



May 2010

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Literary ambition
KARO's open-air library in Magdeburg re-uses a modernist warehouse facade from the 1960s.

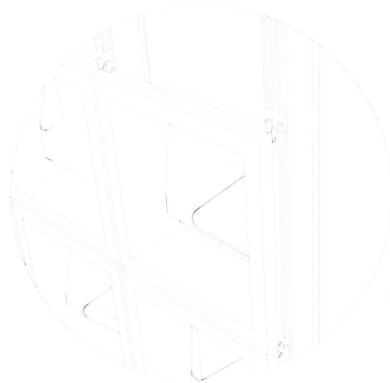
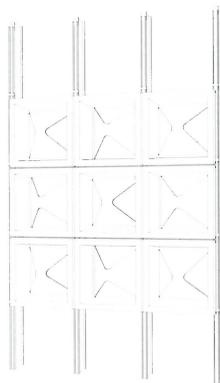
The Salbke district of Magdeburg in eastern Germany is characterised by high unemployment, disused industrial buildings and wasteland. Occupying a previously abandoned site, the origins of the Magdeburg open-air library or 'bookmark' can be traced back to 2005. Leipzig-based architect KARO together with a group of local residents constructed a temporary library structure from over 1000 borrowed beer crates. The shelves were filled with donated books and a literary festival was held to prove the

viability of the project.

Completed in June last year, the library is located on a triangular 490 square metre site in the heart of the town centre. Known locally as the 'library of confidence', anyone is allowed to take a book as long as they return it or present another one in its place. No registration is required and the shelves are never closed.

In addition to providing book storage and reading areas, the scheme incorporates a covered stage for theatre productions and concerts.

One of the most striking aspects of the project, besides its social aspirations, has been the re-use of a modernist facade from a 1966 Horten warehouse. Architect Stefan Rettich explains, the warehouses of entrepreneur Helmut Horten were built in numerous German cities and were based on Edward Durell Stone's facade design for the US pavilion at Expo 58 in Brussels.



Dismantled in 2007, the donor building was originally constructed in the City of Hamm. Except for re-painting the aluminium modules, the facade components including the steel substrate were re-appropriated without any major structural changes.

Above The modernist steel and aluminium facades were taken from a 1966 Horten warehouse which was demolished in 2007.
Left View of the 'donor' building; site plan.

Project team
 Architect: KARO; protect team: Antje Heuer, Stefan Rettich, Bert Hafermalz; local architect: Architektur+Netzwerk; structure: Michael Kurt; lighting: Jürgen Meier; collaborators: Gregor Schneider, Christian Burkhardt, Mandy Neuenfeld; photos: Anja Schlamann.