

20 Years Euregional Prize for Architecture

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Neue Zentralbibliothek am Rudolfplatz, Köln

Participant info

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Project info

The envisioned design for Cologne's new central library is sited south of Cologne's Rudolfplatz. Defining the historic square urbanistically two new buildings frame it's south side.

While the smaller eastern bloc acts as completion of the "Hahnenstraße", the larger western structure is designed to house the new library. Attractive retail areas are envisioned facing "Ringboulevard" in the West and "Pilgrimstraße" in the South.

The idea is to visually expose the former town gate „Hahnentor“ and therewith strengthen Cologne's historic identity. In addition the scheme reconnects the currently interrupted city-ring via „Mauritiuswall“ and thereby offers delivery entrances for both, retail and library.

The main entrance of the library is located in the North facing Rudolfplatz. Despite its open and welcoming reception, the building does not reveal its interior at first glance. Rather, it becomes obvious when moving from the 24-hour lobby to the central area, the atrium. Inside, this spacious, light-flooded core of the library serves as vertical circulation and facilitates orientation and communication.

Framed by a glazed envelope bridges and stairways characterise the room. Bridges cross the void while the spiral of surrounding stairs guides the user on a tour upwards.

The bridges serve as shortcuts through the void and establish a communicative interaction area on each floor. Those bustling spots allow the work in a team using the pool of analog and digital media.

In line with each staircase there is a service counter attending the access to the floors. The levels surrounding the atrium contain the media stock and two large reading rooms that provide for monoactive, silent work.

Finally there is a separation by the ‚veil‘ of the atrium's glazed envelope between the communicative, vertical circulation at the core of the building and the quiet, story-wise, horizontal circulation.

