

The Design Idea of Onno Greiner's Cultural Center

AR2A011 Architectural History Thesis

Name: Te-cheng Tseng

Tutor: Dolf Broekhuizen

Date: 20-4-2023

Delft University of Technology

Content

·Introduction

·Chapter1 Context

1.1 Cultural centers in the Post-War Reconstruction Europe

1.2 Cultural center in the Netherlands 1960s-1970s

1.3 Onno Greiner's cultural centers

·Chapter2 The Design Idea in Onno Greiner's Cultural Center

2.1 Cultural center as part of the city
2.2 Garden in the building

2.2 Flexibility of Performance Space

2.3 Clarity of space

·Chapter3 Comments and Subsequent Transformation

3.1 Different comments

3.2 Subsequent transformation

·Conclusion

Introduction

After the post-war reconstruction of European cities, cultural centers gradually entered people's view as an important component of urban public cultural facilities, due to the diversification and complexity of public daily cultural activities. The purpose of cultural centers is to promote cultural and artistic activities, providing people with diverse cultural activities and experiences.

Typically, cultural centers have a main function as theaters (performance venues) and are constructed as multifunctional buildings with other subsidiary functions. Therefore, the public communication space in cultural centers plays an important role in organizing and integrating these different functional spaces.

Moreover, the public space of cultural centers plays a transitional role between urban space and building functional space, presenting a dual nature of the city and the building. As an extension and important component of urban public space, citizens can chat, gather, and discuss matters here, demonstrating the vitality of the city and citizens' sense of belonging. Therefore, the study of public space in cultural centers is of great significance to urban public space, cultural centers themselves, and public daily life.

The Netherlands has a rich cultural history, and many cities in this culturally rich country have their own cultural centers. Many of these cultural center buildings were designed by architect Onno Greiner. This paper will select three of Onno Greiner's cultural center projects as research analysis subjects: Cultural Center 'De Tamboer', Cultural Center Hoogezand, and Cultural Center 'De Flint'. Through comparative analysis of these three cases, this paper aims to explore Onno Greiner's design considerations when designing cultural centers. The research will focus on different media such as design drawings, text, and video, and combine reading literature related to public space to explore the quality of public space while recounting architectural history.

The main content of this article will be divided into three chapters:

Chapter one introduces the historical background of the objects involved in the article. The first part of this chapter describes the cultural centers, which were considered important forces to promote citizens' sense of belonging and national identity under the background of European post-war reconstruction, and were therefore heavily funded and constructed by governments in various countries. Then, the local cultural center in the Netherlands is introduced, and by introducing different cultural centers in different places between 1960 and 1970, readers can have a basic understanding of the design thinking of cultural centers during this period. The last part of this chapter is an introduction to three cases selected from Onno Greiner, namely Cultural Center 'De Tamboer', Cultural Center Hoogezand, and Cultural Center 'De Flint'.

Chapter two is the main chapter of the article, which will analyze in detail the three cultural centers designed by Onno Greiner. The common characteristics of these buildings will be extracted through comparative analysis. For example, they have an intimate relationship with the city and there are many similar spatial techniques, such as the semi-outdoor space around the courtyard or linear

traffic space, as well as the relationship between seeing and being seen in certain spaces. It is worth noting that Onno Greiner pays great attention to people's emotional experiences in buildings, so these spaces also imply the architect's research on psychology. These analyses will mainly rely on architectural drawings and texts to derive the architect's true ideas through comparison.

Chapter three is about the relevant evaluation and usage of the buildings after they were built. In this chapter, newspapers and magazines become the main materials. Through reading and analyzing these materials, the evaluations of people (clients, users, and architecture scholars) on the buildings are summarized, and then their views and feelings are compared with Onno Greiner's design ideas. In addition, two of the buildings attracted subsequent expansion and transformation after being built for several years, and the reasons and transformation situations will be summarized. Finally, the usage status of the buildings will be explained through on-site research and recording.

CHAPTER.1 CONTEXT

1.1 Cultural Centers in Post-War Reconstruction Europe

When people are asked about their experiences with cultural centers, the answers can vary greatly. Some may recall a thrilling play they saw, while others may mention an elegant art exhibition, or perhaps a crafting session they attended there. Still others may reminisce about going to the center with their parents to borrow books when they were young. As the term "cultural center" suggests, the main function of these centers is to promote cultural activities in cities and provide venues for cultural-related events. As seen from people's responses, the impressions of cultural centers vary greatly, as they are not simply theaters, exhibition centers, libraries, or art galleries, but rather a type of building that combines multiple cultural functions. In Europe, cultural centers are found in both large cities and small towns, largely due to the social conditions that emerged in the post-war period. From the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, the construction of cultural centers became a preferred approach to promoting cultural activities in many Western European countries.¹

This period began in 1945, when post-war Europe, which was on the verge of collapse, was experiencing reconstruction. In this context, "culture" was considered an important means of promoting civic belonging and national identity.² The educational reforms of the late 1950s and 1960s that followed, allowed many young people to enter university campuses, leading to higher levels of cultural literacy and a greater pursuit of cultural activities. Economically, Europe during this period demonstrated relatively stable and sustained growth, with public transportation in cities constantly being planned and improved, and more people owning cars, making daily leisure activities more diversified and accessible. On a social level, the wave of social radicalism, political movements, and cultural revolutions that swept across many Western European countries had a profound impact on the arts and cultural landscape. Thus, under the influence of these various factors, citizens inevitably demanded higher levels of daily cultural activities, creating fertile ground for the construction of cultural centers.

In addition to the growing demand for cultural activities among citizens, the emergence of cultural centers was also influenced by other factors. However, it is worth noting that these factors are all derived from a premise, which is the national level of sponsorship and support for culture.³ As mentioned earlier, culture was considered an important force in post-war reorganization of civic cohesion, so shortly after the war, including in the Netherlands and other Western European countries, new cultural supply systems were established to promote cultural dissemination. This state-sponsored support of culture also meant that traditional cultural buildings were outdated, and single-purpose cultural buildings such as theaters, cinemas, art galleries, or museums were no longer able to meet the requirements of this new cultural policy. Against this cultural and social background, the cultural center emerged as a new type of building. The most significant feature of cultural centers

¹ Christoph Grafe, "Houses of Culture: The Rediscovery of a Recent History," in *People's Palaces Architecture, Culture and Democracy in Post-War Western Europe: Architectura and Natura* (Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 2014), 23.

² Ibid, 25.

³ Ibid, 25

is the combination of various cultural functions in a single building. ⁴As a government-sponsored cultural building, this is an ideal architectural form, as it can be managed and operated more efficiently and can provide a greater variety of cultural services to citizens at a lower cost. Therefore, under the influence of these various factors, cultural centers became prevalent in Western Europe during this period.

1.2 Cultural center in the Netherlands 1960s-1970s

As a member of Western Europe, the Netherlands was also part of the wave of cultural center construction during this period. Many cultural centers emerged during this time, and by introducing them, one can gain a clearer understanding of the types of daily cultural activities of Dutch citizens at that time. A typical example is the Apeldoorns toekomstige Cultural Center⁵, designed in 1963, which includes a hall that can accommodate 500 people, a theater that can accommodate 750 people, a coffee restaurant with a conference room, and a museum surrounding a garden. It demonstrates the typical functional composition of a cultural center, which consists of one or two public cultural functions (usually a public art gallery or a performance space) as the main body, accompanied by some auxiliary functions such as a coffee shop or a restaurant. Also designed in 1963 was the Cultural Center Nijmegen⁶, which includes a music school, a public reading room and library, and a free college. It is more educational in function than the former and can provide cultural education for citizens, making it another type of cultural center.

In addition, the design site of the cultural center also leads to different architectural forms and functional directions. For example, the Cultural Center Hilversum⁷, designed in 1967, was located opposite the town hall, and its functions included a museum, a lecture hall, an exhibition hall, and a music hall. The cultural centers in many Dutch cities are built next to or opposite the town hall, or both are planned in the same building. Such cultural centers are usually considered to have a greater responsibility to showcase the local city's culture, so the most common functions inside the building are museums, exhibition halls, or libraries with local archives, and they are also subject to more constraints in terms of their external appearance. The Cultural Center Winschoten⁸, designed in 1969, shows another type of status, with its site located near a lively shopping street, including a theater and a huge activity hall, and an internal street serving as an extension of the street. Compared with the former, its building posture is more open.

