Project

Résidence du Pré-Babel, Geneva, Switzerland

The construction of apartment blocks of varying heights and different standards on the former Pré-Babel sportsground and park site pursues the idea of concentrated interventions, aimed at retaining as much open green space around and between the buildings as possible.

The first building phase, Pré-Babel, comprised three apartment blocks 1, 2, and 3 with three stories each, offering a total of twenty-eight condominiums for the high-end market segment. For the second phase, Résidence du Parc de Grange-Canal, three taller buildings with standard apartments were planned, also including subsidized housing in accordance with a special stipulation in Geneva’s building regulations. Finding a common architectural language and similar housing typology for all three categories was one of the challenges in developing this park site.

The sitting and shape of the buildings create external spaces that are either dotted with trees or left open as lawns. Each apartment type benefits from windows on three or four sides, with views of the expanses of lawn and groups of trees in the park.

The access paths to the buildings 1, 2, and 3 wind through the park and lead to slightly sunken entrance areas. To keep traffic away from the park, the driveways to the garages run underneath it. The entrance hall can be accessed both from the park and directly from the garage. Polished chrome steel parapets open up this space optically, as does the light gray flooring of terrazzo and cast stone incorporating marble chips. The front doors to the apartments are made of dark oak with an equally wide illumination panel to one side. Exposed concrete walls form a contrast to the refined materials used in the staircases to lend the whole an appropriate everyday quality.

The naturally-lit staircases provide access to two or three apartments and one studio on each floor. The apartments have spacious floor plans and a generous ceiling height of 2.7 meters. From each apartment’s entrance area, the space is divided into two main zones: a daytime area with kitchen, dining room, living room, and study, and a nighttime area consisting of bedrooms with connecting bathrooms and dressing rooms. Each unit has a covered balcony and an additional winter garden. One apartment on the top floor of each building has its own private access to the large roof terrace with pavilions.

The building volumes with their composition of horizontal and vertical prefabricated concrete elements are almost classical in appearance. Horizontal gray bands are combined with yellow vertical elements of varying widths, which reference the coloring of the sandstone buildings in Geneva. Sliding windows with aluminium frames alternate with the yellow concrete elements. Reflective glass parapets intensify the play of mirrored trees in the windows and also amplify the impression of the façades forming a ‘geometric fabric interwoven with silver strands.’

G/G, December 2011
Credits

Project: Résidence du Pré-Babel, Geneva

Address: Résidence du Pré-Babel
Chemin de Grange-Canal 44 à 48
CH - 1224 Chêne-Bougeries, Geneva, Switzerland

Spatial Programme: Three residential buildings with 24 individually owned apartments in total (3–7 room apartments with 132-339 m2) and 4 studios, underground parking with 60 parking spaces.

Competition: December 2003 – January 2004, 1st Prize


Client: Frontimmo SA
Chemin de Grange-Canal 50
CH - 1224 Chêne-Bougeries, Geneva

Architecture: Annette Gigon / Mike Guyer, Architects, Zurich

Collaborators:
Competition: Gilles Dafflon, Katja Fröhlich
Planning/Construction: Gilles Dafflon (Project Manager), Matthias Clivio, Christine Jahn, Andréanne Pochon, Pieter Rabijns, Katja Fröhlich, Michael Wagner

Construction Manager/Cost Planning: Roberto Carella Architectes, Geneva

Gross Floor Area (SIA 416): 11’053 m2

Landscape Architecture: Schweingruber Zulauf Landschaftsarchitekten, Zurich

Structural Engineer: Fiechter Ingénieure SA, Chêne-Bourg

Electrical Engineer: ECE SA, Bernex

Building Services Engineer: Ryser, Eco Sàrl, and Mike Humbert, Geneva

Photography: Joël Tettamanti, Lausanne