

# CASABELLA

CONTINUITÀ

rivista internazionale di architettura

numero 916 12/2020

**CASABELLA 916**



9 770008 718009

GRUPPO  MONDADORI

ITALIAN-ENGLISH EDITION  
ANNO LXXXIV - DICEMBRE 2020 - ITALIA €12,00  
AUT €22,50. BEL €21,70. CAN \$37,00. CHE IT CHF27,00.  
CHE DE CHF27,50. DEU €28,50. ESP €21,40. FIN €22,00.  
FRA €20,00. PRT CONT €20,10. USA \$31,50.

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CASABELLA 916	カザベラ	ITALIAN+ENGLISH+JAPANESE EDITION
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916

A CURA DI  
NICOLA BRAGHIERI E FEDERICO TRANFA

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				<b>ENGLISH TEXTS</b>	<b>98</b>

# Un nuovo fronte urbano

Martin Tschanz

## Europaallee, Zurigo

Caruso St John con  
Bosshard Vaquer,  
Isolato E, 2007–13

Graber Pulver con  
Masswerk, Isolato G,  
2009–14

a cura di Federico Tranfa

Una città nasce fundamentalmente dall'interazione tra gli interessi economici e le regole attraverso le quali un'amministrazione articola e tutela i bisogni collettivi. Come questo meccanismo possa funzionare all'inizio del XXI secolo si vede bene nel nuovo quartiere sorto alle spalle della Stazione Centrale di Zurigo. Una dopo l'altra scompaiono le recinzioni intorno agli edifici, e i nuovi spazi urbani vengono occupati dalla popolazione. Benché in un primo momento il progetto avesse incontrato un generale scetticismo, oggi, a distanza di quasi quindici anni, il bilancio è positivo.

### **Alta densità, spazi ampi**

Nel 2002 le istituzioni incaricarono le ferrovie svizzere FFS di gestire con profitto i propri immobili e terreni, in modo da contribuire al finanziamento del trasporto pubblico<sup>1</sup>. Fu così fondata la società SBB Immobilien, che diede l'avvio a una ricca attività di progettazione e costruzione, ancora lontana dall'essersi conclusa.

Nel 2003, quando si rinnovò l'interesse per il quartiere della Stazione Centrale, questo aveva già alle spalle una lunga storia di progetti falliti. Per individuare nuove condizioni di sviluppo delle aree ferroviarie non più utilizzate, il comune di Zurigo e le FFS indissero un concorso-laboratorio con tre gruppi di progettisti. Tra questi prevalse la proposta dello studio di Kees Christiaanse e soci, che proponeva un programma aperto, senza una situazione finale da raggiungere e che, pur definendo gli spazi e indicando regole chiare, consentiva ampia libertà d'azione. L'elemento centrale della comunicazione era un modello in scala in cui fili sottili delimitavano lo spazio di possibile edificazione e volumi colorati davano un'idea della densità, ma al tempo stesso facevano capire chiaramente che andavano intesi come semplici indicazioni<sup>2</sup>. Il piano particolareggiato (Gestaltungsplan), approvato con un referendum nel 2006, prevedeva sette lotti e un massimo di superfici utili<sup>3</sup>. L'altezza massima era fissata a 22 metri, ma varie disposizioni aprivano la possibilità di derogare a questa indicazione di base sia con strutture più basse che con grattacieli. La quota residenziale ammontava a un minimo del 40% nel settore ovest (lotti E-H, albergo e residenza per anziani compresi), mentre verso la stazione alle destinazioni puramente commerciali si affiancava un'università (lotti A-D). Le funzioni commerciali erano concentrate per lo più ai piani terreni. Linee precise definivano gli spazi pubblici, in cui strette traverse di accesso ai parcheggi sotterranei e alle zone di carico e scarico prolungavano le strade preesistenti fino alla ferrovia; la conseguenza è che oggi le nuove costruzioni risultano, almeno

in parte, poco o nulla visibili dalla viabilità storica con l'eccezione della parte alta della Kanonengasse, estesa fino alla nuova Gustav-Gull-Platz, dove nella sua prospettiva si inserisce un grattacielo. Da questa splendida posizione un nuovo ponte pedonale attraversa i binari e, soprattutto, ha inizio la nuova Europaallee, spina dorsale del nuovo quartiere che conduce direttamente alla Stazione Centrale. La definizione di Allee, "viale", rende solo parzialmente giustizia a questo spazio che di per sé è molto particolare. Un breve passaggio simile a una strada collega due spazi urbani triangolari e sviluppati in lunghezza che generano prospettive inconsuete. Per esempio, da Gustav-Gull-Platz il fulcro dell'attenzione è la *corona della città* formata dalla zona universitaria con le sue torri, mentre le massicce costruzioni dell'Europaplatz rimangono nascoste. Da quello spazio così ristretto la vista si apre poi sulla zona della Sihl, dove il comune di Zurigo realizzerà un nuovo accesso al fiume. Dalla prospettiva opposta, nelle vicinanze della stazione, si osserva invece una densità crescente, che raggiunge il suo culmine nel grattacielo su Gustav-Gull-Platz, il cui fronte preannuncia la direzione trasversale della Kanonengasse e del ponte pedonale. Anche qui, appena passato il restringimento del viale lo spazio si allarga, tanto che l'edificio realizzato da Graber Pulver e Masswerk sembra libero, mentre a sinistra si apre la Lagerstrasse e a destra la ferrovia, e sullo sfondo si vedono i grattacieli di Zurigo ovest. Alla fine, l'alta densità del quartiere è percepibile soprattutto nelle strade laterali relativamente strette, oltre che nella vista dalla ferrovia, dove il nuovo quartiere forma, con il suo interessante profilo, un fronte imponente. Gli spazi urbani sono articolati con molta chiarezza e fanno egregiamente a meno della solita selva di segnali e dissuasori stradali. La vita pubblica si concentra nella parte pedonale dell'Europaallee e sulla Lagerstrasse, che costeggia il quartiere preesistente. La viabilità è assicurata dalle strade trasversali mentre i cortili, che sono per lo più accessibili, hanno un carattere semi privato. Sorprende che il lato verso la ferrovia sia percepito come una sorta di cortile posteriore: nonostante l'esposizione a nord, si poteva immaginare che, grazie alle strutture di protezione, si creasse una maggiore qualità ambientale. Tuttavia si vede bene come anche questo spazio assolva una sua funzione: è qui che si trovano gli ingressi agli appartamenti e ai servizi, e impiegati e studenti vengono a trascorrervi le pause per un caffè o una sigaretta al riparo dal via vai dei passanti. Inoltre è possibile che, dopo l'apertura del ponte pedonale e dei negozi nel lotto D, il carattere di questa zona venga ulteriormente modificato.

