

ICOM: MUSEUMS AND UNIVERSAL HERITAGE

UMAC: Universities in Transition – Responsibilities for Heritage

19 – 24 August 2007

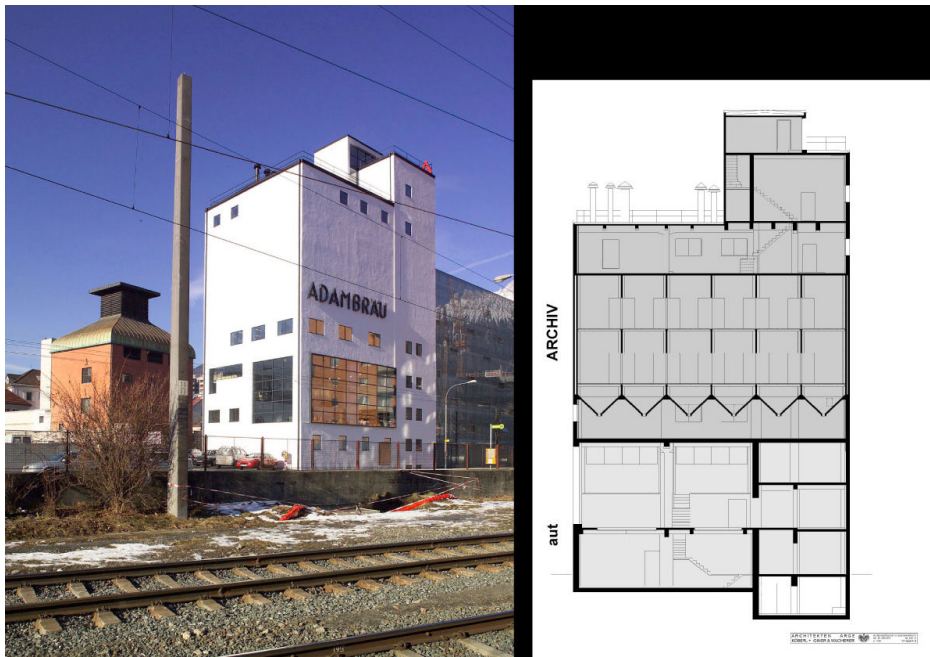
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This “informal experience” is related to Monika Knofler’s lecture about “The Challenges of Austrian University Museums and Collections within the University Law 2002”.

The Archiv für Baukunst was founded in January 2005

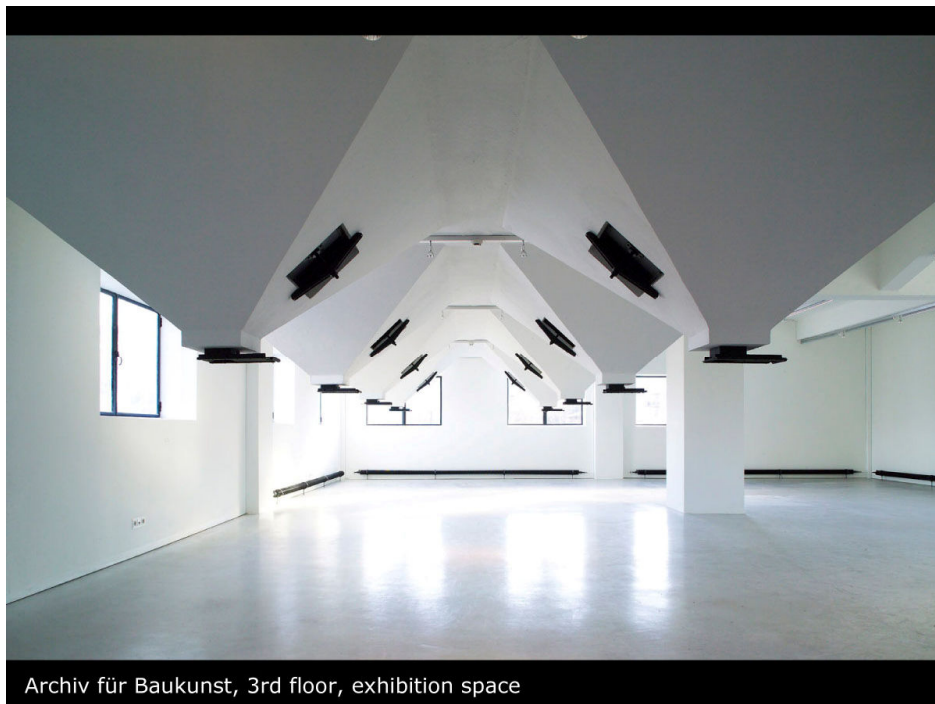
The foundation of a new University collection or archive is both rare and a case of luck in times of low public funding in education and strict budget constraints between the different faculties. These circumstances were noticed by the public and were reported in national and international newspapers. Only the cooperation of the University, the city of Innsbruck, the state Tirol and the Republic of Austria and the initiative of Professor Rainer Graefe made it possible to establish the Archiv für Baukunst. Furthermore we shouldn’t forget: the foundation of the Archive was a political decision. Whereas the University of Innsbruck is an old university, the faculty of architecture was called to life only in the 1970ies as the third school for architects in Austria beside Vienna and Graz, and it is 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 sign strengthening it’s position within the University.



