

ARCHITECTURE IN THE RINGTURM

Post-war modernism in Switzerland: The architecture of Werner Frey, Franz Füg, Jacques Schader and Jakob Zweifel

17th October to 14th December 2001

Curators: Walter Zschokke and Adolph Stiller

Press preview: Tuesday, 16th October 2001, 10.30 hrs

Opening: Tuesday, 16th October 2001, 18.30 hrs

Location of exhibition

Wiener Städtische Allgemeine Versicherung AG

Ringturm Exhibition Centre

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Opening hours

Monday to Friday: 9.00 to 18.00 hrs; entrance free

(Closed on public holidays)

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Photographic material available on request

In the series of ARCHITECTURE IN THE RINGTURM events, from 17th October to 14th December 2001 the Wiener Städtische is staging an exhibition on the architecture of post-war modernism in Switzerland, using selected buildings by the four Swiss architects Werner Frey, Franz Füeg, Jacques Schader and Jakob Zweifel.

The exhibition presents 14 buildings from the 1950s to the 1970s. Among them are the dynamic Studio 4 cinema in Zürich, programmatic dwelling houses, the pioneering nurses' accommodation of the Zürich canton hospital, the magnificent church in Meggen near Lucerne and various school and university buildings.

Architecture of the post-war modern movement: After 1945 the Swiss economic climate benefited from an intact manufacturing infrastructure. This economic impetus in turn gave a boost to the construction industry. A number of young architects – including Werner Frey, Franz Füeg, Jacques Schader and Jakob Zweifel – who, in the post-war years, turned to the further development of modernism, placed the emphasis firmly on new construction methods. These methods included in particular rational prestructuring at the design stage of a building and the prefabrication and assembly of individual structural elements. In addition, the use of module and grid formats provided a rich seam of potential and creative possibilities – even though this practice may have appeared to the layman to be a symbol of schematic processes. These new working methods meant that load-bearing elements, walls, installations etc. could be positioned precisely without affecting one another, and took a much more far-reaching hold than the practices of the 1920s and 1930s.

The region's foremost predecessors of the new construction methods are seen as the masonry-infilled steel skeleton structures of the late 1920s, such as the "Haus für allein stehende Frauen" ["House for single women"] (1928/29) by the Basle architects Paul Artaria and Hans Schmidt. However the main predecessors originate from the USA, including above all the emigrant "Bauhaus Masters", such as Mies van der Rohe and Marcel Breuer. However, these trans-Atlantic influences were not the only ones to be assimilated by the young Swiss architects; there was also great interest in modern construction methods and new materials, such as reinforced concrete, steel and timber – although they did not limit themselves to any specific material.

The architects: This young generation of professionals, who followed the pioneers of the Swiss Modernism of the 1920s and 1930s, sought their own forum for discussion, finding it in the professional journal "Bauen+Wohnen" [Building+Living]. The Zürich Group, too, consisting of architects Werner Frey (1912-1989), Franz Füeg (1921), Jacques Schader (1917) and Jakob Zweifel (1921), found an appropriate journalistic platform in this medium.

Werner Frey came from Unterseen near Interlaken and studied architecture at the ETH (Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule) in Zürich. An early masterpiece of his was the Studio 4 Cinema in Zürich (1948/49), which Frey executed together with Bauhaus disciple and stage designer Roman Clemens. His commitment to socio-cultural matters is expressed in the youth centre “Erika” (1958/59 and 1969/70).

Franz Füeg was born in Solothurn, underwent an apprenticeship as a draughtsman, and continued his training as an architect in Rotterdam. He was a member of the editorial team of “Bauen+Wohnen”, and, from 1971 to 1987, Professor at the EPF (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale) in Lausanne. Füeg’s University Institute buildings in Fribourg (1964-68) were innovative prototypes of structural thinking. The church of St. Pius in Meggen (1964-66) is a unique, atmospheric example of a modern sacred structure.

Jacques Schader was born in Basel, where he attended the Kunstgewerbeschule [College of Arts and Crafts]. He came to the ETH, Zürich, to study architecture. From 1948 to 1953 he was editor of “Bauen+Wohnen”, and from 1960 to 1970 he was Professor at the ETH, Zürich. Schader’s Freudenberg Canton school in Zürich (1956-60) represents an inspired interpretation of the hilltop location. The building has numerous extremely interesting room configurations and makes sensitive use of light. The headquarters of IBM Switzerland in Zürich (1970-73) was at the time a model for imposing office buildings – but unfortunately it was later restructured.

