

## RECONSTRUCTION OF CAFÉ DE UNIE

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J.J. P OUD/CAREL WEEBER, ROTTERDAM 1984

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One project which was supported by the Sikkens Foundation in 1984 was the reconstruction of Café De Unie on the Coolsingel in Rotterdam, dating from 1925, designed by J.J.P. Oud.

Oud was commissioned to design the café through his employer, the Rotterdam Municipal Housing Company. Although he was no longer a member of De Stijl in 1925, Oud's Café De Unie had all the characteristics of that movement: rectangular planes in primary colors and white plasterwork. The façade was often compared to the asymmetrical compositions of Mondrian dating from the 1920s. The quasi-concentric carved pattern in the red plane can be followed back to Oud's director's hut in the White Village, dating from 1923.

Café De Unie was intended as a temporary solution for an empty site between two impressive 19th-century buildings on the Calandplein which formed an extension of the Coolsingel in Rotterdam. The design was presented to the "Building police and Housing Department" of Rotterdam no fewer than three times. In the end it was built on condition that it would be demolished ten years later. In fact, it remained there for fifteen years, until it was lost during the bombing of Rotterdam on 14 May 1940.

A new Café De Unie was built on the Mauritsweg 35 in the 1980s, about 500 meters from where it been located originally, in a part of the centre that was spared during the bombing. This building was designed by the architect Carel Weeber with a replica of the façade dating from 1925 and is now used as the Hall De Unie, a stage for debating by the Rotterdam Council for Art and Culture. A café and restaurant is located on the ground floor, with a small theatre behind it.