Klosterneuburg, May 15, 2009

Constructing the campus

Construction of new research centre took only 18 months

The opening ceremonies of the Institute of Science and Technology Austria at the beginning of June mark the end of extensive building operations. Within only 18 months the former hospital grounds in Maria Gugging have been transformed into a modern research institute. Now the first phase of building has been completed, research can get under way. Activities take off on June 1 with Anton Zeilinger's lecture for children In the Raiffeisen Lecture Hall – designed by Heinz Tesar – as part of the "Open Campus" festivities. At the beginning of June the first scientists of the theoretical working parties move into the new Central Building. Next to the building, the second construction phase begins. In summer 2010, the first laboratories for experimental research groups will be opened. Looking back, it is clear how much from the construction and organisational point of view has been put into achieving these changes.

The Beginning

Since 1885 there has been a hospital on this site. At the end of the 1990s it was decided to relocate the psychiatric and neurological clinic to other regions of the province of Lower Austria. Following the completion of the move in the autumn of 2007, demolition and reconstruction on the 18 hectare site could begin. The aim – as declared in the master plan of spring 2007 – was to preserve the existing campus character in the midst of the Vienna Woods with its scattered buildings and extensive green zones.

The master plan provides for completion in stages, whereby about half the existing buildings remained and were renovated. New buildings are compatible with the landscape of the site and with the existing buildings. Access will be provided with the newly constructed roundabout on the adjoining main road as well as a new road for internal traffic.

During the drawing-up of the master plan it was decided which buildings would be suitable for use for research work. It was decided that this would be the case for 50% of them. Extensively renovated buildings in the first phase were the administration tract adjacent to the main road, and the central buildings overlooking the pond; the technical works buildings had already been renovated in 2007 and housed the offices of the construction team of IST Austria. The following buildings were preserved: living quarters, church, kindergarten, fire station, gallery and the artists' house, workshops, garages, sports field and tennis courts, the historic bowling alley.

The demolished buildings dated from various building phases and extensions of the hospital. On account of their construction and poor condition, they were not suitable for further use, or were not worth renovating.

Construction

Demolition of 17 of the 33 buildings began in December 2007 and was mainly completed in April 2008. The significant final action in this phase was the blowing-up of the about 40 metres high chimney of the former heating plant at the end of April 2008. Already in the spring of 2008, parallel to the final demolition work, excavation work began. To provide infrastructure for the campus an underground tunnel was installed, about 300 metres long and accessible on foot, connecting the buildings underground with each other and with the new central heating plant. To provide the campus with sufficient electrical energy, a new 9 MW line as well as a new connection and transformer station were constructed. At the same time, the gas-conversion station was moved to near the central energy station. To provide heating for the campus*, a wood pellet heating plant was errected.* At a later stage, new main road access from the roundabout as well as an additional new access for the Art/Brut Center was provided.

Conversion of the Central Building and the Administration Building, as well as the construction of the new Lecture Hall began in the summer of 2008. The **Raiffeisen Lecture Hall,** with its striking Dome of Light designed by the architect Heinz Tesar, will be the architectural visiting-card of the new campus. At the same time elegant and functional, it receives visitors and researchers at the entrance. The Raiffeisen Lecture Hall, with a floor-space of 900 m2, provides seating for 200 in a classical lecture hall arrangement. The space in front of the building, with its six almond trees, is paved with ottaphyllít stone. In the auditorium itself, Canadian maple was chosen for the floor, walls and ceiling. The 18 metre high Dome of Light meets the height of the ridge of the central building. Within the dome, directly above the stage there is provision for daylight black-out, as well as three installations for artificial lighting in order to provide various lighting situations. On the gallery accessible from the foyer there is a media and direction station. The foyer itself has an stunning installation made of visible elements by Heinz Tesar, entitled “Sunart”. It comprises a 70 m2 area of pixels in relief, in the colours yellow and grey.

