

Inspiring new visual language for Center Céramique

Center Céramique in Maastricht attracts around 400,000 visitors a year. After 20 years of intensive use the building was in need of an update in all facets. In addition to a fantastic library, exhibitions about photography and visual culture as well as the permanent exhibition about Maastricht history there is also the brand new music school housed in the basement. All in all the place is supposed to be attractive to young and old, resident or visitor of the city.

Zuiderlicht Agency for strategy and design - asked to do the graphic and illustrative design - turned to Stang Gubbels for support in the challenge to provide inspiration, clarity and tranquility for the project, fitting with the architecture and three dimensional design.

The Stang 'fall protection' consists of 40 panels. Each panel contains elements of Maastricht's present, past and future and is a voyage of discovery in itself.

Stang developed an enormous set of black and white illustrations that incorporate all kinds of aspects of the city's past, present and future. They can be seen on the 40 meter long wide fencing, play elements, presentation booths (Van Lieshout), lighting fixtures, rear walls, etc.

„The first idea I had was to mix the whole history with a lot of craziness and that first idea is reflected in the result. Center Ceramique is a library with books about everything, a music school and has cultural heritage and makes exhibitions and debates and much more. I wanted to mix all of that into the fencing.

In the end it was decided architecturally (with Kinkorn and Kloosterboer) that the fence would be divided into 44 areas. I saw those surfaces as my drawing paper. I have divided the panels into science, history, physics, biology, music, politics, theater, celts, dance, art, literature, romans, transport, euro, carnival, etc.... everything you can find in the library or elsewhere in the building or in Maastricht or the world itself. I read about the history of Maastricht such as the five severed heads, the Maasbrug that collapsed due to a procession, about d'Artagnan, one of the three musketeers who also got a place in the 44 hatch. Maastricht is a city with a rich and long history, it is a place where Joris and the dragon and Pinkeltje have also been able to walk around or a princess on a unicorn.

Drawing a fence not only means drawing a large figure, but also all the 'gaps' around the figure have to be filled so I could draw and fantasize endlessly, sometimes I didn't know for a while and then I drew another bird or another cardboard box fill the gap, so the drawings got their own signature. To get some coherence, a horizon runs through all the panels with the underworld or or just weird figures underneath. It took months of drawing work and allows a look inside Stang's head, where there is much more in it, but then 64 meters is still too short. (-:

In addition to the fence, I have also fully drawn a felt wall of four panels behind the counter on the ground floor. On those panels you see the four elements: earth, water, air and fire. It is the basis of the world, without these elements our world cannot exist. I thought it was a good thing because there is so much in it, such as Earth that stands for growth and the earth of Maastricht, Water that fits ceramics and stands for the feeling aspect, Air that stands for communication, thinkers, music, art and debate and finally Fire that stands for inspiration and change - you can find everything in it such as the constellations and other symbols. And that fits the culture Center of Ceramique“. - Stang -