

# SARPHATI'S DREAM

The Palace of Industry in Amsterdam



Figure 1: Herz, S. (1900). Amstel - Hogesluis. Gezien naar Frederiksplein en Palais voor Volksvlijt. [Foto]. In: Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

**Architectural History Thesis**

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'He seriously proposed, if God would give him the strength, to decorate the Netherlands and Amsterdam with a Palace of Industry, a worthy counterpart to the Palace in Hyde Park'



Figure 2: Dreesman, A. (1884). De verlaagde Hoogesluis, gereed in 1884 [Illustration]. In Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

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# PREFACE

**A**s a born and raised Amsterdammer, the Palace of Public Industry (Paleis voor Volksvlijt) has always fascinated me enormously. The colossal building stood on the Fredriksplein from 1864 to 1929. In 1929 the building unfortunately burned down and many years later the building of the Nederlandse Bank, which for many Amsterdammers is an eyesore, came to stand on the spot of the palace. What fascinates me is the fact that such a monumental building has completely disappeared, there is no trace of it at the location, but the building is still very popular to this day.

There have been many studies about the Palace of Industry, about its use, the influence it had on its surrounding and its influence on the Dutch Industry. The Palace of Industry was, when it was still standing, financially struggling and therefore changed and added new functions. This makes me wonder if it was a good idea in the first place to make such a big monumental permanent exhibition building and if Sarphati could have learned from other similar buildings abroad to see if realizing the Palace of Industry would actually be fruitful. Cornelis Outshoorn, the architect of the Palace of Industry, made a trip through Europe to visit these "Industrial palaces" to get inspired but I couldn't find any publications where these buildings are compared to the Palace of Industry.



Figure 3: Rieke, J. M. A. (n.d.). Het Paleis voor Volksvlijt, gezien aan de achterzijde vanaf het Amstelgrachtje (de latere Maarten Jansz. Kosterstraat) [Illustration]. In Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

# INTRODUCTION

**O**n 1 May in the year 1851, Queen Victoria opened the London Great Exhibition of the Work of Industry of all Nations. This first world exhibition, which was held in the Crystal Palace, was an important event for countries from all over Europe with regard to industry. Besides the fact that products were compared in terms of quality and reliability, the presentation and appearance were also important (van Voorst Tot Voorst, 1980, p. 475). The Crystal Palace alone was a modern building consisting of glass and steel, which made an overwhelming impression on its visitors:

*"to nothing of what had been seen before, except in the most fantastic dream. The long corridors, lined with the most precious products of industry, the rich carpets descending from the high galleries, the murmur of voices, the strange countenances, the mingling of garments, the scent of perfumed waters, the trees, standing out from the crowded bazaars, the jumping fountains and the glittering roof extending over everything, came together to form a world, such as could only have existed in the imagination of Oriental fairytellers"*

*(De Amsterdamsche Gids, 1929, p. 218).  
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The world exhibition was attended by many Dutch people, but only one of them, Samuel Sarphati, had the idea to make something similar possible in our country. During the world exhibition in London, which was visited by six million people, it became painfully clear to the Dutch society that it was still completely 'retarded' in the industrial field (Wennekes,



1999, p. 14). Sarphati (1852, p.3) wrote the following in a brochure about the Vereeniging voor Volksvlijt:

*The Exhibition has proven, how inconceivably much man is capable of and how innumerable the sources of labour and profit are. But it has also made us realise how far we Dutch lag behind most of the civilised world'.*

Sarphati believed that a permanent exhibition building, inspired by the Crystal Palace, was needed to stimulate industry in the Netherlands. And Sarphati was not alone in this. Several countries in Europe followed the example of the World's Fair in London and came up with their own industrial palaces and exhibitions like the Glaspalast in Munich in 1854 and the Palais d'Industrie in Paris in 1855. Almost ten years later, Sarphati's wish became reality and the Paleis voor Volksvlijt opened in Amsterdam. A monumental building made of glass and steel that was wider and one and a half times as long as the Palace on Dam Square (De Amsterdamsche Gids, 1929, p. 241).

The Paleis voor Volksvlijt was opened in festive style and in the first few days was well visited. However, over the years the palace did not operate successfully and faced financial problems. The question that then arises, and which is also the main question of this thesis, is: **Was Samuel Sarphati's dream for the Paleis voor Volksvlijt realistic when compared to similar Industry Palaces in other countries? Did these Industry Palaces encounter the same problems?**

First of all, both primary and secondary literature is used to investigate who Samuel Sarphati was, what his influence on Amsterdam was and what he had in mind for the Paleis voor Volksvlijt. The next step is to examine how the Paleis voor Volksvlijt eventually came into use and whether this was in line with what Sarphati had in mind. Then it examines how the Glaspalast in Munich and the Palais d'Industrie in Paris were used and whether these industrial palaces faced the same challenges as the Paleis voor Volksvlijt. Finally, we draw a conclusion and answer the main question of this thesis.



Figure 4: Read & Co. Engravers & Printers. (1851). View from the Knightsbridge Road of The Crystal Palace in Hyde Park for Grand International Exhibition of 1851. Dedicated to the Royal Commissioner [Illustration]. In the Royal Commissioners.

