

# Allemann Bauer Eigenmann

Quart Publishers **Anthology 15**

Anthology 15 – Notat

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Three large new buildings are included in the list of works by the Zurich architects Patric Allemann, Martin Bauer and Marc Eigenmann, and an impressive number of current projects are about to be implemented. Each of the three public buildings already reveals a solid architectural language. The buildings do not have a similar outward appearance, but the way in which they react to the existing conditions, how they create inner space, how they modulate the building volume and tectonically structure the surfaces all show the same hallmark. The floor plans are careful to mediate with external geometries, for instance with the Mettlen school building in Wallenwil and the Jenaz old people's home. Or they are confidently inserted into the orthogonal qualities of the estate, as is the case with the school facility in Oberkirch. The inner functions of the building thereby develop a harmonious modulation of the floor plan. A balance is achieved between the external and inner influences and "forces". In the first school building, these are only small, delicate balancing measures in the floor plan. The Jenaz building however is strongly modulated in a way that recalls sculptures by Eduardo Chillida. The same image of Chillida's formal world leads us to the arrangement of the inner areas. In the Oberkirch school, mysterious rooms and chambers open out from the ground floor. Only after walking through the classrooms on the upper floor does the architectural structure become apparent, as we realise that classroom units have been enveloped around stairways.

There are several important aspects in architecture, of which spatial creation lies at the centre of the field, if we regard architecture as one of the five visual arts. It is closely related to sculpture, it creates powerful sculptural bodies and also opens inner spatial sequences and cavities. They are opposing qualities that are mutually enhancing, enriching and complementary.

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### **Mettlen school building, Wallenwil**

The Wallenwil school facility is situated on a landscape of rolling hills on a plateau. The Mettlen school building anchors the edge of the plane and formulates the transition to the northwardly descending incline. The compact volumetrics of the new building respects the long-distance view of the location, which is dictated by the old school building, with its massive hip roof. Together with the existing multipurpose hall, both school buildings frame an external space that forms a playground and village square as a new centre for the facility. The section is developed from the contours of the terrain: The lower ground floor and the first floor are both offset by half a floor from the elevated recreation hall, which is situated on the level of the square. The sectional solution determines the arrangement of the programme of rooms: The recreation hall is the main entrance for the primary school with its classrooms on the two upper floors. The kindergarten has an entrance on the ground floor and an outer area that is separate from the playground. The slight rotation of the floor plan, which was necessary for reasons of planning permission, has a dynamic effect on the non-parallel wall alignments in the access area. It develops as a different spatial figure on each floor, allowing the building to be perceived in all of its longitudinal and lateral extension. Classrooms and group rooms each create a unity with internal connections along the façade. Sliding doors allow the flexible use of individual rooms.

With the plastered façades, and the windows and entrances framed in artificial stone, the materials and elements of the existing school building are picked up upon and newly interpreted.

### **Fürstenu care centre, Wil**

The existing corner building from 1978 was transformed with a double-sided docking three-storey wing to create an overall facility. The new wing reaches out into the park and thereby defines the boundary of a green area that stretches from the Wil old town to the limits of the town. In addition to the existing courtyard that is open on one side, the facility creates a new inner courtyard that forms the introverted centre of an enlarged care centre. To compensate for the green area that was built upon, an attractive roof garden was created for the extension building, providing a view of the Wil forest and the Kurfürstpanorama. Access to the care floors is accompanied by the inner courtyard and the view at the end of each corridor, making a tour of the facility possible. So residents, who are strongly bound to the building, are provided an attractive, varied opportunity for walking around the facility. The entrance to the ward and the

waiting rooms extend along the round tour, providing opportunities for rest. In addition to the function of simple access, users, visitors and staff can also use the area as a meeting place.

The load-bearing ornamental concrete façade for the extension picks up on the theme of sculptural continuous aprons on the existing building, although its proportions are varied. A light glaze visually combines the differently structured ornamental concrete surfaces of the old and new buildings.

### **Residential and business building on the Limmatquai, Zurich**

The building is a conglomerate of originally three buildings and an alleyway in between. A fundamental structural conversion and construction process was implemented between 1958 and 1960, uniting the estate and its alleyway to create today's building. Due to pragmatic measures since then, the design qualities of the building have been diluted and partially eliminated. The aim of the renovation work was to reactivate the original sophisticated expression by means of a free interpretation of contemporary materials and colours. The focus lies on a new design for the building's entrance and store windows, the renovation of the stairway and inner courtyard, as well as the conversion of the loft into an apartment. The recessed and the connecting hall, with their glass mosaic walls and white artificial stone flooring, provide an adequate overture for the high quality rented rooms on the upper storeys. While the spatially attractive stairway is complemented by a specific colour and light concept, the inner courtyard was completely transformed with new window formats and a glass mosaic façade. Three quadrangular dormer windows articulate the new residential use in the loft and define the conclusion of the building according to the logic of the existing main façade.