### **Urbanistica**

Il cuore del nuovo quartiere è Gustav-Gull-Platz, il cui spazio presenta una doppia scansione. Oltre il triangolo formato dagli alberi e dai pianterreni degli edifici si innalza uno spazio definito da grattacieli. Questi non si limitano a inserirsi nelle prospettive dell'Europaallee, della Lagerstrasse e della Zollstrasse e a marcare così il sito, ma formano uno spazio interno che attraversa i vari lotti, smussando con un quieto gesto concavo il vertice potenzialmente problematico del triangolo.

Quindi i grattacieli non sono semplicemente imponenti testimonianze di potenza economica, ma parte integrante di un ordine urbanistico superiore. Tenendo nella dovuta considerazione i punti di vista importanti e orientando la percezione ottica, lo spazio urbano ricorda l'urbanistica di Camillo Sitte, sia pure su scala maggiore. Svolge un ruolo chiave la forma dei punti più alti del lotto F, che sono stati realizzati per ultimi; e questo non è un caso. Grazie a un paragrafo dedicato all'estetica e alla garanzia di aumentare del 10% le destinazioni d'uso di qualità urbanistica superiore, tutti i lotti hanno acquisito la giusta forma mediante concorsi per lo più in due fasi, nella cui giuria, oltre al comune e al committente FFS, figurava l'urbanista Kees Christiaanse. La procedura, svoltasi per gradi, ebbe un avvio problematico. Se si fosse infatti saputo sin dal primo concorso per i lotti A e C che era possibile demolire l'edificio della posta, ultimato solo nel 1992, forse si sarebbero potute pensare soluzioni migliori. Il progetto vincitore di Max Dudler, pur basandosi su un modello urbanistico collaudato, manca di dare adeguato risalto alla Pädagogische Hochschule; infatti il cortile posteriore del lotto A, raggiungibile attraverso lunghe scale, è un piacevole spazio per una pausa, ma non rappresenta un indirizzo all'altezza di un'istituzione così importante, dalla quale la città trae troppo poco beneficio. È un peccato inoltre che manchi un collegamento funzionale tra il notevole edificio delle poste risalente agli anni Trenta e il nuovo edificio, di cui pure costituisce la testa, sicché il suo gesto architettonico finisce in gran parte nel vuoto.

Dato che i concorsi si sono svolti in sequenza, in seguito vi è stata però la possibilità di reagire positivamente a questa condizione. Nel lotto E, gli studi Caruso St John e Bosshard Vaquer hanno sfruttato il margine d'azione del piano particolareggiato: diversamente da quanto suggeriva il comune, hanno articolato il loro complesso con due elementi sviluppati in altezza e differenziato le facciate in base alla funzione. Graber Pulver e Masswerk hanno ripreso questi temi





1-4  
la città di Zurigo e l'area di  
Europaallee in scala 1:50.000,  
1:10.000, 1:5.000, 1:2.500  
the city of Zurich and the  
area of the Europaallee on  
a scale of 1:50.000, 1:10.000,  
1:5.000, 1:2.500