# CHAPTER 1

## SAMUEL SARPHATI AND HIS DREAM FOR THE PALACE OF INDUSTRY

*"Sarphati represented the Amsterdam that began to revive after 1850. He was the man who combined a strong love for his city with the courage and perseverance to achieve something great. His rich imagination created a new, modern Amsterdam before his eyes that would beautifully join the traditionally renowned, but somewhat solitary sunken city."*

*(Brugmans, 1929, p.2)*



Figure 5: Altmann, S. (1855). Portret van arts Samuel Sarphati (1813–1866), oprichter van het Paleis voor Volksvlijt en het Amstel Hotel. Litho [Photo]. In Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

### 1.1 SAMUEL SARPHATI

**S**amuel Sarphati was born on 1 February 1813 in Amsterdam to a Portuguese Jewish family that had settled in the Netherlands for several centuries. The family did not belong to the financially wealthy of Amsterdam but this did not prevent Sarphati from enjoying an excellent academic education (Bottenheim, 1945, p.5) . After finishing the Latin school in Amsterdam, Samuel Sarphati left the capital at the age of 20 to study medicine in Leiden (Wennekes, 1999, p.27). After obtaining his doctorate at Leiden University, Sarphati returned to his birthplace Amsterdam. Here he started a general practice that quickly flourished due to the poor health of the population, the poverty, the poor housing and the lack of hygienic facilities (Wennekes, 1999, p.30). Sarphati (1860a) wrote the following in his Adres aan den Gemeenteraad der stad Amsterdam over het aanbouwen en verfraaijen van den omtrek van het Paleis voor Volksvlijt, de Amsteloevers etc., submitted on November 14, 1860:

*"No considerable city in the civilized world, where the poverty and suffering of the lower classes is greater than in the capital of our Fatherland; no place is more nearly to be found where the number of the poor, and - which puts an end to all that suffering and to all doubt - that of the dying, has risen as high as it has here."*

Over the years, Sarphati succeeded in establishing himself as 'a respected member of the Amsterdam bourgeoisie'. This was mainly due to his great organisational skills and his universal knowledge (van der Valk, 1983, p. 14). He became increasingly involved in various activities and enterprises for the development of Amsterdam. Sarphati's ambition was to promote the prosperity and growth of Amsterdam and to bring it back to the glory of the old and grand city it was in the eighteenth century (Bottenheim, 1945, p.6).

Sarphati believed that Amsterdam, despite having developed some things but not in proportion to what had taken place in the past, was falling behind European capitals where grandiose buildings and beautiful city districts were being realised (Sarphati, 1860b, p.7)

*"Sarphati represented that Amsterdam which began to revive after 1850. He was the man who combined a strong love for his city with the courage and perseverance to achieve something great. His rich imagination created a new, modern Amsterdam before his eyes that would beautifully join the traditionally renowned, but somewhat solitary sunken city. (Brugmans, 1929, p.2)*

According to Sarphati, *"no national prosperity is conceivable without steady development, no national development without strength and knowledge, no strength without good food, and no knowledge without good education."* (Bottenheim, 1945, p.7) These views are clearly reflected in the enterprises Sarphati set up in Amsterdam. For example, he started the trade education in 1845, the rubbish disposal in 1847, the Vereeniging voor Volksvlijt in 1852, which led to the establishment of the Paleis voor Volksvlijt, De Maatschappij voor Meel- en Broodfabrieken in 1855, the Nederlandse Crediet en Depositobank in 1863, the Nationale hypotheekbank in 1864 and the Amstelhotel in 1866 (Bottenheim, 1945, p.7).

In the meantime, Sarphati's attention shifted to the expansion of the city where the Paleis voor Volksvlijt was located in the heart of the expansion. Amsterdam was growing and there was a housing shortage. Space had to be found for urban expansion and according to Sarphati this had to happen in the eastern direction. Between the Muiderpoort and the Utrecht gate, where the Paleis voor Volksvlijt was built, the rural character had to make way for a modern broad street, which would later be called the Sarphatistraat. According to Sarphati, this large-scale urban expansion, which was the first since the seventeenth century, would make Amsterdam the worthy capital of the Netherlands (Wennekes, 1999,

p.33) Sarphati stood at the basis of the New Amsterdam, which developed in both directions around the Paleis voor Volksvlijt (Bottenheim, 1945, p.18-19).

*With an extraordinary sharpness of mind, he saw through the ills of his city at that time: backwardness of industry, insufficient means of subsistence for a large part of the residents, overcrowding, outdated housing conditions. He saw urban expansion as a major socio-economic problem and devoted his life to solving it. (Schröder, 1931, p.237)*

Sarphati died in 1866 at the age of 53 before his last undertaking, the Amstel Hotel, was completed. Sarphati was under a lot of pressure because of his self-imposed 'task' to develop the city, but he bravely stood his ground (Hagoort, 2012, p.369). After the death of his wife, however, Sarphati was deeply unhappy and bowed under the financial pressure of his entrepreneurial spirit (Bottenheim, 1945, p.21).

*It is said that when, tired of endless work, he got up at night with his head burning and his hand trembling, he climbed up to the roof window behind his house, which gives a view of the Palace of Industry. There, alone with his restless thoughts, his dearest creation in front of him, he drew new strength for the struggle that awaited him, new confidence for the task that he had set himself, and which first escaped him in death. (Wertheim, 1874, p.307)*

After Sarphati's death, the city of Amsterdam honoured 'the great son of its inhabitants' (Bottenheim, 1945, p.22) by naming the broad street that runs from the Muiderpoort to the Paleis voor Volksvlijt after him and by constructing the Sarphatipark, where his statue would later be placed. The following text is inscribed on the statue: Creator of the New Amsterdam. (Hagoort, 2012, p.9)

## 1.2 THE DREAM OF SARPHATI

**H**e is the founder of the Amstel hotel and of the first bread factory; he is the man who promoted a more correct system of collecting and processing the city's waste. But the Paleis voor Volksvlijt is surely his most individual creation: here the idealist and the practical man reach out to each other. (Brugmans, 1929, p.2)

