

A whole life

New architecture for nursing homes

1 October 2010 to 12 November 2010

- Curators:** Wolfgang Dvorak, Peter Stanzl and Gerhard Kastler
- Exhibition venue:** Exhibition Centre in the Ringturm
VIENNA INSURANCE GROUP
1010 Vienna, Schottenring 30
- Opening times:** Monday to Friday: 9.00 am to 6.00 pm, free entry
(closed on public holidays)
- Press tour:** Thursday, 30 September 2010, 10.30 am
- Speakers:** Peter Stanzl, Daniel Bammer, Oliver Sterl
- Opening:** Thursday, 30 September 2010, 6 pm (admission by invitation only)
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A whole life – new architecture for nursing homes

The demographic trend in industrialised nations is characterised by an increasing number of older and elderly people. Society is therefore faced with new challenges in terms of dealing with the changing age structure of the population and the associated increase in the number of people in need of nursing care. In old age, people from all walks of life have specific needs and wishes – especially in relation to their housing situation. Meeting these needs is a major challenge in terms of planning, design and architecture. In its latest exhibition, the Vienna Insurance Group's "Architektur im Ringturm" series looks at modern and future-oriented architecture for nursing homes in Vienna.

New requirements

New quality requirements are being placed on modern nursing homes in order to be able to guarantee the provision of appropriate care. The welfare of the residents comes first and foremost: there should be a friendly and homely atmosphere, whereby the issue of living accommodation is the first consideration, backed by the provision of appropriate medical care. Creating architectural structures based on village or city environments allows greater clarity and assignability, while colour-coded guidance systems help people find their bearings. Design elements that take into account people with even severely limited mobility are prerequisites for creating a living atmosphere that is conducive to both safety and quality of life.

Interplay between privacy and communication

An important aspect for a person's well-being is the ability to choose when to enjoy one's privacy and when to engage with other people. Certain rooms are for tranquillity and privacy, while others are for motivation and communication. Small, manageable accommodation units resemble a private living situation and provide the residents with warmth and the opportunity to retreat. On the other hand, "public" spaces such as lobbies, day centres and cafés provide a place for contact with other residents, visitors and staff. The residents take an active part in public life within the nursing home – an important measure against becoming lonely in old age.

Therapy gardens – places for rest and revitalisation

Green spaces are an essential part of every new sheltered accommodation project – each home will have its own garden area. Nature has a positive influence on the human psyche – the sensory experience of plant scents and colour accents will be used as an important factor in therapy. Access to the plants will be facilitated by raised beds for direct contact with nature creates a feeling of freedom and rouses a new zest for life in the residents. There will be a wide variety of therapy garden designs with walking practice routes, ramps and steps, i.e. elements that help resident relearn how to walk.

New nursing homes in Vienna

This demographic trend is evident in Vienna too. In 2020, the number of over-65s expected to be living in Vienna is 314,000. In order to meet future demand for modern and affordable care models and forms of housing, numerous innovative projects are currently being implemented across the city.

Leopoldstadt nursing home – central and urban

The recently completed Leopoldstadt nursing home was designed by renowned architect Helmut Wimmer. Located in the second district of the city, it is well integrated in Vienna's urban life and provides accommodation for over 300 people. The concept provides a "house within a house system" in that the room groups are designed as individual, freestanding buildings in various colours. The result is a "vertical city landscape". The rooms appear like "houses", while hallways that are like light and airy "streets and squares" provide places to go besides the rooms. The use of different colours helps the residents recognise which room is theirs and therefore aids identification skills. Windows onto the hallways enable participation in the life of the community. The rooms open spaciouly towards the outdoor area in front. All areas not directly related to habitation, such as administration, therapy and infrastructure areas, are located on the ground floor. An elliptical extension of the entrance hall in the courtyard houses

the restaurant with roof garden. This was designed specifically for the needs of dementia patients so that, even without a companion, the residents would be able to get outside in the fresh air and then return to their living quarters.

Liesing nursing home – life in the park

"We have tried to integrate the home into this park in such a way that the home does something for the park and likewise the park does something for the residents and staff. On the street side, it has an urban feel. It resembles urban housing, but the park has helped us soften the urban environment. "In the sheer size of this facility, we also see quality," is how architects Johannes Kaufmann and Peter Riepl describe their idea for the Liesing nursing home. The nursing home is due for completion in 2011 and incorporates elements of a pre-existing park landscape into the design of its extensive gardens. In the ground floor area, which opens onto the park, outdoor spaces will be created with hedge borders and these spaces – inspired by pleasure gardens – will provide a cool, shaded area to relax in the garden. The upper floors contain the residential areas which are designed in an L-shape layout. Two glass bridges connect the various wings of the building with one another. The hallways come together at bridge level in spacious, bright day rooms with loggias. The massive structure is given a light, airy feel by means of a façade made from semi-transparent perforated brass plate.

Innovative residential and nursing home in Döbling – living with Grinzing charm

The innovative residential and nursing home in Grinzing Allee, Döbling, has been designed as a residential group model for senior citizens – and is due for completion in 2012. The residents bring their own furniture and move into an apartment that can be adapted accordingly should nursing care be needed. The building also houses a medical centre, kindergarten and flatlets. This produces an urban living environment in which the residents are integrated into everyday life. *"From the big picture, i.e. the urban context and building mass distribution, to the small picture, i.e. the surface and detail design, the whole building reacts to the needs and special perception situation of the residents,"* explains architect Oliver Sterl. The apartments, which measure approximately 30 m², are grouped around common areas: living rooms, kitchens with adjoining dining rooms and loggias. The individual apartments themselves are equipped with a small kitchen and the sleeping area is located in an alcove behind the bathroom. The carers live with the residents in the residential groups, which allows individual care and attention to be provided without a strict schedule. So the flexible living and care situations produce a kind of patchwork arrangement. *"There are various atmospheric zones where residents, staff and visitors can stay for a while. These different zones also create different options for occupancy,"* explains architect Rüdiger Lainer describing the project.

Exhibition

The "A whole life" exhibition looks at everything from the architecture of new nursing homes and gardens to everyday nursing and care issues. This involves looking into the future of Vienna to a certain extent – with the socio-demographic and social context being highlighted to the same extent as the urban planning aspects. Visitors can look inside the new buildings, passing through lobbies and lounges before reaching individual rooms and looking out over balconies at gardens created by landscape designers – all from the perspective of actual residents as well as carers and visitors.

Catalogue

Franziska Leeb: RESIDING CARING LIVING – new residential and nursing homes in Vienna. Bohmann Verlag. 160 pages with numerous illustrations. Photos by Hubert Dimko.

Price: 40 euros