

FOREWORD TO 'BINNENHOF' THEME ISSUE

Ever since the dismissal of OMA's Ellen van Loon as architect of a major Binnenhof renovation project in September 2019, the extreme sensitivity of any intervention in this building complex has been apparent for all to see. Yet despite exhaustive media coverage, the issue was also surrounded by [an air of] secrecy. Criticism of the plans was nothing short of scathing: megalomaniac, overly ambitious and a desecration of our building complex. That 'our' referred to the users: the parliamentarians and bureaucrats, but implicitly [and by extension] every Dutch citizen as well. The Binnenhof has been the focal point of Dutch politics since the thirteenth century. As the centre of power it is imbued with enormous political and historical significance. But the complex of buildings, which evolved over the course of eight centuries, is also of considerable architectural-historical importance. The Binnenhof consists in large part made of noteworthy buildings, dating from the thirteenth to the twentieth century, and features a great variety of spaces and a complicated structure. Several meticulously preserved historical interiors are world class. This monumental ensemble is the product of successive extensions, renovations and restorations, often carried out by renowned architects, but seldom without controversy or political connotations. Prolonged intensive use, structural and technical deficiencies, new fire safety and security requirements and growing visitor numbers had made a new round of modifications unavoidable. Since 2021 the Binnenhof has been undergoing a suite of rigorous renovations by different architects and building companies, which are expected to take at least five years.

In 2015, by way of preparation for this renovation, the Rijksvastgoedbedrijf (Central Government Real Estate Agency, RVB for short), published *Objectvisie Binnenhof* to complement the *Masterplan Binnenhof* drawn up three years earlier by the Atelier Rijksbouwmeester (Office of the Government Architect). Whereas the masterplan approached the complex primarily from the perspective of functionality and use, the 'object' statement focused on the architectural quality and heritage value of the individual buildings. This was based on a previously published study of various aspects of the Binnenhof and on building history surveys carried out for this purpose. Publications about the Binnenhof are numerous and diverse. We mention a few of these as examples of different approaches and important moments in the historiography. Then, as now, modifications were often a spur to architectural-historical research, beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century. This in turn generated publications dedicated to the buildings and their restorations. *Het Binnenhof te 's-Gravenhage in plaat en schrift* by Arnold Isings appeared on the occasion of a major renovation of the Binnenhof in 1879-1882. Two works were published in 1891 in anticipation of the next phase: *De Landsgebouwen te 's-Gravenhage* by the Government Architect Cornelis Peters and the more polemical *Het Binnenhof en 's landsgebouwen in de residentie* by Victor de Stuers. In 1907 the committee responsible for the renovation of the Grafelijke Zalen (Counts' Chambers) in 1898-1904, issued its report in the form of a richly illustrated volume

entitled *Beschrijving van de Grafelijke Zalen op het Binnenhof te 's-Gravenhage*. It was due to this book as much as to the actual restoration and redevelopment that the Grafelijke Zalen came to occupy a prominent position in the public perception of the entire complex. Later on in the twentieth century, restorations and renovations continued to be reported on in published works like *Van Kwartier van Hun Hoogmogenden tot Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, Kabinet van de Minister-President* by J.P.M. Goudeau (1980) and *Eerste Kamer. Reflecties over de Vergaderzaal van de 'Chambre de Réflexion' (1995) en Tweede Kamer. Van doolhof naar eenheid* (1996), both edited by P.E. Spijkerman.

