

Steven Holl and Marcela Steinbachová complete interior project for the Franz Kafka Society Center in Prague.

In collaboration with the Czech architect Marcela Steinbachová (Skupina) Steven Holl Architects has realized the interiors for the Franz Kafka Society in a small courtyard building of a tenement house not far from where writer Franz Kafka once lived. The 172 square meter project is located in close proximity to the Old Town Square in the center of Prague's former Jewish quarter.

The basement of the small one-story building, formerly used for laundry and storage, now houses a space for exhibitions, lectures, and concerts, as well as it accommodates Franz Kafka's private library. On the first level of the building the Franz Kafka Society has located its offices. The previously dark and dismal spaces of the building are now washed in daylight coming through newly inserted windows and skylights that provide unexpected views to the towers of the Maisel Synagogue. Marcela Steinbachová (Skupina) and Steven Holl Architects have deliberately situated these windows off axis to the interiors. Inside the building new visual connections through openings and inspection holes give its small spaces depth and create visual connections.

All new partitioning in the building, even when carving out spaces for restrooms and a kitchenette, is created exclusively by book shelves. In one half of the building these bookshelves appear in white (offices) and the other half is filled with black bookshelves (entry hall). Coming from the central corridor one only sees black bookshelves and when coming from the offices one encounters white bookshelves. A 360-degree rotating door between the corridor and the director's offices, black on one side and white on the other, reverses white to black

The flat roof of the courtyard building will be covered with cement tiles displaying the plan of the former Jewish Quarter before its demolition in 1896. This open-air rooftop space will be used for concerts and exhibitions during summer. The courtyard and the courtyard building are accessed through the Franz Kafka bookstore and reference library both interiors designed by Marcela Steinbachová (Skupina)

The Franz Kafka Society, established in 1990, is a non-governmental non-profit organization. Its main goal is to contribute to reviving the traditions that gave rise to the phenomenon called Prague German literature, while restoring general awareness of the great significance of cultural plurality in Central Europe, a region where the Czechs, Germans and the Jews have been living together for centuries. Promoting those traditions, epitomized by the name of Franz Kafka, the Society is devoting systematic attention to his works, seeking to make Kafka's heritage a natural component of the Czech cultural context. The Society pursues its literary evenings, debates, specialized lectures and seminars at the Franz Kafka Society Center. The Society has published over a hundred books to date. Among the Society's members are Günter Grass, the holder of the Nobel Prize for Literature, Israeli writers Amos Oz and Avigdor Dagan (Viktor Fischl), and Polish poet Tadeusz Różewicz. For more information on the Franz Kafka Society, please visit www.franzkafka-soc.cz

Steven Holl Architects has realized cultural, civic, academic and residential projects both in the United States and internationally. Steven Holl is a tenured Professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture and Planning. In 1976 he founded Steven Holl Architects, which has now offices in New York and Beijing with a staff of 63. Currently under construction is the Linked Hybrid mixed-use complex (Beijing, China) which made it to the third project in TIME magazine's list of upcoming Architectural Marvels of 2007, the Nanjing Museum of Art and Architecture (Nanjing, China), the Vanke Center (Shenzhen, China), Beirut Marina (Beirut, Lebanon), and the Herning Center of the Arts (Herning, Denmark). In September 2007 Steven Holl Architects opened the renovation of the Interiors for the Department of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts & Science at New York University (NYU). Recently the office has won a number of international design competitions including Herning Center of the Arts (Herning, Denmark), Cité du Surf et de l'Océan (Biarritz, France), Sail Hybrid (Knokke-Heist, Belgium), Meander (Helsinki, Finland) and Vanke Center (Shenzhen, China).

Marcela Steinbachová (1975, Prague) is a young Czech architect that leads her own office Skupina since 2006. She studied architecture at the University of Applied Arts, Prague, at the School of Architecture of the Prague Academy of Fine Arts, the Schule für angewandte Kunst in Vienna and at Cooper Union in New York (video-art, photography). Currently under construction is the Svezozor cinema in the centre of Prague and among the completed projects are the interiors of the Arena Theatre in Ostrava, the production and administration hall in Hodonín, and the Ostrava Museum permanent collection spaces. Recently Skupina has won the competition for the new Prague Technical Museum. Since 2002 Marcela Steinbachová leads the Kruh association (The Circle), which aims to draw architecture closer to the Czech public. For more information on Marcela Steinbachová, please visit www.skupina.org

For more information on the work of Steven Holl Architects, please visit www.stevenholl.com

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