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D | Aalen | Conversion of the Funeral Parlour Cemetery

**Project:**

Conversion of the Funeral Parlour Cemetery

Location:

Aalen/D

Product:

OKATECH Mandarin

Project volume:

27 m²

Architect:

C18 Architekten BDA Marcus Kaestle, Andreas Ocker, Michael Roeder, Stuttgart/D

Completion:

2009

The Architect's Office C18 based in Stuttgart displayed a lot of sensitivity when it created a bright, airy area for a cemetery in a forest in Aalen, a city in the eastern part of Baden-Wuerttemberg, in which the surviving members of the family can find a dignified place for their mourning. Before it was redesigned, the interior of the mourning area, which had been designed by Prof. Karl Gonser in 1954, proved to be anything but open and bright towards the top as its exterior form with its steep, towering roof would have suggested. It was a dark, wood-paneled room confined by four, thick armoured concrete arches. The arches themselves appeared displaced in combination with the polygonal gradient of the roof area. A massive staircase to the

gallery and the crowded interior made the hall even more cramped. Clarity, Reduction and Orderliness While making the changes, the architects Marcus Kaestle, Andreas Ocker, and Michael Roeder placed their main emphasis on concentrating and reducing the structure to the essential basics to show their deep respect for the existing architecture, the location and the feelings of the people who would gather here. They retained the basic structure with its trisection of the room in the entrance area under the gallery, the hall and the choir. In order to maintain the symmetrical floor plan and an orderly spaciousness in the interior, the architects placed the new pews in the middle instead of off-centre. This was a simple but clever change. At first glance,



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the creative decision of the architects to incorporate the semi-circle form of the supporting structure in a radial ceiling lining appears conservative, but it results in a substantially new perception of the room: The simplified arch form now spans the room like a canopy, enhances the contrast between interior and exterior and gives the interior a lofty spaciousness. Sensual Materials. In Aalen, the image of a protective canopy is achieved with a siding of wicker mesh. The material incorporates the room into the cycle of becoming and decaying due to its direct analogy to the area, the location in the forest, and the constant view of the nature surrounding it. Natural, bright materials determine the entire modification. In addition to the white of

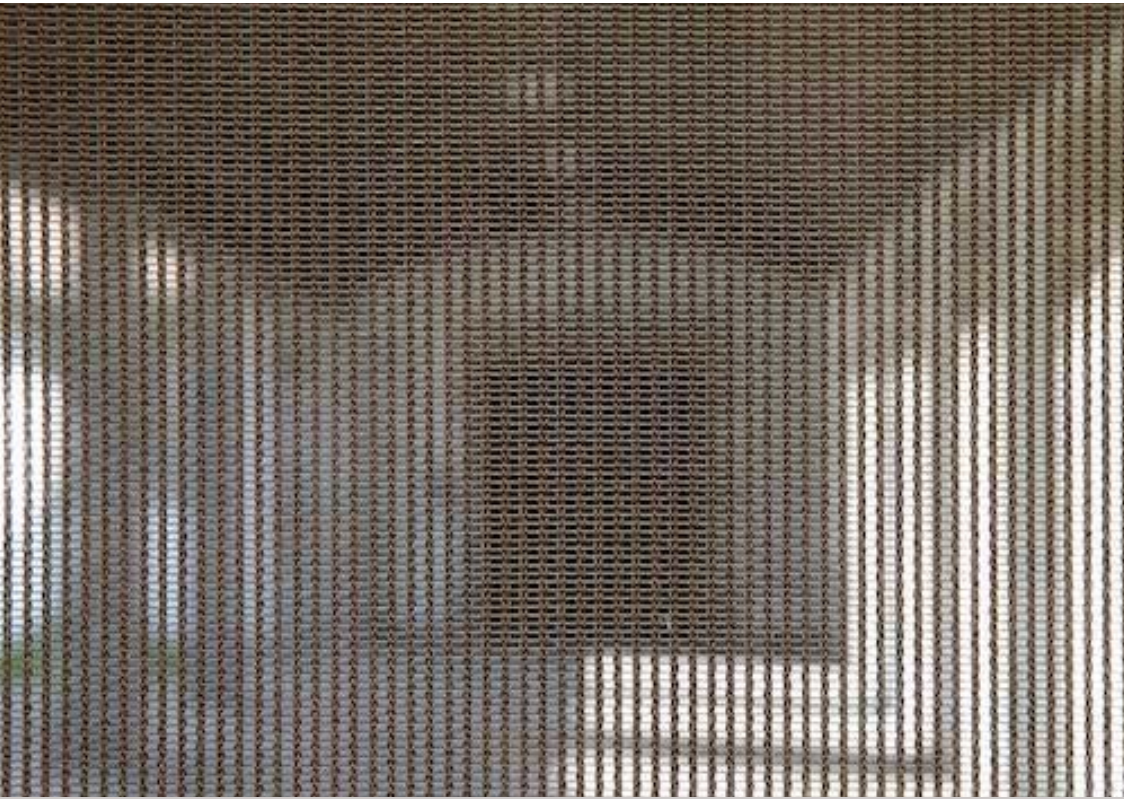
the lime plaster on the walls, the white metal spiral staircase to the gallery, and its white balustrade, bright brown hues create a warm atmosphere. The pews of Canadian birch, with comfortable leather upholstery, rest on a bright, rough floor of shell limestone. The view to the east to the large choir window is literally illuminating. Elaborately designed panes separated by a stylized cross are lit from behind by daylight. All of the other wooden windows and doors are of oak with a brass fiber insert in the cavity. The building owner had asked for these inserts to be integrated in order to give the mourners a retreating room in which they could remain undisturbed. OKATECH insulating glass from OKALUX was the perfect choice. Because the metal inserts



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D | Aalen | Conversion of the Funeral Parlour Cemetery



in the cavities keep out any indiscrete glances from outside, they ensure intimate, private surroundings. The view to the outside remains very good and the incidental light is automatically softly filtered and diffused. Marcus Kaestle, a partner at the C18 Architect's Office explains: "What was important for us was that the product used corresponds with the principle theme of the canopy. The material and colour of the brass fiber fits to the workmanship of the wicker

mesh. It speaks the same architectural language without appearing too technical." Thanks to a few but decisive changes in the existing substance and the materials used, the quality of the area in Aalen – the location in the forest, the large window in the east façade, and the astounding roof construction, the exterior form of which does not correspond to the interior at all – could be developed with the necessary sensitivity.

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