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Summary

"Les Ambassadeurs", special store in Zurich

Paul Steger

(Pages 339–342)

On Bahnhofstrasse in Zurich, the building code limits the number of floors to 6 and the height of the roof cornice to 20 meters. The floors resulting, with a height of 3.30 meters, are too low to be air-conditioned correctly. The installation of the basement as sales premises has in effect yielded an additional floor, while the upper storeys, which are sharply recessed, have been allocated to storage and staff rooms. In big stores it is sometimes necessary to proceed to extreme flexibility, this resulting in an effect of anonymity. Here the floor structures span a distance of 18.50 meters without any intermediate supports, and the store manager can arrange his departments as he sees fit.
The installation of the ground floor and the first floor as a kind of "open house" is intended to encourage spontaneous buying. The traditional display window is here replaced by a prolongation of the counters and shelves towards the outside. The interior fittings are heavily influenced by this new sales conception. In particular, the effect of continuity here is obtained by means of velvet wall-to-wall carpeting on the floor and the same material on the partitions and the ceiling of the store.
Seen from Bahnhofstrasse, the building volume displays very smooth façades of dark-painted sheet metal. The horizontal window apertures and the absence of joints stress the subdued character of the upper part resting on a highly animated ground floor distinguished by a canopy. The idea behind the whole conception is to focus public interest on the merchandise. The discreetness of the building blends with the architecture of the neighbouring structures.
Extract from the inaugural address delivered by the architect.

Extension and renovation of a big department store in Karlsruhe

Magasin Schneider, Karlsruhe
Architect: R. Langensteiner, Ettlingen

(Pages 343–346)

The present building, situated in the centre of the city, has been in existence since 1956. Its sales area was to be expanded from 6000 to 9000 sq. meters, and its fittings were to be adapted to modern sales methods. From the psychological point of view it was necessary to extend the current sales program by the creation of new departments, such as: fresh fish, delicatessen, snack bar, discothèque, newspapers as well as a modern art gallery.
The dimensions of the internal module are 60×120 cm. The ceilings, which are easily transformable, are equipped with electrified rails. The partitions are made up of standardized elements which can be dismantled. The floors are covered with wall-to-wall carpeting on the upper floors and with marble composition throughout the ground floor.
Even when reinforced the existing skeleton could only support a light façade. For the latter there has been selected a system of stainless aluminium panels, coloured bronze. Some of them are simple and equipped with underface ventilation; others are insulated sandwich elements. The globes which are illuminated at night and envisaged originally as Christmas decorations have been retained to animate the façade. The volumes were largely determined by the existing construction, but they have been improved by the transformation. The latter was carried out in stages without interruption of the sales, aside from the restaurant for a certain time. This was not easy, especially as regards supply deliveries and movements.

Design Research Building, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA

Benjamin Thompson and Associates

(Pages 347–350)

It is 17 years now since Benjamin Thompson built the first complex of this type, soon followed by a similar one in New York and a third in San Francisco. The building presented here is intended to replace the first one scheduled for early demolition.
Thompson himself for the most part determined the range of articles sold in this sort of experimental store, where the customer is encouraged to make spontaneous purchases. The architecture expresses this intention, and the turnover figure is proof of the success of the undertaking.
Thompson has conceived of the building as a large display case; a layout reserved up to now for big stores alone is in this case realized within a reduced volume. So as not to betray the break with the street, the pavement is continued throughout the ground-floor level. All the windows, which are hardly visible, are positioned without frames, and the planting of the grounds also continues without any break into the interior of the building. This homogeneous interpenetration of the spaces is carried through as well on the upper levels by way of an optical interplay of mezzanine floors and a group of open staircases. The ceiling of wooden slats is the only warm element wished by the architect, whose declared intention was to build a big store which did not resemble a big store.

Forum Steglitz, Berlin

Georg Heinrichs, Berlin

(Pages 351–354)

The site, measuring 9000 sq. meters, is located on Walter-Schreiber-Platz, an important traffic intersection and meeting-point between two large business arteries.
Very large stores tend to proliferate along the latter; to counteract this development, it was decided to group together in a homogeneous complex a certain number of smallerscale businesses handling various types of merchandise. The district, in addition, will be enlivened by the presence of office premises and places of amusement, and it will be served by the necessary parking facilities.
The shape of the site, measuring 55×162 meters, as well as the pattern of the adjacent roadways, led to an elongated building form with a main entrance sited laterally. Conveyors and escalators serve the various floors from a large central volume, where the fronts of the shops appear superimposed one above the other. The secondary elements of the program, such as vertical installations shafts, emergency stairways, lifts, etc. are situated on the periphery of the complex. The center is supplied either from the second basement level via the garage ramp or via the ground-floor access.
The main technical facilities are located on the second basement level and on the fifth floor. The complex is partially air-conditioned, and the air exchange is effected in accordance with the character of the given premises. The fifth floor, with an area of 4000 sq. meters and solely accessible via high-rise communications tracts, constitutes a separate complex accommodating a recreation center accompanied by various play areas, restaurant, bar, clubs, etc.

Small store in Rheinfelden

Keller and Bachmann

(Pages 355–358)

A row of five old buildings that are not at all unified was to be renovated so as to present the merchandise in a more attractive manner with the aid of a system of variable shelves. The transparency of the ground floor which was considered desirable was not supposed to disturb the upper part of the buildings, classified as a "historic site".
The façade was modified and improved by a portico serving to increase the display area and eliminating reflections in the display windows. The interior is fitted out on a module of 110×110 cm and for the most part made up of prefabricated elements. The joints between the elements are equipped with rails for the attachment of shelves and various lighting fixtures.
The display stands consist of main shelves and of supplementary panels. Shelves can be added; all the pieces are of pressed sheet metal, and the furnishing system is uniform throughout all the floors. Unskilled workers can very easily be entrusted with the assembly. General illumination of the interior has been dispensed with. Horizontal or vertical lighting fixtures are attached 1.60 m from floor level, and the ceiling remains dim. Spotlights here and there add to the intimate character of the store.
A screen of translucid plastic material set at a certain distance from the façade regularly diffuses the daylight coming in through the windows.
Transformation was carried out in 18 months without any interruption in sales activities nor any drop in turnover.

Furnishing system for big stores

Werner Zemp, "Industrial Design", Milan

(Pages 367–372)

The project presented here is a new system of standardized elements designed for the fitting out of big department stores, its principal areas of application being as follows:

- Suspended ceilings or modular grille with contact rails for spotlights or lamps
- Lockers, partitions, shelves, display windows, fitting cubicles and their lighting fixtures
- Sales counters, gondolas, galleries
- Clothing racks

The system is made up of cruciform sections mounted vertically without any special tools between the ceiling and the floor. These sections, having a width of 48 mm, are of aluminium and are connected up with cross-pieces by means of eccentric bolting. Fill-in elements (side panels, intermediate partitions, bottoms, sliding doors, shelves, pediments, etc.) of various materials are then inserted or suspended on the skeleton structure. Assembly is effected without specialized personnel. The attachments are designed in such a way that at any time elements can be added or removed without general dismantling being called for. The basic module of the system is 600×600 mm.
To build sales counters a square section with five different normed lengths is combined with the standard cross-pieces. The system, moreover, permits the assembly of clothing racks and of suspended ceilings. The latter can be equipped with electric power rails allowing for the attachment of advertizing signs, display elements, etc., and finally they have fitted into them the tops of the vertical supports of the system.