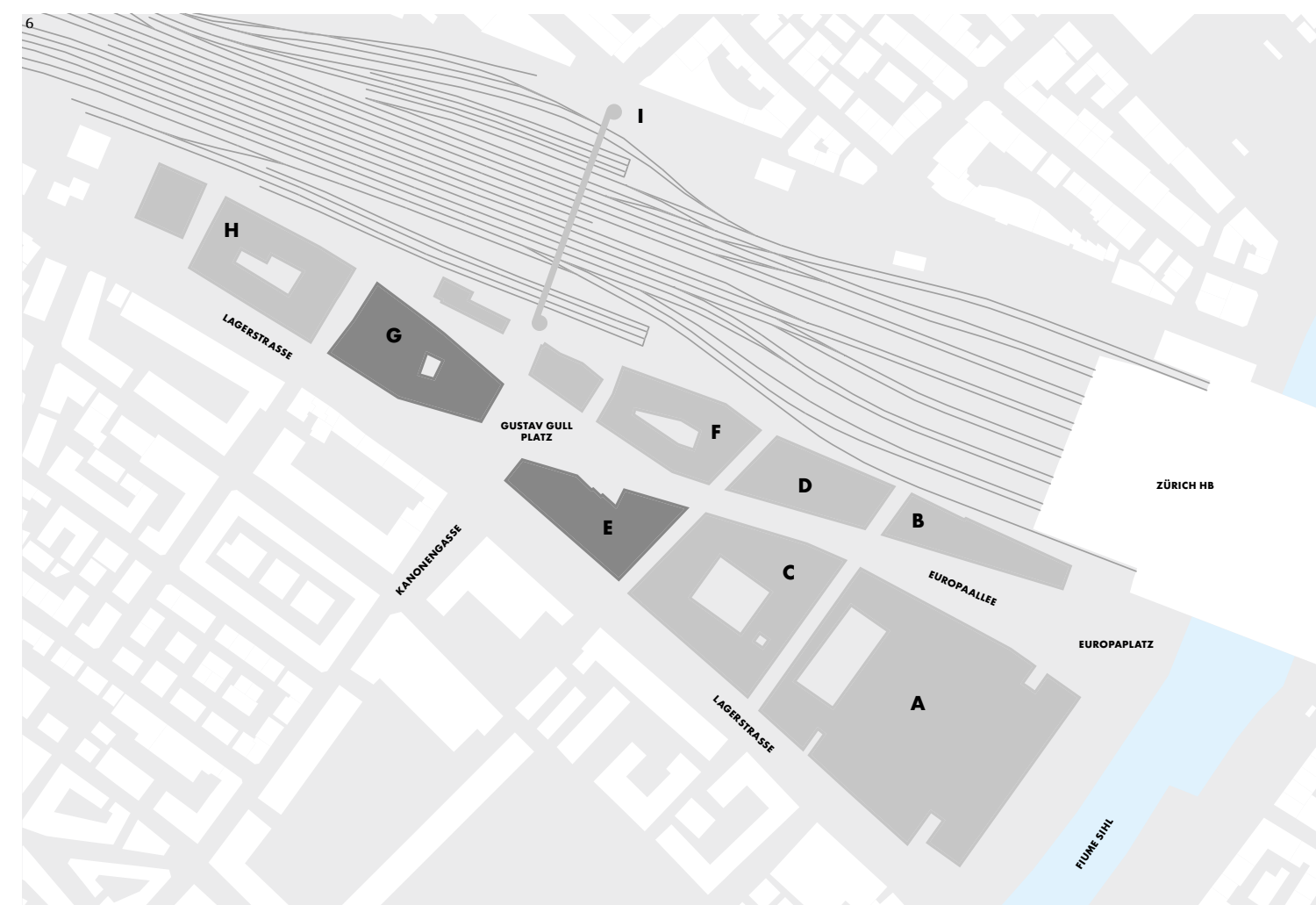
**Note**

- 1 Niklaus Scherr e Rahel Marti: *Die unbekannte Gigantin*, in «Hochparterre», 8/2018, pp. 20-32.
- 2 *Stadtraum HB*, numero speciale allegato a «Hochparterre», 4/2005.
- 3 Il piano particolareggiato, le note integrative e la relazione della giuria del concorso sono consultabili alla homepage di Europaallee: [www.europaallee.ch/node/138](http://www.europaallee.ch/node/138)
- 4 André Bideau, *Europaallee – Der lange Weg zur metropolitanen Geste*, in «Tec21», 25/2020, pp. 24-30, qui p. 28.
- 5 Caspar Schärer, *In der kuratierten Stadt – Tour durch die Europaallee in Zürich*, in «werk, bauen + wohnen», 5-2016, pp. 8-16.

Traduzione dal tedesco di Maria Cristina Coldagelli per *Scriptum*, Roma.

nel lotto G, e lo stesso ha fatto Roger Boltshauser, che nel suo piano per il lotto F ha saputo creare un collegamento con i progetti precedenti realizzando la composizione illustrata sopra. Le sinergie che si sono create tra i vari progetti non erano scontate, come non lo erano il ben riuscito collegamento urbanistico con il Langstrassenquartier nel lotto H (E2A Architekten) o la sostenibilità dei progetti per i lotti D e B. Da uno sguardo alla relazione della giuria emerge con tutta evidenza che il piano particolareggiato avrebbe consentito anche soluzioni completamente diverse; ma non tutti gli architetti erano disposti o in grado di reagire in maniera costruttiva ai progetti precedenti e alle preesistenze urbane e di produrre un valore aggiunto comune.

Quindi non è affatto vero che “la fisionomia dell’Europaallee è stata dettata dal mercato”, come talvolta si afferma<sup>4</sup>. Piuttosto, la nuova espansione del quartiere City è frutto di un’interazione tra regole urbanistiche relativamente aperte e un lavoro curatoriale che è stato reso possibile da una convergenza tra pressione economica e volontà politica. Il quartiere dell’Europaallee rappresenta davvero un frammento di città curata, e non solo perché gli utenti dei pianterreni sono stati accuratamente selezionati<sup>5</sup>. Ma in fin dei conti i meccanismi non sono stati diversi da quelli di altre procedure nate da un piano particolareggiato, per cui viene da chiedersi perché in altre situazioni quel valore aggiunto sia spesso venuto a mancare. Certamente era giusto e necessario che per i successivi progetti nella zona ferroviaria di Zurigo si assegnassero quote maggiori alle abitazioni e si puntasse a una diversa mescolanza sociale rispetto all’Europaallee. È anche possibile che alcune parti di questo piano di trasformazione urbana siano meno convincenti di altre – ricordiamo l’affermazione di Kees Christiaanse che una buona città ha bisogno anche di cattive architetture. In ogni caso è nato un quartiere vivace, che integra approcci progettuali diversi tra loro, offre spazi differenziati per funzioni e gruppi sociali diversi e arricchisce la città di un quartiere nuovo e interessante.



