

Work reports on young architects

Menzi Bürgler

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Anthologie 34 – Notat

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It is fascinating to study the work of young architects and ultimately document it in this series of small black volumes. In doing so, we notice the silent passion for architecture that lies behind it. Often – as in the case of Oliver Menzi and Philippe Bürgler – that passion has been kindled and nurtured during their training by renowned and charismatic architects. So this series of brochures has managed to discover little gems in the past and also reveals the focus of interests of the coming generation of architects.

The two architects presented here pursue a strategy of quiet tones, which they play with accomplishment. For instance the sports hall in Matzendorf does not represent a compositional counterpoint to the rural architecture of the Solothurm Jura. Its gentle inclining gable roof picks up on the formal language of the surrounding buildings, thereby enhancing their entire estate. The building draws its power and expression from the fine detailed development of the timber construction, as well as the impressive simplicity of the hall structure. The recently completed new wing of the Felsberg School complex in Lucerne is skilfully integrated into the historical tree population. Three levels grow upwards from the ground, allowing the building to suffice with as small a foundation as possible – thereby protecting the mighty root growth. A central, quadratic, largely closed staircase penetrates the building like an inner tower. It is covered by a pyramid dome with a central skylight. Four additional pyramid-shaped domes provide light for the group rooms and sanitary facilities, giving the roof landscape an extremely expressive note. Overall, the building is a little masterpiece in terms of creating interior space, building structure, material unity and precision in detail.

Lucerne, September 2016

Renovation of the Felsberg School complex, Lucerne

The preservation listed 1948 ensemble by the Lucerne architect Emil Jauch is a characteristic district school located to the northeast of Lucerne's city centre on a terrace-like plateau. The school complex consists of a total of twelve classrooms, a music hall and a sports hall. The ensemble was constructed in a pavilion system that was widespread in Swiss school designs in the 1950s. One important quality of the facility is the harmonious integration of the buildings into the local topography. The architectural concept and child-friendly design are largely orientated towards a Scandinavian-type modernism.

The exterior appearance of the buildings remains preserved after the renovation, while the building envelopes were optimised with respect to energy consumption. Inside, the conversion and renovation measures combine preservation aims with the spatial and technical requirements of contemporary school operations. A reorganised ground floor allowed the library, staffroom and workshop to be allocated to one of the three building wings respectively. On the upper storeys, the existing partition of classrooms within the façade grid received a new structure. The music and sports halls were renovated in harmony with the existing structures.

Extension of the Felsberg School complex, Lucerne

The organisational and spatial requirements of Felsberg School in Lucerne made it necessary to extend the ensemble at the same time as renovating the existing complex. The new building, providing space for two kindergartens and additional supervision facilities, was positioned in the existing gardens, in the midst of its protected tree population, its volumetrics picking up on the playful formal language of the building. The positions of the extension's floors, which are slightly rotated towards each other and recessed, neither affect the roots nor the crowns of the adjacent sequoia trees.

The infants, pupils and supervising staff enter the building via a large lobby in the solid natural stone base. A staircase with a skylight connects the different floors and provides light for the entrance area. Five massive cores each define the flowing floor plans on the upper levels. Sliding partition walls and mobile elements provide open or protected spatial situations, as required. Unlike the

introverted ground floor, the two upper levels open out towards the surroundings and are flooded in natural light. The all-round orientation provides views of the surrounding trees, park grounds and city.

New sports hall, Matzendorf

The new sports hall for the community of Matzendorf functions as a supplement to the existing facility and closes the gap between the rectory and the upper secondary school. The impressive cubature with a flat, inclined roof gives the building its presence and reflects its public character. At the same time, a relationship with the existing village structure is created by conforming to the dominant roof ridge direction, thereby embedding the building into the overall context. The main entrance is situated on the west side near the village and uses its covered forecourt and the adjoining playground to allow events to be extended into the exterior space.

The ground floor of the new building accommodates the sports hall, foyer and auxiliary rooms. On the upper floor, the changing rooms can be accessed from a spectator gallery. The hall is glazed on the northern side, allowing glare-free natural lighting for the playing area and providing a view of the nearby Jura Mountains. The buildings consist of a wooden structure on a concrete foundation. Traditional craftsmanship and timber joints were used for the load-bearing structure, combined with contemporary production methods and prefabrication processes.

Conversion of the Predigerchor, Zentralbibliothek, Zurich

The former Predigerkirche (“Preacher’s Church”) and its accompanying chancel (“Chor”) are among the characteristic structures of the City of Zurich. New functional and technical requirements, as well as heightened demands led the Zentralbibliothek Zürich to carry out a conversion of the Predigerchor spaces. The access situation was fundamentally reorganised during the renovation and enhanced by an inviting entrée. Now, visitors use a prestigious exterior staircase in the library courtyard to enter the foyer with its reception area.

A renovated staircase, which was freed from clustering installations, and a barrier-free elevator allow employees and the public to access all floors including the music department. The design of the interior space and the exhibition concept of the “Treasure Chamber” were newly conceived. All exhibits are illuminated and highlighted in modular show cabinets and niches in the wall. The conversion work involved extensive excavation work beneath the archaeologically important existing structures, as well as measures to the preservation-listed building structure. The work was carried out in close coordination with the relevant authority. In addition to preserving as much as possible of the building’s material structure, great attention was also paid to the structural context in which additional new structures were erected.

New parish hall, Würenlos

To fulfil its changed spatial requirements, the Würenlos Evangelical-Reformed church community announced a project competition for the new development of a parish hall. A former burial area in the existing cemetery was released for development for this purpose. The new building is integrated into the existing structure of the cemetery square as part of the overall ensemble. The remains of 60 already dissolved graves were carefully exhumed prior to the building measures and relocated to a common grave.

