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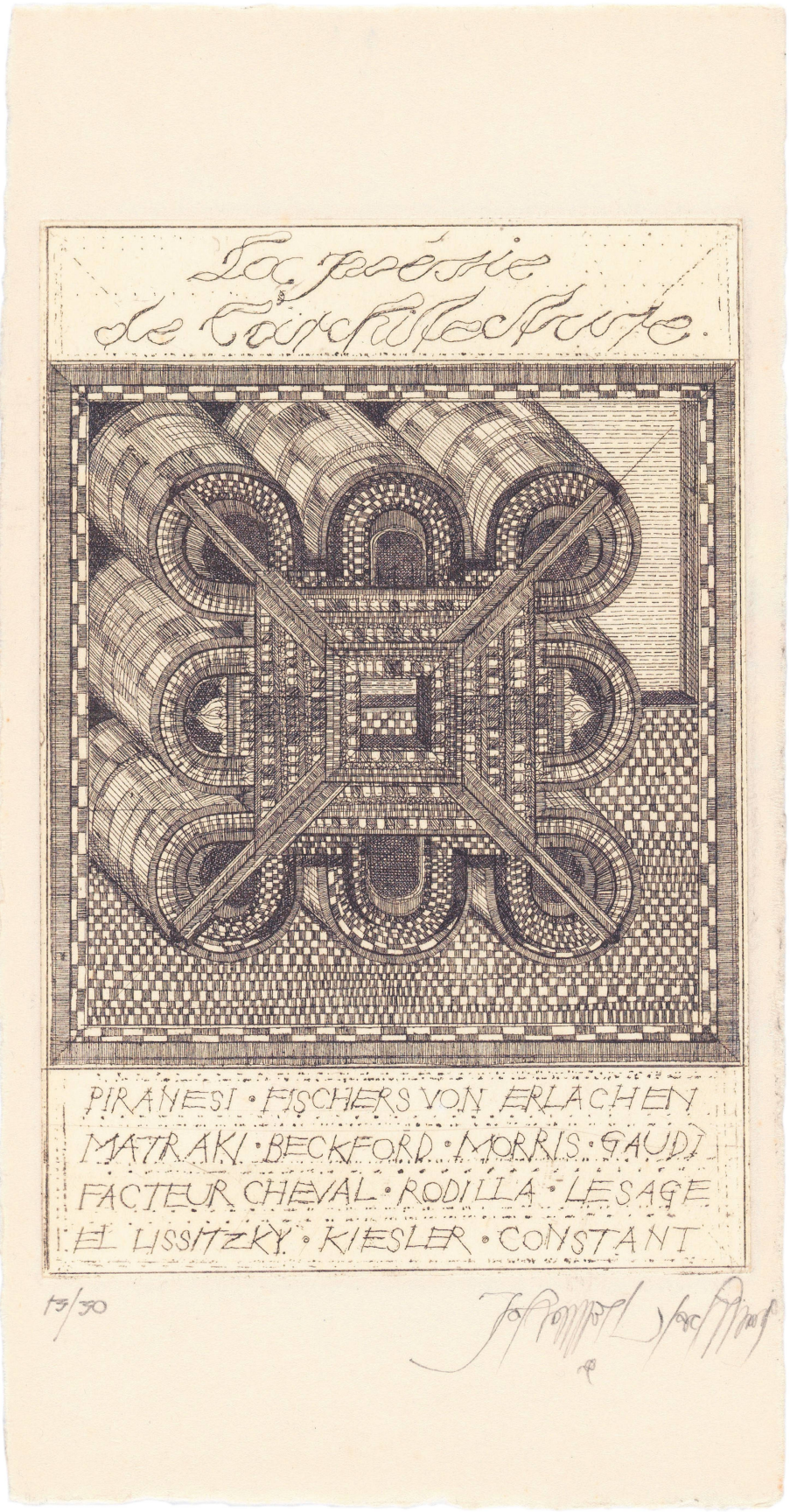
From the gta Archives
Compiled and commentated by Sabine Sträuli, Filine Wagner, and Lukas Zurfluh

