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# ARCHITECT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS



**A MODERN  
HISTORY**



A STUDENT CENTER TUCKED INTO AN EXISTING COMPLEX GIVES A  
GERMAN SCHOOL ITS FIRST TASTE OF NEW DESIGN IN A HALF CENTURY.



# ECKENBERG GYMNASIUM



Text by **Katie Gerfen**

Photos by **Brigida Gonzalez**

**NORMALLY, A PORTFOLIO** of repeat work for a client is a big advantage going into a design competition. But in the case of Buchen, Germany-based Ecker Architekten and the new student center at Eckenberg Academy, it almost kept them from getting a seat at the table. "It's not easy to start an office again after transferring it to another continent," says partner Dea Ecker of the move her firm made from Chicago to Germany in 2000. "We did relatively bread-and-butter work," she says, including fire-code renovations for Eckenberg's 11-building campus in Adelsheim, Germany.

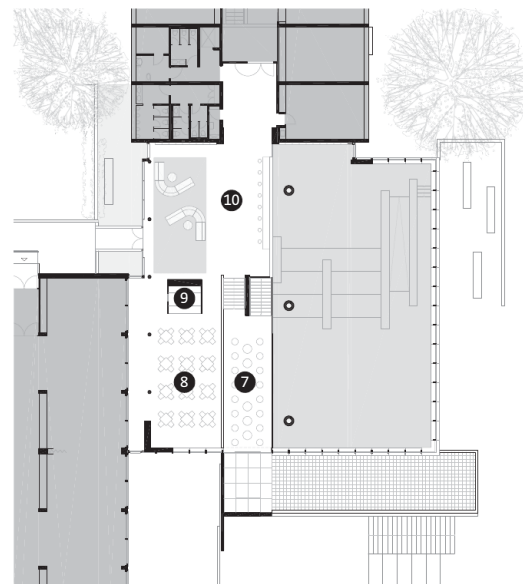
The school's drab cementitious-panel-clad boxes have not been added to since being built in the mid-1960s. So when the news went out about a commission to design a new auditorium and student center, Ecker wanted in. "It's actually tricky to convince a client that you are the person to design their once-in-a-generation new building if you've been doing their fire doors," says partner Robert Piotrowski. "You have to reintroduce yourself."

Luckily, there was a portfolio of camera-ready work at hand: The firm started in Chicago in 1997 after Ecker and Piotrowski had worked at (and lost jobs at) large firms and decided they needed a change. "We laugh about it because you notice that you're working so independently that no one can take you in a regular office anymore," Ecker says. Early work included the corporate headquarters for Chicago furniture manufacturer Holly Hunt, which the duo completed before deciding to relocate their practice to Ecker's native Germany. Ecker, who came to the U.S. on a Fulbright scholarship, actually was required to move back as a cultural ambassador. "She brought an American back with her," Piotrowski says—the two had been married in Chicago.

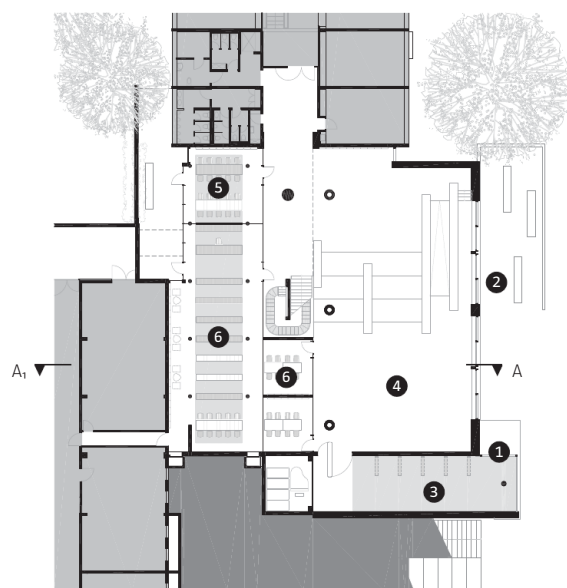
Ecker and Piotrowski maintain a multicultural office that focuses on education work, including several recent projects in Germany which caught the eye of the state government running the Eckenberg project. But ultimately, as with any commission, winning came down to finding a rapport with the client. The architects built a particularly strong relationship with the school's director, who was the driving force behind the project. "He noticed that there was no place where the students could gather," Piotrowski says. In this client champion, they found an ally who allowed them the freedom to create a 10,704-square-foot structure that serves as a new hub for the campus.

