Project

Residential and Retail Building, Almere, The Netherlands

The Dutch town of Almere is not a place that has grown successively, but was planned on a drawing board, originating after the war as polder land reclaimed from the Ijsselmeer Lake. The masterplan for the new, enlarged town center was developed by the OMA architecture studio. A striking characteristic of this city center area is an artificially raised, curved slab ("Gebogen Maaiveld"), which connects the existing retail center with the Weerwater Lake as a new pedestrian level. Underneath this floor slab is an area for local east-west vehicular traffic, as well as for deliveries, parking, and buses. The new residential and retail building is situated at the highest point of the curved slab, where access roads lead to the 'underworld' of services and infrastructure.

The masterplan envisioned the combined residential and retail structure to be a high and very deep building volume with a footprint measuring 27×55 meters. With a trapezoidal floor plan that bends inward on both sides, it was possible to achieve the maximum possible amount of natural light for the residential spaces within the given perimeter. The volume does not rise up in a straight vertical line, but inclines toward the south and east while broadening as it ascends.

On the ground and first floors the retail areas are occupied by the Hema department store chain, with the second floor used as storage space. Both basement levels serve as a parking garage. Originally conceived as condominiums, a total of 72 apartments are now offered for rental over eight floors. As a result of the expansion of the building volume toward the top, larger, south-facing apartments can be offered on the higher, more desirable floors. The floor plans are largely derived from the tunnel formwork technique commonly used in the Netherlands.

On the residential floors the building form is defined by the bands of glazed balcony parapets. In plan the glazed façade of each apartment describes an obtuse angle, thereby forming triangular balcony spaces as well as providing privacy from the neighboring balconies. The jagged shape of the floor plan repeats to a lesser extent the principle followed by the greater building volume of maximizing surface area and natural light.

The façade is wrapped entirely in glass: color-enameded glazing is employed for the cladding of the ground floor, while the parapets of the apartment balconies consist of safety glass laminated with colored film. The residential areas have floor-to-ceiling windows to maximize natural light. The color concept for the building's façades was developed in collaboration with the artist Adrian Schiess: orange for the corners facing the south and east, light green toward the pedestrian area, light blue facing north, and finally, highly reflective silver for half of the two longest, angled façades toward the north and south. The inward- and outwardsloping glazed surfaces reflect the sky and surroundings, while the obtuse-angled surfaces additionally reflect the building itself as well as the nearby exterior spaces. The immediate surroundings thus play an integral part in how the building is perceived.

GG, December 2011
Credits

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Address:
De Diagonaal 187
1315 XM Almere Stadshart
The Netherlands

Spatial Programme: Residential and retail building with 72 apartments (70–145 m²) on 8 storeys; 2700 m² retail space for the department store HEMA on ground and first floor (including restaurant, offices and storage spaces); underground parking.

Competition: Workshop Process with Interview, 2002


Client: Blauwhoed Eurowoningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Architecture: Annette Gigon / Mike Guyer, Architects, Zurich

Collaborators:
Preliminary/Building Project Phase: Christof Bhend
Tender Documentation Phase: Volker Mencke
Construction Phase: Pieter Rabijns

Local Contact Architect:: B+M, Den Haag, The Netherlands

General Contractor: J.P. van Eesteren bv, Barendrecht, The Netherlands

Construction Management: Blauwhoed Eurowoningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Gross Floor Area (SIA 416): 14'700 m²

Structural Engineer: ABT bv, Arnhem, The Netherlands

Building Services Engineer/Building Physics Engineer: Huygen Elwako bv, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Colours: Adrian Schiess, Zurich and Mouans-Sartoux, France

Photography: Jeroen Musch, Rotterdam, The Netherlands