



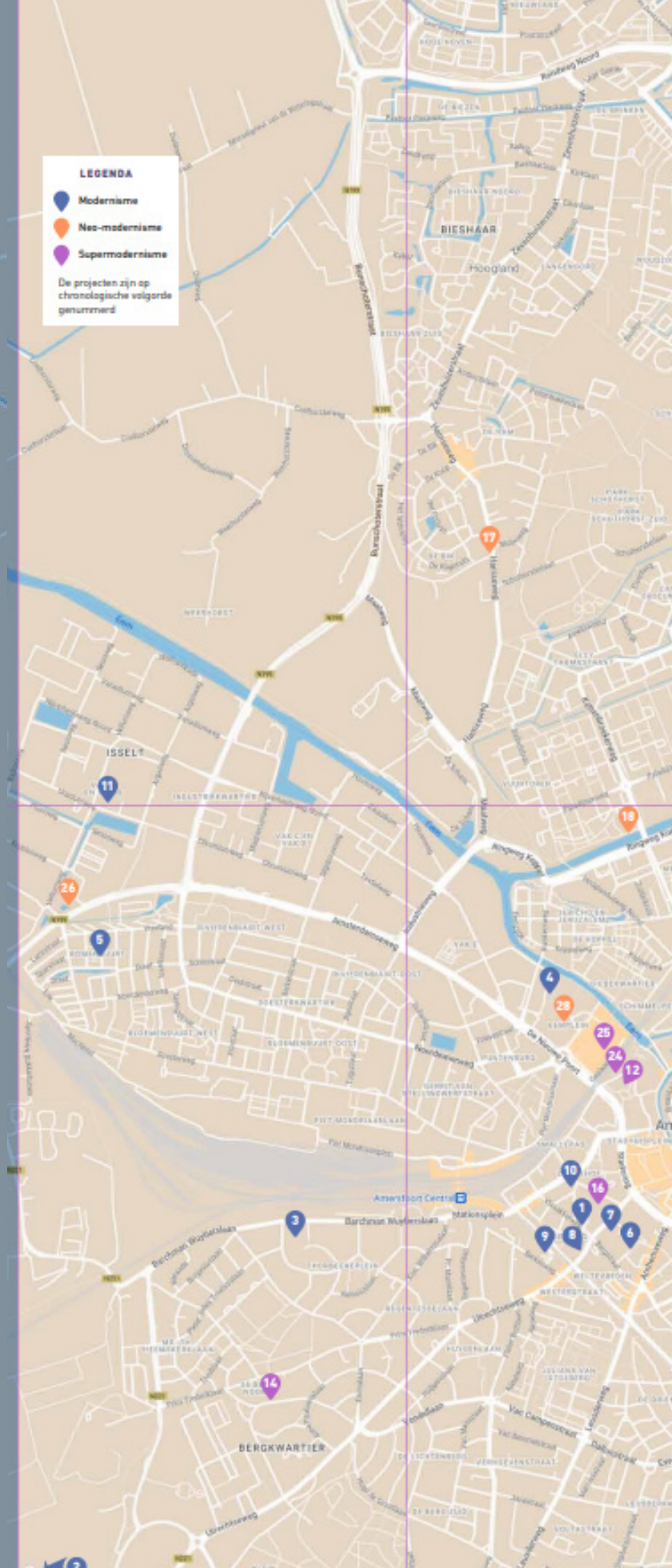
# Modernism in Amersfoort

The word 'modern' has the vague meaning of 'not old-fashioned'. Modern architecture therefore means all sorts of things. What is true in fashion is also true for architecture: new styles evoke counter-reactions and sometimes a revival follows. This anthology shows buildings in Amersfoort that are architecturally rooted in modernism.

**Modernism**  
 Modernism emerged as an architectural movement at the beginning of the 20th century. The architects of the "Modern movement" felt that neo-styles (such as neo-Gothicism and neo-classicism) were out of date. The society that is industrialized, efficient and functional requires different architecture. They experiment with new technical possibilities such as reinforced concrete, use columns instead of load-bearing walls (skeletal construction) and apply large glass openings. Like traditional architects, they strive for affordable and good housing for everyone. By making use of standardization and industrial production, this aim succeeds: "Light, air and space" becomes the motto in modern architecture as well as urban planning.

