

Architecture for alcoholics

UTRECHT (NL)—Vagrants and homeless people used to be accommodated in buildings belonging to religious organizations like the Salvation Army. With the secularization of Dutch society, however, other organizations have taken over this responsibility, and these people now find shelter in a variety of mostly provisional accommodations. These accommodations often leave much to be desired, as much for their users as for neighbourhood residents. The hostel for alcohol-dependent vagrants and homeless people designed by Versseput Architecten is the first building in the Netherlands to be specially built for this purpose. It is located in the Ondiep district of the city of Utrecht,

on the site of a former police station. This striking little edifice now forms the access to the shelter accommodations in the new two-storey building that essentially has been wrapped around it.

Inside, the focus was on creating a sense of home. By giving each of the 23 rooms a different design, the architects have endeavoured to replace the anonymity that usually characterizes hotels and hostels, with rooms in which the personality of the individual takes centre stage. (KH)

www.versseput.nl



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The homely communal spaces



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The new structure is modest in relation to the existing building. The facades are clad in concrete panels (specially designed for this project) covered in a bamboo relief, with which the architects allude to 'the concrete jungle in which the residents have to find a home'.