

# All hands on deck!

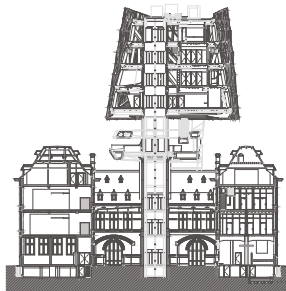
Port House, Antwerp, Belgium



↑ The sparkling glass panels on the extension pay homage to the diamond trade that brought prosperity to Antwerp.



↑ Located in a strategic position at the end of Kattendijkdock, the original building served as a fire station for a long time. With this in mind, the new Port House plays an important role as a link between the city and its port.



**Port House**  
Building owner: Antwerp Port Authority  
Architecture: Zaha Hadid Architects  
Planning and execution: Vliegen NV

Geberit know-how  
Duofix installation system  
Electronic urinal flush controls  
Mepla supply system  
HDPE building drainage system  
Pluvia roof drainage system

Greenbuilding: BREEAM

**Around 500 Antwerp Port Authority employees have taken up quarters. Their new workplaces are strategically located in a former fire station that Zaha Hadid Architects extended by placing a sparkling diamond on top.**

Antwerp has the world's largest cargo port in terms of area – something that is difficult to grasp the scale of from the roof terrace of the Museum aan de Stroom (MAS). The container terminals and petrochemical facilities span an impressive 130 square kilometres right up to the Dutch border. Unlike its eternal rival in Rotterdam, the Port of Antwerp did not become so large due to land reclamation. Bit by bit, each of the 48 docks was created by excavating the land and flooding it with water from the Scheldt.

#### Renewing the bonds

The labyrinth of warehouses, locks and canals is impossible for outsiders to get their head around, which is perhaps why the inhabitants of Antwerp have a peculiar aloofness when it comes to their relationship with the port. However, the tide turned with the approval of the widely acclaimed Strategic Spatial Structure Plan from 2006 – Antwerp was finally claiming its port. In the area around Montevideostraat, the residential towers





↑ The interior of the extension features an interesting interplay between spacious reception and office areas and separate zones where meetings can be held in a private atmosphere. Because all sides of the extension are clad with glass panels, you can also experience the vastness of the port area from inside the building. At night, these panels transform the Port House into a new landmark of the city of Antwerp that can be seen for miles around.

designed by Diener&Diener, David Chipperfield and Gigon & Guyer bear witness to this. On the other side of Kattendijkdock, the area around Cadixstraat is a major building site where residential property continues to be developed at a frantic pace.

**A project that builds bridges**

The transformation of the historical Eilandje docklands – to which the areas around Montevideostraat and Cadixstraat belong – is now reaching its provisional conclusion with the addition of the Port House by Zaha Hadid. Located at the end of historic Kattendijkdock, this is a strategic project that serves as a link between the city and the port. The Port Authority employs a total of 1,650 people, and this project brings together 500 members of staff who had previously been working in different locations scattered all over the city. ←



← The asymmetrical positioning of the extension ensures that sufficient light enters the atrium through the glass roof. Its drainage is taken care of by the tried-and-tested Geberit Pluvia roof drainage system.

# Winding paths

Interview with Raf Vliegen, Managing Director of Vliegen NV

**“A precise calculation was required in order to bridge the horizontal distance. We went over the whole thing several times.”**



Spectacular projects – such as the Port House – usually have a very ambitious schedule. How was it in this case?

**At the outset, the schedule for the work was indeed very tight, particularly when it came to the existing, lower building. In the extension, on the other hand, there was a little bit more leeway due to alterations to the initial brief.**

What sanitary technology issues arose due to the new port building’s unique design?

**Because the upper building structure is very complex from a statics perspective, there were a few changes to the steel structure during the course of the project. If you look at the isometric drawings of the building, it is clear that our plumbers and the Geberit advisors had to do a top job in order to adapt various things – particularly the drainage system – to the specific circumstances.**

What circumstances do you mean?

**The building stands on two concrete pillars, with the one in the inner courtyard used to access the upper part of the building. All the drainage pipes had to be**

**routed through this pillar. Precise calculation was required in order to bridge this horizontal distance. We went over the whole thing several times.**

What support did you receive from Geberit over the course of this project?

**Extremely valuable support, particularly with regard to the aforementioned calculations. In my experience, it is much easier to convince the planning offices of a solution when they know that Geberit is signing off on the underlying calculations or even doing them itself. ←**

**Vliegen NV**

Raf Vliegen has been managing Vliegen NV – a company that his father founded in 1960 – since 2000. He currently employs 25 sanitary specialists and works together with an additional 25 external contractors. Vliegen NV specialises in major projects. Current such projects include a hospital in Mechelen and Tour Paradis in Liège.