

# UNDEND

Quart Publishers **Anthology 12**

Anthology 12 – Notat  
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Slowly and relentlessly, like the world itself, architecture changes and, along with it, its promoters change too. The architectural standpoints that used to be en vogue only yesterday have now been forgotten or have become a part of the history of architecture. A new generation grows into a new world. Thus its tasks change, and, accordingly, architectural solutions. New aspects join continuing constants of architecture. At the same time, these contemporary questions demand for new sources of inspiration. For centuries, architects have instinctively found these sources of inspiration in the study of different cultural environments and buildings. The architects of UNDEND face this challenge. All five partners of the Zurich bureau have completed their education, or parts of it, in New York or India. Here they have learned to question premises and predefined mechanisms and to discover a potential for unorthodox solutions in paradoxical and challenging circumstances. They have sharpened their senses for the quest to develop a future-oriented architecture. The indispensable expansion of exhibition space for the art fair Liste in Basel, for instance, becomes an expressively growing annex, a garage building is turned into a spatial *mise-en-scène* of light and view. A standardized window element – reaching all the way from the floor to the ceiling – is transformed into a main architectural theme for an entire housing settlement containing over a hundred apartments, the form of a farm-house with a barn is the basis for a new residential building, in which spaces for living and traditional appearance are in delicate balance. All of these examples are innovative solutions par excellence, which, rather than being a part of a “zeitgeist”, represent the experimental nature of the approach.

*Lucerne, December 2009*

### **Housing Development Rautistrasse, Zurich**

“Sur”, the winning project in a public housing competition by the City of Zurich, is the only project comprised in this publication, which has not yet been realized. As center-folds in the binders it is interlaced into the book to create references to other projects.

The building lot in Zurich-Altstetten at the foot of the Üetliberg is situated in a hetero-geneously scaled part of the city. Seven buildings with 105 apartments in total occupy the parcel in such a way that the former garden landscape, consisting of existing mead-ows and trees, will be preserved. The housing regulations have been utilized to optimize the quality of the urban setting in regards to free space and visual permeability as opposed to maximizing the degree of exploitation.

The seven-storey buildings are organized in layers of two flats per floor and provide an orientation of all apartments towards three sides, thus offering a wide range of changing light-atmospheres in the course of a day and diverse views over the city of Zurich.

### **Warehouse for Construction Materials, Bülach**

This project resulted from a commission to elaborate an architectural concept for a parcel of 25'500 sqm in the industrial zone of Bülach. In a first phase a warehouse for construction materials including an office and a shop is realized.

The floor plan of the building interprets the layout of an early Roman settlement discovered in the marshlands nearby. The integration of these spatial dispositions with the functional requirements of the client will generate the project. The result is a volume defined by foundation walls rising up towards the roof, which, with its transparent skin, becomes a large window in the landscape. The main hall is located between the slabs forming the foundation, offering glimpses of the landscape through caesuras in the concrete. Framed by steel walls picking up the roof's cantilevers and determining the geometry of the circulation, the building functions as a warehouse for construction materials.

### **Annex Garage, Bülach**

This building is an addition to an existing single-family house dating from 1967. Situated on the top of a hill at the edge of a forest, the house benefits from a remarkable view over the northern Zurich region near the airport. The challenge was to relate a new structure to that view rather than obstructing it, while at the same time accommodating the space for two cars. The project consists of a series of horizontal and vertical concrete slabs, forming inlays into the topography, garden walls and the covered space for the garage. The series of walls and planes form interstitial spaces and provide inner and outer areas.

Following the concept of the walls, the gate is formed as a wheeled panel and refers to the concrete in terms of color. Large-format windows emphasize the views from the driveway and the entrance in both directions, simultaneously serving for the illumination of the garden and the pathway. The color and light concept is further enhanced by fluorescent pigments, which are activated by the cars' headlights in twilight and during night hours.

### **Ville, Commercial Building, Bülach**

The commercial building Ville constitutes the second phase of the development of the Engelswisen building lot (see project Warehouse for Construction Materials). A local construction company was the initiator of the project with the objective to generate synergies with other construction-related companies by joining their office premises, the maintenance depot and parking for the vehicles. The direct spatial connection between the existing warehouse for construction materials and the further accentuated references to the horizon and the topography create an urban ensemble with a distinctive identity.

The wall-like dimensions of the building – ten meters wide, 110 meters long and with a height of 21.5 meters – organizes the outdoor space into an access area (white façade) and a courtyard for deliveries, maintenance, storage and parking (black façade). The interior circulation system is accomplished by single-flight stairs, which cut diagonally through the volume, turning the building's accentuated proportions into a spatial experience.

### **Liste 06 – The Young Art Fair, Basel**

In 2006 Liste – The Young Art Fair commissioned the design of a temporary structure as an extension of the existing brewery building of the former Warteck with the aim to expand its exhibition space to make room for an additional ten galleries. To meet the expectations of the owner for a cost-efficient solution, which can be erected fast and with a minimum of noise, UNDEND decided to opt for a membrane structure while making full use of its structural potential. The silhouette of the existing brewery building, consisting of a high chimney and two towers, is complemented by four black cones, which accentuate the verticality of the ensemble. While standing in a multilayered dialogue with its historical counterpart, the new structure's language does not reveal its purpose. The cones work simultaneously as chimneys, which naturally extract the warm air from the exhibition space and thus enable air exchange for a comfortable indoor climate. In the interior, the partitions generate an inner horizon with white walls ensuring the focus on the exhibited art – the black of the membranes above disappearing into empty space.

## **House H, Zurich**

A farmhouse from 1878 in the outskirts of Zurich that was destroyed in a fire caused by arson in the late eighties provides the basis for this project. Within the volumetric profile of the former building, as claimed for by the Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments, the original typological disposition serves as point of departure and is transformed towards new uses. Accordingly, barn, stable and former living quarters are interpreted as separate units in an overall structure. The roof – descending from the gable downwards to end only at the lawns – is interpreted as an open truss structure, which will take on several tasks according to specific locations, performing as bench, stairs, parapet, canopy, shades, and as a roofing shelter.

With wide spans and windows with proportions reminiscent of billboard advertisements, the building's structural system – consisting of engineered prefabricated large-scale timber elements – engages the potential of contemporary timber constructions. The building's spatial expression is further enhanced through the conscious exposure of the tectonics of the primary structural elements. The façade, built of horizontal louvers varying in inclination and position, provides protection against weather and direct sunlight. In some locations the planking works additionally as a light filter intervening on the rooms' atmosphere. In order to accentuate the overall presence of the house the gradients of the louvers play on the proportions of the façade, while emphasizing its independence as a tectonic element.

## **UNDEND**

All five partners of this Zurich office completed part of their training in New York or India. Their buildings and projects are experimental, inquisitive and clearly refreshing. Presented work in this book includes a warehouse, a residential estate, a commercial building and an exhibition facility for the Art Basel.