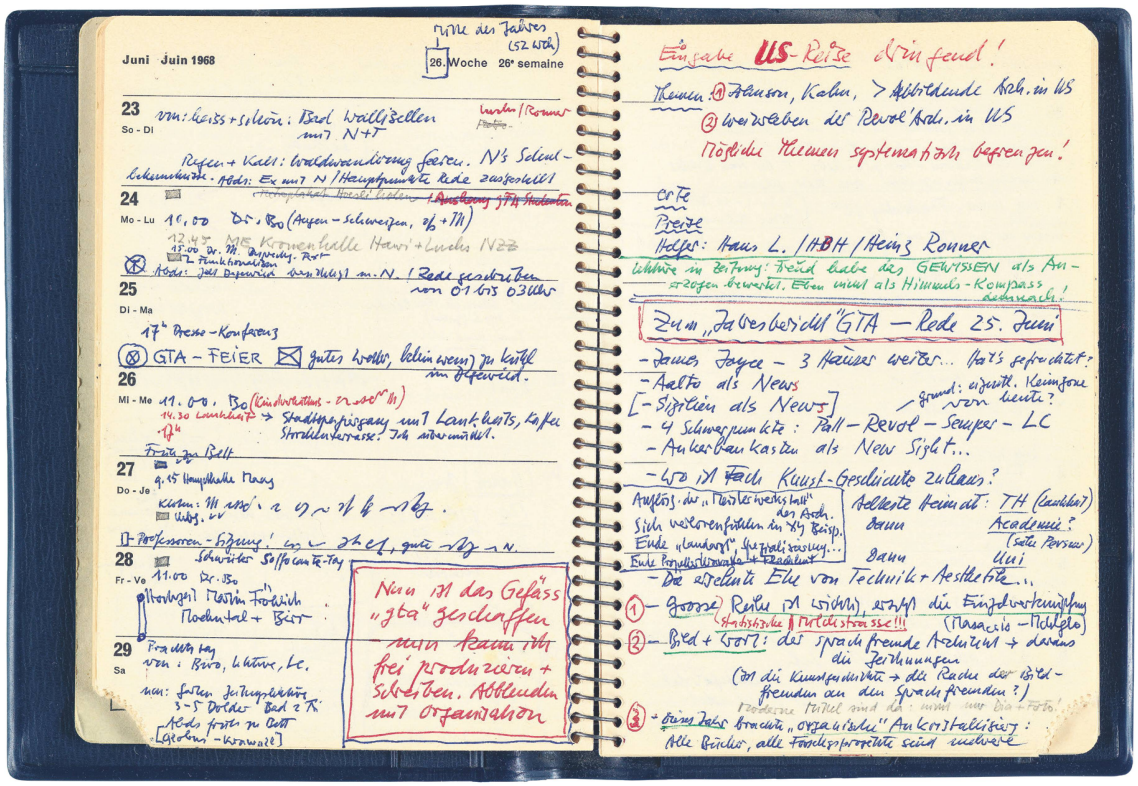


1 Johannes Gachnang, *La Poésie de l'architecture*; etching; first printing, 30 copies numbered and signed, 1967; Bequest of Adolf Max Vogt, gta Archives, ETH Zurich.

The Zurich artist and architect Johannes Gachnang created this etching for the invitation to the official inauguration ceremony of the gta institute on June 23, 1967. The etching references both the historical and present-day "Saint Andrew's cross," as well as the theory and practice that Adolf Max Vogt would mention in his speech as the first director of the gta. Gachnang had worked in Hans Scharoun's studio in Berlin, where he completed a first cycle of fantastic architectures, from which the etching was taken.

2 Adolf Max Vogt, page from his 1968 pocket diary; Bequest of Adolf Max Vogt, gta Archives, ETH Zurich.

A year after its inauguration, the gta Institute was a fait accompli. Next to his entry on the annual celebration on June 25, 1968, Adolf Max Vogt, driving force of the institute and its long-standing director, expresses relief at having created the container "gta" and finally being able to produce and write freely while reducing organizational tasks. On the opposite page, the notes for his speech give insight into the unremitting endeavor to shape the institute's profile through research topics and to position it within the field of architecture and art history.



Kunstformenlehre

~~DER STIL~~

oder der Stil und seine pract. Anwendung in den

technischen und tektonischen Künsten.

Ein Handbuch

~~der~~

~~praktischen Aesthetik~~

für

Techniker, Künstler und Kunstfreunde

von

Gottfried Semper.

Erster Band.

FRANKFURT.

Verlag der Hermann'schen Buchhandlung.

3 Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten, oder praktische Ästhetik* (1860/1863); draft of the title page with corrections, ca. 1860; Bequest of Gottfried Semper, gta Archives, ETH Zurich.

