

IDENTITY IN DIVERSITY

Friedrich Ludewig
Founding Director ACME London

Tim Laubinger
Director ACME Berlin

Heidrun Schuhmann
Director ACME London

SUSTAINABLE RE-INTERPRETATION OF ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN SPACE

Sustainably and meaningfully rethinking and visualising the existing and the new is something that represents both an attitude and an expression of action for Friedrich Ludewig (FL in the interview below) and Tim Laubinger (TL) at ACME. This is also the philosophy of the ONE METRO Campus: history meets the future. Tradition meets the modern. Architecture meets urban development. Carefully and deliberately, something inspiringly new is being brought to life.

In the urban-development competition, one building in METRO's head office, the Brücke 1, was initially not considered. It was something of a blank space on the map. But it will play a decisive role in the future of the ONE METRO Campus, both in architectural and metaphoric terms.

FL: The current METRO Campus was a transformative model of the work world in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, 30 years later, the Group has the courage to say this: "We are going through a transformation. We are refining our business model and, thus, consequently our work style and work worlds." We think it is important

for this development to be reflected in the architecture of the company's global headquarters. Both striking and visible buildings of the ONE METRO Campus, Brücke 1 and Brücke 2, are not old in construction terms. They are good 30-year-old offices, but they have no defining identity and special appeal. But an office location of the future will be a place that is something more than a complex of office buildings. It will be a place where people like to get together, enjoy interaction and gain inspiration. How can we keep and sustainably develop the existing METRO buildings and turn the campus into a place that is something more than a

traditional office location? I think it quite interesting that METRO approached us with this question and this clear conceptual formulation. METRO sees itself as an active member of the newly arising city district in Flingern. It will be a place for METRO, its guests and its customers as well as a place for the neighbourhood and the residents of the new quarter, the people who will reside, work, shop and, above all, live here. What type of added value, what contribution can and must METRO make in such a constellation to be seen and accepted as a participating developer and fixture?

METRO is a food wholesaler for gastronomy. It is an emotional business whose defining qualities consist in particular of hospitality and quality. But the Group's brand, its identity and its hospitality are hardly visible at or are brought to life by the METRO Campus in Flingern. For this reason, our work on Brücke 1 and Brücke 2 is a reflection on METRO's core areas of expertise: a celebration of METRO products and services and, naturally, of its customers and partners in gastronomy. This is being achieved, first, by integrating diverse gastronomic concepts and the new METRO GASTRO store into the existing building complex and, second, by

creating a lively and attractive public space.

TL: Brücke 1 is particularly important as a result of its visibility and meaning to the METRO Group – it is the head of the entire organisation. For this reason, it has to be included in the planning and realisation of the new campus. With the help of an appropriate entrance, this building will be given the weight it deserves and will surprise people with its completely new and dynamic quality: the previously cold, loud and empty atrium will become a place with personality and representative power. It will be a place that people will strongly identify with and love to visit. The space will not only

gain its own identity, but will also perform an externally and internally effective function in particular. Architecturally, Brücke 1 will be integrated visually and physically into its immediate environment: first, it will connect METRO to the public campus square. Second, the atrium will be converted into a starting point for a sensible connection to the existing METRO office buildings of Brücke 2. This horizontal integration of the buildings to create a consistent organism will undoubtedly become one of the highlights of the ONE METRO Campus.



The existing office buildings will become inviting gateways to the quarter and lead to a lively square buzzing with activities and offerings.

One of the real challenges of the ONE METRO Campus will certainly involve construction work in existing building, the integration and the adaptation of existing architecture ...

TL: Yes, of course. But there is a whole lot of potential hidden there as well. Ultimately, we are talking about estimating and preserving the value of this grey energy, making changes readable and not just razing and building from scratch again. We think METRO is taking the right, coherent approach: remaining at the location, moving together and carefully, but boldly modernising some places. Surprisingly new landscapes, other connection

axes and visual contacts can be created by using just a few tricks – and extend beyond the boundaries of the ONE METRO Campus to create an inner-quarter and inner-urban link. Added it all together, and the project will have a huge aha effect.

A project to which an office concept has now been added ...

