

# MVRDV



VAN BOVEN ARCHITECTEN

## Winy Maas transforms his former high school: Gymnasium Beekvliet's colourful addition documents local history with façade artwork

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Two alumni of the Gymnasium Beekvliet – MVRDV founding partner Winy Maas and Theobert van Boven of Van Boven Architecten – are leading the transformation of their old secondary school in the Dutch village of Sint-Michielsgestel. The main element of the design by 'Team Old Beekvliet' is a colourful, flowing addition that reaches out into the school's plaza and considerably improves circulation, creating a new focal point at the heart of the building. Exhibiting artwork by visual artist Ian Kirkpatrick, the addition becomes a new focal point for the school's activities. The completion of the transformation is scheduled for June this year.



The starting point of the design was to renovate the existing school building, extending its lifespan. In addition the brief required a new auditorium, more space for regular school activities, and additional art and culture facilities to provide students with a challenging and stimulating learning environment while offering them more spaces to meet and gather. To achieve this, the design extends an existing roof structure and lowers it to ground level – closing the building's circulation routes in one flowing move and creating an eye-catching element at the entrance to the school.



The swooping form of the new addition incorporates a tribune forming an auditorium to act as a focal point for school activities, as well as an adaptable stage and a kitchen. The building's entrance remains in the same location, but the new design reconfigures it, with the main door now nestled underneath the curve. The resulting proposal draws pupils, teachers, and visitors directly into the heart of the building and the life of the school. Painted entirely in blue, the entrance creates a "heaven" in the school.

The exterior walls of this curved addition feature artwork by the renowned London-based Canadian visual artist Ian Kirkpatrick, bearing the memories and experiences of pupils and former pupils, as well as references to the surroundings and the school's history. The illustrations are positioned using a computer scripting technique that links each one to its geographic location. The resulting artwork bears Kirkpatrick's characteristic visual style – part iconographic, part Greek amphorae, part computer-generated – lending a fresh and contemporary appearance while providing a record of the school's 200-year history and anchoring the building in its environment.



"It's fantastic to work on a building with which I have such history. This school shaped me strongly – it's a former catholic seminary that transformed into a hip gymnasium and it gave me, coming from a village, a cosmopolitan perspective," says MVRDV founding partner Winy Maas. "I also think it is great that memories of students, from the past and present, are represented in the mural. Actually, there is a piece of everyone in the region in this building. It really is a reflection of the whole of Sint-Michielsgestel and its surroundings."

“I went to school at Beekvliet myself, as did one of my children, and my wife is also a teacher there. These connections strongly motivate me to design a unique and special building that does justice to the school’s rich history”, says architect Theobert van Boven. “The auditorium with its curved shape, the printed façade, and the view of the pond that is characteristic of Beekvliet mean that this school will now also be located in a building that matches its stature.”



Gymnasium Beekvliet is not the first time Maas has worked in his home region. Also designed with Van Boven Architecten, Sint-Michiëlsgestel’s Green Villa, with a façade of green shelves lending it a soft, leafy exterior, is currently gearing towards a planning application. Earlier, Maas designed The Glass Farm in his home, the neighbouring village of Schijndel.

**About Ian Kirkpatrick**

London based Canadian visual artist Ian Kirkpatrick has been exhibiting his work across the UK and internationally, with shows in Montreal, New Orleans, London, Berlin, Rotterdam, New York and Chicago. His sculptural work was commissioned for the 2012 London Olympic Games and the 2014 Tour de France Grand Depart. Among his recent works is Renaissance, a 160–square-metre mural commissioned by Leeds City Council, and he is working on an art mural for the new Amstel Tower in Amsterdam.

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