Known mostly for his built oeuvre, Gottfried Semper also gained fame for his prolific writings about architecture. His meticulously crafted *Der Stil* is considered to be a fundamental work of architectural theory. Based on four elements—the hearth, the roof, the enclosure, and the mound—his foundational story goes beyond the boundaries of architectural and art history, reaching into such fields as the history of culture and language, evolutionary biology, and anthropology.

4 Sigfried Giedion, *The Eternal Present,* vol. 1: *The Beginnings of Art* (1962); layout for a page-spread with drawings based on photographs of cave painting in Niaux, ca. 1960; Bequest of Sigfried Giedion, gta Archives, ETH Zurich.

In the decades after the Second World War, Sigfried Giedion became increasingly interested in the principles of paleoarchaeology and paleoanthropology. In his ample publication *The Eternal Present*, published in two volumes in 1962 and 1964, he traces the origins of art and architecture in prehistory. For both volumes the art historian undertook journeys to places like the Cave of Niaux in south-western France. He accurately documented the objects of his investigations, using them for research and to lavishly illustrate his narration.

5 Ernst Gladbach, "Bern"; watercolor of the timber structure of a rural building from the canton of Bern; second half of the nineteenth century; Bequest of Ernst Gladbach, gta Archives, ETH Zurich.

The founding of Switzerland as a federal state in the mid-nineteenth century also saw the rise of an engagement with timber structures as an expression of national architecture. Ernst Gladbach, then professor at the Polytechnikum and author of many books on "Swiss woodwork style," was a pivotal figure in researching and disseminating vernacular architecture. In his educational panels, like this watercolor of a building from the canton of Bern, he did not represent actual houses but created hybrids by unifying in one drawing all the features of the regional tradition.

6a Paul Artaria, cottage in Prêles, ca. 1920; photograph; Bequest of Paul Artaria, gta Archives, ETH Zurich.

Due to its elementary form and its simple construction, the tent-like cottage in Prêles, built by Paul Artaria in 1920, was soon dubbed the "primitive hut" of Swiss modern architecture. The site did play a crucial role during the formative years of modernism. In June 1923, representatives of the architectural avant-garde, including Artaria, Hans Schmidt, and Hermann Baur, convoked a meeting at the cottage above Lake Bienne to contest the rather conservative result of the competition for the Hörnli cemetery in Basel, thus fostering different directions for Swiss architecture.

A B O WIR ERWARTEN IHRE TEILNAHME UND IHRE BETEILIGUNG AN DER AUSSTELLUNG.

DIE ZUSAMMENKUNFT DER ARCHITEKTEN
findet statt:
SAMSTAG / SONNTAG,
6./7. Juni 1925
in PRÊLES (Bielersee).

HINFAHRT Samstag 6.Juni abends

Zürich	ab	18.27	
Biel	an	21.14	(via Olten)
Basel	ab	19.25	
Biel	an	21.05	(via Grenchen)
Bern	ab	19.47	
Biel	an	20.43	(via Lyss)
Biel	ab	21.25	
Neuveville	an	21.43	

UNTERKUNFT im Ferienhütte (1Std. ob Neuveville)
für die am Samstag ankommenden Teilnehmer.

HINFAHRT Sonntag 7.Juni morgens

Zürich	ab	7.00	
Biel	an	9.31	(via Olten)
Basel	ab	7.50	
Biel	an	9.24	(via Grenchen)
Bern	ab	9.08	
Biel	an	10.06	(via Lyss)
Biel	ab	10.52	
Ligerz	an	11.11	
Ligerz	ab	11.28	
Prêles	an	11.59	

~~ESSEN~~ Sonntag 7.Juni mittags im "Bären" in Prêles.
Für einfaches Mittagessen wird gesorgt.

AUSSTELLUNG und Besprechung von Plänen etc. im Saal des "Bären. Alle Teilnehmer sind eingeladen, Arbeiten und weiteres Material mitzubringen oder Diskussionsthemata zu stellen.

