

PRO MON TORIO

DSBG UNIBASEL

BASEL, SWITZERLAND

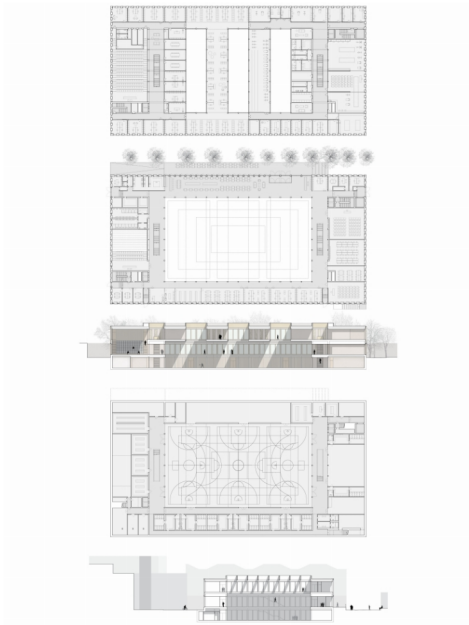
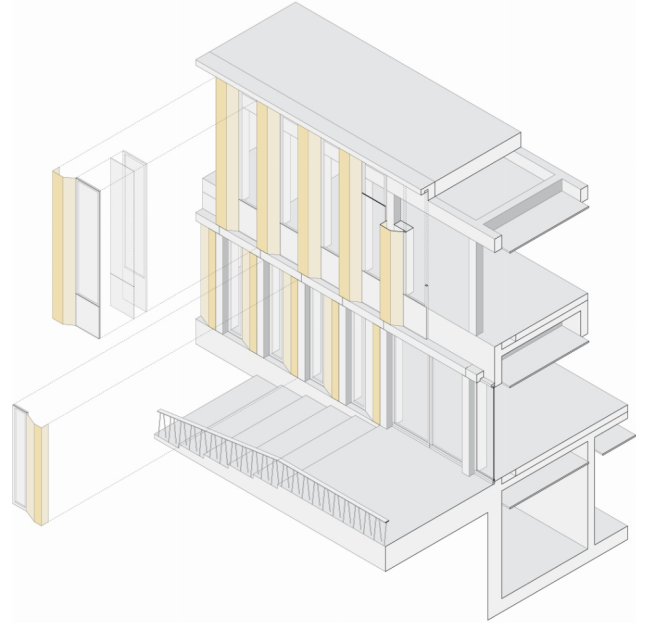
2015

The new building for the Faculty of Sports of the University of Basel (DSBG) is located in Merian Park, next to St. Jacobs football stadium, in an indistinct context defined by buildings of very different scales, types and periods. This design proposal positions the new building in a way that systematises the interstitial spaces between the St. Jakobshalle, St. Jakobsarena and the Gartenbad pools, defining an organisational presence in the public realm through a new urban frontage, enhancing Grosse-Allee's presence as a structural axis. The proposed building is devised as a pavilion in the park with a dominantly horizontal body, 85 m long and 43 m wide, with two storeys above ground, in addition to a basement level. Autonomous in relation to the surrounding buildings, it occupies almost the entire space of the existing tennis courts.

Distributed over three levels, the sequence of the programme consists of: the foundation, formed by a 1-m-high plinth, which raises the ground floor and protrudes 4.1 m from the main façade alignment, along which the access ramp and stairs at the ends evolve; the projection of the plinth, which in turn generates a platform that is both a place of arrival and an outside terrace at ground-floor level; the raised ground floor, which acquires greater transparency in the entrance and cafeteria area, closing with narrow, proportioned openings in those areas that do not require a similar direct relationship with the outside; finally, the upper floor, which closes and completes the volume with a rhythmic fenestration — more open and yet restrained— and works visually as a mass resting over the ground floor.

Given its total length of 85 m, the façade acts as a determining element in the visual reordering of Grosse-Allee, contributing to reducing the dispersive presence of the surrounding buildings. The façade articulation is correspondingly simple and abstract, with a reiterative rhythm that reinstates and clarifies the structural axis. The design concept is largely defined by the Dreifach-Sport-Halle (three-field sports hall), which conditions the whole spatial organisation. This large inner void operates as a spatial generator and a ubiquitous element throughout the building, as well as being its essential and differentiating motif. This inner courtyard is surrounded by circulation areas, which serve the various spaces running along the façade, enhancing the relational contiguity, proximity and distance between them. The proposal translates the structure required to cover the span of the sports hall into three-dimensional beams that generate usable surface for the programme space. The beams that make up the span become coffered spaces that densify the first floor, not only solving the structural issues of the building but also providing the faculty's activities with natural illumination through the skylight.

To emphasise the principle of modularity and flexibility, the design proposes a spatial frame of precast concrete elements, i.e., plinth, lintels, pilasters, columns and beams. Brass sheeting is used to clad the opaque surfaces in the façade and the skylights — a richly lit and reflexive surfacing that ages beautifully and gives a strong interaction with the surrounding trees. Brass-coloured aluminium frames are used for the outer and inner openings. The external glazing is partially reflective with low emission properties, breaking the direct sunlight with the help of exterior blinds. The internal spaces are characterised by the use of wood and chipboard panels on the walls, contrasting with the expressive exposed-concrete structure.



Location: Basel, Switzerland

Client: Departement für Sport, Bewegung und Gesundheit der Universität Basel (DSBG)

Associate architects: Stähelin Architekten (Basel)

Scope of services: Architecture and landscape architecture

Project brief: Faculty of Sports (sports hall and faculty services)

Gross floor area: 6,100 sq. m

Project status: 2015 (public competition, 2nd prize)

Rendering: 4+Arquitectos