

## MARTa Herford Museum

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Photos courtesy of MARTa Herford Museum and Tomas Mayer Photography

### MARTa Herford Museum

A brick-clad work of art designed to house works of art

Client:

The city of Herford

Project Team:

Gehry Partners, LLP (architect)

Archimedes GbmH

(executive architect)

Bollinger + Grohmann (structural engineer)

Materials:

Brick (3,744 square yards) High-grade steel (6,000 square yards)

Anti-vibration pillars (13,200 feet)

Steel (440 tons)

Construction steel (308 tons)

Reinforced concrete (17,500 cubic feet) One look at the MARTa Herford Museum in Herford, Germany and it's obvious whose hand was holding the pen, drawing the first conceptual designs for this playful structure. Frank Gehry began putting his distinctive touch on the brick and stainless steel structure in 1998. It is, at once, both a unique design and a signature building that obviously is of Gehry's artistic mind. As one of the industry's so-called star architects or "starchitects," you just know Gehry's work — or at the very least his inspiration — when you see it.

The museum, which houses mostly contemporary art, opened in 2005 after four years of construction. Its name reflects both the purpose of the facility — M for Möbel/furniture, art (ART), and architecture/ambience (a) — and the town in which it is located. Herford is known for its thriving furniture industry, which represents 20 percent of the furniture made in Germany. Each year, the town hosts two major industry trade shows that act as both international forums and barometers for the industry. In Gehry's mind, according to articles published about the building, the main idea behind the museum's design is to highlight and redefine the contradictory links between art and business.

The 21,500-square-foot facility, which features a combination museum/centre of excellence/event forum, is a from-the-ground-up renovation of an existing structure that has been standing since the 1950s. That old, industrial site (once the home of a clothing manufacturer) was incorporated into the design with the museum's new structures to its north and south. Thus, the old building now acts as the museum's centerpiece, welcoming visitors as they make their way through each of the five galleries. In addition to the lobby, this renovated section also contains a retail store, as well as a furniture testing area on the upper levels.

The former manufacturing building is shielded by a semi-transparent metal screen and connects the different parts of the complex. According to Bollinger + Grohmann, the structural engineering firm of record for the project, based on precise 3-D data, all components for the sculptural steel structure of the roof were CNC-fabricated (computer numerical controlled). CNC-milled stainless steel panels were mounted like overlapping shingles on the secondary structure of the double-curved lattice shell, the firm says. The manufacturing of the complex formwork for the curved reinforced concrete walls also was based on CAD data and subsequently insulated and clad with cement on the exterior before applying the brick.

With no windows at street level, the interior of the MARTa Herford Museum is flooded with natural light through a series of skylights, which are carved out of the 72-foot-high domed roof. Incidentally, Gehry designed each of the galleries as single-story units so that visitors would have unimpeded views of the artwork as well as the sky. Inside and out, this building truly is a sculpture itself — a brick-clad work of art designed to house works of art. In fact, Germany's tourism website describes the museum as "a fantastical-burlesque creation located somewhere between Duckville, Gotham City and cyberspace." It certainly sounds like a place worth seeing in person. MD