In addition to the above cases, it is worth mentioning that during this period, there was also an architect who designed a large number of cultural centers for the Netherlands, and that is Onno Greiner. From the 1960s to the 1970s, he designed cultural centers for the Netherlands, including Cultural Center 'De Tamboer' (1960-1967), Cultural Center Hoogezand (1961-1968), Cultural

⁴ Ibid, 26.

⁵ Bernard Bijvoet, "Apeldoorns toekomstige cultureel centrum," *BOUW: centraal weekblad voor het bouwen* 17, no.24 (1962): 874-875.

⁶ J.W.C. Boks, "Cultureel centrum te Nijmegen," *BOUW: centraal weekblad voor het bouwen* 18, no.13 (1963): 397.

⁷ W. M. Dudok, "Cultureel centrum te Hilversum," *BOUW: centraal weekblad voor het bouwen* 22, no.49 (1967): 1825.

⁸ Van den Broek, "Cultureel centrum 'De Klinker' te Winschoten," *BOUW: centraal weekblad voor het bouwen* 30, no.4 (1975): 71-74.

Center 'De Flint'(1966-1970), Cultural Center 'De Bonkelaar' (1967-1973), Cultural Center 'De Lawei' (1968-1973), Sociaal Cultural Center Vreeswijk (1971-1973), and Cultural Center, Krimpen aan de IJssel (1972-1976)⁹. These designs by Onno Greiner became an important part of the cultural centers constructed in the Netherlands in the 1960s and 1970s, and they played an important role in providing public cultural services in cities, making them an important part of the social environment and cultural life of citizens at that time.

1.3 Onno Greiner's Cultural Centers

As mentioned earlier, Onno Greiner designed numerous cultural centers throughout the Netherlands. These designs originated from different sites and had different functional requirements, which inevitably led to unique characteristics and qualities for each cultural center. However, despite their differences, there are also certain design principles and concepts that are consistent across these buildings, such as the layout of courtyards, the flexible use of space, and the relationship between the buildings and the city. This article focuses on analyzing three of Greiner's cultural centers: Cultural Center 'De Tamboer', Cultural Center Hoogezand, and Cultural Center 'De Flint'. By examining how these design principles are manifested in different buildings, we aim to uncover Greiner's thinking process in cultural center design. All three of these cultural centers were designed between 1960 and 1970, and share a similar social context and coherence in their design, making them suitable for comparative analysis.

Cultural Center 'De Tamboer' was Greiner's first cultural center project and was designed in 1960, completed in 1967. The client was the Hoogeveen municipality, and the initial design brief was for a theater. However, considering the potential for future development in Hoogeveen, the design brief was changed to a cultural center to meet the community's various cultural needs. De Tamboer has a space of 50x100 meters, and the most important function of the building is a flexible-use theater hall, a large and small hall, meeting spaces, a café, and an exhibition space.¹⁰

Cultural Center Hoogezand was designed around the same time as De Tamboer in 1961 but was never built. The client was the Hoogezand municipality, and the core of the design was a star-shaped hall, including a circular theater. The peripheral functions of the building were small halls, exhibition spaces, a café, and a library.¹¹

Cultural Center 'De Flint' was designed slightly later in 1966 and completed in 1977, commissioned by the Amersfoort municipality. It is located in the Teut area outside the center of the old town of Amersfoort, surrounded by worker housing and dilapidated factories. De Flint includes a theater, a town hall with a stage, a business center, a café, and various administrative and technical areas. The different functions are connected by two internal streets, which together form a T-shaped traffic area.¹²

⁹ Andrea Prins et al., *Onno Greiner (1924-2010): Een Zoektocht Naar Helderheid En Geborgenheid* (Beilen, Drenthe: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2016), 83.

¹⁰Ibid, 129-131.

¹¹Ibid, 136-137.

¹²Ibid, 145-147.

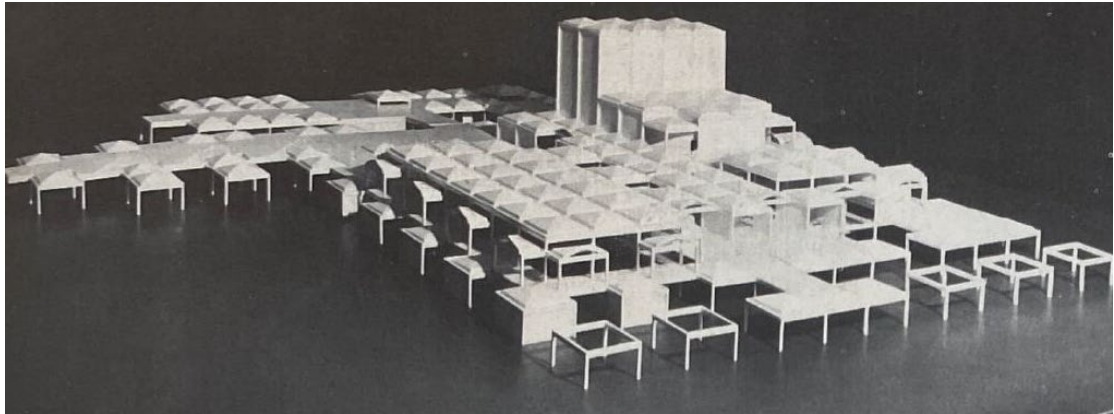
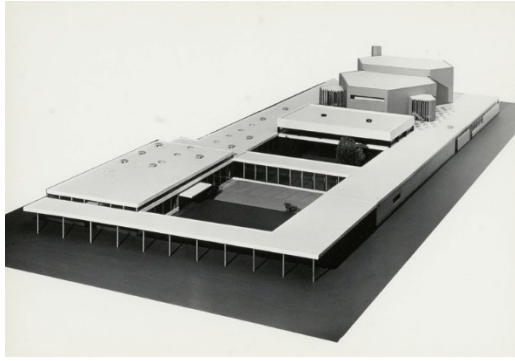


Fig 1: Model of De tamboer; From: HNI GREO_60010f3-2a

Fig2: Model of Cultural Center Hoogezand; From: HNI GREO_61019f1-7a

Fig3: Model of De flint; From: BOUW centraal weekblad voor het bouwwezen ,nr.40, 1971, p.1421

CHAPTER2 The Design Idea in Onno Greiner's Cultural Center

2.1 The cultural center as part of the city

As a part of the city, cultural centers can provide important cultural functions and services while also showcasing the city's characteristics and functions. A city's cultural center represents not only its functionality but also its culture and history. Therefore, architects must consider both the urban environment and the balance between functional and aesthetic values when designing and constructing cultural centers.

In addition, as a public building, the cultural center should also serve as a place for people to meet and interact, and act as a hub of urban life. In Greiner's design, we can see many social spaces designed to promote encounters between people. These spaces may be a lobby, a garden, or even a transportation space, all symbolizing the building's attempt to become an extension of the city. Greiner uses the street as a metaphor to express his views on these social spaces: "The street - an area accessible to everyone - is the most fiercely contested, beloved, and maligned territory of people. It is the freest space where life finds its expression. The street aspires to be like this building, in the best sense of the word. It can be festively decorated, giving people a sense of celebration and unexpected encounters."¹³

Regarding the relationship between architecture and the city, the different designs in these three projects all reflect the architect's ideas about the relationship between them.

2.1.1 De Tamboer

The boundary between architecture and the city is blurred in De Tamboer. The main entrance of De Tamboer is located on Hoofdstraat, adjacent to a small square surrounded by a covered corridor. This is an open square for the city, where citizens can enter at any time. There is a circle of chairs and several tables and chairs on one side of the square, where people can stay, relax, rest, chat, and gather. Additionally, due to the successive arrangement of floor-to-ceiling windows in a horizontal direction, people on the square can visually connect with the entire interior of the cultural center. The architect describes this as follows: "On the square, we can see the entire development of the complex: first, the exhibition area, then the courtyard with plants and sculptures, then the undulating small hall, and the theater hall that can be seen all the time."¹⁴ The square in front of De Tamboer becomes an essential medium in the dialogue between architecture and the city, attracting people in the city to stay and interact with the interior of the building through visual contact.

Moreover, there is a covered corridor between the square and the street. The space under the gallery has become a place where people often stay, forming a place for public activities in the city with the square. The entrance of the cultural center is located at the end of the south side of the gallery.

