

Rolf Meier, Martin Leder

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Anthology 20 – Notat
Heinz Wirz

Seen in its entirety, Swiss architecture would be significantly poorer without the clear reception of contemporary architecture from areas outside its major agglomerations. The ambitious, talented architects there face the challenge of working patiently and persistently, often in the face of strong resistance from the population.

Rolf Meier and Martin Leder have been fulfilling and pursuing that aim in Baden for the last 9 years. During that time, many projects, competition entries and a number of notable buildings have been produced. The presentation in this volume shows how each project is developed with enthusiasm and aptitude. The office building constructed for Axpo in Baden this year shows that the implemented projects are able to fulfil their “promises”. The strong building volume, including a solid element that projects from the main body to act as a porch and entrance – with a scale that is a clear reference to the nearby garden house - is stringently anchored in the existing urban planning structure and integrated into the quarter. The façade covered in ornamental etched glass recalls the “curtain walls” that were popular in Switzerland and elsewhere in the 1960s, yet alienates its familiar appearance through contrasting sizes and positions for the windows, which alternate between glass surfaces and openings. The image of a cogged mechanism is apparent, and is developed further and spatially heightened in the inner courtyards, skylight rooms and open hall zones. The building feels abstract, like a moulded piece, sinking underground like a floating body, breaching disciplinary boundaries, and creating associations with abstract painting.

Lucerne, October 2010

Chrüzliberg school building, Baden

The compact, expressive building volume thrives on the tension between individuality and integration. Its forward-shifted position gives the building its own presence in the city. The voluminous fitting element is brought to a synthesis with the existing structure, so that the playground in between maintains its open relationship with the forest. An inner spatial complexity, with an openness that tensely contrasts with the organisation of the rooms of the existing school building, replaces a traditional school corridor. In a large united entrance and accessing space, coherent, impressive spatial experiences are created with inner through-views and spatial interconnections. The interior staircase access is extended in alternating alignment to the school working zones. The classrooms themselves have corner windows and enable flexible teaching through their neutral proportions. The exterior design supports the idea that in the light, the building placed at the edge of the forest sets itself apart from the darker background. The pigment of the dyed concrete gives it a natural character.

Baregg scout centre, Baden

In the open space of a woodland clearing, the scout centre is positioned along the fringes of the forest. The building's form is developed from the conditions of the spatial programme, whereby a wide range of rooms with different heights is generated from the sloping roof. The auxiliary rooms create an angled backbone, so that the main rooms open out towards the atmospheric exterior space due to the widely projecting roof. The skylights in the upper dormitories create a relationship with the treetops. The extra-deep window flanning creates a secure interior atmosphere that revokes the character of a wooden hut. Room-high cupboards are built into the exterior walls. The flanning enables windows and shutters to be opened outwards, allowing unhindered furnishing. The surfaces are oriented by the natural range of colours in the forest and give the bark-like façade a lively patina. The choice of varnishing technique makes the interior walls colourful and animates them to be used in daily life.

Krone residential development, Altstetten

with Dominik Moser Architekt, Baden

The existing architectural potential in the tense relationship between urban density and rural construction is used to achieve coherent integration for the new building. The large form connects with the construction density of Badenerstrasse, while also respecting the historically protected building as a typological exception. In accordance with the quality of the exterior space, the ground floor has a semi-public character. References from a rural atmosphere are intermingled with the expression of contemporary, urban life to develop a harmonising architectural language. The alternating positions of the window openings express the autonomy of the individual apartments. The façades with a ground plan that is folded in several places give the building its rhythm. Apartments for the elderly are aligned in a way to provide views of lively places. The loggias that are accessible from two rooms, as well as various sliding doors, allow a large range of different movements. The family apartments open out towards the green area in the south. The connected dining room allows an open form of living and unfolds interesting diagonal spatial relationships.

Catholic church extension, Seon

Various uses are brought together with the existing building to create a new large form with grouping around a common courtyard. The inviting main entrance leads through to an open new church centre and on to the landscape room, whereby it is expressed as a public building in the neighbouring residential environment. The climbing roof and the polygonal incisions give the facility a striking expression, as the church volume forms the focus of the building's composition. A concise yet familiar architectural expression was deliberately sought, so the traditional liturgical organisation was transformed into a collective form. The flexible large space is structured into different use rooms through targeted light guidance. An additionally extended room accommodates the organ and choir and also allows secular events. The finely structured wooden cladding has an atmospheric effect and radiates joyful respect. The translucent glass surfaces form a unity with the profiled cladding and heighten the room's sacred atmosphere.

Zelgweg residential development, Dättwil

with Liechti Graf Zumsteg Architekten, Brugg

The location is characterised by a homogeneous environment and has above-average emissions. Therefore the quality of both the interior and exterior space is of great importance. An elongated building is positioned as far back as possible to create an exterior space that defines its identity, while a copse of trees acts as a filter between the house and the street. This residential garden characterises the entrance to the village and thereby becomes an element that is relevant to urban planning. Beneath the trees, a garden facility with private exterior areas and structuring hedgerows is created for a wide range of uses. The building is clad in naturally anodized aluminium and shimmers airily through the copse of trees. The staggered height and a number of jumps in the building provide its structure. On the western side, protruding balconies intertwine the building with the trees. A repetitively structured building typology allows the different apartment sizes. Inner courtyards light the middle zones of the extra-deep building and generate an atmospheric quality in the rooms. They give the apartments an introverted, yet spatially generous character.

