

Kapuziner Karree Aachen

Aachen, Germany 2000 - 2003

Kapuziner Karree is a highly successful urban conservation, restoration and extension project located on a crucial urban axis in Aachen. The masterplan and architecture illustrate many of the challenges and the opportunities for urban regeneration in historic neighborhoods. The site includes a former post office building, which is a listed heritage property, built in early 1890s according to the plans of Cologne planning director Hirndorf, along the old inner city wall. It is a short walk from the central station in Aachen. The new development consists of a broad mix of programs including retail, hospitality, medical clinics, offices, a multiplex cinema and the existing post office.

Prerequisite for the heritage conversion was a sensitive handling and careful restoration of the existing structures to extend their life-span, economic sustainability and use as well as preserve their heritage value. Without influencing it physically, the heritage structure is covered by a latticework with thin membrane roof that creates a sheltered courtyard, adding usable interior spaces. This modest but significant intervention protects the aging structure from direct onslaught of weathering elements, while adding a contemporary canopy.

Addressing the public realm is essential to the long-term viability of the project as well as adds quintessential urban open spaces to the city. A primary strategy for restructuring the site was to create a central urban plaza amidst the peripheral buildings. The concept led to the proposal of a fifth new building complementing existing four buildings to encircle the central open space. The program required addition of new leisure and entertainment activities to revive the neighborhood. The proposed new addition is a 2,500 seat multiplex cinema integrated appropriately into the historic context despite its massive size and contemporary program. Its streamlined structure and modern materiality give the building a special character and a distinct identity.

These interior and exterior spaces set amidst historic and new architecture, with distinct details and materiality, add attractive nodes of focus and function to the urban fabric. The project engages with the concepts of urban regeneration, environmental sustainability and economic expansion while exemplifying the scope for a meaningful architectural intervention. Over the years, prosperous integration of these new and restored buildings into the daily activities of the people of Aachen and the vibrant interactive atmosphere in the plaza is emblematic of the success of its creative design concept.

Floor area:	40 850 sqm.
Type:	Mixed-use
Client:	Kapuzinergraben 19 GmbH & Co. KG
Credits:	Ingenhoven, Overdiek, Kahlen und Partner
Status:	Completed

