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Summary

Form and Construction at Siemens and Halske (page 333)

Exactly 100 years ago Werner von Siemens began to work on electrical equipment in his small shop in Berlin. From this very modest beginning a gigantic world-encompassing enterprise has come into being, which, together with its subsidiaries, employs nearly 160,000 workers.

Like the internationally known Italian firm Olivetti, whose activities were published in our 8th issue in 1956, Siemens & Halske AG. already produced substantial contributions to the development of new buildings in the 1920's and 1930's. The corporation has established its own centralized construction department. This comprises an architectural, specifications and job supervision office as well as a business or technical management department in which the project offices for heating, ventilating sanitary installations, traffic and production equipment are gathered together.

In 1955 the firm's leaders decided, as the result of a competition, to call upon independent architects for the planning of their building projects. The buildings shown here are the result of the collaboration between E. von der Lippe (who died in 1955) and Hans Maurer and the construction department described above, which took place after both of these architects were awarded first prize in two advertised competitions. The relationship between client and architect is so well constituted today that all building projects and overall planning has been entrusted to Hans Maurer as design and consulting architect.

Characteristic of the large administrative and factory buildings, which have been built primarily in Munich, is a clearly conveyed common denominator developing from the functional requirements. The architects have succeeded in developing a few basic types of buildings which appear again and again in certain variations, such as a standard office building, standard laboratory and one or more standard factory buildings.

All these building types are distinguished by their rigid, unequivocal discipline reflecting on the exterior the activities within. A beautiful example of this is presented by the first three buildings of the new factory complex on Balanstrasse in Munich.

He who has the occasion to be led through a series of such buildings, as recently befell the writer, gains the impression above all that he can be nowhere else but in Munich. Such architecture can only exist here and can only be achieved by a person whose eye has been trained under the singular sun of this unique city.

The plane quality of the Maurer façades, the relative heaviness of his details, the clarity of the articulation of the façade, show a southern influence. Typical, moreover, is the upper termination of the building's vertical rise by means of the thin definite line of a narrow, slightly overhanging metal cornice. In no place is the clarity of the building mass disturbed by the shadow of a projecting cornice. Whoever travels with his eyes open through the bright Munich countryside will discover the same order and arrangement in all the anonymous buildings of many of the small towns.

Nowhere does such building lapse into fussiness. It consciously renounces the never-tiring excess of details and profiles. It is materially simple in all respects and employs only very few different materials and, finally, such building is clear and uncomplicated in regards to color. Siemens has been fortunate with the choice of this 31 year-old architect.

Administrative Building on Oskar-von-Miller-Ring in Munich (pages 334—339)

As the first stage of a larger building development in downtown Munich located on the partly completed Oskar-von-Miller-Ring, this administrative headquarters was erected in 1955—56 as the result of a close competition between two architectural firms. It contains offices for the product design department, lecture rooms instruction and exhibition rooms: the architects have proposed an essentially dual organized five-story building with a square plan surrounding a spacious central court. Both the north and south building wings have staircases facing the court, toilets and coat rooms, while the east and west wings contain workrooms on the court side.

Columned halls, extending along both street sides, offer protection from the weather in front of the entrance doors. The building is entered in about the middle of the north side from a spacious square on the Oskar-von-Miller-Ring, with a nearby parking space for 70 autos.

The visitor then steps into a charming reception hall which occupies the entire north side of the ground floor and opens onto the inner court where a series of planting boxes stands. To the left and right in this hall are both main staircases with elevators affording access to all office floors. The office spaces are 3.50, 5.25 and 7 meters wide—deriving from the basic dimension of 1.75 m upon which all Siemens & Halske AG. buildings are based. The façades present an essentially vertical emphasis brought about by the placing of the reinforced concrete columns in front of the façade.

As with all the new buildings by Hans Maurer, white and gray tones predominate on the façades. The wall of the ground floor has been clad in green serpentine as a color accent. Exposed concrete elements are painted gray or left in natural concrete color, while the rest of the façade area is clad in white glass mosaic.