In fitting with its midcentury-modern context, the new building is quiet on the outside—a deceptively simple glass box—but its interior introduces a new generation of design for the school. The main space is a double-height assembly hall that can accommodate up to 300, and the facility also incorporates a library, multipurpose study rooms, a café, and a student lounge, all housed under a not-so-quiet, 25-meter-square, poured-in-place concrete roof, inset with circular coffers and acrylic domed skylights. "We left all the fireworks for the inside of the building," Piotrowski says. And, of course, all of the fire codes are up to date.

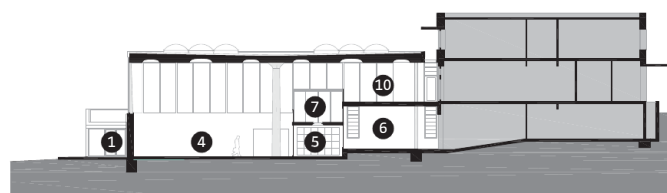
## Second-Floor Plan



## Ground-Floor Plan



## Section A-A<sub>1</sub>



- |                      |               |
|----------------------|---------------|
| 1. Main entrance     | 6. Library    |
| 2. Terrace           | 7. Bridge     |
| 3. Foyer             | 8. Café       |
| 4. Assembly hall     | 9. Food kiosk |
| 5. Multipurpose room | 10. Lounge    |





**Opening spread:** The interior of the addition connects various levels of the surrounding buildings. A walkway overlooks the assembly hall on one side, and the student café, with its yellow twin chairs from Brunner, and library, on the other. Circular floor lights mimic the coffers and skylights in the concrete ceiling. **This image:** As seen from the floor of the assembly hall, multipurpose study rooms are tucked into the void beneath the walkway.





The entire 25-meter-square concrete ceiling was poured in place in a single session on “a very cold day” in the middle of winter, Ecker says. The architects originally considered other materials—wood and metal among them—but eventually Ecker suggested concrete. “That’s kind of the way our office works,” Piotrowski says. “I’m constantly involved in the really fine details of what we’re doing, and Dea comes and shakes things up and will think about things a little differently.” The walls of the structure are also formed from concrete—its high flyash content gives it the white color—and the floors are terrazzo, so even though the tones are very light, they can take the wear and tear of hundreds of high schoolers. “We find that if you use true materials, and you leave them exposed, there’s not really much that can happen to them that you cannot remove,” Ecker says. The benches in the main assembly hall are also made from concrete, and were cast with formwork from Max Frank.











