

Blättler Dafflon

Quart Publishers **Anthology 29**

Anthology 29 – Notat

Heinz Wirz

After studying Architecture at the EPF Lausanne, Ralph Blättler and Gilles Dafflon embarked on an eventful training period including internships and Assistant positions with a number of renowned architects and Professors both in Switzerland and abroad. In 2008, they finally founded their own architectural office in Zurich. Their intensive training led them to an assured architectural stance that is manifested in their work. Their buildings are extremely well integrated into the surroundings, which are accepted as familiar reality, enhancing them to create a new, coherent whole. For instance the two apartment buildings in Belfaux have several attributes of a bourgeois residential zone. The architects develop such qualities with exceptional care and meticulousness. Individual characteristics are thereby exaggerated or used in an unusual way. The architectural work focuses on details and nuances to ennoble everyday aspects. The façades achieve a memorable expression and the building volumes are particularly elegant. Finally, the ground plans are unorthodox and yet closely related to function and real life, thereby creating notable spatial qualities.

The architectural power also lies in unusual building figures and the imaginative structuring of ground plans. One such example is the Hofwies residential development in Bonstetten. At first glance it looks extremely ordinary, but on closer inspection, it reveals a complex, multifaceted placement of the volume and organisation of the roof structures, as well as creatively designed ground plans and cave-like angular loft spaces with strong spatial qualities. Indeed these are gems in the guise of usual, everyday buildings. They show that quality in architecture is often also based on diligence and a creative spirit.

Lucerne, July 2014

Hofwies Residential Development, Bonstetten

Contracted study 2009, 1st Prize, Construction 2011–2014

The property is situated in the village centre of the Bonstetten community. To the east of the plot, a footpath runs along the Isenbach stream. To the west, an ensemble of traditional houses form a kind of nucleus within the quarter. A total of 42 rented apartments are distributed over three volumes. The angled interconnection and simultaneous displacement of the buildings within the permitted 42 x 16 metres produces additional roof-ridge sides by which the apartments can be naturally lit without multiplying the roof perforations and superstructures. The grain is appropriate for the location and distinguishes between public and private spaces. The apartment typologies are orientated towards the green area and the passage of the sun. The living rooms are aligned around corners and combine with the loggia, kitchen and entrance to form a sequence of rooms that give the apartment a generous feel and offer diverse views. The roofs and façades have a uniform, alternating colour and accentuate the form of the buildings. The windows are framed in light grey frames. Their rhythm and continuity connect the folded façade surfaces.

Two Buildings – Five Apartments, Belfaux

Constructed 2012–2013

An unused farmhouse – surrounded by single-family homes that are aligned like an amoeba around their internal accessing route – forms the basis of the project. The demolition of the agricultural estate provided space for the development of five apartments, with a maximum of three per building. The orientation and access determined the placement, while the typologies and materials determined the form. The spatial and functional structure of the flowing floor plans was achieved by the precise positioning of the stairs and the tall cupboards. On the upper levels, the rooms and bathrooms are accessed from a central area that stretches over the entire depth and height of the building's asymmetrically designed saddle roofs. The balustrades act as a superordinate element of the façade composition. The project uses only a few architectural gestures to achieve a maximum quality of living, use and economy.

Two-Family Home, Beinwil am See

Construction 2011–2013

This project contributes to the sparing use of land with respect to the desire to densify an existing quarter of single-family homes. Instead of a single-family home, a two-family home was created with a 3.5-room apartment and a 4.5-room apartment without any compromises in terms of living quality and the individuality of its residents. The slope allows the two stacked apartments both to enjoy floor-level access to the garden. The deeply incised terrace generates a strong relationship with the exterior space and allows a great deal of light and outward visual relationships deep within the 3.5-room apartment. Residents pass through an inner courtyard to access the 4.5-room apartment, with its view of Lake Hallwil to the east and the warm evening sun from the west. Inspired by the surrounding buildings from the first half of the last century, a granulated concrete base follows the line of the topography, forming a ribbon around the house and ending with the formation of a small balcony. It serves both as a visual shield for the bathroom and as a cover for the entrance to the apartment below. The widespread dark red, anodised aluminium window frames have the quality of a robe. The house with a lift is both compatible for older people and is also planned in a way that allows the two apartments plus the covered car port to be connected via a flight of stairs along the inner courtyard.

Annexe Building, Beinwil am See

Construction 2013

A traditional settlement of single-family homes is situated three quarters of the way between the village centre and the edge of the forest, in which a series of 1920s “master builder cabins” are aligned on both sides of the street. The former kitchen gardens are situated between the houses, most of which are gently terraced on the slope. At the start of the project, there was a simple house with spatial and residential qualities, which were combined with a fine garden and a beautiful view of Lake Hallwil. The small annexe had the great ambition of connecting the existing living rooms on the upper ground floor with the garden. By inserting it half way between the upper ground floor

and the garden, at street level, it is integrated into the existing topography to create a tall room that is accessed, like the existing exterior stairs, via the old salon. Two large oak sliding windows can be completely slid into the wall, transforming the room into a loggia on warm summer days. The warped metal roof assumes the geometry of the existing folded saddle roof and rises towards the southeast, the lake and the sun. The material of the sophisticated, pre-weathered wooden cladding creates a relationship with the existing wooden cabin both in terms of the scale and the construction.