A different perspective on the history and significance of the complex is that of the residents, users and designers. The most important study of written sources covering the first five hundred years is still G.G. Calkoen's article 'Het Binnenhof van 1247-1747 (volgens de Rentmeesters-rekeningen van Noord-Holland)' in *Die Haghe* (1902). The year 1984 saw the publication of *Het Binnenhof. Van grafelijke residentie tot regeringscentrum*, edited by R.J. van Pelt and M.E. Tiethoff-Spliethoff, in which various authors described the complex's construction phases in relation to successive users, supplemented with chapters on prominent architects and the debates about restorations. Two articles are crucial to understanding the political significance of the thirteenth-century counts' chambers: 'De "Grote Zaal" van Floris V te Den Haag. Een onderzoek naar de betekenis van het concept' by A.J.J. Mekking (1991) and 'Die gräflichen Säle auf dem Binnenhof. Architektur- und bauhistorische Untersuchung' by E. Röell (2004). Outstanding interiors, extensions and designs have been discussed in monographs dealing successively with the seventeenth-, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century architects Daniel Marot (1988), Pieter Post (1993), Pieter de Swart (1997) and W.N. Rose (2001). The last of these also received a good deal of attention in *De Rijksbouwmeesters. Twee eeuwen architectuur van de Rijksgebouwendienst en zijn voorlopers* edited by C.J. van der Peet and G.H.P. Steenmeijer (1995). Of interest in the context of the current renovation is *Het belang van het Binnenhof. Twee eeuwen Haagse politiek, huisvesting en herinnering* (2015), in which Diederik Smit analysed the Binnenhof's significance as the home of the Netherlands' national administration, and the many debates on this topic. Appreciation of the Binnenhof as architectural heritage is also evident in Paula van der Heiden's 2018 book, *Interieurs van het Binnenhof*.

In recent years, with an eye to the upcoming renovation, RvB commissioned several new building history surveys of those parts of the complex where interventions in the built substance were envisaged. These sub-studies, building history reports and evaluations can be found on the RvB's website. Thanks to the Binnenhof's rich, eight-hundred-year history, new research continues to produce important new insights. We highlight some of them in this thematic issue, which contains seven articles that together cover a large part of the Binnenhof complex in terms of both time and space. We begin in the very heart of the complex, the residence of the counts of Holland. Judith van Kesteren has investigated its thirteenth-century origins and refutes the claim that they

lie in a hunting lodge built by Count Floris IV. Although a comparison with other courts in and beyond the county of Holland indicates some use for hunting, it is clear that from its inception this early court also had a ceremonial function. Paula van der Heiden and Hein Hundertmark re-examined the roof line and two towers in the front facade of the Grote Zaal or Ridderzaal (Great Hall or Knights' Hall). Based on an analysis of assembly marks and entablatures, they conclude that these towers were part of the original elevation built in around 1295 by Count Floris V. Mark van Gend reflects on the acrimonious debate over the restoration of the Grafelijke Zalen towards the end of the nineteenth century. He shows how the battle between the ministries of Binnenlandse Zaken en Waterstaat (Internal Affairs and Water, Trade & Industry) ended in the latter's favour, heralding a decline in the influence wielded by Victor de Stuers and Pierre Cuypers over government policy and growing receptiveness to other views on restoration ethics. Next Ronald Stenvert introduces readers to the building history of the western section of the Binnenhof, the Stadhoudersplein Kwartier. The focus here is on the power struggle between the stadholders and the States of Holland, which can be deduced from the layout and design of the buildings, and which has never before been presented in this way.

From here we proceed clockwise past other components of the Binnenhof, which has been extended on the east and south side from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. Natasja Hogen describes the climate control design devised by W.N. Rose for the building he designed for the Departement van Koloniën (Colonial Office, 1859-1861). Although it functioned poorly in practice, the system for heating and ventilation is an important Dutch example of the pursuit of thermal comfort and a healthy indoor climate in office buildings and of the architectural integration of technical installations. Ester Vink delved into the archives in order to unravel the design history of the Departement van Justitie (Department of Justice, 1876-1885). This building has usually been attributed to Cornelis Peters, but it turns out that Cuypers and De Stuers also had a hand in its design. Finally, Paul Meurs examines the long-drawn-out realization of a new addition to the Tweede Kamer (Lower House) from 1970 to 1992. Key concerns were its integration with the listed heritage site, the desire for clarity and accessibility, and its connection with the surrounding historical buildings.

Despite the diversity of topics and approaches in the articles, there are also striking constants: strong ambitions with respect to representation, monumentality, quality, functionality and the relation with the historical context, and – from the nineteenth century – conflicting views and fierce public debates, which often resulted in more conservative compromises in the execution. In that respect, too, the current renovation is part of a rich tradition.

On behalf of the editors:

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Binnenhof from the northwest (photo Gerhard van Roon, Central Government Real Estate Agency)

- 1 Counts' Chambers / 2 Great Hall (Knights' Hall) / 3 Stadholder's Quarters / 4 Colonial Office /
5 Ministry of Justice / 6 Lower House