

VELUX®

CONTEMPORARY TRADITIONS

A Community Library in Gundelsheim, Germany

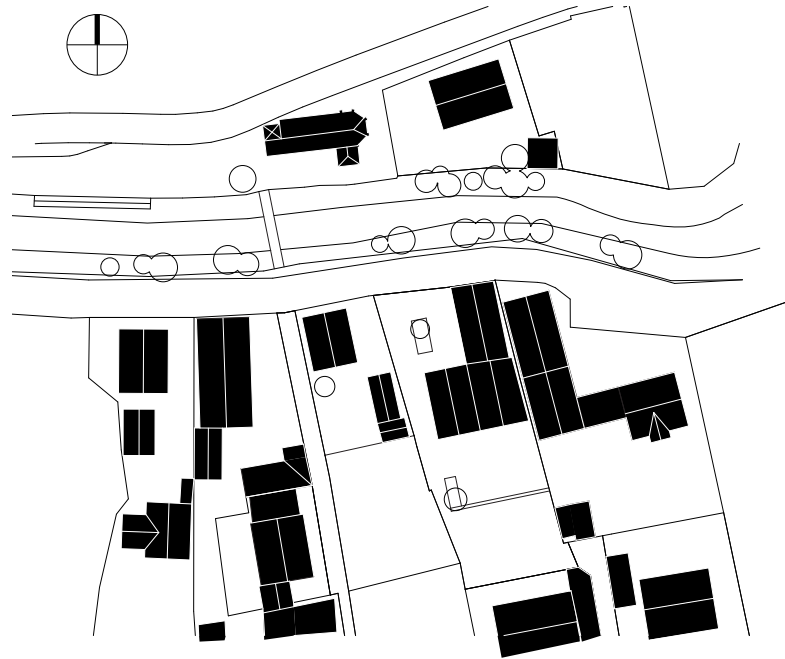




FILLING THE GAP

Gundelsheim, a village in German Upper Franconia, shares the destiny of many other small settlements in the region. In the past decades, it has experienced a slow decay due to immigration of the population to the cities, little jobs and the presence of big shopping malls causing the collapse of the local economy.

Only in the last years, the government started to support with funds and policies the revival of villages – at the same time people have rediscovered the advantages of living in the countryside. The new library and cultural centre in Gundelsheim were founded by such grant, coordinated by an association for local libraries.



Siteplan.
An existing, formerly freestanding farmhouse with a barn was carefully renovated and became part of a building complex. Two volumes in wooden construction house the new community library. The square in front of the building, opening towards the river and the church behind it, became a new meeting place for the inhabitants.

A competition for a new building in the centre of the village was organised in 2016, won by Schlicht Lamprecht Architekten from nearby Schweinfurt. Their competition project not only won the first prize but has been built with no changes, which is an absolute rarity. Stefan Schlicht and Christoph Lamprecht are no strangers to projects in rural context; both coming from the countryside, they focus on their homeland, often neglected by young architects.

"We found our calling in designing for a better life in the countryside. The continuity given by long-term collaborations with local authorities is very satisfying. We are happy to have found villages, where we accompany the authorities over a longer period; in some cases, it's already been fifteen years. Sometimes we're hired as planners, in other places are involved as consultants for planned constructions, both in architecture and urban design. We are not trying to design outstanding statement buildings, but strive to achieve architectural quality by seamlessly fixing the holes of an existing context."

Stefan Schlicht and Christoph Lamprecht



«I work as a planning adviser for local authorities in about fifteen villages and have seen a lot of deserted farmhouses. People don't recognise their potential, don't think of any other use but housing. Those buildings are an amazing asset, too often overlooked, even when in prime locations. The Bücherei stands in the middle of the village, right next to the church. We hope to show with our project that there are many creative ways to re-use farm dwellings: as community centres or kindergartens, for example.»

