

**Jo Coenen: Netherlands Architecture Institute**

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Yet the examples of impressive institute buildings of architects are rare. The Netherlands Architects Institute is one good example of this kind.

The Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAI) is more than a museum of architecture. It is above all a cultural institute which is open to the public and which uses a variety of methods for communicating about the shaping of human space.

The Netherlands Architecture Institute achieves an architectural unity through fragments that work as a whole to provide a provocative museum experience. The program's components link not only to function effectively, but also to merge in their function making spatial overlaps necessary. Its principal components, museum (exhibition hall), archive, auditorium, and administration are housed in four distinct building forms, each legible on the exterior by its primary finish.

The central hall is entered from either a broad concrete ramp from the north road or through the park's entrance over a narrow timber walkway spanning the reflecting pool. The two entrances form an enjoyable urban route through and into the hall which links visitors via a wooden bridge to all important spaces of the institute.

Immediately upon entry into the building one is suspended—absorbing the visual links to spaces above, below and across, the collage of color, the intersection of materials and light. The central administration hall, enclosed in glass on a visible concrete frame, rises under a steel pergola construction serving as a key urban landmark. Its upper levels of offices and public library have views over Rotterdam.

Off this hall is the museum, clad in dark red baked brick; its levels of exhibit space are connected by a perimeter stairwell as well as by visual connections between floors.

The skewed auditorium, primarily of glass and wood, intersects the main hall from the opposite side. Bending from the north, the long gently curved archive in coated steel plate sits atop a concrete arcade that, by night, is festively illuminated by computer-directed colored light developed by the artist Peter Struycken.

A coherence of the fragments comes with light, bright or somber, passing through the building's consistent structural bay dimensions. Throughout the museum, the structure and mechanical equipment are exposed. Opaque and transparent surfaces have been carefully arranged, purposefully planned for optimum light orchestration.

Photographs: Roos Aldershoff

Official website of Netherlands Architects Institute:

[www.nai.nl/e/index.html](http://www.nai.nl/e/index.html)

To know more about this institute and the building visit:

[www.nai.nl/e/aboutnai/index.html](http://www.nai.nl/e/aboutnai/index.html)

See this project from Google Earth [CLICK HERE](#) to download the KMZ file (after downloading double click on it to fly through Google Earth).