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Waterrijk Multifunctional Community School, Boskoop

Located on Boomgaard street in Boskoop, the Waterrijk community school houses the Immanuel primary school and Junis Day care Foundation. The school had a unique conception: in a short period of time a team of enthusiastic users, municipality and school committee members and designers conducted a massing study and devised a sketch design – this was used for the tender process. This was a very bold approach for an ambitious project, and the continuation of the process was swift: in 2013 atelier PRO was engaged by the consortium to develop the design. The building opened, according to plan, in June 2015.

Simple foundation, thoughtful detailing

The design is characterised by a simple foundation: two elongated shed-like volumes with a double kink and an upturned roof. Visually the building's angled lines help reduce its scale to better fit the surrounds while still maintaining unity for the overall form. The archetypal shed form is accentuated through the use of a singular material for the roof and facade and extended profile at the ends of the building.

While the basis and planning of the building are relatively simple, the finishing is characterised by thoughtful and crafted details.

For example gutters are not exposed, but concealed in the roof edge. The angled lines, material transitions and windows are finely detailed. In the main lobby, an overhang and balcony shade the large glass facades.

Light and friendly

In accordance with the urban prerequisites for colour and material use, in combination with objectives regarding investment and operations costs, steel was chosen as the base material. Here it's used as cladding with a weatherboard profile in a cool grey tint. This is combined with pale wood to create a friendlier and more inviting colour palette. Vertical planks are applied in varying widths with open and closed structures. The result is a light, calm and refined facade that fits beautifully and naturally with the green surroundings.

Pale wood is also widely used throughout the interior and in the roof trusses. The light-coloured floor and crisp white walls combine to create a contemporary colour palette that complements the branding of Junis Day Care and fits the requirements of the Immanuel school team.

Multipurpose lobby

The spacious multipurpose lobby forms the heart of the school. The entry is light and inviting with a transparent facade at both ends. Features of this space include:

- A large void with a wide staircase and integrated seating elements

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- A stage for dance and music classes with hidden storage for craft materials
- A multipurpose kitchen unit that doubles as a reception counter
- A bridge of books: a 19-metre-long walkway equipped with bookshelves and media niches;

The entry and generally the whole interior was well considered by the users, who recognised the opportunities from taking a multipurpose approach, and were open to activities taking place outside enclosed classrooms. This gives flexibility and allows the building's interior to easily adapt to future changes. For example the staff room, cloakroom, toilet arrangement and study areas with extra space for groups of students were well thought out.

Green Boskoop

For the outdoor areas, the themes were green, natural materials and discoveries. Instead of tacky bright bouncing animals, natural play elements occupy the playground such as a willow tent and climbing tree surrounded by greenery. This natural approach is logical considering the town's importance as a centre for floriculture. The site borders a large stretch of water, but the school is rather unconcerned considering the town's motto: 'If there's no duckweed on your head, then you're no resident of Boskoop'. Therefore instead of huge high fences, a friendly green buffer with a low barrier forms the boundary with the water, enabling a wonderful green space with views and sunshine where children can play outside.

The users were also engaged in process to review matters that take place outside the school's boundaries. In this way, the municipality together with the school, day care centre and traffic expert researched the safety aspects concerning the dropping off and picking up of children and logistics with traffic routing through the neighbourhood. Their valuable input can be clearly seen in the end result.

Sustainability and installations

'Prevention is better than cure': this was the motto of the project. In this way the basics such as good insulation, abundant daylight inside and avoiding excess solar heat gain

were first laid in place. Thereafter measures regarding technical installations and renewable energy were considered. Technical installations are housed in the attic. This space connects below to corridor zones and toilets that have lowered ceilings. This minimises loss of space and enables shorter distances between ductwork and cabling and limits their size. Spatially the classroom zones can be easily adapted. All in all, the school is designed to easily accommodate any changes in educational needs today and in the future.