

HERZOG & DE MEURON

Project No. 200
Extension Museum of Cultures
Basel, Switzerland
Project 2003 - 2004

Basel's Museum der Kulturen (Ethnology Museum) can trace its origins back to the mid-19th century. Completed in 1849, the building, which replaced the Augustinian monastery near the Basel Minster, was designed in the Neoclassical style by architect Melchior Berri. At the time, it was conceived as a "universal museum" to house both science and art exhibits. Various donations over the decades have made it one of the leading ethnological collections in Europe. With a growing stock of some 40,000 objects, the Museum in 1917 opened its courtyard annex, designed by architects Vischer & Söhne. A second extension is now planned, following acquisition in 1998 of an outstanding Tibetan collection.

The brief called for improved access to the Museum along with a clearer expression of its architectural identity. The Museum currently shares an entrance with the Natural History Museum in the Berri building, even though most of its exhibition rooms are located in the 1917 Schürhof wing. This has resulted in rather complicated circulation routes within the building. The Museum will now be given its own entrance from the Münsterplatz. The Rollerhof restaurant, which opened in 2000, marked a first step in this "new orientation" towards the Münsterplatz, and in a more general sense reflects the Museum's opening towards the city.

The Schürhof courtyard will thus accommodate the Museum's entrance. Its history is evoked by the enclosing patchwork of medieval and Baroque rear walls and extensions. It is framed on two of its four sides by the 1917 annex, which in terms of both scale and style represents an insensitive intervention in the existing fabric.

Instead of adding several separate building sections – which would fill the courtyard – we suggest adding an additional storey to the 1917 Vischer building and cladding it in greenery.

The entrance courtyard will be a gently sloping area from which the visitors will reach the former basement level – where the new entrance and museum shop will be located. The facade will be planted with, and eventually completely enveloped by, hanging, creeping and flowering vegetation, echoing, as it were, the vine-covered neighbouring facades: the Schürhof is conceived as a green oasis covered in plants.

Vertical circulation to the exhibition rooms will be via the existing main staircase and a new elevator. The new exhibition space will be the fourth storey, which will form the new roof. With its irregular folds and colourfully reflecting ceramic finish, it will fit seamlessly into the roofscape of mediaeval Basel, while marking a new departure at the heart of the historic quarter. The result will be a large, unified exhibition space offering spectacular views.

The roof will overhang the entrance to the courtyard. A multi-layer curtain of flowering plants will rise from the floor right up to the roof – a hanging garden. Visitors will step through this curtain of plants and flowers to enter the exotic, far-off world of the Museum der Kulturen.

Herzog & de Meuron, April 2004

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Project Number: 200

Project Name: Extension Museum of Cultures, Basel

Location: Basel/CH

Client: Stiftung des Museums der Kulturen, Augustinergasse 2, Basel

Project Phases: Study August 2000 - January 2001
Reconnaissance January 2003 - June 2003
Project July 2003 - September 2003
Baubewilligungsverfahren September 2003 - 2004

Construction Cost: 12, 5 million CHF (incl. surrounding area)

Gross Floor Area: Rebuilding 700 qm
New building 800 qm
Composition of the courtyard 750 qm

H&deM Project Team: Christine Binswanger - Georgio Cadosch - Jacques Herzog - Ines Huber –
Jürgen Johner - Gilles Le Coultre - Pierre de Meuron - Laura McQuary

Collaboration: Proplaning AG, Basel

Construction Management:: Proplaning AG, Basel

Structural Engineering: ZPF Bauingenieure, Basel

Landscape Design: August Künzel, Landschaftsarchitekten AG, Basel

Firm Profile

The architectural practice Herzog & de Meuron was formed in 1978 by Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron. Of the other partners, Harry Gugger and Christine Binswanger joined in 1991 and 1994 respectively, followed by Robert Hösl and Ascan Mergenthaler in 2004. The company now employs a 180-strong staff worldwide, with branches in London, Munich, San Francisco, Barcelona and Beijing. Since 1994, Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron have served as guest professors at Harvard University in Cambridge, USA. Together with Roger Diener and Meili, they formed the ETH Studio Basel (Contemporary City Institute). Among numerous accolades, Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron in early 2001 received the Pritzker Architecture Prize, billed as architecture's Nobel Prize, for their life's work.

The Goetz Collection scheme, to house a private collection of contemporary art in Munich (1992), was the first in a string of museum buildings. It was followed by the Küppersmühle Museum for the Grothe Collection in Düsseldorf (1999) and the Tate Modern in London (2000). Apart from the Kunsthaus Aarau, 2003 saw the completion of four other major schemes: the Laban Dance Centre in London (February 2003); the Five Courtyards, a project with restaurants, shops and offices in Munich city centre (March 2003); the Schaulager® for the Laurenz Foundation in Münchenstein/Basel (May 2003) and the new Prada flagship store in Japan – Prada Aoyama Epicenter in Tokyo (June 2003).

Current projects include the Forum 2004 in Barcelona (to open in May 2004); the University Library in Cottbus (completion in autumn 2004); the extension to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (to open in February 2005); the New de Young Museum in San Francisco (to open in summer 2005); the CaixaForum Madrid (scheduled for completion in 2005); the quayside remodelling in Santa Cruz de Tenerife (scheduled to go on site in 2004). After the St. Jakob Park football stadium in Basel, Herzog & de Meuron have, since the start of 2002, been developing the new Allianz Arena, future home of the two Munich clubs, FC Bayern Munich and TSV 1860 (completion in 2005, opening match of the 2006 World Cup in June 2006). The ground-breaking ceremony for what is currently Herzog & de Meuron's largest project – the National Stadium in Beijing, venue for the 2008 Olympic Games in China – took place on 24 December 2003.