

Utopia - Library & Academy for Performing Arts

Location

Aalst, BE

Client

Autonoom Gemeentebedrijf
Stadsontwikkeling Aalst
(AGSA)

Initiated

2016

Size

8.500 sqm

Project Team

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The new Municipal Library and Academy for Performing Arts Utopia is situated on the corner of Oude Graanmarkt and Esplanadestraat in Aalst. The plan is functionally driven, so it achieves a sense of spatial freedom that enriches the experience of the building. The so-called Pupillenschool, with its historical grandeur, has a presence that anchors the new complex. Using this structure as the ‘cornerstone’ supports integration in the existing urban fabric and in the hearts of local residents. The irregular street pattern of the historic centre of Aalst was a source of inspiration and forms the foundation for the new complex. At various points the streets converge erratically, leaving small open spaces – tiny public squares that dot the old city centre. By inserting a rectangular edifice loosely against the back and part of the side of the Pupillenschool, Aalst has gained two more of such small public squares: one serving as the entrance area for the complex and the other as terrace to the reading café.

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