

christian kerez

Leutschenbach, once an industrial zone on the outskirts of Zurich's urban core, is being redeveloped into a new district. This summer architect Christian Kerez completed its new school complex, set among large-scale residential and commercial buildings. The main objective was to follow the scale of the surrounding buildings and to 'leave the smallest possible footprint' on the site. The outcome, a steel structure in an artful supporting structure, took four years to build. All of the functions, such as the gymnasium, classrooms and an assembly hall, are stacked on top of each other in a single volume. The compact cube of 50 x 34 m seems to float above the site, supported by six 'table legs'. The three floors with classrooms are contained in a framework hung from the cantilevered trusses of the upper floor. The apotheosis is the glass-clad gymnasium on the top floor.

The building can be interpreted, according to Christian Kerez, as two 'houses on *pilotis*', one above the other. The steel construction necessitated 'cambering the steel girders'. 'However, settling the girders could not be speeded up,' explained project leader Mike Critchley from the city of Zurich's Office for Building and Construction. Further challenges related to the many elements and details not usually found in a school building: frameless glass façades on the ground floor, floor-to-ceiling panes of glass in the gymnasium, a single solid core for the vertical access zone. Other than that, there are only translucent interior walls of Profilit glass, fold-plate, light concrete ceilings for optimal structure, continuous exterior balconies with glass balustrades serving as escape routes – making for a generous and open interior space. These tasks were addressed jointly by designers, clients and school heads. Now they will be tested by the students and teachers.



Text **Katharina Marchal**
Photo **Walter Mair / Keystone Images**

stacks a school

