



FENIX: from the world's largest warehouse to a world class museum

From the late nineteenth century onwards, more than three million people boarded ships at the nearby docks, embarking from Rotterdam on a new life, mostly in the United States and Canada. Some of them famous like Johnny Weismuller, Willem de Kooning, Max Beckmann and Albert Einstein. Love, hope, work, sheer necessity or a sense of adventure have always moved people to pack their bags and leave for a new life elsewhere. FENIX explores, exhibits and explains this timeless and universal phenomenon and all the emotions associated with it.

FENIX brings together an ever growing, international curated collection of art, history and personal stories. The collection includes photographs, historical objects, art and commissioned pieces, both contemporary and historical. It will be displayed in a meticulously restored former riverside warehouse built in 1923. The striking building by architect Cornelis Nicolaas van Goor (1861-1945) is made of reinforced concrete, and features distinctive windows and sturdy columns. It is currently undergoing an extensive restoration, to ensure that this fine example of Rotterdam port architecture is preserved for the future.

A new feature will be the so-called Tornado, a double helix staircase swirling up from the ground floor, leading to a platform that affords a spectacular view over the river and the city, designed by MAD Architects.

MAD Architects is established by Ma Yansong in Beijing in 2004. FENIX is MAD Architects' first commission for a cultural public building in Europe and will be the first museum built by a Chinese firm in Europe. The organic and technologically advanced forms in the architecture of FENIX represent the movement of people. Around 1900 the peninsula of Katendrecht, where FENIX is located, was one of the earliest Chinatowns in Europe. Katendrecht used to be the site of opium dens and the home of the first Chinese restaurant in the Netherlands, as well as in continental Europe. The Chinese background of Katendrecht was an extra reason to choose for MAD Architects.

FENIX is initiated by the Droom en Daad Foundation and is due to open early 2024.

A New Narrative: Curating Art, Objects and Stories

FENIX will continue building its museum collection, bringing together historical objects, photography and art both contemporary and historical. Several acquisitions have already been made, including the iconic photograph *The Steerage* (1907) by Alfred Stieglitz, a huge swinging metal fence by Shilpa Gupta, Bill Viola's video *Ancestors* (2012) and *We The People* (2011-2013), a fragment of Danh Vø's Statue of Liberty.

Movement of people

The modern city of Rotterdam is a melting pot, home to over 170 nationalities; a city of arrivals and departures. Packing your bags and starting anew is an integral part of life in this port city, but it is also a timeless and universal phenomenon. FENIX will connect the past, the present and the wider world by focusing in its collection on the movement of people. Love, hope, beliefs, climate change, work, family: the themes connected to migration are endless. FENIX is building a wide-ranging collection that explores these topics. International artists like Do Ho Suh, Red Grooms, Ugo Rondinone, Omar Victor Diop and Rineke Dijkstra among others already feature in the collection, alongside emerging talents such as Benjamin Li and Omar Imam. FENIX has also invited artists to make new work, including Beya Gille Gacha, Efrat Zehavi and Hugo McCloud.

Photography

A monumental photographic installation consisting of several hundreds of photographs will be on permanent display on the 7000 m² exhibition space on the upper floor. This exhibition focusing on documentary images and portraits, brings together the most striking photos on the subject of migration and touches on themes such as family, love and saying goodbye. Among the hundreds of portraits are iconic images by Dorothea Lange, Lewis Hine, Wang Fuchun, Ara Güler, Sem Presser and Eva Besnyö. The reference for this permanent photographic installation is the legendary exhibition 'Family of Man', Edward Steichen's 1955 ode to humanity.

Luggage labyrinth

With two thousand donated suitcases FENIX will build a maze. Visitors can walk through it, get lost and hopefully find the exit. Currently, hundreds of suitcases have already been donated, ranging from large leather trunks with elaborate fittings and battered suitcases with stickers showing their destination to small rucksacks. All these personal belongings reveal individual stories about the former owners and their journeys. The luggage labyrinth will be a permanent installation, symbolising the search for a new path in life.

Facts & Figures

Fenix Warehouse II

Commissioned in 1923 as the San Francisco warehouse, then the largest warehouse in the world.

Architect: C.N. van Goor (1861-1945)

Original total length of facade: 360 meters

Building height warehouse: 13.4 meters

Museum area: 16.000 m2, divided over 2 floors

Design: MAD Architects

Restoration architect: Bureau Polderman, Rotterdam

Building partner: Dura Vermeer

Commissioned by Stichting Droom en Daad, 2018

Opening: foreseen early 2024

Partners

Stadsarchief Rotterdam

Maritiem Museum

Museum Rotterdam

Nederlands Fotomuseum

Wereldmuseum

Ellis Island, New York (United States)

Pier 21, Halifax (Canada)

Red Star Line Museum, Antwerp (Belgium)

The Droom en Daad Foundation was founded in 2016 and invests in cultural projects in Rotterdam to make the city liveable for residents and loveable for visitors.

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