



## SPECTACULAR INLAYS IN THE ESCHER MUSEUM IN THE HAAG

**Building:** Escher-Museum, Den Haag (Netherlands)

**Product:** noraplan® uni

**Owner:** Escher in The Hague,  
[www.escherinhetpaleis.nl](http://www.escherinhetpaleis.nl)

**Installation:** March/April 2010

**Design:** Karelse & Den Besten, Rotterdam,  
[www.karelse-denbesten.nl](http://www.karelse-denbesten.nl)

**Photos:** © CR-BEELDWERKEN

**Installer:** Mark van Steenhoven, Ridderkerk

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# “Escher would be proud of us”

Flat or three-dimensional? With a sophisticated optical illusion, the room design for the Escher museum in The Hague, by the design office Karelse & Den Besten links up with the artist’s works.

A more worthy domicile cannot be conceived for a museum – “Escher in Het Paleis”, the museum depicting the life and work of the Dutch graphic artist Maurits Cornelis Escher (1898-1972), resides in the former palace of Queen Emma (1858-1934) in The Hague’s prime location, the boulevard “Lange Voorhout”. The museum thus takes pride in having “Escher in Het Paleis” in its name. The museum displays almost all of the works of the graphic artist – early landscape paintings from his travels in the Mediterranean area as well as illustrations

of impossible perspectives, optical illusions and multistable perception phenomena for which he became world-famous in later years. Private photographs and preliminary sketches also give a lively impression of how the artist designed his geometrical-optical illusions.

In the building itself, the historical architecture dominates with its magnificent details – stucco, gold-decorated wall panels, forged filigree stair railings, or noble parquet. The design office Karelse & Den Besten, Rotterdam, was given freedom of design for a visitor room which would primarily be used by the educational unit of the museum. “In our opinion, the situation was rather poor”, recalls Jan Kees Karelse. “As far as I remember, tables and





chairs were bolted to the ceiling, cups and saucers glued to the wall. There did not exist any colour concept. The result was a room which despite bright colours gave a dark, stifling and cluttered impression."

### **"Don't underestimate the children"**

By order of the museum, Karelse and his partner, John Den Besten, set out to design the room from scratch. Apart from the workshops of the museum's educational unit, the room was also to be used for official events. "The task consisted in designing an area for children. Our solution was simple: Create a room which you would like, too. Don't underestimate the children. Design it in a way Escher himself would have been delighted in", explains Karelse.

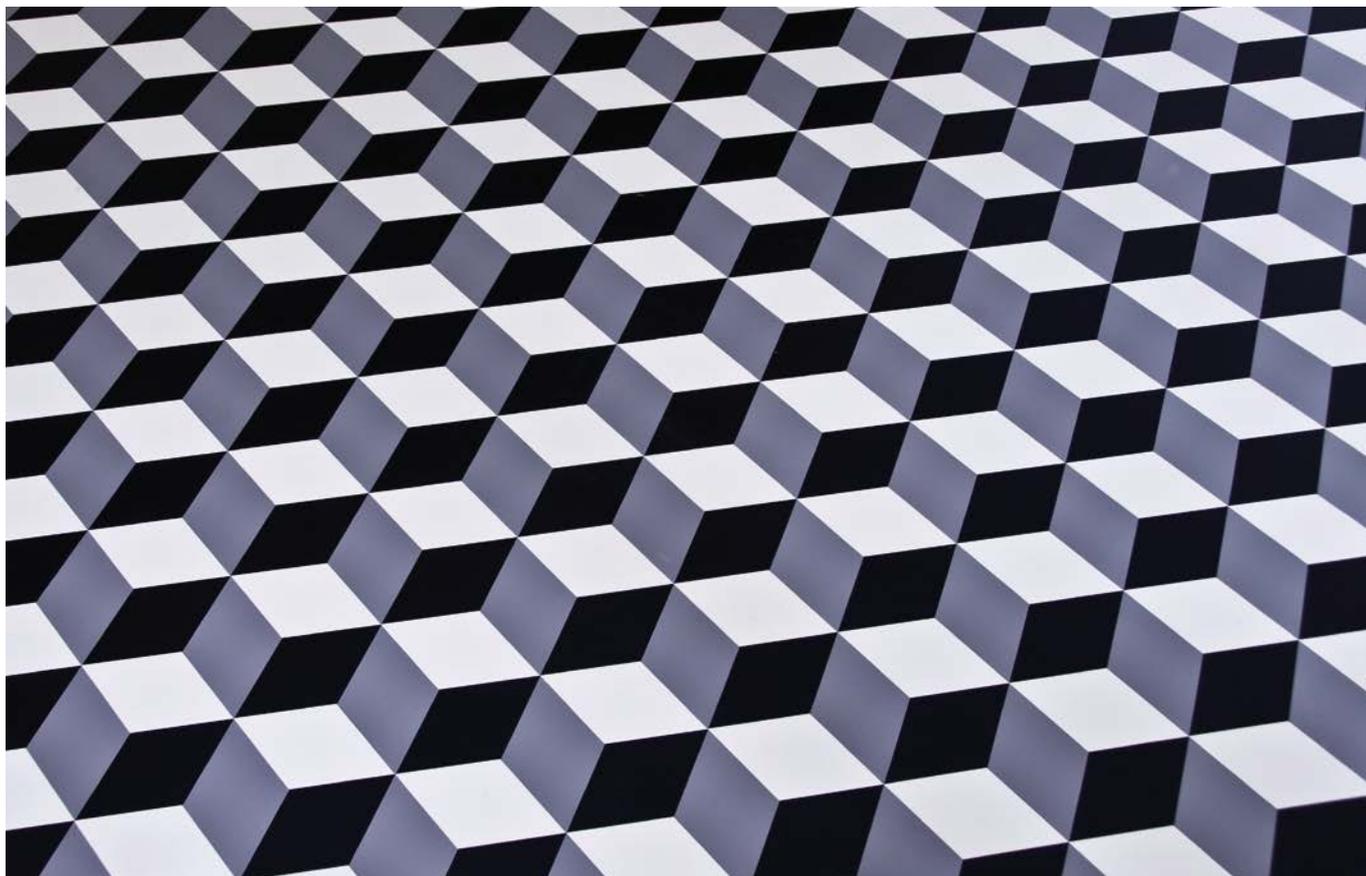
With their solution, the designers follow Escher's work: "For the floor, we choose an equal hexagon consisting of three rhombuses. In Italy and Spain there are many variations of these tiles. The absolute benefit was that we thus could create a hypnotic depth effect. Escher would be proud of us. The same

hexagon was used for the design of the chairs and the covers of the heating, but distorted beyond recognition."

### **2,505 robust tiles with a soft look-and-feel**

The floor consists of 2,505 rubber tiles of the noraplan uni range in three grey shades. They are pre-cut to size by nora systems on an ultrasound cutting machine such that the floor-layer Mark van Steenhoven Projects, Ridderkerk, did not have to joint-seal the tiles.

Apart from the technical feasibility, the planners were convinced by the product itself. Karelse reports again: "We have chosen noraplan uni because it is robust but strangely enough has a delicate and soft touch at the same time. One could assume that a room designed according to mathematical principles would have a cool and calculated effect. But this is refuted by the feel. The room has now a soft and friendly look."



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