5  
KCAP Architects & Planners,  
modello concettuale delle  
volumetrie proposte nel piano  
particolareggiato  
KCAP Architects & Planners,  
conceptual model of the  
volumes proposed in the  
detail plan  
6  
planimetria generale  
overall plan

- A Max Dudler (2006–12), Adolf e Heinrich Bräm, Sihlpost (1928–30; Max Dudler renovation, 2015)
- B Stücheli Architekten (2012–19)
- C Max Dudler, Annette Gigon / Mike Guyer Architekten, David Chipperfield Architects (2006–13)
- D Wiel Arets Architects (2013–20)
- E Caruso St John Architects + Bosshard Vaquer Architekten (2008–14)
- F Boltshauser Architekten (2012–19)
- G Graber Pulver Architekten + Masswerk Architekten (2009–15)
- H E2A Architekten (2010–17)
- I Conzett Bronzini e Diggelmann + 10:8 Architekten (2017–20)



Trümpy have done in the project for the public swim facility of Bellinzona (1967–70).

The starting point for all is to give back to the territory what has been received from it, giving rise to a place that can augment the physical, psychological, economic and social wellbeing of its users. The design opportunity is seen in terms of civil responsibility and a functional program enriched as much as possible by content, to make the experience of architecture intense and part of an overall design of change. Finally, there is a basic clarity that makes it possible to implement a few project choices, relying on their expressive quality and therefore also simple to grasp for those who have a direct experience of the architecture. The materials – few in number and selected with care – enable the observer to avoid getting distracted and to get to the heart of the design choices.

The survey of four Swiss contemporary community facilities begins with the most urban of the group and gradually shifts towards projects in small towns or the countryside.

The project by the firm Bakker & Blanc for the Les Garages complex in the Flon district of Lausanne addresses a long, narrow lot below an sloping street in an area once inhabited by small industrial activities, which became a counter-cultural gathering place in the 1970s. In keeping with local building regulations, the new structure with a length of 115 meters has to match the level of the upper street, so it adapts to its slope like a sort of staircase, allowing the individual units to grow in height as the street rises. The building also incorporates the vertical connection that allows pedestrians to reach the upper street. The complex contains 21 units of different sizes, for ateliers, galleries and shops. The studio BABL, in the design of this long urban wing, takes on a more difficult objective, namely the creation of a new collective context, a mixture of trade, art and culture that bears the signs of the identity of the place and its history. The infill panels of the facades in oak and glass, and the covering of the doors in titanium zinc, narrate something about the typical materials used in the original constructions from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Flon district, in vivid contrast with recent adjacent projects that present themselves without any relation to the context. This particular focus on materials is joined by a rugged, repetitive character, which once again is capable of communicating the essence of the site and its industrial heritage.

Artistic dimension and local culture are the features of another urban project at Saint-Maurice, a town at the narrowing point of the Rhône River, in the passage between Canton Valais and Canton Vaud, which takes its name from the large Abbey of Saint-Maurice d'Againe. The project by the local studio of Götz Menzel and Catherine Gay involved the restoration and partial refurbishing of the Maisons Duc, three buildings from the 1600s partially facing the Grand-Rue, the main street of the town, listed as a site of historical importance. The project develops a delicate balance between permanence, protection, historical reconstruction and contemporary abstraction, bearing witness to in-depth research and maniacal conservation of elements felt to be of importance for the identity of places. Therefore many original doors have been

conserved, restored and repositioned, *papiers peints* have been studied to reproduce their motifs in a contemporary way, original casements have been reinserted alongside other completely new ones, while surface coats in concrete bear the imprint of the old paneling. The same design attitude continues on an urban scale: the part of the lot not facing the main street, which was more badly damaged, also in structural terms, has been completely demolished and reconstructed in concrete with a high access portal that faces the plaza of the Abbey, and leads to the Oblique art gallery on the ground floor. The spaces of the gallery show signs of time, the walls have been partially left bare, without plaster, and the fair-face concrete takes on a prevailing, sculptural role, visually reprising the rhythm of the baseboards and the paneling of a wall clad in wood. The upper levels contain residences, accessed from an open courtyard, and ateliers for artists with disabilities, connected with the local FOVAHM (Fondation valaisanne en faveur des personnes handicapées mentales), which has worked with art for some time to create psychological wellbeing and social inclusion.

