

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# HANS VAN HEESWIJK ARCHITECTS TRANSFORMS AMSTELHOF INTO HERMITAGE AMSTERDAM

## MUSEUM OPEN TO THE PUBLIC ON 20 JUNE

The Hermitage Amsterdam announced that on Saturday 20 June at 10.00 in the morning the Hermitage Amsterdam in the Amstelhof – transformed and renovated in its entirety by Hans van Heeswijk Architects – will open its doors to the public. In the period between June 2007 and June 2009 the 17<sup>th</sup> century landmark on the river Amstel in Amsterdam has changed from a home for the elderly into a spectacular multi-functional museum with exhibition halls, a café-restaurant, shops, study centre, auditorium and a Hermitage for Children.

**BUILDING** Hermitage Amsterdam is housed in the monumental Amstelhof which, since its foundation in 1683, has served as a home for the elderly. The building retained this function until April 2007. The home could no longer be adapted to meet present-day requirements and consequently the Social Welfare organisation of the Dutch Reformed congregation that has always owned the Amstelhof, decided to hand over the property to the municipality of Amsterdam in 1999. On one condition, that the building should be used for cultural purposes for which the Hermitage Amsterdam project was considered suitable.

**ARCHITECT** Hans van Heeswijk Architects was commissioned to turn the Amstelhof into a modern museum. The ostensibly closed block is now becoming a light, open and spatial public building, prominently situated in the city on the river Amstel. The main entrance is once again on the Amstel side and it will have its own jetty. Through the old “ossenpoort” gate under the main landing the public enter the courtyard garden, closed for centuries, redesigned by landscape architect Michael van Gessel. This tranquil courtyard garden with age-old chestnut trees will be open to the public. On the other side of the garden there is a spacious entrance foyer and the entrance to the exhibitions. Merx + Girod Architecten designed the interiors of the public spaces.

**DISTINGUISHING FEATURES** In this project Hans van Heeswijk Architects once again demonstrates that, in addition to the radical spatial interventions, the team has a good eye for detail and it guarantees a perfect realisation. Convenient arrangement, spatiality and crystal-clear structural detailing are the distinguishing features in this project. Long sight lines have been created through the axes of the building round the circulation of the courtyard garden and through the row of cabinets to the stairs in the corners. Because of this these can be seen from all vantages in the museum at the end of one such sight line. By alternating the low floors in the building with high spaces where sections of floors have been removed, this creates spacious areas with double heights that admit plenty of light. This intervention makes the interior much larger and more spacious than you would expect from the outside of the building, adding extra refreshing appeal to the interior. The detailing is austere and abstract: practically no finishes, means of attachment or other detached components are visible in the building and this creates an overall tranquil and graphic visual image. Good examples of this are the ultra-transparent glass lifts and stairs.

## Hans van Heeswijk architecten

Ertskade 111 1019 BB Amsterdam

t +3120 622 57 17 f +3120 623 82 84 e info@heeswijk.nl i www.heeswijk.nl

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**FACILITIES** The Hermitage Amsterdam, with a surface area of approximately 9,000 square metres, will shortly offer a “total experience”. The exhibitions contribute important ingredients with two large exhibition halls and 42 small cabinets, but also the monumental building itself with its old church hall, trustees' rooms, other historical functions and the inner courtyard. The NEVA café-restaurant (shortly open daily to 01.00 at night), a large auditorium and the two shops will also contribute to this. The Hermitage Amsterdam is so much more than a museum; the building also houses a study centre and Hermitage for Children, where each year some 20,000 children from Amsterdam and its surroundings can develop their creative talents.

**ORGANISATION** The Hermitage Amsterdam is the sole independently-managed branch in the West of the Russian Hermitage state museum in St. Petersburg. The Hermitage Amsterdam will organise two temporary exhibitions a year from the encyclopaedic collections of the Hermitage in St. Petersburg and other Russian museums. The exhibitions will supplement the Dutch museum programme and it will not be exhibited elsewhere. After the opening exhibition, from 2010 other exhibitions will follow, including modern art with Matisse and Picasso, and an exhibition about Alexander the Great, for example.

**BUDGET** The total renovation costs of the Amstelhof amount to approximately 40 million euros. Half of the exploitation costs of the new Hermitage Amsterdam will be covered by revenues from sponsoring and the other half from the proceeds from ticket sales. With this framework, the Hermitage Amsterdam is an example of cultural entrepreneurship.

**IN PORTFOLIO** Hans van Heeswijk architecten has recently completed the town hall and public library in Heerhugowaard and the Graphic Design Museum in Breda. The company is currently working on the new town hall for Lansingerland (a merger of the municipalities of Berkel Rodenrijs, Bleiswijk and Bergschenhoek, completion 2010), and the restoration and extension of two monuments for De Muzerije cultural centre in Den Bosch (2010). For a complete overview of all projects, see [www.heeswijk.nl](http://www.heeswijk.nl).

**BOOK** A monograph, designed by Irma Boom, with more than 600 pages and 800 illustrations has been published covering all projects between 1995 – 2005 (including designs and artists' impressions of the Graphic Design Museum and the Hermitage Amsterdam).

In Germany the publication was selected among the Best-Produced Books.

Dutch edition: Hans van Heeswijk Architectuur 1995 – 2005, ISBN 3-8030-0655-4

English edition: Hans van Heeswijk Architecture 1995 – 2005, ISBN 3-8030-0652-3

**NOTE TO THE EDITORS** Artists' impressions, floor plans and photographs during the building are free of rights and can be downloaded from the web site: [www.heeswijk.nl/press](http://www.heeswijk.nl/press), on condition that the source is stated as: Design: Hans van Heeswijk Architects and Photography: Luuk Kramer.

In the event of publication we would very much appreciate checking your text prior to publication for any factual errors, as well as receiving a complimentary copy of (or pdf of/link to) the end result.

For more information about Hans van Heeswijk Architects please apply to:

**NDCC | Natascha Drabbe | Cultural Connections**  
Ertskade 105, 1019 BB Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
+31 6 22 69 07 11 [press@ndcc.nl](mailto:press@ndcc.nl) [www.ndcc.nl](http://www.ndcc.nl)