

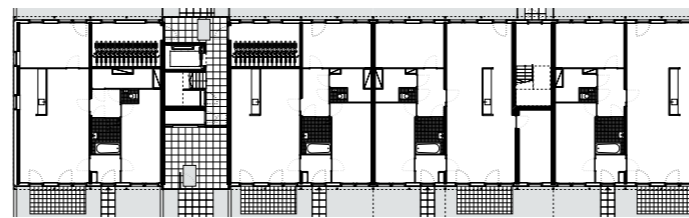


→ The strong image of the front facade is determined by the grid of columns and window sills.

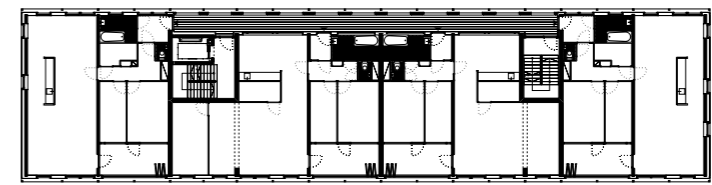
Apartment complex, Zierikzee

Kingma Roorda's fusion of a Norwegian warehouse and Venetian palace fits wonderfully well into its Dutch context.

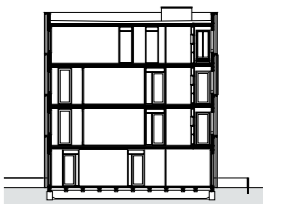
NETHERLANDS — TEXT: KIRSTEN HANNEMA & HANNAH SCHUBERT, PHOTOGRAPHY: RENÉ DE WIT



↑ Ground floor



↑ First floor



↑ Section



→ Access to the walkway at the rear

An hour's drive from the urbanized heart of the Netherlands, lies the province of Zeeland, known for its beaches, its emptiness and – of course – the Delta Works, built after the 1953 storm surge disaster. With the construction of this complex of dams, locks, sluices and storm surge barriers (one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World) and the accompanying expansion of infrastructure, the southwestern province suddenly became more accessible and before long, a popular tourist destination. Small historical centres like Zierikzee have been major beneficiaries of these developments. In summer the little 'heritage town', with a population of around 10,000, is thronged with day tourists from the rest of the country, Germany and Belgium.

Despite this, Zeeland is one of several Dutch provinces suffering from depopulation: young people in particular are moving away, to study and in search of work. It is perhaps surprising, therefore, that the city of Zierikzee

should be building a substantial new suburb, Poortambacht. In its plans to counteract shrinkage, the province of Zeeland has stipulated that new-build dwellings should be distinguished by exceptional spatial quality and sustainability. This is not immediately apparent upon entering Poortambacht, which looks very much like any other modern Dutch suburban development, composed of a number of neighbourhoods, each with its own spatial layout and distinctive architectural language. Only on the edge of the suburb does the appeal of this location become apparent: it is situated a few hundred metres from the dike with a view over the Oosterschelde and the estuary that provides access to Zierikzee.

It is on this side of the suburb that the Rotterdam firm Kingma Roorda architecten has designed two housing projects. The first project, the so-called quay houses (completed last year), is distinguished by the varied facade composition. Through the repetition of a

limited number of housing types, in which colour, size, doors, windows and roof shape are the variables, the architects have tried to give an individual expression to the collective of dwellings. The typology of the quay wall lends itself particularly well to such an approach – so typical of this age of individualization. But the sober detailing and grey-green colours do nothing to enliven the facades. If the quay does not strike one as dull, that is because of the 'intrusive' presence of project number two, the red-brown apartment building half-way along the row of houses.

For this building (which in two years' time will have a green doppelgänger, further along the quay) Kingma Roorda drew inspiration from the warehouse architecture of Bergen (NO) and the Venetian palazzi. The firm has fused these building types into a stately, brightly coloured block – not quite as brightly coloured as the renderings suggest, though; in that respect the block is less spectacular than anticipated. But

when the building is viewed in context, that is a positive quality. With its rust-coloured, nautical appearance, it fits in well here.

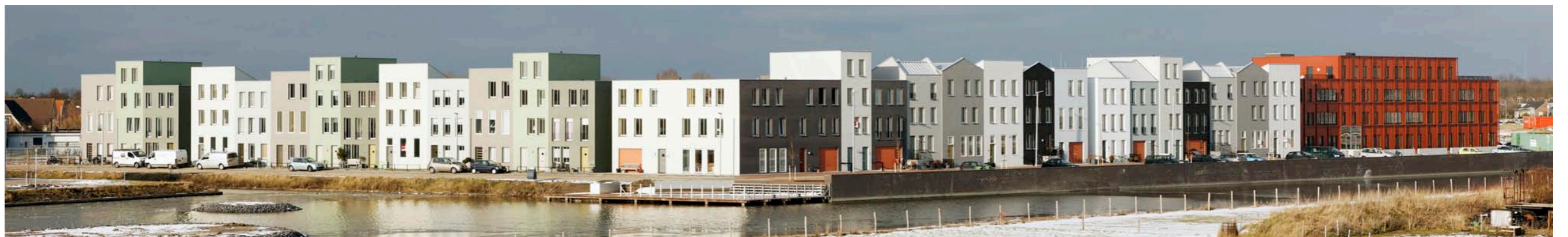
Unlike the quay houses, this facade exhibits a high degree of unity. Thanks to the location of the outdoor spaces and the access walkway within the block at the rear, to the tautly detailed joints between the profiled aluminium facade panels and frames (and letterboxes!), and to the use of a single colour, the building presents as a monolithic block. The refinement lies in the grid of projecting window sills and super slender columns designed for the facade. This softens the transition in scale between the block and the quay houses and gives the facade depth.

The only exception to the regularity of the grid is the glass facade section at ground floor level, nicely positioned to call attention to the entrance. That entrance is spacious and light (but sweltering in summer) and provides views through to the rear of the block.

Such a sightline is typical of the thoughtful approach to the design of the walkway areas. The wood-lined walls of the walkway, often a 'bleak' element of modern apartment buildings, exude a sense of warmth with their bright orange colour, while the slightly recessed front doors acknowledge the need for a measure of privacy. The means are minimal, the result effective.

In contrast to the austere facades, there is an attempt to provide variation in the apartments themselves. There are apartments with garden, balcony room or roof terrace, the living rooms vary in shape and size and some apartments have free-standing kitchen units and others an enclosed kitchen. The one big plus is that all apartments enjoy a sunny outdoor space and a view over the dike. ←

APARTMENT BUILDING, 2008–2010
 Architect: Kingma Roorda Architecten BNA
 Client: Loostad Vastgoedontwikkeling
 Address: Poortkade, Zierikzee
 Info: www.kingmaroorda.nl



→ View of Poortkade with quay houses, also designed by Kingma Roorda