

Text **Shyn Cheah**Photos **Hertha Hurnaus**

SUE

continues telling a tale



Every story presumably has a beginning, a middle and an end. But in the story of the recently renovated Gusenleitner Haus, which now hosts the Open Municipal Hall, SUE Architekten plays the role of a storyteller who continues to weave a tale spun a long time ago.

The young Austrian trio that makes up SUE breathes yet another extension of life into a building that has already undergone numerous transformations. Originally consisting of three 16th-century terraced houses, the renovated building now serves the Austrian municipality of Ottensheim as both an administrative centre and a multipurpose public facility.

In a well-controlled and simply defined design, SUE Architekten subtly emphasizes the linearity and proportions of the existing building next door by applying these features to its new counterpart. 'The extension is recognizably an independent, contemporary part of the whole,' say the architects.

What had been solely a municipal council hall now includes an enclosed yet flexible public space. At ground level, the new addition opens onto Linzer Strasse on one side and, on the other, faces a courtyard that is protectively tucked between her sisters, young and old. It is the open but connective nature of the new hall that creates a link between the public interface of the street space and the semi-private courtyard. 'Street, hall and courtyard become a continuum in space, offering room for celebrations, events and markets,' note the designers. And while the hall succeeds in drawing an audience into the building – made up of both visitors arriving with a purpose and curious passers-by – the clever spatial organization of the extension's other operational spaces enables the centre to carry on with its administrative duties amidst the festivities.

