Novi programi omogućuju novu arhitekturu

New Programs Make New Architecture Possible

Interviewed in Vienna 24 May 2014

In the focus of a joint practice of Artec architects, which Bettina Götz and Richard Manahl have been running for many years, is the research of the possibilities of typologies, as well as materials, structures, and, above all, space. Their work was greatly affected by their studies in the specific conditions of Graz University of Technology, much under the influence of the then avant-garde Günther Domergue. The direction of their approach to architecture was greatly determined by the constructivist and liberating work of Helmut Richter, as well as the works of Austrian modernists of the ’50s and ’60s. The largest part of their work relates to housing projects, especially subsidised housing. However, no matter if they design social housing projects or luxurious apartments, they apply the same principles which are the result of the synthesis of relevant factors and aim for optimum living conditions. The work of Artec architects which focuses on the relation between private and public domain, especially communication areas which have multifunctional programmes, is especially valuable. A certain sculptural quality of their works is never arbitrary, but is the result of many relevant parameters, including shaping parameters. Their architecture is on hierarchical and open with every particular detail supporting the whole programme. Artec architects always show respect to the context, but never in a direct and mimetic way. They get to the conceptual core of their projects by the process of reduction.
The catalogue titled Beyond the Minimal

Otto Kupferer described your work as: "Paradigm of autonomous, brutalistic, and post-modern language of construction and materials, and the subtle interpretation of the context. Do you still consider this concise and precise definition valid? The other question is whether you can accept the framework of a style or a trend? A trend is something we would not like to be associated with; only if it is a trend of searching for the new, but not in the conventional meaning of the word. This probably comes clear in our works; they are very different, and cannot be categorised. We are always trying out a new way, without knowing where it would take us. Especially in housing design we are trying to find a direction; there are so many possibilities of choosing the direction, and so many different possible results.

A certain common denominator can, however, be discerned. With you it is not about collecting and adding, but about omitting and reducing to what is important in the concept. In the end we go after that, but the question of recognisability and categorisation of projects, and the basic concept is interesting. The concept is important to us but, depending on the task, it can have different sources; typological or topographic, or it can be about a new abstraction.

So, you are not applying strict rules; each task requires a new analysis in which to process the new parameters contextually. Exactly, and perhaps it can be recognized only through actual construction, it is very important for us that our projects be built. We deliberate the treatment of the material, and try to reach the simplest possible technical solutions. Often, when we realise that technical realisation is too complicated, we review the concept, and try to avoid the problem by reinterpreting it. We try to get to the substance of the concept through the process of abstraction.

It means experimenting with every project. The beginning is familiar, but you do not know where it will lead. Such a path is characteristic for research. A physicist knows his field of research, but does not know what the result of his work will be. The On-going quest for a new path and new possibilities is intriguing to us.

Decisions are not ambiguous, and consequences are multiple. The decision that then is not ambiguous; it is one of several possible paths. Finally, we decide on one possible path, which eventually ends in a complex building. Much still remains open and sometimes we even reach an impasse. We have been working for a long time now; we do many competitions, up to 20 competitions per year, so we have contem-

plated numerous problems, and have come up with a lot of
solutions; we already have a certain corpus of solutions we can use and combine to produce something new.

ors — Let us go back to the process of abstraction — how do you achieve the strength of the expression of materiality? We recognize the material. It is not camouflaged, and the concept is thus far more transparent. How do you achieve this materiality or immateriality? Has it always been so, or is this a translation of the concept?  

ors — You do not seem to care much about the attractiveness or glorification of detail. Instead we can talk about a specific austerity which leads to poetic potential and expression, as in the example of Raum Zita Kern. I believe that in recent European architecture this work can be qualified as a masterpiece. Poetic quality and atmosphere have to be acknowledged, they go beyond research, systematic quality and methodology. What inspired you to create the building in question?  

ors — It is definitely the context of a farm, and also the fact that only one space was required. The theme was a definition of space, the changeability of light, and the quality of the surfaces. A sheet metal envelope was on the outside, and equally large formats of appropriate wood were applied in the interior. We deliberated where to cut the surfaces, and allow the light to enter. Thus, in the broadest sense of the word, something resembling atmosphere happened. It was also about the equivalence of the old and the new; the old was clearly old, and the new was clearly new, but the new was emphasized by the qualities of the old; and this created the atmosphere.