The visit to the World Exhibition in London made such an impression on Sarphati that it changed his course and sharpened his focus. He started thinking much grander (Hagoort, 2012, p.226). Sarphati (1852) wrote the following about the Crystal Palace:

*No undertaking has ever promised more blessing and prosperity, and no plan is known to have been crowned with so favourable a result'.*

Sarphati was convinced that Amsterdam also needed a building like this to stimulate the industry in the Netherlands and to make up for the lost time (Polak-van 't Kruys, 1991, p.13). The Dutch entries for the World Exhibition in the Crystal Palace had been embarrassing for many Dutch visitors; together with the Vatican, the Netherlands finished in last place on the list of honour (Hagoort, 2012, p.226). According to Sarphati, there had to be more entrepreneurial spirit in the Netherlands; there had to be exhibitions that were grander than before. Exhibitions where new inventions and discoveries were made known and where Dutch industry was put in a better light (Tussenbroek, 2019, p. 21-22). That is why Sarphati, together with his friends S. Bleekrode and A.C. Wertheim, founded the Vereeniging voor Volksvlijt in 1852 (Polak-van 't Kruys, 1991, p.13). The aim of the Vereeniging voor Volksvlijt was to stimulate national industry by promoting the provision of information about industrial developments and products by means of

exhibitions (Tussenbroek, 2019, p.23). This required a permanent exhibition building. A building that had to meet all the requirements of modern technology, but which also had to be monumental and impressive (Bottenheim, 1945, p.14). After an unsuccessful competition, the designs submitted did not meet expectations (De Amsterdamsche Gids, 1929, p.222), the architect Cornelis Outshoorn was appointed as the Palace's architect (Polak-van 't Kruys, 1991, p.14).

*It has to be beautiful, Outshoorn, it has to be beautiful'*, Sarphati is reported to have said during a meeting with Outshoorn. If the Paleis voor Volksvlijt did not become beautiful and imposing, it would not attract people, and would not achieve its goal (Feddes, 2015, p.118).

*He (Sarphati) seriously decided, if God granted him the strength, to decorate the Netherlands, Amsterdam, with a Palace of Industry, a worthy counterpart to the Palace in Hyde Park'* (Hagoort, 2021, p.226).

The Paleis voor Volksvlijt can be seen as a first step in giving Amsterdam a place alongside the other capitals in the civilised world that it deserves in many respects according to Sarphati (Sarphati, 1860b).

Outshoorn's design for the palace was received with great enthusiasm; he designed an imposing building that was largely constructed of iron and glass. It was decided to build the palace closer to the Utrechtsestraat than originally planned. The dome of the palace was then positioned exactly in the middle of the Hogesluis and the Weteringschans (Polak-van 't Kruys, 1991, p.27).

In 1853, Sarphati submitted a request to the administration of Amsterdam to make a piece of land available for a permanent public exhibition building. He envisaged the Drilveld and the Ossenmarkt near the Utrechtsepoort as the location (Tussenbroek, 2019, p.44). Before Sarphati received a reply, four months had already passed. The mayors and councillors considered themselves unable to grant the requested pieces of land and were also unable to make another site available for Sarphati's plans (Witkamp, 1864, p.7). Sarphati then went to the king with the request to approve and support the plan for an exhibition building. That this eventually happened was partly due to the mediation of Prince Frederik (Sarphati, 1855, p.378-379). This royal support was an important step for the realisation of the plans for the Paleis voor Volksvlijt (Tussenbroek, 2019, p. 45). When the Amsterdam Council decided in 1855 whether or not to grant land for an exhibition building, it stipulated that the Vereeniging voor Volksvlijt had to provide proof within three months that it had sufficient funds to carry out the construction (De Amsterdamsche Gids, 1929, p.221). To meet

this requirement, the Vereeniging opened a subscription for a loan of 1 million guilders in 1865. This subscription was already full on the first day (Polak-van 't Kruijs, 1991, p.14). In 1857, the site for the Utrechtsche-poort, which Sarphati had initially envisaged, was made available by the Council of Amsterdam (De Amsterdamsche Gids, 1929, p.220).

The Paleis voor Volksvlijt was not only to be a place for exhibitions. Sarphati envisaged the Palace as the beginning of a new urban expansion. At the edge of the city, "*the new era of progress and prosperity would be opened*" (De Amsterdamsche Gids, 1929, p.220).

*Nowhere, therefore, have the palaces of industry been given a place in the middle of the city, and probably nowhere have they been asked for. Where they exist, they are found at the end or the outer circle of cities. But they do not remain at the borders, because soon new buildings arise around them, which make them the centre of those beautiful districts. (Sarphati, 1860b, p.3)*



Figure 6: Schadd, K. H. (1869). Kaart van Amsterdam. De kaart is opgenomen in een gids voor de bezoekers van de Internationale Tentoonstelling in het Paleis voor Volksvlijt. Vandaar dat het Paleis in opstand is getekend. [Illustration]. In Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

# CHAPTER 1

SAMUEL SARPHATI AND HIS  
DREAM FOR THE PALACE OF  
INDUSTRY

Sarphati envisaged the Paleis voor Volkslijdt becoming the centre of a new residential district with luxurious houses and wide streets (Tussenbroek, 2019, p.118). Shopkeepers and small independent businesses would also benefit from the arrival of the Palace, due to the attraction that the building would have on its surroundings (Tussenbroek, 2019, p.46).

