

Project

Remodeling of the Kunstmuseum Basel and Laurenzbau Library, Switzerland

The expansion of the Kunstmuseum Basel into the neighboring former bank building enabled important improvements to be made to the spatial organization of the museum building and allowed additional exhibition space to be created. Both historic buildings - the Kunstmuseum, constructed in 1936 by the architects Rudolf Christ and Paul Bonatz, and the Laurenzbau, formerly home to the Nationalbank and built in 1926 by the architects Suter & Burckhardt - were in need of structural modifications in several areas in order to fulfill their new functions. The plan to build an extension for temporary exhibitions, as considered during the 2001 competition, was abandoned.

The character and extent of the various restructuring measures ranged from the creation of new spatial relationships to the reconstruction of original conditions, and also included light restorative retouching. The reconstruction work was carried out in various stages in order not to disrupt the functioning of the museum.

In the museum building, the former library rooms were converted into exhibition spaces and a bistro. Large new display cases, doors, and windows in the arcades open up the museum to the street and provide a welcoming countenance for museum visitors and restaurant clients. A gray sandstone staircase and ramp rises from the red-gray veined sandstone flooring of the arcades and leads to the entrance of the new bistro. The narrow former library hallway now functions as the bistro's dining area. Sitting on the elongated leather sofa, the guests look through the glazed doors at the comings and goings in the great sculpture and entrance court. In the adjoining bar, the focal point is the bar itself, which is made of highly polished brass. This treatment of the material produces a striking contrast to the matt, dark brown tones of the related material, architectural bronze, used for the windows and doors – this is true of both the historic elements and the new additions.

The gallery encircling the small courtyard and the high entrance hall were only gently renovated, with all interventions designed to restore the hall's function as the central starting point and orientation area for all visitor services. The few modifications to this space included a light wash of paint, new lighting, and the island-like placement of the ticket desk. Freeing up the gallery around the small courtyard on the ground floor represents a further important strategy in this reconstruction project. This gallery corridor was historically used as an exhibition space, but over the years it has also accommodated a cafe and cloakroom. Provided with new lighting, freshly stuccoed walls and ceilings, and a reduced number of door openings, the gallery now forms a generous exhibition space for contemporary sculpture and reliefs.

GIGON / GUYER

**ANNETTE GIGON / MIKE GUYER DIPL.ARCHITEKTEN ETH/BSA/SIA AG TEL +41 (0) 44 257 11 11
CARMENSTRASSE 28 CH-8032 ZÜRICH E-MAIL INFO@GIGON-GUYER.CH FAX +41 (0) 44 257 11 10**

Credits

Project: Remodeling of the Kunstmuseum Basel and Laurenzbau Library

Address: Kunstmuseum Basel und Laurenzbau
St. Alban Graben 16
CH - 4010 Basel

Spatial Programme: New spatial organisation, various remodelling measures and reconstruction of the Art Museum and "Laurenzbau"; conversion of the former library in the Art Museum into exhibition spaces and a bistro; refurbishment of the copper-engraving cabinet; renovation of the entry hall and the sculpture gallery; remodelling of the Laurenzbau into a library/reading room.

Competition: June 2001, 1st prize (Reconstruction and Extension)

Planning/Construction: 2003 – 2007 in four stages (Reconstruction without Extension)

Client: Building and Planning Office, Main Building Division,
Construction Department of Canton Basel City

Architecture: Annette Gigon / Mike Guyer, Architects, Zurich

Collaborators:
Competition:
Barbara Schlauri, Sergej Klammer, Christof Bhend
Planning/Construction:
Christian Maggioni (Project Manager), Florian Isler

Construction Management: Annette Gigon / Mike Guyer, Architects, Zurich

Collaborator:
Thomas Hochstrasser

Gross Floor Area (SIA 416): 6'500 m2

Furnishings: Annette Gigon / Mike Guyer, Architects, Zurich
and Hannes Wettstein, Zurich

Structural Engineer: RAPP Infra AG, Basel

Electrical Engineer: Elektrizitäts AG, Basel

Building Services Engineer: Aicher, De Martin, Zweng AG, Lucerne

Photography: Heinrich Helfenstein, Zurich