Municipal Building with Underground Car Park and Village Square, Meilen

Competition 2010, 1st Prize, Construction 2013–2015

This project focuses on two aspects: treatment of the qualities of the old municipal building and its preservation-listed substance, and the old stairs remaining after the demolition of the open niche, which served to dry firemen's hoses. An atrium is created there that becomes the centre of the entire building, as part of a clear connecting figure. In a kind of symbiosis of old and new, an extremely compact building is created in which the spatial and functional departments can be accessed from a single, central room – making the “inner geography” of the municipal administration clear to visitors. The new pair of buildings receives two faces, like the mask of a Venetian *commedia dell'arte*: the old, familiar face towards the village street and the young, fresh appearance that will characterise the village square in future. Both faces should equally reflect the special status of the municipal building.

The village square, extension and café form a unit that is integrated into the existing heterogeneous situation and gives it a new order. The extension to the municipal building gives the ensemble with the two inventoried buildings and the restaurant Bahnhof additional power. A new level connects the massive closed base of the neighbouring building to the west with the accessing courtyard of the local building authority. Level with the village street, it also creates a new village square. A pavilion with a café and an entrance to the underground car park with 218 public parking spaces form the conclusion of the square and the transition to the level of the former village school building.

Peter Kilchmann Gallery, Zurich

Construction 2011

The Peter Kilchmann Art Gallery is situated in a preservation-listed industrial building within the Maag estate in Zurich. The rooms form two zones: public exhibition rooms and offices. Visitors enter the bench-lined entrance hall to both areas through two oak doors of differing heights. The rooms are conceived in a way to provide the exhibiting artists the greatest possible flexibility. A quadratic exhibition room forms the centre, while the smaller rooms are aligned around it, partly naturally lit and provide views of the estate and references to the urban context. The administrative area is organised in the same way as the exhibition rooms – in a downscaled form: a central room around which the peripheral kitchen, meeting room, office and server room are grouped. The floors are covered in solid, soaped oak strip parquet. The artificial lighting consists of strip lights aligned diagonally to the steel girders, which provide a high degree of flexibility with respect to the position of the walls. A specially developed profile also allows the precise placement of selective lighting.

Kronenwiese Residential Estate, Zurich

Competition 2011, 2nd Prize

Kronenwiese impresses with its unique location and networking with the Zurich urban landscape. The terrain is on a slope that descends from north to south by more than 10 metres. The estate directly adjoins with the public open spaces of the Limmat region and the Schindlergut area. The latter's green area and community centre form the core of a neighbourhood that benefits the new residential estate. A long, linear building along Kornhausstrasse and Nordstrasse, in the form of an acute angle, highlights two qualities of the residential estate: the city and the park. The closed peripheral development makes the street space more precise and creates a large, protected exterior space. The sculptural courtyard façades enter into a dialogue with the organic, playful atmosphere inside the development, where the crèche and kindergarten are situated. They benefit from the natural topography by contracting diverse exterior spaces with different qualities and atmospheres. The loggia forms the heart of each apartment. It provides privacy and protection from the wind

and weather. Flowing, open spaces alternate with private rooms and structure the living rooms, which are all orientated towards the park. This consistent alignment within the long, closed building volume makes further noise protection measures unnecessary. The apartments are orientated towards the direction of the sun and the view of the river and the city.

Brüderhofweg Residential Estate, Zurich

Contracted study 2011, 2nd Prize

The basic urban planning pattern is characterised by a row of individual houses, whereby the interim spaces mediate between the public and private areas. These spaces provide views into the depth of the interconnected, flowing green areas. The open residential courtyard serves as a concept that aims to fulfil today's requirements of urban living. The buildings along Brüderhofweg develop over five storeys. Along the sports field, the buildings have six storeys, reflecting the privileged location. A total of 233 apartments are planned on four separate building sites. Most of them are organised on Building Site 1, including a central courtyard as a powerful green oasis that provides all the apartments with an attractive view. The private exterior spaces are formed as balconies and orientated towards the courtyard. The sanitary cores are arranged in a staggered way on each floor, while the connected kitchens create two different typologies, each with continuous living and dining rooms. The apartments on Building Site 2 are characterised by a sequence of a living room, kitchen and dining room, which are complemented by the entrance area and access to the central sanitary core. This creates a "round route" that gives the typologies their character and makes them suitable for daily activities.

