

# A10



**#57**

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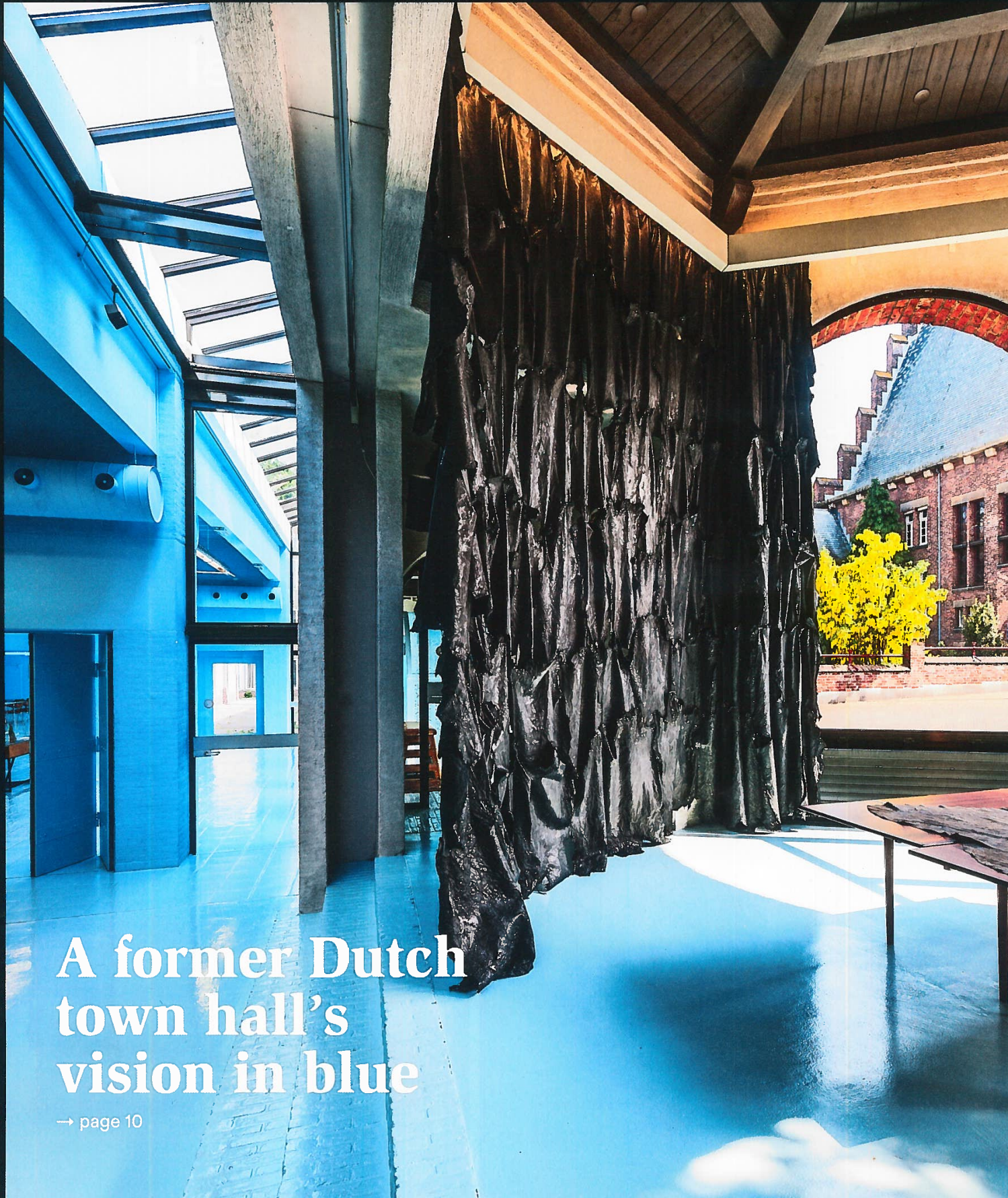
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# The Grand Budapest Hotel

**'It's not about the architecture at all – we're just trying to support the story,'** said production designer Adam Stockhausen about the film, *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. But the worlds of film and architecture are not really as far apart as he suggests. Both professions are involved in creating worlds, and the way in which the film's director, Wes Anderson, creates worlds is highly reminiscent of an architect's creative process.

From script to storyboard to screen, Anderson takes just a slightly different path from that of his colleagues when it comes to location scouting, modelling and finding references. He prefers to work on location rather than in the studio, so his actors can be immersed in the atmosphere of the film for months on end. *The Grand Budapest Hotel* is not actually about a hotel in Budapest. It is about a fictitious grand hotel located somewhere in Central or Eastern Europe, and takes place over two time periods, the 1930s and the 1960s. While on a tour of Central and Eastern Europe, Anderson was inspired by the Grandhotel Pupp in Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic, and chose to film his interior scenes in the former Hertie department store in Görlitz, Germany. This department store, built in the Art Nouveau style, has been vacant since 2009, making it perfect for

