

# Philipp Wieting

Quart Publishers **Anthology 19**

Anthology 19 – Notat  
Heinz Wirz

The city of Zurich is an extensive conglomerate of numerous, frequently small and fragmentary districts or former village centres, each organized in a very different way. There is occasionally an abrupt clash between urban structures, different building characters and disparate types of infrastructures. This is also true of one section of the district Zürich-Giesshübel, which is sandwiched between the railway line, the motorway viaduct and the main traffic artery. Here it is evident what the architecture can and must fulfil in an incongruent city quarter. The architectural team Werknetz Architektur, grouped around Philipp Wieting, did not simply fill up the development areas but instead attempted to find a subtle balance between supplementary geometries and building volumes and in doing so not only repaired and enhanced these districts but also made them more sophisticated in a form of fine-chiselling and incorporated the required utilisations imaginatively. The building along the Rüdigerstrasse is located precisely within the structure of the existing city fragment. The façade facing away from the street forms a slight bend that is taken up by the opposite façade in an undulating movement.

The career of Werknetz Architektur began with the school facility in Flims. Planned in 1999, the monolithic building combines two types of school and a common tract with a double gymnasium. While in the 60s the goal of such a project was to keep the different types of school and the gym explicitly separate, presenting them as individual buildings, here the reverse intention applies. The different types of space merge to form one single building structure. The architectural quality lies in the spatial density. This is created by superimposing different conceptual – pragmatic and poetic – levels, without losing the sense of what is important.

*Lucerne, in October 2010*

### **Conversion of office storey, Zürich**

The static structure of the building from the 1950s will be superimposed with a new form of utilization that will include six individual rentable offices as well as a shared spatial ensemble with a reception and meeting area. All the rooms are characterized by this overlapping of old and new.

The rough, raw concrete roof with its central bearer will be exposed and painted white. Its surface will contrast with the smooth, white-painted walls and the frosted glass of the sliding doors.

### **Institute of Higher Education, Wädenswil**

In 1997 the institute of higher education in Wädenswil, which belongs to the Zürich University of Applied Sciences, was supplemented by the courses of study Food Technology and Horticulture (garden-, wine- and fruit cultivation) following a fundamental restructuring and has since seen a striking increase in the number of students. It became absolutely essential to expand the available space by constructing a new building in the existing location.

“Drawing the required space allocation plan together to form a concentrated building structure in a location with a relatively unproblematic location means that large areas of the site can be kept free of development. The building has been designed as a low overall volume, like a landscape element, a piece of land that breaks out of the gentle slope. The interaction between the countryside and the technology, research and education, becomes an architectural theme. A convincing aspect is the clear division of a seemingly complex building structure into the three areas lectures/cafeteria, administration and laboratories, as well as the clever integration of the zones of access into the overall element – the area of transfer.” (Excerpt from the jury report). The finely-woven nets used to protect the vines from hailstones are part of the surrounding landscape. They stretch across airy spaces and integrate themselves into the natural environment. The building shell of the new institute of higher education is based on this image. The backlit facade is clad with a finely-woven steel mesh. The material hangs from the edge of the roof in different lengths and has sections cut out for the window openings where required. In some sections it is stretched across the large panes of glass where it creates an interesting play of light in the building interior when the sun shines. The material covering the entire facade has the effect of drawing the complex building structure together and connecting the different storey heights of the institute wings to create a uniform whole.

### **Administration Building Untertor, Chur**

A new superstructure for a commercial- and administration building is being planned in a strategically important location in Chur. The task is to construct a building with the greatest possible utilization potential while at the same creating an important urban feature that is appropriate to the location. Great importance is placed on creating an overall concept that fits the cityscape and the nature of the quarter. The intention is to convey the character of a public building both on the interior and exterior.

“The project respects the body of rules specified in the quarter-plan and transforms the existing building development into a large structure that is convincing both in terms of its volume and the urban planning. Due to the precise alignment of the rotations and bends in the building development a front façade facing the square in front of the town theatre is created that is appropriate for the special setting. The public building has a corresponding area of public access on the interior. This space allows the special corner situation and the rotation to also be experienced in the interior of the building. Thus the building is divided into four sections by “cracks”, which begin at the points where the building has been rotated. The gap that is created structures the building and also gives the administration building a lasting identity on the interior. This structuring generates the concept behind the spatial composition: Daylight enters the depths of the storeys from all sides and gives the interior spaces a special ambience. This complex spatial system of indentations and perversions is fascinating as it characterizes the architects’ overall solution concept. (..). The spatially complex work represents a special, above-average solution proposal for the administration buildings.” (Excerpt from the jury report).

### **Comprehensive School (Gesamtschule), Flims**

The comprehensive school in Flims is a self-contained, solitary building at the foot of a former ski slope. The five-storey, compact building volume is incorporated into the context of the detached buildings in this location and responds to the existing typography with a minimal intervention in the terrain and the landscape.