¹³ Onno Greiner, "Cultureel centrum 'De Tamboer' te Hoogeveen," BOUW : centraal weekblad voor het bouwwezen 24, no.8 (1969): 298.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Regarding the setting of the entrance of the cultural center, Onno Greiner describes it as "The entrance of the cultural center only wants to be a transitional climate, not an obstacle."¹⁵The straight line of the traffic space leads directly to the theater hall, and there is no turning or obstacle in the process from the entrance to the theater hall. In De Tamboer, the traffic passage seems to become a small alley in the city, unobstructed but still with a sense of ceremony, leading to different functional areas of the cultural center.

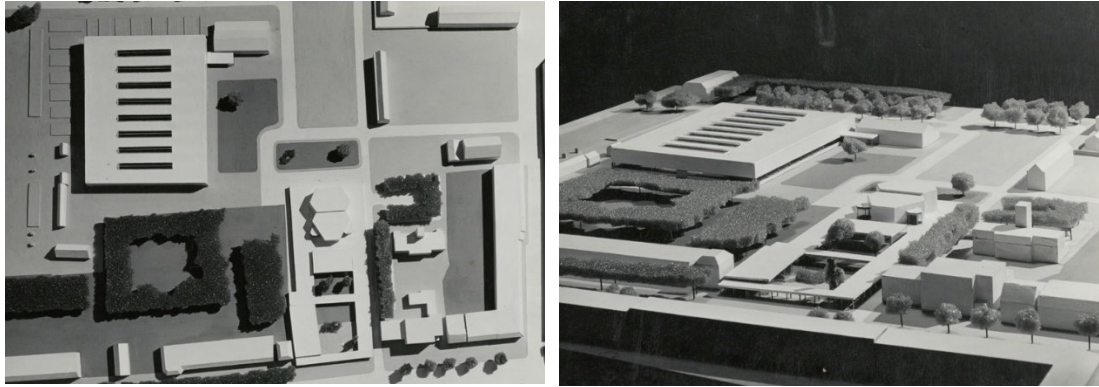


Fig4: Model of Cultural Center Hoogezand; From: HNI GREO_60010f3-4a

Fig5: Model of Cultural Center Hoogezand; From: HNI GREO_60010f3-6a

Fig6: De Tamboer's Entrance; From: Bouwkundig Weekblad (1946-1969) ,nr.21, 1967, p.366

2.1.2 Cultural Center Hoogezand

In the Cultural Center Hoogezand, the relationship between architecture and the city is reflected in different positions of the building. Located in a completely new neighborhood, the surrounding environment does not impose constraints on the new building, giving the architect a lot of freedom in the design process. As a result, the building has a very unique shape: at the center is a star-shaped theater, from which four different functional blocks radiate outwards, each serving as an entrance in different directions.

¹⁵ Ibid, 298

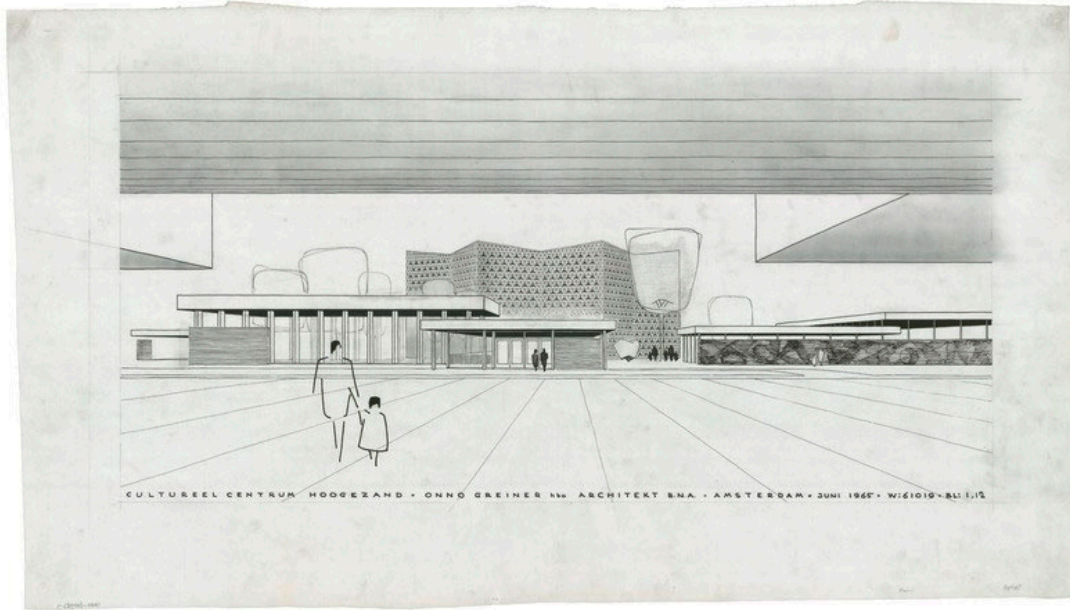
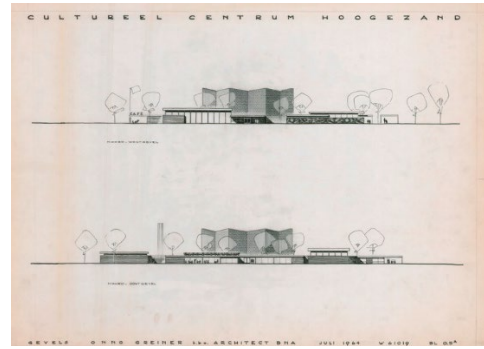
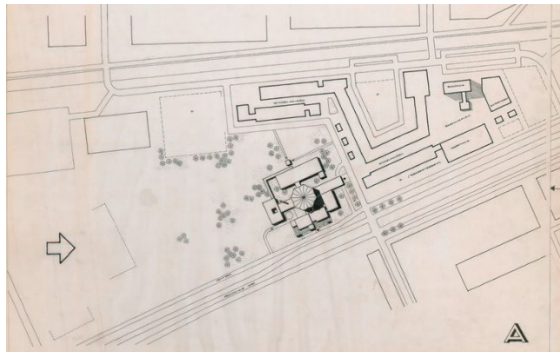


Fig7: Master Plan of Cultural Center Hoogezand; From: HNI GREO_61019t6-6

Fig8: Façade drawing of Cultural Center Hoogezand; From :HNI GREO_61019t6-1

Fig9: Perspective drawing of Cultural Center Hoogezand; From: HNI GREO_61019t7-1

Among these entrances facing different sides of the city, the most public one is the café block located on the east side, adjacent to the main street. The café facade features continuous windows, and the space under the roof along the street provides a place for pedestrians to stay and engage in lively communication. The main entrance to the cultural center is located on the north side, with the same width as the street of the adjacent northern neighborhood, as a continuation of the urban fabric. The other two functional blocks, the music school and the library, which require a higher degree of privacy, are located respectively on the quieter south and west sides, not directly adjacent to the city streets but connected by internal streets or glass corridors.

Furthermore, in the architect's perspective drawing of the design scheme, we can see the effect of the star-shaped theater of the complex in the city. When people look towards the cultural center from the city street, they are attracted by the unique visual effect of the theater. The exterior walls of the theater are inset with many translucent small holes, making it more eye-catching compared to the surrounding buildings. In addition, the roofs of the peripheral blocks of the cultural center are staggered in height, making the building more dynamic, thus even more attractive to people's

attention. If this cultural center was successfully built, the star-shaped theater would attract countless tourists and audiences and become one of the most iconic buildings in this new area of the city.

2.1.3. De Flint

Regarding De Flint, Onno Greiner described "This building in the traditional sense of the word does not want to be a building. It wants to be a continuation of the street."¹⁶ The 1970 design of De Flint reflects the architect's initial idea, which is a T-shaped internal traffic road connected to the external road network. This road represents the "continuation of the street" mentioned by the architect. The internal road connects the park in the north and the city ring road in the south. Thus, this road can become a pedestrian route between the city center and the city's outer ring road. Compared with general urban roads, this pedestrian route is safer for pedestrians, and the kiosks, shops, and cafes on the street provide a richer walking experience.