ors — This reminds me of Koolhaas’s thoughts on some of the buildings from the 1990s. He said that he does not do details; instead, he designs buildings without details, and then watches them come to life. In housing projects it has become increasingly important to design interspaces, not private areas only. We would be interested to hear where the borderline is; what is urbanism, what is architecture, and what other potentials are there?  

ors — Housing has been an important part of our work from the very beginning; through the projects that were completed, as well as those which were not realised. Here in Vienna we have subdivided housing construction, we know all the rules, and the size of the apartments has to be relatively small. The requirements for apartments are quite clear; they have to be of decent spatial quality, they need to be decently lit and airy, there has to be a separate exterior space. However, what the apartments cannot have,
We have always been interested in conceptual work. Typology evolves from the concept, and over the typology we set the conditions on the location, which in turn result in a specific building.

The street inside; there are also common rooms, such as in the Tokiostrasse, as well as the possibility of using the entrance hall for different events. The Viennese theoretician Christian Kühn wrote in a newspaper article recently that he went back to see the complex three years later. He noticed that the common areas have not been fully accepted, and that there are possibilities which have not been fully used, whose form and structure, however, play a significant role in the configuration of the building. Do architects conceive, plan, design more than the tenants can accept, use, internalise?

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for economic reasons, large dimensions, air, width; that is simply not possible in subsidized housing. In a way, we have transported the luxury of space in front of the apartments. The buildings do not have a dark staircase which you climb when you enter the building, and try to get to your apartment, but actual spaces on the borderline of the public and the private, stretched as wide as possible, thus becoming an extension of the city. We want the tenants of large residential complexes to have the possibility to choose from more than one possible path in getting to their apartments, to use several entrances. It improves the situation, and makes the context versatile.

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In Tokiostrasse you used lobbies over two levels to compensate for the low height. Generosity is a precondition of dignified living — the street inside; there are also common rooms, such as in the Tokiostrasse, as well as the possibility of using the entrance hall for different events. The Viennese theoretician Christian Kühn wrote in a newspaper article recently that he went back to see the complex three years later. He noticed that the common areas have not been fully accepted, and that there are possibilities which have not been fully used, whose form and structure, however, play a significant role in the configuration of the building. Do architects conceive, plan, design more than the tenants can accept, use, internalise?
L’Habitation and Cosoblanca, or in Switzerland, where Patrick Gmür uses it, too. We merely developed the pattern.

Oxys — Russians use it as well; the Wenin brothers, Ginzburg, Corbusier also knew them.

Artec — Housing projects in Vienna support only the construction of apartments, but in a developing city, apartments have to be built so that they contain an urban component. The implementation mechanisms, however, do not anticipate that. Therefore, we believe that we have to introduce precautionary measures which will allow a consequent upgrade. The structure needs to have a reserve of space for the functions presently missing, thus guaranteeing a city not only being built through apartments, which would result in the creation of dead neighbourhoods. There has to be a room for additions, and this the structures need to remain unfinished at this time.

Oxys — Developing neutral spaces with several possible references is probably the right strategy. The question is where in subsidized housing projects an architect should plan the unknown purpose, where is urbanism or a comprehensive view of the issue? Corbusier used to say that nothing should be planned; one merely needs to allow for the possibility of things developing spontaneously.

Artec — That is impossible without following such strategies. The rules are so rigid,
proti srednjeevropskom mentalitetu. Tu se naprosto hoće
znati što je to, gdje je početak i kada je gotovo. Od toga bi se
trebalo oprostiti.

