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Press release

Milestone for the Kunsthaus Zürich: extension shell completed

The vision of a museum for the 21st century – The New Kunsthaus – is fast becoming a reality: completion of the shell in July 2018 means the full dimensions and proportions of the building designed by David Chipperfield Architects can be appreciated for the first time.

For many years the extension existed only in the form of plans and models; now the building has reached its full height and is changing the face of Heimplatz. At a media briefing Member of the City Council and Head of the Structural Engineering Department André Odermatt emphasized the significance of the Chipperfield structure to the urban landscape: together with the existing Kunsthaus and the Schauspielhaus it will enhance the role of Heimplatz as a cultural hub and also act as a gateway to the university district.

A top-quality construction for a top-flight museum

Within the shell, the proportions of the future museum spaces can already be made out. Wiebke Rösler Häfliger, Director of the City of Zurich Building Surveyor's Office, praised David Chipperfield's design and the coherence of its spatial qualities, materials and the entrance hall leading to the publicly accessible art garden. Kunsthaus Director Christoph Becker sees Switzerland's largest art museum as a symbol of continuity and renewal. It offers more space for interaction between art and its public. The proportion of contemporary art will be increased, as will French painting, with the Foundation E.G. Bührle Collection creating a focal point unmatched anywhere in Europe outside Paris. With a shop, bar and event hall that can remain open outside normal museum hours, the new Kunsthaus will attract visitors with all kinds of needs to enjoy the wealth of experiences it has to offer.



Art and architecture

In addition to the art garden, an integral part of the development is the art and architecture project 'Tactile Lights' ('Tastende Lichter') by the artist Pipilotti Rist. Coloured points of light will be projected onto the surrounding buildings and surfaces from an artistically designed mast on Heimplatz. Together with specially made videos for the niche figures in the Moser building, the circles of colour will breathe new life into the stone surfaces as they slowly feel their way forwards, creating a spatial and aesthetic bond between the square's cultural institutions.

A complex building site

The logistics of building on Heimplatz have proved very challenging, with vast amounts of material being moved around, machinery having to be fitted into tight spaces and parallel processes needing to be coordinated. At peak times, around 120 builders have been working simultaneously. The fact that construction of the underground passage linking the existing Kunsthaus to the new building is proceeding almost unnoticed by transport users is in itself a remarkable feat. The existing structure by Karl Moser has also been affected by the building work, necessitating a temporary relocation of the entrance which remains in place until September 2019. Nevertheless the Kunsthaus remains open and providing access to its collection and exhibition programme.

Leading the way in environment-friendly construction

The new Kunsthaus also looks to the future in terms of its ecological credentials, being designed for the 2000-Watt Society and geared to its objectives throughout its lifecycle. Thanks to the use of ecologically sustainable solutions, it aims to achieve a substantial reduction in total energy requirements for its operations (heating, air conditioning, electricity), construction materials (grey energy) and mobility compared with existing museums. One example is the use of recycled concrete, which accounts for around 95% of the total.



Project status and next steps

Completion of the shell comes almost three years after construction began on 3 August 2015. Building work is on schedule. As things stand, the project spend is predicted to fall within the CHF 206 million budget. Private funding totalling more than CHF 80 million has been secured. Under the current timetable, the new structure is expected to be finished on time in 2020. The next step will be to start fitting out the interior, adding heat insulation, inserting the windows and cladding the façade with natural stone from Switzerland. For the City of Zurich, the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft and the Stiftung Zürcher Kunsthaus, which together make up the commissioning body – the Einfache Gesellschaft Kunsthaus-Erweiterung (EGKE) –, the ‘topping out’ is the most important milestone between laying the foundation stone and the new extension opening.

Note to media:

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