



Peneder Basis, Atzbach, Austria

LP architektur ZT GmbH, Austria

Steel Pearl Curtains

Steel construction was the focus for LP architektur when designing the head office of the Peneder Group in Atzbach in Austria. For the client, an equally important area of focus is the wellbeing of their employees. Thus the company management of this family business desired to build not just a collection of office buildings, but a small village with a restaurant, meditation rooms, an events hall and a hotel.

Since its establishment in 1922 as a blacksmith and wheelwright business, the Peneder Group has developed into a family business operating throughout Europe in the sectors of steel, construction, and fire protection. Continuous growth made the enlargement of the company head office essential, with the aim being to bring all the companies in the group together under one roof. The company was also keen to retain the location in Atzbach. This called for demolishing the existing office building and peripheral parts of the manufacturing facilities in order to create sufficient space.

Pearl Curtains - Facade made of steel lamellar segments

LP architektur was awarded the contract for the complete detail and construction planning, as well as for the entire interior design. This meant that the agency could concentrate entirely on the core task of architecture, while issues such as construction management and supervision, costs and project control could be dealt with by others.

One special feature of the project for LP architektur was the development of the facade, which is primarily based on steel construction. The structure consists of the basement storey, made of fair faced concrete. It's centrally arranged rows of pillars form the basis for the levels made of steel above. The smooth fair faced concrete surface of the substructure is intended to stand in contrast to the facade material. This is ensured by a suspended steel facade with movable lamellar segments made of steel mesh latticework. "Like a chain curtain, a chain of steel pearls," is how Tom Lechner describes the impression of lightness which the appearance of the facade creates. What better way to emphasize the skills and abilities of the Peneder Group!

More than just an office building

The new site known as the Peneder Base is intended to offer more than just office space for 270 employees. The site also aims to convey the social engagement and awareness of Peneder, offering a workplace in which particular value and emphasis is placed on the wellbeing of the staff. As a result, the company headquarters includes in addition to office space and training rooms, its own kindergarten, an à la carte restaurant

open to the public, a hotel and a hall for public concerts and lectures. For the staff, there are also rooms for rest and meditation, cafés and a large outdoor relaxation area. "The Peneder Base is like a living organism, a little village that caters to all your needs," explains architect Tom Lechner from LP architektur.

Structural configuration of the building complex

The Peneder building complex is composed of five office blocks constructed on an upright platform that forms an open ground floor area. This platform is extended between the blocks to connect to the ground floor at a number of points thru the use of free areas. The parking level located beneath this can thus be illuminated from the sides as well as from above. Access is provided from two points located at the local street level.

The individual blocks are each accessible by a stairwell and an elevator. The central access passageway leads visitors through a body of glass, directly to the reception area on the ground floor and to the main hall. From the parking area, the visitor passes via an open walkway to the main entrance of the building. This access path is kept deliberately simple. The intention is that visitors should enter the building almost as if by accident and then realize that they are not at some kind of focal point, but instead can appreciate the spirit dwelling within the building.

Reception area and ground floor

The reception desk is centrally located and stands immediately next to the main entrance on the ground floor. From here there is a general view of the three-storey hall, which is divided up and structured by platforms and special function areas (café, meeting hall, etc.). Open walkways and bridges create horizontal links with the blocks, which penetrate in an architecturally formal manner into the hall. From here, there is a view of the terraces between the office blocks with their luxuriant greenery - an open invitation to take a stroll. The overall design and location of the hall helps to make it a main communication area of the Base.

The office blocks are aligned in an east-west direction and all exhibit a similar interior design. The eastern "head" includes the enclosed meeting units and the core sanitary and ancillary

modules. Heading west, an open general zone follows the course of the office blocks and encloses the individual office cell entities. These are glazed and thus spatially expanded towards the general zone. The orientation of the offices to the north is by way of bands of light illuminating onto the green terraces, and to the south onto the entirely glazed general zone, which is also intended to provide a spatial reserve area for office entities. In addition to meetings areas, there are group workplaces and facilities for sitting and working that resemble lounges. The aim for the design of this area was to create a genuine feel-good atmosphere for the staff. Here the appreciation the company accords its staff is particularly tangible.

These group workplaces alternate with library areas and spaces for relaxation and encourage spontaneous exchanges of news and views between members of staff from different divisions. Such chance encounters are catered to here, for they encourage the creativity inventive potential that can arise from chance encounters. This public area is thus transformed from being just

a meeting area into an important communication area.