The day the construction of the largest building in Amsterdam began, in 1858, must have been a memorable one. A large crowd of people gathered around the pile-driving site, which was decorated with flags. There were stands for guests and an orchestra played behind them. King Willem III was present with his brothers Frederik and Hendrik and his son, who celebrated his birthday (Hagoort, 2012, p.291). The day of the opening was also a true holiday for the people of Amsterdam. Sarphati held his speech under the supervision of

Prince Frederik, an orchestra conducted by J.H. Verhulst played Von Weber's Jubilee Overture, a choir sang Mendelssohn's song of praise and in the evening there was a large instrumental and vocal concert (De Amsterdamsche Gids, 1929, p.242). On the day after the opening, the Paleis voor Volkslijdt was open to the public and was immediately in full swing. On the first three Sundays, the Palace was visited by at least 20,000 people (De Amsterdamsche Gids, 1929, p.244).

*Large and grandiose this building had to be, a real people's palace was Sarphati's intention from the start.*

*(Bottenheim, 1945, p.14)*



Figure 7: Wegner en Mottu. (1864). Frederiksplein - Paleis voor Volkslijdt [Photo]. In Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

# CHAPTER 2

## THE PALACE IN USE

The Palace soon became a real attraction. In the first months, the Palace Society ensured that visitors had something special to see. The opening exhibition stayed on until October, the International Congress of Social Sciences took place and there was a demonstration of a steam engine making ice. Within a year of its opening, the building had been visited by over 200,000 people. The first major exhibition to take place in the Paleis voor Volksvlijt was the Algemene Tentoonstelling van Voortbrengselen van Tuinbouw in combination with an international congress. For this exhibition, the main hall of the palace was transformed into a beautiful oasis with flowers, plants and crops from all over the world. This exhibition was a great success, attracting no less than forty thousand visitors. However, the Algemene Tentoonstelling van Voortbrengselen van Tuinbouw had made it clear that this kind of exhibition required a great deal of preparation and could therefore not be held continuously. It was not until a year later that another such large event was held in the Palace, the Algemene Tentoonstelling Nijverheid en Kunst, exactly the kind of exhibition Sarphati had in mind for the Palace (Tussenbroek, 2019, p.127-129).

*"For almost two million, Amsterdam had 'a colossal iron building, without character, with walls and windows, and roof sheathing blind, with side and other doors, which are not used, with a very sad substructure, a much too showy and embellished superstructure'". (L.B., 1866, p. 75)*

Despite the success of the exhibitions in the first years, there was also criticism of the Paleis voor Volksvlijt. During the opening of the palace there were already complaints about the acoustics, in the summer it was much too hot in the palace and in the winter there was no adequate heating. There

were draughts in the Great Hall and the incidence of light was not satisfactory either. (Tussenbroek, 2019, p.136):

The newspapers promised too much. The Paleis voor Volksvlijt was presented as an entirely national, Dutch affair. But the Palace could not have been built without help from England. Outshoorn only made design drawings that were not detailed enough to build a complex building like the Paleis voor Volksvlijt. For this, the help of Rowland Mason Ordish, an English engineer who had also worked on the Crystal Palace in London, was called in. However, this was kept quiet and Outshoorn took all the credit (Tussenbroek, 2019, p.136).



Figure 8: Hekking, W. (1865). Interieur tijdens de Bloemententoonstelling van 1865; palmen onder de koepelgalerij, zuidzijde [Illustration]. In Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

Just one week after the palace had opened, Sarphati, the chairman, was forced to announce at the general meeting of members that the total expenses, despite the fact that the palace itself had cost no more than the budgeted one million guilders, had turned out to be higher due to many unforeseen costs (Polak-van 't Kruys, 1991, p.52). Just over two years after its festive opening, the Palace was in a dire financial situation. The exploitation and construction had been presented too optimistically and too little account had been taken of disappointing revenues. An annual income of four hundred thousand guilders had been assumed. Despite the great interest that arose after the opening, the proceeds were only one hundred and fifty thousand guilders (Leliman, 1867, p.6). The board of the palace soon realised that the building could not be maintained on the basis of income from entrance fees alone, especially when only one or two major exhibitions took place per year. Therefore, a membership was established. To the board's disappointment, there was little enthusiasm for this membership; only 2000 people became members and the money that this generated was soon used up again (Polak-van 't Kruys, 1991, p.54-56). In 1866, two years after the opening, the anonymous L.B.(1866) already expressed the following criticism in *De Opmerker*, a weekly magazine for architects, engineers, manufacturers and contractors of public works:

*'The neighbouring country could have given the management lessons. Iron industrial buildings, erected long before that in Amsterdam, were everywhere rejected as permanent structures. They were considered expensive and inefficient, and despite that, and the bad account they gave, one drifts to infinity'.*

A permanent iron exhibition building was too expensive according to L.B. Sarphati had emphasised again, shortly after the opening of the exhibition building, that the Palace served to exhibit the products of industry. But already in the first month after the opening of the Palace, big music parties had been

organised in the Palace and it became clear that this kind of entertainment was necessary to make the building financially profitable (Tussenbroek, 2019, p.129). In 1867, it was decided that a large part of the Palace would be dedicated to restaurants and amusements, this was necessary to give the building a chance of survival (Tussenbroek, 2019, p.142). There were repeated attempts to make the Paleis profitable by partly reallocating the building (De Amsterdamsche Gids, 1929, p.248). The Commissioners of the Palais were concerned with the finances and the management could more or less do as they pleased with the programming. Over the years, this programming became increasingly detached from Sarphati's original dream, which disappeared more and more into the background (Wennekes, 1999, p.276). In 1889, under loud protest from people who feared for the reputation of the art palace, a market hall was even opened in the palace. Vegetable auctions were held