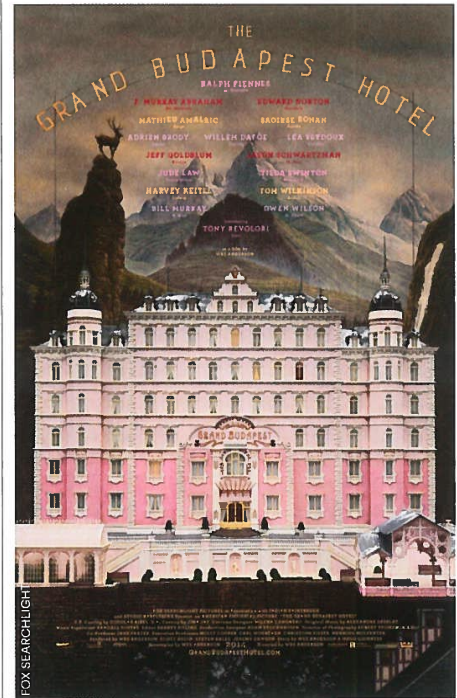
months of filming. The interior was first renovated to represent an opulent 1930s decor, and like a matryoshka doll, the 1960s decor was built right over it, not much different than what often actually happened in that decade.

Regarding design, props and film sets, Anderson has a preference for things to be handmade rather than using computer-generated images (CGI). His films all look simulated and stylized, but they are made with an old-fashioned love for the artificial. He creates his own miniature world. The scale models of the hotel and the funicular railway are handmade doll's houses, and months were spent designing the cake box for the Mendl patisserie. A graphic designer created the fictional money, letters and keys, while Prada provided the luggage trunks. It gives the film the character of a youth novel – a pop-up book for boys.

In contrast with a director like Terry Gilliam, who continually creates through pastiche a phantasmal and illusory atmosphere, Anderson consciously inserts references into his work that are not just intended for visual effect. The references all have a backstory, and refer to universal cultural baggage. There are sequences straight out of Hitchcock or Bergman films, and sets from paintings by Caspar David Friedrich. *The Guardian* newspaper even devoted an entire article to the painting *Boy with Apple*, central to the film's plot.

*The Grand Budapest Hotel* is a guided tour through a stylized world with so many references that a lively online discussion is raging about it. It is slightly reminiscent of the hype that followed *The Da*

*Vinci Code*, but without the pedantry of Dan Brown. The viewer constructs an impression of the Grand Budapest Hotel in his or her own imagination – such a unique film experience is absolutely about architecture as well. (WIES SANDERS)



## Economy of cultural renovation

**UŽICE/WAALWIJK (RS/NL) — A clever structural set-up and organization is the secret to maximizing the potential of a vacant building. Two examples show how to create spatially rich architecture on a limited budget.**

### Užice Cultural Centre by Ružica Jovanović

Following a civic initiative, the municipal cultural centre in this small city in south-west Serbia has been given new premises: a former Army Club, left vacant after the recent move of military facilities out of the city centre. The building, however, did not suit the purposes of a contemporary culture centre and was in very poor condition, as it had been abandoned for quite some time. Neither the City Council nor the cultural centre itself could produce the funds needed to reconstruct the building's 2000 square metres, so it seemed it would remain unused for an indefinite time.

As a way out of this situation, it was decided to redesign only the former cantina as a temporary multifunctional space. Since almost no funding was available, it was advised to choose the lowest possible budget. The answer came from Ružica Jovanović,

↓ The cultural centre in Užice employs a rather spartan interior aesthetic.



a young architect and a native of Užice, who proposed a single multifunctional space with flexible partitions. This was made possible at very low cost by using a regular aluminium grid for the lowered ceiling and turning one section of the girders to face the floor, thus creating guide rails along which the partitioning panels can slide. The entire grid structure is equipped with lighting, plus additional hooks and hangers for mounting exhibitions. Walls and slabs have been stripped to the underlying brick and concrete, which gives an ambient, fresh appearance while actually saving expense on internal finishing. Also, the original wooden panels removed from the walls have been recycled and reused for exhibition panels and tabletops for the new cafeteria.

Ultimately, the Užice Cultural Centre received a brand-new, 200 m<sup>2</sup> multifunctional venue with exhibition and conference spaces and a cafeteria for an amazing cost of less than €3000. (MIDRAG NINIĆ)

### SLEM by Doepel Strijkers

The old town hall of Waalwijk has undergone a profound metamorphosis. Every wall and ceiling is now painted in a pale blue colour, and even the standard red fire hose holders have been given a fresh lick of paint. The reason for this particular shade of blue is not just aesthetic. It also refers to the new function of the structure, which was built in an austere brick

architecture in the style of H.P. Berlage. Since 2013, the building houses an international education and innovation centre for the footwear industry, called SLEM (an acronym for 'Shoes, Leather, Education and Museum'). The blue tint refers to the colour of the newly tanned leather that once shipped from tanneries in the area in massive quantities.

The idea to paint all the rooms in one unifying colour came from Doepel Strijkers, who were asked to transform the building within only three months and on a very restricted budget. To begin, they removed all elements that were added to the original construction, such as suspended ceilings, counters and a dominant canopy against the wall. The building is also conceived as an open plan wherein nothing is explicitly positioned. Yet the centre's innovation lies not in the visual design, but rather in its implementation.

For demolition, construction and interior finishing the architects worked closely together with local partners, including a youth centre and a painting company. Not only did this add a sense of social involvement and community awareness, it also reduced costs. The architects cleverly made use of available resources, a good example being the curtain that hangs prominently within the space. Single-handedly and with minimal effort, remnants of leather were fabricated into a whole and given a new function. (KIM HOEFNAGELS)

↓ SLEM's overall pale blue coating energizes its austere yet flexible space.