The project by the studio Baserga Mozzetti also has great social value, while at the same time it is solidly anchored to its territory of reference and to existing architectural presences: it is an institute for troubled youth, Jugendheim Mattini, in Brig, Canton Valais. The project recycles the Mattini chatelet, a structure from the 1700s at the entrance of the historic route leading to the Simplon Pass, behind the village of Brig. Apart from its strategic position, the building had an agricultural purpose, as indicated by the adjacent stall. The landscape context is marked by the architectural and spatial tension between the two buildings, by the enclosure with traditional dry stone walls, an old orchard on the opposite side of the stall and the view of the Alps. The project was made possible by a donation from the municipality, with the stipulation of reutilization for social benefit, and important funding on the part of the Canton (for conservation of existing buildings) and the Swiss Confederation (for social reinsertion of troubled youth). The set of three buildings, in perfect balance, called for different modes of design, intervention and functions. The stall, organized in two parts with a passage at the center, has been reformulated on the inside with teaching spaces, maintaining the original subdivisions and rhythms. The chatelet, which contains administration offices, has been conserved with its fragmentary characteristics, of stone and wood, between austerity and domestic atmosphere, in tune with its complex chronological background. The new building is an oblong volume that connects to the typology applied for the stalls, in which the rooms for the young guests are a reinterpretation of monastic cells, in antithesis with the continuity of the community spaces.

The Jugendheim Mattini seeks a virtuous combination of an empathic pedagogical approach and the regenerating potential of the alpine landscape, close to the community yet sufficiently separated to offer “another world” in which the young people can again find their way, engaging in social interaction through positive and stimulating practices, including contemplation of the landscape and agriculture.

A not so different communitarian vocation – based on restoration of existing buildings of interest with the insertion of new service volumes for social benefit – has to do with the center of the village of Cressier, in Canton Fribourg, in the Swiss countryside. Thanks to the project, the four existing buildings, of clearly rural character, and the three new ones contain about 20 lodgings – some for people with reduced mobility – as well as a funeral chapel, a heating plant and a community services zone. The studio LVPH, no strangers to projects in rural areas, have managed to balance the renovation of the characteristic buildings of the town with the introduction of new ones, lower with respect to the monumental *fermes*, to increase the density of the settlement without diminishing its domestic tone, the sense of welcome and protection generated central square with its stone fountain. The large farm, small farm, former school and pigsty are the existing buildings addressed by the project, divided into apartments with independent entrances from the outside. Three new volumes respectively contain residences, a party room with the heating plant that serves the new portion, on the basement level, and the funeral chapel which has a peripheral position with respect to the complex. The firm LVPH has conserved the most salient characteristics of the existing buildings, the large lowered roofs that almost touch, the wooden structure supporting the roofs and their ceramic materials. They have also refurbished, where necessary, the pavement of stones that joins the various volumes, while using polished concrete as an ideal component to set the tone of the new interventions, without creating chromatic breaks with what already existed, though vibrant material effects have been achieved.

The designers of the four projects for community facilities surveyed here all share in an approach of careful research on the existing contexts, ranging from urban analysis to in-depth investigations, in teamwork with restoration experts and historians regarding construction techniques, decorations and materials. Knowledge of history and the identity of places is firmly interwoven with awareness of the role of contemporary architecture as an effective tool of social redemption, of appropriation of identity and, more generally, of personal balance for users.

## page 50

Schools  
Marco Biagi

In the Swiss Confederation the theme of public education and school buildings has always been a priority in political-administrative spheres, and in the budgets of individual cantons assigned the task, on a state level, of organization of the education system. Although this decentralization has the consequence that in the Alpine country – as Jul Bachmann and Stanislaus von Moos remarked in a booklet from 1970 titled *New Directions in Swiss Architecture* – “planning in the scholastic field is just as disorderly and almost as conservative as the education systems themselves,” nevertheless, “the construction of schools by local communities [...] continues, together with that of churches, to be the main source of social pride, ever since the classic type of the Swiss school was established during the last century [...] and

more original solutions were proposed for school furnishings.” Over time, the system of public competitions has ensured the quality of the selected projects and offered important opportunities for work, discussion and success among young professionals.

In the span of 150 years the typological research has gravitated, in substance, around the vision of reform outlined from the late 1700s to the early 1800s by two great forerunners of modern pedagogical thinking, not by chance both of them Swiss: the Geneva native Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) and the Zurich of Italian origin Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827). The relationship with nature, the central focus on the child or the young person, the importance of direct practical experience in the learning process, are key principles that have oriented the design of school buildings in Switzerland, ever since in 1907 the architect Henry Baudin, in the important manual *Les constructions scolaires en Suisse*, predicted – in a sufficiently near future – “l’abandon de l’école-caserne pour le système de l’école en plein air.” In the 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture has accompanied and interpreted, period after period, the evolution of psychopedagogical theory, on the one hand, and the urban role assigned to the school building by the society, on the other. This is the case, for example, of the “hygienist” and “scientific” positions advanced by modern architecture in from the 1930s to the 1950s, which aim to spread the model of the *école pavillonnaire*, in the open air, for everyone, with low volumes on a scale suited to children, ample green areas, good ventilation and bilateral lighting. These were the tenets urged, in 1932, by the exhibition “Der neue Schulbau” set up by the architect Werner M. Moser, together with the educator Willi Schohaus and the hygienist Willi von Gonzenbach, at the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Zurich, and reiterated by Alfred Roth in his successful trilingual publication *La Nouvelle Ecole*, reprinted and repeatedly updated from 1950 to 1966. Among the more or less definitive general achievements of this phase in Switzerland, we can mention the emancipation of school buildings from alignment with the street, and their free arrangement at the center of green areas, also in densely settled contexts.

