

The Archive for Architecture (Archiv für Baukunst) at the University of Innsbruck

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Abstract

The Archive for Architecture (Archiv für Baukunst) at the University of Innsbruck was established in 2005 through a unique collaboration of stakeholders, but faces long term financial challenges if it is to continue to add to its collections.

The foundation of the new archive

The foundation of a new university collection or archive is rare and fortunate at a time of low public funding for education and strict budget constraints within faculties. These circumstances were noticed by the public and were reported in national and international newspapers when the Archive for Architecture was founded in January 2005. It was only possible as a result of a co-operation of the University, the city of Innsbruck, the state of Tyrol, the Republic of Austria and the initiative of Professor Rainer Graefe, and it was a political decision. The University of Innsbruck is an old university, but the Faculty of Architecture came into being only in the 1970s. It was the third school for architects in Austria beside Vienna and Graz, and the only one in Western Austria. Although thirty years later some people suggested abolishing the department, the foundation of a new University Museum and Archive for Architecture was a political statement strengthening its position within the University.

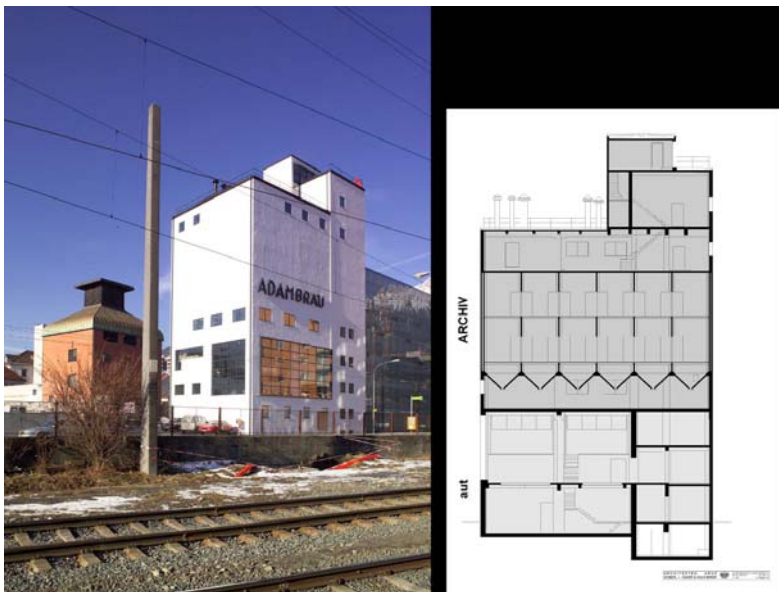


Fig. 1 - Archive building

The Archive building

The Archive is accommodated in the former *Adambrau* brewery, which was designed by the architect Lois Welzenbacher in the International Style between 1929 and 1932 and has been renovated in line with conservational practice. The archive uses its space of 800 m² for both its permanent collection and for visiting exhibitions. But the *Adambrau* building itself is probably the most impressive object of our collection.

The Archive's aims and collection

The Archive's tasks include the documentation of the development of modern architecture and engineering in the central Alpine region, focussing on Tyrol, South Tyrol, Vorarlberg and Trentino from the 19th century onwards.

With this objective the Archive has many similarities with its affiliated institutions in Munich (Architekturmuseum, Technical University Munich), Vienna (Albertina and the Kupferstichkabinett/

Etching Cabinet) and Zurich (ETH, Institut gta), though the size and volume of the collection have been adapted to Innsbruck's needs.



Fig. 2 - Exhibition space

The collection contains architectural bequests, specific projects, company archives, photo collections, publications, models and similar materials, the main emphasis being on classical modern architecture.

In the case of the architecture of the 1920s and 1930s, the central Alpine region can look back on an autonomous development: between the poles of the international *Modern White Architecture* and the regional architectural scene, a specific Tyrolean architecture came into existence, which proved to be of an extraordinary quality and

diversity and attracted Europe-wide attention with its powerful, distinctive formal vocabulary.

Here only a few examples from our collection of historic photographs and architectural drawings are shown: schools, hotels, administration buildings, urban and suburban dwellings and settlements. The Alpine buildings became of great interest because winter sports became an important issue for Tyrol and the whole of Austria after the First World War. The image of Austria truly changed after this historic event, which reduced one of the largest European empires to a small republic in the Alps. It was also the birth of "the white Austria". A younger generation of architects aimed with their buildings to reflect this new image and the new state of society.