RUECKFAHRT Sonntag, 7.Juni abends

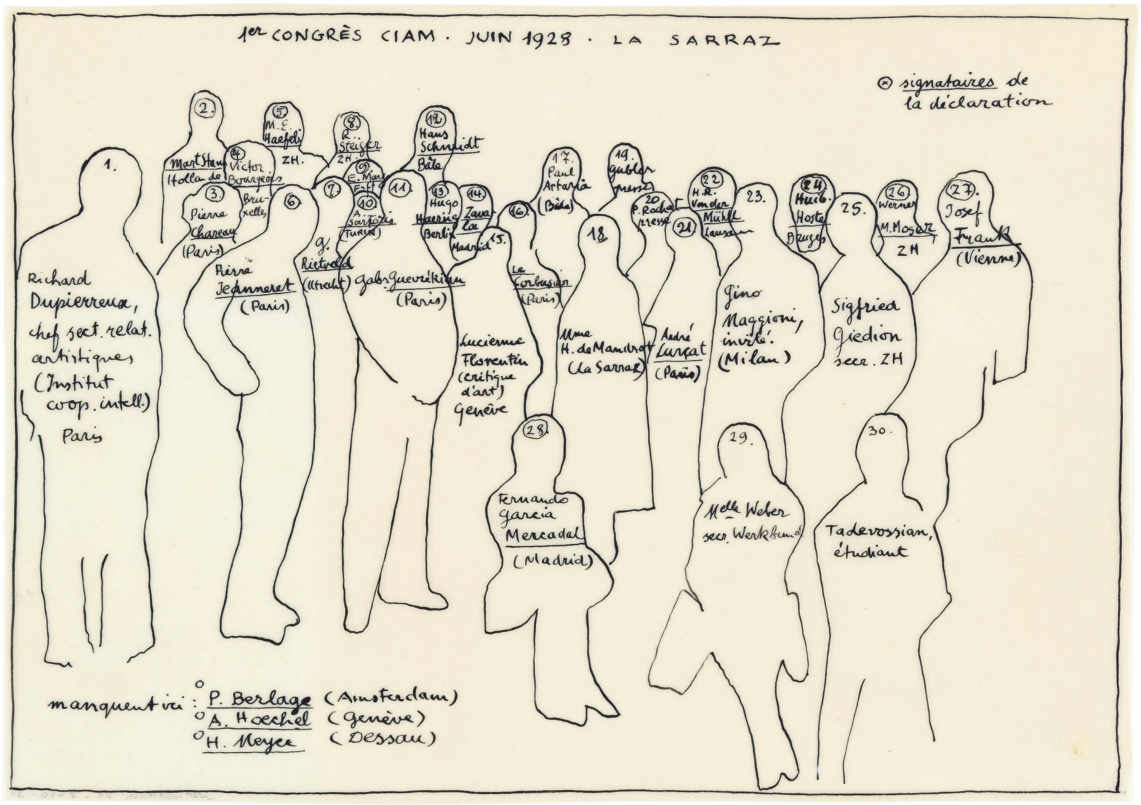
Biel	ab	20.43	
Zürich	an	23.22	(via Olten)
Biel	ab	20.53	
Basel	an	22.31	(via Grenchen)
Biel	ab	22.10	
Bern	an	22.54	(via Lyss)