*Glas en ijzer zaâmgewrocht  
Aandeelhouders zwaar bezocht,  
Rendez-vous van kou en tocht,  
Kweekplaats van de rhumatiek,  
Schuiven, geeuwen van 't publiek,  
Zangers van den kouden grond,  
Koude lijden, blauw en bont,  
Donker, zuinig met het gas,  
Duur en slecht in kop en glas,  
In de oogen strooijen zand  
Door het bluffen in de krant  
Veel beloven weinig geven,  
Naar charlatanisme zweven...*

*(Tussenbroek, 2019, p.137)*



daily, meat and fruit stalls were set up, and the basement was rented out for the storage of carts and stalls. However, the market was soon disbanded (Polak-van 't Kruys, 1991, p.66). The Paleis voor Volksvlijt increasingly became an entertainment venue. Concerts were given, operas performed, circus acts were staged, dancers performed, there was a café, meeting rooms and at one point even a roller skating rink (De Amsterdamsche Gids, 1929, p.250, 252). The Palace became a monumental banquet hall (Wennekes, 1999, p.93). In order to make it possible for the Palace to accommodate these various purposes, it underwent an internal conversion

in 1890. Among other things, a theatre was built in the palace, which was still in use until the evening of the fire. In the west wing there remained room for exhibitions (Brugmans, 1929, p.2). The emphasis of the Palace of Public Industry shifted from exhibitions to performing arts and entertainment. As a result, the Palace increasingly lost its leading role in the cultural-social life of Amsterdam, as there were more suitable locations for this in Amsterdam. The building itself was, due to the financial circumstances, maintained bit by bit. The garden of the palace became a metaphor for the neglect of the building (Wennekes, 1999, p.276).



Figure 9: Wouters, A. (1869). Tentoonstelling van Kunst en Nijverheid in de tuin van het Paleis voor Volksvlijt, [Illustration]. In Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

*The destruction of the Palace of Public Industry made a deep impression on many of Amsterdam's citizens. The overwhelming interest shown in the sight of the desolate, lifeless ruins is proof that the palace was something in the life of Amsterdam. There was much against it. The building was severely neglected; it was hollow and draught; it was not very suitable for the purposes for which it was ultimately used. But on the other hand, the large monumental building was really something of grandeur. (Brugmans, 1929, p.2)*

Few events in the history of Amsterdam have made as much impression as the fire that destroyed the Paleis voor Volksvlijt. The people of Amsterdam had many fond memories of the almost fairy-tale like, majestic building they loved to go to for entertainment (Polak-van 't Kruys, 1991, p.101). In the 65 years of the palace's existence, around 23 thousand exhibitions, concerts, theatre performances and other gatherings took place there (Tussenbroek, 2019, p.146). The Palace entertained millions of people, it was a real 'people's palace'. It had not been possible before to make such large events possible in a building (Hagoort, 2012, p.367-368).

*Amsterdam had been given a large building that cost a lot of money, yielded little profit and 'in which there will never be much special to see or do' (Feddes, 2015, p.118).*

The Paleis voor Volksvlijt was a magnificent building, but the building did not know only joy and glory. The 65 years of the building's existence were in many ways a suffering for the people who ran and maintained it. The use of the palace eventually became far removed from Sarphati's dream: to stimulate the national industry to improve the happiness of the people (Polak-van 't Kruys, 1991, p.101). The Paleis voor Volksvlijt failed to live up to his high expectations (Brugmans, 1929, p.2). For the Netherlands the Palace was an impressive building but abroad it did not receive the attention Sarphati had hoped for. Moreover, the palace was situated in a part of the city of which nobody knew yet how it would develop. If Sarphati had known about the railway network that was developing in the Netherlands, he might have chosen a different location for the palace. His plans for the expansion of Amsterdam came after the plans for the Paleis voor Volksvlijt. Sarphati had thought well that a successful exhibition building could be a stimulus for the surrounding area but he did not really think about the development of this area (Tussenbroek, 2019, p.143-144).

*'The legendary fire of the Paleis voor Volksvlijt and the loss of this fascinating building to the city have made us forget the depressing and difficult aspects of its existence. The memory of something very beautiful has remained'. (Polak-van 't Kruys, 1991, p.103).*



Figure 10: Ruine van het Paleis voor Volksvlijt op het Frederiksplein na de brand. (1929). [Photo]. In Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

# CHAPTER 3

## OTHER PALACES OF INDUSTRY

**T**he 1851 World Exhibition in London at the Crystal Palace had made a huge impression on the world. A real Crystal Palace mania was born in the world. In 1854, the Crystal Palace inspired the building of the Glaspalast in Munich. In 1855 the Palais d'Industrie was built in Paris for the Exposition Universelle de 1855, the successor of the London exhibition. More exhibition halls followed, taking the Crystal Palace as their model. Among others in Manchester (1857), in Dublin (1865) and in Porto (1865) (Tussenbroek, 2019, p.43). In this chapter, two exhibition halls will be discussed in order to make a comparison with the Paleis voor Volksvlijt, which was also inspired by the Crystal Palace. These two exhibition buildings were chosen because they were built just after the World Fair and could serve as an example for the People's Art and Industry Palace. It is known that Oudshoorn travelled through Europe to get inspiration for the design of the People's Warehouse (Wennekes, 1999, p.52). It is not known which cities Oudshoorn visited, but the two chosen buildings would not have been an illogical choice.