Factory Group on Balanstrasse, Munich (pages 340—342)

In 1955, after winning a limited competition for the layout of the new factory site on Balanstrasse, the architects E. v. d. Lippe and Hans Maurer were given the commission for the design of all the buildings involved.

The problem here concerned the total building-up of a site about 100,000 m² in area with new factory, administrative and laboratory buildings as well as an employee's welfare building. The three buildings already completed comprise the 1st stage: the Ferrite factory, office tower and laboratories with fabrication areas for transistors. The final completed development will comprise (in addition to the above buildings) an extension to the transistor factory, a building materials factory and a research and social building set in a green area. All factory buildings will be 5 stories high, while the office tower, somewhat back from the street, will contain 8 stories. One-story buildings will serve to link the masses of the total composition.

Three different standard constructions will be used, developed from the particular uses of the buildings: 1. the office and later laboratory buildings will be based on the previously mentioned administrative building on Oskar-von-Miller-Ring, and will be based on a module of 1,75 m; 2. Another type comprises fabrication halls with their necessarily large installation areas, thus the wide wall segments between the individual windows; 3. the third type will serve essentially the electrochemical manufacturing activities — here a module of 3.50 m. with narrow intermediate supports has been selected. Some of the fabrication halls of the third type may only receive a minimum of daylighting and are therefore fully air-conditioned. In contrast to the American system of completely eliminating daylighting in such rooms, the European mentality requires at least a peephole through which the worker can maintain a visual connection with the outside world.

Office Building for the Hofmannstrasse Works, Munich (pages 344—346)

As part of the overall planning for the expansion of the existing works on Hofmannstrasse the first stage consists of a large 5-story office building. It contains

exclusively marketing offices and only one small exhibition room near the main entrance on the ground floor. It represents the latest development of the Siemens & Halske office building type and is organized mainly along the lines of the administrative building on Oskar-von-Miller-Ring. The plan shows a dual east-west oriented layout with a staircase core placed in the middle containing elevators, storage rooms, paper disposal shafts, as well as toilets and coat rooms. One reaches this core on the ground floor after passing under a long projecting canopy which rests upon four slim steel columns. Color scheme: columns and wind-stiffening walls are painted gray, spandrels are white; the roof penthouse is clad with corrugated cement asbestos.

Casino on Hofmannstrasse, Munich (pages 347—349)

A second casino was necessary to accommodate the 15,000 new employees in the factory expansion on Hofmannstrasse. The completed building consists of two floors, each with a dining hall seating 600, accommodating several lunch-hour shifts. It is square in plan with a central provision and service core. Both dining halls are arranged in a U-shape around this core and have south, east and west exposures. The building is entered through either of the two opposite entrances on the east and west sides which open onto a hall containing tobacco, chocolate and drink counters. The provision and service core is located behind these counters.

The core itself consists of a continuous east-west service pantry affording an efficient food, coffee and drink handling service and dishwashing area, and provides for the deliveries of large quantities of food from the basement kitchen by means of elevators.

The core of the basement kitchen, with its elevators, refrigerated rooms, main cooking area, etc., is organized to correspond with the cores of the upper floors.

Thank to its flat façades the building is set apart from the office buildings with their exposed frames. This façade form has been evolved from the functional requirements of the building. The supporting columns are set back from the façade enabling the floors to cantilever outwards.

Factory and Warehouse Building on Hofmannstrasse, Munich (page 350—351)

In place of the variously scattered storage sheds existing in the old factory layout, it was decided to construct a new storage, receiving and shipping building with additional offices and a shed hall for special fabrication. This three-fold program finds its expression in the completed building.

The long 5-story office building lies in the middle, the ground floor of which is used for the shipping area. The first part of an approximately 35 m. deep shed hall is annexed to one side of the office building. This hall stands in contrast to all the other Siemens & Halske steel buildings and is linked to the shipping area in the office building.