**Neomodernism**  
 Modernism is enjoying worldwide success. But because of the uniformity of postwar mass housing, modernism does lose its charm. In the mid-1980s, interest revived and 'neomodernism' emerged. Elements of the modern formal language, such as horizontal window strips and flat roofs are reapplied, but at the same time materials and constructions are made more visible.

**Supermodernism**  
 Globalization and the 24-hour economy take off in the 1990s. Places like airports and shopping malls are designed in a high-profile way. The term 'super - modernism' emerges. Although the exterior of these 'landmarks' looks simple, the interior is often complex. Clever architectural constructions make exciting divisions of space possible. The crisis of 2008 brought the heyday of super-modernism to an end. However, Amersfoort was fortunate to have a few more special buildings in its possession.



In every time period, designers shape the city in contemporary ways. FASadE makes an effort to bring inspiring projects to the attention of a wide audience. On [fasade.nl](http://fasade.nl) you will find an extensive overview of architectural styles. This overview shows that totally different architectural movements coexist in the same time period and that a multitude of nuances can exist within a movement.

## Supermodernism

Particularly Dutch architectural firms (“Superdutch”) such as OMA, MDRDV, Neutelings Riedijk, UNStudio and VenhoevenCS, become famous with collage-like designs for office and commercial buildings. You could say that Amersfoort was at the cradle of supermodernism. Berkel en Bos Architectenbureau manages to attract the attention of the (inter)national media in the early 1990s with a number of remarkable Amersfoort projects, such as the Schakelstation REMU (no.12) and the Karbouw office (no.13). This is followed by the design for the Erasmus Bridge in Rotterdam, which makes the architectural firm world famous. In 1998 the firm changed its name to UNStudio, where UN stands for United Network: the firm as a network of various specialists in the field of architecture, infrastructure and urban planning.

## Het Nieuwe Bouwen

Modernism (‘The Modern Movement’) is known in the Netherlands as ‘Het Nieuwe Bouwen’: an architectural style that can be recognized by the use of new materials and techniques and by a sober and functional design without much decoration. ‘Nieuwe Bouwen’ also includes architectural movements such as ‘De Stijl’, ‘Nieuwe zakelijkheid’ and ‘Functionalism’.



1

**Showroom with house (1934)**

Vlasakkerweg 3A

**W. van Gent**

This building shows that different architectural styles can be close together. Originally, the building had brick facades with a strong expressive joint. By plastering the facades white, the appearance has changed completely. Now the building now has many similarities to the architecture of the ‘Nieuwe Bouwen’, partly because of the steel windows and doors. The Nefkens advertising sign has made way for the text ‘be happy’: an exhortation to cheerfulness. Concept and design for ‘be happy’ (2009) is by Michel Schoonderbeek and Peter Hopman.



2

**Residence van Beek (1937)**

Utrechtseweg 375

**J.H. Blom after design by G.Th. Rietveld**

Commissioned by Mrs. van Beek, Gerrit Rietveld designed a striking villa. However, the design was not to her liking and Rietveld returned the commission. Subsequently, the Amersfoort-based architectural firm J.H. Blom made a few changes to the design. Different roof heights are added, for example. The 1937 building shows characteristic modernist features: overhanging flat roofs, white smooth walls and large areas of glass. The strong relationship that exists between inside and outside (light, air and space) is striking. The large balconies and terraces are accessible from almost every room.



3

**Gymnasium Johan v. Oldenbarnevelt (1929-1933)**

Groen van Prinstererlaan 33 / Barchman Wuytierslaan

**C.B. van der Tak**

Modern buildings are not always white. Architect Van der Tak was undoubtedly inspired in the design of this school building by architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Berlage. Sleek rectangular volumes, with flat roofs are combined with horizontal canopies. The front facades are monumental and tightly designed. The rear facades to which the classrooms border are more open and functional. In terms of style - period, this architecture is a mixture of modernism, expressionism and traditionalism. The building is currently used for living and working.