### 3.1 THE GLASPALAST, MUNICH

**H**e lived, took a wife and died'.  
(Roth, 1971, p. 9)

The above quote is the shortest description concerning the Glaspalast. The 'life' of the Glaspalast can be described with three points of interest: It was built in 1854 for the First General German Industrial Exhibition in Munich. After a turbulent bachelor's life, the Glass Palace married art in 1889. After seventy-seven years it died after an accident (Roth, 1971, p.9). The World Fair in London had shown King Maximilian II how much England and France were ahead of other countries, and thus also Germany (Hütsch, 1980, p.75).

Philip von Martius, the master of the Botanical Gardens, was sitting at his masterpiece in the Botanical Garden on a beautiful August day in 1853 when he was surprised by a message from the king. King Maximilian had decided that the grounds of the Botanical Gardens would be released for an industrial exhibition building (Roth, 1971, p.13).

The industrial exhibition in 1854, the First General German Industrial Exhibition, was to serve as a challenge and a stimulus for local industry. The exhibition building was to be constructed of the modern materials iron and glass to symbolise the state of industrial development. And also the progressiveness and broad-mindedness of politics were to be symbolically shown to the middle classes. King Maximilian's attempt to give local industry a boost, a new beginning, was not immediately successful. Economically, there was a deficit compared to other countries. In addition to the lack of capital, there was also a lack of raw materials to realise the intended industrial boom (Hütsch, 1980, p.75-76).

Philip von Martius was assured that after the exhibition in 1854 the Glass Palace would be demolished or made available for botanical purposes. But he already realised that the enormous building could never be used for botanical purposes without the necessary technical facilities (Roth, 1971, p.13). Architect August von Voit was commissioned to design a building with a surface area of two hundred thousand square metres (Roth, 1971, p.15). Voit designed a glass box with sparkling windows and a well thought-out iron structure. The building earned a great deal of admiration. (Roth, 1971, p.26). The grand opening of the Glaspalast was overshadowed by a catastrophic cholera outbreak that took the lives of 122 people every day (Roth, 1971, p.24).

After the First General German Industry Exhibition, committee members were unsure what to do with the Glaspalast, despite the promise that the building would be demolished after the exhibition (Hütsch, 1980, p.81). As it turned out, the demolition of the Glaspalast would cost a lot of money, so the decision was made to leave it standing and to use it for all sorts of things. Various kinds of exhibitions, parties and concerts were held in the building. The people of Munich visited the Glaspalast less and less often, unless there was a flower or poultry exhibition. (Roth, 1971, p.25-26). In 1882, a theatre was built in the Glaspalast for an electricity exhibition. This theatre was the first that could be fully electrically lit. In this theatre, it was shown how a stage could be brightly lit without risk of fire (Roth 1971, p.37).

*'Munich's Glass Palace is still vaguely present in the memory. People associate it with artists' parties, art exhibitions from around the turn of the century, the 1920s and 1930s. The Glass Palace is a symbol of the art city of Munich in the past.'* (Hütsch, 1980, p.5)

After years of being misused for various purposes, the Palace was used for art for good in 1889. This was a gain, the Glaspalast became the symbol of the art

city, but also a loss at the same time. The enormous building was no longer used as a large total space. The artists and painters needed more walls (Roth, 1971, p.37). The art exhibitions ensured that the Glaspalast was seen as a true institution and made an enormous contribution to the development of Munich as an art city (Hütsch, 1980, p.83).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the Glaspalast also came in for some criticism. According to experts, the glass building was completely outdated for its purposes:

*It is absolutely outdated, humourless, inelegant in its decoration, wet and cold in cold weather, very hot in summer and hygienically very objectionable. You all know the stale air in this unventilated showcase.'* (Hütsch, 1980, p.83)

On 6 June 1931, the Glaspalast burned down completely, destroying more than 3,000 works of art. At first it was thought that the cause of the fire was self-ignition of cleaning wool, but later it was discovered that arson was the real cause of the fire (Hütsch, 1980, p. 86).

