



photography Jeroen Verrecht

## ROYAL ATHENAEUM NINOVE

- master plan for the reorganisation of a GO! schoolcampus in the heart of Ninove
- demolition of the existing building and the phased implementation of a new primary school, middle school and lab building; the extension of the athenaeum with a gym, refectory, administration, lab and classrooms, playgrounds and outdoor paving
- assignment with application of the law on public procurement
- winning entry in a competition

### STUDY

2009 - 2014

### REALISATION

2012 - 2018

### CLIENT

GO! Onderwijs van de Vlaamse  
Gemeenschap

### DESIGN TEAM

Association of Engineering Offices:  
Abscis - Provoost - Ingenium

### LOCATION

Astridlaan 33-39 / Dreefstraat  
31-35, 9400 Ninove

### GROSS AREA

6 042 m<sup>2</sup> (buildings)  
7 077 m<sup>2</sup> (areas)

### COST PRICE

€ 9 347 965  
excl. VAT and fees



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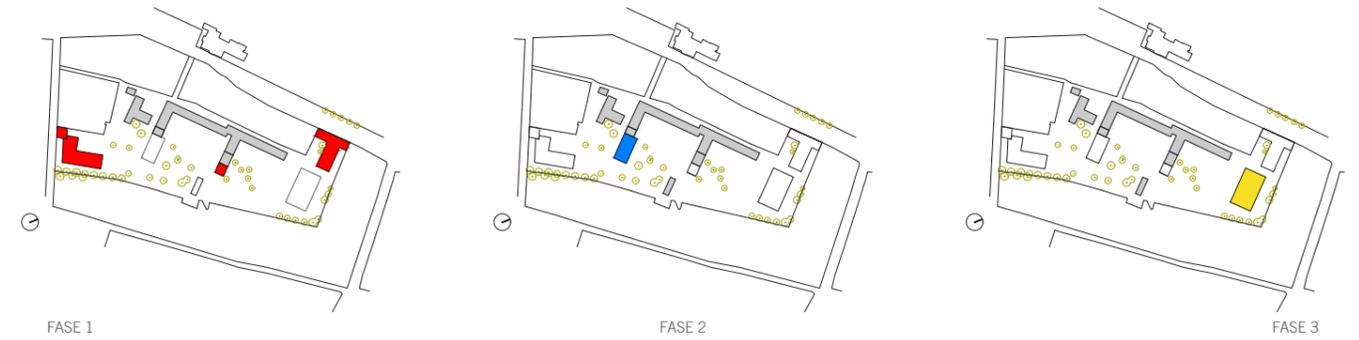
### MASTER PLAN

The school campus is located in the centre of the city of Ninove, on a green strip in the middle of a closed building block. This green oasis offers space to three GO!-schools: a kindergarten and primary school, a middle school and a secondary school (athenaeum). The schools were dealing with an enormous shortage of classrooms, which threatened to fill the open space with temporary containers. The assignment consisted of drawing up a master plan for the future development of the entire campus and the construction of several new school buildings and sports infrastructure.

During the development of the master plan, a number of bottlenecks were uncovered that greatly reduced the potential quality of the campus. The campus was rather hidden behind the existing residences along Dreefstraat and Astridlaan. A proper presentation and connection of the campus in de street was missing. The only view to the surroundings were the dilapidated buildings along the Dreefstraat and two existing car parks. The beautiful green inner area was barely visible from the street and the terrain was highly fragmented by temporary pavilions.

The master plan had to anticipate construction in different phases without restricting the quality of the existing open space. The new school buildings together provided an additional 7200 m<sup>2</sup> of space, which allowed to gradually reduce the amount temporary pavilions.

In the first construction phase, the primary school was built. A powerful standalone volume on the Dreefstraat, for which the old buildings of the athenaeum had to make way. The middle school was given a new extension between two blind facades on the Astridlaan (on the side of the train station) where originally there were parking spaces. Both new buildings form the new face of the campus in an improved integration of the school campus in its urban environment. Centrally on the campus an existing school building of the athenaeum was extended with modern laboratories and sanitary facilities. A second construction phase comprises a four-storey new building for the athenaeum with classrooms and secretariat. A third phase is planned for the construction of a sports hall with a canteen, which could also be used by third parties outside school hours. While phases 1 and 2 contain the realization of different buildings - a kindergarten and primary school, a middle school and a secondary school- we attempted to create a certain harmony that shapes and strengthens the campus as a whole. A clear and identical materialisation for the different new buildings was the most important way to achieve this. The new buildings create a renewed identity for their users without losing sight of the uniformity of the campus. Spatial connection, unique shapes versus uniform choice of materials and detailing all keep each other in balance. The large green open space creates a strong cohesion between the different schools.



### PHASE 1: NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL, MIDDLE SCHOOL, AND LABORATORY BUILDING

#### PRIMARY SCHOOL

The old, decayed and largely vacant buildings of the secondary school have to make way for a powerful and free-spirited volume in which the primary school and one class of the kindergarten were provided. The building connects to the existing wall shared with the neighbours. The street façade of the new volume was pushed back a little, in line with the only free standing villa in the street. This provides a local expansion of the public space, which offers a place of rest in the traffic-rich Dreefstraat. Parents who bring their children to school on foot can safely drop them off or wait for them after school. Motorized traffic and cyclists can drive past the building to nearby other buildings and parking areas on the campus.