4

**Prodentfactory (1935-1937)**

Oude Fabriekstraat 20

**P.A. Warners**

“Erdal” was a factory for cosmetics and detergents and was designed as a plain brick building with some decorative additions. Despite the brick façade, the building has modern features: a steel frame with reinforced concrete floors and a rhythmic façade with large glass openings. The column-free hall in the production departments receives daylight from above and allowed the installation of large machines. Demolition of the factory complex was avoided through Siesta’s efforts. In 2013, the building was purchased by developing investor Schipper Bosch, which is developing it into a multifunctional complex with space for crafts, businesses, education and events. The repurposed Prodent Factory will be the catalyst for the area development of the entire Oliemolenkwartier, now called ‘The New City’.



5

**Bomenbuurt (1950)**

Soesterkwartier

**A. Roimans** (stedenbouw),

**D. Zuiderhoek** (architectuur)

The traditional urban planning structure with streets and closed building blocks has been abandoned in modern urbanism. Living, working and recreation are separated and buildings are placed in collective open spaces, with communal entrances such as porches. The urban plan for the Bomenbuurt has a clear modern design, but combines this with traditional corner turns and closed street profiles. The straight streets appear extra wide because of the public grass strips laid out in place of private front gardens.



6

**Rietveldpavilion 'de Zonnehof' (1956-1959)**

Zonnehof 8

**G.Th. Rietveld**

Light, air and space are the main ingredients of this extraordinary exhibition pavilion. To celebrate the 700th anniversary of the city of Amersfoort, architect and furniture maker Gerrit Rietveld designed this first Exhibition-hal in the Netherlands. The design of the Zonnehof is based on a 3x3 meter size system that is reflected throughout the building. Modern materials were used, such as glass, steel and concrete. In order not to damage the interior walls, many brackets have been placed in the butt joints, which together form a plane. It is an invitation to hang art, which is still being used.



7

**Levob building (1959)**

Utrechtseweg 12

**J.H. Oosterhuis**

The office building of a life insurance company (Levob) has many modern features: a sleek main form, slender design and a flat facade with large glass openings and horizontal glass strips. The construction of the building consists of cores and floors of concrete, combined with a steel skeleton of floor beams and supporting columns in the facade. This makes the floors freely divisible. This building was almost demolished, but instead renovated and preserved in 2008. This was done while preserving characteristic elements, such as the natural stone facade, the bare concrete, the steel construction and the aluminum window frames. Artist Pieter Starreveld designed the sculpture on the canopy for this building specially.



8

**Nefkens building (1969 en 2021)**  
 Utrechtseweg 27-29/ Vlasakkerweg  
**original design: Architectenbureau H.A. and ir. G. Pothoven,**  
**transformation: architectenbureau De Kort Van Schaik (2021)**

Originally designed for the car company Nefkens, this building contains a car showroom, a fuel pump and offices. As of 2002, the building houses hospitality, a bank and office space. In 2020, the building was preserved and transformed into luxury apartments and a restaurant. In doing so, the existing architecture was carefully built upon. Both wings were given an additional floor. The forecourt was greened and the rear of the building was modified to provide private outdoor spaces for the apartments.



9

**Office buildings Berkenweg (1969-1970)**  
 Berkenweg  
**E.F. Groosman and M.J. Klijnstra**

You can tell from the facades of the offices that they are not structurally load-bearing. The continuous horizontal strips of glass, typical of modernism, are not interrupted anywhere. The concrete columns can be seen through the glass strips in the interior. The slightly elevated position relative to street level reinforces the impression that the buildings seek little connection with their immediate surroundings.



10

**Voormalige Rabobank/Partijbureau SP (jaren '70 en 2013)**  
 Snouckaertlaan 70  
**Treep & Vermeulen and later De Twee Snoeken**

The building has the name 'De Moed – The Courage'. Jan Marijnissen, political leader of the Socialist Party (SP) at the time, justified the choice of name: 'It took courage to exchange our Rotterdam office for Amersfoort and to convert an old bank bunker into a modern and transparent party office'. Only the first floor has replaced the concrete panels for a high plinth of natural stone. On the upper floors, the concrete facades have been clad and plastered white to create a modern, businesslike office villa that blends well with the residential villas in the immediate vicinity. Next to the building is the sculpture 'One Man is More', after a poem by Karel Glastra van Loon.



