different volumes of the galleries and is blunt and sharp against the sky. While the building is introverted and somewhat fortress-like, it is not out of scale with its surroundings. The only exception to the general rule of small-scale mediocrity is the restored smooth fineness of Bruno Paul's 1928 Mendelssohn-like Dischhaus that contrasts with the museum's blocky massiveness.

Entering, you are faced with a blank wall, which deflects you left towards the reception desk. Here, everything is flooded in daylight from the foyer's window wall, which overlooks the court that Zumthor has created to recall the old churchyard. Young trees rise from a gently rounded form covered in grey gravel. The museum's grey brickwork continues and forms one wall of the court, to the right are stone medieval fragments, carefully preserved with their repairs from different periods made quite obvious. The other two walls of the court are formed in concrete, rough-poured to show its aggregates as almost geological strata like the concrete at Zumthor's Bruder Klaus chapel at Wachendorf.

Returning to the foyer, the ruin hall beckons. A 12 metre high floor-to-ceiling opening takes up most of the end wall of the foyer. To keep the two climates apart are full-height leather curtains, reminiscent of the leather valances that contain the hot rooms in the thermal baths at Vals (AR August 1997). But there, the curtains are sensual, black and slippery with condensed steam. In Cologne, they are chestnut, dry and warm brown. The change in luminance between the museum's bright foyer and the mysterious twilight over the ruins in the great space is dramatic. At first, I thought there was a representation of a starry night sky above the ruins, but once my eyes had adjusted to the dimmer space, it became clear that these manifold points of light are the result of the band of porous lacy brickwork that makes the outside so strange. It allows daylight, outside air and street sounds into the great space. Light changes minute by minute as sun and clouds move; it is reflected off the ceiling and sometimes has a greenish tinge from the leaves of surrounding trees. On sunny days, needle-like shafts of sunlight suddenly illuminate a Roman cellar on a line of modern concrete columns. How are birds kept out?

You are conducted over the ruins on a zig-zag wooden bridge, which has a rail that is both easy to hold and welcoming to lean on. Below, illuminated by conical semi-industrial lamps as well as the patterned daylight, are the crumbled brick and stone walls, arches, vaults and column bases of nearly two millennia of civilisation: Roman, Frankish, Carolingian, Romanesque, early and late Gothic piled indifferently on top of each other.

The bridge leads to the sanctuary, now roofless, a small broken-vaulted medieval court containing Richard Serra's rusted steel The Drained and the Solved (1992-97) erected over human remains found in the excavations. Returning along the bridge, you become aware of strange soft music in addition to rusted street noises. Pigeon Soundings by Bill