To — Beč stoji pod pritiskom jer se očekuje godišnji pristiz
stanovnika od 30 000 do 40 000, a to znači da bi godišnje
trebali graditi od 3000 do 4000 stanova. Nastoji se razviti
model, model zasnovan na zbivanja se kod novog cen-
tralnog kolobrada i kod sjevernog kolobrada. Tu su zapaleni
i relativno novi kooperativni pristupi. Imamo i primjer novog
dragog dijela Srestadt. Aspern, tamo se poklapa uspo-
stavni izdvojne prilike i grad se nastoji izmijeniti. Doduče, već
postoji odredene komunikacijske strukture. To je jedan od
prvih projekata kod kojih je javni sektor bivuć unaprije.
Značajni su izmjami, koja je mogućnost izpravna, možda
objaiji.**

** Artec — Obje su interesantne. Jedan grad poput Beča centralno je organiziran, moguće je još male zasnovi,
ali to neće voditi tako. Biće bitno otmijati, međutim
mislim da se to odvija na površine poglavlje način. Aspern se
gradi gustocima kao u bečkoj gradskoj jezgri, međutim bez
prednosti koje grad pruža, već s manarama. Čovjek tamo stane
i ne može nitko podesiti. Trebalo bi promaknuti strategije kako bi
moguće u novim četvrtima postići kvalitet Beča ili nekog dru-
gog srednjeevropskog grada. Radi se o arhitektonskim kvalite-
tama unutarnjih, ali i vanjskog prostora. Gradski pristup Bi

** Artec — To leads us to sustainability, a term which has
come overused because wrong parameters have been taken
into account. It is about social sustainability, the resources
of the landscape, and urbanism, and the role of an architect,
which is again being forgotten. What is the path that should
be taken in order to avoid the Asian scenario?**

** Artec — As far as architecture is concerned, the basic requirement is
having good architects, next, moral and ethical preconditions
have to be met, as well. Architecture as a service industry is not
possible. Investors should share the same attitude, the posi-
tions of architects and investors need to be equal. In certain
areas it can only be about the politics. The politicians should
know that these are their fundamental tasks. That should be
demanded from the politicians, and urban planning should be
implemented. We do not see that happening in Vienna today.

** Artec — We are also faced with the work of international
architectural stars in Vienna. How can an architect resist the
allure of this expressive world of forms? How to pursue one’s
path firmly? It may be a problem for some younger architects.

** Artec — Does the answer lay in professional ethics?**

** Artec — I believe that these special buildings are also necessary;
that should, actually, not be a problem. These city icons are here,
and the city needs them, too. However, that does not have
anything in common with typical city structures we are inter-
ested in. There are no arguments against the international
architects designing for Austria, perhaps Austrian architects of
our generation do not design enough abroad. You are probably
referring to the new campus. From the outside Zaha Hadid’s
building looks completely impossible. The inner space is true
surrealism, and I am, in general, very interested in surrealism.

** Artec — Generally, I would expect higher quality, and less formalism.
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** Artec — I would like to refer to a theoretical text of yours
where you say that Architecture inevitably ends in sculpture.
When I think of the Wohnen am Mühlgrund residential com-
xplex, I am reminded of that sentence. I believe it also applies to
the Tokiostrasse complex, but that is a town on a small scale,
with numerous rich structures, while Mühlgrund is a mono-
light.**

** Artec — Their very dimension is a sufficient reason for the
buildings to be given a more or less sculptural quality.
Whenever there is the question of more or less, I plead for
more. Buildings characterise our environment, and are city’s
landmarks, which breaks the uniformity of the city. Appear-
ance can and should result in significance. Naturally, it cannot
be applied to each individual building.

** Artec — The sculptural quality of Mühlgrund did not occur
accidentally, but as a result of different parameters. It stands as a fort
which protects the settlement behind it.
može biti samo polica. Poštovanti bi morali spoznati da su to njihove sultaninske zadac. To bi trebalo sahtijevati od poštovanti a urbana planiranje bi to moralo provoditi u djele. Danas toga nema u Beču.

**Oris** — U Beču smo također već konfrentirali s arhitektoničkim problemima internacionih zvijezda. Pitanje je, kako se arhitekt može odvjetiti: zgodnjeg rastvača formi? Koliko nepobjedljivosti i svog putem? Može li to problem za nele }


**Artec** — Možda li to problem za nele
Otvoreno je osećanje čini usporedbu u osnovi.

**ARTEC**

To je prema van. Prema unutrašnji je cilj uvijek razvijanje specijalne prostore kvalitete. Zgrada može izvana djelovati neobično, ali unutrašnja se nalazi velika osvjetljena bala, nastaje prostora kvaliteta koja bez tih vanjskih značajki ne bi bila moguća. Ta velika štendirna vanjska forma moguća je samo tamo gdje je sve tako heterogena, bila bi nemoguća u nekom kvartu iz utvrđenog grada.


