

Vorarlberg – An intergenerational Dialogue

SammlungsLab #5

Exhibition: 05.12.2019 – 10.02.2020 | Gallery

Presse conference: Wed 04.12.2019

Opening: Wed 04.12.2019

Adventurous clients, innovative architects, liberal planning and building laws, and an open-minded population are behind the realisation of an especially high density of interesting architecture in Vorarlberg over the past five decades.

In the 1960s Friedrich Achleitner described the work of Hans Purin, one of the co-founders of the Vorarlberger Baukünstler, as a “synthesis between structural and spatial rationality”. Since then, Vorarlberg has been considered exemplary as a region for its resource-conserving and formally coherent architecture: Pioneering participative housing estates promoting dense low housing, innovative school buildings that focus on children's needs, but also charming single-family houses where traditional craftsmanship is combined with a reduction to the essentials. In 2000 the lifestyle magazine Wallpaper even described Vorarlberg as "the most progressive part of the planet when it comes to new architecture. ...The hills are alive with outstanding architecture."

The exhibition 'Vorarlberg – An Intergenerational Dialogue' ranges from the legendary beginnings by local architects Hans Purin, Rudolf Wäger, Gunter Wratzfeld and the C4 architects' collective – all of whose archives are in the Az W Collection – to the current generation, represented by ARTEC Architekten, bernardo bader architekten, Cukrowicz Nachbaur Architekten, Matthias Hein and Helena Weber. SammlungsLab takes a literal approach to this intergenerational dialogue: In the midst of models, sketches, plans and photographs of their building projects, the encounters between 'old and young' and their engagement with the architectural landscape of Vorarlberg are documented in conversations on film at the original locations. What were and are the strengths of the architecture in Vorarlberg, what are the blindspots? Which of the insights from the 1960s on issues ranging from affordability to the conservation of resources, to urban sprawl, have not lost any of their relevance today? How has the cultural and socio-political situation changed?

The encounters were produced and filmed for the exhibition at the original locations in Vorarlberg by the ORF journalist Ingrid Bertel. She grew up on the Halde housing estate by Hans Purin. We hear, among other things, about the role played by Gunter Wratzfeld in the founding of Cukrowicz Nachbaur Architekten, why Helena Weber worked on the Hasenfeld school in Lustenau by the C4 architects' cooperative, what links Matthias Hein and Karl Silaber (member of C4) apart from swimming together regularly, whether Bettina Götz's (ARTEC Architekten) decision to study architecture had anything to do with the fact that she also grew up in the Halde housing estate, and what particularly impressed Bernardo Bader about Rudolf Wäger.

The table specially designed by Vorarlberg designer Robert Rűf provides a link between the exhibition and the films. This table, which went along to all of the locations, is now available for visitors to sit at in the exhibition. Rűf is also responsible for the exhibition architecture, which links the key works of both generations with a wealth of original material.

Vorarlberg is no longer an island of privilege, as we see in the exhibition. The Rhine Valley is one of the most dynamic agglomerations in Europe, development there being thoroughly 'expansive': It is now the third most densely populated conurbation in Austria, after Vienna and Graz. For the local population the mantra had long been: "work, work and build your own house". Despite individual attempts to establish significantly denser housing, large numbers of single-family homes have been built — referred to locally as 'wooden crates' in the countryside. This rapid consumption of rural space is producing urban sprawl and affordable land is now in short supply. Is this still sustainable building?

Perhaps the time has come to pay more attention to what was being said decades ago. How can the density of housing be increased sensitively, conserving the countryside while providing the homes that are urgently required? Matthias Hein says here: "The architects of the 1960s to 1980s were streets ahead of us. We primarily build detached houses now and not housing estates anymore." However higher density housing is not necessarily something to be feared, as Gunter Wratzfeld remarks: "Higher density does not automatically bring its own problems, it can also be good quality." Even Friedrich Achleitner stated that density is not merely valuable in commercial terms: "It has always also meant social life in the development of mankind, information and culture, promoting the potential of individual talents and skills within the community."

The exhibition is also being shown at the vai — Vorarlberger Architektur Institut in Dornbirn from 13 March 2020.

Curator: Sonja Pisarik, Az W

Assistance: Katrin Stingl, Az W

Exhibition design/ graphics: Robert Rűf

Films:

Design: Ingrid Bertel

Camera: Nikolai Dörler, Herbert Bochum, Daniel Andrei

Light: Nikolai Dörler

Technical production: Alex Schwendinger

Edited by Nikolai Dörler

Make-up: Marina Böhler

Guided tours

Guided tours with the curator

Wed 11.12.2019, 17:30

Wed 15.01.2020, 17:30

Guided tours

Wed 18.12.2019, 17:30

Wed 22.01.2020, 17:30

Sat 01.02.2020, 17:30

The press release as well as high definition rights free images and press photographs are available for download at www.azw.at/en/articles/press.

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