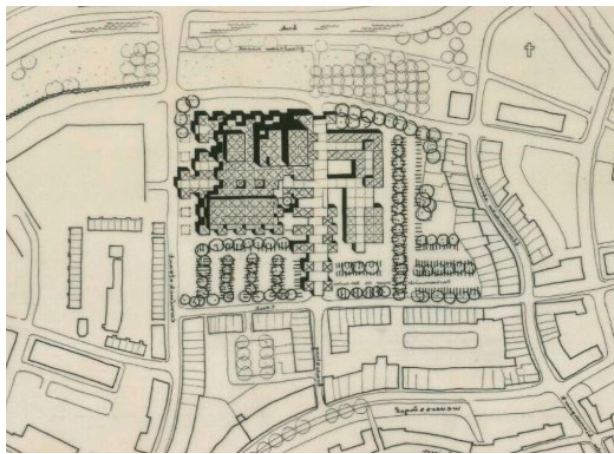


Fig 10: Master Plan of De Flint; From: HNI GREO_66037t4-1 (1970)



Fig 11: Master Plan of De Flint; From: HNI GREO_73100t10(1974)

The eastern side of the T-shaped road connects to Coninckstraat, and the bridge to the north of Coninckstraat will lead to the city's upcoming ring road, providing great convenience for car traffic. This T-shaped road dialogues with the city and divides the building into three parts: the west is the creative center, the northeast is the cultural center, and the southeast is the town hall. The relationship between De Flint and the city is also reflected in its architectural scale. The building uses a 6.40×6.40 meter grid size, which is approximately the average width of Amersfoort's houses. The modular spatial composition avoids long and monotonous facades, and the small changes in height in the building also conform to the "image of a slowly developing city center".¹⁷

However, due to various limitations, the design proposal from 1970 was not accepted and continued to be modified until construction began in 1974, which was already the 17th version provided by the architect. In this proposal, the T-shaped internal traffic route can still be seen, but it no longer aligns with the city streets due to changes in the internal and external spaces. Additionally, in this version, Greiner began to refer to De Flint as "Play Town" because people at the time began to question whether the word "culture" was too heavy. "Play City" is relatively more relaxed and also

¹⁶. Onno Greiner, "Cultureel centrum ' Een spelstadje voor Amersfoort ontwerp Onno Greiner," *BOUW: centraal weekblad voor het bouwwezen* 26, no.40 (1971): 1420.

¹⁷ Ibid, 1421.

expresses well the fact that it will accommodate interesting activities. On this matter, Onno Greiner said, "Let the users and the people decide what happens next after our time. The complex system is changeable, much like a knitting pattern that can be expanded in any direction. It's a starting point for the future."¹⁸

2.2 Flexibility of Performance Space

The performance space has always been the most important space in the cultural centers designed by Onno Greiner. When designing the performance space in different cultural centers, architects need to consider many factors, such as the number of audiences, stage form, sound effect, and supporting functions. Of course, in addition to these basic factors, architects usually have their own unique ideas. When all factors are considered comprehensively, the performance space in different cultural centers presents different spatial characteristics. This section of the article will analyze and elaborate on the performance space in three cultural centers, exploring the ideas of Onno Greiner in designing such spaces.

2.2.1 De Tamboer

As the first cultural center project designed by Greiner, De Tamboer was his initial exploration of performance spaces, and its design process embodied many interesting attempts by the architect. There are two performance spaces in De Tamboer, one is a small hall next to the garden, and the other is the theater hall.

After entering the entrance of De Tamboer and passing through the garden, one can reach the small hall, which can accommodate 400 people. The small hall has a movable stage, stage lighting, and a movable sound system. Here, people can hold solo concerts, small theater performances, or song and dance performances. If necessary, it can also be used for large gatherings, weddings, and other events, or as the lobby of the main hall. Typically, there are no walls around it, only a glass wall separates it from the garden, and people can come and go freely. When the small hall is used for performances, it can be separated from other spaces by wooden curtains. The small hall serves more as an informal, casual performance space.



Fig 12: Small hall of De Tamboer; From: *Bouwkundig Weekblad* (1946-1969), nr.21, 1967, p.371

¹⁸ "Verpauperde Buurt Krijgt Nieuw Hart Er Komt Weer Leut in De Teut," *De Telegraaf*, November 30, 1974.

In contrast, the theater hall in De Tamboer is more formal. It is composed of two hexagonal spaces, with the front hexagon used by the audience and the rear hexagon mainly used by performers. It is worth noting that the combination of these two hexagons can create different spatial arrangements depending on the nature of the performance. The stage in the rear hexagon can be extended into the front hexagon (using an electric platform), creating different performance spaces and accommodating audiences ranging from 600 to 800 people. Therefore, this space can not only be used as a theater but also for concerts, choirs, movies, dances, TV shows, and any other type of performance.

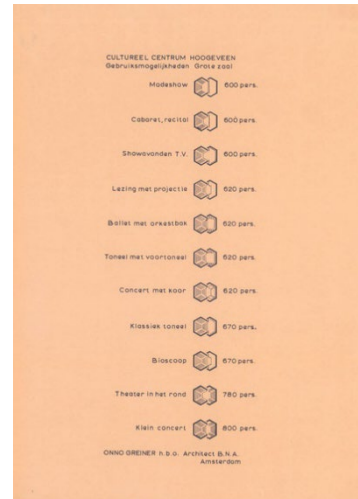
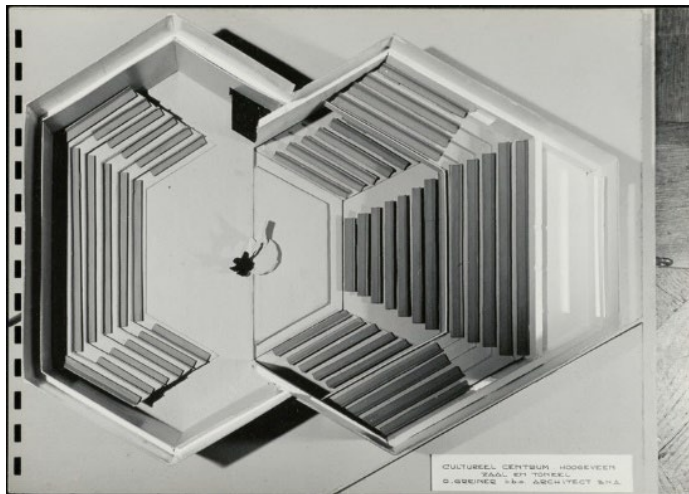


Fig 13: Model of De Tamboer's Theater; From: HNI GREO_60010f3-1a

Fig 14: Different ways of using the performance space; GREO_60010t7-3

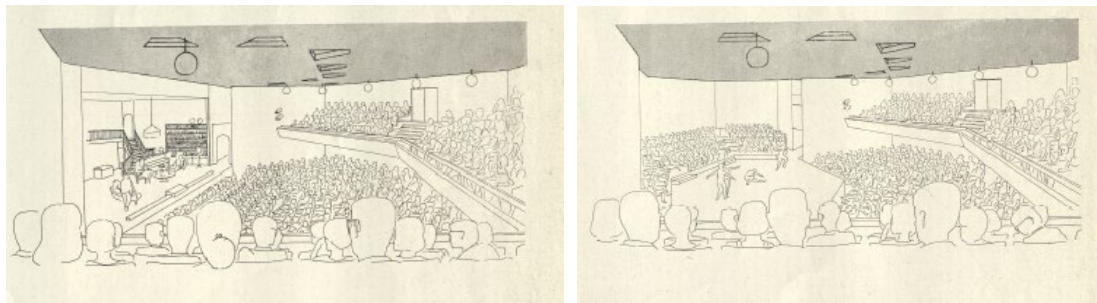


Fig15,16: Different ways of using the performance space in De Tamboer; From: Bouwkundig Weekblad (1946-1969) ,nr.21, 1967, p.373

Onno Greiner did not strictly distinguish between the functional properties of these two performance halls, which also reflects the flexibility of architecture as an important quality that architects hope to impart.

2.2.2 Cultural Center Hoogezand

The performance space of Cultural Center Hoogezand is located in the center of the building and is a star-shaped theater. The stage is located on one side, with two levels of seating surrounding the stage, and an outer circular aisle. Similar to De Tamboer, this performance space is highly flexible

and can be adapted to different performance needs, serving as various forms of theater, concert hall, cinema, or even as an arena for certain events, with seating capacity ranging from approximately 400 to 900 people.