Otvoreno je uvažati li arhitekturu koju se posve razlikuje od vašeg rada? Poznato je da je vrlo značajno Hana Hollema. [ARTEC] - Posjetimo osobu Hana Holleme, kako je razmišljao o arhitekti i kako je u svojim opštim predavanjima znao proširiti to što je arhitektura. Dyjelom je to u njegovim radovima ispadaju drugačije. Najnovije intervju nekoliko mladih arhitekta na kojem rad je iznimno prijemljiv. Njihova intervju se na svim arhitekta plaća na iznimnoj, kako općenito nije naročito značajno. To je jedan rad u gradskom kontekstu u kojem je prisutno mnogo slojeva grada. Rad je vrlo neobičan, mogao ga je napraviti samo on sa svojim intelektualnom pozadinom.

Otvoreno je Govačić smo da surađujemo i drugim disciplinama, radi se također o uzajamnom učenju. Onda je na istoj i rad sa studentima. Međutim, realizacija prostora posjeduje također pedagošku komponentu. Jedna od pretpostavka u vezi s arhitektura je usuala, svakom studentima. To je bilo povezano s sadašnjim programom školskih zgrada. U urbanismu i u restrooms. The extent of the intervention at the time is beyond our imagination at present. In the current political discussions architecture is secondary. It brings no votes to the politicians, because the voters have no understanding of architecture. It is these buildings which we consider important and valuable, that the population does not accept at first. The pedagogical quality of the areas in which you grow up is also important. I grew up in the Slavonic area in the housing estate designed by architect Hans Purin, Rainer’s student. It really did influence me; if I had not grown up there, I would have become a completely different architect, or would ever have chosen a different profession.

**Otvoreno** - The Dutch have been dealing with these issues for a long time; the work of Herman Herzberger was particularly important in that aspect. [ARTEC] - He completed so many noteworthy projects. A great deal of people who acquired certain spatial concepts grew up in the areas that he had designed.

**Otvoreno** - We had the opportunity to meet Herzberger last October at Days of Oris. He was extremely successful — the reactions to his lecture were as if he were a pop star. It was very nice to see that the young recognized his engagement; it was a really positive experience. [ARTEC] - Does the architect also need to be a mediator? What should the form and the direction of work with future architects be conveyed? [ARTEC] - It is not so simple, but teaching is a very interesting topic; teaching architecture is, in a way, completely different from practicing architecture. I have been doing it for quite a while, and Richard has been involved in the review of student works. At first designed projects with the students resembling those for competitions. However, I soon realized that it is boring to design projects at the university in the same way as in a bureau. So I set a primary concept which we have been continuously working on for more than four years. It is titled Abstract City. We work on an abstract term every semester; it can be a street or a location, and students have to develop concrete projects. First they have to develop a programme, consider the issues — what is a school, what qualities can a street have, what is important, and how it can be achieved? When we have money, which is not always the case, we organise an accompanying conference, invite experts in different fields to give a lecture, which is followed by a panel discussion. That is how a theoretical background of a certain concept is developed. All of the above is included in the map of the Abstract City, the basic knowledges of the city are combined, and the developed designs are filled in this map like inlays. The topics are integrated and range from...
ono je vrijeme bilo posvejasto; ako želimo graditi školu, onda moramo praviti programsko uvjete da razredne prostorije moraju imati dimenzije 9 x 7 metara. To se nije nikada moglo dovesti u pitanja. Na zidu učionica prema hodniku stvorili smo prozore kako bi se koncept oslobodio. Zanimljivo je da arhitektura postaje nova samo ako ima novi program. S pedsačkim promjenama i uvijek novim programima važno je da je kod školskih zgrada moguće graditi uvijek nove prostore sklopove. Zanimljivo je preispisivanje funkcionalnih programa i procesa. Pokusali smo da cjelina zgrada bude jedna tvojina, a ne samo razrez. Spomenuli ste da je bilo moguće da mi kao mladih boljemo talhu narudžbu, iako smo na najtežu bili tek drugoplazirani. To je inicirao Hannes Svoboda koji je tada u gradskoj vlad gradu značajniji Zilla rukovatio gradskim projektnim i, you include your work in the continuity. When we have to explain architecture, we have to do it not only from the perspective of our work, but in terms of continuity, as well. Developing concrete objects in specific situations as radically as possible is what students also find helpful.