The color scheme follows the principle that all tall buildings are to be in variations of gray, white and blue, while only the low buildings are to have strong color accents.

Administrative Building for Dätwyler AG, Swiss Cable, Wire and Rubber Works, Aitdorf-Uri (pages 357—359)

With this new building the clients have been able to gather together in one central building their hitherto scattered merchandising and technical offices, permitting a far more efficient layout for these two departments. From the covered approach the visitor is led through a vestibule with porter's booth into a completely artificially lighted reception and exhibition hall equipped with various display cases. The use of black and white tones produces a most comfortable and restful atmosphere in these rooms. The elegant effect is heightened by the scarlet-red color of the "Dätwyler" Plastofloor floor covering. By the use of a planning module of 1.75 m. the smallest offices have a minimum width of 3.40 m. With the exception of the individually planned and furnished director's offices and conference rooms, all other office areas are simply, but functionally furnished.

Centre Professional del Este (pages 360—363)

Caracas, one of the many aspiring capital cities of the great South American continent, where new giant apartment towers with low-cost apartments are shooting up next to cities of tin shacks, where broad avenues lead out from the new generously laid out city center to either the jungle or steppes only a few miles away, is the location of our example of an office building complex which was constructed two years ago.

The name "Professional Center del Este" stands for one of the most interesting and unique collective efforts combining the various activities of collaborating professions in one large, modern, well-organized building. The idea, arising out of the special requirements of the unbelievable building boom which Caracas is enjoying, originated with a group of people in the construction business: architects, engineers and a contractor's syndicate. Associated with these three professional groups is the most important member, the bank which financed the project, and which is housed in a special building wing, and has, as a special feature, a drive-in bank. Here the driver can simply drive up and either deposit or withdraw money from his account while remaining seated at the wheel.

What this building offers in the way of special interest for European readers is the provision of all the required services for a large building complex, such as: basement garage with service station, blue-printing shop, technical book dealer, barbershop, exhibition areas, lecture halls, a magazine editorial office, café-restaurant with bar and dance floor, gymnastic club, gymnasium, and a swimming pool with Turkish baths on the lower level.

The office areas are sold, rather than rented, similar to the principle of floor ownership successfully used in large Italian cities.

The architecture is fresh and lively without being poor in any details. The office tower consists of clearly recognizable room units — the long rows of office windows are arrayed along the north and south façades protected by short sun-breaking projections, supplemented on the south side by the stairway and toilet groups. Both end walls are unbroken by fenestration and serve as wind-stiffening membranes. Very characteristic is the 2-story bank annex with its widely cantilevered sun-shading roof.

Ankerhof Commercial Building, Zurich (pages 364—365)

In the neighborhood of the Wiedikon station west of Zurich, the prominent location of this corner site enables the new building to enjoy quite distant views. This may have been why the zoning authorities relented to allow the architects to add an additional floor, so that the 6-story building has been constructed with a set-back upper floor.

The ground floor contains large stores and sales areas which have been rented by the French automobile firm of Renault. On the upper floors are offices, storage and work shops. Many of the tenants have rented either a half or an entire floor.

In his façades the architect has struck out on a new path. The supporting columns are set back and enable the façades to freely continue through in front. The windows, in contrast to so many other similar buildings, are woodframed and consist of extraordinarily wide horizontal and vertical bars and mullions.

The spandrel panels are prefabricated with an exterior asbestos cement cladding over an insulated core.

Administrative Building for the Brugg Cable Works (pages 366—368)

With its clearly massed cubical conception, this building presents a very desirable accent in the midst of the otherwise disordered and wildly overgrown building development of this small city which is destined to become Switzerland's first large inland port on the planned Rhine-Rhône Canal. Façade materials: Verde Alpi marble cladding for the spandrel panels and Solothurn limestone on the short façade. The windows are aluminum-framed and glazed in Polyglas (Thermopane). The architects have also been particularly successful in achieving a clean, uncompromising solution for the interior appointments.