

FEATURED:  
Leading Female  
Architect

# Enhancing the urban environment

"We want to make a difference," say Juliette Bekkering and Monica Adams, founders of Bekkering Adams Architects. "We are committed to make expressive and characteristic architecture that people can identify with and can be proud of."

TEXT: BERTHE VAN DEN HURK | PHOTOS: BEKKERING ADAMS ARCHITECTS

With a team of passionate designers and architects, Bekkering Adams Architects works on innovative and sustainable projects. The Dutch architectural office specialises in communal buildings and public spaces. Bekkering says, "For each client, we strive to create a customized environment, tailor-made and special. It is our core business to make buildings that connect, with spaces where people can meet. We aim to create projects that go beyond the purely architectural and continue to repeatedly surprise." Adams adds, "We want to create unique architecture by making buildings with a soul."

## Urban environment

Both founders have a fascination for enhancing the urban environment. Bekkering

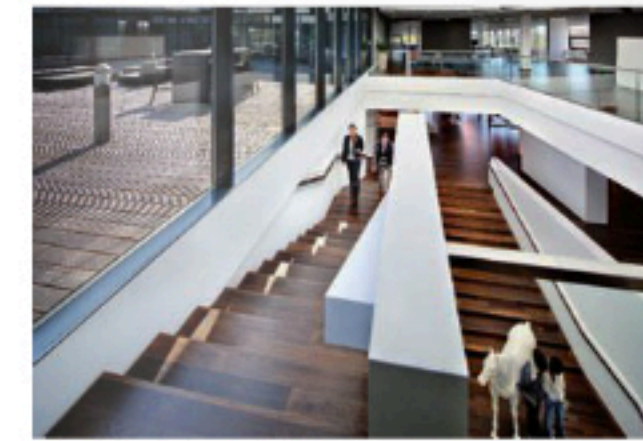
says, "For us, a design should always connect to the existing environment and add value to it. We strive to create buildings that have a confident appearance in the landscape, buildings that are expressive and have a tactile expression of material and detail. In the communal buildings of Bloemershof for instance, we pursued the expression and materiality of a frozen forest, thus creating a self-evident urban ensemble."

## Specific yet flexible

"We take into account the demands of the different parties involved, such as the client and the users, but also the relevant technical requirements," explains Adams, "people should feel comfortable in our buildings

and be able to identify with them." Bekkering says, "It is like solving a puzzle, the buildings must be specific and expressive yet also generic and flexible, able to move along with the time, shrink and grow when necessary and be able to accommodate a variety of uses."

"And," adds Adams, "we strive to combine a certain neutrality in the design with clearly defined communal spaces. We articulate specific architectural elements, such as a stairwell or hallway. For example the majestic staircase in the fire station of Doetinchem connects all floors and the different functions, making it the central feature in the building. Also the stairwell in the head office Esprit Benelux in Amstelveen is the



Bekkering Adams architects make innovative and sustainable buildings, interiors and public spaces that are customized for the environment. OPPOSITE PAGE: Ensemble Bloemershof. Photo: René de Wit. TOP LEFT: Esprit Headquarter Benelux. Photo: DigiDaan. BOTTOM LEFT: Fire Station Doetinchem. Photo: Ossip van Duivenbode. RIGHT: Private House. Photo: Daria Scagliola.

eyecatcher of the building, flooded with daylight and with a view to the patio on the top floor."

## Research

The office has an open attitude towards the current issues of society. Research plays a key role within projects. Bekkering: "Our strategy is more and more to seek cooperation with other parties and set up research projects with them. In this way we can deepen the content of the design, including the research into sustainability, materialization, scenography and typological studies." Adams says, "We have a special interest in the potential of public and collective space for the contemporary transformation processes of our cities. We feel that architects nowadays should take into account the constant changes in our urban environment and think about solutions for enhancing our environment, now and in the future."

## Sustainability

Striving for energy efficiency is an integral part of the design process. "Nowadays people expect environmentally friendly solutions," says Bekkering. "We achieve en-

ergy efficiency for example by designing buildings in which daylight is provided deep into the building. We have a preference for natural and beautifully aging materials and are constantly searching for possibilities to combine distinctive materials and a characteristic detailing with environmentally friendly techniques."

## Stretching the limits

Over the years a distinct portfolio has been established, characterized by expressive and striking buildings. The commissions vary from complex building assignments to concept development; from headquarter offices to public buildings and spaces, but also interior and product design. Recently completed projects include the fire station in Doetinchem, a public playground in Rot-

terdam, the head office Esprit Benelux in Amstelveen and even a comprehensive design for a highway.

Bekkering continues, "Currently we are working on a secondary and primary school, a boarding school and a sport complex, all embedded in a new public park in the city centre of Peer, Belgium. It reflects a unique co-operation between the municipality and the school-institutes. Next to this large-scale project we are working on smaller projects such as a pavilion in Oss. Recently we developed an installation for the Architecture Biennale of Venice that puts the definition and perception of space and infinity centre stage." Adams concludes, "We always try to find the boundaries of our work field. Architecture is more than creating a building or public space. It is about enhancing the urban environment."

[www.bekkeringadams.nl](http://www.bekkeringadams.nl)

Monica Adams (left) and Juliette Bekkering (right), founders of Bekkering Adams Architects. Photo: Frank Hanswijk