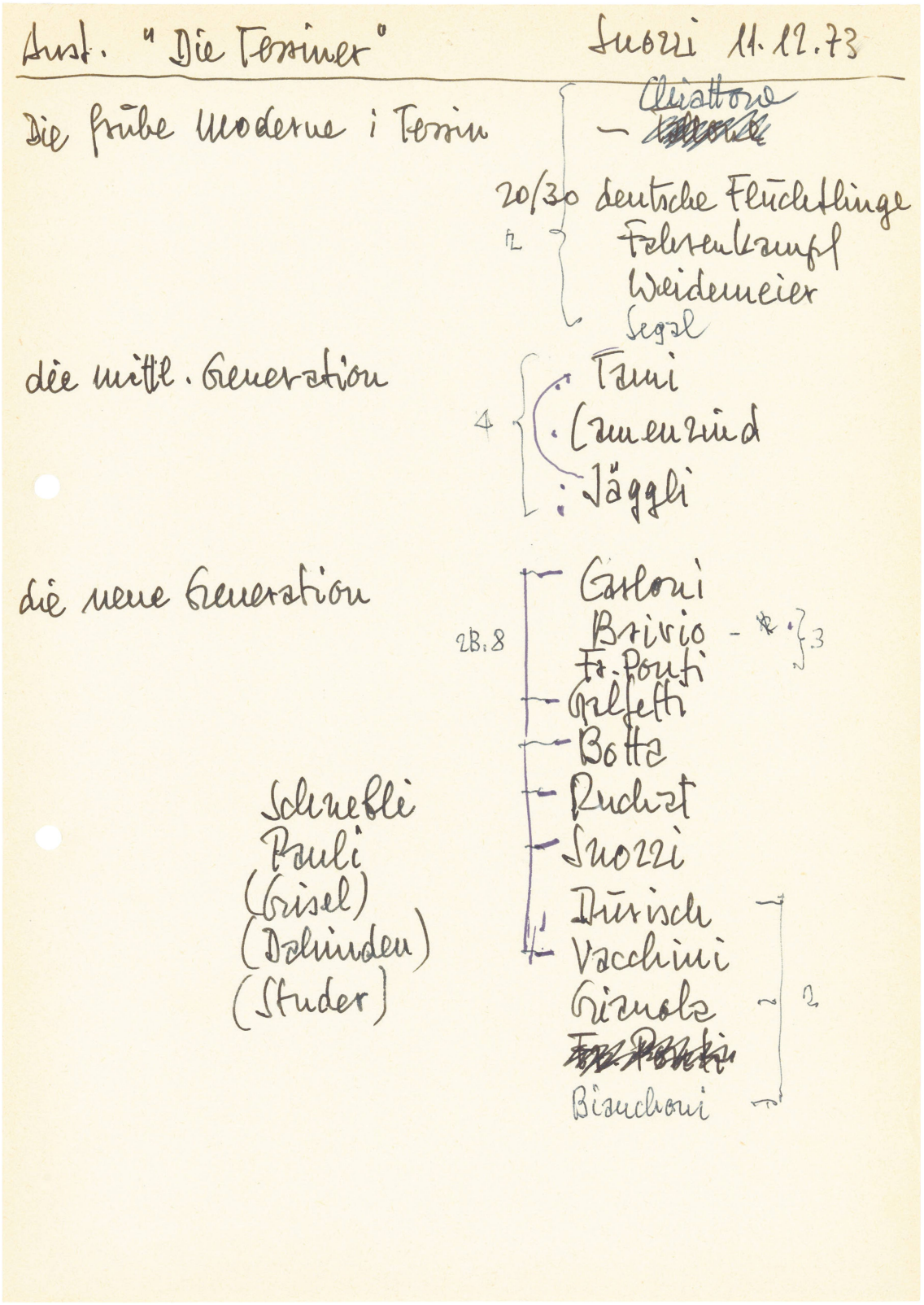
Jede weitere Auskunft erteilt die Administration des
A B O
Augustinergasse 5 Basel

6b "Die Zusammenkunft der Architekten" (The gathering of the architects); announcement and program for the meeting of avant-garde architects in Prêles, 1923; author unknown; Bequest of Hermann Baur, gta Archives, ETH Zurich.

7 Founding congress of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) in La Sarraz, June 26–29, 1928; photograph and corresponding template; CIAM Archives, gta Archives, ETH Zurich.

In 1928, the International Congresses of Modern Architecture were founded at the chateau of Madame Helène de Mandrot in La Sarraz. The reason for this meeting was the defeat of the "modern" projects in the competition for the League of Nations palace in Geneva in 1927. The photograph shows the participants and the hostess in front of the castle's chapel. A corresponding template tries to retrace and identify them.

