



X PROJEKTE DER ARBEITSGRUPPE 4 HOLZBAUER, KURRENT, SPALT 1950–1970

04.03 – 31.05.2010

OPENING: WED 03.03.2010, 7PM

"Not only did arbeitsgruppe 4 bring modern architecture to Austria they also left Modernism behind them when they did so." (Hermann Czech)

At the focus of the exhibition is the oeuvre of *arbeitsgruppe 4*, with their key projects and works on show for the first time. The group, consisting of the strong personalities of Wilhelm Holzbauer, Friedrich Kurrent and Johannes Spalt has achieved fame beyond the realm of architecture. Otto Leitner, the fourth of the founding members, had already left the group by 1953, which led to the paradox situation whereby this workgroup of 4 consisted of only 3 members for most of its existence and subsequently, with the departure of Wilhelm Holzbauer in 1964, of only two. A fellow architect and close friend of the group's members dubbed them the Dreiviertler (the '3/4ers'), a name that has become legendary in Vienna circles and has had a lasting impact on the image of *arbeitsgruppe 4*. Over the years *arbeitsgruppe 4* appears to have gained mythical status in more recent Austrian architectural history. Architecture aficionados know their key projects but the precise details of these, the full background and context have largely remained in the dark – until the cataloguing and analysis of their extensive archives was completed by the Az W. The generous donation of these archives to the Az W by Friedrich Kurrent and Johannes Spalt forms the basis for a comprehensive research project. Also providing the Architekturzentrum Wien with the challenge of compiling the enthralling and still topical work of the three members of *arbeitsgruppe 4* in an exhibition, to open in Spring 2010.

Wilhelm Holzbauer, Friedrich Kurrent und Otto Leitner met while attending the Salzburger Gewerbeschule (vocational college), where Johannes Spalt had also matriculated only a few years before them. In 1950 the four young architects, who were studying under Clemens Holzmeister at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, formed a group together for the first time, and chose the extremely pragmatic epithet *arbeitsgruppe 4* for their collaboration. Following their graduation, in 1952 they moved into a studio at 4 Fuhrmannsgasse in Vienna-Josefstadt, which was to become not only a meeting place and interface for a new generation of architects in the ensuing years but also a key location for the culture scene in Vienna. Readings by the newly forming Wiener Gruppe were held there as well as legendary studio parties of which the participants – themselves all key proponents of the Viennese avant-garde – still have vivid memories today, even sixty years later.



The first phase following the founding of the studio was marked by numerous submissions to competitions. Schools became a special area of interest to *arbeitsgruppe 4*, and remained so for a long time to come – the concepts behind their Wohnraumschule (Living Space School, 1953) met with wide acclaim, although *arbeitsgruppe 4* was never actually commissioned to complete a school despite a comprehensive programme of new school building in the 1950s. The group not only engaged with the schools building sector but also developed groundbreaking concepts, above all in the sectors of church building and housing, that were to have a key impact over the decades to follow. Among the best-known buildings by *arbeitsgruppe 4* today are, alongside their early work, the church ‚Zum kostbaren Blut‘ in Salzburg-Parsch (1953-1956), the counselling centre in Steyr-Ennsleiten (in collaboration with Johann Georg Gsteu, 1959-1961/1968-1970) as well as St. Josef college in Salzburg-Aigen (1961-1964). In addition, the group showed an active interest in Austrian architecture of the early 20th century (pursued with particular dedication by Kurrent and Spalt), which not only impacted significantly upon their own work but also resulted in numerous exhibition concepts (including Kirchen unserer Zeit/Churches of Our time, 1956; Internationale Theaterbau-Ausstellung/Exhibition of International Theatre Building, 1961; Architektur in Wien um 1900/Architecture in Vienna around 1900, 1964; Adolf Loos, 1964) and publications. The result of their apparently contradictory conscious preoccupation with the past, on the one hand, and their avant-garde pioneering achievements with structural and technical innovations, on the other, was the subliminal impact of *arbeitsgruppe 4*'s oeuvre, which survives to this day and has made them one of the fundamental phenomena in the architecture and culture of building of their time.

THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition title is ambiguous: What does the 'X' mean? The X occurs frequently in the work of *arbeitsgruppe 4* as a structural element – most conspicuously in the architectural vocabulary employed in the Steyr-Ennsleiten counselling centre. It also stands for the quantity of projects on show in the exhibition – 40 out of a total of 119 works by *arbeitsgruppe 4*. To do justice to the Dreiviertler, the projects are presented on a table that is 3/4 of the length of the exhibition space. The works chronologically arranged and cover an area of 25 metres x 4 metres in slightly sunken display cabinets specially made to conform to the system of measurements employed by the group. Original material in the form of plans, photographs, posters and models is supplemented by a display of reproductions and facsimiles. Special stations invite visitors to linger and read, adding depth to their experience, while three interviews with the protagonists on film provide a lively insight into the world of the three members of *arbeitsgruppe 4*.



ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME

Avant-gardes and Atmospheres

An evening with contemporaries of the arbeitsgruppe 4
Wed 19.05.2010, 7pm, Admission free

Guests: Friedrich Achleitner, Johann Georg Gsteu, Peter Kubelka, Gerhard Rühm (requested), Wieland Schmied, Kurt Schwertsik moderated by Siegfried Mattl

The exhibition on arbeitsgruppe 4 provides an opportunity for a culture-historical engagement with the network between a range of disciplines in the arts and cultural arena in Vienna during the 1950s and '60s. A relatively small circle of protagonists and institutions in the fields of architecture, art, music, film and literature who were in close contact with one another characterised the specific atmosphere of the Viennese avant-garde of the time. Key members of what was an interesting sociotope are our guests for the evening, and provide insight into their experiences and memories.

Conversations

The members of arbeitsgruppe 4 and their colleagues in conversations with the curators of the exhibition.
Wed 24.03, 6pm: with Friedrich Kurrent/Johannes Spalt
Wed 14.04, 6pm: with Wilhelm Holzbauer
Wed 05.05, 6pm: with Hermann Czech
Wed 26.05, 6pm: with Friedrich Achleitner

Guided tours of the exhibition

Sat 10.04 / 01.05 / 15.05.2010, at 3pm

sonntags 233/12. – 13.06.2010 arbeitsgruppe 4 and more

To accompany the exhibition 'x projekte der arbeitsgruppe 4. Holzbauer, Kurrent, Spalt. 1950 -1970', the sonntags excursion takes a trip to three exceptional examples by the three members of the arbeitsgruppe 4 in Steyr and Salzburg, as well as in St. Pölten. The tour is enriched by contemporary highlights.

Steyr: Steyr-Ennsleiten rectory: arbeitsgruppe 4, J.G. Gsteu, 1959-70 / St. Franziskus church: Riepl Riepl, 2001 / **Salzburg:** church, Parsch: arbeitsgruppe 4, 1956 / city stroll / Boutique Sportalm: Johannes Baar-Baarenfels, 2008 / Restaurant Magazin / St. Josef college, Aigen: arbeitsgruppe 4, 1964 / Museum der Moderne + Restaurant M32, Mönchsberg: Friedrich Hoff Zwink Architekten, 2004 / Stadt:Werk:Lehen, Halle 1 / Touzinsky Herold Architektur with Wolfram Mehlem, transparadiso, 2010 /

St. Pölten: culture tourism guidance system: Gabriele Lenz, Anja Mönkemöller, 2009

Schedule details and tickets are available online at: www.azw.at



A comprehensive catalogue is being published to accompany the exhibition, with 256 pages, around 500 images and an extensive index. With texts (in German only) by Friedrich Achleitner, Gabriele Kaiser, Siegfried Mattl, Sonja Pisarik, Ute Waditschatka and Karin Wilhelm.

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NOTE – PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS

High resolution press images are available online free of charge as downloads on the Press Page of our website.

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