Trend je nešto s čime ne bismo baš htjeli biti povezani, jedino ako je to trend traganja za novim, ali ne u klasičnom smislu oblika nekog stila.

A trend is something we would not like to be associated with; only if it is a trend of searching for the new, but not in the conventional meaning of the word.

Let us take Pletčnik, for example, whose grandiosity of work is beyond expression; a lot of work is required to be able to understand its peculiarity and extraordinary quality. It takes experience and background knowledge. At the beginning of my career in CSU, Domenech was the one who, from the point of view of an architect, showed me how to work with a firmly expressed attitude, and how to execute projects. It was probably the most important thing for me to experience that. Then there was Helmut Richter in Vienna, who also introduced us to Prouvé, who had become extremely important to us. When we talk about Richter, we also need to mention Heidulf Gergross; they worked together at the time. One of our first journeys led us to La Tourette, Corbusier was very formative. Very early, we also had the opportunity to see the
me je zaista objeljilo. Da nimam tomar odlučila, postala bih, ako uspješno, dominantna posve drugačija arhitekta.

ORS — Tim su se stvarima i neznamo već vrglo dugavi, naročito važan u tom pogledu bio je rad Hermana Herberga. ARTEC — Ovo je isto tako vrlo mnogo značajnog; u pro-
storima koje je Herberger gradio odraslo je mnogo ljudi koji su takoj stekli naročito proširene predodinj.


Trebalo bi arhitekta također da bude posvedon? Još jesu u kojem obliku i u kojem smjeru ide rad s budućim arhitektima? Kako se mogu prenositi vlastita iskustva? ARTEC — To nije tako jedno-
stavno, ali nastavlja je interesantna tema; na određen je način kao i u biociti. Onda se postavlja jedan primjer koncept na kojemu se permanentna radionica, već od četiri godine. Naziv se Access City; svakog semestra obrađivamo jedan apace stvoren pojam, to može biti primjerica ulica ili lokacija, studenti moraju realizirati konkretnu projekciju. Na početku moraju izraditi program, promijeniti — što je škola, koja kvalitete može imati jedna ulica, što je važno i kako se to može napraviti. Kad imamo novca, što je uvek slučaj, onda imamo odgovara-
jujuću pozadinsku konferenciju, posavjetovati, iskustvene snih područja kako predvadati, ali nakon toga je parel diskusija. Tako nastaje teoretska pozadina određenom pojmu. Sve to

Puchemau garden city designed by Roland Rainer. It was very influential, and it determined our attitude towards the hous-

PROJEKT — Iako je tokom sljedećih godina postao jedan od najzanimljivijih arhitekta, u projekatima koje je realizirao, nije odsutna značajnost. Osim toga je način na koji je rad predstavljen u sezone, to je bitno za dobrog arhitekta. U ovom projektu je, kako je rečeno, način na koji je rad predstavljen, bitno za dobrog arhitekta.

ORS — Lacker arhitekta nije, ali je bio vrlo interesantnog, nažalost, s važnijim projekcijama. To je, kako je rečeno, bitno za dobrog arhitekta.

ORS — Kažemo se baviti radom na ovim projekcijama, to je vidi o arhitektskom, ali i o većina znanje o njemu. U našem svijetu, još uvijek je, kako bi bilo dobro značilo, većina arhitekta.

ORS — Kažemo da je u ovom projektu, a je to neka odslužna, ali i o većina znanje o njemu. U našem svijetu, još uvijek je, kako bi bilo dobro značilo, većina arhitekta.

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