

The Open Frame

Art concept based in the building of
Museum für Neue Kunst, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany

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The frame relates
to the museum
as institution

Traditionally paintings are framed. The frame gives the painting the status of a presentable object, a means of perceiving. Normally, a perceiving is not explicitly proposed, for it takes place everywhere and at all times. We are subject to non-stop perceptual flow. The frame arrests this flow. The frame challenges us to examine that which it frames and to examine it closely. The frame cuts out a piece of the visible world and creates its own world out of it.

The function of the frame can be compared to the function of the museum. The museum cuts off and isolates a part of the visible world and then calls attention to this part-reality by leading up to it. The museum demands that before digesting them, we contemplate and reflect with leisure the experiences therein gained. Exhibiting can be defined as making the means of perception accessible by pointing certain things out, underlining certain things and recommending a certain way of perceiving things. In this way, the museum is a frame.

The function of the museum is not only to exhibit but also to store. In this sense, the museum is veritably a frame.

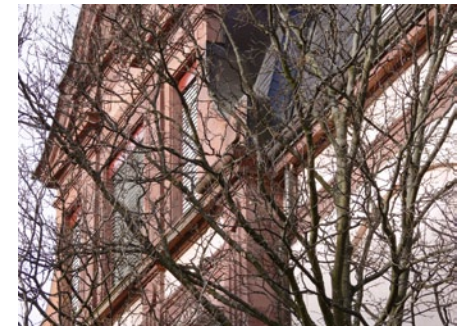
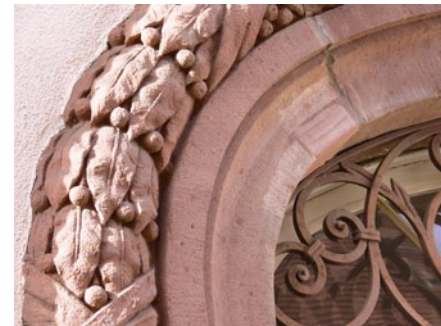
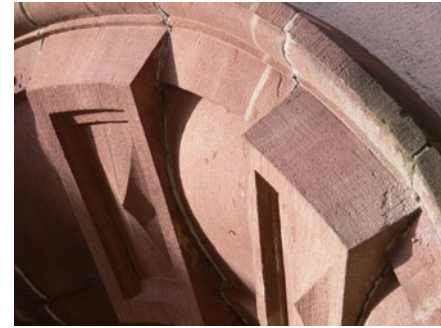
The frame relates
to the programme
at the Museum
für Neue Kunst

The Museum für Neue Kunst in Freiburg focuses on the development of modern art – beginning with the Classic Modernism around 1900. The collection and the exhibitions are part of a programme. And this programme is built around an historically fixed date – the beginning of modern art.

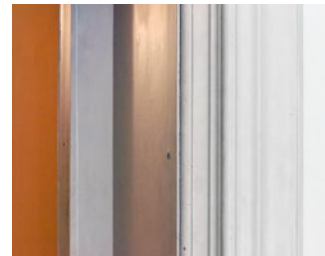
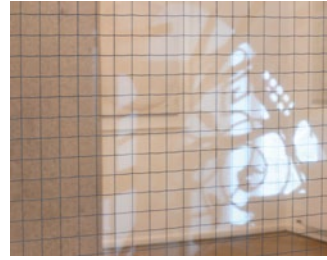
The paradigmatic changes that have taken place in modern art have also revolutionized the frame. Art has opened up to make headways into the concept of the object, the concept of the pictorial space and the concept of color. In the same way, the frame has opened up. It has become simpler or non-existent or part of the painting. It can be a theme in itself. The frame is no longer a given factor. It has become a parameter of artistic intent – no longer an object belonging to the picture carrier but to the picture itself. It becomes an accessible vehicle.

The opening up of the frame leads it open to exposure.
The frame becomes an object to be observed and reflected upon.

