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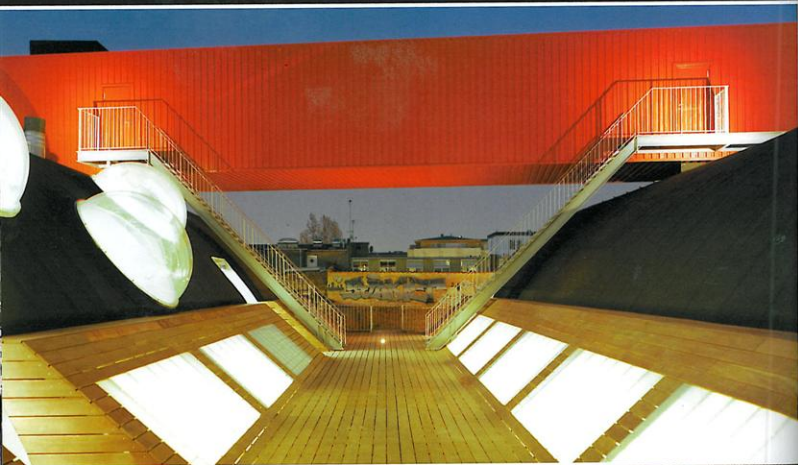
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BUILDING BRIDGES

"Wonderful Copenhagen" is not quite as wonderful as the slogans suggest – at least not for everyone. New immigration laws have revived a grumbling strain of Danish xenophobia. "We started Sjakket in reaction to hostile headlines," explains Khosrow Bayat, head of the capital's noted youth centre, frequented mainly by troubled immigrant youths aged 11 to 17. "Quite simply, I got tired of the negative picture painted of the young."

The media attention paid to the centre is not just due to what goes on in the building – an unconventional mixture of play and study. Sjakket, which means "the gang," was designed by Belgian Julien De Smedt and Dane Bjarke Ingels, the duo once known as Plot, who have arguably done the most to steer Danish architecture away from historical modernism toward a more expressive idiom. The youth centre marks the last project they managed to complete before splitting up to become JDS/Julien De Smedt Architects and BIG – the Bjarke Ingels Group; Sjakket exemplifies their expressive esthetic.

"Sjakket occupies what used to be an engineering workshop on north Nørrebro, the Copenhagen district undergoing the most rapid development at present," says De Smedt. "It is a low-budget project, as shown by the choice of raw materials and simple solutions, a style that accords well with the building's purpose."

The vaulted industrial galleries, protected as listed buildings, are linked by a central spine containing lavatories and change rooms. The two galleries represent opposites, one empty, the other full: the first serves as a multi-purpose hall, while the second houses administration, study rooms and a kitchen. Light enters through distinctive bubble roof windows and transparent PVC garage doors.

An outdoor patio clad in wood planking runs between the roofs. Above it, a music studio in the form of a red container balances across the top of the two vaulted ceilings, with staircases leading up on either side. "The studio functions as a beacon for the whole building," says De Smedt. "Here the kids can sit and look out across the industrial landscape."

Beats juvenile reformatory any day.

MARK ISITT



Top: Sitting atop two vaulted ceilings, a red container housing a music centre calls attention to Sjakket. The new educational and recreational centre for young immigrants to Copenhagen was designed by Julien De Smedt and Bjarke Ingels. **Above:** Garage doors open onto the study halls, whose windows are treated with tinted glass. **Right:** Once in disrepair, the linked buildings that make up the centre breathe new life into their surroundings.

