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PERMANENCE AND TEMPORARINESS IN ARCHITECTURE AS EVIDENT IN THE KMAR ROYAL DUTCH POLICE COMPLEX

The text considers the permanence and durability as inbuilt conditions of every military project. It describes the design of the Kmar Schiphol Airport Complex as an example of such conditions being transformed into architectural design. The uniqueness of the design lies in its self orientation and isolation from the unfavourable conditions of the site. It is a kind of oasis built on water.

Keywords: Kmar (Koninklijke Marechaussee), permanence, durability, security, temporariness

The Kmar complex, now under construction, on the grounds of the Schiphol International Airport in Amsterdam is to be inaugurated in 2013 and to stay in operation as long as no other important airport facility, for example a new runway, will claim the right for the land. The unforeseen and urgent needs are no exception in airport operations and fifty years appears to be the maximum life span of the Kmar project. Despite this envisaged temporary existence, the project is required to be designed and built according to the latest Dutch building regulations and standards. Permanence and temporariness are characteristics of every project built on the grounds of an airport and military buildings and installations are no exception.

The Dutch Government's decision to build a new Kmar complex was in response to a growing need for additional security personnel stationed at Netherlands harbors and airports, particularly at the main gate to the country, the Schiphol International Airport. Security at these locations is the sole responsibility of the Royal Dutch Police, the Koninklijke Marechaussee.

As a result of an international competition held in 2001, Zvi Hecker Architect was selected to design the complex and to supervise its realization. In 2006, due to the high construction costs the project, although ready for realization, had to be delayed. Until 2009, when world financial crisis reduced construction costs considerably, allowing the Kmar project to be built within the established budget.

The site chosen for the Kmar complex is to the east of the Schiphol main terminal and to the south of its long term parking area. The site is 50,000sqm in size and 3.6 meters below sea level, bordered on the north by the NE4 entrance highway to the terminal and to the south by Sloterveg, an access road that provides the main entrance to the project. On the west and eastern sides the water canals determine the borders of the project's site.

The location of the complex comes with several constraints, which greatly influenced the design. One of the important factors in determining the final configuration of the buildings was the need to avoid and protect the complex buildings from the noise

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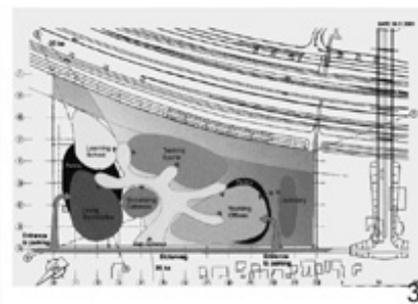
1, 2. Location of the complex 3. Arrangement of the functions 4. Layout of the complex 5. 2nd floor plan 6. Perspective view 7-12. The complex under construction



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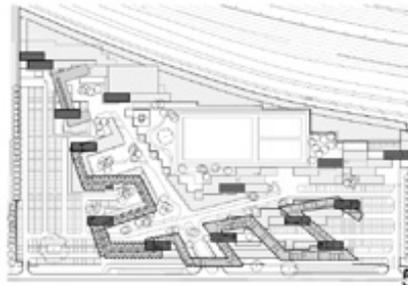
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emanated from the adjacent highway and airport runways. The location of various components of the project was determined by the need to comply as well with the high limits required by airport radars. The precise placement of all the buildings was chosen according to their vulnerability and exposure to the noise and restriction of their height. The less sensitive facilities, such as those for indoor sports or the shooting range, are placed closer to the highway, located partially within the six meter high dyke. The dyke, a natural element of the water canals system and the Dutch landscape became, through necessity, a functional and architectural element of the design.

The programme of the Kmar complex requires a combination of several interrelated functions, brought together into a multifunctional complex of living, working and training. It accommodates 1600 security staff, providing the security of the Schiphol Airport. The competition brief also underlined the need for the complex, when viewed from the air, to provide a bold architectural accent to the main entrance gate of the Netherlands.

The programme is composed of the following functions:

1. Offices and related work areas. The offices are arranged into several interrelated departments located partially in the two lower floors and two upper floors, connected both horizontally and vertically.

2. Dormitories. The double room units are arranged around three courtyards, accessed via a central entrance. Single officers rooms are arranged over two floors located one above the other, linked vertically both functionally and visually.

3. Training school, Sport and Shooting range. This part of the project is situated partially within the dyke

and is directly connected to the centrally positioned outdoor sports fields.

4. Restaurant and adjacent kitchen. The dining hall's central location within the complex provides convenient access from all parts of this project. Sports activities can be watched from the restaurant terrace which overlooks the sports fields.

5. Logistics, Garages, etc. This part of the project is linked to the military parking, garage and service facilities. Its architectural expression is purposely unassuming, continuing the form and height of the dyke.

6. Energy Centre. This structure is partially immersed in the dyke.

7. Parking. The parking areas are divided into two parts located on both sides of the complex.

This functional programme of the complex could have been translated into architectural form in many different ways. The most common practice for military barracks is to place them free standing near large parking lots. Although this is a very common solution, it does not provide quality conditions. The design of the Kmar complex took into consideration the discomforting external conditions in developing an internally orientated campus. The buildings are positioned in a layered configuration so as to shield each other from the outside, whilst the high dyke along the highway provides additional protection.

As Rafi Segal describes in his account of the complex, "This strategy turns the campus as a whole into a kind of landscape, while also acting functionally as a kind of city, comprising of intimate spaces and buildings connected within a permeable wall."

The design process went through many stages until the functional needs of the complex were consolidated into a formal entity. Though large in scale, the complex could be compared to the scheme of a small house:

A centrally positioned main entrance leads, on the right, to the offices (study room in a house) and left to the dormitories, (bedrooms in a house), and then to the sports facilities (gym in a house), and to the centrally positioned restaurant (dining hall). The outdoor sports fields are comparable to a house's garden with garages and repairs (carport in a house) at its far end.

Architecturally, the complex is reminiscent of a walled medieval city with one exception that in the Kmar project, the Wall is the City. The city inhabits the wall and the wall protects its open space, the place for people to meet.

Symbolically, the project embodies the nature of the democratic society, which, openness and freedom depend on police and military protection. This contradiction within a democratic society is, expressed in the Kmar complex through its design. The continuous wall of buildings protects the interior free space. The form of the buildings themselves

underlines this metaphor further. Heavy, lower floors in concrete carry two light, upper floors in steel and glass alluding to the dual nature of a democratic society.

The military constructions are, by definition, durable in order to withstand any assault. On the other hand, their destruction is not a probability but rather an eminent inbuilt condition. The durability and the unpredicted length of military construction existence makes it an example of the world general situation.

Permanence and temporariness are both common expressions of every human endeavour. Architectural durability, whether in terms of years or centuries, depends on the strength of its message and its acceptance by continuous generations. Parthenon seems to be an example of eternal permanence, despite its temporary existence as ruins of its own greatness.

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