The museum building
as perceived
from the outside



The museum building
as perceived
from the inside



The association of the museum building to the principle of the frame

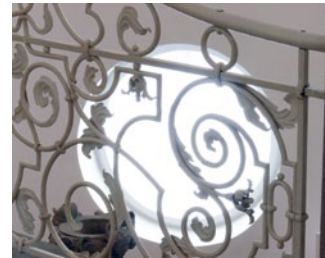
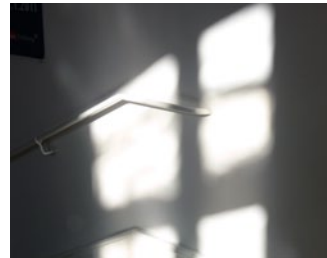
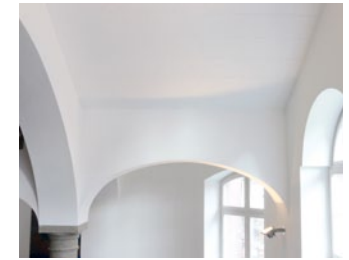
The museum as an institution offers a frame as does the museum as a building. Whoever enters the Museum für Neue Kunst in Freiburg has to deal with the concept of the frame.

The principle of the frame, as long as it is the basis of the museum as a whole, appeals to reason. The eye, on the other hand, looks for this principle in the detail and discovers the frame principle everywhere in the museum building. The framing crops up in many different forms, due to the multi-faceted architecture of the building.

This leads to many details in the inner building gaining substantial meaning. A relationship is thereby formed between the buildings distinguishing features and the exhibits, between the packaging and the content.

Wandering through the museum building, the frame principle becomes the dominant motif.

The eye discovers
the principle
of the frame
everywhere



The traditional doorframe
as a factor
bound up in history



The modern,
unadorned doorframe
as a view
to what lies ahead



The opening up
of the frame
becomes
a sensual experience

The concept “The Open Frame” initiates a compositional process.
A pre-existing frame form is changed – opened. For this process the doorframe
has been chosen.

The doorframe is a form that repeats itself throughout the whole museum building.
More than that, the doorframe is an architectural detail that becomes
a sensual experience when the principle of the frame is applied to it.

On the one hand the doorframe offers a view on to other rooms and exhibits
as things to be seen. A view, an expectation, a question is being framed.

On the other hand, the doorframe acts as an invitation and challenge to pass
through. An entrance, a directional decision and an action is being framed.

In both cases the doorframe is in dialogue with the museum visitor.

Therefore the doorframe is integrated into the compositional process.
It forms the basis material.

