

Francine Houben

Founding Partner/Creative Director

With Mecanoo since 1984

Professional qualifications MSc in Architecture/Urban Planner, Delft University of Technology

Memberships Member Akademie der Künste, Department of Architecture, Berlin (2010-present); Member Society of Arts, Akademie van Kunsten, Amsterdam (2015-present); Supervisory Board Scapino Ballet, Rotterdam (2019-present); Founder Manifesto Group Rotterdam South (2019-present); Board member Gieskes-Strijbis Fonds (2021-present); Member International Council Van Alen Institute, New York (2015-2020); Board Member Carnegie Foundation, The Hague (2008-2016); Supervisory Board Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo (2005-2016)

"Architecture is never a solo act. I like to compare it to directing a symphony orchestra; it's all about teamwork, about being visionary, sensitive and supportive at the same time."

Francine Houben (the Netherlands, 1955) is Founding Partner and Creative Director of Mecanoo. Her work ranges from theatres, museums and libraries to neighbourhoods, housing and parks. Each design is founded on the observations of people, location, culture and climate. This analysis amounts to designs that respond to current needs yet are also prepared for (un)predictable change. With her practice, she has gained international acclaim. Francine holds Honorary Fellowships of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC). Francine was granted lifelong membership to the Akademie der Künste in Berlin and received the International Honorary Fellow Award by the Architecture Institute of Taiwan. Francine Houben was professor of mobility aesthetics at Delft University of Technology and also taught at the universities of Harvard, Yale and Mendrisio. As curator of the First International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam (2003), she brought the theme of the aesthetics of mobility to the forefront of international design consciousness. In 2014 Francine was named Woman Architect of the Year by the Architects' Journal and in November 2015 Queen Máxima of The Netherlands presented Francine with the Cultuurfonds Prize for her wide-ranging career. Francine was awarded Honorary Doctorates from the Université de Mons, Belgium (2017) and the Utrecht University (2016). In 2018 Francine received the BNA Kubus Award for her oeuvre, in 2019 the International Prize, Prix des Femmes Architectes and she was distinguished with the TU Delft Alumnus of the Year in 2020. In 2024, King Willem-Alexander appointed Francine Houben as a Knight in the Order of the Netherlands Lion.

Selected projects



New York Public Library, US

Size: 68,500 m²
Year: 2015 - 2021



Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, Washington D.C., US

Size: 37,000 m²
Year: 2014 - 2020



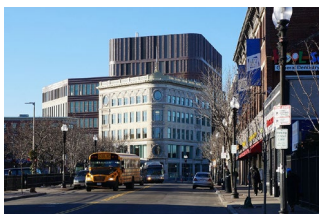
National Kaohsiung Centre for the Arts, Taiwan

Size: 141,000 m²
Year: 2007 - 2018



Municipal Offices and Train Station, Delft, NL

Size: 28,320 m²
Year: 2006 - 2017



Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building, Boston MA, US

Size: 16,700 m²
Year: 2011 - 2015



Library of Birmingham, UK

Size: 35,000 m²
Year: 2008 - 2013



La Llotja Theatre and Conference Centre, Lleida, Spain

Size: 37,500 m²
Year: 2004 - 2010



Delft University of Technology Library, NL

Size: 15,000 m²
Year: 1993 - 1998