

INTERIOR DESIGN

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reimagine renew redesign



Signs of the times

text:
david sokol
photography:
christian richters/artur

For a Dutch village's
House of Culture
and Administration,
Claus en Kaan and
Claudy Jongstra bridged
past and present

By Dutch standards, the village of Nijverdal is but an infant. English textile manufacturer Thomas Ainsworth established a mill on the otherwise empty riverbanks there in 1836, importing the industrial revolution. "The 19th century may be old to the U.S., but for us it's something to laugh about," says Claus en Kaan Architecten founding partner Felix Claus, who designed the local House of Culture and Administration. Ainsworth, whose mill was absorbed by textile giant TenCate in 1957, would hardly recognize his "valley of craftsmanship" today. The merged company, once headquartered in a Jugendstil building, has moved many of its offices elsewhere. People still living and

working in Nijverdal, which is approximately 70 miles east of Amsterdam, are likely to be chemists or aerospace engineers rather than weavers.

Claus en Kaan's 135,000-square-foot design, a renovation and expansion of a 1960's municipal building, contains an assortment of public and private functions: mayoral offices, council chamber, unemployment administration, library, theater, and multipurpose room. Civil servants and visitors enter via a dramatic 60-foot-high hall encircled by a sweeping staircase and paved in black mica. Above the municipal employees' offices at the top of the four-story building, oak-framed skylights recall the ones on the TenCate

headquarters's sawtooth roof.

Claus en Kaan also stitched together inspirations that predate TenCate and Nijverdal itself to "create a kind of icon for the city," Claus explains. For example, he credits the eighth-century Mezquita de Córdoba in Spain for the new facade's row of glazed archways. On the inside, those arches are expressed as soldierly rows of brick barrel vaults.

Although exterior and interior bricks are a reddish-brown that recalls TenCate's 1900's building, their not-quite-perfect layers suggest that they accrued over centuries—or perhaps that bewildered masons laid the bricks with mortar that was either more than 1 inch thick or just a sliver. "The ➤



Previous spread: At the House of Culture and Administration that Claus en Kaan Architecten designed for the village of Nijverdal, the Netherlands, frosted-glass pendant fixtures hang in the 60-foot-high entry hall. The floor's honed mica comes from China.

Left: To enclose the council chamber, Claus en Kaan built a steel frame and clad it in plywood, to which Studio Claudy Jongstra glued wool felt dyed with indigo.

Right, from top: Among the building's several different uses, public ones such as the theater are demarcated by custom neon signage. Rising to the mez-

zanine, the main staircase combines powder-coated steel, oak, and laminated glass. The theater's 270 seats are covered in a wool-polyester; along the side-walls hang Claudy Jongstra's banners of felt dyed with madder root.

Dutch are used to making things neat and consistent," partner Dick van Wageningen says. "But the brick surfaces here are so huge that the variation makes the whole space dynamic."

Dating back only four years, Van Wageningen's idea of collaborating with Claudy Jongstra was sparked when he saw photographs of her installation of felt tapestries at the Dutch prime minister's official residence in the Hague. (They were subsequently destroyed by fire.) Jongstra represents a long chapter in the history of artisanal ingenuity. "Wool felt was our first house as well as our first clothing," she says. "As a material, it's honest and smart. It offers fantastic architectural qualities—warmth, acoustical control, dirt repellence."

On her isolated farm, she not only felts and dyes her own wool but also raises her own sheep, which belong to a rare long-haired breed known as Drenthe Heath, indigenous to the Netherlands. The Nijverdal project, requiring 21,500 square feet of textile, is the biggest to date for Studio Claudy Jongstra. To fill the order, Jongstra had to enlist all 200 members of her flock—the sheep would not be shorn again for another year. Then she had to custom-order larger steel dyeing tubs to handle the huge pieces.

Jongstra chose wool felt and silk for the walls of the council chamber. Claus en Kaan designed the modular table, with its top of lacquered MDF, as well as the felt-upholstered benches, all custom. The flooring is oak.



