Islamisches Forum

Bichler Strasse 15
82377 Penzberg, Deutschland

ARCHITEKTUR
Jasarevic Architekten

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Islamic centre, Penzberg, Germany

Jasarevic Architekten's contemporary mosque contributes to the gradual integration of different beliefs into the village of Penzberg.

von Ursula Baus

South of Munich, where the Alps rise beyond Lake Starnberg, one is in deepest Bavaria, a region known for its conservative Catholicism. Here of all places, a small Muslim community has built itself a forum with prayer room in a contemporary architectural style – a courageous undertaking based on a desire for integration. The aim is to overtax neither the local residents nor the members of the community in their willingness to tolerate and engage with one another. Admittedly, the building is not right next to the church in the centre of the village, but it is within walking distance on the well-groomed periphery, a residential area on one side of the street, a DIY store on the other. With its distinctive but in no way provocative or confrontational appearance, the building and its delicate tower fit into the surroundings, where the traditional village structure has already been disrupted by deviating roof lines and ornamentation ranging from rusticity to post-war monotony.

Jasarevic Architekten from Augsburg arranged the prayer room, the communal and administrative rooms and an apartment under a single roof on an L-shaped ground plan. But the facades, which are clad in pale stone, give a clear indication of the different functions of the rooms behind – especially the slightly recessed, full-height decorative blue glass window on the east side. The entrance features two concrete slabs that swing out of the wall like open gates, inviting visitors into the house in German and Arabic script; the actual door, made of stainless steel, is open to all. Inside, one is greeted by a classical, open-plan staircase that is flooded with daylight. To the right, the view opens up into the prayer room. Shoes must be removed, but anyone may enter – women are not even required to wear a headscarf. From the side, daylight enters between curved concrete slabs, at the front the light is filtered through the blue glass. The atmosphere in this space is unusually friendly. The way the light falls draws attention to the ceiling and wall panels, where ornaments applied to the exposed concrete can be read as expressions of divine infinitude. The abstract star motifs contain the 99 Names of God – such as „The Most Merciful" and „The Utterly Just" – in calligraphy. This design was developed jointly by the artists Lutzenberger

Lutzenberger from Bad Wörishofen and Mohammed Mandi from Abu Dhabi. The forum’s other rooms can be compared with a parish community centre: they offer German lessons, discussion and prayer meetings, the usual things.

The architect is familiar with the religion, culture, customs and mentality of Islam, and such knowledge is essential in the development of a modern religious architecture. Here in Penzberg, contemporary architecture is contributing with wise restraint to the gradual integration of different beliefs into village structures. Where places of worship cautiously distance themselves from traditional, dogmatic structures and offer comparatively free spatial interpretations of the spiritual, they genuinely promote mutual understanding between believers. What succeeded in the design of modern churches can, as here in Penzberg, be equally fascinating in contemporary Islamic architecture.

DATENBLATT

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