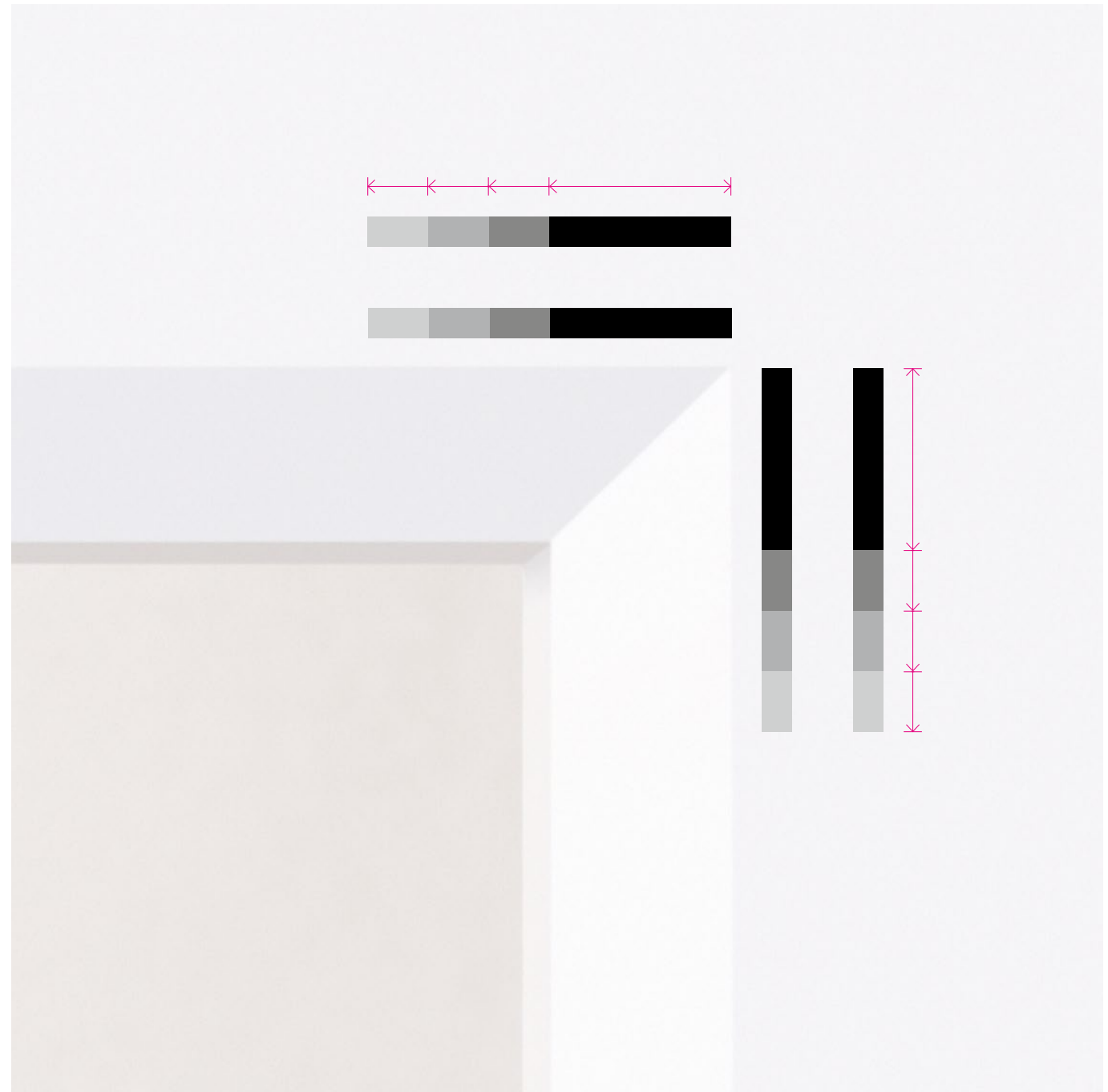
The first step
in the composition
is to expand
the frame form,
thereby confirming it



In the second step
of the composition,
the frame form
is broken down,
thus enabling it
to be opened



