

Tongersestraat 6-8

Commandant's House

Service Science Factory – School of Business and Economics

As of early 2012, the Service Science Factory is housed in the former Commandant's House at Tongersestraat 6-8. The Service Science Factory is an academic workplace where scientists, scholars and students – from Maastricht University, Hogeschool Zuyd and RWTH Aachen – work on projects in collaboration with members from the business community.

The building has a rich history and dates from the seventeenth century, but some of its elements go back to the medieval period, such as the massive walls that in fact divide the structure into three buildings. It was built in the Mosan Renaissance style, which is clearly reflected in the façade, marked as it is by the colorful effect of the three building materials characteristic of this style: reddish brown bricks, yellowish chalkstone and the grayish blue limestone. The chalkstone comes from the nearby Sint Pietersberg or other chalkstone quarries in Limburg, while the solidly gray limestone, also called 'Namur stone', was hauled from the Ardennes. In 1725, the city government decided to combine four existing houses along the Tongersestraat into a single new structure: the Commandant's House. After the governor of the garrison, the commandant was the highest ranking military in the fortified town of Maastricht. When the different buildings were joined into one, a central stairway was realized as main access in the middle building. To the right of this building, a carriage entrance was put in, to allow the residents and their visitors who used a horse-drawn carriage to enter the house without being bothered by rain or wind. To ensure light, a lantern was added, to which the stained glass, put in around 1900, gave an ornamental touch. Further towards the back, there was access to the stables, which can still be seen in the twist between the crosswise building and the house on the backside.

In 1772 the Commandant's House was remodeled: the windows were lowered to add more symmetry to the façade's look. Between 1796 and 1811, when this region was part of the French Empire, the building housed a criminal court. As of 1811 it served as a regional courthouse, first of the Lower Meuse Department, and, later on, of the Province of Limburg. After in 1829 the court had moved to the former Second Minderbroeders Church (today, the university's main administrative office), the 'Commandement' was turned into a private residence. In the early twentieth century, the owners drastically remodeled the crosswise building and the back part of the house; the stables were turned into a notary's office. From 1956 to 1986, the Nederlandse Kredietbank would use the building for its banking activities, after which it was purchased by Maastricht University.

Frencken Scholl, an architect's firm from Maastricht, took up the challenge of adapting this building to meet the needs of the Service Science Factory. Starting from respect for the past, the architects aimed to turn the structure into a sustainable, multifunctional building. For example, advanced air-conditioning technology was put in to control the indoor temperature; as a result, the rooms did no longer need to have their own radiator, and this has made it possible to experience them again in their original design. The ground floor has been equipped with multifunctional spaces (such as for teaching), while the upstairs floors offer space for offices and meeting rooms. To restore a sense of the original structure, the architects, Peter Scholl and Rosanne Jansen, removed all non-essential dividing walls as well as all non-monumental elements. Next, they realized four major spatial modifications:

1. Extension of the central, monumental stairway (with its splendid balustrades decorated with bird motifs) towards the attic.
2. Addition of a new staircase (doubling up as an extra escape route) in the aisle on the right, to improve the accessibility of the back part. The void between the staircase and the original façade of the carriage entrance now facilitates the falling of natural light on the lantern in the carriage gate.
3. Adjustment of the sun porch in the back part of the house, which makes it possible to see the centuries-old façade from within and to establish a connection with the main building's traffic zone.
4. Addition of a pitched roof over the mansard roof. The new saddle roof is made of zinc, which in this region is used more often to cover roofs, and as such it is a playful reference to the commandant's helmet. The roof also reflects a pattern of light beams, allowing a sea of light to enter, which is striking in particular in the new addition for the central staircase.