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Building Systems

MEDIA INFORMATION

October 2019

LocHal, Tilburg:

Engines for urban transformation

Civic Architects have transformed a railway depot from the 1930s into a "hybrid library", saving a piece of local industrial history from oblivion in the process. The versatile industrial building in the centre of Tilburg, known as the "LocHal", has been given a new interior – and generous glazing on the south/west facade with the VISS steel profile system.

Until well into the 1980s, the "track zone" of Tilburg, which was once a maintenance station for the Dutch railway, reverberated to the sound of hammering and welding of locomotives and carriages – then gradually, one after the other, the workshops closed down. As part of its urban renewal, the city of Tilburg acquired the approximately 75-hectare site north of the railway tracks. It is now to be gradually transformed into an urban centre. The plan is for a mix of new buildings and the preservation of selected buildings that have shaped the townscape for generations. These include the former railway depot, which is now facing a new future as the "LocHal".

The two-span industrial hall, which attracts attention from afar thanks to its sheer size of 90 x 60 m and 15 m high, has been largely preserved as a cultural and social space. Civic Architects have only added two levels and a gallery, as well as the "City Balcony", which offers an unobstructed view of the old town on the opposite side of the tracks. The LocHal is the result of a close collaboration between the Amsterdam architects and Braaksma & Roos Architectenbureau, along with Inside Outside's Petra Blaisse. The engineering firm Arup provided advice on the structure, building physics and acoustics, while the library, the various "laboratories", the café and the offices were furnished by Mecanoo. All these well-known firms have created this very special place in an exemplary cooperation.

The entrance hall of the LocHal is in the shape of a covered town square with reading tables dotted around, an exhibition area and a bistro. The big steps up to the first level can be used as seating for more than a thousand spectators. A wide flight of stairs leads deeper into the building, which is characterised by its huge glass facades. On the second level, the gallery allows a closer look at the historic industrial glazing. This has been restored where possible. Wherever the facade was renewed – either because add-ons were removed or because the conversion required more daylight – large-scale glass facades were created. Civic Architects opted for the Jan-

sen VISS profile system – a steel profile system that is particularly suited to the manufacture of large-format, highly heat-insulated vertical facades. Its narrow face width of just 60 millimetres (150 millimetres deep) allows maximum daylight to flood in. The new facade sits in front of the primary structure of the locomotive shed and has been attached to it with steel plates. The black steel profiles skilfully underline the industrial character of the former locomotive shed.

But there was another reason to choose the high-load-bearing steel profile system, namely the enormous glass sizes and the arrangement of the panes within the 5.40-metre-wide building grid. In the top row, each pane is 1.35 metres wide; four panes fill the grid. Underneath that runs a strip of two 2.70-metre panes, i.e. double the width of those above. The three panes on the bottom row, with their width of 1.80 metres each, break the pattern in that the vertical posts in the middle row now meet the middle of the transom on the bottom row. In order to transfer the load of the post through the resulting 90-degree angle, that transom is reinforced with an internal steel plate – an architectural trick that is only possible with steel profiles. From the outside, the facade looks as if it were a single piece.

With the VISS system, Jansen offers a highly thermally insulated facade construction with Passive House certification – even though this was not required for the LocHal. As large parts of the historic industrial glazing were restored for preservation reasons, only double-glazing was used in the newly constructed areas. The building envelope is primarily intended to protect against wind and weather. A sophisticated climate control concept ensures a comfortable temperature inside. Six floor-to-ceiling “textile walls” (design: Petra Blaisse) allow individual areas to be separated and their temperatures to be controlled separately.

The principle chosen for the climate control of the large space – namely “warm up the people, not the room” – can be understood both literally and figuratively: with the LocHal, Civic Architects have created a high-quality urban space that is enthusiastically received by residents and visitors alike.

Info box

Maximum possibilities with a minimum of components

With the VISS facade system, Jansen offers a modular construction system that allows energy-efficient high-tech facades to be planned and executed simply and economically – even roof glazing is possible. The outstanding structural properties of steel allow large-format glass surfaces to be arranged with extremely narrow, delicate frames for outstanding interior views. This creates a unique sense of space that combines spaciousness and transparency with the safety and security of a sophisticated system solution.

Project details:
Owner: Tilburg City Council, Netherlands
Architecture: Civic Architects, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Metalworkers: Façadis Geveltechniek, AH Oldenzaal/NL
Steel profile system used: VISS
System supplier: Jansen AG, Oberriet/CH /Klöckner Metals ODS Nederland

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Captions:

pic_01_LocHal_CI-BIB3-1902.jpg: Civic Architects have transformed a railway depot from the 1930s into a “hybrid library”, saving a piece of local industrial history from oblivion in the process. The versatile industrial building in the centre of Tilburg, known as the “LocHal”, attracts hundreds of visitors every day. Not all of them come for the library – many are also attracted by the various science labs, the Seats2Meet or simply the bistro.

pic_02_LocHal_CI-BIB2-1106-2.jpg: The two-span industrial hall from the 1930s has been largely preserved as a cultural and social space.

pic_03_LocHal_CI-BIB3-2047.jpg: The historic industrial glazing (pictured above) has been repaired wherever possible.

pic_04_LocHal_CI-BIB4-2728.jpg: The architects opted for the Jansen VISS steel profile system for the new facades.

pic_05_LocHal_CI-BIB3-2030-1.jpg: With the LocHal, Civic Architects have created a high-quality urban space that is enthusiastically received by residents and visitors alike.

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