The Archive building

The Archiv für Baukunst is accommodated in the former ADAMBRÄU-brewery, which was designed by the architect Lois Welzenbacher in the International Style between 1929 to 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 ADAMBRÄU building itself is probably the most impressive object of our collection.

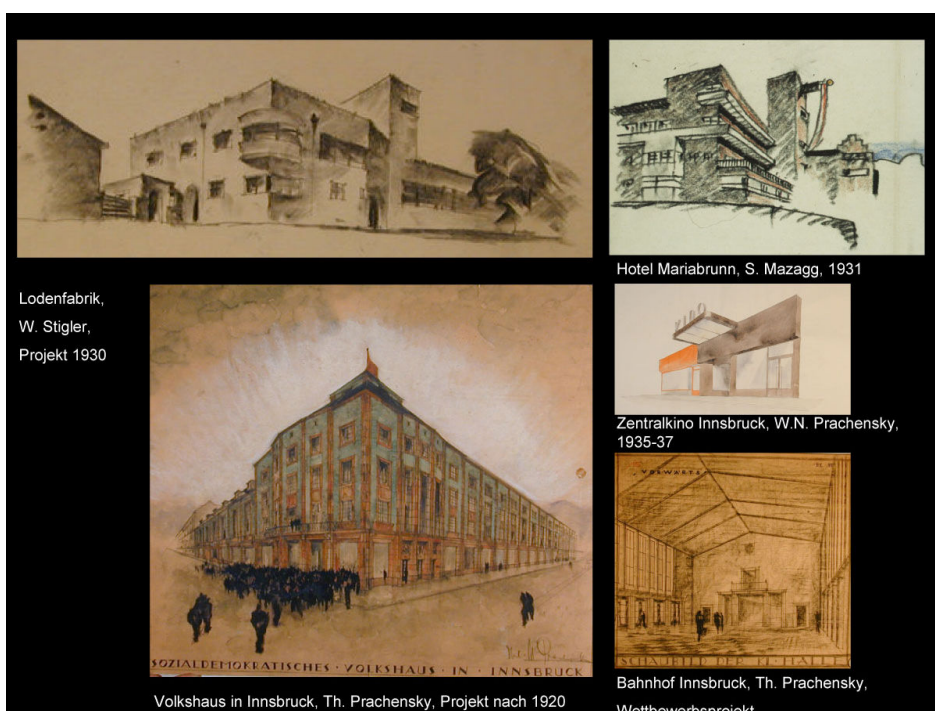


Archiv für Baukunst, 3rd floor, exhibition space

The Archiv'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 Archiv für Baukunst has many similarities with its affiliated institutions in Munich (Architekturmuseum TUM), Vienna (Albertina and the Kupferstichkabinett/Engraving Cabinet) and Zurich (ETH, Institut gta), though size and volume of the collection have been adapted to Innsbruck's dimensions.



Lodenfabrik,
W. Stigler,
Projekt 1930

Hotel Mariabrunn, S. Mazagg, 1931

Zentralkino Innsbruck, W.N. Prachensky,
1935-37

Volkshaus in Innsbruck, Th. Prachensky, Projekt nach 1920

Bahnhof Innsbruck, Th. Prachensky,
Wettbewerbsprojekt

The collection contains architectural bequests, specific projects, companies' archives, photo collections, publications, models and similar materials, the main emphasis lying on Classical Modern Architecture.

With the architecture of the Twenties and Thirties, 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 out of our collection of historic photographs and architectural drawings are shown: schools, hotels, administration buildings, urban and suburban dwellings and settlements. However most of all 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: one of the largest European Empires turned into a small republic in the Alps. It was 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.



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", i.e. the national varieties of "Modern Architecture". Unfortunately there was not one single example of Tyrol's modern alpine architecture represented.

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.

How can the students and the public be integrated?

The steadily growing collection and the results of the latest research are regularly being customized with 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 cooperation 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 were about € 4.000.000.- Furthermore, the University guarantees a budget of € 100.000.- a year. For exhibitions it is necessary to raise additional funds.

The financial problems become very urgent if we think of the acquisitions of new archives: a large part of our collection was donated by architects or their relatives. However the financial aspect is becoming more and more important for an increasing number of owners.

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 Archiv für Baukunst 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.

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

What is the answer? Should we be content with buying souvenirs like this "Schneekugel"? 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.