The fragments
of the frame
take on
a variable dimension



The fragments
of the frame
are combined
in multiple ways



The colour
unlocks the dimension
of the pictorial potential

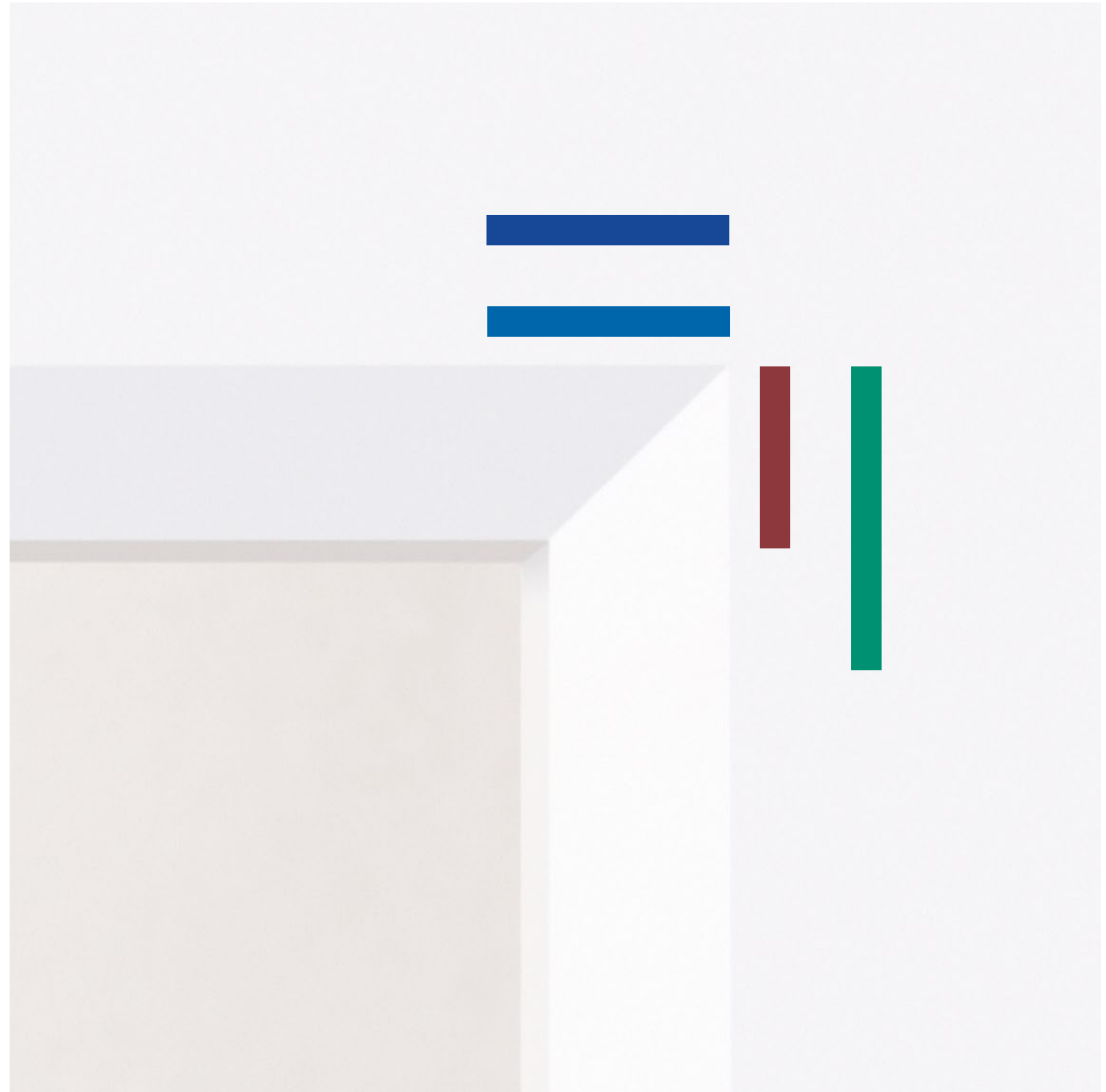
The conceptual change occurs at the doorframe – at many doorframes – at all the doorframes of the Museum für Neue Kunst. This principle reigns everywhere yet the occurrence differs. The changes to the doorframes give them individuality.

The individuality comes about because the fragments of each doorframe are uniquely combined. In addition, there are different color combinations. Each doorframe is a vehicle for the color. The doorframes are made up of four frame fragments and four colors, thus each design is a color composition.

The color compositions have pictorial character. They are more than a color combination, a color experiment or a color demonstration. They are an “epiphany”. They awake associations to an epic cosmos. In this sense they have a poetic dimension.

The visitor can perceive the compositions of the doorframes in various ways. Firstly, as a thought-provoking impulse in the sense of a thematic debate about the frame and its meaning. Secondly, as a point of orientation, as each passageway is unique. Thirdly, as an epic message: a pictorial offer to the viewer inviting contemplation and reflection.

