About the architecture of the Museum of Modern Literature

The Museum of Modern Literature, designed by David Chipperfield Architects and opened in 2006, originated as a venue for the display of fragile paper exhibit objects. The building unobtrusively provides protection; it delicately and purposefully juxtaposes fragile and monumental bodies, view and presentation, natural and artificial light, warmth and coolness, sleek and structured materials:

»A literature museum is something that almost does not exist. The literature museum is, in a sense, the opposite of an art museum. It is a museum with the greatest possible discrepancy between the actual meaning of its objects and their physical presence. At times, this physical presence borders on nothingness—script, ink, paper. Yet it is precisely this physical presence of the remnants of German literature documents that the German Literature Archive collects. Natural light is retracted from the loggia, foyer, stairs, on to the high hall below. Then there are the cool, dusky exhibit rooms that must accomplish so much to preserve its objects and yet receive so little in return. These rooms are, in a manner of speaking, self-reliant and self-sufficient. They possess nothing more than proportion, floor, wall and ceiling—and materiality. The architecture symbolizes nothing; rather, it means what it is: opening and mass, air and cement, Muschelkalk, glass, wood, sand-blasted concrete blocks, with loose gravel of Muschelkalk, jura sand. . .«

Alexander Schwarz, David Chipperfield Architects, Marbacher Magazin 103