The primary school is more than a repetition of classrooms. Different functions within the building require a different height (gym, refectory, classrooms,...). By connecting these different heights, as well as connecting to the neighbours' cornice, a playful

roof profile is created which characterises the building. This play on heights continues in the volume that extends inwards on the campus, creating classes with variable sloping ceiling heights on the top floor that creates a wonderful sense of space.

To strengthen the visual relation with the campus, a large passage way cuts through the main volume. The main entrance to the primary school is situated under this covered outdoor area. Both on the left and right of this covered playground are the two largest rooms of the primary school: the gym and refectory. Both are separated from this outside space by large glass sections with doors. All three of these spaces can become one large indoor-outdoor space during events. The facade on the street side has been deliberately kept fairly closed to prevent unwanted insight. In specific places, such as the entrance, the central staircase and the refectory, large windows are provided to strengthen the connection with the urban landscape.

In addition to the primary school, there is a private playground and outdoor area that fits well with the overall green character of the campus. There is a large asphalt playground and a grass field that connects with the other green areas on the campus through its shape and form. Two new trees are planted in this green area as an extension to the existing row of trees on the site. The L-shape of the building gives this playground a sheltered character. Enclosed between the school building and the shared wall with the neighbour, the playground seeks connection with the existing playground of the toddlers just around the corner.

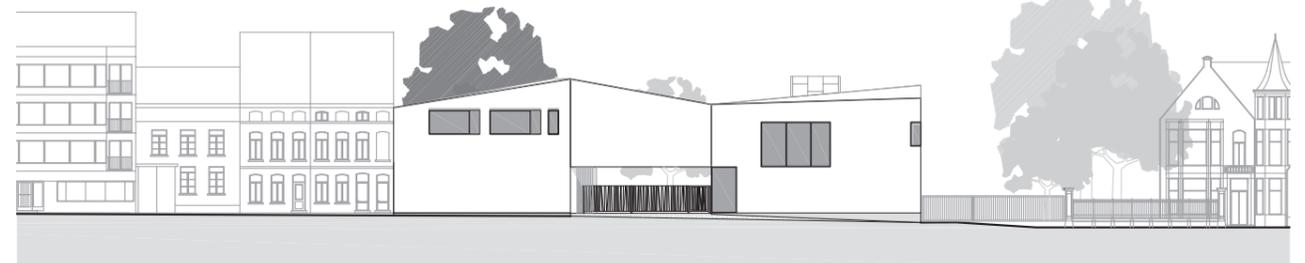
#### MIDDLE SCHOOL

This zone of the campus on the Astridlaan is flanked by two fully closed facades and was used as a parking space. The new development places a volume of which one part is positioned perpendicular to the Astridlaan and another part parallel to it. By not building across the entire width, the site remains well accessible, not only for students but for emergency services alike. The cantilevered upper levels ensure that the building block is actually closed.



above: main entrance primary school with waiting area for the parents - photography Jeroen Verrecht

below: façade primary school





photography: Jeroen Verrecht

## PHASE 2: EXTENSION ATHENAEUM

The new building of the secondary school is centrally located on the site and is characterized by a diverse use of materials. Brick is interspersed with architectural concrete. This creates a base that connects the building with the plateau on which it stands.

To the north of the new building are the existing school buildings of the Royal Athenaeum. These act as a buffer between the new building and the adjacent plots north of the campus. In the east and west the new building is surrounded by a number of tall trees. The impact of the new building on the campus is therefore relatively small. To the south lies the main road that runs through the entire campus and, together with the large bicycle parking, forms a buffer towards the adjacent houses.

By opting for a slightly higher building with a small footprint, a rather full program was realized without affecting the green character of the school campus. The new building is a rather modest volume. Because of its central location, the building has two faces. On one side it connects both functionally and spatially to the existing building of the Royal Athenaeum (KA). On the other hand, it focuses on the main access to the south of the building. To ensure that both entrances are made sufficiently visible, a cut out was made on the ground floor to pronounce the entrances. A roof terrace is provided on the floor with the art studios. The terrace is shaped by cutting out a piece of the volume, which provides a fascinating perspective from the playground of the KA.



## LABORATORY BUILDING

The new lab building is located centrally on the campus and is an extension of one of the existing buildings. The location used to host a few smaller volumes that were used as sanitary facilities, which have been demolished. The plan type of the existing building is continued in the new volume. The existing corridor continues into the new laboratory building and ends with an external door that gives access to an external steel staircase. The cornice of the roof is raised higher than strictly necessary to seamlessly connect to the existing buildings. A part of the new volume cantilevers over the playground. This creates a covered play area next to the new sanitary block, and creates a continuity between the two existing playgrounds. The school later on decided to add glazed doors to be able to close off this play area.

photos below: Toon Grobet

