

Zeitschrift: Werk, Bauen + Wohnen
Herausgeber: Bund Schweizer Architekten
Band: 68 (1981)
Heft: 7/8: Die Solothurner Schule

Rubrik: Auslieferungsstellen

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can also live" – that was the assignment as formulated by a client who subsequently left the architect total freedom of action.

The carrying structure and the skin of the building apply the "mini-stahlbau" (mini-steel construction) system, one of the USM building systems (cf. B+W 7/1973). The closed outside walls are equipped on the inside with ventilated panels serving as picture display surfaces.

The house is equipped with an air-conditioning plant and an additional floor heating system. Depending on weather conditions and mode of utilization (absence of residents, etc.), the two systems are alternately switched on or off.

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Franz Füg

**Solothurn Art Museum
Reconstruction and renovation 1979–1981**

This museum, designed by Emil Schlatter, opened in 1902, is one of the best Neo-Renaissance buildings in Switzerland; it was in-

tended to create a solemn impressive effect. The galleries of the art department were originally in bright colours, the Salle Carrée being red, the other galleries yellow. The architecture sought to emulate the works of art on display within it; perhaps it even predominated. However, the wide, heavily gilt frames provided a sufficient gap between the paintings and the intense colours of the walls.

The galleries which are designated on the plan (Fig. 2 below) "Minerals, Palaeontological Collection, Zoological Collection, Insects, Fish, etc." had a more subdued colour scheme. For these departments the Municipality of Solothurn recently created a natural history museum in a building by Paolo Pisoni dating from the 18th century. This opened the way to the creation of a museum devoted purely to art. Important private collections, which have been donated to the museum over the years, have made it easier for the city (population 18 000) to make available large sums for the architectural reorganization of their museums.

The Museum in Solothurn is a product of the late 19th century. In those days people would speak of "temples of art". The new art, which was collected shortly thereafter, contrasted sharply to the architecture. An external sign of this was the simpler frames, which meant that the effect of the paintings came to be disturbed by the intensely coloured walls of the galleries. Therefore, in the course of time, the colours became more neutral; in the final stage before the reconstruction the walls and carpets were of a grey shade which was quite neutral in effect.

Originally the galleries were set up for decades; the objects on display occupied their fixed positions. A different conception of display and the accumulation of new works required rapidly changing exhibitions. The wall was now a work-site at which the pictures were displayed in ever new combinations. Thus the walls became soiled more quickly and often had to be repainted. In order to gain more wall space, the windows were closed up with wooden panel-

ling. In this way, the architecture increasingly lost its impressive solemnity.

The reconstructed museum is likely to continue this development. Nevertheless, the original effect of the architecture was not additionally restricted. Foyer and stairway are in their original form; only the installation of a goods lift required an alteration. The galleries on the upper level are chromatically neutral, but the reddish shade is intended to suggest at least the original festive quality. In the galleries on the ground floor the exhibitions will succeed one another more rapidly. Therefore the original subdued effect of these rooms has been maintained. Along with the walls, the floors will also be working areas. For this reason the old, rather unimpressive terrazzo flooring has been preserved. In the basement five rooms, which have been rebuilt repeatedly over the years, have been prepared for the exhibition of graphic art and objects of "primitive art".

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