BIBLIOTHEEK



Opposite top: Custom neon signage points the way to the library. **Opposite center:** The four-story building was inspired by Spain's Mezquita de Córdoba. **Opposite bottom:** Oak paneling and custom bookcases define the library. Its halogen fixtures are custom. **Right:** Jongstra's custom felt panels line the multipurpose room.

PROJECT TEAM

ARD BUIJSEN; WALLY GLASHOUWER; HILMAR GOEDHART; STEFAN HOFSCHEIDER; ARD HOKSBERGEN; ELIANNE REIJERS; ROMY SCHNEIDER; MARC VAN BROEKHUIJSEN; LEO VAN DEN BURG; JAMES WEBB; KATRIN WEBER; JAN GERRIT WESSELS; CLAUS EN KAAAN ARCHITECTEN; REYNOUD HOMAN; GRAPHICS CONSULTANT; W+R INSTALLATIE-ADVISEURS; LIGHTING CONSULTANT; MEP; ADAMS BOUWADVIESBUREAU; STRUCTURAL ENGINEER; GELSING; BRICKWORK; HEIJMANS; GENERAL CONTRACTOR.

PRODUCT SOURCES

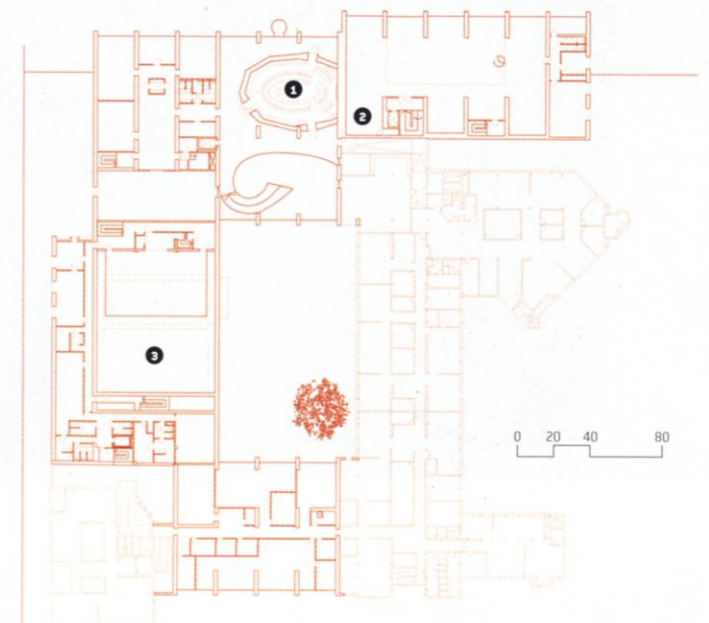
FROM FRONT VAN DOORN VERLICHTING: CUSTOM UP-LIGHTS (MEZZANINE, LIBRARY). VORWERK & CO.: CARPET (LIBRARY). THROUGHOUT FLOS: PENDANT, CEILING FIXTURES, TABLE LAMPS. NEON WEKA: CUSTOM NEON FIXTURES.



The reddish-orange dye for the banners in the theater is derived from the root of the madder plant, which takes three years to grow. "Then there's one harvest of this beautiful, rich color," Jongstra says. To clad the exterior of the huge faceted dome standing on the mezzanine above the entry—looking not unlike a yurt but in fact housing the municipal council chamber—Jongstra chose felt dyed by indigo plants to produce a royal blue, a nod to the ancient nomads who used it on yurts to signify wealth. Inside, angular wall sections are covered by textured felt panels in cream and gray, colors befitting the wedding ceremonies that Nijverdal officials perform here as many as three times a week. The palette is also restrained enough not to distract from monthly government meet-

ings, when 30 officials can gather around the impressive table that rings the room. Also pale gray are the table's lacquered top and the upholstery on the task chairs and low benches.

Outside the council chamber, ancient craftsmanship meets pop art. Signage indicating the building's different public areas glows in neon red, green, and blue, while a softer light emanates from frosted-glass pendant fixtures that look like giant piña colada Life Savers. As for the gracefully minimalist sconces and up-lights, they have a populist derivation, too. They were inspired by the paper cones that french fries are sold in. 🍟



- 1 COUNCIL CHAMBER
- 2 LIBRARY
- 3 THEATER