



An oasis of calm and creativity: Élancourt Music School by Opus 5 architectes

Some 25 kilometres from central Paris, Opus 5 architectes has given a former ecumenical centre a befitting skin for its new function as a music school, providing Saint-Quentin en Yvelines a new cultural heart in the process. The discerningly renovated building located in an open, vehicle-free space acts as a link between the administrative part of the district and living, learning and working in its greener areas.

In accordance with its peaceable purpose as a place of worship, the original building erected by Philippe Deslandes in 1977 was characterised by unembellished and introverted architecture; indeed, in keeping with the spirit of the times, Deslandes sought to embody the qualities of simplicity, modularity and anonymity and demonstrate honesty in the materials employed and the supporting structure. Opus 5 architectes' adaptation of Élancourt Music School to today's functional and statutory requirements shows respect for these principles.

In this regard the walls between the reinforced concrete columns have been removed, and their replacements seamlessly clad in brick. The monolithic effect created by this outer skin reduces the complexity of the volumes, plus even the windows disappear behind the façade's moucharaby-type latticework, thus retaining the intimate character of the original structure. Indirect daylight also reaches the interior through skylights. At night, the fine openings in the facades make the school shine in a soft shimmer; during the day, the elevations are enlivened by the subtle nuances of colour in the projecting and recessed masonry fashioned out of hand-crafted brick laid without use of mortar. The single-storey building's new identity is also signalled on the top of the building: the roof, visible from the surrounding houses, is covered in artificial turf in a deep blue that alludes to the characteristic "blue notes" in Blues melodies while providing a musical patch of colour in the otherwise monotone surroundings.

The ground plan of Élancourt Music School has been left largely unaltered, as seen in four medium-sized rooms and a large one in the north and additional smaller ones in the south that accommodate various uses. Working to an appropriate grid, Opus 5 architectes was also able to easily fit new partition walls between the existing elements of the supporting structure. Their most substantial change has been to close off the central entrance court. This continues to function as the circulation core and in accordance with its former open architecture, has been provided a generously-sized rooftop window. Wood on the walls additionally characterises the light-filled interior and optimises the acoustics.

Without extravagant gestures, Opus 5 architectes has created a place that welcomes the inhabitants of Saint-Quentin en Yvelines, while the light-hearted atmosphere of Élancourt Music School makes it a new gathering spot for young people in particular.

Client: Stadt Élancourt
 Architects: Opus 5 Architectes
 Location: Place de la Foi, 78990 Élancourt (FR)
 Text: Charlotte Peterleit
 published 23.08.2019



Photo: Luc Boegly



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Further information:

Project management: Hùng Tôn

Planning of structural framework: Batiserf (FR)

Planning of acoustics: Impédance (FR)