

A changing city: New Architecture in Linz

Like no other Austrian city Linz has experienced a tremendous change in the last decades. The construction of a number of new buildings in the centre and the outskirts of the city is an essential part of this dynamic process. So the new slogan of the city “Linz, changes” offers interesting facets also in the field of architecture and urban development.

Culture on the Banks of the Danube

Especially the so-called „Kulturmeile“ (“Culture Mile“) on the left and right banks of the Danube impresses with striking new buildings of international scale and shows heavy construction activities. The Lentos Art Museum, opened in 2003 and designed by Zurich architects Weber + Hofer, is an elegant glass building of 130 m length and situated right at the Danube. On an area of 8000m² on three floors this building offers the best setting possible for its works of art. Its large exhibition floor has been provided throughout with a glass ceiling – one of the largest glass roof constructions of its kind in Europe – und so there is no artificial light needed most of the time. There is a very characteristic 60-m-long sculpture hall in the open area under the exhibition floor, allowing a nice view on the Danube and the Pöstlingberg. The glass skin of the museum appears transparent, semi-transparent or grey, depending on the light; if you look at it very closely you can see writings on single glass sheets. Its façade is lighted from behind with strong colours when it is dark.

On the opposite side of the Danube the Lentos Art Museum faces its counterpart which is not less spectacular in architecture. Designed by Treusch architecture from Vienna, a new **Ars Electronica Center** is under construction. This Museum of the Future is dedicated to all kinds of latest technologies and interactive media art. The new museum will be 6500m², meaning that its present exhibition capacity will be tripled. The existing building of 1996 will be wrapped into a glass skin with contours that are remarkably slanting. So there will be a new two-floor hall between the old and the new part of the museum. This new construction will fit to the main building with an almost sculptural quality and its embedding into the surrounding historic structural fabric and into the necessary flood control constructions was a big challenge for the architects. The „Maindeck“, under which the 890m² new exhibition hall and the foyer are situated, is a multifunctional open area connected by a flight of stairs with the “Upperdeck”, the roof of the Ars Electronica Futurelab.

On the façade of the new Ars Electronica Center there are LEDs all over so that it can be used for any kind of art design.

Now let our gaze wander from Lentos and Ars Electronica Center to the Schlossberg. Here, too, a very important new building of culture is under construction, supposed to be finished in July 2009: **The south wing of the Castle of Linz**. In the year 1800 the historic south wing was destroyed by a major fire – since that time the Castle has been an open ensemble facing the old city centre. The new construction by Grazer architects HoG architektur (Martin Emmerer, Hansjörg Luser and Clemens Luser) captures site and space of the historic wing. A transparent glass connection at upper floor level links the central part of the building with the south wing which seems to be floating above the Castle walls like a glass bridge. For as much as 24 million Euros 6000m² of new floor space are created on which two new permanent exhibitions on the history of nature, technology and economics of Upper Austria will be presented.

Symbioses of Old and New: Renovating and Modernizing the City Centre

Construction work on cultural buildings is not only performed on new buildings, there is also sensitive renovation and modernization work on historic structural fabric going on. On the upper banks of the Danube, for example, the historic building of the imperial **Salzamt**, which dates back to the 17th century, is turned into a modern studio building with 200m² of exhibition space, nine studios and five apartments. There are more and more historic buildings in the old city centre which are being modernized so that they can be used for residential purposes. Under the surveillance of the board of urban design, which consists of independent experts, redevelopment measures in the city centre have always been taken with an eye on the careful treatment of historic qualities. Also the **residential home** of the astronomer and mathematician **Johannes Kepler** at Rathausgasse 5 will experience profound modernization. This building will be adapted for apartments, but also, as a location for the Cultural Capital year and beyond, for the “Kepler Salon” – a place of public discussion and exchange for modern sciences.

The city museum **Nordico** underwent extensive modernization and general redevelopment as well. The interior of this 17th century building was adapted to the standards of a modern museum. Its façade was redecorated according to old illustrations and the court in front of the building was renewed and extended. Extension work is also being done at the **Oberösterreichische Landesbibliothek** (Central Library of Upper Austria). These

adaptations have become inevitable in order to guarantee high-standard present and future operation of the library.

In the city centre, at close range to Landstraße and around the renamed **OK Square**, a new cultural district has developed. The **OK Offenes Kulturhaus Oberösterreich**, internationally known as an exhibition and production site for contemporary art, was refurbished, the attached repertory cinema Movimiento was thoroughly modernized and extended, and new catering and restaurant businesses have opened. Right in front of the OK a multifunctional building of Linz architects Riepl/Riepl was erected. This building is not only occupied by offices of the OK, but also by a new cinema hall and new restaurants.

Ready for the Future: Exemplary Housing in Linz

In the mid-1990s, a residential complex was built in the very South of the city which is considered to be exemplary in Europe: **SolarCity**. The whole city district with a today's capacity of about 3000 inhabitants was constructed according to low-energy house standards. Based on a master plan of the Austrian city planner Prof. Roland Rainer, a model estate was built in 1994, the concept of which was drawn up in cooperation with internationally renowned architects, among them Sir Norman Foster (architect of a.o. the New Reichstag in Berlin), Richard Rogers (a.o. Centre Pompidou in Paris, Millenium Tower in London) and Thomas Herzog (the pioneer of solar building construction). The residential homes of SolarCity, which have received a number of international Best-Practice-Awards, were built by implementing different solar construction techniques and are therefore extremely energy-efficient. The whole district is provided with a tight network of social facilities and also with infrastructure of high ecological standards – like a special form of sewage disposal, the use of rainwater and gentle landscape design in the nature reserve of Traun-Donau-Auen.