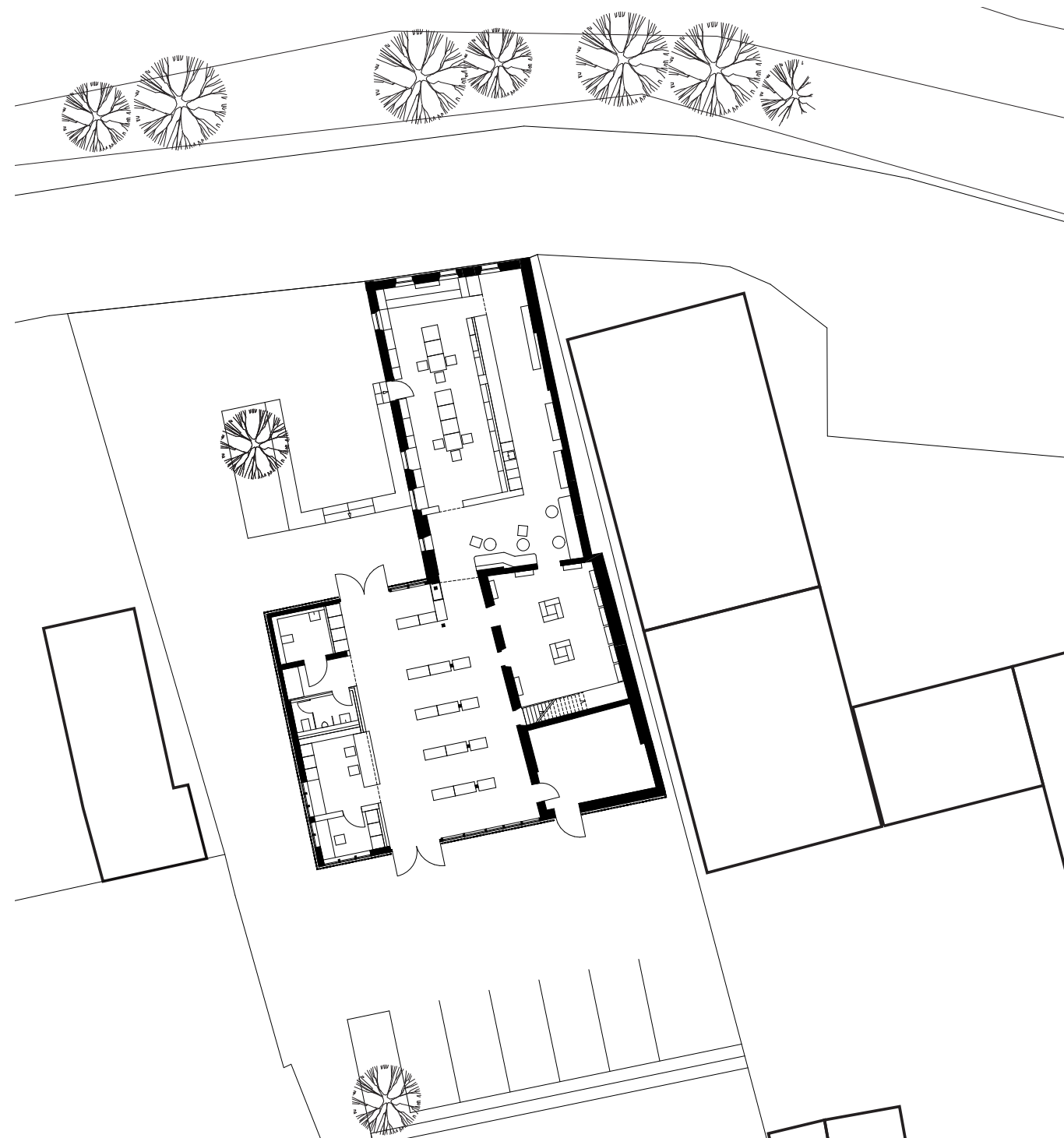
Stefan Schlicht



HOUSE IN A HOUSE

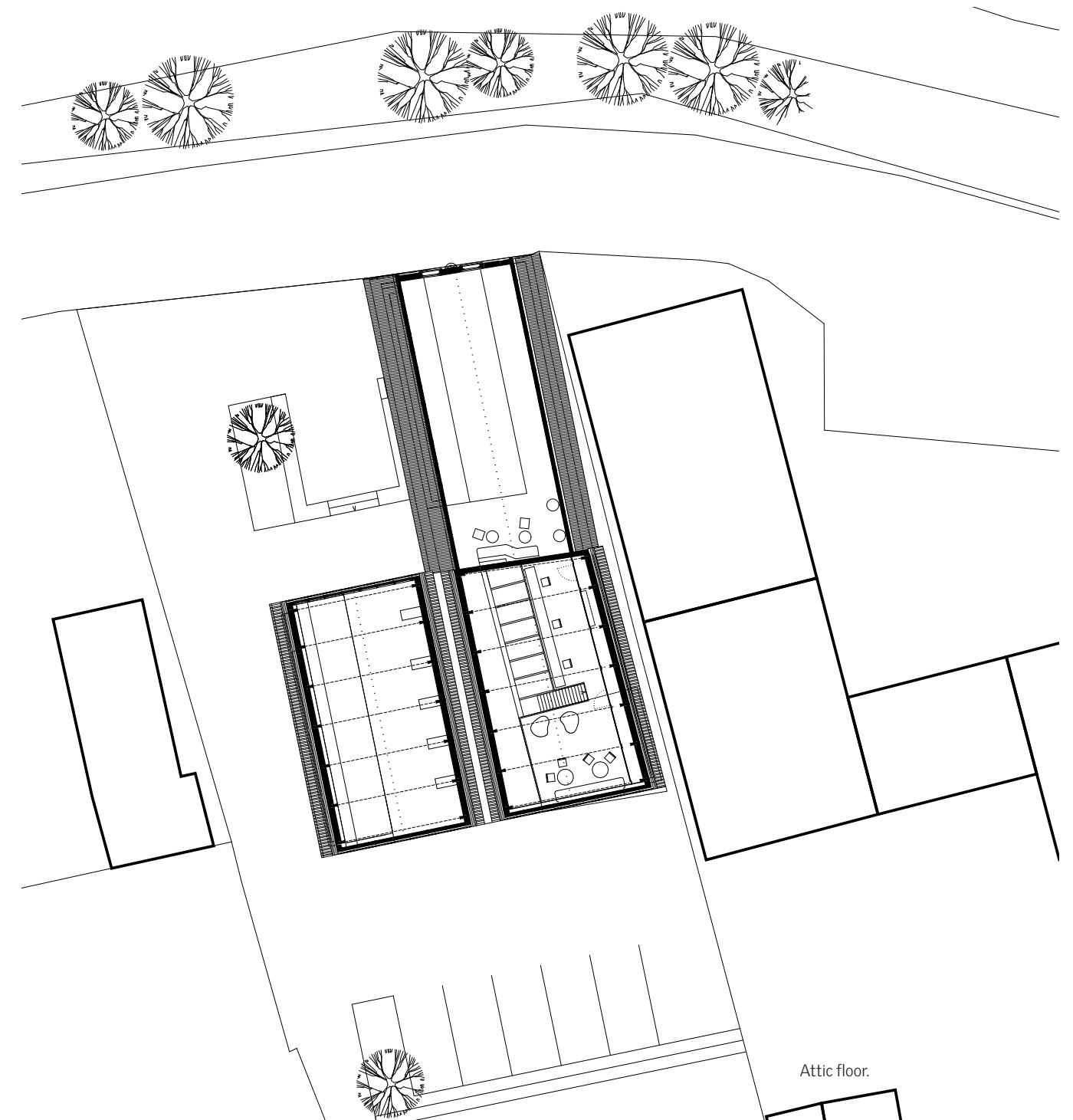
The idea for the project came at the moment the two architects saw the site and the house – freestanding, stripped off its barn and cowshed, which would have been typical for the farms' typology in the area. The front facade of the ensemble reveals its inner structure: a small house tucked in along the wall of the large volume.

The heart of the library is an open space with shelves, divided by load-bearing columns supporting the two "barns". In the space under the two new volumes, along the east façade, stands another tiny house: a former henhouse. It has been freed of its weathered roof and crowned with a platform. Both architects declare the place to be their favourite spot in the new complex.



