

THE MOSQUE

The Mosque.

Political, Architectural and
Social Transformations

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Fig. 55 - detail of masonry



Fig. 56 - front elevation by night

A Merger that Preserves Separate Identities

Title: Fusion Mosque Religious Complex
City: Amsterdam, the Netherlands
Design: Architectenbureau Marlies Rohmer
Status: Completed in 2009

The heading sounds like a contradiction in terms: a non-merging merger. Yet that is exactly what Marlies Rohmer achieves with her design for the 'Fusion' Mosque Religious Complex. The building combines two prayer halls, one Turkish and one Moroccan, together with their associated classrooms and offices, as well as a Dutch employment office. The organizations share a single main entrance and reach the four storeys using the same central staircase. But there are also separate entrances for those who do not wish to meet the building's other users, with access to separate washing areas, offices and prayer halls, and a staircase leading to the women's mezzanine.

In spite of these clear divisions in the plans, the façade has nothing suggestive of two buildings in one. Immediately over the main entrance, for instance, is a wide window overlooking the central meeting place – the only really transparent section of the building. In most of the other sections, small gaps in the masonry provide glimpses of the spaces beyond. At night, light filters through these openings to the building's surroundings, adding depth to the façade. This semi-transparency is a compromise between the mosque directors' desire for a blank façade and the municipal council, which saw openness as crucial. The decorations of the façade were also a subject of debate: the city insisted on replacing the Islamic formal language with a more hybrid architecture.

The masonry and glass façade of the religious complex harmonizes well with the tall, straight façades and striking details of its surroundings, designed by H.P. Berlage. In front of the building will be a large square with sports fields and playground equipment. The municipal council and designer expect this square – as the main local meeting place – to help make the mosque a natural part of the neighbourhood. Who knows – within a few years maybe the Turkish and Moroccan children will end up learning each other's languages so well that the Fusion will only use its main entrance, and will combine the two prayer halls to make one. Now that would be a real 'fusion'.



Fig. 57 - third floor



Fig. 58 - second plan



Fig. 59 - first floor

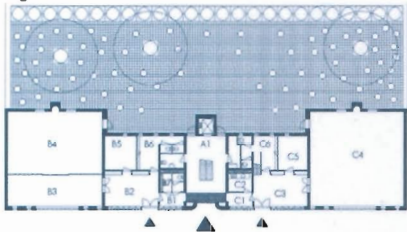


Fig. 60 - ground floor

communal area

A1 - hall
A2 - classroom

Turkish Islamic Social and Cultural Centre

B1 - hall
B2 - entrance
B3 - meeting room
B4 - prayer hall (Turkish community)
B5 - office
B6 - men's washing area
B7 - women's washing area
B8 - classroom

Moroccan Social and Cultural Centre

C1 - hall
C2 - pantry
C3 - entrance
C4 - prayer hall (Moroccan community)
C5 - office
C6 - washing area
C7 - classroom
C8 - storage

Office of the Dutch employment agency

D1 - hall
D2 - boiler room
D3 - office
D4 - storage