TL: ... and in which the focus will be placed on taking a closer look, asking questions and going in other directions if necessary to create modern worlds of work. In addition the office and home office, the current discussion about New Work repeatedly explores the idea of the third place. This refers to (semi-)public areas where people meet, spend

time, establish relationships, discuss ideas and strengthen their sense of community. Classical examples include co-working spaces, cafés, parks and libraries, that is places that consciously have nothing to do with the office or home.

“ WE TRY TO CAREFULLY READ THE EXISTING SITE, UNDERSTAND IT AND DEVELOP A SENSE FOR IT AND ITS FUTURE. ”



The atrium of Brücke 1 will serve as an inviting entrance and space for a contemporary company presence. It will be a place that people will strongly identify with and love to visit.



The future Campus Square will be located in the heart of the new quarter. It will connect the new city area called D.STRICT with the ONE METRO Campus.



PLACES ARE SOMETHING MORE THAN A PHYSICAL DIMENSION. THEY HAVE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL QUALITY.

FL: We are now living in a world in which many of us work from home or remotely several days a week. This flexibility is leaving huge office buildings behind, and these areas frequently suffer from a feeling of emptiness. The interesting question is: how can you create energy and a sense of community here once again? Together with METRO, we decided to rethink their worlds of offices so that they reflect the transformation philosophy and altered needs. The result: small, individual cells

and inflexible group offices will give way to spacious and multifunctional office landscapes. The space will be structured by flexible work stations and informal community areas – that is rooms where people can meet and can discuss ideas. We human beings are definitely social creatures. We do not come to the office in order to work in silent, isolate places – we can do this at home after all. We come to the office to meet our colleagues, communicate and jointly develop ideas. We will

create exciting and, occasionally, unexpected new work places on the ONE METRO Campus for this purpose.

TL: One example of what we are talking about is METRO's former showrooms, which are no longer needed in their entirety. About three-quarters of the space here will be reserved for an flexible open-space concept that all employees can use. On the first floor of the ONE METRO Campus, we will create a place that will bring all employees together.

Buildings will communicate with their environment. This is one of your core messages as an architectural firm. Why should they do so, and how can this be achieved? Which added value is connected to this concept?

TL: We have realised – finally, I would like to add – that cities and quarters have to be open in ground floor zones. The ground floor is essential to the formation of a city's character, identity and utility. It serves as the bridge between public and built-over space. This interface in the ground-level base section is the venue for urban life and multifaceted uses. This is where the action is, action that sends a powerful signal and that the public can join in. This idea will also be applied by the future ONE METRO Campus: it will be an inviting venue. Plinth areas with gastronomy and retail offerings will welcome people everywhere in the area. The METRO GASTRO store will serve as an anchor. Another element that will help create this welcome feeling will be a passage that will draw the newly developed city area called D.STRICT into the ONE METRO Campus. The way I see it, METRO is making a grand gesture here by opening its office buildings

and making them available to the general public.

Let's talk about "placemaking". You create quarters and spaces that are coherent and correspond to their environment. What were your key parameters for the ONE METRO Campus?

FL: Every space has its own qualities and challenges. Every place can be developed and emerge anew. As a rule, we rarely create something totally new. We usually work with existing properties. We try to carefully read the existing site, understand it and develop a sense for it, its opportunities and its future. Identity and permeability are the 2 most important parameters for placemaking at the ONE METRO Campus, a location that is not particularly inviting today. How do you turn 2 buildings with little location quality into a real place? I think our biggest challenge is to awaken interest in the idea of taking a look behind the METRO buildings. The inner Campus Square will form the heart of the future quarter. As they exist today, the METRO buildings block access to this space. To awaken interest in it, these existing office buildings must be converted into inviting gateways to the quarter. A wide

range of attractive offerings and activities will ultimately fill the Campus Square with life over the long term.

TL: Places are something more than a physical dimension. They have social, economic and cultural quality. We have done a lot of exploring into the history of the city district and its historical usage, the Schmincke artistic-colour factories that defined the area until 1980 as well as the Grafental rolling mills. These are historical aspects that we will include in the design of the atrium and passage. During the urban-development competition process and during public participation, the triangle from the large city spaces – that is the campus, quarter square and the Green Lane – was the convincing aspect. The Campus Plaza will be a colourful, large marketplace with unsealed green spaces and meadows, a magnet and the centre of attraction for all users and residents of Düsseldorf.