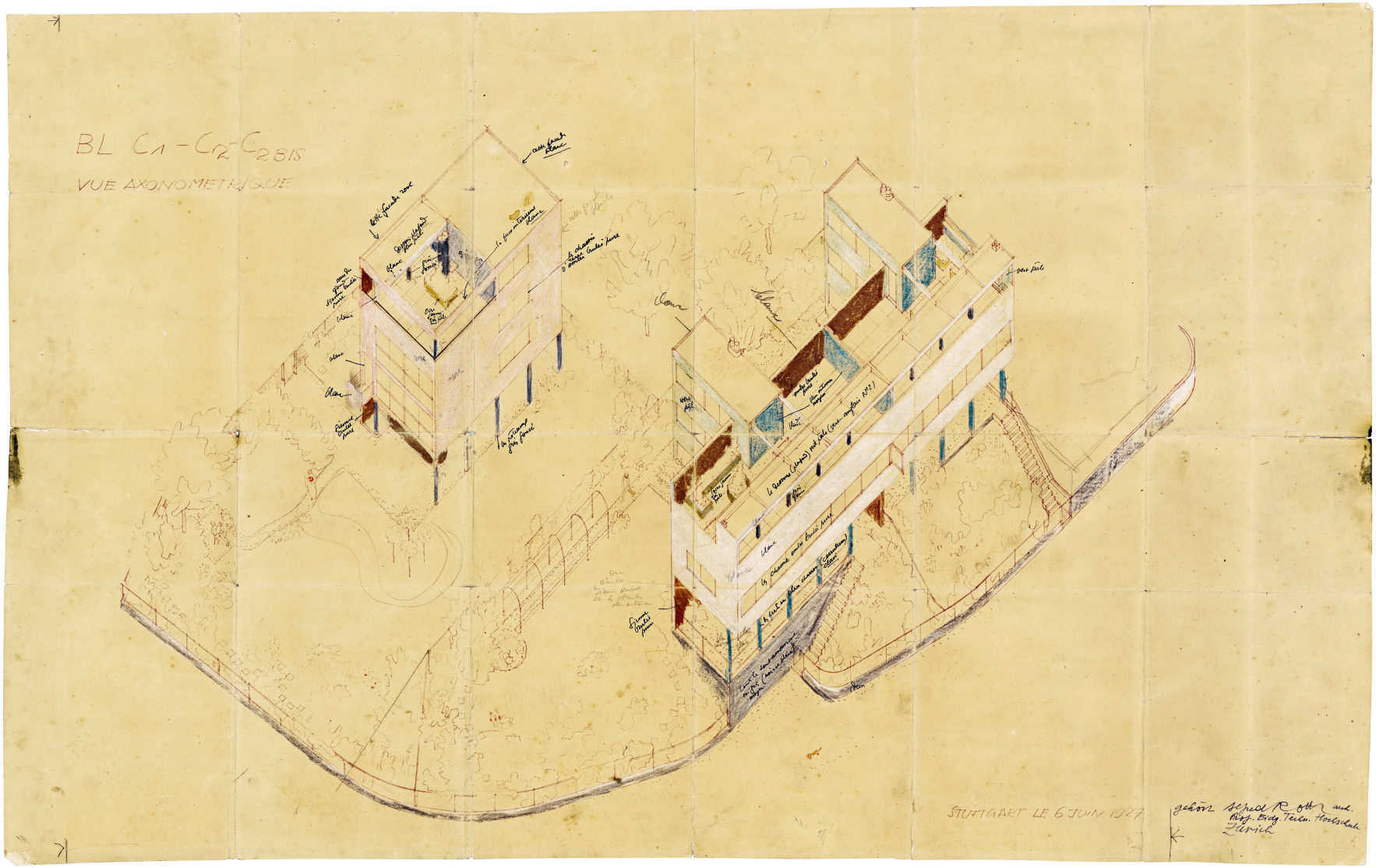




8 Heinz Ronner [?], "Ausst. 'Die Tessiner'" (Exhib. "The Ticinesi"); research notes for the exhibition *Tendenzen — Neuere Architektur im Tessin*, 1973; Collection gta Ausstellungen, gta Archives, ETH Zurich.

With the exhibition *Tendenzen — Neuere Architektur im Tessin* in 1975, the gta showcased the work of architects emerging in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the canton of Ticino. The exhibition sought to grasp the tendencies of a new generation — an autonomous and formally heterogeneous movement rooted in regional tradition and practices, though considerably indebted to contemporary Italian discourse. The seminal exhibition put Ticinese architecture on the national and international map and was highly influential for the work of subsequent generations of Swiss architects.

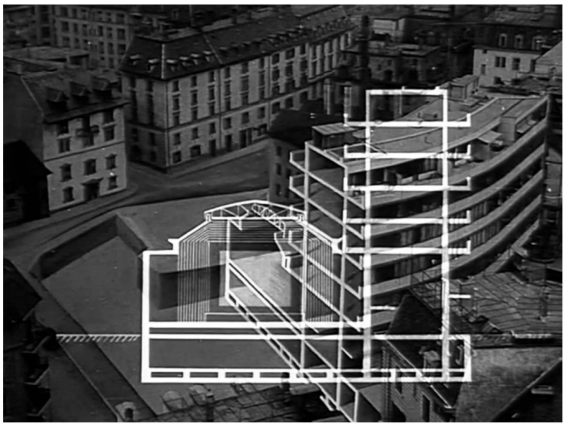
9 Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret's single-family house and twin house at the Weissenhof Estate; axonometric projection with instructions by Le Corbusier on how to color the walls, 1927; Bequest of Alfred Roth, gta Archives, ETH Zurich.