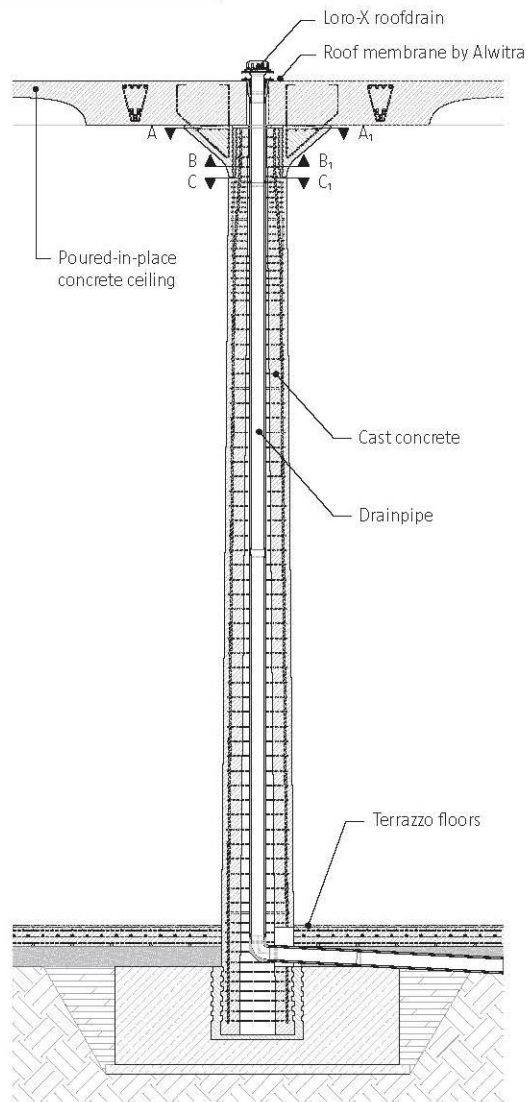
**Left:** Throughout the concrete-and-glass interior—in the assembly hall, the library (shown), and the multipurpose rooms—the architects used Soundwave Swell modular acoustic panels from Offect to dampen sound. Designed by Teppo Asikainen of Helsinki-based Valvomo Architects, the panels are formed from molded recyclable polyester fiber and covered in Europost fabric from Gabriel. The library stacks, manufactured by Bruynzeel, are starkly white in keeping with the building's overall aesthetic.



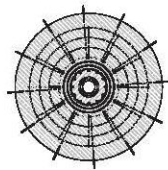
**Above left:** Library reading tables overlook the multipurpose rooms on the ground floor and the bridge leading to the café on the second floor. The glazing is from Balardo. Here, and in other study spaces, ceiling panels from Heraklith further dampen sound.

**Above right:** In a second-floor lounge next to the student café, carpet from Forbo helps soak up even more noise. The architects knew that acoustics would be a concern in a largely open interior of glass, terrazzo, and concrete. "But when you have a gathering of 300 people, clothes [absorb a lot of noise]," Piotrowski says. And the clients are comfortable with the fact that the addition still requires some fine-tuning. "They understand that having a brand new building, the first in 40 years, takes a little getting used to," he says, so it's not a process that they are accustomed to. But it is one that is welcome: "They have a little influence," Ecker says.

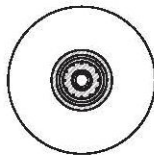
**Vertical Column Section**



**Column A-A, Section**



**Column B-B, Section**



**Column C-C, Section**





The exterior incorporates an aluminum rainscreen from Kalzip and a curtainwall from Schüco. Ecker describes the existing 11-building, 1960s complex as “well-built, but quiet,” in an aesthetic worth respecting. “We found that we could reinterpret that on the outside,” Ecker says. Visible through the high-efficiency glass from Glas Trösch is the main assembly hall and its three rotationally cast concrete columns that support the mass of the concrete ceiling.



## Forum at the Eckenberg Gymnasium, Page 108

**Project** Forum at the Eckenberg Gymnasium, Adelsheim, Germany  
**Client** Baden-Württemberg Department of Property and Construction, Heilbronn Office  
**Architect** Ecker Architekten, Buchen, Germany—Dea Ecker, Robert Piotrowski (partners); Joachim Schuhmacher, John Ruffolo, Peter Borek, Tom Jin, Sophie Hartmann, Mariana Martins, Shaique Uddin, Joshua Chan, Aref Nezami, Karolina Bieniek, Ankur Manchanda, Michael Fung, Stephanie Polochowitz (project team)  
**Structural Engineer** Rehle Engineers  
**M/E Engineer** Carpus+Partner  
**Structural Analysis and Inspection** Kist Engineering  
**Lighting Design** Belzner Holmes  
**Acoustic Engineering and Building Physics** Krämer-Evers  
**Size** 1,000 square meters (10,764 square feet)  
**Cost** Withheld

