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"Zur Palme" High-rise Building in Zurich

424

Architects: Haefeli, Moser, Steiger FAS/SIA. Associate: André Studer SIA, Zurich

The block defined by four streets could have one single building erected on it. A two-storey tract follows the lines of the streets, although not rigidly. Its entrance gives access to a forecourt with display windows, passageways, a restaurant and a branch bank. The upper level serves as office premises for the shops below. The roof terrace of this building provides parking space for one hundred cars. Spiral ramps lead into the street with the lightest traffic. In the basement of the building there are an additional 60 parking sites. The entire low-silhouette complex stands in sharp contrast to the high-rise office tract rising in the centre. It rests on a powerfully projecting "concrete table", and, starting with the fourth floor, soars up with its eleven stories and an installations superstructure to a height of 50 metres. The "table" itself is supported by eight mighty mushroom elements of concrete. The central vertical element with its lifts, stairs and shafts begins at the main entrance on ground floor level. The office premises of the high-rise tract are articulated in the shape of four windmill-like wings turning about the central core.

The building is constructed of reinforced concrete throughout. Prefabrication was applied for the elevation columns of the high-rise house and for elements of the parking roofs, prestressing for the supporting floor, the car ramps and elevation columns.

The architectural conception aims at a plastic spatial variety via the articulation of the volumes into different masses and via their simple dissociation in plan and elevation. It is to be wished that the building, still isolated at the present time, will be integrated in the coming development of the old town into a great business centre.

The Fountain by Erwin Rehmann in the "Palme"

432

In the open forecourt of the building there had to be installed over an underground garage a round skylight. This opening in the ground was covered with a Plexiglas bowl filled with water and elaborated by the sculptor Erwin Rehmann into a fountain. The shape is elevated up to 105 cm above ground level and has a diameter of six meters. The shaped edge consists of welded bronze plates and was assembled from six segments.

"Silberkugel" Restaurant in the "Zur Palme" Building

437

Architect: Dr Justus Dahinden SIA, Zurich

The need for light quick lunches in the business district and for labour-saving service led to the development of a novel type of luncheon restaurant, one of which has been installed in the "Zur Palme" Building.

The Zurich Dramatic Theatre Competition

439

by Hans Curjel

The Zurich Dramatic Theatre has a dignified tradition behind it, but an outmoded and in every respect inadequate building, situated in the courtyard of a commercial building. On Heimplatz, the same square where the old Dramatic Theatre now stands, there was found a site for the new building—the exercise ground of the Cantonal High School. This site, a happy one per se, requires, however, a careful integration of the large theatre building in the loosely articulated surroundings.

The author first takes up the controversial competition programme, which—based on the conception of the dramatist and architect Max Frisch—tends rather clearly in the direction of a peep-show stage and which does not encourage experiments bearing on a variable intermediate zone between auditorium and stage. This restriction, along with other factors, has the result that a number of interesting and viable plans have emerged no doubt from the Zurich Dramatic Theatre Competition but that most of the more than 90 submitted entries suffer from a certain monotony. The means applied by the participants, asymmetries, merged rows, roomy foyers, do not replace fundamental invention.

The first prize was awarded to the Danish architect Jörn Utzon, the builder of the new Opera House of Sydney. His plan is based on a spreading, horizontally accented structure, with a rather abrupt high-rise stage tract set on top of it. The detached roof consists of a system of tub elements which are purely architectural elements possessing no function. This roof design has a comprehensively expressive effect, but it could look problematical in view of the surroundings. The auditorium is a large, circleless rectangular hall with one single ascending level, an articulated ponderous wooden ceiling arching over in front and broad stairs on both sides of the orchestra seats.

A far-reaching town-planning study accompanies the entry submitted by the Dutch architects Van den Broek and Bakema. The architects take the position that the theatre building ought not to be isolated but ought

to be practically integrated in the pulsing economic life of this part of the city. They see the solution to the problem in a large visible circular garage and an office building, both enclosing the theatre. In this way they create a pluralistic centre at this point, which in any case is crying out for a resolution of its traffic problems. However the question has to be raised whether the Dramatic Theatre, along with the neighbouring Art Museum and the Cantonal High School, should not rather constitute a quiet zone in the midst of the city. The plan was only given Honourable Mention.

One of the non-prize-winning entries is the plan submitted by Hans Scharoun. A crystalline structure, which creates a rather light effect despite the massive volumes, owing to the interplay of horizontal and slightly inclined surfaces. It is redolent of the Berlin Philharmonia, but there is a movement toward greater simplicity. With his auditorium Scharoun has moved toward precise symmetry. Orchestras and circles contrast nicely with one another; the ceiling sloping down from the rear ascends once more in front of the stage, which creates a large open space. The ramp enters the auditorium crosswise at an acute angle. Among the other proposals, the author mentions those of Franz Füg and Jacques Henry, Schwarz & Gutmann & Gloor as well as André M. Studer. The author takes the position that the first-prize plan should not be carried out in its first form, but that the prize winner should in conjunction with the city elaborate both a new traffic conception for the square and a Dramatic Theatre adapted to this scheme.

New Works of Art in the University of St Gall

449

by Rudolf Hanhart

In the August Issue 1963 WERK reported on the new construction of the St Gall University of Business and the Social Sciences and its artistic decoration. Since then these works have been added to considerably. Umberto Mastroianni created for the west face of the Institute Building a sculpture of cast aluminium, which was chromatically treated with a spray gun.—Near the stairs leading up to the main building there now stand 12 large concrete shapes by Alicia Penalba, serving as an intermediate realm between the rectangular forms of the architecture and the natural setting.—Next to the entrance of the main building there stands in front of a pool the large bronze sculpture known as the "Cup Tree" (three superimposed cups) by Jean Arp.—In August 1964 there was set up in the lobby a large ceramic frieze by Joan Miró and Artigas. It runs along the left lateral wall beneath the ceiling for 29 metres and is 1.2 metre high and consists of 435 panels. On a grey ground, on which there is a play of sparsely employed colours, there develops a broad black line, which often breaks up into simple signs.

The Restored Kirchner House in Davos

454

by Erhard Göpel

The German painter Ernst Ludwig Kirchner came to Switzerland in 1917 and soon settled in Davos. From 1923 until his death in 1938 he lived in an old farmhouse standing on the Wildboden at the outlet of the Sertig Valley. The artist's wife lived there until 1945. In the years that followed, it was let as a vacation house and underwent a series of renovations. The Bernese art dealer Eberhard W. Kornfeld has had the house restored during the last few years by the architect Christian Meisser, with the dual intention of creating a monument to Kirchner and of making it suitable as a vacation home. In the renovation the basic construction of the old house was reaffirmed; it is fundamentally a Walser house from the middle of the 16th century (Walser: German speakers from the Valais who emigrated to the Grisons in the Middle Ages), which was extended room by room between 1710 and 1737. Here there was revealed an inner affinity between the timber structures and the actual creations of Kirchner, his woodcarvings and furniture, which he fashioned here out of cembra-pine.—The house was opened to the public in August 1964; the intention is to reopen it again in August during the coming years.