The formation
of the doorframe
as color composition



The formation
of the modern,
unadorned doorframe –
part 1



The formation
of the modern,
unadorned doorframe –
part 2



The formation
of the traditional
doorframe



The compositional process continues throughout the museum building

The concept “The Open Frame” accompanies the museum visitor as he makes his way through the building. This way leads not only through the doors that join the rooms but also up the stairs that join the different floors.

The doors have a “shuttle function”, bringing the visitor from one room to the next. The same can be said of the steps on the stairs, which continually bring the visitor one step further. On the stairs the visitor crosses – metaphorically – into a new frame each step he takes. It is confirmed by the architecture that frames the stairs.

This is why the composition of the frame fragmentation of the doors is carried over to the stairs. On one step of every staircase there is a frame fragmentation, so that here too individualization occurs. It is not, however, the steps that are individualized, but the staircase. We perceive the staircase as a sum of the steps rather than seeing the steps as part of a staircase.

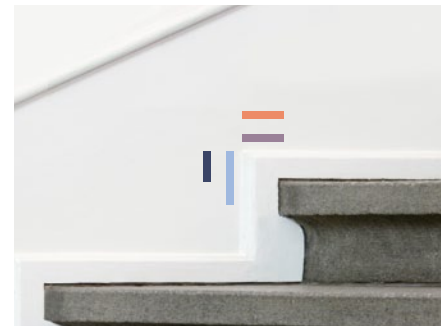
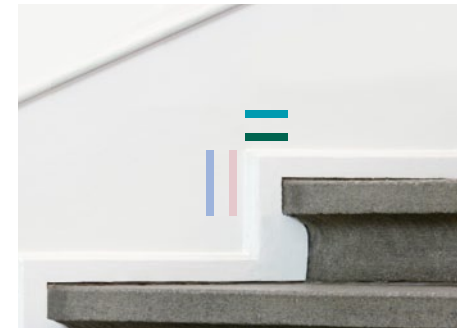
The architecture
frames every stair,
giving each
a transitional
interpretation



The formation of the stairs



The concept
as carried out
on the stairs
of the building



The time-based frame
as theme

The frame separates a perception. In the Museum für Neue Kunst we are concerned with our perception of visual impressions, but this is not all. Over and above the visual impression, the visitor is able to perceive the dimension of time.

The exhibits exist within a historical timeframe, so that time is what characterizes their differences. There is a before, an after and a now. There are distances of time, some greater than others. There is always the relationship to the observer, to his placement in time and to the moment of his observation. This time factor is connected to the exhibit.

There is also the time factor that alone belongs to the museum visitor. There is a before and an after he has looked at the work. There is also the aspect of the time taken to look and how often this was repeated.

The time factor touches the visitor in many different ways. Especially here, the frame is a means of orientation because the frame also separates our perception of time. So it is that the concept “The Open Frame” covers both the dimensions of space and time.

The timeframe
is depicted
on the wall clock



The application
of the concept
on the dimension
of time



The visitor
experiences
“The Open Frame”

