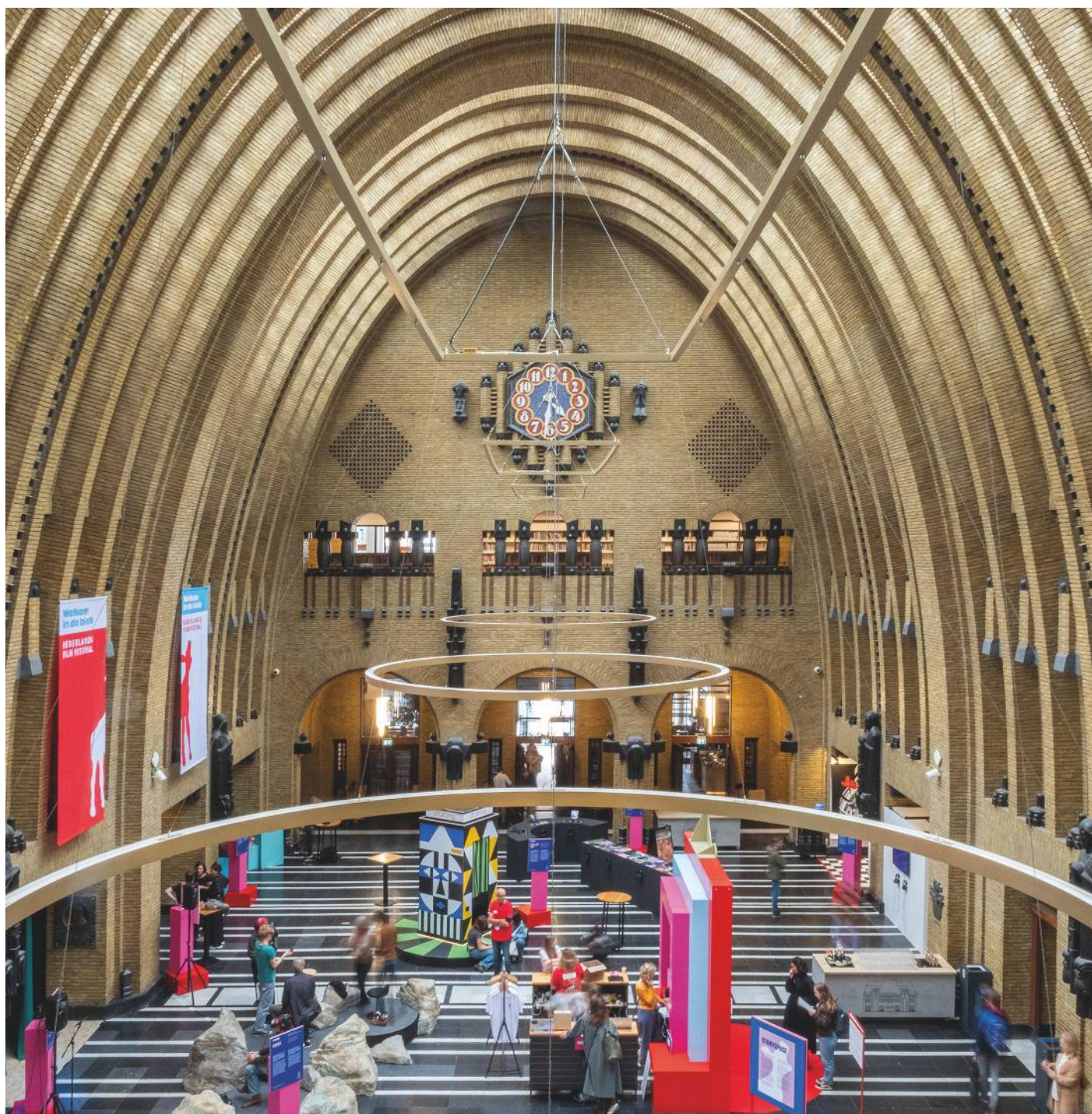




Libraries through the lens

Bibliotheek Neude, Utrecht, The Netherlands

LIBRARIAN and photographer Thomas Guignard takes us through the doors of the Bibliotheek Neude in Utrecht.

The library took over the former main Utrecht post office, which was built on the site of a former Royal Dutch Mint building on Neude square between 1919 and 1924. Thomas says: “Its architect was Joseph Crouwel Jr, who designed it in the style of the Amsterdam School and drew inspiration from Finnish architect and pioneer of the Art Deco movement Eliel Saarinen. Particularly impressive are the large parabolic arches of the main hall. The brick interior is decorated with statues of black

Belgian Petit granite by Hendrick van den Eijnde, inspired by ancient Egyptian and Assyrian artworks.

“The Dutch Post Office vacated the premises in 2011, after which the building was restored and transformed by Zecc Architecten and Rijnboutt into the main Utrecht public library, opened on May 11, 2020. This spectacular conversion almost didn’t happen. The project for a new Utrecht library initially favoured by planners was a brand new building, but its high ecological cost eventually caused the project to be voted down by the city council. Thankfully, within days of that vote, the insurance company that at the time owned the former post office offered it to be reused as the library.”