

Meier Hug

Anthology 10 – Notat
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Quart Publishers **Anthology 10**

The Zurich architects Michael Meier and Marius Hug have preceded each of the buildings and projects presented in this volume with a reference image. They serve as metaphors for the references of the designs. For instance the reference image for the lido facility in Jona shows how multifaceted they can be. In this case it is an atmospheric black and white photo taken in winter. We see a copse of plane trees that typifies the lido's location. A row of bare treetops with dark, gnarled, upwardly reaching branches stands by the calm, reflecting lake. We also rediscover the slightly melancholic mood in the recently completed buildings. It is created by the cool, untreated concrete surfaces of all constructive elements, as well as the neutral white of the insertions and the grey, natural colour of the aluminium frames for the glazing. The mood is both a counterpart to the warm, cheerful, perhaps light-hearted summer days on the beach and can also dialectically highlight and strengthen that world.

In a way, the facility's floor plan reflects the vegetative motif of the image. It dynamically unfolds in a conical, slightly folded form from the narrowest area to the expansive head of the building. And finally the bare treetops also provide the image for the skeleton-like upwardly developing construction. The joists grow like branches from the supporting columns to form an organic treetop structure. The sober nature of this construction refuses to be narrative, yet appears both poetic and direct. This, the slightly elevated scale, the impressive unity of the theme, the construction, materials, form and the reserved language all ennoble the remarkable building.

Lucerne, April 2009

Residential building am Lindenhof, Zurich

Competition 2005; construction 2006

The building was constructed for residential use in 1876 and converted into urban offices in 1964, whereby a large part of the interior building substance was lost. In 2006, it was converted again to revert it to its original residential purpose. Above the raised ground floor, which is used for offices, the first and second floors each have two-room apartments. A 4.5 room maisonette apartment is situated above them. In the area of the maisonette apartment on the third and fourth storeys, a stairway inside the apartment replaces the existing staircase, making room for a bathroom. The small apartments are framed by an enveloping band of joinery consisting of skirting boards, wainscots and door frames, as well as the jointless moulded flooring surface. The low contrast of the colours attracts attention to the nature of the surfaces and the profile of the joinery work. The smooth surface of the light coloured flooring, reflecting the colour of the trees in the neighbouring green area, contrasts with the rough structure of the white fibre glass wallpaper. The moulded flooring surface ends at the wall with a skirting board and a wainscot made of painted wood. This indicates the architects' approach of combining fragments of various residential cultures instead of recreating the original conditions. Thus the polyurethane floor surface seems to stem from loft apartments, while the skirting board solution comes from traditional bourgeois apartments. Such an approach to design conforms with the given task of converting a 19th Century residential building in a way that makes it suitable for living requirements today. It may be possible to criticise the fact that the various white tones used create a clinical atmosphere, but one must also admit that furniture and all kinds of objects will be well placed in front of such a background.

Residential building for the elderly, Zumikon

Competition 2006, 1st prize; project 2008

A total of 34 apartments for elderly people are accessed from the ground floor, which also accommodates general and public facilities. Together, the apartments create a compact volumetric design consisting of a plot with large connecting open spaces. The ground plan and a varying number of storeys allow the build-

ing to react to the heterogeneous context and follow the incline of the terrain using racked suspended floors. Balustrades of prefabricated concrete elements and the partially oversized roof hold the volume together to form a framework, whereby an interplay between balconies, windows and storey-high fixed glazing becomes possible. The organisation of the individual apartments is similar to the project for the Frauensteinmatt centre for the elderly in Zug. But in contrast to that project, this volume narrows towards the balconies by the amount of their depth. This leads to a horizontal incrementation allowing each apartment to provide orientation on several sides. Each balcony protrudes into open space in two directions. The slightly offset exterior walls at the extension of the balconies allow the effect to continue inside the apartment. The measure fulfils the clear urban planning intention of intermingling interior and exterior spaces. The skilful organisation of numerous apartments in one compact volume, without detracting from the individual apartments' quality in view of the large number of units, and without losing a reference to the outside world, is an impressive quality of the project. Sascha Roesler picks up on the relationship between the apartments and the exterior space in an artistic contribution to the project by proposing the settlement of wild animals in the garden and describing the project as "an observatory for wild animals".

Rectory and church hall, Klosters-Serneus

Competition 2006, 1st prize; construction 2007–2008

Within the mainly even, loose building structure of Klosters-Serneus, the ensemble around the Church of St. James, which faces more dense development and the undeveloped cemetery quarter, has its own urban planning qualities. The lengthy new building for the church hall, whose western external wall is aligned with the former cemetery walls, borders at its front end with the forecourt of the church and is longitudinally inserted between the cemetery and the rectory garden. The alignment of the long building with two gabled volumes placed perpendicular to the slope, as well as an auxiliary building section with a flat roof, allows the ensemble to be racked to follow the incline of the terrain. Inside the building, the visitor is guided from the church to the foyer on the mountain side and from there to the church hall on a lower floor. The stepped quarry stone wall and the large larch windows accentuate the adaptation to suit

the topography. The strong association with the local environment is reflected by the use of materials found in the region, such as the quarry stone wall, the plaster structure and the lead roof. The new buildings also have qualities associated with traditional alpine construction, such as the clarity of its volumetrics, the use of only a few building elements and the materials' ability to age with time. This design approach, which can be described as appropriate, ensures that the new building does not encroach into the foreground, instead remaining modest and integrated into the existing ensemble of the church, rectory and cemetery, and thereby highlighting their qualities.

