services and lights end to receive an internal lining of insulation and plaster where required. The building is only heated intermittently, so insulation is internal to achieve a fast response. Many spaces are not heated, and these, together with internal walls, are left as exposed concrete. Where there is plaster it is mostly white, with a gold end wall and some walls painted in dark, earthy hues.

After Zaha Hadid left the AA she began working. For a time she collaborated in the OMA office, but has not undergone the usual apprenticeship of young architects who spend years detailing under the supervision of a more experienced architect. So she has never been exposed to conventional ways of doing things, and the fire station is put together like no other building.

She is in the details that this would seem to be an architect's building. Many details are eliminated, there are no skirtings, no door frames, no floor finishes, no light fittings. It is line with the main generative concept, doors are simply planes that slide past their surroundings. Lighting takes the form of fluorescent strips in continuous slots embedded in the ceilings or floor, usually placed to throw light on to a wall, transforming it into a glowing plane. There are many neat solutions to problems which emphasize the theme of continuity, such as the handrail to the staircase, which has four runs at different levels extending straight through from top to bottom, thus obviating the usual jok in the handrail at the mid-floor quarter landing. Of course there is, in reality, the usual amount of detailing, but it is hidden by clever sleight of hand – for example, the roof terrace, the cover over the asphalt skirting disappears below the roof parapet, so that the concrete parapet appears to extend down as a plane. It will be interesting to see how this building survives in use, but it has an inherent ruggedness and a caring client which should see it through.

The exploring plan is accompanied by a section equally at odds with the rectilinear norm. Wails slope and so do door jams. The longest still rises gently giving the illusion of a sloping floor. Roof terrace and parapet converge towards the mystical big bang of the explosion. Splays give false perspective. Combine all this drama with the already dramatic scenario of a fire station for a building complex recently destroyed by fire and it may all be too much. In which case Vitra has the antidote, for June sees the completion of Tadao Ando's cald building for contemplation.

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