Like an atrium building, the apartment envelops the inner courtyard. Long alignments connect the oversized, continuous living room with the other rooms. In addition to the spatial variety, the apartment is attractive through the scenically staggered views of Niederdorf and the panorama extending beyond the River Limmat the roofs of the city.

### **Seebach old people's estate, Zurich**

The three Katzenbach apartment buildings at the front of the square towards Tramendstation are a striking ensemble, formulating the green zone that is important for the quarter, with its leisure facilities. The new buildings' placement extends it to form a linear park that stretches past the estate up to

Schaffhauserstrasse. Height development is oriented by the existing and planned buildings along Schaffhauserstrasse to create a specific rhythm of higher and lower buildings along the exit road. By recessing the volume, the idea of an urban, dense, vertical estate is strengthened and the scale can refer to the context.

The consistency of the urban planning concept means the 4-unit rows of houses have no rear façades. All apartments are oriented on two sides and have the common principle of a core of bathroom, kitchen and loggia, around which the living rooms are aligned. A tour of each apartment is possible using the loggias. Together with long lines of sight and switchable rooms with double doors, a spatially generous and varied facility is created in conjunction with the ideal use of the space for the apartments.

Light, levigated masonry covers the exterior wall surfaces with a subtle texture and gives the façades a fine-scale plasticity in the level light. The light levigating contrasts with the colour of the loggias and the dark window profiles.

### **Freihof and Town Hall urban planning, Altstätten**

The Town Hall, the Freihof and the four buildings of the Churer-/Städlenstrasse estate define new urban spaces in the existing context, combining with the planned new street routes to form ordering elements that clarify the existing situation and create new interrelationships.

By placing the new Town Hall as an individual, vertical building at the edge of the plot, the Town Hall square opens up and establishes an attractive visual and accessing relationship with the old town. The tangential route of the road allows the square to remain undisturbed by traffic and become a stage for a wide range of activities.

The newly built Freihof is developed from the dense construction of the old town and concludes its northeastern side. Together with the existing neighbouring building on the opposite side of the street, a succinct gateway situation is created that acts as a transition from the town centre to the park-like late 19th Century town expansion to the suburbs.

The buildings in the Churer-/Städlenstrasse estate are oriented by the roughness and dense placement of the construction pattern of the suburban quarter. The building's direct relationship with the street creates clear urban spatial situations towards Freihof and strengthens the character of the Neue Churerstrasse. Towards the east, a calm, spatially framed courtyard situation is created. The morphological strategy of staggered height integrates the new buildings into the silhouette of the grown town and traces the topographical line that is typical of Altstätten.

## **School facility extension, Oberkirch**

The extension for the Oberkirch primary school is a two-storey volume placed upon a disused civil defence facility. The longitudinal alignment of the building volume parallel to the existing building follows the logic of the original planning by the architect Fritz Metzger and transforms the playground into a spatially framed central point of the facility. Articulated through the powerfully protruding upper storey, the entrance section forms an additional covered recreation area. The terrain that slopes towards the river allowed the former civil defence facility to be cleared on the southwestern side in order to activate a semi-basement. The school building slightly protrudes forward and mediates towards the lower lying playing field.

An interior access room forms the backbone of the building, with a linear development on the ground floor that reaches into the upper storey with two individual protuberances. Meeting areas are created at its ends to serve as locker areas for two classes and additional working areas for small groups. As a contrast to the classrooms that are oriented outwards with large windows, the access area's central lighting and some two-storey rooms provide a more inverted atmosphere. Classrooms and group rooms are internally connected to each other to provide flexible teaching concepts.

The new building in ornamental concrete picks up on the material of the existing building while maintaining its own distinct expression through granulated shear walls and smooth form finish continuous aprons.

