Project

Three Houses on Susenbergstrasse, Zurich, Switzerland

The articulation of the building mass into three volumes takes place within the context of the small-scale, “fine-grained” housing structure in the immediate and extended upscale neighborhood on the Zürichberg. In contrast to the solitary houses and villas, the building volumes react to each other by means of their proportions and with respect to their openings.

The division into three buildings allows the apartments to be oriented in all four directions, which also provides natural light and ventilation for the bathrooms and kitchens. The apartments are laid out in such a way that the service spaces - wet rooms, kitchens, bathrooms, and ancillary spaces - act as closed cores that generate a spatial articulation of the open "living space area". The area thus defined can be easily subdivided into more conventional rooms or living spaces using large sliding doors. Nevertheless, this living area can still be understood as a continuous space aligned with the four points of the compass and correspondingly proportioned and formed.

The four-sided orientation of the apartments is differently accentuated depending on the varying location of the loggias to the east, south, and west. The loggias themselves are conceived as projections from the concrete façades that form narrow open-air rooms along the entire length and width of the building volumes.

The building structure is determined by the space-forming, load-bearing cores of the service blocks. A double-layered concrete façade completes the support framework. The exterior layer, made of in-situ concrete, forms the cantilevered loggias and the perforated parapets of the penthouses. The floor surfaces are made of concrete in various forms and finishes: poured concrete flooring for the living space areas, prefabricated polished cast stone tiles for the secondary rooms, and unpolished tiles for the terraces.

Mineral-based pigments, applied to the concrete with silicate, enable a highly matt, pollen-like "powdered" building surface. An additional intention was to attain the individualization of the three buildings by varying the colors used, while simultaneously emphasizing their compositional coherence. The final coloring was achieved in collaboration with the artist Adrian Schiess. The smallest building is painted a bright yellow, the largest, north-facing one is in grayish green with pink-painted loggias, and the medium-sized building is yellowish apricot with the west-facing façade painted light blue.

G/G, December 2011
Credits

Project: Three Houses on Susenbergstrasse, Zurich, Switzerland

Address: Susenbergstrasse 84–88
8044 Zurich, Switzerland

Spatial Programme: Three apartment buildings with nine apartments, six offices/studios, two activity rooms, basement garage

Competition: August 1998, 1st Prize


Client: Zürcher Frauenverein (ZFV)

Architecture: Annette Gigon / Mike Guyer, Architects, Zurich

Collaborators:
Competition: Michael Widrig,
Planning/Construction: Peter Steiner (Project Manager),
Samuel Thoma

Construction Manager: Generalunternehmung Göhner Merkur AG, Zurich

Gross Floor Area (SIA 416): 2'700 m2

Landscape Architecture: Zulauf Seippel Schweingruber, Baden

Structural Engineer: Dr. Lüchinger + Meyer AG, Zurich

Colours: Adrian Schiess, Zurich and Mouans-Sartoux, France

Photography: Heinrich Helfenstein, Zurich