

The Austrian Builder-Owner Award 2011

From 28 February to 16 March 2012

- Concept:** Otto Kapfinger, Adolph Stiller
- Exhibition venue:** Exhibition Centre in the Ringturm
VIENNA INSURANCE GROUP
1010 Vienna, Schottenring 30
- Opening hours:** Monday to Friday: 9 am to 6 pm, free admission
(closed on public holidays)
- Press tour:** Monday, 27 February 2012, 11.00 am
- Speakers:** Otto Kapfinger, Adolph Stiller
- Official Opening:** Monday, 27 February 2012, 6.30 pm (by invitation only)
- Enquiries to:** Silvia Polan
T: +43 (0)50 350-21064
F: +43 (0)50 350 99-21064
E-Mail: silvia.polan@vig.com

The Austrian Builder-Owner Award 2011 is one of Austria's most prestigious architectural awards. Presented by the Central Association of Austrian Architects since 1967, this annual award pays tribute to architects and their clients by recognising outstanding projects that set new standards in architectural design. As builder-owners, architecture is a subject that the Vienna Insurance Group and its Austrian and Central and Eastern European Group companies can identify with closely. Over the past few decades Vienna Insurance Group has joined forces with several high-profile architects to create a string of out-of-the-ordinary buildings, such as Vienna's Ringturm. The Vienna Insurance Group's latest exhibition in the "Architektur im Ringturm" series puts the spotlight on projects that stand out for their state-of-the-art, sustainable and responsible approaches to building ownership.

Over the past three years a total of 123 submissions were received from construction and space design projects from all over Austria. Nomination panels for each federal province shortlisted three to five projects, in which clients and mentors demonstrated a concerted focus on architectural quality, in terms of both design and realisation. The 37 projects on the shortlist were evaluated by an expert jury – architects Eva Rubin from Klagenfurt and Jurij Sadar from Ljubljana, and architecture critic Otto Kapfinger from Vienna – following site inspections and interviews to determine the top five, which received the 2011 Austrian Builder-Owner Award.

The award-winning projects

Klinikum Klagenfurt

Builder-owners: KABEG, Landeskrankenanstalten-Betriebsgesellschaft, Franz Sonnberger, Herwig Wetzlinger, Manfred Freitag

Architects: Arge Generalplaner LKH Klagenfurt Neu, Wien; DFA Dietmar Feichtinger Architects; Priebernig „P“ ZT GmbH Architekten + Ingenieure; Müller & Klinger/Architects Collective Ac ZT-GmbH

With 300,000 outpatients and 80,000 inpatients per year, 4,000 employees and 1,400 beds, Klinikum Klagenfurt is Austria's third-largest hospital and provides a viable alternative to the standard blueprint for a large-scale care facility. In this EU-wide tendering process the decision was taken to move away from the ubiquitous 'solid foundation plus high rise' format. Instead the focus was placed on an aesthetic that would primarily serve the needs of the patients, as well as those of the site itself. The outcome of this redefinition was a decentralised and low-profile "garden city" aligned to the river Glan, which had been rerouted to its original course. All rooms, wards, corridors and treatments rooms offer views of and, in some cases, access to the world outside. This radical departure called for strength of conviction and managerial resolve from the builder-owners if they were to successfully break free of conventional architectural patterns. While some linking routes are longer than those found in conventional compact solutions, this was outweighed by the gains in terms of the quality of stay and ease of use for patients and their visitors. Operating costs and facility expenses were cut through the use of automated transit routes. The well thought-out, colour-coded signage system, the abundance of natural light at the heart of the grid layout, and simple details combine with a fundamentally "light" and transparent room structure, and the various green courtyards to create a relaxed, human-centric and almost hotel-like atmosphere.

Clients' statement: *"The role of the builder-owner in a project of this magnitude should be singled out for particular mention, especially given the degree of professional latitude granted in terms of defining a new vision for the future: which in this case involved a complete reappraisal of the entire structure including auxiliary buildings, and extended to such radical measures as rerouting the course of a river."*

Freiraum (free space) Ahorn, Mayrhofen im Zillertal

Builder-owners: Mayrhofner Bergbahnen AG, Michael Rothleitner

Architects: M9 Architekten, Lanzinger, Innsbruck

While summer and winter tourism is of prime financial importance to Tyrol, architectural quality all too often falls short. With around 1.3 million overnight stays, Mayrhofen is a major player in Tyrol's

tourism industry. The builder-owner of the new “Freiraum” (free space), which forms part of the Ahornbahn (Austria’s largest gondola ski lift), has coined an unusual mantra: “Quality as the definitive measure; paradigm shift for the tourist industry – for full-year offers, for considered use of resources.” The cooperation with the architects continued with the construction of the station and was an essential aspect in the development of the overall operating concept. An unadorned plinth 2,000 meters above sea level contains machine rooms and service zones, while a reinforced concrete roof element creates a large plateau for a wide range of uses, as well as providing a visual counterpoint to the mountainous backdrop. This is overlaid with a glass-fronted bridge leading from the gondola station to the rock face. Seemingly floating in space, a panoramic café offers space for seminars, and exhibitions with an environmental theme. Urbane, pared-down design among the mountain tops with step-free access, suitable for year-round use for all age groups. In tune with its environment, the architecture presents a technology-driven and spatially interpreted stance.

