Play scape be-MINE, Beringen (BE)

The team of Carve and Omgeving (design) and Kriinkels (contractor) won the international competition to design an adventurous play-scape and landmark on a ‘terril’ in Beringen, Belgium, in January 2015. The adventure mountain is part of the touristic, recreative project be-MINE, that aims to breathe new life into the monumental coalmining site in Beringen, the largest industrial-archaeological site in Flanders. The former mining city asked to add new function to the 60 meter high rubble mountain, and to redevelop the old industrial buildings into a cultural hotspot where its history can be experienced in a playful way.

The spectacular scale of this site – regarding both the height of the terril as well as its industrial heritage - is unique in the relatively flat surrounding landscape of Limburgian-Flanders. The intervention is a landmark on a large scale, but through its playable character it also reflects the small scale of a child. The values of the industrial heritage have been a continuous leading theme in the design process that resulted in an unprecedented playscape. The mining ‘terril’ has been given a new meaning, rooted in both the past and the future.

The design consists of three parts, that create a unity with the mountain and its past: a pole forest as a landmark, an adventurous prismatic play surface on the flank of the mountain and a coal square on the top of the ‘terril’. The spine of the ensemble is a straight stairs that provides access to all levels. At night, a light line along the stairs makes the topography of the terril visible.

Pole forest as reference to the mining past

The topography of the landscape has regained structure and is made visible by a pole forest: 1,600 timber poles are anchored in the northern flank of the terril, from top to bottom. The rounded poles refer to the mining past; they were used for supporting the kilometres long underground mining shafts. It is a strong spatial gesture and an intervention that relates to the scale of the hill and the industrial heritage on this location.

A part between the poles has been dedicated to an adventurous play course with balancing beams, climbing nets, hammocks, a labyrinth and a rope course. The poles are placed in a grid, which results in an interesting perspective effect: the sightlines create an experience that reminds of the dark mining shafts of the past.