Rietpark Residential Development, Geistlich Estate, Schlieren Contracted study 2012

The project plans various configuring and volumetric measures in connection with the local noise problems. Primarily, an optimized orientation for the apartments is desired even at the urban development level. The building has three storeys to the south, apart from the “tower”, which reduces the aspect angle to 30 degrees and therefore provides protection from the noise of the railway. The bays and loggias also shelter the apartments on the top two floors from the noise and achieve an added spatial value. From the view of the pedestrian in the park, the rhythm of the developed and planned building is thereby highlighted, while the clear perimeter development makes the exterior spaces more precise. The large, sheltered interior courtyard functions as a transition from the public to private space and serves as a meeting place for the residents. A piazza lined with arcades is created at the building’s centre, providing a lively location that allows the residents to reach their apartments without getting wet when it rains. The architectural expression is predominantly characterised by a three-storey base that is clad in prefabricated concrete elements and forms the foundation of the plastered residential floors above it. Occasionally extended or reduced, the building enters into a dialogue between the interior and exterior spaces. Its treatment of the multifaceted conditions of sunlight, privacy and noise emissions produces an attractive diversity of uses that is reflected in the design of the apartments. Five different typologies are united in one building: studios, lofts, maisonettes, and apartments facing both the park and the city.

Riedgrabenweg Residential Estate, Zurich Planning 2013–2015, Construction 2016–2018

The property belonging to the Baugenossenschaft Frohheim is situated in Schwamendingen, which is partially developed according to plans by the then Municipal Architect Heinrich Steiner. The plot is occupied by an autonomous figure: with a large form that is structured by projections and recesses and is mainly a three-storey building, thereby reacting to the small scale of the

neighbourhood. Two terraced houses and an estate house complement the existing row of single-family homes along Tramstrasse.

The planned mezzanine typologies enable a spacious, intensively planted and communally used exterior space. A sequence of two inner balconies and a small central atrium provides the primary quality of the apartment typologies, which stretch into the entire depth of the building. The kitchen is situated in the “belly” of the apartments and is naturally lit via the patio. The dining room to the north is extended to include a narrow balcony and opens out southwards towards the courtyard. All living rooms are situated along the south façade and benefit from the spacious, partially continuous loggias.

To prevent “residential hygiene collisions”, one room is always aligned over a corner. The maisonette apartments are accessed via a two-storey entrance area with a kitchen. It opens out, like a studio, over large windows towards the north. The living rooms with a rooftop terrace are situated in the attic. Light is emitted down onto the “entrance passage” on the ground floor through the patios. Combined with a balcony above, this creates a horizontal and vertical perforation of the building volume. Like a tree, the fair-faced concrete structure grows out of its base, creating a seam that holds together the building elements. The balustrades overlap with the branch-like concrete structure and create a sculpturally formed building shell.

Schütze Areal Centre, Zurich

Competition 2013, 2nd Prize

The urban development concept plans a northerly and an eastward extension to the Heinrich School building and its sports hall that connects the community hall and the library in a 36 x 40 metre volume. Recessed from Heinrichstrasse, it produces an exterior space with an all-weather recreation area and a playground. The former is an element of an urban green area that is inserted into the street space. The latter forms the location’s address and articulates the different elements of the newly organised grounds. The extension to the primary school enters into a functional and architectural dialogue with the sports hall, library and community hall, which is based on the location’s industrial past and is expressed in its colours and mural quality. The dark brick façade contrasts with the light-coloured natural stone of the library. The

cuboid skylights above the classrooms, group rooms and cloakrooms give the façade its rhythm and add selective highlights. The roof over the library inside the deep ground plan opens out towards the northwest to allow light to shine into the interior and to bridge the great distance above the open library and the sports hall. The rooms of the community hall are situated on the ground floor and open out towards the north and the park. The foyer is formulated as an elongated space that permeates the entire building from the park to the west to the delivery entrance to the east, opening out towards the sports hall. The community hall, sports hall and Pestalozzi Library are accessed individually and benefit from direct spatial and visual interrelationships that enhance social interaction and allow clear monitoring.

Schachenmatten School Building, Bonstetten

Competition 2012, 4th Prize

The competition design for the Bonstetten primary school develops the existing campus-like grounds further. The school building is planned as part of a “learning landscape” and should connect all classrooms and group rooms on a single storey. Towards the street, the building appears as a single-storey resting on a base, facing the playing field. Thanks to the topographic characteristics, the building opens out on all sides towards the exterior space on the ground floor. From the street and the adjoining single-family homes, the view spans over the shed roof and onto the expansive plain until the hills to the west. The singing hall is separated from the school building. The covered space in between protects children from the weather and creates a new address on the southeastern periphery of the Schachenmatten school grounds. A clear, simple distribution of accesses and uses is achieved by a rue intérieure along the recreation area, playground and school areas, complementing the group rooms and classrooms. These are organised along the façades. In front of them, a layer of group rooms and inner courtyards are provided for children and teachers to move from the playground to the classrooms through a series of rooms with different atmospheres. The staffroom provides a view of the entrance, playground and playing fields. Open staircases between the floors connect the recreation halls and the cloakrooms and lead straight to the playing fields.

Quart Publishers Ltd., Heinz Wirz
Publishers for Architecture and Art
Denkmalstrasse 2
CH-6006 Lucerne
Telephone +41 41 420 20 82
www.quart.ch