Clients’ statement: *“The brief was to create a building complex on a challenging site 2,000 metres above sea level. Besides incorporating ecologically sound building methods as far as possible, it also had to accommodate as unobtrusively as possible the necessary logistics for a ski lift company. Owing to our previous relationship with this architect no specific restrictions were attached to the brief, in order to leverage the greatest possible creative potential to our advantage.”*

Artenne in Nenzing

Builder-owner: Verein Artenne; Hildegard and Helmut Schlatter
Architect: Hansjörg Thum, Bregenz

An example of general relevance that demonstrates how a private initiative with minimal resources can draw on institutional and professional expertise to breathe new life into an unspectacular quotidian space, adding public value to the established building vernacular. Constructed in 1841, this old farm house is one of only a handful of contemporary examples still standing in the Walgau region. As early as the 1990s Hildegard and Helmut Schlatter opened the barns from time to time for workshops and exhibitions. By 2005 there were plans to use these sections of the building as a year-round stage for showcasing this rural region’s art and cultural life, which was undergoing a dramatic rebirth. A society was formed with this purpose in mind, and professional help was drafted in to oversee the planned upgrades to the barn. The Schlatters approached the Architekturstudium Vorarlberg for advice, and four teams were invited to participate in an architectural competition. Financial support came courtesy of the EU Leader funding initiative. After fine tuning the winning submission, the outcome was a flagship building-rehabilitation project. The original character of the stable block was retained, and any interventions echo the existing building fabric with a rustic, pared-down and raw formal language. Nowhere do the new elements outshine the old – all share the same intelligence, which is immediately apparent in situ and not just from the photographs.

Clients’ statement: *“On reflection it was an important decision to gather multiple ideas for the construction project by means of a competition. The discussions with the experts helped to crystallise our expectations and intentions in our role as the builder-owners, while ushering in new insights and approaches for the project.”*

Agricultural vocational training and technical college Ritzlhof, Haid

Builder-owners: Land Oberösterreich; Albert Aflenzer, Bernhard Haider
Architect: Architekten Dickinger-Ramoni, Innsbruck

Ritzlhof is a provincial Austrian agricultural college set in the middle of a ten hectare farm estate. Each year about 600 students join the intake to study agriculture and landscape gardening. The area is also used for large-scale regional events, most recently for the Upper Austrian Landesgartenschau gardens exhibition which attracted thousands of visitors. An architectural competition was called to add an auditorium, multipurpose hall, teaching space and library to the existing building stock. The use of wood as the primary construction material was a prerequisite. The results were impressive for two reasons: stipulation of the materials and the unanimous desire to realise a project that marked a departure from the standard spatial approaches to academic

facility construction, and sets new standards in agricultural building methods. The new build reveals a conscious remodelling and use of the site, while adding the final piece to the triumvirate alongside the older buildings despite its strikingly independent formal language. At the same time the structure of the modern timber construction provides a light-hearted, yet formal variation on the theme to effortlessly create a sense of comfort using a wealth of natural daylight and landscaping details. This was also achieved by blurring the lines in the relationships between indoor and outdoor spaces, and playing on the different depth perspectives that run through the complex. Far from being a boastful statement, it is an airy and pavilion-like construction embedded in a dialogue between the natural light, sloping site and the surrounding trees.

Jury statement: *“The outcome is a homely, communicative atmosphere which breaks with school building conventions, an achievement only made possible by the intense collaboration between the builder-owners, users and architects.”*

Bankhaus Spängler, Linz

Builder-owner: Bankhaus Spänger & Co AG

Architects: Heidl Architekten ZT GmbH Linz

Outdoor spaces: Barbara Bacher

A traditional Salzburg-based private bank acquired a dilapidated and empty heritage-listed building in Linz. At just 6.6 metres wide and 52 metres deep, it is also the smallest on the city's main square. Above ground, the building rests on top of medieval foundations and largely dates back to the late Gothic era. Additional floors were constructed during the Baroque period, leaving the building with layer upon layer of concealed historical details, structural imponderables and enormous scope for restoration surprises. The bank chose a young local architect to plan the rehabilitation project, in what was his first major commission. Consensus-based and often spontaneous decision making culminated with the emergence of a classic example of a new building in an old context, as this near-ruin slowly came back to life in a highly labour-intensive, phased restoration. The complex technical solutions needed to make the property suitable for contemporary use are no longer visible, and the building has now been transformed with elegant open spaces. Contemporary and historic elements coexist in fascinating symbiosis; nothing vies for attention, everything exudes quality, and the new materials appear to be in the service of the building's overall character. The intensity of the interior natural light is unexpected given the narrowness of the building, but floods into the building via the rooftop canopy, courtyard terraces and other outdoor spaces.

Jury statement: *“The builder-owner consciously placed its trust in a young architect's ability to turn his vision for the concept into reality. Landscape designer Barbara Bacher added fresh accents which underscored the relationship between internal and external components.”*

Exhibition

The latest exhibition in the Architektur im Ringturm series uses a collection of images and models to put the spotlight on the projects that secured the 2011 Austrian Builder-Owner Award in recognition of their functionality, design and value to society. It also features all of the projects shortlisted by the various regional juries.

Catalogue

Architektur im Ringturm XXVII. Bauherrenpreis 2011. Published by the Central Association of Austrian Architects. Approx. 60 pages including numerous photographs and images.

Price

EUR 15