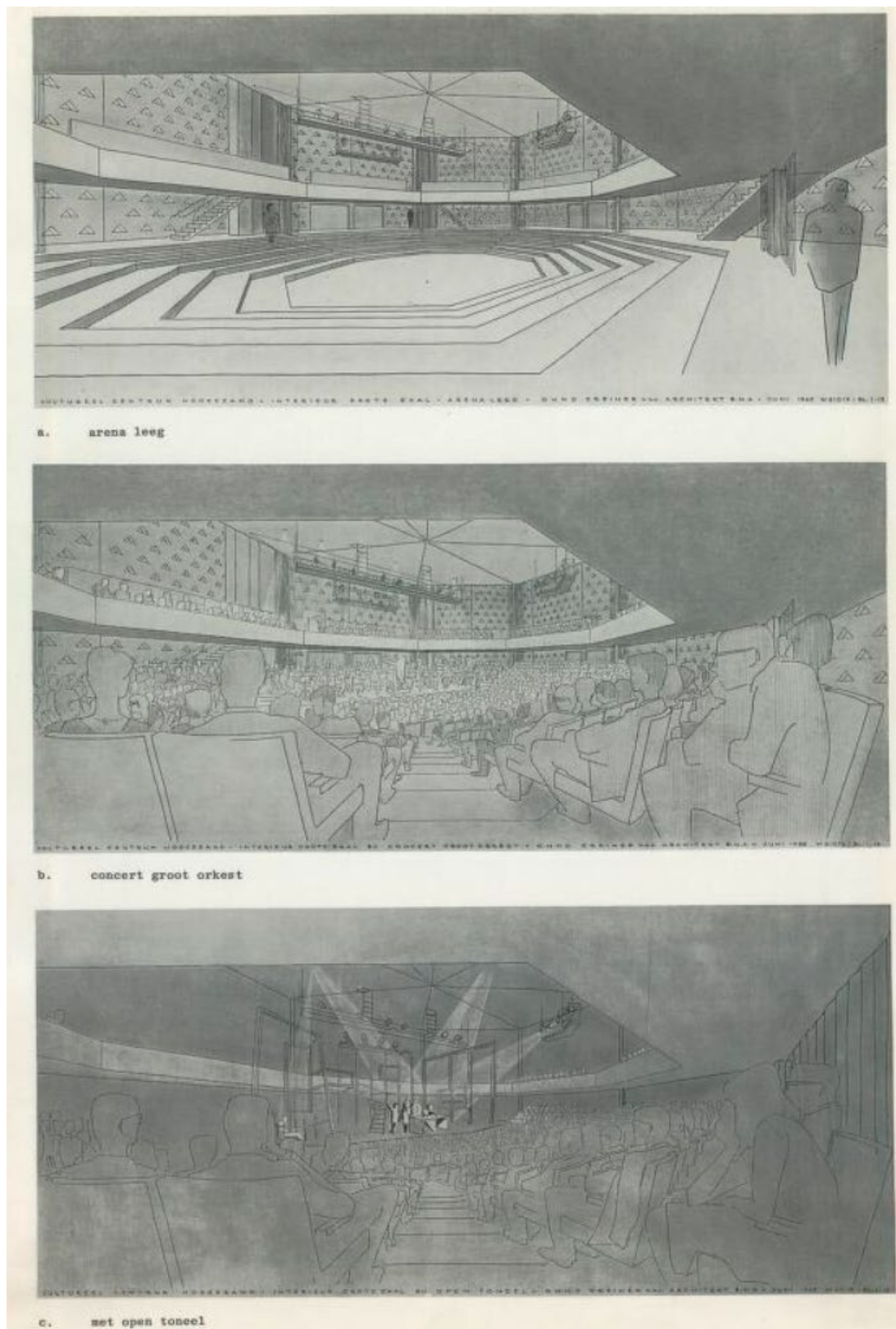


Fig17: Different ways of using the performance space in Hoogezand; From: HNI GREO_61019t15-5

From the drawings of different forms of theaters created by Onno Greiner, it can be seen that the different variations of the theater are mainly determined by the position and form of the stage. In most cases, the stage is located on one side of the theater, and when a larger performance space is required, it can be extended to the center of the theater. Conversely, when a solo concert is performed, the back half of the stage is occupied by the audience as there is no need for a large performance space. A special case is when the theater is used as an arena for events, in which case the stage is located in the center of the theater.

As this cultural center was ultimately not constructed, people were unable to experience its specific space firsthand. However, the perspective drawings created by the architect convey an intimate, warm, and vibrant atmosphere of this theater. The star-shaped theater is full of audience members, sitting in the two levels of seating around the stage. The theater space is not large but is fully equipped, with spotlights neatly shining on the band and the audience fully engrossed in the concert. The dazzling lights in the theater shine through the triangular hollows on the walls and radiate outward... If it had been built, this scene might have become a fond memory of many families for the cultural center.

2.2.3. De Flint

Similar to De Tamboer, De Flint also has two performance spaces. If viewed from a floor plan, people would first notice the theater located at one end of the inner street. The theater consists of a rectangular stage and a polygonal seating area, which is divided into two levels. This theater can accommodate 500 spectators and is equipped with an 11m×19m stage. In an interview, when Onno Greiner was asked whether he would choose to attend a chamber music night at De Tamboer or De Flint, he replied, "If it's a symphony orchestra, I would definitely choose Amersfoort (De Flint), it has very good acoustics."¹⁹ Onno Greiner mentioned that De Flint has better acoustics, but this may not refer to the aforementioned theater, but rather to another performance space in De Flint. It is located in the center of the City Hall and is larger than the former, with a 270 square meter stage and a capacity of about 1000 people. The gallery on the top can serve as a balcony for the theater and brings very good acoustics. In fact, it can not only be a performance space, but also, when the architect drew its perspective view, considered it as a marketplace, and after its completion, it served as an examination room for people.

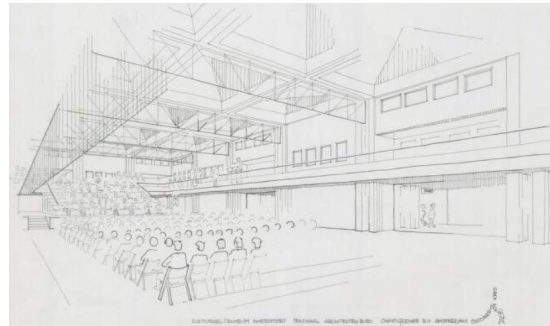
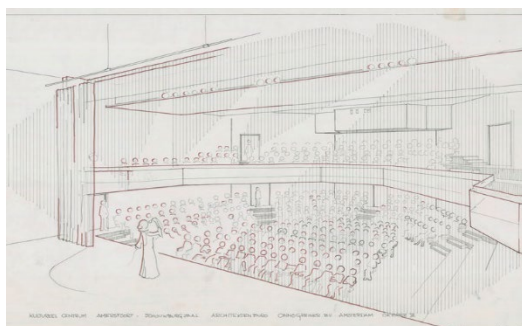


Fig18: Perspective drawing of theater in De Flint; From: HNI GREO_73100t20-11

Fig19: Perspective drawing of city hall in De Flint; From: HNI 73100t20-9

¹⁹ "Onno Greiner: Vierkant Tegen Het Kwadraat," *De Architect : Vaktijdschrift Voor Architectuur* 9, no.3 (1978): 63.

2.3 Clarity of space

In Andrea Prins' book "Onno Greiner", she mentions that "in the first few decades of Onno Greiner's life, his deep sense of insecurity was the reason he needed clear structures. Based on this need, he wanted to develop architecture that provided certainty and clarity."²⁰ Onno Greiner himself also described this need, stating, "People must constantly know or feel where he is and why (even if he need not be aware of it)"²¹. Thus, this sense of certainty and clarity is manifested in the precise perception of one's location and direction within the building. In the following section, this paper will analyze the different methods used by Onno Greiner in designing the cultural center to demonstrate how he achieved this sense of certainty and clarity in the building.

2.3.1 Patio

In Onno Greiner's design, patios are widely used in the creation of spaces. From the perspective of clarity, patios can first divide the interior space of a building into different areas and functions, thus increasing the spatial hierarchy and variability, making it easier for people to perceive the distribution and layout of the space. Additionally, the position of trees or the direction of sunlight passing through the courtyard can be used to determine people's location and direction. Moreover, through natural lighting and ventilation, patios can provide a clearer and brighter indoor environment, while also increasing the circulation of indoor air, allowing people to better perceive the atmosphere and air quality indoors. In more complex buildings such as cultural centers, the use of courtyards can make it easier for people to understand the layout and structure of the building, thereby improving the readability of the space and the user experience.



