

Second-Hand SUPERMARKET

Expensive,
meet accessible.

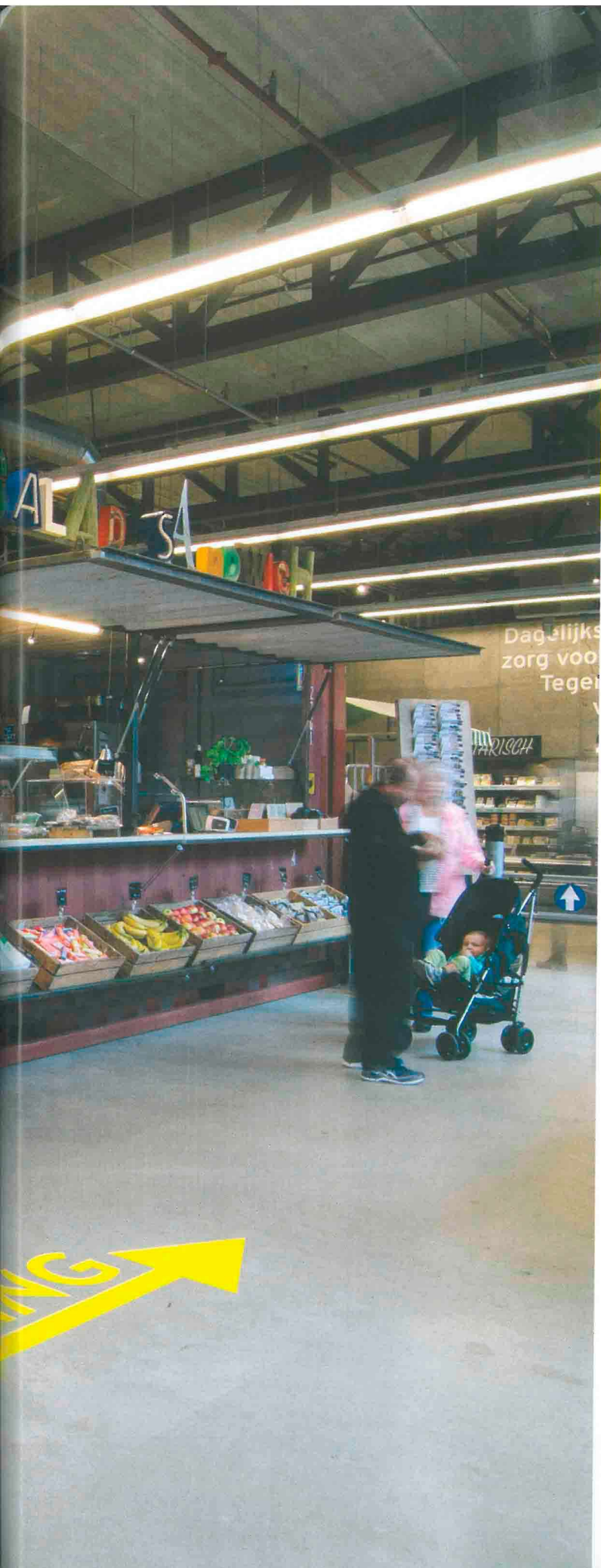
Dutch specialist
grocery chain

Marqt

turns popular notions
of organic markets on
their heads in its new store
built from recycled and
reused materials

By MARK FAITHFULL

Photos courtesy of STANDARD STUDIO





↑ The store's larger footprint gave Marqt more space to play with the ranges on offer.

→ Standard Studio sourced second-hand equipment for the new Marqt.

H

igh-quality, but not expensive. Specialist, but not exclusive. Such was the brief for Dutch organic supermarket chain Marqt, which at its newest store in Amsterdam wanted to maintain its reputation for good quality produce and specialist products, but move away from what it felt was a consumer perception of being high-priced.

"We heard that customers saw us as expensive," reflects Marqt Director Meike Beeren. She believes this partly came about because the (then) 13-store supermarket portfolio paid special attention to products such as truffle sauces, unique cheeses and special fish offers within small retail spaces that did not offer much scope for balancing these with staples for a fuller food shop. And so with its 14th and newest store at the Gelderlandplein, the retailer's goal was to challenge these consumer views while creating a store quite unlike any of the others within the existing chain.

At a little more than 10,000 sq. ft., the outlet represented its largest store—and for Marqt this more substantial footprint also meant that the company had a larger amount of space to play with. This meant there would be enough space to carry out a number of design and feature experiments and to ensure that staples, such as bread, cheese and eggs, would be better represented and that the more exclusive products—while still a core component—would be a less dominant element of the total proposition. While Beeren concedes that Marqt cannot price-match the major supermarket chains