11

**(Re)Fläkt building (1973-1974)**  
 Uraniumweg 23  
 Peter Gerssen

The Fläkt office building was commissioned by a Swedish company in air circulation systems. The buildings technical installations and design are progressive. The building mass is reflected in a pond and strongly dominates its surroundings. The building consists of three cylinders, each consisting of five or seven floors. Together they form one interior space: this is called an office garden. The entire building is constructed of precast concrete elements. The aluminum facade panels reflect sunlight and keep the building cool in the summer. The building stood empty for 20 years. Since then, owner Schipper Bosch has been working on the redevelopment into a dynamic office building with a mix of functions.



12

**Schakelstation REMU (1989-1994)**  
 Smallepad  
 Architectbureau Van Berkel & Bos (later UNStudio)

This building is an example of “supermodernism”: a building like a sculpture with only one door and window. This quickly raises questions. Yet its function can be read from the outside. The switching station was built on behalf of the Amersfoort electricity network. Windows and doors are unnecessary in this industrial building. The large building contains three electrical transformers. The facade is divided into two slightly shifted sections, which are executed in different materials: dark basalt blocks and light gray plastic panels. The division represents the transformation process of electric currents, and the materials refer to ‘earth’ and ‘conduction’.



13

**Karbouw and Schipper Bosch (1990-1992)**  
 Basicweg 7  
 Architectbureau Van Berkel & Bos (later UNStudio)

The commission for this office building was given to the then young architects Ben van Berkel and Caroline Bos. Instead of yet another rectangular office box, they managed to create an exciting building. In the design, the upper floor is placed with a slight twist on the substructure. This allows the building to face the tapered road and creates multiple entrances and a special spatial effect on the second floor. The building has been compared in newspaper articles to a perforator, hood and Polaroid camera.



14

**Villa Tiemens (1990)**  
 Willem de Zwijgerlaan 13  
 P.M.C. Scheers

The house is placed in an embankment and therefore largely disappears from the streetscape. Red elements and the sloping, slightly twisted glass of the first floor give the visible facade from the street its own character. By using the level difference in a playful way, the view from the road on the living room and outdoor terrace is minimized. The living room is equipped with an 18-meter long glass wall. This panoramic wall makes the forest garden an extension of the living room. The sloping wall and the interior with fascinating vistas means that this design can be seen as an early example of supermodernism.



15

**Woningen/politiepost (1990)**  
 Bombardonstraat 133-173  
 H. Klunder

Although this structure looks like a modern building from 1920, it dates from the 1990s. It therefore dates from the period of neomodernism, but cannot be classified here. For this, it is too literal a copy of modern architecture. Urban planner Ashok Bhalotra's urban design for Kattenbroek focused on the imagination and turned away from common architectural styles. One of the stated themes was 'traveling and being at home'. This theme was understood by some architects as traveling in time and they drew on old architectural styles. The design of these houses and police station was inspired by the modern architecture of J.J.P. Oud from the 1920s with characteristic rounded corner solutions and stuccoed facades.



16

**Grand Café villa Härtel (1990-1991) in villa Para (1990)**  
 Snouckaertlaan 30-36  
 Architectbureau Van Berkel & Bos (later UNStudio)

Villa Para was known to many Amersfoorters as Maison Härtel: a chic fashion store for ladies. Later a Grand Café was established here. Architecture firm Van Berkel & Bos designed the elegant glass extension together with Schipper Bosch. The facade on the side makes a small kink and is angled. Because the lower edge is set back, the conservatory seems to float. The interior with its beautiful bar was also designed by Berkel & Bos. Unfortunately, that bar is now no longer present. The sloping walls and the interior that seems to be composed of folded surfaces make this extension an early example of supermodernism.