Fig 20 Photo of De Tamboer's entrance patio From: *Bouwkundig Weekblad (1946-1969)*, nr.21, 1967, p.367

Examples of this can be seen in De Tamboer. This cultural center has mainly two patios, one located at the entrance and the other in the middle of the building, both of which serve to differentiate the

²⁰ Andrea Prins et al., *Onno Greiner (1924-2010): Een Zoektocht Naar Helderheid En Geborgenheid* (Beilen, Drenthe: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2016), 105.

²¹ Onno Greiner, "Cultureel centrum 'De Tamboer' te Hoogeveen," *BOUW : centraal weekblad voor het bouwwezen* 24, no.8 (1969): 298.

space. As mentioned earlier, one of the functions of the patio at the entrance is to serve as a transition between the city and the building. It consists of a public terrace and a pool, separated from the city street only by a covered walkway, but surrounded by different parts of the building. Its existence as a limited public terrace can showcase the building's openness to the city while also serving as a reference for the space, indicating that people have entered the interior of De Tamboer. In addition, it also divides the entrances to the café and cultural center within the building. The main open face of the building is located near the main street, so the entrances to the different functions within the building converge here, and the presence of the courtyard helps to separate the crowds and avoid confusion at the entrance. The patio in the middle of De Tamboer also plays a similar role, with only continuous glass separating it from the building, providing ample light to the interior. Therefore, the café, corridors, exhibition areas, and small halls around it can all enjoy clear indoor visual effects, allowing people to better understand their location. In De Flint, the circulation space inside the building has already divided the functions of the building, and its patio is mainly used to distinguish the café and creative center in the east of the building.

2.3.2 Traffic space

The handling of traffic space in architecture is another method used by Onno Greiner to create clarity in architectural space. In many of his projects, the traffic space is clearly visible throughout the entire building. In a cultural center, the role of clear traffic space is even more important. Clear traffic space can be achieved through the layout and interconnection of spaces such as theaters, lounges, corridors, and lobbies, as well as other functions within the cultural center. This provides people with a clear passage to enter and exit the cultural center, enhances their perception and understanding of the architectural space, and brings about a greater clarity effect for the building.

In De Tamboer, the main traffic flow is in the area between the entrance of the cultural center and the entrance of the theater hall. This traffic space is very straight, and people can clearly see the theater hall at the front as soon as they step inside the entrance. Around this main flow line, various functions such as dressing rooms, exhibition halls, small halls, and restrooms are arranged in sequence. People can choose to enter different functional areas and then return to the main flow line, ensuring the clarity of the route. Additionally, at the entrance of the café, there is also a straight traffic passage enclosed by two horizontal long walls with doorways distributed at different positions on the walls, allowing people to freely choose to go to different spaces.

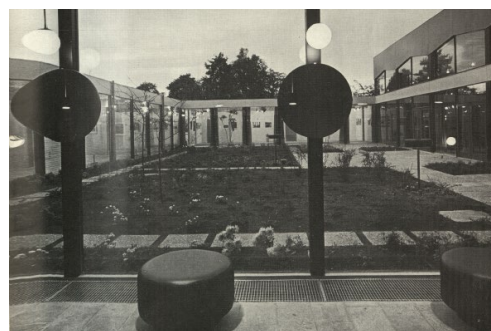
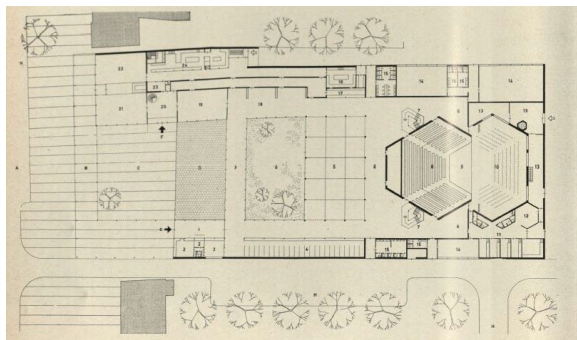


Fig 21: Ground floor of De Tamboer; From: *BOUW centraal weekblad voor het bouwwezen*, nr.8, 1969, p.300

From: *Bouwkundig Weekblad (1946-1969)*, nr.21, 1967, p.369

Fig 22 Photo of De Tamboer's traffic area From: *Bouwkundig Weekblad (1946-1969)*, nr.21, 1967, p.369

In contrast to the spatial organization of De Tamboer, the Cultural Center Hoogezand sets different functional blocks and their corresponding entrances in different orientations within the cultural center, with the theater hall located in the center of the building. Therefore, the traffic space within the building mainly serves as the connection between the peripheral functional areas and the theater. These traffic spaces also exhibit linear features and are connected to the circular corridor around the star-shaped theater through straight corridors, ensuring the clarity of routes within the building. In addition, both sides of each connecting corridor are made of glass, providing transparency between the inside and outside, enabling people to correspond to their own positions based on the landscape outside the window and the building itself.

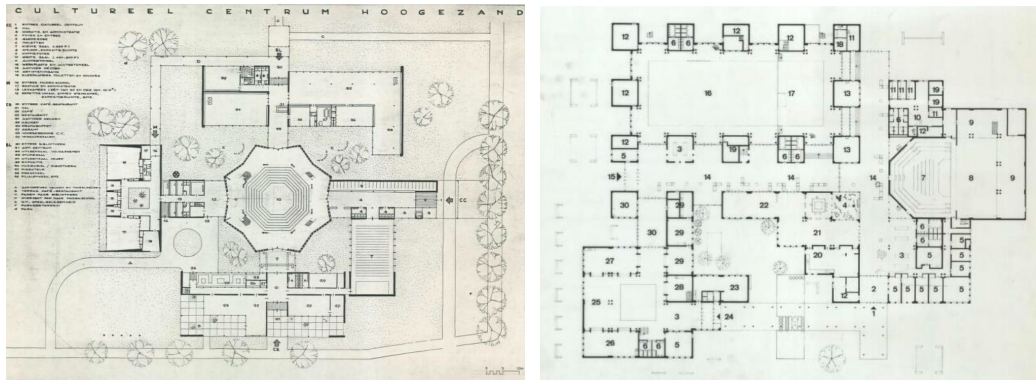


Fig 23: Ground floor of Cultural center Hoogezand; From: HNI GREO_61019t15-3

Fig 24: Ground floor of De Flint; From: HNI GREO_73100t21-6

Compared to the previous two examples, although De Flint has a larger building area and more complex functional composition, it still relies on clear traffic to connect different functions within the building. The internal traffic area of De Flint mainly presents a T-shaped layout, dividing the building into four parts: the western part is the municipal hall, the northeast part is the cultural center, the southeast part is the creative center, and the theater is located in the north.

2.3.3 Sight relationship

In the creation of clarity and certainty in architecture, the line of sight of users within the space is also a crucial design factor. The line of sight can provide a clear sense of direction and space during movement within a building, making it easier for people to locate their destination. Additionally, the line of sight can affect people's perception and behavior within a building, ultimately impacting the building's safety.

In De Tamboer, the line of sight within the building is primarily centered around the courtyard. As previously mentioned, the glass windows or corridors surrounding the courtyard provide visual transparency, creating favorable conditions for the intersection of people's lines of sight. For instance, from the corridor at the entrance of the building, one can see both the cultural center and café's distinct entrances through the courtyard. As a result, people will have a rough impression of the building's space before entering. Even after entering the building, people's lines of sight can still pass through the courtyard and into the opposite space. For example, in the cultural center's traffic corridor, people can see the paintings hung on the exhibition area wall opposite the courtyard, or they can see the tables and chairs arranged in the small hall after the corner.



Fig 25: Photo of De tamboer's Café From: *Bouwkundig Weekblad (1946-1969)*, nr.21, 1967, p.376



Fig 26: Photo of De tamboer's foyer From: *Bouwkundig Weekblad (1946-1969)*, nr.21, 1967, p.370

Similarly, in Cultural Center Hoogezand, the building still employs the combination of courtyard and glass windows to facilitate the exchange of lines of sight. For instance, while ordering coffee in the café's foyer, people can see those in the small theater hall opposite the courtyard listening to the band playing. Or while reading in the borrowing room, one can see the performers in the backstage preparing for their performance. These different functional spaces with visual communication may not have a specific connection, but these visual cues enable people to better understand the spatial distribution of the building.

