The Kunsthaus Zurich, designed by the Swiss architect Karl Moser, was built between 1904 and 1910 and is situated on Heimplatz, a square in Zurich’s city centre. The existing museum is to be expanded with a new building on the opposite side of the square, designed by David Chipperfield Architects Berlin. The new extension will display a collection of classic modernism, the Bührle Collection, temporary exhibitions and a contemporary art collection starting from the 1960s. Together with the Schauspielhaus (theatre) on the eastern side of the square, the museum buildings will form a ‘gateway to the arts’, an urban entry to the education mile leading to the university buildings to the north.

The urban concept envisages the placement of a clear geometric volume on the north edge of the square, resulting in the definition of two new public spaces – an urban square framed by architecture to the south and the art garden acting as a natural counterpoint to the north. A publicly accessible hall, which spans the full length of the building, creates a link between these two new urban spaces. The large entrances facing the square and garden create a strong relationship with the surrounding city, while large windows on all sides of the building strengthen this connection. The façade of the extension is determined by traditional stone façades, which can be found in the existing museum as well as other significant, public buildings in Zurich. Slender pilaster strips placed at regular intervals and the sawn limestone surface interweave tradition with the present and embed the building in its urban context.

The floor plan of the building is based on the idea of a ‘house of rooms’. All public facilities, such as café/bar, event hall, museum shop and education services, are arranged at ground floor level around the central entrance hall. The hall is accessible to the public from both the garden and Heimplatz, breathing new life into the square. The two upper floors are reserved for the display of art, with the exhibition spaces forming a sequence of rooms of varying size. Daylight enters the building from the side on the first floor and through skylight openings on the second floor, giving the visitor orientation in terms of both time and space.