While the contour and colours are orientated towards the existing church building, the construction and materials of the parish hall have an autonomous expression, without dominating the contemplative location. The structure of prefabricated timber elements allowed an optimised construction process and made it possible to erect the overground section of the building within a few days. The building envelope consists of the naturally ageing materials of wood and copper.

The inner organisation of the parish hall is designed in accordance with the use requirements. The new building’s ground floor houses the functions that are used on a daily basis, namely the rectory office, a meeting room, the welfare and social office and the secretary’s office. Two differently sized common rooms are accommodated on the upper level for events.

New upper secondary school construction, Matzendorf

The extension to the upper secondary school in Matzendorf is located to the southwest of the existing school building, which was erected in the 1960s. The 90° rotation of the entrance façade creates a central village square and recreation ground in front of the two buildings, welcoming a range of different users. The new building condenses the school within the existing buildings without reducing the reserve of land that is still suitable for development. A covered crossing walkway connects the extension to the existing building and also highlights the new entrance area. A reserved cubature with a flat saddle roof, which is structured by large, framed openings, determines the architectural expression of the school building.

The inner organisation of the school building is designed in a functional, clear way. The six classrooms and the staffroom are positioned over two floors around a schoolyard and a cloakroom area with a skylight. Two staircases with a sculptural character structure the central access area. Each group and preparatory room is organised between two classrooms. The group rooms create a spatial extension of the schoolyard on the ground and upper levels. Their large openings stage both the view to the south and a reference to the new square to the north.

Renovation of the west wing of Basel SBB station

To this day, Basel SBB fulfils the function of a border station and is one of the largest stations in Switzerland, handling 120,000 passengers a day. A comprehensive renovation project is aimed at developing the station into a multifunctional location in the future. The currently required measures are mainly in the west wing of the preservation-listed entrance building. In the long term, it is to be positioned as a commercial location by creating and extending attractive shopping offers and services, while also consolidating its character as a high-quality place for people to spend time in.

The planned reconstruction of the two-storey crossing walkway on the ground floor plays a central role as a connection with an appropriate scale between the main hall of the station and the hall in the west wing. The latter will have the existing customs facilities removed to restore the use of the adjoining rooms.

The historical structures of the original station catering halls and the two waiting rooms will remain preserved. At the south façade, a kind of winter garden is planned beneath the platform roof, serving as an enlarged space with a reference to the tracks. Underground, a large-scale basement beneath the historical structure provides space for a new supermarket. Additional space for services can be provided around the existing atria on the upper levels.

Hofacher housing development, Kaisten

The “Hofacher” building area is situated between the historical village centre of Kaisten and a quarter of single-family homes on the Lümberg hill. The steep incline on the western side of the plot and the crossing Kaisterbach stream structure the topography of the location. The lower part of the grounds, to the east and west of the stream, is interpreted as a coherent area and developed with five apartments buildings. Instead of having a spatially separating effect, the stream enhances the location as its central element. The three-storey buildings with attics are positioned in a scattered way on the plot, creating an open, permeable development structures that contribute to the expansive character of the terrain and offer everyone an appropriate open space. The apartment buildings planned in timber will have a total of 45 apartments.

New parish hall, Rüti ZH

The Evangelical-Reformed parish of Rüti planned the pooling of publicly used spaces near the church building. A church centre in the middle of the village is planned by converting the old rectory and building a new parish hall in the rectory garden. The placement of the new building picks up on the spatial quality of the grounds. With its compact design, it positions itself along the plot perimeters, while neither spatially nor volumetrically undermining the effect and presences of the old rectory as the main building, due to its maximum distance to the existing structures. Typologically, the planned new building is orientated towards free-standing pavilion buildings. Furthermore, its embedding in the green space and the alignment of the large-scale lattice windows recall the atmosphere of former orangery buildings in old monastery grounds.

District estate extension, Winterthur

In the extended Winterthur district estate, various institutions of the Canton and a new prison are to be organised as independent operative units with spatial synergies. With respect to urban planning, the project picks up on the typology of industrial estates, which are particularly prevalent along the railway lines in Winterthur. The superordinate theme is to position long, narrow buildings that are displaced perpendicularly to each other and directly merge with the exterior space, without creating any spacer zones. The older structures of the district estate remain preserved and will receive an administrative extension with the same height. The new prison building, which is separated from administrative functions, is positioned parallel to the existing buildings along the railway tracks and creates space between the buildings for illuminated courtyards and a delivery yard.

New district court building, Meilen

On the grounds of the district estate in Meilen, a new building is planned to assume the public functions of the court. The project supplements the existing ensemble with a three-storey structure and a quadratic footprint, which will be inserted as an independent volume. The placement creates a forecourt that gives the building an appropriate presence. The interior world of the new building is orientated towards clear organisation and guidance. After the entrance area, visitors enter a foyer adjoining the required auxiliary rooms. A staircase situated centrally at the façade leads to the two upper levels with waiting areas for the public. These brightly designed zones open out broadly into the exterior space. By contrast, the wooden-clad courtrooms with skylights for natural illumination express an introverted atmosphere.

Tüfwis housing development, Winkel

The “Tüfwis” housing development is situated at the southern edge of the village Winkel and is strongly characterised by a uniform appearance. In transforming the estate into its next life cycle, the owner intends to replace most of the apartment buildings with new developments. The placement of those buildings planned in the project is integrated into the urban development of the existing estate, without dissolving its identity-enhancing open spaces or undermining its permeability. To use the existing potential of the property, four new buildings with a total of 109 apartments are planned. Their scale will be orientated towards the original development. The use-related division of the blocks into individual cubatures allows the harmonious staggering of the buildings in the terrain and the alignment of the buildings towards the southwest.

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