### Material and Sources

**Acoustics** Heraklith [heraklith.com](http://heraklith.com); Offecct [offecct.se](http://offecct.se)  
**Acrylic Skylights** JET; Börner [teppichschutz.com](http://teppichschutz.com)  
**Aluminum Rainscreen** Kalzip [kalzip.com](http://kalzip.com)  
**Carpet** Forbo [forbo-flooring.com](http://forbo-flooring.com); Tretford [tretford.com](http://tretford.com)  
**Columns** Europoles [europoles.com](http://europoles.com)  
**Concrete Formwork** Max Frank [maxfrank.com](http://maxfrank.com)  
**Curtainwall** Schüco [schueco.com](http://schueco.com)  
**Exterior Shading** Clauss Markisen [clauss-markisen.de](http://clauss-markisen.de)  
**Fabric** Gabriel [gabriel.dk](http://gabriel.dk)  
**Finishes** Formica [formica.com](http://formica.com)  
**Flooring** Nora [nora.com](http://nora.com)  
**Free-standing Kiosk** Knauf [knauf.com](http://knauf.com)  
**Furniture** Brunner [brunner-group.com](http://brunner-group.com); Bruynzeel [bruynzeel-storage.nl](http://bruynzeel-storage.nl)  
**Hardware** FSB [fsb.de](http://fsb.de)  
**Lighting** Ludwig Leuchten [ludwig-leuchten.de](http://ludwig-leuchten.de); Planlicht [planlicht.com](http://planlicht.com); RSL Lichttechnik [rsl.de](http://rsl.de); Selux [selux.com](http://selux.com)  
**Lighting Controls** GIRA [gira.com](http://gira.com)  
**Roofing** Alwitra [alwitra.de](http://alwitra.de); Loro [loro.de](http://loro.de)

## Metalsa Center for Manufacturing Innovation, Page 118

**Project** Center for Manufacturing Innovation Metalsa Cidevec, Apodaca, Mexico  
**Client** The Proeza Group—Abraham Tijerina-Priego (director of innovation management)  
**Architect** Brooks + Scarpa, Los Angeles—Lawrence Scarpa, FAIA (designer, principal-in-charge); Silke Clemens, Daniel Poei, Abby Katcher, Oliver Liao, Darien Williams, Jordan

Gearhart, Ching Luk, Mark Buckland, Angela Brooks, AIA, Emily Hodgdon, Daniel Safarik (project design team)  
**Architect of Record** Centro de Diseño—Homero Fuentes  
**Landscape** PEG Office  
**Structural Engineering** Carl W. Howe Partners  
**M/E/P Engineering** Cobalt Engineering  
**Engineers of Record** SPID Ingenieros (structural and civil); SENSE (mechanical); DINELEC (electrical)  
**LEED Consultant** Zinner Consultants  
**Project Management** Araltec—Alex Ruiz Cruz, Evelia Garcia  
**Size** 55,000 square feet  
**Cost** Withheld

### Material and Sources

**Concrete** LM Scofield Co. [scofield.com](http://scofield.com)  
**Doors** Anemostat [anemostat.com](http://anemostat.com); McKeon Door Co. [mckeondoor.com](http://mckeondoor.com); Nationwide Industries [nationwideindustries.com](http://nationwideindustries.com); Ingersoll Rand [ingersollrand.com](http://ingersollrand.com); Timely Industries [timelyframes.com](http://timelyframes.com); TM Cobb [tmcobb.com](http://tmcobb.com); Total Door Systems [totaldoor.com](http://totaldoor.com)  
**Flashing** APOC [apoc.com](http://apoc.com); Celotex [celotex.co.uk](http://celotex.co.uk); GAF [gaf.com](http://gaf.com); Grefco  
**Glazing** PPG [ppg.com](http://ppg.com)  
**HVAC** Runtal Radiators [runtalnorthamerica.com](http://runtalnorthamerica.com)  
**Insulation** Johns Manville [jm.com](http://jm.com)  
**Lighting** Bega-US [bega-us.com](http://bega-us.com); Prudential Ltg. [prulite.com](http://prulite.com); Belfer [belfer.com](http://belfer.com); DelRay Lighting [delraylighting.com](http://delraylighting.com); Eaton's Cooper Lighting/Shaper [cooperindustries.com](http://cooperindustries.com); Philips Stonco [stonco.com](http://stonco.com)  
**Lighting Controls** Lutron Electronics Co. [lutron.com](http://lutron.com)  
**Masonry** Angelus Block Co. [angelusblock.com](http://angelusblock.com)  
**Paints** AFM Safecoat [afmsafecoat.com](http://afmsafecoat.com)  
**Plumbing** Toto [totousa.com](http://totousa.com); Hansgrohe [hansgrohe.com](http://hansgrohe.com)  
**Roofing** CertainTeed Corp. [certainteed.com](http://certainteed.com)  
**Skylights** Bristolite [bristolite.com](http://bristolite.com); Solatube International [solatube.com](http://solatube.com)  
**Stormwater System** Stormwater360 [stormwater360.com](http://stormwater360.com); Contech Engineered Solutions [contech-inc.com](http://contech-inc.com)  
**Windows** Fleetwood [fleetwoodusa.com](http://fleetwoodusa.com); US Aluminum Corp. [usalum.com](http://usalum.com)

