Project Description

The wasteful use of light is no longer in vogue. But how is it possible to address the increasing disparity between necessary energy savings and increasing demands for sophisticated lighting composition and staging? The answer is through restraint and finely detailed planning.

The well-known trading company of Kastner & Öhler has always claimed to be able to evoke strong emotions beyond economic necessities, which enable the respective merchandise to captivate the attention of the customer. It is a tradition that has paid off because the current conversion of the head office, which opened on the main square in Graz in 1883, shows how light can be used both economically and with exciting dramatic effect at one and the same time. Over the decades, the building has gradually been extended in all directions – including an underground car park – so that today virtually the entire square up to the Mur river and north of Murgasse to Palais Attems is occupied. Since 2007, atriums have been covered during ongoing operations, 10,000 square metres of additional sales space has been created, and 21 new escalators installed.

At the same time, the lighting concept is a clear departure from the principle of flooding, focusing instead on minimalism and the use of variable grids that can be combined with each other. Not a single spotlight too many is used, yet the concept still lays claim to an immense wealth of individualism. A spectacular roof extension designed to the futuristic plans of Spanish architects Nieto/Sobejano will also give the city a modern “landmark”, although it had to be resized in order to comply with UNESCO and World Cultural Heritage requirements. However, the work is not expected to be finished before the second half of 2011.

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