

22.82x20.71	1	10 עמוד	haaretz-front	24/01/2013	35444765-8
המכללה האקדמית כנרת בעמק הירדן - 13300					

Blending in is beautiful

Israel's Kinneret College is the proud beneficiary of two new buildings that 'flow' toward the lake the school is named after

Keshet Rosenblum

Kinneret College's new engineering school joins the college's compact library: Both buildings try to blend in with the surroundings and encourage social interaction. No wonder one student wanted to hold her wedding there.

The library was inaugurated two years ago. Several yards from the lake, the new building contrasted sharply with the campus' other structures, most of them old-fashioned, opaque and profligate.

The project was designed by Schwartz Besnosoff Architects, with the hope of creating a public place accessible to the residents of nearby villages. It would be a center of social interaction, unlike traditional libraries made up of isolated rooms. Critics argued that such a library couldn't fulfill its traditional role, but the architecture's quality overcame all obstacles.

Without corridors and doors, the library is organized around a wide staircase, like an auditorium. It faces Lake Kinneret; this allows natural light into the halls, which offer varying degrees of quiet. The building quickly became popular, also serving as a community center for nearby communities. Two months ago, students and staff celebrated the building's two-year birthday with a flash-mob on the stairs.

"We could hardly dream of anything wilder," said Gaby

Schwartz of Schwartz Besnosoff Architects. "After all the theories and dreams, it actually materialized."

Now for the engineering school

Immediately after the building was completed, the college's directors asked Schwartz Besnosoff to design the engineering school next door. The school, funded by the Ahi Ezer fund, is now receiving its final touches; by next semester it should be alive with students of electronics, software design and data systems. Last month's mezuzah-fixing ceremony was attended by hundreds of students, all curious to check out the library's little brother.

The building uses the same design language as the library; people at the college call the buildings "the twins." Its four stories contain classrooms, two auditoriums and a cafeteria.

As at its neighbor, the staircase is used as a meeting place. Since the building is mainly designed for practical purposes, it is clearly divided between classrooms and other areas such as bathrooms and staircases.

Wide bridges cross the central space – again with the hope of allowing social interaction; a few stories can be viewed at the same time. This concept isn't rare in the architecture of school buildings, but in this case there's more order, preventing the visual mess often caused by three-dimensional

acrobatics.

The new building, like the library, faces the Kinneret, of course. In both auditoriums the panel behind the stage is transparent, and the rows of seats reflect the lake's calm waters.

An exterior staircase, painted a strong green, will serve as the building's main route of traffic, leading students on up from the beach and grass. The upper stretch touches the roof, while the staircase beneath it, above the auditorium's roof, serves as a place to relax or for open-air lectures, with the water and reeds as a background. Originally, the designers planned to have the stairs lead to the flat roof, but in the event, the stairs end before the roof.

This is an introverted building, offering more when looking from the inside out. It has no extravagant exterior; its design focuses on the view and the relations among the users. The big test will be come when the students and staff start flocking to the unique spaces such as the ground-floor cafeteria that will "flow" into the beach.

This isn't a prestigious building, costing only NIS 5,000 per meter – roughly 10 times less than the Design Museum in Holon. "This means that one can use a low budget to create experiences and places that work – spaces that are exciting and dynamic," Schwartz says.

Schwartz is already planning the college's next proj-



The campus' buildings let in plenty of light. Schwartz Besnosoff Architects

ect, the dormitories, to be built south of the campus near the Hejaz train station. The station, located on a railway built by the Ottomans in 1900, was used by passengers traveling

from Damascus to Mecca. It will eventually serve as the college's southern campus, housing a center for Land of Israel studies and a visitors' center.