



PROJECT

Indemann Observation Tower

LOCATION

Inden, Germany

DESIGNER

Maurer United Architects

FEW ARCHITECTS EVER GET

the opportunity to work with clients who allow them to realize their fantasies. But Marc and Nicole Maurer, principals of the Dutch firm Maurer United Architects (MUA), did just that when the city of Inden, Germany, gave them the go-ahead to build their design for a 118-foot-high robotlike observation tower.

Indemann, so named for its anthropomorphic form meant to mimic early video-game characters, is made entirely of steel, and appears to be more Erector Set than building.

To expose and animate the skeletal, zinc-coated structure, the architects wrapped its multiple levels in Illumesch, a sheer facade system that allows for digital imagery by incorporating LED strips into stainless-steel mesh at regular intervals. According to Marc Maurer, "All kinds of animations can be shown on the facade." These include logos, video streams, and colorful light shows – all controlled remotely through a Web-based interface. Illuminated at night, Indemann is visible from the A4 highway between Aachen and Cologne to its south – helping to attract an estimated 10,000 visitors a month since it opened last September.

This project more than satisfies the city's brief to MUA: create an icon-cum-landmark to signal the region's infrastructural shifts, which include shuttering its strip mines by 2030 and creating a man-made lake in their place.

The giant figure, erected on a 164-foot-high artificial hill made from mining waste, serves as an ideal vantage point from which to survey the evolving landscape around it – and to ponder the future development of the growing city of Inden. *Linda C. Lentz*