Project

Housing Development Erlenhof, Dietikon, Switzerland

This residential complex, constructed on a former industrial site beside the ‘Oberwasserkanal’, a bypass canal of the Limmat River in Dietikon, gives the emerging district its first truly urban note. Three large built volumes are set above a shared basement level to create a slightly raised courtyard open to the water. Pentagonal ground plans with corresponding gabled façades characterize these volumes. The heart of the ensemble is the courtyard with its large alder trees, which also gives the complex its name (Erlenhof: Courtyard of the Alders). Hornbeam hedges line the perimeter of each of the private gardens outside the ground-floor apartments and articulate the shared outdoor areas. Short flights of steps lead from this part of the ensemble to the promenade along the canal. Rows of trees along the surrounding streets mediate between interior and exterior of the complex; they are the first step in developing a future garden city. This notion also underpins the color scheme for the street-facing façades, which are rendered in a vibrant green that shapes the mood and identity of this pioneering project in what is still an industrial setting. In contrast, the courtyard is transformed into a luminous, light-filled space by pure white façades, with the alders outlined against this backdrop.

Entrance to the buildings is either directly from the street or via passages between the retaining walls of the raised front gardens and continuing up single-flight, well-lit stairways to the courtyard and the apartments. The light here takes on a red hue created by reflections from the paint on the underside of the stairs, contrasting with the green façade on the street and the white space of the courtyard.

The 85 apartments utilize a range of different floor plans to take advantage of the orientation and positioning of the various housing units. The condominiums in Block 1 are configured with loggias set in front of south-facing living rooms and adjacent kitchens, while the other rooms face north. Block 2 comprises rental accommodation of varying proportions, including apartments that open to the exterior on two or three sides. In Block 3 living rooms incorporating open-plan kitchens run through the entire depth of the building, with other rooms grouped around this space, allowing the apartments to open both to the south and onto the courtyard. The gently slanted roofs create high-ceilinged penthouse apartments. Recessed loggias provide each apartment with an outdoor area protected from the weather, while the size and number of the windows are maximized to ensure that all the apartments are flooded with light irrespective of the room depth.

Solid concrete construction was used for the buildings, with load-bearing and bracing cross walls and flat floor slabs formed from in-situ concrete. The façades are finished in plastered external thermal insulation, the basement level in exposed concrete. The slightly slanted roofs feature extensive planted areas.

G/G, December 2011
Credits

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Address: Alfred-Comte-Strasse 8/10 (House 1)
Limmatfeld-Strasse 6/8 (House 2)
Josef-Staub-Strasse 1/3/5 (House 3)
8953 Dietikon, Switzerland

Spatial Programme: Housing Complex consisting of three buildings with 55 rented apartments, 30 individually owned apartments, 480 m2 studio space, and underground parking.

Study Commission: March 2005, 1st Prize

Planning/Construction: January 2006 – November 2009

Client:
Client House 2 (Rental Apartments):
PV-Promea, Schlieren
Client Houses 1 and 3 (Condominiums):
Wohnbaugenossenschaft Blumenrain, Zurich
c/o Baumgartner Knobel & Partner, Treuhandgesellschaft
Development Houses 1,2,3:
Halter Entwicklungen, Zurich

Architecture: Annette Gigon / Mike Guyer, Architects, Zurich

Collaborators:
Competition: Matthias Clivio
Planning/Construction: Marjana Sigrist (Team Manager until planning application), Michael Winklmann (Team Manager from planning application), Matthias Clivio (Project Manager), Martin Bischofberger, Karin Schultze, Cornelia Schmidt, Daniel Trepte, Daniela Bergmann

General Contractor: Halter Generalunternehmung, Zurich
Form of Contract: Design and Build (Totalunternehmung)

Gross Floor Area (SIA 416): 18'890 m2

Landscape Architecture: Schweingruber Zulauf Landschaftsarchitekten, Zurich

Structural Engineer: Basler & Hofmann AG, Zurich

Electrical Engineer: R+B engineering AG, Zurich

Building Services Engineer: 3-Plan Haustechnik AG, Winterthur

Building Physics Engineer: Kopitsis Bauphysik AG, Wohlen

Colours: Harald F. Müller, Öhningen, Germany

Photography: Lucas Peters, Zurich