



Protected historical building Grand Hotel Amrâth Amsterdam celebrates 100 years

Amsterdam, January 2013 - Construction began in 1913 on this landmark building that is now a luxury five-star hotel and a Dutch protected historical building. *Het Scheepvaarhuis* (Shipping House) was designed by architect Van der Meij and is viewed as the start of the Amsterdam School architectural style. It is truly exceptional due to the interconnection between the building and the interior furnishings that combine to create a total experience (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) that is so characteristic of this architectural style.

This total experience extends from the staircases and railings, woodwork and stonework to the ceiling adornment, wallpaper and carpets. It is also magnificently mirrored in the freestanding furniture such as chairs, tables and sofas. These furnishings are exceptional because they have been preserved and because they represent an overall collection that exhibits remarkable and rare examples of craftsmanship and materials used in the period. The early twentieth-century vision of art founded on the cornerstones of craftsmanship, originality, symbolism and luxury is still respectfully and clearly visible 100 years later in what is now Grand Hotel Amrâth Amsterdam.

Six Amsterdam shipping companies commissioned the construction of *Het Scheepvaarhuis* at the time. They wanted to join forces in their own business collective. They put forward the pioneering initiative of having like-minded people share a building in order to improve Amsterdam's competitive position. It was designed to be a modern office building that would complement the ring of canals and, above all, radiate the self-confidence of the Dutch maritime tradition. The building's location is of particular historical significance. It is the site from which the *Compagnie van Verre* (Company of Far Lands) led by Cornelis Houtman set sail with a small fleet of ships for the first expedition to the East Indies in 1595.

Van der Meij was given overall responsibility for the design of *Het Scheepvaarhuis*. He collaborated with the Van Gendt brothers who designed the concrete skeleton and were responsible for the technical execution. Van der Meij composed a team that included De Klerk and Kramer. Van den Eijnde, Krop and Brouwer (sculpture work) and Bogtman (stained glass) also participated in the project. Nieuwenhuis and Lion Cachet focussed on the interior. The young team comprised of mostly unknown artists went on to gain wide acclaim. Nieuwenhuis had already made a name for himself and was asked to design *De Beraadzaal* (Council Chamber) and the boardrooms on the first floor. This uniquely designed chamber still serves today as an official wedding location in Amsterdam. The boardrooms on the second and third floors were designed by De Klerk and Kramer. These rooms still feature a wealth of original details and currently house the hotel's luxury suites.

The building was designated a protected historical building forty years ago in 1973. Both the facade and the interior reflect this cultural and historical value. Following the purchase of the building by the Van Eijl family, the restoration and renovation activities required to transform the building into a hotel were carried out in close consultation with the Office of Monuments and Archaeology. The project began with the restoration of the facade, including the extensive wrought iron work. This was followed by the process of restoring the building itself and transforming it into a luxury five-star hotel. The related focus was on combining an authentic experience with contemporary luxury.

Amsterdam architect Ray Kentie accepted the commission for the metamorphosis into a five-star hotel. Artists including Gerti Bierenbroodspot created silk screens, the swimming pool's painted floor and the china used in the Seven Seas restaurant. Christie van der Haak was responsible for the fabric designs and patterns on the napkins and tablecloths for the restaurant. The original signage, which was designed especially for this building at the time, has been expanded to ensure that everyone can easily find their way around the hotel. The building and interior of the Grand Hotel Amrâth Amsterdam showcase a unique marriage of contemporary comfort and an authentic and historical ambience that together create 'a world of luxury and art'.