

ROTOR NPO**TEMPORARY OFFICE AND EXHIBITION SPACE RDF 181, BRUSSELS**

DESIGN ASSOCIATION:
BUREAU:
 ROTOR NPO
 WWW.ROTORDB.ORG
ARCHITECTS:
 LIONEL DEVLIEGER
 MAARTEN GIELEN
 MIA SCHMALLENBACH

DESIGN:
 NOVEMBER 2006

DELIVERY:
 DECEMBER 2006

CLIENT:
 ROTOR NPO

LOCATION:
 VLAAMSESTEENWEG 181
 1000 BRUSSELS

ENGINEERS:
 COFFRAL PLC

CONTRACTOR:
 ROTOR NPO AND VOLUNTEERS

AREA:
 120 m²

VOLUME:
 240 m³

BUILDING COSTS:
 3.000 EURO (EXCL. VAT)

PHOTOGRAPHY:
 JAN KEMPENAEERS

BUILDING COSTS/m²:
 25 EURO (EXCL. VAT)

In the narrow Vlaamsesteenweg in Brussels, a yellow parasite hangs against the blank side wall of a town-house: this is the head office (RDF 181) of the Rotor non-profit organisation (npo). The construction was built between four concrete buttresses that prop up the blank wall and is composed entirely of industrial waste materials and reusable materials: a rejected lot of plastic film, old exhibition material and transparent sailcloth for the windows, EVA¹ foam to insulate the roof, plastic van cladding as terrace paving and materials they have loaned from building firms for the structure: props, struts and formwork beams. The construction is a virtually literal translation of the ideas Rotor stands for: it is an npo organised logistically to give new life to remnants of industrial materials. In the first place it works with artists and designers who are looking for cheap or alternative materials, but they wanted to use their office as an example to show that materials can also be reused on a scale larger than that of the design plan.

The site is a piece of wasteland where a property developer plans to build new homes, and which was loaned for a year while waiting for planning permission. The ground floor had to be kept free as a parking space for the owner, which is why the office, starting halfway up the concrete buttresses, now protrudes above the wall around the site. Rotor defines this solution as legal squatting. The office is a rectangular space of 65 square metres where the members of the npo organise the daily logistics and where regular small exhibitions are held. The space has heating and electricity: an arrangement was made with the neighbours whose electricity and water they are connected to. It turned out not to be possible to install a toilet because of the short duration of the project, but they can use the toilet in a café just up the street. As an illegal construction (no application for planning permission was made), this sort of arrangement nevertheless gives the office a certain legality, not in the eyes of the law, but in those of society. What is more, in this way they use it to show their utopian vision of a different way of looking at existing industrial materials and also urban land occupation.

The use of props and struts as on a building site emphasises the temporary nature of the construction. This recycled box does not actually hang from the wall, but is properly constructed from the bottom upwards with scaffolding on which lie reusable yellow formwork beams that provide the basis for a wooden floor structure. Both the blank wall of the house and

its concrete buttresses act as supporting elements. Several scaffolding towers pass vertically through the office space; they support the roof that lies on top of it and are used for bookcases. The window frames were recycled from old exhibition material, which thereby also determines the height of the space, and for security's sake a thin net of reinforcement rods was welded on.

Lastly, the whole space was wrapped in translucent plastic film, reclaimed from a rejected lot. This makes for a very light but inward looking space. For this reason a terrace was built on the roof where parties and meetings can be held. There is a staircase in a scaffolding tower outside the main volume, leading up to the box and the roof terrace.

Despite the private nature of the office space, the neighbours are appreciative of this cheerful yellow parasite. They considered the concrete buttresses and the vacant plot that had defined the street frontage for years to be a desolate element in the street. The owner shows no interest in all this, and has turned the requested parking space under the office into a rubbish dump.

RDF 181 is striking for its radical combination of creativity, temporariness and reusability: this is not just a simple site hut, but more like the ultimate big boy's camp-building dream.

VERONIQUE BOONE

¹ Ethylene Vinyl Acetate