17

**Woningen Hamseweg (1991-1994)**  
Hamseweg 60a-i  
**Architectbureau Van Berkel & Bos (later UNStudio)**

Hamseweg residential complex is located on a small courtyard. The attached houses look like detached houses. By playing with proportions, projections and repetition in the design, privacy and separation are arranged in a natural way. The spaciousness and openness of the homes does justice to the modern tradition of light, air and space. The use of wooden parts is in keeping with neomodernism. On the other hand, the slightly sloping facade and angular twists in the floor plan are reminiscent of supermodernism.



18

**Appartementcomplex 'De Waaier' (1992)**  
Garietstraat 203-299  
**Klunder architecten, M. de Ruiter**

The entrance to the Schothorst district has been given a face with this neo-modern building. This high apartment building has been constructed at the head of an existing care center. The sleek, curved facade with its large series of glass windows is strongly reminiscent of modernism. The blue-purple tones in the facade are striking. On the first floor, recreation rooms are hidden behind angled glass facades.



19

**Villa Wilbrink (1992)**  
Aaltostraat 4  
**Architectbureau Van Berkel & Bos (later UNStudio)**

From the outside, it is hardly noticeable that a villa is hidden behind this embankment. And this is exactly what the clients wanted: an introverted house with lots of privacy and light. The architects combine two typologies: the closed character is inspired by the bunker and the qualities of openness and light come from the patio house. Special features include the construction. The bricks are stacked glued together with reinforcement in the joints. A masonry bond is therefore missing. The exciting spatial structure makes this an early example of supermodernism.





20

**Multifunctional centre de Ark (1992)**  
De Ontdekking 5  
**Architectbureau Van Berkel & Bos (later UNStudio)**

This building was built as a multipurpose center. It has housed various functions, including an elementary school and a daycare center. In 2016, residential units for young adults were created in the building. In the design phase, the architects already took into account possible function changes. Different volumes are interlocked and each has its own appearance. The slanted wooden facade makes the building an exciting whole. Partly because of its prominent location in the neighborhood, this can be seen as an example of supermodernism.



21

**Kantoor Latei projectontwikkeling ('60s en 1993)**  
Hoek Stadsring / H. van Viandenstraat  
**F.H. Klokke / Architectbureau Van Berkel & Bos later (UNStudio)**

Van Berkel & Bos were commissioned by the Dutch central housing care foundation to remodel and modernize this 1960s office building. Van Berkel wanted the interventions to remain recognizable as additions. The office building has two new street facades set in front of the existing ones. These have remained visible thanks to the use of sandblasted, tempered glass panels, which are slightly askew. Both facades feature a single large window opening, screened by wooden slats, which are progressively rotated horizontally from top to bottom. The first floor ('plinth') consists of two wooden screens in front of the entirely transparent glass facades.



22

**Villa Hof (1993)**  
Le Corbusierstraat 12  
**M. van Schijndel**

On the edge of the Zielhorst neighborhood is a special little villa district: the Etalage Project. The municipality wanted to stimulate the quality and variety of architecture here. Future residents could choose a well-known architect from a predetermined list. Villa Hof was designed by Mart van Schijndel: an architect who put light at the center of his work. He liked to experiment with new materials and techniques, often coming up with simple solutions to complex problems. His work can be called neo-modern, but he sought the limits in this. By using voids, the interior of the villa is very spacious.