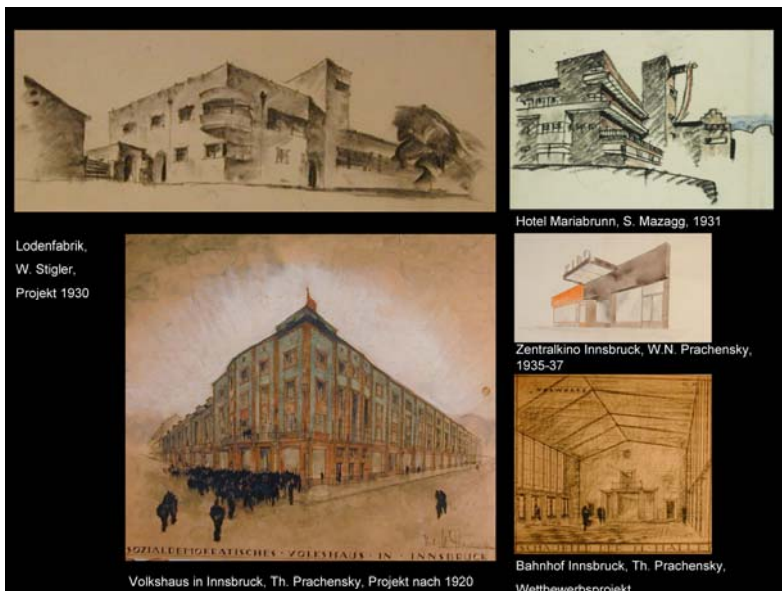


Fig. 3 - Examples from the collection

The exhibition *Modernism: Designing a New World 1914-1939*, planned by Christopher Wilk for the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 2006, among other things aimed at demonstrating the *National Modernism*, that is the national varieties of *Modern Architecture*. Unfortunately there was not one single example of Tyrol's modern Alpine architecture represented.

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It is quite astonishing that of the many outstanding architects only Lois Welzenbacher and Clemens Holzmeister are still internationally well-known today. This “forgotten modern architecture“ needs to be rediscovered.



Fig. 4 - Examples from the collection

How can the students and the public be integrated?

The steadily growing collection and the results of the latest research are regularly promoted through exhibitions, publications and series of lectures as well as with an internet-supported database. Moreover, the archive is integrated into the teachings of the Institute of Architectural Theory and Building History at the Faculty of Architecture of the university, which enables it to administer any specific research projects in co-operation with the students. Thus, an appreciation for classical modern architecture is encouraged on a large scale, at the same time contributing to

the preservation of classified historical buildings as a part of the National Heritage of Tyrol.

Challenges for the future

The total cost for the renovation and establishment of the archive was about € 4,000,000. In addition to this, the university guarantees a budget of € 100,000 a year. For exhibitions it is necessary to raise additional funds.

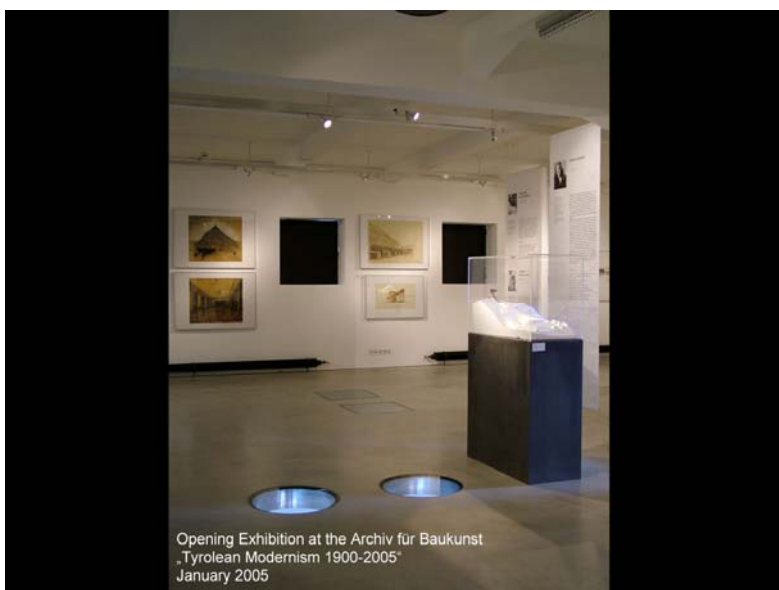


Fig. 5 - Exhibition ‚Tyrolean Modernism‘ 1900-2005

A large part of our collection was donated by architects or their relatives, but we cannot rely on gifts and bequests and the Archive has little funding for acquisitions. In the New York Times’ article *Star Architects find Treasure in Archives*, reprinted in the supplement of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on 13th August 2007, it was reported that influential, famous and wealthy architects like Frank Gehry and Peter Eisenmann have decided to sell their archives to public repositories for a great profit. Surprisingly millionaire Eisenmann said that

“he can not afford not to sell his drawings”. Therefore he offered his archive to the CCA Canadian Center for Architecture in Montreal for a six or seven figure amount. The bargaining power of these architects is buttressed by the growth of popular appreciation for architecture as an art form.

This kind of commercial thinking creates many urgent problems for smaller archives such as ours. The Archive for Architecture will never be able to spend such sums. Zaha Hadid’s famous Ski Jump in Innsbruck is a perfect example: although we can almost touch the original from the terrace of our Archive, it is practically impossible to afford its corresponding sketches, drawings, models or paintings.



Fig. 6 - Examples from the collection

But wouldn't it be desirable for the Innsbruck Archive to possess original material from the architect herself? Fortunately we have managed to obtain at least some of Hadid's computer renderings; electronic data, which can be reproduced.

What is the answer? Should we be content with buying souvenirs like this snow globe? We have to face the facts: If the Archive wants to expand – and every archive must grow if it doesn't want to die – we need resources and larger budgets.

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