In the 1960s and 1970s the focus shifted, on the wave of a cultural revolution, towards themes connected with a desired reform of education systems, the extension of the timing of use of the school and the insertion of recreational functions and services on differentiated schedules, also for the local community as a whole. The use of the square classroom is consolidated in this period, about 80 square meters in size, seen as more versatile in its layout options with respect to the traditional rectangular form. This approach is often raised to the level of a microcosm outfitted to substitute for cognitive experience of reality, thanks to the supply of added spaces and facilities. We can also see the spread of the Anglo-Saxon solution of the “functional unit” composed of two or more classrooms placed in a cluster, in keeping with variable schemes, around another space for group activities. There is also a proliferation of special classrooms, laboratories and sporting facilities, indoors or outdoors, to be shared with external users. Finally, the coincidence

between a situation of demographic growth and the rise of new education ideologies based on a more horizontal, participatory and differentiated transmission of knowledge led to experimentation in the area of economies of scale offered by larger and more centralized complexes, and on the front of application of industrialized construction systems, and of a nearly absolute variability of the arrangement of internal spaces, which nevertheless runs the risk of translating into an equally radical renunciation of architectural form. The interest in the representative and monumental dimension of the school building resurfaces starting in the 1980s, applied above all in an attempt to redeem the “institutional” role of the place of education in relation to a composure and figurative decorum in tune with its civil mandate.

From the 1990s onward, under the pressure of the *Schulreform* in the canton of Grisons, we see the rise of compositional exercises on a small scale, often comparable to each other in terms of setting and program, which do not usually alter established typological models, but mainly focus on the level of architectural expression, moving in the dual direction of almost antithetical sensibilities. The most important examples, in fact, can be traced back to sophisticated reinterpretations of traditional construction techniques and materials in a “contextualist” approach, on the one hand, and to refined experiments of a plastic or structural character, on the other, with avowedly exemplary value and assertion of an authorial poetics.

As a whole, however, and in spite of certain outstanding exceptions, the current praxis in the field of school construction seems to ratify the judgment expressed, in its time, by Bachmann and Von Moos, in relation to Swiss architecture in general, namely that “its contribution is oriented more towards practice than theory, towards technical experience rather than creative speculation and imaginative anticipations.” The two recent projects shown here both seem to confirm the lasting validity of this assessment.

## page 70

A new urban front / Europaallee, Zurich  
Martin Tschanz

A city comes fundamentally from the interaction between economic interests and the rules through which an administration expresses and safeguards the needs of the community. How this mechanism can function at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century can clearly be seen in the new district created behind the central rail station in Zurich. One by one, the fences around the buildings vanish, and the new urban spaces are occupied by the population. Though in an initial moment the project met with widespread skepticism, today – almost 15 years later – the assessment is positive.

### High density, large spaces

In 2002 the institutions charged the Swiss Rail system FFS to profitably manage its own real estate holdings, in order to contribute to the financing of public transport. The company SBB Immobilien was founded, and it launched variegated activities of design and construction, which are still far from having been completed.

In 2003, when there was renewed

interest in the area of the central station, the zone had already been through a long history of failed projects. To identify new conditions of development for the railway areas no longer in use, the municipal government of Zurich and FFS held a competition-workshop with three groups of designers. The winning proposal was that of the firm of Kees Christiaanse and associates, which called for an open program, without a final situation to be achieved; though it indicated clear rules and spaces, it also permitted great freedom of action. The central feature of the communication was a scale model in which slender threads bordered the space of possible construction, and colored volumes conveyed an idea of the density, while at the same time making it clear that these were merely indications. The detail plan (Gestaltungsplan), approved with a referendum in 2006, called for seven lots and a maximum of usable areas. The maximum height was set at 22 meters, but various measures opened up the possibility of altering this indication, either with lower structures or with skyscrapers. The residential quota amounted to a minimum of 40% in the western sector (lots E-H, including a hotel and a residence for senior citizens), while towards the station the purely commercial functions were combined with a university (lots A-D). The commercial facilities were concentrated for the most part on ground level. Precise lines defined the public spaces, in which narrow crosswise accessways to the underground parking areas and zones of shipping and receiving extended the existing streets as far as the railway; the result is that today the new constructions, at least in part, are barely visible from the historic circulation ways, with the exception of the upper part of the Kanonengasse, extending as far as the new Gustav-Gull-Platz, where a skyscraper is inserted in the perspective. From this splendid position, a new footbridge crosses the tracks and, above all, the new Europa-Allee begins, the backbone of the new district that leads directly to the central station. The definition as *Allee*, “avenue,” only does partial justice to this space that is very particular in its own right. A short passage, similar to a street, connects two triangular urban spaces developed lengthwise that generate unusual perspectives. For example, from Gustav-Gull-Platz the fulcrum of attention is the *crown of the city* formed by the university zone with its towers, while the massive constructions of the Europaplatz remain hidden. From that narrow space, the view then opens to the zone of the Sihl, where the city government of Zurich will create a new access to the river. In the opposite perspective, near the station, one instead observes a growing density that reaches its peak in the skyscraper on Gustav-Gull-Platz, whose façade foretells the crosswise axis of the Kanonengasse and the footbridge. Here too, just past the narrowing of the avenue, the space widens, and in fact the building by Graber Pulver and Masswerk seems unencumbered, while to the left extends the Lagerstrasse and to the right the railroad, with the skyscrapers of Zurich West in the background. Finally, the high density of the district can above all be perceived in the relatively narrow side streets, as well as in the view of the railroad, where the new settlement forms an imposing front with its interesting profile. The urban

spaces are laid out with great clarity, and do very well without the usual forest of signage and parking barriers. Public life is concentrated in the pedestrian portion of Europaallee and on Lagerstrasse, running along the existing quarter. Circulation is provided by cross streets, while the courtyards, most of which are accessible, have a semi-private character. It is surprising to note that the side towards the railroad is perceived as a sort of rear courtyard: in spite of the northern exposure, one might have imagined that thanks to the protective structures there would have been greater environmental quality. Nevertheless, it can clearly be seen that this space too has its function: it is the location of the entrances to the apartments and services, where workers and students come for coffee and cigarette breaks, sheltered from the coming and going of passers-by. Furthermore, it is possible that after the opening of the footbridge and the shops of lot D, the character of this zone will be further changed.