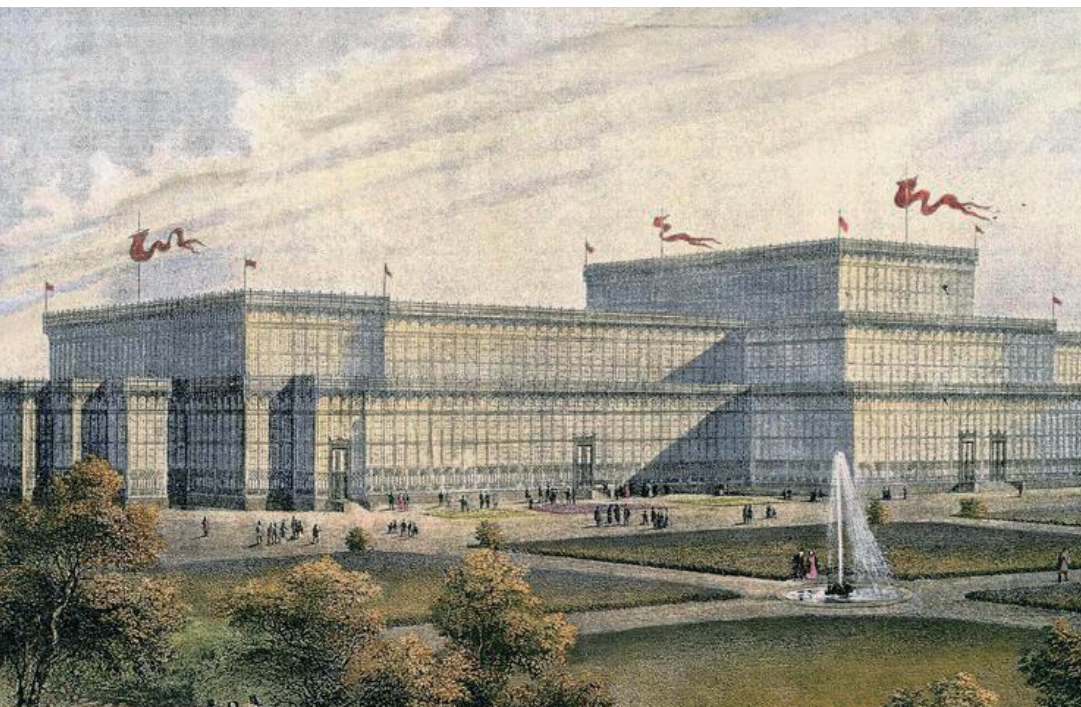


Figure 11: akg-images. (1854). the Munich Glass Palace on a coloured steel engraving from 1854 [Illustration]. [https://www.rheinpalz.de/kultur\\_artikel\\_-vor-90-jahren-der-glaspalast-brennt-\\_arid,5211395.html?reduced=true](https://www.rheinpalz.de/kultur_artikel_-vor-90-jahren-der-glaspalast-brennt-_arid,5211395.html?reduced=true)

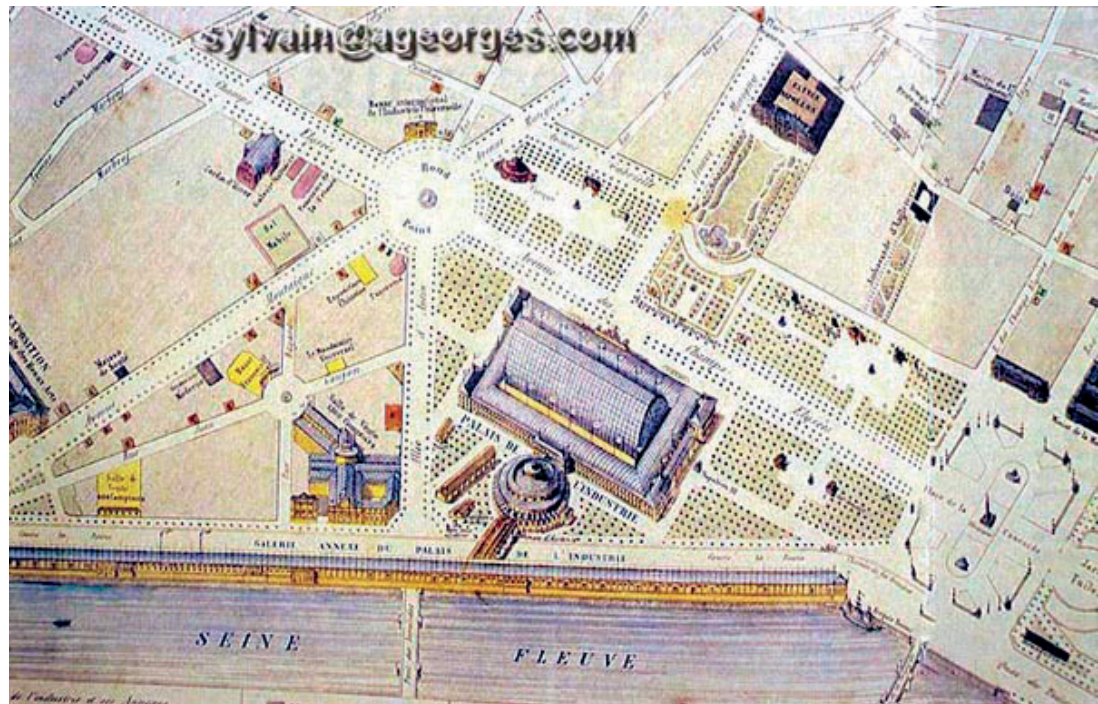


Figure 12: Situation of the Palais de l'Industrie, the imperial rotunda connecting the gallery of machines. (n.d.). [Illustration]. <http://expositions-universelles.fr/1855-exposition-universelle-paris.html>

### 3.2 PALAIS D'INDUSTRIE, PARIS

The first universal exhibition to be held in France, Paris, was in 1855. The organisers hoped that the world exhibition would serve as an advertisement for the newly installed Second Empire of Napoleon III. And that the spectacle would make them forget the Revolution that took place in 1848 (Findling et al., 2008, p.22). The Exposition Universelle had different, contradictory objectives. With the exhibition, the organisers wanted to commemorate the forty years of peace since the battle of Waterloo and highlight the benefits of international cooperation. But by the time of the exhibition itself, England, France and their allies were engaged in a war with Russia, which was therefore not represented at the world exhibition either (Findling et al., 2008, p.21). In 1855, the newly formed French-British alliance was further strengthened and Queen Victoria visited the Paris Exhibition, which was the first state visit to France by a reigning English monarch since Henry V in 1422. Nevertheless, there was some rivalry between the countries. Each country used the exhibition to show off its national

prosperity and power to other countries. The French government tried to ensure that the exhibition would be more successful than its predecessor in 1851 (Findling et al., 2008, p.22). The Exposition Universelle was spread over several buildings, unlike the single Crystal Palace in London (Knijn et al., 1992, p.39). As a result, the exhibition in Paris took up a much larger area. In addition, the French government allocated much more space to its own exhibitors. The British had done the same in 1851; the British exhibitors took up half of the Crystal Palace (Findling et al., 2008, p.22).

