

PRESS INFORMATION

60th anniversary of the twin cities Groningen and Graz

Bold city, brave decisions

How the city of Groningen transformed itself into an exemplary city

An exhibition by De Zwarte Hond – Architecture | Urbanism | Strategy

Opening and podium discussion:

June 12, 2024, 6.30 pm at HDA, Mariahilferstraße 2, 8020 Graz

Exhibition:

June 13 – September 15, 2024 | Tue–Fri 10 am–6 pm, Sat & Sun 11 am–5 pm



Groningen Vismarkt now © Gemeente Groningen -Web

In 2024 we are celebrating the 60th jubilee of the twinning of the cities Graz and Groningen. On this occasion the HDA invited the Dutch/German architecture and urban planning office De Zwarte Hond - which has played a key role in shaping Groningen's urban planning - to present Groningen to the people of Graz. With the exhibition 'Bold city, brave decisions. How the city of Groningen transformed itself into an exemplary city', the office provides insights into the transformation of the Dutch city in recent decades and encourages a lively exchange about the challenges the twin cities are facing and the future brave decisions they need to make.

Urban centers around the world have been steadily expanding for decades now and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future, as do Graz and Groningen. Cities that both have steadily increasing populations. Today's new pressures on cities developments are manifold: How can growing cities respond to recent challenges for sustainable urban development? How can we create highly livable, sustainable, and inclusive cities which can grow along with their populations? Whom can we learn from, to make inspired decisions on how to design and manage the cities of the future? How can we ensure a high quality of life in a socially and environmentally sustainably designed city? In other words, how can we make cities livable today?

Graz and Groningen have a lot in common: Both have a population of around 300,000 and a historic center located along river banks. Their universities, each with more than 60,000 students, are important national centers for research, science, and culture in their region and beyond. Both Cities have a lively and diverse creative scene with festivals and event centers for art, music and design. Finally, both can look back on a long history of high-quality architecture, characterized by a thoughtful combination of historic and modern buildings. With these many similarities, it seems particularly interesting to bring together the respective approaches to urban development in Graz and Groningen. The exhibition and the accompanying opening discussion therefore aim to stimulate dialogue between the two cities and their citizens about future urban developments and to exchange strategies for socially and ecologically sustainable cities.

The exhibition will take a closer look at the city of Groningen, in celebration of the 60th anniversary of the town twinning, to present its urban development in Graz. After an overview of the historical development of Groningen, three of the most important "brave decisions" and their implementation in various phases of urban development planning are presented as examples. These include the implementation of Berlage's urban expansion plan, which was developed in 1928 and updated in 1932, the development and implementation of Max van den Berg's transport plan in 1977 and the support of innovative and sometimes controversial architectural projects by Ypke Gietema, who was Groningen's city councilor for spatial development from 1978 to 1992. Together, these bold decisions have made Groningen the compact, characteristic, and exemplary city it is today.

The exhibition aims to inspire citizens and experts alike and to invite a discourse on the topic of the city and its future, to present its public and political dimension and to promote the relationship and exchange between its inhabitants.

About 'De Zwarte Hond'

De Zwarte Hond is a design office for architecture, urban design and strategic planning that was founded in Groningen in 1985, staffing around 120 people. Further offices in Rotterdam (1995) and Cologne (2011) followed. The office's way of working is characterized by a combination of social commitment and craftsmanship. Their aim is to respond sensitively to the context, the needs of the users and the wishes of the client with high-quality projects. The firm's wide-ranging portfolio ranges from housing to cultural, to urban development projects and more. Some examples are the Reguleur Housing Block in Groningen/NL 2023, the Zuidplein Theatre in Rotterdam/NL 2021, SuperHub community centre in Meerstad/NL 2022, the Alliander Westpoort offices in Amsterdam/NL 2023, the redesign of Rode Weeshuisstraat in Groningen/NL 2023, the Ellener Hof neighborhood development in Bremen/DE 2016, the Köln Katalog in Cologne/DE 2022, and the Kraftwerk

Frimmersdorf project in Grevenbroich/DE 2024. Their projects have been honored with numerous awards, including the Rotterdam Architectuurprijs, The BNA Best Building of the Year, the Groningen Architecture Prize, the International Architecture Award, ICONIC Award, Canadian Wood Design & Building Award, Rethinking the Future Award, BLT Built Design Award, Future House Award, and the Design Educates Award, among many others.

www.dezwartehond.nl

OPENING AND PODIUM DISCUSSION

12 June 2024, 6.30 pm, HDA, Mariahilferstraße 2, 8020 Graz

Welcome

Beate Engelhorn, Director HAD

Judith Schwentner, Vice Mayor Graz

H.E. Mr Peter Potman, Ambassador of the Netherlands in Vienna

Cities in Dialogue

Bertram Werle, Director of City Planning Graz

Bert Popken, Head of Spatial Planning Groningen

Ellen Schindler + Jeroen de Willigen, De Zwarte Hond

Judith Schwentner, Vice Mayor Graz

Moderator: **Beate Engelhorn**

The exhibition is part of the Days of Architecture 2024: www.architekturtage.at

For further information, please visit the HDA website:

<https://hda-graz.at/en/programme/bold-city-brave-decisions>

Press images are available at:

<https://hda-graz.at/en/press-area-hda/press-information-bold-city-brave-decisions>

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