



VRIENDEN

The Vondel Church ('De Vondelkerk')

Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
Vondelstraat 120 D 1054 GS Amsterdam

History

Date of building: 1872-1879.

Architect: Pierre Cuypers (1827-1921), who also designed Central Station, Rijksmuseum and Posthoornkerk

Commissioner: Diocese of Haarlem, the board of 'H. Nicolaas buiten de Veste'

The church was closed in 1978 because it was ruinous. The inventory and some fixed parts of the church were sold or put in storage awaiting the sale. Plans for housing construction didn't get off the ground in 1980 a foundation 'Stichting Vondelkerk' was established and took the initiative to restore.

Restoration

Commissioner: 'Stichting Vondelkerk' later taken over by Amsterdam Monuments Fund

Restoration: completed in 1985

Restoration architect: André van Stigt

At present

Owner Stadsherstel Amsterdam since merger with AMF in 1999

The building is available for concert, church service, congress, reception, and wedding ceremony for example. Information about renting: Stadsherstel, phone 020-5200090.

<http://www.stadsherstel.nl>

The building process

When the freedom of religion was restored during the French domination, many new churches were built already. The restoration of the Episcopal hierarchy in 1853 launched one of the greatest building campaigns in the Dutch history. New catholic churches mushroomed all over the country. An architectonic renewal movement which found inspiration in the Middle Ages and the Gothic revival developed in the same period. Cuypers was the main representative of this movement in the Netherlands.

The building of the Vondel church is closely connected to the building of the 'Vondelstraat' for which the first plans were presented by Cuypers in 1866. Cuypers designed the houses at street numbers 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48 as well as 73, 75, 77 and 79 (Cuypers's residence) of this part of town-development.

Architecture

Cuypers based the design of the Vondel church on a medieval example, making use of modern techniques like steel constructions for the tower. The entrance to the church originally was at the south side, facing the length of the new street. Offices are housed there now. The present wardrobe came in the place of the choir and the altar. The composition of coloured brick masonry, mainly dark and bright red for the pillars is characteristic. The vaults have yellow fields and green white ribs.

'A tower has to be high, a low tower is an absurdity', Cuypers used to say, so the tower is 50 meters high.

The original tower got lost during a fire in 1904. The ingenious construction with a steel ring as a support for the tower, luckily saved the church itself. The tower was rebuilt after a design by son Joseph Cuypers and could be realized, just like the building of the church some decades before, thanks to many gifts including some by non Catholics.

Church interior

Tile plaques have been made along the side aisles (entrance of the bathrooms) as background for the Stations of the Cross (which are no longer there). Saints' statues stood on the consoles of the pillars, but these have been auctioned in the seventies. Looking up from the middle of the church one sees a shield with a symbolic representation of the holy city of Jerusalem on a blue background. The stained glass windows present the evangelists Marc, Matthew, Luke and John for example.

Particulars of the restoration

Parts of the church have been separated by glass windows and let as office space to cover exploitation cost. The build-in is kept as transparent as possible, in order to maintain the spacious impression. Bathrooms were built in the cellar, where one can see nearby how the vaults were built up.

The appearance of Amsterdam is largely characterized by monumental and historic buildings. 'Stadsherstel Amsterdam N.V.' takes care of sustainable preservation of disintegrating monumental and representative heritage within the defence line of Amsterdam ('Stelling van Amsterdam'). The main activities are restoring buildings, giving them a new purpose and managing them with care. Stadsherstel contributes considerably to the preservation of heritage for the next generations and helps to keep alive the craft of restoration.