#### Urban planning

The core of the new district is Gustav-Gull-Platz, whose space has a dual arrangement. Beyond the triangle formed by the trees and the ground levels of the buildings, stands a space defined by skyscrapers. They do not simply insert themselves in the perspectives of Europaallee, Lagerstrasse and Zollstrasse, thus marking the site; they also form an internal space that crosses the various lots, attenuating the potentially problematic tip of the triangle with a calm concave gesture.

Hence the skyscrapers are not merely impressive witnesses of economic power, but become an integral part of a higher urban order. Taking the important viewpoints into due consideration and orienting optical perception, the urban space reminds us of the planning of Camillo Sitte, though on a larger scale. A key role is played by the form of the uppermost points of lot F, the last to be built – and this is no coincidence. Thanks to a section on aesthetics and the guarantee to augment the presence of places of superior urban quality by 10%, all the lots have taken on the proper form through competitions, mostly in two phases, in which the jury was composed of representatives of the municipality, of the client FFS, and of the urbanist Kees Christiaanse. The procedure, carried out by degrees, had a problematic beginning. Had it been known, from the first competition for the lots A and C, that it was possible to demolish the post office building, completed only in 1992, perhaps better solutions would have been envisioned. The winning project by Max Dudler, though based on a tested urban model, fails to grant suitable emphasis to the Pädagogische Hochschule; the rear courtyard of lot A, reached by means of long flights of steps, is a pleasant place for a break, but does not represent a feature that matches the status of such an important institution, from which the city draws far from enough benefit. It is also a shame that a functional connection is lacking between the remarkable postal building dating back to the 1930s and the new construction, of which it forms the end, and therefore this architectural gesture is to a great extent lost.

Given the fact that the competitions took place in sequence, in a later phase it

has nevertheless been possible to positively react to these conditions. In lot E, the firms Caruso St John and Bosshard Vaquer have exploited the margin of action provided by the detail plan: as opposed to what was suggested by the city government, they have organized their complex with two vertical parts, whose facades are differentiated according to their functions. Graber Pulver and Masswerk have reprised these themes in lot G, and the same has been done by Roger Boltshauser, who in his plan for lot F has managed to create a connection with the previous projects, generating the composition illustrated above.

The synergies created among the various projects were not to be taken for granted, as is also true for the successful urban link with the Langstrassenquartier in lot H (E2A Architekten), or the sustainability of the projects for lots D and B. A glance at the jury's report clearly reveals the fact that the detail plan would also have permitted completely different solutions; but not all the architects were willing or able to react in a constructive way to the previous projects and the existing urban context, producing a common added value.

Therefore it is not actually true that “the physiognomy of Europaallee has been dictated by the market,” as has been asserted. Instead, the new expansion of the City district is the result of interaction between relatively open urban planning rules and a curatorial effort that has been enabled by a convergence between economic pressure and political will. The Europaallee complex truly represents a fragment of curated city, and not just because the users of the ground levels have been carefully selected. In the end, however, the mechanisms have not been different from those of other procedures based on a detail plan, so it is legitimate to wonder why, in other situations, that added value has often failed to materialize. Certainly it was proper and necessary, in the successive projects in the railroad zone of Zurich, to assign larger shares for residence and to wager on a different social mixture with respect to Europaallee. It is also possible that certain parts of this plan of urban transformation are less convincing than others – here we can recall a statement by Kees Christiaanse, to the effect that a good city also needs bad works of architecture. In any case, a lively district has been born, which combines different design approaches, offers differentiated spaces for various social groups and functions, and enriches the city with a new, interesting neighborhood.

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### 1986–2021 thirty-five years of museums Federico Tranfa

It is not so farfetched to say that the success of Swiss contemporary architecture is also a result of the country's museums. This bond between a nation and its museums coincides with the foundation of the modern state and its openness to international tourism. The efficiency of the rail system, making mostly mountainous territory easily accessible, has contributed to make the country into a museum of alpine landscape, whose panoramas, thanks to artistic mediation, are universally admired works. Even today, the *Schweizer Heimatschutz* (the agency for the protection of national heritage) publishes a

