior space, I demolish its floor and utilize the space underneath as the core for the circulation. This is where the information desk is located. The most significant part of the routing is in the middle of the main staircase that goes through the old facade of the building. The visitors are able to look towards the sceneries' making space and the warming up room for the performers, so as to be offered an introduction to the «art of performing».