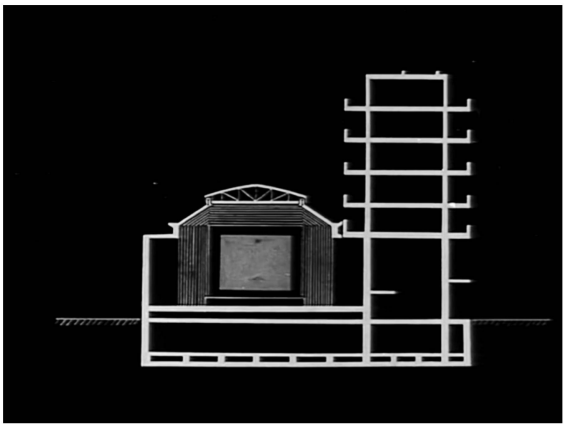


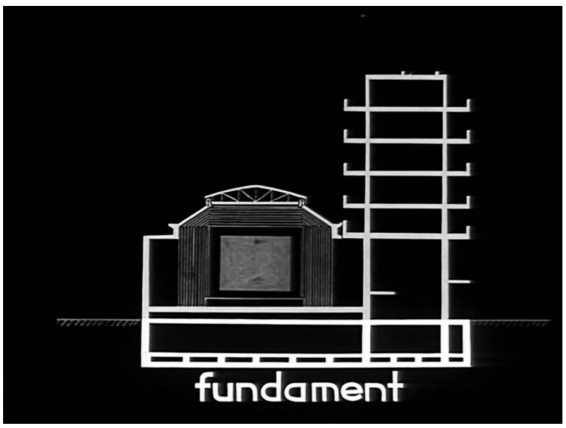
In 1927, Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret contributed two dwellings to the Weissenhof Estate in Stuttgart, a built manifesto of the Neues Bauen movement. Their semidetached two-family house, overseen on site by architect Alfred Roth, marks an attempt to apply "the five points of a new architecture." The first point, or principle—the pilotis: a grid of reinforced concrete stilts lifting the structure off the ground—not only offers the basis for a new aesthetic but, by providing the rooms with light and air, literally represents the pillars of modern architecture.

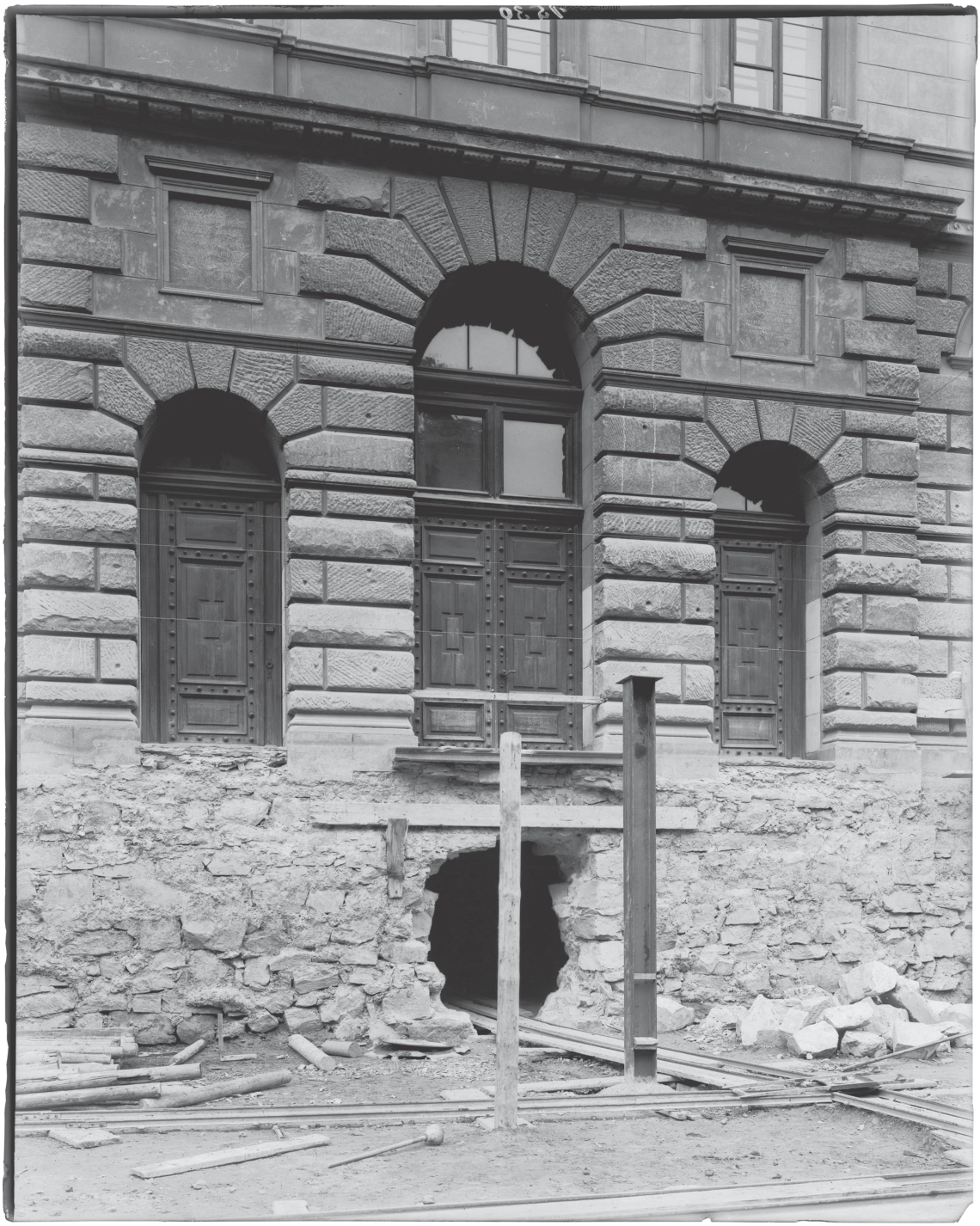
10 *Zett-Haus*, ca. 1932; film stills of the animated section and the laying of foundations for the construction; author unknown; Cinematheque, gta Archives, ETH Zurich.