Jakob Zweifel originates from the Glarnerland region. He studied at the ETH, Zürich, where he attained the post of assistant to Prof. William Dunkel. As the Zürich chairman of the “Schweizer Architekten” [Swiss architects] association and as a member of the “Glarner Heimatschutz” [Glarus Canton regional preservation society] he undertook a cultural and political role in architecture. The nurses’ accommodation at the Zürich Canton hospital (1956-59) is a high-rise building which is pleasing both for its external and internal organisation. The new college building for the EPFL (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale) in Lausanne-Ecublens (1973-84) is the largest structurally-planned building in Switzerland and has the dimensions of a small town.

The exhibition: With the “Post-war Modernism in Switzerland” exhibition, the ARCHITECTURE IN THE RINGTURM series of events is drawing attention to a movement in recent architectural history which is still relatively unknown. One of the show’s intentions is to give buildings of the 1950s and 1960s the significance they deserve.

“Post-war modernism in Switzerland” demonstrates that the four architects, who were, and still are to this day, linked by a close friendship and mutual appreciation, have been exemplary in their implementation of certain essential aspects of the architecture of the late 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s. This shows, inter alia, in the great care devoted to the design, the exemplary structural design approach which takes account of industrial

production methods, and the sites, with their successful translations of widely varying social relationships between individual and group. Today, an examination of the well-preserved, in some cases carefully restored, buildings of the post-war modernism movement gives surprising insights into this period of recent architectural history: room sequences, the use of light, the impact of materials and clarity of design have been implemented to great effect.

The exhibition also presents and contrasts critical-analytical texts by Walter Zschokke (architect, architectural agent and critic, living since 1985 in Vienna and known to the general public above all for his critical works in SPECTRUM/Die Presse) with videos by Georg Radanowicz (photographer, architect and film-maker in Zürich). Eight films, produced especially for the exhibition, give a lively insight into the most significant of the 14 buildings on display.

In addition the presentation is enriched by numerous original photographs taken during the construction of the buildings, which are compared and contrasted with the impressions of the internationally-renowned photographer Doris Fanconi (cultural journalist and photographer of the Zürich daily newspaper, Tages-Anzeiger), which give a present-day introduction to the subject.

Original plans and drawings from the architects' archives show the precision of the drawing discipline which characterises numerous Swiss architectural practices.

The buildings: The exhibition presents the following buildings:

- Studio 4 Cinema, Zürich; Werner Frey and Roman Clemens, 1948/49
- Erika youth centre, Zürich; Werner Frey, 1958/59 and 1969/70
- SWICA administration building, Winterthur; Werner Frey, 1956/57 and 1978-83
- Dwelling house, Hessikofen/Solothurn; Franz Füeg, 1962-64
- St. Pius Church, Meggen/Lucerne; Franz Füeg, 1964-66
- Naturwissenschaftliche Universitätsinstitute [University Institute of Natural Sciences buildings], Fribourg; Franz Füeg, 1964-68
- Freudenberg Canton School, Zürich; Jacques Schader, 1956-60
- School extension, Zürich-Altstetten; Jacques Schader, 1962-64
- Architect's house, Schwerzenbach/Zürich; Jacques Schader, 1973/74
- Nurses' accommodation, University Hospital, Zürich; Jakob Zweifel, 1956-59
- Residential and commercial building, Zürich-Seefeld; Jakob Zweifel and Heinrich Strickler, 1957-60

- Centre de recherches agricoles, St. Aubin/Fribourg; Jakob Zweifel, Heinrich Strickler and Uli Huber, 1967-70
- Ecole polytechnique fédérale, Lausanne-Ecublens; Jakob Zweifel, Heinrich Strickler and others, 1973-84
- Residential development, Zürich-Unteraffoltern; Jakob Zweifel, Heinrich Strickler and Ulrich Glauser, 1980/81

The book (in German and English): the exhibition is accompanied by a comprehensive book. *Post-war modernism in Switzerland. Architecture by Werner Frey, Franz Füeg, Jacques Schader and Jakob Zweifel.* Contributors include Adolf Max Vogt, Claude Liechtenstein, Michael Hanak, Walter Zschokke. With numerous illustrations by Doris Fanconi. The videos shown as part of the exhibition are included in CD format. 232 pages, generously illustrated (b/w and colour), Verlag Birkhäuser, Basel - Berlin - Boston. Published 2001. Price: ATS 550.

Press information on Architecture in the Ringturm can be found under <http://www.wienerstaedtische.at> under the heading "Kunst & Kultur" ["Art & Culture"].