

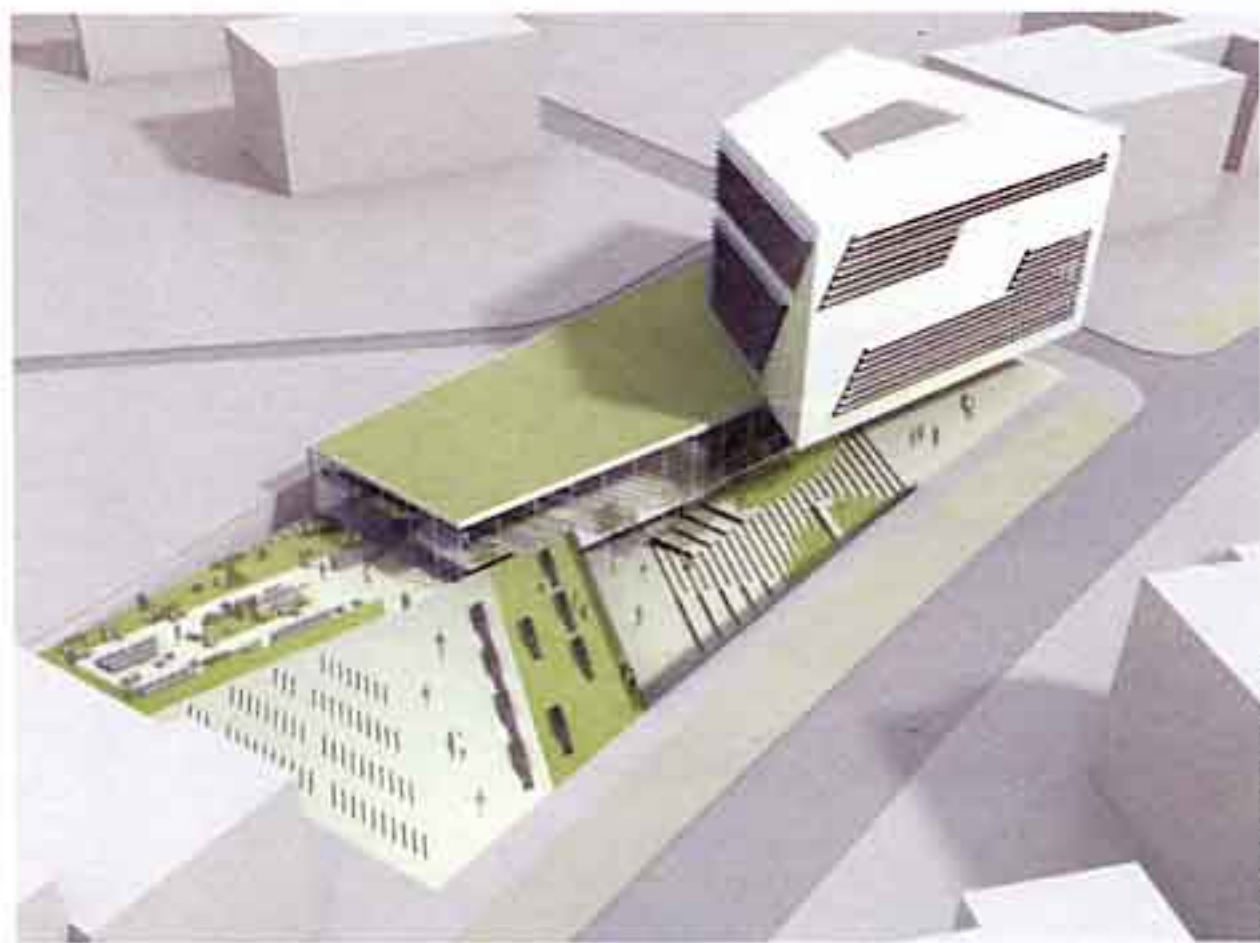
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COURTESY STUDIOMDA

## UNVEILED

DAS  
KOMPETENZZENTRUM  
MOBILITÄT

Aachen, one of Germany's oldest college towns, recently held an international competition for the design of three new university facilities. One, an energy research lab, went to Zaha Hadid. Danish firm schmidt hammer lassen architects carried away a commission for an auditorium complex. And the third project, a center for studying mobility in everything from cars to spaceships, was won by New York City-based studioMDA. "What's great about this competition is that

they kept it open to get in little-known offices like us," said studioMDA founder Markus Dochantschi. "We submitted and got the first prize."

The program of the 50,000-square-foot facility includes two 350-seat lecture halls, a cafeteria, and classrooms and applied study labs for a variety of disciplines including electrical engineering, information technology, and aerospace. Part of the site had to be kept open to maintain a ventilation corridor for the city. Taking this zoning requirement as inspiration, studioMDA based the form of their design on wind study tests, winding up with a long, one-story podium topped at one end by a six-story box. The

podium houses a wide, open cafeteria that functions as a campus room, a place for students to meet and mingle. This space opens on to a piazza, a rarity for this urban campus. The first floor also contains the applied study labs, which open directly onto the street, making it easy to move machinery in and out. The architects placed the lecture halls below grade along with a parking garage.

The most technologically savvy part of the building is the six-story box, which houses the classrooms. studioMDA based their design of this volume on the stop-start technology found in many late-model German automobiles, in which the engine actually turns off every time the car comes to rest and then turns on again when you press the accelerator, thus saving gas. The architects clad the box with metal louvers that close when the room they shelter is not being used. The lights also turn off and the air conditioner goes on a lower cycle, all controlled by a central computer. **AS**

**Architect:** studioMDA

**Client:** Aachen University of Applied Sciences

**Location:** Aachen, Germany

**Completion:** 2012