Construction for the Knowledge of tomorrow

On the campus of Johannes-Kepler University in the North of Linz a **Science Park** is being built in four construction stages. This Science Park is going to be not only the new home for the mechatronics institutes of the university, but also a centre of communication for research institutes and partner companies. The first building with 14.000 m² of floor space is planned to be ready in August 2009, the other buildings are supposed to be finished in the years 2010 to 2014 – with a construction budget of 80 to 100 million Euros the biggest building construction project of the years to come in Upper Austria.

In connection with this project there are also considerations how to solve the traffic problem in the university area. So in 2010 a new motorway exit will be opened.

The voestalpine AG, one of Europe's most important steel producers, has essentially contributed to the economic history and the cityscape of Linz. Up to 50.000 visitors annually are expected to come to the new **visitor centre** of the Linz architects Schremmer & Jell. This visitor centre with its exhibitions is not only aiming at the presentation of the different facets of the company; just by looking at it from outside the visitor can get an idea of the manifold possibilities for the use of steel for esthetical purposes. The visitor centre is part of an architectural master plan by Feichtinger Architects for an area of 36.000 m² situated around the company headquarters, including a sales centre, a financial centre and a parking level for cars.

High-rise buildings at the City Entrance: The Station District

In recent years there has been major construction work going on around the railway station of Linz, making the station district, as regards to its architecture, one of the most modern city districts. The **Wissensturm** (Tower of Knowledge), 63 m high, with its elliptical shape and a metal-glass façade is now the new centre of the city library and of the Volkshochschule (institute for adult education). Just opposite, right beside the **Central Station** – a new building designed by architect Prof. Wilhelm Holzbauer and finished in 2005 which has repeatedly been awarded the most beautiful train station in Austria – the Vienna architects Holzbauer&Partner created the highest building in Linz, the **Terminal Tower**. In this 98-metres-high building, the offices of the fiscal authorities of Linz and the pension insurance institute, among others, are situated. The Energie AG (Upper Austria's energy supplier) built its new headquarters: The **Power Tower**, 74 m high, by architects Weber + Hofer AG (designers of the Lentos Art Museum) is the first high-rise office building worldwide that is constructed in passive house technique. This showpiece building as regards to energy technology can completely do without any district heating and so 300 tons of CO₂ emissions can be saved annually. On its southwest façade the Power Tower is equipped with a solar power station of 637m², which is the largest solar power station in Austria that is attached to the façade of a building.

Between station district and city centre the **Musiktheater** (Music Theatre) of British architect Terry Pawson is about to be built and supposed to be ready by 2011. This new cultural

building will comprise about 1000 seats and will be a new cultural focus at the south end of Landstraße.

On the Way to the Landmark of Linz

Let's return again to the Danube! From here you can see best the landmark of Linz, the Pöstlingberg with its pilgrimage church. You can go up the mountain on an adhesion tram which is over 100 years old and the steepest one in Europe. This historic Pöstlingberg tram is now being revitalized and its track lengthened to the Main Square in the heart of the city. Adaptations of the historic tram to state-of-the-art technology and a modernization of its stops according to accessibility standards have been initiated, but also three new wagons were ordered from Bombardier, the company in charge. By lengthening the track to the Main Square (at a cost of 15 million Euros) the tram will be more closely connected to the city centre which makes access to the tram much easier for our guests.

Looking back: Linz Architecture in the 20th Century

Already at the beginning of the 20th century there were historically significant building construction projects in Linz, of which a great part had to do with the prevailing social needs of the growing industrial city, and therefore they were focused more or less on housing development. An example would be the **Scharlinz Estate** (1919-1925) by city construction director Kurt Kühne who also built the **Parkbad** (1929-1931) and the **Alte Volksküche** (finished in 1926, now home of the afo architekturforum oberösterreich).

Certainly one of the most noted examples of early 20th century architecture in Linz – and beyond that on an international scale a very important document of Modern Art – is the **Tabakwerke** (New Tobacco Factory, 1929-1935) on the lower banks of the Danube, one of the first steel buildings in Austria, which was designed by **Peter Behrens** (among the leading exponents of Industrial Design of that time) and Alexander Popp.

During the time of National Socialism the esteem for Linz changed radically: Being the „hometown“ of the Führer, there were many plans of large-scale construction projects; however, all of them – except the Nibelungen Bridge (1940), the Brückenkopfgebäude (bridgehead buildings) and a number of residential buildings – remained stuck in the planning stage.

Important architectural documents of the post-war era were created by architect **Arthur Perotti**: the Bulgariplatz and the university campus. In the 1960s also many sacred buildings of note were erected, for example, the Churches of St. Theresia by Rudolf Schwarz in Keferfeld, St. Konrad at the Froschberg by Gottfried Nobl, or St. Severin by Franz Wiesmayr

in the Lederergasse. The construction of the Brucknerhaus (1969-1974) to plans by Finnish architect **Heikki Siren** was an event of international importance. A little bit further up the Danube, very close to Linz, you can find the **Gartenstadt Puchenu** (1966-1982) by **Roland Rainer** which is a stunning example for housing in harmony with nature.

With the **Design Center**, opened in 1994, Linz has been able to establish a reputation as a congress and conference centre. This conspicuous arched construction by architect DI Thomas Herzog offers 10.000m² in a column-free interior and is situated right next to the **ORF Landesstudio Oberösterreich** (ORF provincial studio for Upper Austria, 1980-1982). This building, dominated by its visual concrete façade, was designed – like all other provincial studios of the ORF – by the famous architect **Gustav Peichl** (also known as a caricaturist under the pseudonym Ironimus) who has drawn the attention of the public in the recent years by designing the new Wiener Messe and the Karikaturmuseum Krems.

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