23

**Dienstencentrum Calveen (2000)**  
Maanlander 14 (with public space)  
MVRDV Architecten

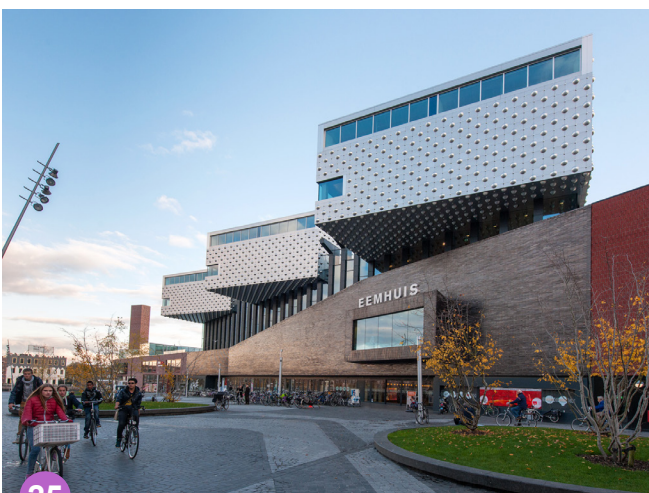
'As a gift for the new century', Schipper Bosch worked with MVRDV Architects to redevelop this high-profile location into an exciting office building designed as a striking, narrow disc. On the long side, each floor has a completely closed brick facade and a glass facade. The floor plans are alternately mirrored: oriented east or west. The view from this building with its large windows is spectacular. It is an imposing building with striking parking spaces that make you feel like you are on a lunar landscape, which earned the building the nickname 'Lunar Lander'. It is characteristic of super modernism that the design of the exterior space emphasizes the statement of the architecture and is less focused on residential quality.



24

**National cultural heritage service (RCE) (2009)**  
Smallepad 5  
J.N. Baldeweg, W. Woensdregt (A+D+P architecten)

This striking building is one of the ten Major Projects with which the state of the Netherlands wants to set an example of good commissioning practices. The building is located right next to the railroad and is equipped with progressive techniques for that time, such as a heat pump under the building and a climate facade. For the design, the Spanish architect drew inspiration from Dutch painters and typical Dutch architecture, such as farmhouses with large roofs. The sloping glass façade reflects the cloudy sky, as does the mirror pond created in front of the building. The spacious canopy invites people to visit the knowledge institute.



25

**Het Eemhuis (2006-2014)**  
Eemplein 71-77  
Neutelings Riedijk Architects

The Eemhuis has become an iconic landmark of the city and is a characteristic example of supermodernism. Some 24,000 large and small silver spheres are incorporated into the gleaming expressive facade. Three volumes protrude above a brick plinth. This continuous strip is also continued in adjacent buildings, forming a cohesive wall of the Eemplein. The Eemhuis houses the library, archives Eemland, Scholen in de Kunst and Kunsthal KAdE. A special element is the ascending reading room, 50 meters long and 30 meters wide, which is spanned in a single span. What is also structurally clever: the absence of columns in the library space. After all, above this space are the heavy shelving units of Archives Eemland.



26

**Office Van de Burgt & Strooij BV (2016)**  
Amsterdamsseweg 155  
**INBO Architecten, G. Popinceanu**

Construction and restoration company Van de Burgt & Strooij is developing the building itself as accommodation for its own organization. The design reflects what the company stands for: a young, modern company focused on craftsmanship. Inside are a machine carpentry workshop, storage areas and offices. The facade composition of horizontal lines, stuccoed surfaces and wood cladding is reflected in the pond, making the building appear larger. The use of wood in the façade and the application of clean horizontal lines is in keeping with neomodernism.



27

**Zwembad Amerena (2018)**  
De Velduil 2  
**VenhoevenCS**

Along the road stands a striking but simple-looking building. The large glass facade offers a vista and betrays that this is a swimming pool complex. These are architectural features appropriate to supermodernism. On the side of the main entrance, the colorful building shows itself invitingly. On the side bordering the park of the Water catchment area, the green roof with roof terraces defines the facade image. The reflection of daylight and the view to the other spaces and the various environments are atmospheric in the interior, which is all about top and recreational sports.



28

**The Platform (2019)**  
Oliemolenhof 14-18  
**Space Encounters, Schipper Bosch**

The Platform is an office building on De Nieuwe Stad, built by means of seven steel trusses over an existing shed of the Prodent Factory. The columns of the new building follow the rhythm of the old building. A wide, concrete staircase connects the first-floor balcony to the plaza. The floors between the trusses are hollow floors, which can make the large span and simultaneously house the installation systems. This allows for flexible layout of the spaces. The new building is clad in white glazed tiles that refer to the former Prodent factory. Horizontal window strips of the durable Plato wood and sleek facades that highlight material properties make this a neo-modern building. You can also think of the building as a statement, and in that sense it may be super-modern.