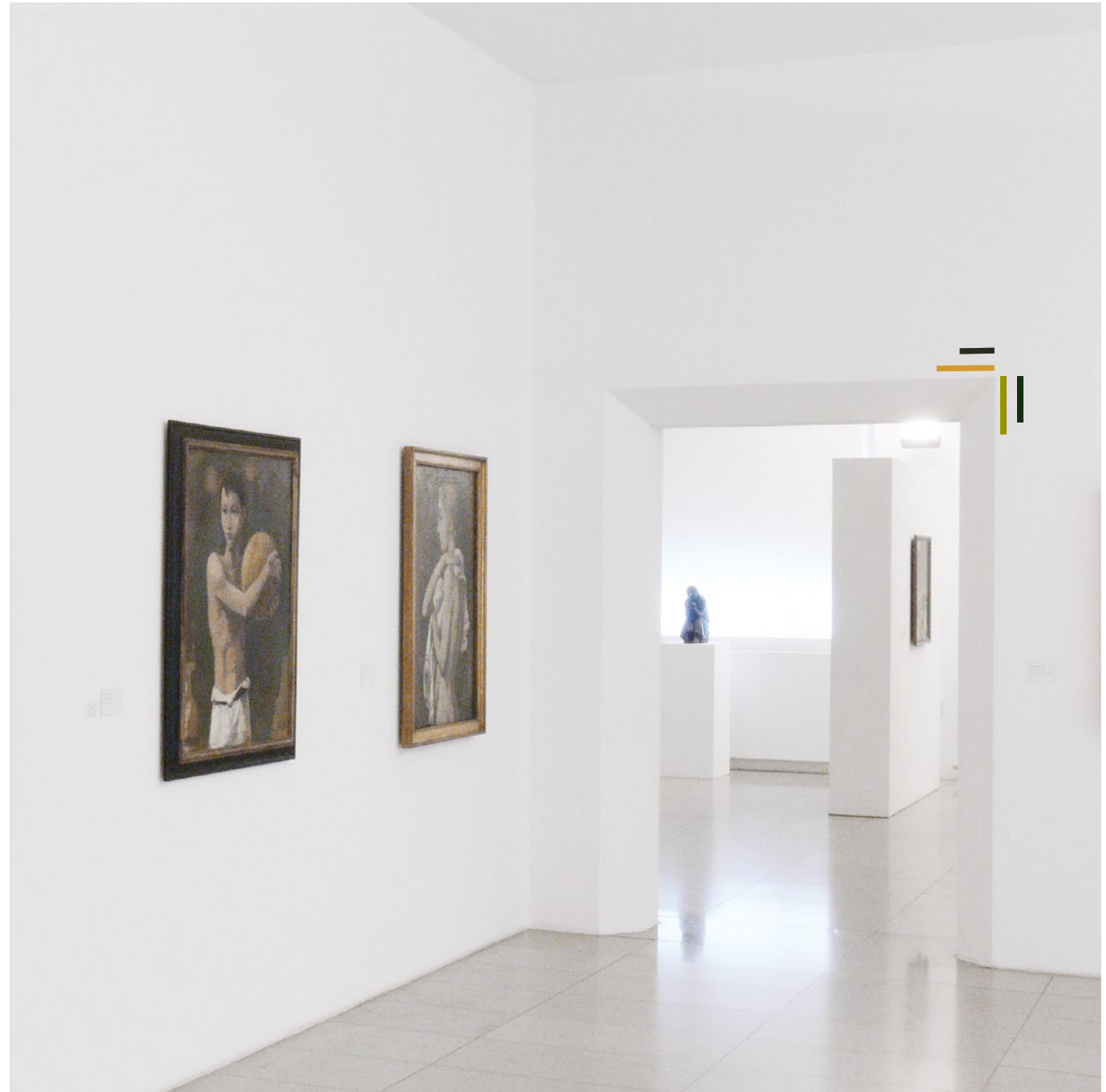
Whoever visits the Museum für Neue Kunst in Freiburg receives a multitude of impressions formed from both the exhibits, as well as from the variety of detail in the architecture.

The concept “The Open Frame” adds to these impressions whilst forming an antithesis to the richness on display due to its very austerity and sparseness.

Furthermore, the concept strengthens the museum as a whole. The concept is perceived as being continuous and yet circular. The notion of wholeness is the notion of the frame. “The Open Frame” is not meant to negate the frame but rather to confirm its capacity to embrace.

By emphasizing the museum as a whole, the concept binds together the many different impressions at their source and gives the borders of perception a “frame”.

Perceiving
the concept
while walking
through a doorframe



Perceiving
the concept
while walking through
the museum