Special areas such as the café, the bar, the foundation hall, the restaurant, the hotel area, and the kindergarten are situated at the southern end of the entrance hall, which ensures that they can be used outside office hours and provides direct access to the garden. The foundation hall is prominently located next to the entrance area in the upper storey of the large hall and is accessed by a long ramp running from the foyer. Likewise located at the southernmost end of the hall, on the second and third storey's, is the hotel area. This consists of eight rooms fronted by loggia oriented to the south.

Meanwhile, the shell of the Peneder Basis has been completed and the interior work has begun. The Peneder base project is expected to be completed by July 2010.

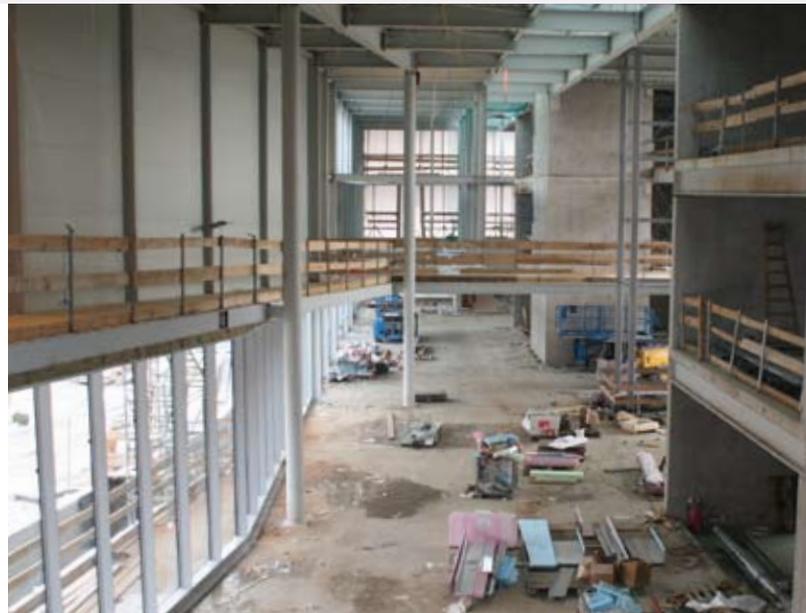
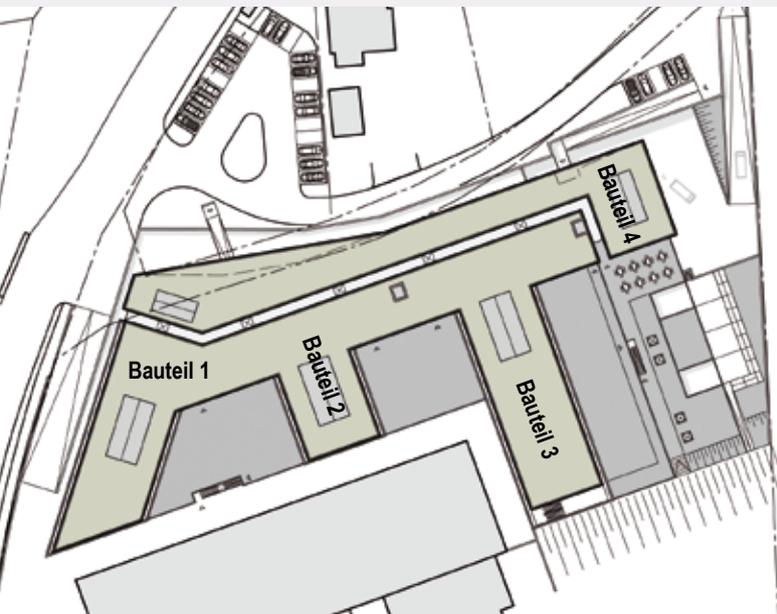




Photo: Andreas Hechenberger

2D or 3D which do you really prefer to work with?

Both techniques have their advantages and at LP architektur we use each of them for specific situations. About three quarters of our work is in 2D and a quarter is in 3D. The 3D model is always kept accessible for the overview and is very helpful, for example, for the proportional studies.

In your opinion, what are the main advantages of working in 2D?

For technical studies that go into great detail, 2D clearly has an advantage due to its speed. In my view, the advantages of working in 2D lie in the intuitive and rapid way in which we can work. And because most of our planning associates work in 2D, there is no problem with data exchange.

By contrast, what advantages do you see in working in 3D?

The advantages of working in 3D lie in particular in the logical formation of the structure and in checking the proportions of the building, particularly in phases during which most of the technical questions have not yet been resolved.

What do you think is most impressive about Allplan software from Nemetschek Allplan?

What impresses me most about Allplan is the stability of the software and its continuous development. "I particularly appreciate the clarity and easily understandable structure of the program. It is obvious that Allplan was developed for architecture and not, for example, for mechanical engineering. In addition, the Workgroup Manager is crucial for the networked working environment at LP architektur.