

Zeitschrift: Werk - Archithese : Zeitschrift und Schriftenreihe für Architektur und Kunst = revue et collection d'architecture et d'art

Band: 66 (1979)

Heft: 33-34: "Stadtgestalt" oder Architektur? = "Forme urbaine" ou architecture?

Sonstiges

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 23.01.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

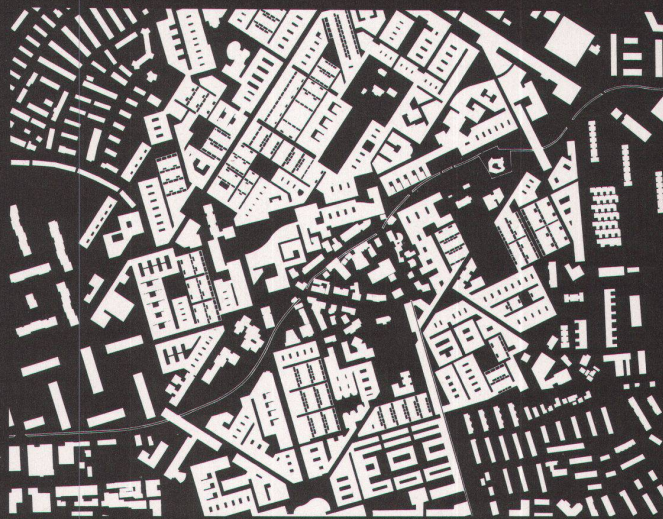
In this issue...

Unfortunately, according to Prof. Kristiana Hartmann, the present debate between "Architecture" and Preservationism does hardly serve the interests of those living in urban areas. Neither do they take any particular advantage from the dictatorial gestures of pure form proposed by the champions of "rational architecture", nor from the attempts at harmonizing the urban image according to certain historic models, usually chosen at random, as it is being proposed by the Preservationists. For the contractors who have decided to transform our city centers into more prosperous eldorados of rentability do not care at all who will win this struggle. – Yet, the author admits, the conscious and explicit handling of the interests both of architecture and preservation in our urban centers could become an element of increasing popular and professional awareness of what matters in urban quality.

Borromini and Piranesi

In a plate in *Prima parte di architettura* (1734) G.B. Piranesi uses Borromini's spiral-shaped lantern of S. Ivo as a background for a Royal Palace Court. As Prof. *Manfredo Tafuri* points out, this is no coincidence – for not only does Piranesi at times explicitly refer to Borromini's work, he shares the latter's interest in late Cinquecento forms and his conviction that architecture and urban form are two separate phenomena. In Borromini's architecture, space "does not communicate with the surrounding city, it merely exists as something separate, adjacent (...); the crisis of the city is revealed by architecture's isolation from it". In places like the Piazza Navona (where Borromini designed the church of S. Agnese), he refrains from using architecture as a means of organizing the urban form in a grandiose fashion. He rather conceives of architecture as of a disturbing element in the city; so the city as a whole is merely a collage of its elements.

In a smaller scale, Borromini used analogous procedures of "bricolage" based on the combination of "ready made" frag-



«Collage-City», Made in Switzerland (cf. pp. 22–23)

ments from medieval or antique tombs, e.g. in altarpieces, as those executed in S. Giovanni in Laterano. On the other side, Piranesi's use of the "forma urbis" in his "Pianta di Roma" documents a loss of identity of the traditional concept of the city; the city is seen as a labyrinth, as a coagulation of gigantic nomads.

Vienna: Karlsplatz

"The case of the Karlskirche in Vienna has become a European scandal." This statement by Hans Sedlmayr (1976) is amply confirmed by *Othmar Birkner's* study of the Karlskirche and the difficulties of its integration into Vienna's urban fabric. Separated from the city's center by the river Wien and, later, the Ringstrasse and the Stadtbahn, the only way of providing it an adequate surrounding seems to have been a picturesque landscape garden with the unavoidable Moore-sculpture.

St.Gallen or the typology of urban growth

In his study of the architecture in the center of St.Gallen, *Peter Roellin* comments on the economic and social reasons underlying the various urban changes typical for the 19th and 20th centuries. He interprets these changes as the result of various attacks on the qualities of the preindustrial city by the forces of industry and automobile traffic. The 60ies and 70ies have witnessed a particu-

larly dramatic erosion of community control over the built environment, and therefore massive operations like the building of office slabs and traffic arteries have met only little popular resistance. Only recently, the awareness of what has been lost seems to have become an issue in local politics.

"Collage City", made in Switzerland

Where and by what kind of forces do cities, urban centers, squares, streets and built forms impress us, exert an animating, electrifying fascination? – Or, to ask the other way round, why are the collective settlements of our times merely dwelling places for urbanites – but not true realizations of the art of urbanism?

In his introduction to a teaching program on urban typology (ETH Zurich), Prof. *Paul Hofer* juxtaposes two kinds of urban systems: the *contrast* of empty and full, sharply defined volume against sharply defined space (A) on the one hand; *interpenetration* of empty and full, positive and negative (B) on the other. And he claims that, since the late 19th century, (A) is being taught and (B) has been largely ignored. Thus the city was allowed to degenerate into an assembly of well-served "objects".

And he concludes: "The outline of the 'dialectical city' discussed in the article is immensely rich in possibilities of content and form. However, only few understand the vocabulary and the syntax of this language anymore

(...)." But there are the cities, the squares and the streets of Italy, France, Bohemia, Poland. They are not yet petrefacts. They don't speak dead languages. Merely languages which are neither taught, heard or understood anymore."

Prof. *Bernhard Hoesli*, in turn, describes the debacle of the two leading reform-ideas in the realm of 20th century urban design: the Garden City Movement and the Ville Radieuse. "These visions and the application of the corresponding urban theories have destroyed the form of the city and endangered the idea of urban life; they don't transform the city, they destroy it." Next to a generous visual documentation of a recent student's project at the ETH parts of the forthcoming German edition of Colin Rowe's and Fred Koetter's book *Collage City* are being reprinted.

"Signs of Life"

Denise Scott Brown then suggests – in the form of beautiful, large exhibition panels prepared for an exhibition in Washington, D.C. (1976) – a typology of symbolism in the American City:

"All cities communicate message to people as they move about on the street. There are three message systems available for urban communication:

Heraldic: written and graphic signs of all types.

Physiognomic: messages given by the façades of buildings, for example, columns and pediments on a Greek Revival bank, evenly spaced windows and balconies on a modern highrise hotel.

Locational: the corner store, the railroad station located at the end of main street."

Swiss Graffiti

In conclusion, three major Swiss competitions and the "case" of James Stirling's Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart are being examined. Among those competitions the Railway Station for Lucerne has certainly been the most controversial, especially since the fascinating project by Béatrix, Consolascio, Reichlin and Reinhart, which is amply documented, has unfortunately not been chosen for the first prize – the "lost chance" of Swiss architecture in the Seventies.