However, the line of sight communication in De Flint is different from the previous two examples. It is not based on the horizontal transparency brought by the courtyard and floor-to-ceiling glass windows but rather focuses on creating vertical interaction within the space. A clear example of this is the city hall in De Flint. The center of the hall is an internal square with a high ceiling, which can be flexibly used and filled with various types of small stalls for markets, where people can wander around or stay. Above the square is a circular corridor that forms a height difference with the lower square, allowing for the exchange of people's lines of sight. This spatial manipulation can also be found in the creative center of De Flint, where the center is also a high-ceilinged internal hall with a circular corridor above. While chatting on the corridor, adults can see the young people playing table tennis below or the children practicing painting in the room next to the square. The exchange of lines of sight in De Flint is more three-dimensional and active, and it is more manifested between people, subtly encouraging cohesion and making the building feel safer.

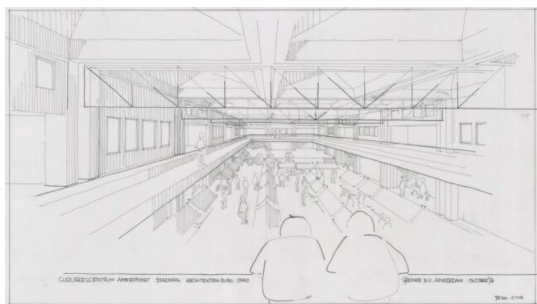


Fig 27: Perspective drawing of De Flint's city hall; From: *HNI GREO_73100t20-3*



Fig 28: Perspective drawing of De Flint's Creative Center; From: *GREO_73100t20-14*

Chapter 3: Comments and Subsequent Transformation

In the three cultural centers, De Flint and De Tamboer have been successfully built and are still in use today. Moreover, Onno Greiner personally renovated and expanded these two cultural centers later on. However, Cultural Center Hoogezand was not able to be built due to various reasons. Therefore, this chapter will focus more on the elaboration of De Flint and De Tamboer.

3.1 Different Comments

3.1.1 De Tamboer

Prior to the construction of De Tamboer, a journalist from Drentse described the theater hall of this cultural center, which had 11 different uses, as a "magic room"²² in his article for De Tamboer. At that time, such a design was actually a novelty, and according to the journalist's view, it could possibly become a solution for many northern cities in the Netherlands to deal with the problem of limited space. In addition, in an interview, the State Commission for the construction of theaters and concert halls also commented on the soon-to-be-completed De Tamboer. They believed that De Tamboer, as the new cultural center in Hogeveen, had performed well in terms of art, structure, and economics.²³

Before De Tamboer opened to the public, the cultural center was busy searching for a suitable manager. Eventually, Mr. Jan C. Goedegebuur stood out from 150 applicants and was recognized as the manager. After becoming the manager, Mr. Jan C. Goedegebuur actively cooperated with different organizations to increase the attractiveness of De Tamboer. He believed that De Tamboer was not just a cultural center, but also a community center. He hoped that it could become a place like home: "Let everyone, especially young people, feel: this is our building and we feel comfortable here"²⁴

Ten years after the completion of De Tamboer, Onno Greiner mentioned in an interview that he had tried hard to change the client's ideas at the time: "They (wanted to build a real theater, and I had to overturn their ideas, which I also succeeded in doing...They did not understand what this building could bring to Hogeveen. You can introduce conferences and courses, as well as theater, music, ballet and improvisation. Imagine people celebrating carnival in De Tamboer, and besides that, exhibitions, stations, markets and parties have been held here..."²⁵ In Onno Greiner's view, De Tamboer brought not only a theater, but also many other cultural activities to Hogeveen, giving people more choices.

²² "CULTUREEL CENTRUM HOOGEVEEN VOORJAAR 1967 IN GEBRUIK Uniek Ontwerp Van Een „Tover'-Zaal," *Nieuwsblad Van Het Noorden*, May 5, 1966, 3.

²³ Ibid

²⁴ "Jan Goedegebuur Leidt Toekomstig Cultureel Centrum in Hogeveen DE DIRECTEUR IS EEN GEWONE JONGEN," *Nieuwsblad Van Het Noorden*, November 19, 1966, 27.

²⁵ "Onno Greiner: Vierkant Tegen Het Kwadraat," *De Architect : Vaktijdschrift Voor Architectuur*, 1978, 62.

3.1.2 De Flint

Before the construction of De Flint, Emmy van Overeem published some criticisms in her article, including the lack of a sense of scale in De Flint. Two weeks later, Onno Greiner responded to Emmy van Overeem's views in an article.²⁶ In his opinion, E.v.O seemed to confuse De Flint with the Rotterdam "Doelen" or the Hague Congress building. He explained that De Flint was not designed for car traffic, but for pedestrians. The scale of De Flint was determined based on the average width of houses in the city center, and its roof color and window sizes were roughly similar to nearby houses. In addition, regarding E.v.O's mention of "(De Flint) disrupting the scale of the historic residential area in the name of culture," Onno Greiner believed that she equated culture with activities such as ballet and theater. He thought that besides these, leisure activities such as ceramics, painting, woodworking, and photography were also culture, which were closely related to people's lives. The theater, town hall, and creative center in De Flint were a very unique combination, and they would have a strong mutual influence with the residential area.

Of course, most of the opinions about De Flint are positive. Scholar K. Wiekart greatly admired the comfort and flexibility of De Flint, which were showcased by its roof. He said, "The shape of the roof not only affects the exterior appearance of the building, but also creates an internal dimension that is attuned to the needs of its occupants. This complex seamlessly integrates into its surroundings, as if it has gradually evolved over time to adapt to changing social norms, expansion, and innovation."²⁷ In addition, scholar Gert Jonker also expressed his views on the roof (or appearance) of De Flint. He believed that the rising and falling of the building's roof gave it a literal fluidity and made the building appear as if it were respectfully receding. In his view, this is related to Onno Greiner's idea about public space, that festiveness should be brought into the building by people themselves. Gert Jonker said, "He is not the architect to nail the festivity to the wall; you have to bring them and make them yourself. To that extent, the Flint is a demanding building and not a fairytale world where one enjoys what others have prepared. But it is anything but a 'sober' building."²⁸

3.2 Transformation

3.2.1 De Tamboer

As the first cultural center designed by Onno Greiner, De Tamboer opened to the public in 1967. Its outstanding performance brought the architect great acclaim, making it one of the most popular theaters of that time. However, after operating for over 20 years, it became apparent that the 1967 cultural center was no longer suitable for the people of 1990. De Tamboer needed a larger stage and a complete stage tower to perform more works. Therefore, a new theater volume was added on the north side of the original De Tamboer theater, with a stage area of 16 x 28 meters and a height of 25 meters. It became one of the most well-equipped theaters in northeastern Netherlands at that time.

²⁶ "BRIEF / De Beurt Aan Amersfoort," *NRC Handelsblad*, August 24, 1974, Z5.

²⁷ "Nieuw Cultureel Centrum Amersfoort: Stadje in De Stad," *NRC Handelsblad*, September 1, 1977, 6.

²⁸ Gert Jonker, "Onno Greiner Toont Meesterschap Amersfoort Kreeg Bijna Ideaal „Cultuurstadje,"" *De Telegraaf*, September 3, 1977, T.XXIII.

The shape of the stage is oval, a theory that Onno Greiner developed from his many theater designs, with countless circles on the cross-section and countless ellipses on the longitudinal section. This hall shape makes the distance between the audience and performers shorter, encouraging more interaction.