Old people's home extension, Untersiggenthal

The new nursing department is formulated as a base extension in which the rising roof merges the existing and new sections. The inner order of rooms including a covered forecourt is developed further and smoothly fuses with the extension. The recreation areas are all oriented towards the entrance, while the nursing rooms enjoy a unique long-distance view of the landscape. The inclined room walls help residents in wheelchairs to move about and give the hallways a folded wall development. Interior glazing and atmospheric lighting create rooms with a range of different ambiances to fulfil the requirements of comfortable, atmospheric life in a home. The colour of the high-rise building is strengthened by a powerful aubergine tone for the base to create a contrasting appearance for all building elements compared to the newly planted surroundings.

Town house in a moat, Baden

The location is at the transition between the old and new town and is structured into two building sites. The upper building is inserted into a gap and completes the historical cityscape. A façade relief that develops in depth, creating the oscillating appearance of the wall section, achieves a reference to the punctuated façades of the old town buildings. The lower building is set apart from the historical urban corpus, making the former city moat visible. When walking through the staggered steps, the terraced and uniformly materialised moat area can be experienced to the full. The polygonal solitary building that is inspired by the historical countermure makes a stronger reference to the wooded slope through its layered façade tectonics. The offset storeys form the interior topography, whereby a continuous accessing zone unfolds along the countermure. The meandering window bands are set in alignment with the façade to support the architectural appearance. The overall measure becomes a contemporary supplement in a historical context that enhances the atmosphere of today's location.

Badenfahrt – “Turm zu Babel”, Baden

The “Tower of Babel” invites visitors on a spatially atmospheric tour, accompanied by food and theatre. The cocktail for the senses creates a festive experience in an oriental ambience that is spread over four floors. The ground floor bar is the first of a series of elements. The open staircase leads up to the rooftop terrace to enjoy an aperitif with a long-distance view. For the next item on the menu, another closed staircase takes visitors one floor down, directly to the culinary main course, before moving on to the dessert room. Appropriate furnishing and atmospheric light is provided on each floor. The scaffold erection is covered on all sides by a colourful textile, making the tower appear like an abstract sculpture and sending a striking signal that alternates between tradition and contemporary intervention.

Apartment house, Römerstrasse, Baden

The staggered depth of the volume is dissolved in the grain of the large-scale office buildings and thereby joins the villa buildings that are typical for the quarter. The exterior conditions are balanced with those of the interior, allowing the new building to be naturally anchored in the urban structure. Around the central staircases, all the auxiliary rooms are organised like a mural compression. An enveloping room structure of room units with neutral uses opens out adjacently up to the glazed façade layer. The loggias are integrated into the building volume and can be used all year round due to the additional glazing. The specific apartment typology with extra-high walls allows variable room relationships and therefore provides an adequate response to the dense, urban living conditions. The exterior design merges with the park-like garden of trees through the building's layered effect of different depths, which also serves as a filter to maintain the apartments' intimacy. The slatted wooden structure of the sliding shutters provides privacy and sun protection, while invigorating the changing play of light on the façade's appearance.

Allmend residential development, Baden

The property is situated on the southern limit of the quarter on a slope that inclines northwards, with a fine view of the Jura Mountains. Six rows of houses perpendicular to the slope provide access to the wooded background. The 20 house units create a bridge of colour towards the wood and create individuality for the residents through colourful highlights. A wide range of offers in terms of exterior rooms and rooftop terraces characterise the settlement. The introverted entrance courtyards face green, hedged gardens. A head building with direct southward alignment is designed for each of the six rows. On the ground floor, a continuous large space between the courtyard and the garden is opened up. The variation in the situation of the living areas allows for different types of living. Situated on the top floor, it benefits from maximum sunlight and an impressive long-distance view. A skylight fills all the floors with a surprising lighting atmosphere and also lights the staggered stairways, creating an impressive spatial experience as one climbs or descends.

Day centre in Bachteli, Ennetbaden

The striking roof silhouette gives the new building a playful appearance and allows its users to strongly identify with it. At the same time, specific rooms are created inside which have an inspirational effect on the children's activities. The caterpillar-like bevel siding for the façades and roof creates a lively surface structure. Additional colour contrasts are created by visible plate attachments that complete the caterpillar gown as an ornamental highlight. Along the edge of the wood, a seating element made of compressed concrete defines the transition from the playground to the green area. Both user groups are directly accessed from the common cloakroom. The space for the playgroup is angled, creating areas that can be used for different types of play. The areas of the day centre are aligned in a Z-shape, whereby one niche with a gallery-style rostrum rounds off the diverse facilities. The varnished wooden surfaces of the walls and ceilings have a lively appearance and combine with the light floor to create a monochrome room. The choice of a prefabricated wooden building allows a sustainable and ecological building method that conforms with the Minergie-Eco standard.

Office building, St. Verenastrasse, Baden

As a result of an analysis of urban structures, we developed a four-storey main building that was oriented by the existing grading range, with an offset connecting building. The outer appearance with a wave pattern that alternates between glossy and matt sections gives the surface and the perceived depth a constantly changing appearance. Due to the changing lighting conditions, the volume is assimilated into the surrounding environment. The flexibly divisible office layer develops in the interior around a central accessing core with two inner courtyards, which are connected to the common areas for staff in a staggered way. They are deliberately given an atmosphere that complements the office ambience using colourful bands of light. On the walls and the ceiling of the staff canteen, an endless flash is used as an ornament that evokes refinement through the harmonious surfaces. With respect to sustainability, it is the first new office building to conform with the Minergie-Eco standard and the target values of the "SIA Effizienzpfad Energie", thereby fulfilling the requirements of a 2,000-Watt society.

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