No medium was more apt than the moving picture at mirroring the technical and functional novelties of the Zett-Haus, a multiuse building comprising apartments, commercial spaces, a cinema with a movable roof, and a swimming pool on the terrace. Designed by Rudolf Steiger, Flora Crawford-Steiger, Carl Hubacher, and Robert Winkler, and executed in 1932, it was a key representative for modern architecture in Zurich. The film reveals not only the entire construction process of this innovative building, starting with the laying of the foundations, but its role within the transformation of the city during the first decades of the twentieth century.









11 Gottfried Semper, Polytechnikum, Zurich; photograph of the fundaments of the east facade during renovation, ca. 1920; Bequest of Gustav Gull, gta Archives, ETH Zurich.

The massive foundation walls of the Polytechnikum, built by Gottfried Semper in 1858 and still towering over the city of Zurich, symbolize what was meant to be the basis of the then still young Swiss Confederation: education. Although the stone foundation had to be replaced by concrete for structural reasons, Semper's work is still one of the pillars of the school. A good hundred years after the building was erected, ETH gave the so-called Semper Archive to the gta. Since the institute's founding in 1967, Semper's drawings, writings, and letters have been an integral part of teaching and research, and, in a figurative sense, form the foundation of the institute.

12 Radoslav Begic, Max Bosshard, Marianne Crivelli, Urs Dietler, Axel Fickert, Heinrich Helfenstein, Stefan Hilbrand, Bruno Jenni, Renato Magginetti, Paul Schröder, and Margareta Peters (lead), "Solothurn: Zusammenhängende Grundrissaufnahme, Erdgeschoss" (Solothurn: continuous floor plan, ground floor), 1978; Collection Chair for Town Planning, gta Archives, ETH Zurich.

The "Solothurn Project" — an experimental design course taught in 1977/78 by Paul Hofer, Bernhard Hoesli, and Aldo Rossi at the ETH Department of Architecture — was based on an overall ground-floor plan of the city of Solothurn. Starting from a morphological analysis, the students designed new buildings as a collective undertaking based on Hofer's concept of the "dialogical city" and Rossi's understanding of the city.

13 Lisbeth Sachs at the cornerstone ceremony of the Kurtheater in Baden, December 14, 1950; photograph by Werner Nefflen; Bequest of Lisbeth Sachs, gta Archives, ETH Zurich.

The cornerstone ceremony marks the initial public act of construction. The photograph shows architect Lisbeth Sachs at the construction site of the Kurtheater Baden (built 1951/52) surrounded by male colleagues, craftsmen, and official representatives. The modern theater, characterized by a glazed dodecagonal foyer set in a historical spa garden, ranks among the first of a very few public buildings created by female architects in 1950s' Switzerland.

14 Fabric produced for the roofing ceremony of the Kongresszentrum Davos extension by Ernst Gisel in 1989; Bequest of Ernst Gisel, gta Archives, ETH Zurich.

Traditionally, the last beam to be mounted is celebrated with flags and ribbons tied to the building's highest point. During the postwar period, the sanatorium town of Davos in the Swiss Alps evolved into an international congress hub. Thanks to a collaboration with architect Ernst Gisel, whose culture and sports center adjoined by a congress venue was designed as a multiuse event location, the mountain resort successfully reinvented itself by blending leisure and business from 1959 onward.