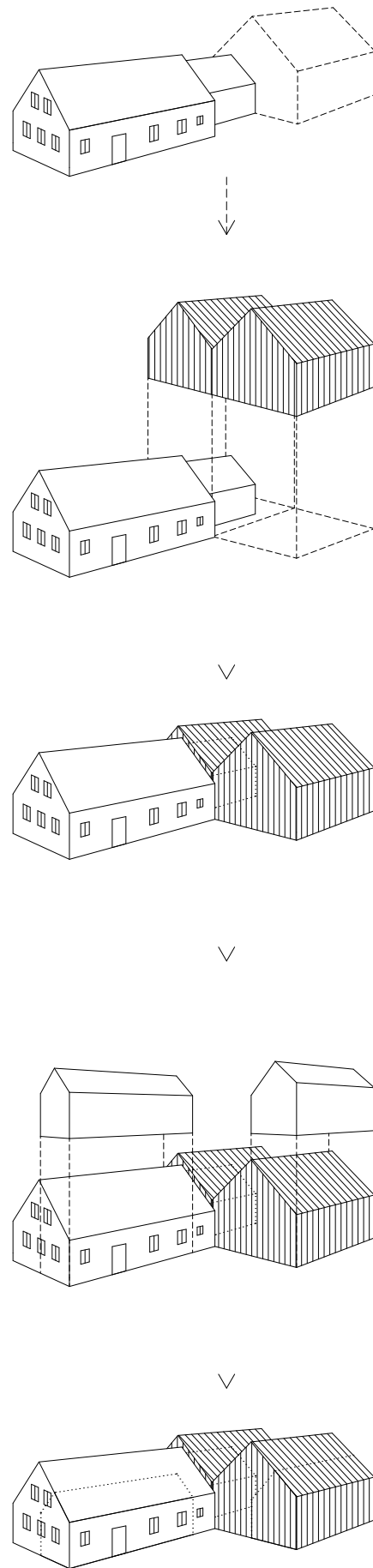
"Experience of past generations as well as our visual habits spoke through us when we decided to reestablish the threesome farm dwelling typology by adding two volumes to the orphaned house. The idea came to immediately, almost automatic: we were filling the void in the manner described by the tradition."

Stefan Schlicht and Christoph Lamprecht



"Our projects are not meant to stand out. We understand our practice as a community service, for a harmonious looking countryside, perhaps a happier world."

Stefan Schlicht and
Christoph Lamprecht



Diagrams showing the structure of the library and the "house in house" concept. A barn, demolished many years before the competition, was replaced by two large barn-like volumes. Inside them – following a local construction tradition of placing sheds inside barns – tiny houses containing libraries, service rooms, reception and other functions requiring little space.



"It's common to have a small shed standing inside a barn. A small house in a big house, a perfect place to store working tools – or in our project, service rooms and storage. Spaces inside those inserted houses are very friendly and cosy because of their size and serve perfectly as a reading space for children."

Stefan Schlicht and Christoph Lamprecht

INVISIBLE LIGHT

The main room of the library is a light-flooded hall with bookshelves, placed under both volumes. The bookshelves stand on hidden wheels, which allows for stowing them to the storage wherever a large open space is needed.

There is extensive glazing behind the wooden façade on the north side, but the source of daylight in the space are two rows of roof windows, located on the east side, on the very top of both roofs.

"We decided to use VELUX, twelve elements on each roof, as it was just better, and cheaper than developing an of own detailing of a custom-made strip roof window. VELUX provides a wide selection of windows to choose from: we did not have to change the proportions of the roof opening."

Stefan Schlicht and Christoph Lamprecht

The windows strips lighten up the roof surface, which enlarges the room optically. East exposure of the openings ensures plenty of light during the day and protects from potentially unwanted blending rays in the evening, during gatherings. The blinds are solar-powered and enable a complete blackout of the room, which is crucial for some activities, like film screenings.

Schlicht Lamprecht Architekten prefers understatement in their projects, when it comes to light sources, both in the day- as in artificial light. One will find no extravagant designer lamps in their projects, nor oversized façade openings. Stefan Schlicht points out the absence of a broad view in Franconian villages, and the wish to protect the privacy of the interior, as one of the factors that have led to hiding the glazing of the northern façade behind wooden slats.

"The competition jury praised the project for its open space and placing of all crucial functions on one floor, allowing barrier-free access for everyone. It turned out that most of our competitors followed a different strategy. Our generous approach to space and belief that a library is more than merely a place to rent books led us to success. After the competition, we collaborated closely with the local library association – which provided very detailed feedback on the amount and kind of books needed – on the development of the mobile shelves."