In place of the otherwise typical subdivision of the upper and lower grades in each of the school buildings, a shared building is the main focus of the design proposal, a place to come together. In this way, both the schools are drawn together and the common wing and double gymnasium create a complex whole. The resulting spatial closeness creates an operative potential, leads to a richness of experience and not least serves the building economy. The alignment of the ground plan is surprisingly simple and clearly structured: All three operative units each have their own point of access, through which they are connected to one another. The transparency on the interior means that in each area one is aware of what is going on in the other areas. The frosted glass windows become projection surfaces for light, contours and

movement. The area of access enhances the clear and comprehensible spatial organisation and allows a flexible response to alternating conditions of use. The materials used (exposed concrete, oak wood, glass), as well as the building alignment, create a poetic ambience in the interior, however they also provide impressive views of the surrounding alpine countryside.

The usual iconography of school buildings has been consciously avoided here. The size of the building has not been used as an attempt to relate to the size of the children but this has rather been achieved by the play with the proportions, the grid, construction and appearance of the facade. The glass facade allows the building to be easily incorporated into the natural colourful environment and changes its appearance depending on the location and ambience, discreetly emphasizing its important role as a public building.

### **Conversion of VonRoll Site, Bern**

The need for more space prompted the University of Bern to purchase the VonRoll site on the outskirts of Bern. The plan is to transform the site in different stages into the university centre for natural history.

The project aims to maintain the industrial proportions as well as the character of the VonRoll site. A site-specific approach and the traces of the past are perceived as an opportunity to create a new cityscape, although the interventions made to the building substance are too great from the perspective of building conservativists. Through the continued construction of a linear, additive structure, the character of the large workshop halls is maintained, built on, and compressed to create a new whole.

The site is supplemented by a fifty metre high ashler. This ashler will be a symbol that provides identity, both on the interior and the exterior. With a vertical zone of access in the south and the main areas of utilization in the north, the new building volume is clearly divided into two sections. The useable areas are in the form of “megafloors”. That means that only the floor spaces of every other storey are part of the primary system. In this way a high level of flexibility in terms of utilization is created: on a vertical axis due to the double storey height, which also allows for the installation of large auditoriums for example, and through the organisation of the floor plan based on a support-free space. Possible differences in height are compensated with ramps. Emergency exit balconies enable the installation of laboratories. A central theme here is the creation of an area of access as a public space: a vertical “cityscape” with escalators provides access to all of the useable areas and in this way comprises the real centre of the university.

The facade is conceived as a double-shell construction. The interior glazing can be opened to provide individual ventilation and access (cleaning, emergency exit

balcony). The folding shutters made of metal fabric in the layer between the facades serve as a glare shield. The double-shell facade allows the windows to be opened despite the fact that the location is very exposed to noise. The solid building volume behind the glass facade makes the tower appear opaque by day and transparent by night.

### **Detached house, Domat/Ems**

In addition to an impressive exposed concrete building from the 1970s the client desired a smaller but equally unique house, a so-called “Alterstöckli” (place of retirement). Despite the new building being close to the old one it is important that the proximity is not too great in order that the indisputable qualities of the latter are not depreciated and the required demarcation is maintained. The new building is developed in accordance with the specific characteristics of the location as well as the shape of the remaining plot of land: A shell of pigmented exposed concrete on the one hand forms an introverted, private ground floor with an atrium-like outside area and on the other hand a spatial boundary to the section of the site that has been sold. The concrete shell encloses almost the entire new plot of land and has several angles. The entrance front on the north side has no “protective wall”; here the visitor is welcomed by an open, glassed entrance area. A spaciouly glazed upper storey protrudes out of the concrete shell, providing a magnificent view far into the valley on both sides. The material used for the interior follows the logic of the basic building concept. The ceilings and the supporting concrete walls have been painted white. The facing, in other words the area of interior insulation, emphasize the theme of lining: The plaster is left raw and forms a unit together with the anhydrite floor, which is also perceived as lining due to its floating nature. Together with the materials used for the interior fittings and the furnishing, a coherent colour concept is created, which corresponds precisely to the joints between the different building components and also builds on the client’s existing furnishings.

### **University of Applied Science, Olten**

The competition perimeter lies in a heterogeneous area along the track areas of the SBB. The open area gives the location spaciousness and this will be maintained by the creation of a continuous square – a forum. This new square is set up as a large, coherent area of movement that leads through the respective ground floor of the building. Two to three solid building volumes that seem to hover over the square rise up above the public ground and first floor storeys. In the first phase, the utilisation of the new building will be clearly separated, storey for storey, while the level of public utilisation becomes less and less the higher one goes. The interior of the

building is not characterized by the long corridors but by a meeting area and zone of access at the point where several departments and subject areas interact. This continuous space begins with the auditorium in the basement storey then leads to the media storey on the open ground floor via ramps, and on into the lecture storey via a rotating cascading stairway. Due to its planned central location on the site, the building is oriented towards all sides. It can be reached by rotating the area of access storey for storey. This creates a fascinating spatial development with constant new views: a place of communication and exchange. Thus a public, attractive zone of access on the interior is formed that corresponds to the public nature of the building.

