Roeterseiland Campus - University of Amsterdam, NL

Date: 2010 – 2017
Client: University of Amsterdam
Architects: AHMM, London
Scope: Public Space and Courtyard landscaping
Size: 2.2 ha
Budget: 2.640.000 Euro
Construction: 2012-2017, realized in 7 phases
Team Inside Outside: Petra Blaisse with Jana Crepon, Celine Baumann, Gianluca Tramutola, Michal Jagozinski, Jaume Vidal Pardo, Carmen Bullenhuis, Miklo Orbegoso, Annelies Bloemendaal, Valentin Frechet, Chu Liu, Yukië Ann Nagasawa, Agnieszka Zborowska

This landscape design aims to connect the University campus with the historical city center and at the same time to create a unique and modern environment for students, scientists, staff and local residents. The strategy combines the simple and chic qualities of the classical standard profile of the Amsterdam canals with a specific Roeterseiland-signature. An additional, graphical layer that defines the University campus but also connects, leads, turns and invites.

The winding white ribbon might refer to the paths students take while studying – sometimes that path is a direct connection between A and B, but often it will be a de-tour or a loop that may enrich the trajectory. The path invites to be followed to special places on the water edge or to a hidden courtyard full with flowers with delicate scents and subtle sounds. It creates an intriguing pattern to look at from above and it defines places where one can meet other people or admire an amazing view.

The basic layer consists of a clear profile and the typical materials – brick and blue limestone with the omnipresent Elm trees. The path is created by contrasting bricks laid in continuous patterns. Sometimes that path curls around a group of trees, describes a loop that defines a planted island and rises up to create seating or tables for students to sit and meet or to quietly work outside. Those sitting elements are spread all over the campus and are located on the most interesting places to invite the students to be outside, to study and meet in the open air.

The planting is of relatively low maintenance and attractive throughout the year. Most public green areas are equipped with multifunctional lawn and trees. But there are also rich, secluded gardens planted with a variety of plants in three different courtyards. These special places are planted with a carpet of evergreen perennials, grasses and different types of bulbs shooting out throughout the entire year.

The rows of Elm trees are a continuation of the canal profile; the base of the trees is planted with perennials to create miniature gardens within the street profile. The sheltered micro-climate of the courtyard gave us the chance to plant trees that are generally too vulnerable for the climate in Amsterdam. Here we have selected a mix of Magnolia species with a different growth and leaves, that are blooming at different times and in different shades.