## **St. Gallen speech therapy school**

Situated on an attractive location with a fine view, the school building provides a further element in the series of striking school and institute buildings on the brow of the Rosenberg hill. Together with the neighbouring school building, the vertically developed new building unfolds an entrance area and playground that places the speech therapy school facility access in a spatial relationship with the larger section of the campus that develops down the slope. The terraced nature of the school compound is a reference to the volumetric development of the new building. The terrain's conclusion is formed by the partially voluminous terraces, which are legible as part of the building due to the materials used. The racking continues on the upper floors of the building as an organising element.

The classrooms and kindergarten are accessed from a common entrance. A meandering spatial figure connects the kindergarten rooms on the garden and entrance floor. The classrooms and therapy rooms for the primary and upper

schools are arranged in opposite pairs on the upper floors. A central access hall provides changing views of the town and the valley plane to the north and thereby picks up on the theme of the building's special location on the brow of a hill. The façades have been given a clinker brick masonry materialisation as an interpretation of the late 19th Century villas that spread over the Rosenberg. Masoned window linings that protrude by half a brick breadth from the line of the wall underline the massive nature of the volume and give the views a fine scale relief.

### **Da casa val lumnezia old people's home, Vella**

A powerful, four-storey volume occupies the edge of the perimeter and keeps its distance from the small-scale units of the village structure. The new building is oriented by the scale of the school and multipurpose hall, entering into a dialogue with them to formulate the valley-facing side of the Vella community. The polygonal ground plan and the single hipped roof forms the building into a compact, sculptural volume with an actual size that cannot be quantified from the street level. Between the village and the building, an exterior area is created that combines the character of rural meadows and the gardens of the village centre, providing a small landscaped park form the residents of the village and the home.

The meeting and accessing area develops as a distinct spatial figure between the groups of rooms, the central core and the two inner courtyards. The cascade-like developed sections give each inner courtyard its own identity and multiple spatial relationships are created between the different floors. The chapel and multipurpose rooms are arranged as a crowning group of rooms in the attic. Together with the social rooms on the ground floor, the section reveals a spatial clasp for the residential floors and picks up on the theme of vertical development through the building.

The sculptural nature of the building volume is complemented by the interplay of light and shade of the façades, with their cornices and ledges. The alternating windows, which are aligned in alternation on the different floors, and structural elements conceal the similar structure of the rooms and evoke the individual expression of a residential building.

### **Maintenance area, St. Gallen garden authority**

Two long buildings complement the orthogonal facility of the botanical garden and formulate the transition to the adjoining sports facility. Roof surfaces staggered along the longitudinal axes structure the large volume and integrate it into the existing rooftop landscape. The new and existing buildings thereby form an architectural and topographical ensemble together with the plateau of the sports facility.

Linear external spaces between the buildings act as works roads and are the primary ordering elements for the facility, along which the various functions are aligned. The upper works road is organised by slight deviations in the façades that articulate the access to and conclusion of the interspace. Projecting roofs provide an upward framework.

Three parallel rows of columns form the vertical load-bearing structure of both halls. At the centre of the building, the columns are aligned at a double distance to provide flexibility. The larger span is achieved through timber beams. Their static height is the reason for the displaced roof that allows an additional band of windows to provide light for the deep floor plan.

The roofs and closed façade surfaces are clad in corrugated fibre cement that gives the powerful building a finer scaled texture. The windows, gates and ornamental eaves are made of translucent fibreglass. Clear glass fields within the diffuse fields of light provide focused views out of the halls.

### **Old people's home, Jenaz**

Situated on the old main road on the valley floor, the stately building represents the beginning of Jenaz town. Along the road, the building with its three-part structure relates to the scale of the existing construction and its retracted central section defines a concise entrance area. On the side facing the street, the volume unfolds all of its strength and thereby reacts to the Alpine topography. The large ground floor area provides room for a first floor terrace as a separate exterior space for residents with dementia.

Like a hotel lobby, the central entrance hall is the hub of the facility. Vertical accesses and paths to the social rooms and the garden are all connected to the hall. Three cores and the peripheral room groups structure the floor plan of the residential storeys. Corridors and common rooms act as a substitute for village lanes and squares, allowing residents to go on different tours of the facility with a range of views. Two inner courtyards accompany the interior stairs, add daylight to the depths of the building and create visual relationships

between the floors. The rooms are composed as parlours. Large windows provide bed-ridden people a view of the landscape, while deep jambs offer seating and storage opportunities.

Cornices and window linings made of glazed concrete and the woodwork of the windows structure the views. The architectural expression of light plaster façades refers to bourgeois buildings that confidently play their solitary role and yet appropriately integrate themselves into the context through their materialisation and colours.