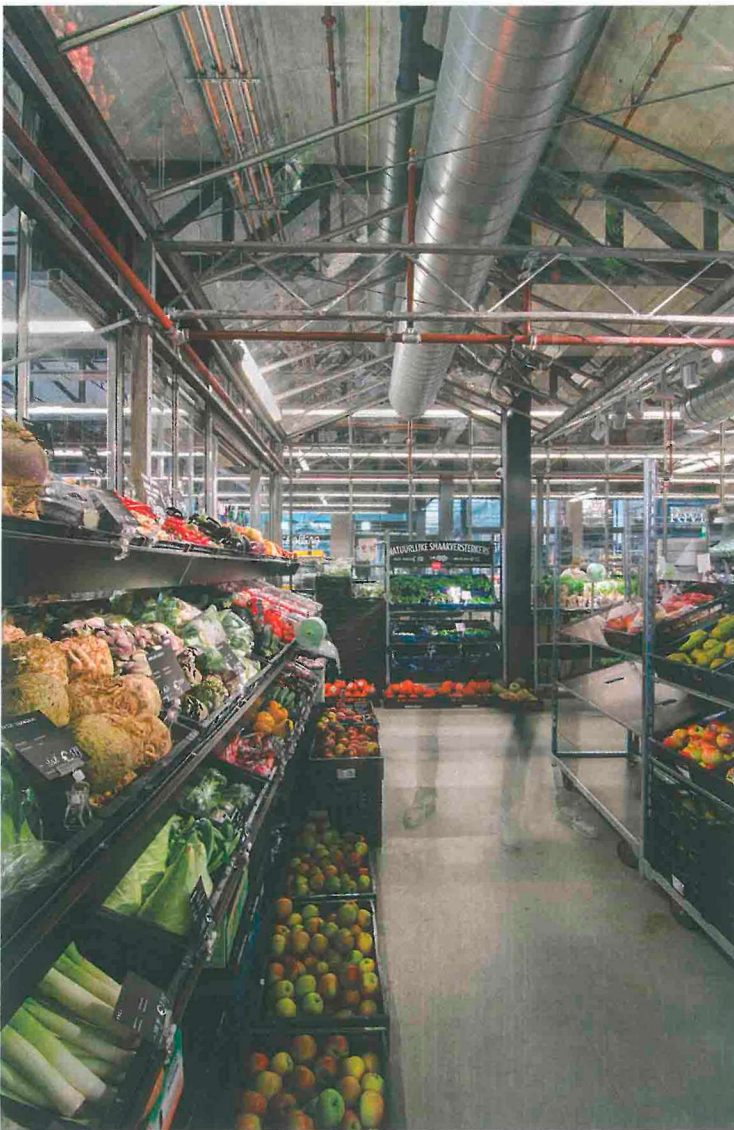


in The Netherlands, the company has made efforts to make its pricing competitive. “Making a profit is necessary for sustainable growth,” Beeren says. “But profit will never be made at the expense of others and is not an end in itself. Quality and price go hand-in-hand.”

As a result, when Marqt devised plans for its latest location at the beginning of last year, the balance was carefully considered. With a number of new services, Marqt has focused on more convenience and quality for the customer. For example, fresh-made pasta, various cuts of meat and fish, fried or marinated, are all featured. Even the chickens are grilled on a spit, while fresh mussels are shoveled in the desired quantity to add to the in-store theater. There is a “Shack” for coffee, snacks, salads and sandwiches—constructed from a former sea container, complete with rusting exterior—and a different food truck takes residence each day in a specially built space near the entrance.

But the real thrust of the interior is in the materials used throughout. To move away from a sense of higher prices, the store fit-out boasts more than 75 percent of the fittings made from second-hand materials, from the lighting to the fridges and other display furniture. An in-store greenhouse dubbed the “Koelkas,” developed together with Marqt and Amsterdam-based design agency Standard Studio, sustainably stores fruits and vegetables unpacked at 57 degrees Fahrenheit, the ideal temperature to keep them fresh. It also provides free filtered tap water in association with charity Join the Pipe. With the purchase of a bottle made from recycled plastic, customers support drinking water projects in developing countries.

“Our goal was to get more to the essence of the Marqt brand, and that ought not to be an expensive supermarket, but an accessible market feel where beautiful products are presented in the right way,” says Jurjen van Hulzen, Standard Studio’s creative director. “The previous Marqt stores were more like traditional supermarkets, but we wanted a different look and feel. The new Marqt feels more like a rough marketplace where different departments present their products. Through the use of large bulk spots, the best-sellers are presented well, and instead of expensive new custom furniture, we



↑ The “Koelkas” greenhouse sustainably stores fruits and vegetables.

← The new Marqt feels like a more approachable marketplace.



used old trolleys. Shopping is tastier, easier and, above all, more fun."

Of course, sourcing second-hand products was not as straightforward as ordering from a catalog, and van Hulzen reflects that the company needed to take a new approach in accessing display and storage equipment. "Almost all the materials are second-hand. All the fridges, the glasshouse and the registers as well," van Hulzen says. "Basically everything is available second-hand, you just have to find the right companies who trade in this kind of stuff. Often the used supermarket equipment heads off to Eastern Europe, but why should we not use it again ourselves?"

As for the budget, van Hulzen reflects that traditional supermarkets "often spend a lot of money to make it look 'cheap.'" He says of Marqt Gelderlandplein: "Including new installations and total renovation, supermarkets often cost around 2,500 euros per square meter. This project was done for less than half of this amount. So it might look 'expensive,' but actually it was much cheaper than a normal supermarket." **d+r**



↑ More than 75 percent of the fixtures in Marqt are made from second-hand materials.

← A different food truck takes residence each day in a specially built spot near the entrance.

“Our goal was to get more to the essence of the Marqt brand, and that ought not to be an expensive supermarket, but an accessible market feel where beautiful products are presented in the right way.”

—JURJEN VAN HULZEN,
STANDARD STUDIO

➤ The Shack coffee and snack bar is within a former sea container.

➔ The interior fixtures have come in at around half the cost of a traditional supermarket.