Initially the intention was to organise a national exhibition in 1854, but in 1854 the decision was made to organise a real world exhibition. In 1852, it had already been decided to build a permanent building, the Palais d'Industrie, for the national exhibitions that would take place every five years (Molet, 2011, p.199). For the design of the Palais d'Industrie, architects Jean Marie Viel and Antoine Desjardins proposed a cast-iron structure

similar to the Crystal Palace in London, but on a masonry ground floor. But this project was deemed too expensive to build and operate. The architects Alexis Cendrier, Alexis Barrault and Gustave Bridel were then called upon to create a new design for the Palais. They combined a cast-iron structure with a brick façade, which had been designed by Viel. The metal structure was supported by the façade and this façade was to give the building, which was located on the Champs Elysées, a "palace" appearance (Molet, 2011, p.199). The placement of the building at the beginning of the Champs Elysées was typical of Haussmannian urban planning in Paris during the Second Empire (Knijn et al., 1992, p.39). However, there was also criticism of the building and its placement. Mr Doncour wrote the following thirty years after the building was completed:

*"The Industrial Palace is a huge style-less building, which burdens the Champs-Élysées, but does not grace it"*  
(Ageorges, 2006a).

Writer Octave Mirbeau agreed with Doncour and compared the Palais d'Industrie to *"an ox trampling on a bed of roses"*. (Ageorges, 2006a).

The building had two drawbacks. The first was that its bold construction was hidden behind a facade that was a collection of old architectural styles. The other disadvantage was that the hall was too small and could not meet the needs of an exhibition, due to insufficient ventilation it was too hot in the building (Findling et al., 2008, p.24). Already during the construction of the Palais it was discovered that it would be too small for the exhibition. Nevertheless, it was decided to use the building, but this meant that additional pavilions had to be built for the exhibition. (Molet, 2011, p.199).

In 1897, the decision was made to demolish the Palais d'Industrie in order to create a link between the Champs Elysée and the neighbourhood behind it. The building was replaced by two buildings, the Grand and Petit Palais, which were built for the 1900 World Fair. At the time of demolition, the building housed several museums, art depots, a shop, offices, a police station and a fire station (Ageorges, 2006b).



Figure 13: Die Gartenlaube. (1855). The Palais de l'Industrie in Paris [Illustration]. In Die Gartenlaube.

# CONCLUSION

**A**fter the Netherlands' disappointing performance at the Crystal Palace in 1851, it became painfully clear to Dutch visitors, including Samuel Sarphati, how 'backward' the Netherlands was in terms of industrialisation compared to the rest of the Western world. Samuel Sarphati, also known as the Creator of the New Amsterdam, decided that Amsterdam needed a permanent exhibition building, similar to the Crystal Palace, to promote industry in the Netherlands. Sarphati was a doctor of the poor who dedicated his life to national prosperity. Sarphati believed that national prosperity equalled good public health. And national prosperity was unthinkable without a steady development of, among other things, industry. Sarphati's dream for the Paleis voor Volksvlijt was to build a grand monumental people's palace, where exhibitions would be held that would put Amsterdam back on the international map, stimulate national industry and encourage the city council of Amsterdam to expand the city, which at the time, was the last time this had happened two hundred years ago.

Despite a promising start, the Paleis voor Volksvlijt was not a conclusive success. It soon became clear to the Palace Committee that the Palace was not financially sustainable if only exhibitions were held there. Over the years, various forms of entertainment were offered in the Palace and a large part of it was eventually allocated to catering and entertainment. Due to the financial problems in which the palace found itself, the programme became increasingly detached from Sarphati's original dream. The latter was increasingly relegated to the background. Moreover, from the very opening, the building itself was criticised. There were complaints about the acoustics in the Palace, it was too hot in the summer and in the winter there was no adequate heating, there were draughts

and the light was not satisfactory either. The Palace did contribute to the expansion of Amsterdam, as Amsterdam began to expand around the Palace. The Palace therefore had its share of shortcomings in terms of the building itself and its operation.

If we look at comparable exhibition buildings in Munich and Paris, it becomes clear that these buildings had the same kind of shortcomings. Both industrial palaces complained that it was too hot in summer and too cold in winter, and that there was insufficient ventilation. In terms of operation, the situation of the Glaspalast was similar to that of the Paleis voor Volksvlijt. The committee members of the Glaspalast did not know what to do with the expensive building, so it was misused for all sorts of different purposes, eventually becoming a permanent space for art exhibitions. The Palais d'Industrie, too, was used for all sorts of purposes before it had to make way for its replacements. The Palais d'Industrie was actually too small for the large exhibitions it was intended to house. The buildings were only sporadically used for what they were built for, the holding of exhibitions.

If we compare the Paleis voor Volksvlijt, and its problems, with the two industrial palaces in Munich and Paris, was Sarphati's dream of a permanent exhibition building realistic? In the way it was built, of glass and iron, the Paleis voor Volksvlijt was an unrealistic plan. A building of that size and those materials was not suitable for the function of an exhibition building because of the defects it entailed. In addition, such an exhibition building with the interpretation as Sarphati had in mind was simply too expensive to be viable. Now the Palace was being used for a

mishmash of functions for which it was not designed. If the Palace had been designed as a palace of entertainment, which it changed into over the years, it might have had a better chance of survival. In Munich, for example, the Glaspalast was successful after it embraced art, the building becoming the symbol for the art city of Munich. Despite all its shortcomings, the Paleis voor Volksvlijt was enormously popular among the people of Amsterdam. After all, it was a beautiful building where many people experienced beautiful evenings of entertainment. It was a real palace for the people.



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