### **Residential development edeneins, Zürich**

The two six-storey building volumes with a total of 61 condominiums adhere to the alignment of the existing buildings specified in the urban planning, and in this way fit the local conditions of the quarter. The area Zürich-Giesshübel will be enhanced by creating a new accentuation and thus contributing to the mixed utilisation aspect of the quarter (living and working). The bend in the facades that face one another creates an enclosed, spacious courtyard, which draws the two building volumes together so that they appear as one unit. The design of the development has a civic character. This is achieved by the uniform format of the windows, which connects the respective facades of the two buildings. The dark facade plaster enhances the physical nature and unity of the two buildings. The fact that the colours of these buildings differ from those of the surrounding ones prevents them being connected one-sidedly to one of the neighbouring buildings and in this way backs up the central alignment of the residential building in the midst of the quarter.

All the apartments are orientated in two directions, towards the courtyard and the street, primarily in the living and dining area. The alignment and design of the bathrooms also support the theme of open-plan living: The bathroom is integrated the layer of rooms so that a second uninhibited view is created. This creates a generous size and spatial diversity, also in the case of the smaller apartments. The bathroom area and the kitchens are inserted into the central wetroom volume. This spatial concept is implemented following two lines of development: one of them works with the structure and surface of materials, the other with the theme of colour and coating.

### **Detached house, Chur**

This initially introverted, almost repellent detached house was created on the basis of the route of the street around the sloping building site and the client's desire for privacy. Three storeys aligned differently within the floor plan have been

stacked to create a cohesive exposed concrete sculpture. The use of local concrete with two different types of shell and as a result the differing structure of the surfaces draws the different storeys together to form a whole and emphasizes the sculptural character of the building.

Despite the fact that the slope storey has been dug into the mountain, its proportions are visible from all sides of the building. Together with the pool it forms a platform for the living space of the ground floor above it, which, conceived as a spatial enclosure, divides the private from the public space. Views from the street are consistently avoided. The frequent curves in the exposed concrete shear wall not only represent the spatial closure of the ground floor but also connect the outer and inner space. In this way the private areas become very spacious. The upper storey has been designed in line with the maximum permitted parameters – the inner geometry of the spatial divisions however follows that of the ground floor and in this way creates an interesting design dynamic. Three windows provide horizontal views. The rooms in the upper storey are lit via the patios, which, in a similar way to the alignment of the airspaces, create fascinating spatial impressions and ensembles between the two residential storeys.

### **SBB Lounge, Railcity Zürich**

Europe's leading rail companies have joined together to form the association Railteam with the constitutional goal of improving the network of rail offers and making travel in high speed trains easier and more comfortable for the customers. In addition to a large number of other services still in planning there are also lounges for 1st class travellers and frequent travellers at the important hubs and stations. The Swiss national railway (SBB) will now offer this service in the form of a lounge for the first time in the RailCity Zürich. Here the travellers are cared for intensely and for this reason the SBB lounges have something special, something unique that cause them to stand out from the other lounges.

The proposal for the SBB lounge is characterized by an architectural, spatial solution: a dark blue building volume – a “bright gem” – is the trademark of all future SBB lounges (corporate architecture). The artificial ensemble divides the existing spatial structures into different living zones. All the services provided are combined within the cube. In the planning, the shape of the building is to a large extent flexible and is based on the circumstances found in the respective locations of the Railcities, the type of lounge area required for the location, as well as the services provided. The lounge waiting areas span the area between the existing walls and the new building volume. The spatial relations between the existing buildings and the inserted volumes as well as the interior and exterior space create a density offering different ambiances that are immediately tangible for the visitor.

## **Residential development *edendrei*, Zürich**

In an urban planning context Edendrei forms the extension of the curved building Staffelstrasse 8–12 and in this way generates a clear, self-evident completion of the quarter opposite the Sihltal railway. Because the decision as to how to utilize the building was not to be made until a later planning stage, the new building has a primary structure that has no specified utilisation, which means it can be put to both residential and office use. The building volume is characterized by a strict basic grid, analogue with the surrounding commercial buildings.

Different interior design concepts were created, which could be inserted into the structure: for the office utilization a service-/office module with an integrated sanitary and tea kitchen core, for the residential building a standard residential module and alternatively a loft module. Both residential modules play with the double-sided alignment of the apartment, however with different spatial statements: while the loft core and the way in which the space flows around a central volume reflect the implementation of a well-established spatial model, the standard core plays with a dividing element as a connection between the two sides of the apartment. A spatial diversity is generated according to the spatial-structural specifications. The way in which the rooms are constructed is based on what the client desires. The adaptation of the “office construction style” to the residential building construction with a consistent separation of primary-, secondary-, and tertiary structures not only represents a contribution to a sustainable method of construction but also produces spatially diverse yet clearly structured apartments due to the layering of different systems. The facade made of white painted concrete elements supports the connection to the existing building. On the side where the trains are, long balconies extend out of the severe structure and emphasize the curved shape of the building. A clever play with the grid, as well as individual balconies, is a subtle indication of the residential utilisation of the building.