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Entscheidend anders.

Art is not just featured as an attraction in Fünf Höfe. Its aura is also made to work for a pragmatic purpose – to perfect a formally ambitious environment. By involving Rémy Zaugg and Thomas Ruff Herzog & de Meuron resorted to two artists with whom they have been working for a long time. Zaugg has placed accents displaying colour and text at strategic vertical access points (art gallery foyer, office floor stairwells, etc.). In the familiar manner, these text images convey “positive irritations” to passers-by like AND – I WOULD – BECOME VISIBLE – IF I OPENED – MY EYES or I – THE IMAGE – AM LISTENING – TO YOU or simply YOU HERE NOW. Due to the omnipresence of the noted “Zaugg characters” – used by Herzog & de Meuron as graphic trademark of their plans for a long time now – the architecture appears somewhat overloaded pedagogically: all street side entrances, all arcades and courtyards have been provided with neon signs in the typography developed by Rémy Zaugg and Michèle Zaugg-Röthlisberger, relegating the shop signs very firmly to second place.

The question about art as a medium is also raised by the photographic works by Thomas Ruff that have been incorporated in the flooring. Compared to the expansion of awareness brought about when Herzog & de Meuron and Ruff collaborated on the Eberswalde library façades, the screen prints of towns and landscapes that have been applied to occasional concrete slabs in Fünf Höfe seem rather episodic and decorative (some of Zaugg’s text images refer to their visual content as well). Thus in Fünf Höfe it is not the brand labels that dominate public space. It is much more art itself that exerts a kind of aesthetic control here – as a programme and as a surface.

Nostalgic density, cool styling

Herzog & de Meuron call it a “European response to American shopping malls” a “mixture of art and non-art”. In Fünf Höfe the use of art for urban branding is more subtle than in the imposing gestures made by the Guggenheim concern. In any case, the culture foundation of HypoVereinsbank is not a colonializer like the Guggenheim Foundation, but a solid Munich organization.

Munich has often claimed to be more important than it was, economically, culturally and politically, regularly assigning compensatory functions to architecture and landscape.⁷ We are familiar with Ludwig II, who anticipated Jeff Koons’ actions with a historicist architectural theme park. Ludwig made an impact with his private architectural policy when the North of Germany was in the act of sidelining the Kingdom of Bavaria economically and politically. Set in the midst of its agricultural environs, Munich was stuck for a long time with the status of a civil servants’ and residence city without either industry or proletariat. Until the era of Franz Josef Strauss, being “under-programmed” remained the chief characteristic of the state capital.

It was not just in Munich’s past that architecture was associated with placing signs and urban planning with introducing worldliness. The synthetic character of the city centre was reinforced if anything by the Second World War – the cause of its purifying reconstruction and subsequent reduction to museum image, to a large extent. Fünf Höfe, too, lies somewhere between nostalgic condensation and a coolly styled urban landscape. With elegant, controlled distortions and reflections Herzog & de Meuron, pick up some of Munich’s traditional artificiality and art-syness.

In a city whose ambience stands more for quaint chic than radical chic nowadays, the “blending” of inside and outside, exclusivity and anonymity, cultural consumption and high-end shopping has some entertainment value in its own right. But at the same time the Fünf Höfe complex forms part of a phenomenological analysis of the structural principles of city and landscape that Herzog & de Meuron already carried out in the eighties – alongside their glamorous object production.⁸ This experience makes it possible for them to respond thematically to a building commission that relativizes all signature design and, fundamentally, raises the question about the role of architecture and the definition of its products.

1 The conservatory was built immediately after the accession of Ludwig II (reigned 1864–1886) on the roof of Leo von Klenze’s Hofgarten wing.

- 2 “The Cunning of Cosmetics” in *El Croquis* 84, 1997 and *wbw* 11 / 1998
- 3 None of this could have happened without the building of the S-Bahn and the U-Bahn for the Olympic Games in 1972. Since then public transport in the city centre has imposed a completely new development hierarchy and changed the relationship between the centre and the region.
- 4 Newly created instruments like co-operative development planning or imported strategies like public-private partnership are attempts by public authorities to monitor major projects in an agile fashion and to slim down long-drawn-out consent processes.
- 5 Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm: “Die Veranstaltung von Stadt”, *wbw* 12 / 1998
- 6 It is the adaptability of Renzo Piano that has to be thanked for the fact that the retrograde urban image destined for Potsdamer Platz survived this architectural infill.
- 7 Claims of this kind were typical of Munich in the 20th as well as the 19th century: the municipal housing projects in the 20s, the theming of the neoclassical city as the Third Reich’s “City of the Movement”, the 1972 Olympic park and the intercontinental airport and trade fair city in the 90s.
- 8 E.g. the Schwarzpark project in Basel, the housing estate design for Aspern, Vienna, the study for the Avenida Diagonal in Barcelona (with Meili & Peter), the suggestion for the development by the Berlin Tiergarten and the study “Basel – an emerging city” (with Rémy Zaugg).

Hans Frei (pages 36–43)

English Translation: Michael Robinson

From the art of space to the politics of space

New spatial technologies, new power mechanisms

Architects – the masters of spatial creation – cannot handle space autonomously. Space is always political. But what can architecture achieve in this kind of space today? Do we need architecture at all, or just a new spatial policy for architecture? Questions of this kind arise against a background of the new technologies and networks that are crucially involved in presenting, organizing and producing space today. Along the essay by Hans Frei, we present a “classic” strategy of spatial control. A photographic essay on the defense structures left by

