

'T ZAND

2015-2018, Bruges, Belgium





The winning competition entry of 2015 for the redesign of 't Zand, (Het Zand Square) in the UNESCO city of Bruges is, according to the 11 person jury "revolutionary in its simplicity."

Entitled '[The Square of 150 Lindens](#)', West 8 + Snoeck & Partners design for the Belgium Square , strives to maximize available space for a multitude of uses. Striking a balance between the intimacy necessary to make attractive and pleasant square and the demands of a premier event plaza.

At 8,500m², 't Zand is the largest public square in the historic city of Bruges. It fulfills an important social function within the city and hosting some 218 events per year. Its location, in the heart of Bruges, also makes 't Zand an important link in the city's network of squares.

The urban evolution of 't Zand has seen it undergo a series of transformations in image and perception. A succession of interventions; railway lines, road infrastructure, and a vaulted canal have resulted in gradual separation of the square from the surrounding medieval urban fabric. Creating a barrier between the iconic downtown and West Bruges. While the square is currently functional, it feels big and empty.

The design solution offers a renewed identity for the square, unearthing a full-fledged 'Bruges' character that draws on the rich historical, cultural and scenic layers of 't Zand. Subtle emphasis is placed on several existing spatial characteristics to restore the original identity of the square.

The redesign focuses on extending the experience of the adjacent King Albert I Park into 't Zand, and thus embedding the iconic Concert Hall (Concertgebouw) in a more natural context. New intimacy is created by adding double rows of Linden trees around the square, whilst still preserving the site's open character. The trees provide a scenic corridor and functional zone for terraces, bicycles and entrances to the underground parking. A new water patio reinvigorates the historic canal. A subtle material/colour palette and the use of quality natural stone complements the subdued tones of the city center.

The plan significantly reduces vehicular traffic while still providing the necessary transport linkages and easy accessibility. The gaping void at tunnel entrance near Smedenstraat is filled with a building. The proposed new building helps frame the square by enclosing it on all four sides. This sense of enclosure will be further enhanced by the introduction of custom designed lighting elements, which have been developed together with Atelier Roland-Jéol.

After two years of construction, 't Zand was open to the public in September 2018. It is now transformed into Bruges premier event plaza and once again be connected to Bruges' celebrated urban fabric.

client

Stad Brugge

partners

Snoek & Partners, Atelier Roland-Jéol

team

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