

BASIC PRESS RELEASE

Design and creative industries

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The "most beautiful coal mine in the world": symbol for the change of the continent's once most efficient coal mine into a future location for culture and economy.

Essen. The Zollverein UNESCO World Heritage Site is an attraction for design fans from all over the world. The modern architecture of Zollverein Shaft XII is characterised as a "built design" by the successful combination of technical functionality and aesthetic design and follows the Bauhaus concept of "form follows function". Design institutions such as the Design Zentrum Nordrhein Westfalen with the internationally renowned Red Dot Design Museum present award-winning design objects and are a meeting place for the design scene. In addition, Zollverein is a growing location for the creative industries - with about three dozen companies, as Campus of Excellence "World Heritage Site Zollverein" with the SANAA Building, the new building of Folkwang University of the Arts and, in the future, with a new business incubator and the "Gründerallianz Ruhr" for companies and start-ups.

Architecture: built design

The Zollverein World Heritage Site is regarded as a prime example of design consistency and aesthetics as a result of technical progress. Fritz Schupp and Martin Kremmer - the two visionary industrial architects, who designed and planned the masterpiece of mining architecture in the north of Essen at the end of the 1920s – succeeded in creating a congenial combination of gigantic technology and extraordinary architecture with Shaft XII. The cubic volumes made of steel framework, arranged according to strictly functional aspects, enclose a huge machinery, which almost completely automated the processes of coal processing and could largely do without human manpower: an idea of rationalisation in the 1920s, which was consistently transferred to coal mining with the construction of the new Zollverein Shaft XII facilities. Even today, the symmetrical arrangement of the buildings along two viewing axes is still impressive. The 20 fully preserved individual buildings of Shaft XII represent the technical work and production processes: form follows function. The facilities, which were designed down to the last detail, are a completely preserved work of art.

After the decommissioning: focus on design

Shortly after the Zollverein Coal Mine was closed down in 1986, ideas for the conversion and new utilisation of the halls and buildings with a focus on design and creative industries were already developed in the course of the first reconstruction phase. Since 1997, the Design Zentrum Nordrhein Westfalen has been based in the former Boiler House of the Zollverein Coal Mine, which was from 1995 to 1996 converted by Lord Norman Foster into an extraordinary venue for events and presentations. Today, the Design Zentrum, whose history began in 1954 with the foundation of the association "Industrieform e. V." in Essen and which is one of the oldest and most renowned design institutions in Europe, is a globally acclaimed qualification and communication centre for business, politics and society. Together with the Red Dot Design Museum, it is also a pilgrimage site for people from around the world who love culture, architecture and design. More than 2,000 good examples of successful product design from all over the world are presented at Zollverein.

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Future-oriented sector: cultural and creative industries

The declaration of Zollverein as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2001 was the starting signal for the further development of the entire site: architect Rem Koolhaas and his Rotterdam-based Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) developed the master plan for the transformation of the Zollverein World Heritage Site into an integrated cultural and business location in 2001/2002. Based on the development guidelines of the City of Essen from 1993 with the triad of architecture - design - culture, the architectural master plan "Design- und Kulturstandort Zollverein" ("design and cultural location Zollverein") lays out a site "(...) where the public, the economy, history, culture, science and architecture form an unexpected network of relationships with each other". In addition to the museum area including the Ruhr Museum, the Denkmalpfad Zollverein and the Visitor Center in the converted Coal Washing Plant, the master plan provides for two industrial parks, a university and an area for event business.

The first companies from the creative industries had already moved to Zollverein Shaft XII in the 1990s, including the agency for communication design verb and the event service provider Ik lichtdesign & klangkonzept. With the construction of the "designstadt No 1" office building in 2006 and the renovation of further existing buildings at the Coking Plant in 2016, the number of companies from the creative sector has meanwhile grown to around three dozen, employing a total of approx. 1,000 people (as per 04/2017). The youngest tenants include Schacht one GmbH, the digital company of Franz Haniel & Cie. GmbH, and Grand Hall Zollverein GmbH, which has been operating a state-of-the-art event location in the former Extraction and Compressor Hall at the Zollverein Coking Plant since the beginning of 2017. In addition to the Möbelloft, the Golem tile manufactory, an art school as well as dry soap manufacturer Sapor, the product development office MMID moved into attractive workshops, showrooms and studios in the Comb Building at the Coking Plant in 2016. Since 2014, brand consultancy KNSK West - a branch of the Hamburg advertising agency - has occupied its office at Zollverein. From the Zollverein World Heritage Site, the 15-member team supports customers such as BVB football club and its main sponsor Evonik.

The internationally active company Accenture will be headquartered in the former Transformer and Distribution Station (Hall 2) at the Coking Plant from 2018 onwards and will develop solutions for future and innovation issues for industrial clients from its Essen location.

Even more space for good ideas

In October 2017, the new building of Folkwang University of the Arts with a floor area of 19,000 square metres was inaugurated on the former Material Storage Yard at Shaft 1/2/8. The four-storey building attracts attention: with its galvanised sheet steel façade, the column-free staircase in the atrium and flowing spatial structures, the building is an architectural masterpiece. From now on, Zollverein will be home to the entire design faculty with its degree programs in photography, industrial design, communication design as well as art and design science. Together with the SANAA Building used by Folkwang University of the Arts since 2010, the new building forms the World Heritage Site Zollverein Campus. This is the second Folkwang Campus in Essen beside the headquarters in Essen-Werden. On further plots of land owned by NRW Urban, a development with offices for companies operating in the creative sector is planned.