In addition, the entrance of De Tamboer was also renovated. In the 1960s design, the "theater as an extension of the street" was the starting point of the plan, attracting people in the city through a combination of canopies and squares. However, the renovated De Tamboer removed the 3-meter-high canopy along the street and replaced it with seven white concrete doors, each 8.5 meters high. The architect explained, "This 'open facade' is more suitable for the new buildings that have emerged on Hoofdstraat in recent decades... the tall entrance also allows people to look up at the entire complex, including the old and new theaters, and the original features and natural transitions from the outside to the inside are preserved through this spatial separation."²⁹



Fig29: De Tamboer's old Entrance; From: *Bouwkundig Weekblad (1946-1969)*, nr.21, 1967, p.366

Fig30: De Tamboer's new Entrance; From: *Onno Greiner : Architect (1985)*, p.44

3.2.2 De Flint

De Flint was officially put into use in 1978 and was highly praised for more than a decade, hosting many performances of various sizes. At the same time, the demand for larger theaters was also growing. On November 25, 1990, a fire destroyed the theater hall of De Flint. Many people thought that the burnt theater could be a beautiful background for performances, but at the time, director T. Porringa did not want to adopt this suggestion as she was concerned it would cause another accident.³⁰ Therefore, all performances at De Flint were suspended after the fire. The Municipality of Amersfoort considered building a new theater near the station, but they ultimately decided to renovate De Flint, with Onno Greiner as the renovating architect. De Flint was transformed into a brand new, fully equipped theater, with the addition of a balcony and an increase in seating capacity from 500 to 800 people. The new stage could accommodate all common theater show. The realization of this change mainly relied on the structuralist concept that the architect initially chose for De Flint, which brought great possibilities for its expansion, both horizontally and vertically.

²⁹ Marck, Marc van der, John Kirkpatrick, K Wiekart, and Onno Greiner. "nieuwbouw theater 'de tamboer' hoogeveen" in *Onno Greiner : Architect*. (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1985), 45.

³⁰ JOLAN DOUWES, "Vier Jaar Na De Brand Voel Ik Het Litteken Nog Steeds Schrijven" *Trouw*, September 22, 1994, 5.

Conclusion

“What is a Cultural Center? It turns out to be a difficult concept. The word cultural seems to refer to the level of the society of a country, of a nation, of a group of people, regardless of how that society expresses itself.”³¹

In his architectural career, Onno Greiner designed many cultural centers. This article explores three of his classic cultural centers, Cultural Center 'De Tamboer', Cultural Center Hoogezand, and Cultural Center 'De Flint', providing a good perspective to observe and explore Onno Greiner's thought process when designing these cultural centers. The article discusses Onno Greiner's ideas on the relationship between cultural centers and cities, as well as the spatial organization of these cultural centers, including the flexibility of performance spaces and the clarity of social spaces.

Regarding the relationship between architecture and cities, as well as the relationship between architecture and people in cities, Onno Greiner's cultural centers show a positive attitude. This is the result of the architect's reflection on people's lifestyles at that time. He once said, “In this era of isolation, we have an enormous need for places where we can meet each other ... It is not just about visiting a theater performance or a concert six times a year. People want in the direction of a kind of communal creativity [...] In this world, which consists of five days of work and two days of recreation, tensions live, which work their way up from under the surface. Everyone looks at the clock, people live at a fast pace, but they must be able to relax somewhere.”³² Therefore, he hoped that the cultural centers he designed would be open and inclusive enough to be places where people can "encounter." Onno Greiner once said “Such encounters are a goal of culture, a safe encounter should be without traffic. The traffic has come about through ourselves, but only now do we see what it is becoming: an enemy of the encounter.”³³ He hoped to create spaces where people can linger and talk sincerely with each other instead of just passing by. He also regarded "encounter" as part of culture. In his view, culture is not just about music, dance, and drama. It is a force that brings people together and enhances social belonging.

In Onno Greiner's consideration of performance spaces, it can be seen that he is passionate about designing multiple uses for a space to meet different performance needs. Its advantages are obvious. First, it is very efficient, bringing as many possibilities as possible to the limited space capacity, and people have more choices for the use of the space. Another benefit it brings is that it is more advantageous economically. The construction of a cultural center is usually not a small sum of money, so combining multiple spaces in one space can effectively save a lot of costs. In addition, this design method also brings greater flexibility to the building, making it easier for the building to be remodeled and updated, so the building becomes a constantly growing and evolving object.

³¹ Onno Greiner, “Cultureel centrum 'De Tamboer' te Hoogeveen,” *BOUW* : centraal weekblad voor het bouwwezen 24, no.8 (1969): 298.

³² Andrea Prins et al., *Onno Greiner (1924-2010): Een Zoektocht Naar Helderheid En Geborgenheid* (Beilen, Drenthe: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2016), 129.

³³ Onno Greiner, “Cultureel centrum 'De Tamboer' te Hoogeveen,” *Bouwkundig Weekblad* (1946-1969) 85, no.21 (1967): 367.

Onno Greiner's demand for clarity reflects his delicate design thinking and his emphasis on people's experience in buildings. In his design, different design elements are carefully considered, such as patio, light, plants, route, line of sight, and transparency. He carefully arranges the combination of these elements to make people feel clear, safe, and comfortable in the building. His strong perception of space allows him to create more details when conceiving different spaces. He carefully controls the changes in the user's mood in the space to create a rich spatial experience. Such changes in space will not make users lose their way, but instead allow them to calmly feel and discover every space. Clarity and certainty are the constant qualities of the space.

Until today, the De Tamboer and De Flint cultural centers have been in continuous use for 56 and 45 years respectively, witnessing the transformation of cultural centers in the Netherlands over the past half century. During this period of more than 50 years, views on "culture" and "public space" have undergone multiple changes, but these cultural centers have been able to continuously adapt to the changing times, continuing through self-renovation and transformation, which also proves the validity of Greiner's design thinking over time. In his design thinking, whether it is the relationship between architecture and the city, or the flexibility and clarity of architectural space, they reflect his emphasis on the "people" in architecture. People's experience and emotions are the core of his design thinking, and these qualities do not change over time.

Bibliography

Bijvoet, Bernard. "Apeldoorns Toekomstige Cultureel Centrum." BOUW : Centraal Weekblad Voor Het Bouwwezen 17, no. 24, 1962.

Boks, J.W.C. "Cultureel Centrum Te Nijmegen." BOUW : Centraal Weekblad Voor Het Bouwwezen 18, no. 13, 1963.

"BRIEF / De Beurt Aan Amersfoort." NRC Handelsblad. August 24, 1974.

Broek, Van den. "Cultureel Centrum 'De Klinker' Te Winschoten." BOUW : Centraal Weekblad Voor Het Bouwwezen 30, no. 4, 1975.

"CULTUREEL CENTRUM HOOGEVEEN VOORJAAR 1967 IN GEBRUIK Uniek Ontwerp Van Een „Tover'-Zaal." Nieuwsblad Van Het Noorden. May 5, 1966.

DOUWES, JOLAN. "Vier Jaar Na De Brand Voel Ik Het Litteken Nog Steeds Schrijven'." Trouw. September 22, 1994.

Dudok, W. M. "Cultureel Centrum Te Hilversum." BOUW : Centraal Weekblad Voor Het Bouwwezen 22, no. 49, 1967.

Grafe, Christoph. People's Palaces Architecture, Culture and Democracy in Post-War Western Europe: Architectura and Natura. Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 2014.

Greiner, Onno. "Cultureel Centrum ' Een Speelstadje Voor Amersfoort Ontwerp ." BOUW : Centraal Weekblad Voor Het Bouwwezen 26, no. 40, 1971.

Greiner, Onno. "Cultureel Centrum 'De Tamboer' Te Hoogeveen." BOUW : Centraal Weekblad Voor Het Bouwwezen 24, no. 8, 1969.

"Jan Goedegebuur Leidt Toekomstig Cultureel Centrum in Hoogeveen DE DIRECTEUR IS EEN GEWONE JONGEN." Nieuwsblad Van Het Noorden. November 19, 1966.

Jonker, Gert. "Onno Greiner Toont Meesterschap Amersfoort Kreeg Bijna Ideaal „Cultuurstadje." De Telegraaf. September 3, 1977.

Marck, Marc van der, John Kirkpatrick, K Wiekart, and Onno Greiner. Onno Greiner : Architect. Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1985.

"Nieuw Cultureel Centrum Amersfoort: Stadje in De Stad." NRC Handelsblad. September 1, 1977.

"Onno Greiner: Vierkant Tegen Het Kwadraat." De Architect : Vaktijdschrift Voor Architectuur 9,

no. 3, 1978.

Prins, Andrea, Tine van Merwijk, Soscha Monteiro de Jesus, and Marthe Stallenberg. Onno Greiner (1924-2010): Een Zoektocht Naar Helderheid En Geborgenheid, 2016

“Verpauperde Buurt Krijgt Nieuw Hart Er Komt Weer Leut in De Teut.” De Telegraaf. November 30, 1974.

ARCHIVE

Het nieuwe instituut in Rotterdam