

ATELIER PRO

OPDRACHTGEVER
Heijmans Bouw

PROJECT TYPE
architecture

7.230 m²

PROJECT STATUS
under construction

LOCATIE
Couperusplein 33
Den Haag
Netherlands

FUNCTIES
education, renovation
& re-use, sport &
leisure

PERIODE
2013 - 2015

OPLEVERING
2015



BEELD

RENOVATION EDITH STEIN COLLEGE

Atelier PRO's design of the Edith Stein College offers both a familiar and dynamic learning environment for students. The stately and compact high school building is being built at the end of the Louis Couperusplein in the inner city of The Hague. The site will accommodate space for sport, games, gardening, green areas, and outdoor education. This new school is a special place that offers a 'home' for students from deprived neighbourhoods.

Old and new

Initial research revealed that situating the sports hall underground would result in the most compact construction volume. This enables the sports hall to be completely integrated with the new building and simultaneously frees up more ground space for outdoor activities. The roof of the sports hall then becomes a podium to stack the different school departments above. On each floor, these departments are connected with the most prominent space and new heart of the school: the assembly hall. The hall will be accommodated in the existing chapel. With its high atmospheric space, the impressive 1930s chapel will be preserved in its original state and integrated with the new building. With this, the most beautiful building of the current school becomes the new pride of the future complex. With its compact connection to the canteen, the hall is suitable as a gathering

space for performances and parties while the open canteen makes a festive foyer adjoining the hall. The hall is equipped with a tribune for theatre, a piece of furniture that extends into the media classroom, which can double as a director's room.

Bridge, gateway and the logistics of student flow

The movement of people through the building was an important starting point for the design. In order to better direct the flow to and from the building (students now cycle around the building to the back), the school will gain a prominent new gateway, a thoroughfare along the axis of the Louis Couperusplein. Logistically, this allows students coming from the Mauritskade to continue directly through to the large play area on the south side of the school. Architecturally, the new gateway creates a clear urban marker at the end of the Louis Couperusplein. The volume above the gateway acts as a connecting bridge: an intermediary between the new structure and the chapel. This part of the school appears transparent – here, the canteen and other services are accommodated. Also, the section of the building with the school's original entry is maintained. This entrance functions as a formal secondary entry for visitors and parents and the after-hours entrance for the sports hall. At night, access is closed off with a gate.

Internal routing

The gateway plays an important role in the recognisability and processing of the student flow. Once inside, the routing is clearly organised along the central axis of the building. Besides connecting the separate buildings, the bridge above the gateway

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also marks the beginning of the route that connects the different departments. The staircase in the bridge also becomes a gathering space and is partly used as a casual seating element and tribune. Because the split levels between the chapel and new building now come together ingeniously in the bridge, and thanks to the installation of a dual-entry lift, the entire building is accessible for wheelchair users.

The departments

The departments are clearly and rationally organised with classrooms around one central zone: a system of open communal spaces and voids with surrounding wide corridors. Every department receives its own floor with a row of classrooms on the north and south elevation. The different departments for HAVO/VWO and MAVO are never further than a set of stairs away from the assembly hall. In and around the main gateway are classrooms for specific departments like creative subjects or sciences that the school can use to profile itself with. A sunken patio – with enough space for a sculpture garden – will direct sufficient light and air to the basement handwork room. The sports hall is also situated underground in the eastern part of the building. They are accessed via a staircase and lift in the chapel. In this way, the sports hall can be both easily reached all day during school and separately accessed by the community after school hours.

Architecture and aesthetic

In its architecture, the building seeks a balance instead of contrast with the existing environment. Beautiful brick reliefs characterise the façade, derived from the surrounding buildings built in style of The Hague School – these offer a contemporary interpretation of the historic style. Visually, the existing chapel retains the focus in the new ensemble of existing and future buildings.