Residential building, Parpan

Project 2008; construction 2009–2010

The planned building's location makes it similar to buildings one sees on road journeys, with their dirty facades that seem too close to the street by today's standards. Solid exterior walls made of two-tier concrete react to the proximity of the street, as indicated by a frontage line. The chosen construction looks as if it can resist the burden of traffic on its street side and also bear the stress of the climbing terrain on its rear side. A slightly offset floor plan provides the structure for the long volume with a gabled roof and ensures that the scale conforms with the other buildings in Parpan. Above the ground floor with an underground garage and the auxiliary rooms, eleven differently sized apartments are organised around two staircases on three floors. The apartments differ in terms of the position and nature of the exterior space, as well as the alignment of the kitchens. The exterior space is partly expressed by a balcony, a loggia or a roof incision. The kitchen either forms part of a living-dining-cooking area or is planned as a separate dining kitchen that is independent of the living room. Like other projects by the architects, insertions, runners and moving wall elements are essential aspects of the design. Outside, the wall paintings around the windows imitate the groups of rooms behind them and add a playful element to the facade. Such paintings, which can be found in a similar way on neighbouring buildings, help to integrate the building into the rural context of Parpan.

Extension, Hochschule für Technik, Rapperswil

Competition 2008, 3rd prize/Purchase

The exterior characteristics of the planned research centre for the Hochschule für Technik in Rapperswil are protruding suspended floors, powerful girders and large scale glazing. These elements of structural architecture combine not only to create a two-storey flat building, but also to create a four-storey building, whereby in both cases the rooms inside can be freely and variably laid out. Although the research centre seems to be placed into the landscape and only touches it locally at its strip foundation, the massive nature of the individual buildings highlight the fact that this is not temporary architecture. The protruding suspended floors relieve the interior hallway of its role as an emergency exit, allowing it to be furnished and used in a freer way to create an area for people to meet and relax. The institute's quadrangular rooms all connect at their narrow ends with the accessing zone and are partially lit by three courtyards that alternate to follow the line of the framed middle zone, as well as providing light for the rooms on the lower ground floor. A two-storey wooden building without a cellar is proposed for the student accommodation that was also required by the research centre. It is also placed on a strip foundation and retains the grass area of the fen in its courtyard. The research centre and the student accommodation are positioned in a way to allow the reeded landscape to flow between the buildings, so that only the slightly raised walkways and terraces can be used by pedestrians. The reeded landscape's valuable existing qualities along Lake Zurich justify such a juxtaposition of the architecture and the landscape.

Frauensteinmatt centre for the elderly, Zug

Competition 2005; construction 2009–2011

In the foreground, cushions can be seen, behind them is a desk with an accompanying chair before a broad window ledge, which smoothly merges with a plant box with book cases below it. Beside it is the door to the loggia with a reclining chair. In the background, the mountains can be seen on the other side of the valley through the wide open sliding doors. That is how in 1924, the architect Jan Karzewski presented his scenographic design for a sanatorium

room for lung patients. The contrast between the protected inner and expansive outer worlds, the architectural wealth in such a small space and the high degree of living quality it thereby provides are the themes of Karzewski's design, which also influences the project for the Frauensteinmatt centre for the elderly in Zug. By folding the outer walls into the building's interior, the Zug project creates protected exterior spaces behind which the kitchens and adjacent living rooms are positioned. The kitchen is part of the living and dining room, but can also be separated using a folding partition. This ability to transform the floor plan using partitions combines with runners and small niches to give the small apartments a high level of spatial wealth. In the nursing sections, the aforementioned versatility is also provided for the common rooms and entrance hall, thereby reflecting the influence of hotel lobbies on the architects' design. In designing the apartments and the common areas, they were keen to create a high degree of living quality that was far from the traditional image of old people's homes. As a result, the apartments for elderly residents, families and priests are basically organised in the same way, regardless of the user group. The apartments are distributed in three buildings, whose alignment is accentuated on all sides through continuous concrete aprons. The image of a superior residence is rounded off by the buildings' detached location in the park.

Stampf swimming facility, Jona

Competition 2006, 1st prize; construction 2007–2008

The new building is the starting and finishing point for guests at the Stampf swimming facility. It creates a spatial conclusion for the public bathing area on the banks of the River Jona and accommodates an entrance and exit, changing rooms with lockers and showers, as well as a self service restaurant. Powerful concrete ribs structure the building in a rhythmical way along its longitudinal axis, thereby visibly fulfilling the building's function as the backbone of the facility. Two structurally independent insertions do not come into contact with the rib-supported roof on the inside, allowing views through the building from far away. The untreated materials of concrete, white artificial resin plates, glass and aluminium coloured window frames contrast with the rich green of the sunbathing lawn. Towards the lake, the building creates a head to accommodate the restaurant, while the rear-facing, narrower end is used for changing rooms

and technical rooms. The roof, the insertions and the foundation base are treated separately, allowing the creation of an array of different rooms. A covered patio is situated in front of the restaurant and transforms into a sun terrace through the extended building base plate. Along the sunbathing lawn, a protected area beneath the roof connects the restaurant with the changing rooms and the entrance. In this area, the roof folds in an opening gesture, whereby the edge of the roof and the head ends of the bearing ribs stretch upwards at oblique angles. The search for a concrete, direct approach is highlighted by deciding against an incline for the edge of the roof and the ribs' head ends, and is also reflected in the detached insertions, roof, foundation base and the untreated materials.

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