series of pocket-size books on the most beautiful sites, also including museums. According to the Swiss Heritage Office, the best Swiss museums are often “hidden gems that help us to know about the traces and material products of human endeavor and natural processes,” not hesitating to define them as a whole as the “Swiss museum landscape.” The art museums, of no small number, add the ability to interpret their own time to these particular characteristics, in dialogue with the collections they contain. A difficult achievement, which has shed light on the talent of the finest designers. In fact, it was through the design of museums that Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, Annette Gigon and Mike Guyer, or more recently Emanuel Christ and Christopher Gantenbein, have come to success. Swiss art museums represent, perhaps, the area in which contemporary architecture has been able to express itself with the greatest freedom, if by freedom we mean the possibility of combining expressive talent with excellent construction and a generous availability of financial resources. Through museums, today's Swiss architecture expresses the success of its *Zeitgeist* precisely as happened in Italy after World War II, when a new generation of museums and galleries became the nation's calling card. Buildings capable of fostering a dialogue between artistic heritage and timely tastes, materials and forms. Though today the major international museums are not exempt from global systems of tourism, making the increasingly resemble shopping malls or airports (two families of buildings in a phase of mutual hybridization), one characteristic of Swiss museums is that of being specific and memorable, even above and beyond their contents. Peter Zumthor, first with the Kunsthhaus of Bregenz and then with the Kolumba in Cologne, has implicitly criticized the model of the Fun Palace, interpreted with great success by Piano and Rogers in the Centre Pompidou of Paris. A re-reading of classical architecture, its traditional elements and materials, which is not extraneous to the project by Herzog & de Meuron for the new Tate Modern in London. The latter project was the clamorous outcome of a process in which in spite of their outsider status, the duo defeated colleagues who in the immense power plant at Bankside had simply conserved only an indispensable minimum. Inside Swiss boundaries, the museums, from the largest to the smallest, form a network of excellence and an important catalogue of architectural works. Not all the buildings have been designed by Swiss architects, and in fact even the Kunstmuseum Basel – perhaps the best loved of all the national art museums – was designed by a foreigner, the German Paul Bonatz. Excellent Swiss organization offers architects, regardless of their passports, two indispensable resources to create quality buildings: suitable means and interaction on a high level. The Swiss art museums, as a whole, represent a heterogeneous set in which modest spaces like those of *La Congiunta*, a building conceived in 1992 by Peter Märkli to display sculptures by the artist Hans Josephsohn, whose keys are made available to visitors at the Osteria Giornico in the Ticinese village of the same name, coexist with complex institutions like the Landesmuseum of Zurich, renovated and expanded by Christ & Gantenbein from 2000 to 2016. In any case, the determination with which the Swiss Office for Culture and the local administrations have invested in this sector is quite striking\*. Building museums, however, does not mean museumizing. Observed as a whole, Swiss museums are places for gathering, for study, to visit for pleasure. The

libraries are comfortable, the cafes enticing, the gardens are visited in all the seasons of the year. The museums have a good relationship with the education system, informing the populace, conducting research, producing publications and exhibitions. A country in which the necessity of all this is not understood, encouraged and protected is a country going through a cultural recession. Instead, what sets Switzerland apart is profound faith in its system of education and culture. Furthermore – and from the standpoint of architecture this is not a secondary aspect – the museums represent a preferred field of design experimentation. The short survey seen on these pages, which is obviously far from complete, offers an overview of the multiplicity of orientations that can be recorded over a relatively short time span. A strong heterogeneity of form, attenuated above all by the quality of the projects and their ability to stand up to time. Three emblematic cases: the Kirchner Museum in Davos, the Rietberg Museum in Zurich, and the addition to the Kunstmuseum in Basel. The first, by Gigon Guyer, coincides with the start of a process of transformation of Davos, from a resort for health and recreation to a true *alpine city*. The museum, which shows works by German Expressionist painters who spent long periods of time in the vicinity, is a neo-modern building, without references to the tradition of construction in Grisons, but so well formulated that it seems to be in total tune with the site. The second, designed by Adolf Kischanz with Alfred Grazioli, is a positive example of transformation of a private building for a public purpose. The large spaces for temporary exhibitions, below ground, are reached by means of a system of wooden steps whose sizing is perfectly adapted to the proportions of the historic villa, while the surrounding garden enhances the neighborhood with a large green area that is always accessible. Finally, the expansion of Kunstmuseum Basel is the result of construction of a new portion communicating with the building by Bonatz, at an underground level. The addition, which is a building in its own right, is connected to the original museum thanks to an extension of the entrance lobby and a mutual exchange of materials and finishes. Through the enormous windows, the city literally enters the museum, like a very large house. The definition of *museum landscape* precisely describes a condition in which the osmosis between the city and the single work of architecture is authentic. A particular characteristic of Swiss culture, in which the public-private boundary is physically blurred, because it is first of all represented by respect for reciprocal prerogatives. In the finest examples, the Swiss museum also represents that assertion of personality which would not seem politically correct in the private sector, as well as a precious terrain of both technical and formal experimentation. In an asset paid for by the community, the quality of the construction has to be exemplary, as does the sturdiness of the result. A rule of good common sense, applied without exceptions in all public construction, which becomes a term of comparison for all the rest.

\* Also see Nicola Braghieri in “Casabella” no. 905, January 2020, p. 30-47.



# CASABELLA

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«Casabella» è disponibile anche in edizione giapponese, attraverso:

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tel +81.06.63635701  
[www.asj-net.com](http://www.asj-net.com)

**rivista mensile**  
**monthly magazine**

**numero 916 / issue 916**  
**n. 12/2020**  
anno/year LXXXIV  
dicembre/December 2020

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rivista internazionale di architettura  
pubblicazione mensile / monthly review  
registrazione tribunale Milano n. 3108  
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stampato da ELCOGRAF S.p.A.  
Via Mondadori, 15 – Verona  
nel mese di novembre 2020

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