## Weeksville Heritage Center, Page 126

**Project** Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn, N.Y.  
**Client** NYC Department of Design & Construction—David Burney, FAIA (director of design & capital improvement); NYC Department of Cultural Affairs—Victor Metoyer (deputy director of capital projects unit); Weeksville Heritage Center—Pamela Green (executive director)

**Architect** Caples Jefferson Architects, Long Island City, N.Y.—Sara Caples, AIA, Everardo Jefferson, AIA (principals); Michael Behrman (associate principal)  
**M/E Engineer** Loring Consulting Engineers  
**Structural Engineer** Severud Associates  
**Civil and Geotechnical Engineer** P.W. Grosser Consulting  
**Construction Manager** Hill International  
**General Contractor** Brickens Construction  
**Landscape Architect** Elizabeth Kennedy Landscape Architects  
**Lighting Designer** Berg-Howland Associates  
**Theatrical Lighting** Cline Bettridge Bernstein Lighting Design  
**Cost Estimating** Faithful & Gould  
**Building Department** Metropolis  
**Specifications** Heller + Metzger  
**Curtainwall** Gordon Smith Construction  
**Sustainable Design & Commissioning** Viridian  
**Security** Ducibella Venter & Santore  
**Museum Programming** Dial Associates  
**Size** 23,000 square feet (building); 41,000 square feet (landscape)  
**Cost** \$26 million

### Material and Sources

**Building Management Systems** Johnson Controls [johnsoncontrols.com](http://johnsoncontrols.com)  
**Carpet** Bigelow [themohawkgroup.com](http://themohawkgroup.com)  
**Ceilings** Decoustics [decoustics.com](http://decoustics.com); Techstyle [hunterdouglascontract.com](http://hunterdouglascontract.com)  
**Exterior Wall Systems** General Woodcraft [generalwoodcraftinc.com](http://generalwoodcraftinc.com)  
**Flooring** Oregon Lumber Co. [oregonlumber.com](http://oregonlumber.com)  
**Furniture** Steelcase [steelcase.com](http://steelcase.com)  
**Glass** JE Berkowitz [jeberkowitz.com](http://jeberkowitz.com)  
**HVAC** AWL Industries  
**Masonry and Stone** Vermont Structural Slate [vermontstructuralslate.com](http://vermontstructuralslate.com)  
**Metal** Allen Architectural Metals [allenmetals.com](http://allenmetals.com)  
**Millwork** Mitchell's Restoration & Millwork; ACGI [acgiwood.com](http://acgiwood.com)  
**Paints and Finishes** Art-in-Construction [artinconstruction.com](http://artinconstruction.com); Sherwin Williams [sherwin-williams.com](http://sherwin-williams.com)  
**Roofing** Revere Copper [reverecopper.com](http://reverecopper.com)  
**Windows and Doors** Door Engineering [doorengineering.com](http://doorengineering.com); Schüco/S&C Products [schueco.com](http://schueco.com)

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