



WORLD WIDE WEAVE

GKD: Spectacular metal fabric façade for museum of art

Varying degrees of transparency lend the textile skin a sense of scale

The new building of the "Kunsthalle Mannheim" museum of art was opened in December. Its sophisticated stainless steel mesh façade from GKD – Gebr. Kufferath AG (GKD) is both technically challenging and aesthetically unique.

gmp architects von Gerkan, Marg, and Partners in Hamburg selected a metal fabric façade for the largest newly-constructed museum in Germany. This lends a true sense of scale to the gigantic dimensions of the monolithic building through varying degrees of transparency. GKD developed a fabric design specially for this building with quadruple groups of warp wires made of untreated stainless steel, colored weft wires made of 3 mm thick wire, and 25 mm thick tubing. A tube is interwoven every eight thin wires here, whereby the key was to use special weaving techniques to compensate for the various tensions in the fabric caused by the differences in thickness.

An additional challenge was to guarantee the specified color tone of the fabric homogeneously across the entire surface, despite use of a different coating process for the tubes and the wires. A total of 72 panels made of this unique fabric, each measuring approximately 20 meters long and 3.26 meters wide, are what give the art museum its unmistakable face. The 4,600 square meter, translucent façade gives the gmp concept for the art museum a uniform shape – whereby 13 cubes of different height and width are offset from one another to transform the museum into a *city in the city*.



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It grants visitors inside the museum an unobstructed view of the city and its landmark, the water tower. The textile skin offers passers-by inviting views into the museum inside. With a discreet shine, the warm brown tone of the fabric emphasizes the color of the sandstone used in the surrounding buildings. During daylight hours, the metal mesh diffusely reflects the sunlight and urban life of the city. In the evening, a subtle illumination concept then transforms the museum into a light sculpture.



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As a privately owned technical weaver, GKD - Gebr. Kufferath AG is the world market leader in metal, synthetic and spiral mesh solutions. Four independent business divisions bundle their expertise under one roof: Industrial Mesh (woven metal mesh and filter solutions), Process Belts (belts



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made of mesh and spirals), Architectural meshes (façades, safety and interior design made of metal fabrics) and Mediamesh® (Transparent media façades). With its headquarter in Germany and five other facilities in the US, South Africa, China, India and Chile – as well as its branches in France, Spain, Dubai and worldwide representatives, GKD is close to markets anywhere in the world.

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