Stefan Schlicht and Christoph Lamprecht

On the top of the former cowshed, in the henhouse, you are in a cosy place, yet can see the spaces below sitting at the long table along the railing. It's tranquil up there, thanks to the sound insulation on the ceiling, and the wooden walls around smell beautifully."

Stefan Schlicht

"We did not want the roof space to appear as a dark mass hanging over the library: with openings, right at the gable we let the sunlight into the rooms in a very discreet way. One enters and wonders: where does this nice light come from?"

Stefan Schlicht and Christoph Lamprecht

"A roof window is more efficient in bringing in light into rooms than a façade window of the same size. The light comes to life when reflected on the roof surfaces and walls; that's why we prefer to position the openings close to the roof gable. In the rural context, where the majority of our projects are, the interior is designed without a direct connection to the landscape, as the people used to spend their days working outside. It looks like we have also followed this tradition, unaware of the fact, naturally."

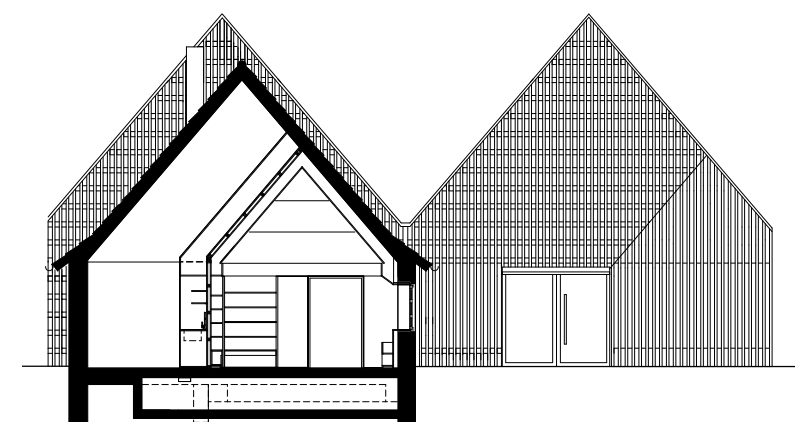
Stefan Schlicht and
Christoph Lamprecht



GABLE ROOFS

Gable roofs are typical for Upper Franconia, as they are in many other areas around the globe. Both architects genuinely like the shape and made it a recurring element of their project not only out of modesty. Both architects work with roof windows and gable roofs for many years now: during their ten-year-long employment in another company, they have once participated in a project, which has won the VELUX award.

Christoph Lamprecht experimented with roof openings in his own house, completed in 2009. He recalls studying daylight and states with joy that the sun from just one single roof window had the power of converting a staircase into a beautiful space.



"My own house has several VELUX windows. I have built a 1:20 model and analysing the light indoors and discussing the location with my wife. Her desk is now on a gallery below two large roof windows facing north. I also like to work there, especially if I am drawing something; the light is even, never blinding, not even in the summer. All of my family likes to draw, so we all appreciate great daylight."

Christoph Lamprecht

Cross sections.
Above: a section through the old farmhouse, showing the childrens' room and the main facade towards the square.
Below: on the left, the "service house" with reception, storage rooms and storage. In the middle, placed under two volumes, the main reading space with bookshelves on wheels. On the right, the former henhouse, with a gallery space – both architects' favourite space – on top.







"Sometimes, one understands one own design fully only after completion. The house reflects the structure of a village, with its open "squares" and narrow lanes. We have created a lot of diverse spaces under two simple gable roofs. Furthermore, I understood the impact of tradition on our designs: we applied solutions, proven over hundreds of years, in our project, and still came up with a contemporary building, that matches the surroundings and houses an array of new functions and accepted by the villagers. It makes us very happy, as we work with an extreme engagement and dedication on projects, which are meant to be useful and beautiful – and at the same time become invisible in the village fabric."

Stefan Schlicht and Christoph Lamprecht





PROJECT DATA

Project: Community Library
Location: Gundelsheim, Germany
Client: Municipality of Gundelsheim
Architects: Schlicht Lamprecht Architekten, Schweinfurt
Year: Competition 2016, construction 2018 – 2020
Area: 320sqm

Photos: Stefan Meyer

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