The foyer connects the Raiffeisen Lecture Hall directly with the central building. The conversion of this building was a technical challenge for the builders. During the renovation it was found that the floors in the western wing were unsuitable and had to be completely renewed during the winter of 2008/09. The facade, with its full area of 4500 m2 was insulated using the newest energy-saving measures. This involved replacing all the 250 windows and the outer doors. In addition, the foundations were protected against rising damp.

The central building, with its 9000m2 floor space was provided with a generous new foyer, which can be used in conjunction with the foyer of the lecture hall. The restaurant area is approached from the entrance area on the one hand, with 80 seats in the cafeteria on the first floor and the restaurant on the ground floor. On the other hand the guest house is accessed, located on floors 2 and 3, with 38 single and double rooms, as well as suites. In the central courtyard of the central building a shady wooden terrace can be used in the summer months.

The **Mondi Seminar Center** on the first floor of the central building consists of four seminar rooms of varying sizes. The most significant is the former Great Hall. Now it is the **Oberbank Ballroom** and has been extensively renovated. Ventilation and air conditioning equipment was installed, the floor level raised by about 50 cm and a new barrier-free approach for guests was made. The remaining three rooms in the Mondi Seminar Center offer between 34 and 90 seats. All rooms are

equipped with the most modern media technology. From the main corridor of the Mondi Seminar Centre a new staircase provides access to the central inner courtyard.

In the east wing are about 40 offices with a total area of around 1200 m2. These offices are intended for groups of theoretical researchers who will move in immediately after the opening of the building in June. Access is planned between the east wing and the laboratory building, to be constructed by the summer of 2010 on the 2nd and 3rd floors.

Infrastructure and buildings maintenance are in the basement of the central building. Here is another notable figure: in the first building phase, a total of 300 kilometres of standard cables were laid.

The administration building on the opposite side of the central pond was also extensively renovated. The foundations were isolated and a lift installed for handicap-access. Protected by heritage restrictions, only the northern side of the building could be insulated. The historic outer form of the windows was maintained and additional inner windows were installed. For the air-conditioning, eleven deep bore-holes were made to obtain low temperature from the earth.

The Park

In designing the park, great attention was paid to maintaining the characteristic tree planting which has developed over more than a century in the landscape of the Vienna Woods. Every tree was examined and documented. Together with the pond and the three streams, the green area forms the topographical centre of the campus. The park is accessible to the public.

A significant addition to the park is the memorial for victims of Nazi medical crimes. The memorial, designed by Dorothee Golz was chosen by an international jury in the framework of a competition in the spring of 2008, and erected by the artist in the autumn of 2008. The jury judged the work to be “sensitive and idiosyncratic, far from all traditional or topical formulation, without or typical features of a memorial. Dorothee Golz approached a complex problem metaphorically and makes concepts such as memories, the past, despair and loss comprehensible.”

The central element of the memorial is a freight container, tilted on one side at an angle of 45 degrees. Looking up into the container the viewer is able to discern a sketch of a table and a chair – as well as a broken chain of spheres, symbolizing life that has suddenly and unexpectedly ended. At the upper end of the container, a door opens to the sky, to a new future and a new hope.

Participating firms

Demolition, conversion and new building on the new campus site would have been impossible with this speed and quality without the cooperation of all the firms involved. One figure makes clear the coordination necessary during the most intensive building phase in the winter of 2008/09. At times up to 300 builders were working at the same time on the site. The most important firms in detail: The master plan was drawn up by the engineering office of Helmut Ledl and the architects' office Hoffmann – Janz. Responsible for planning was the firm Maurer & Neumann, as well as the planning office KCE. Architect Heinz Tesar designed the Raiffeisen Lecture Hall. Infrastructure work was carried out by Strabag, building construction by Leyrer & Graf from Gmünd, Lower Austria. House technology was installed by the firm Herbsthofer, electrical technology by the firm Schmied und Fellmann. Site management was carried out by Vasko + Partner Ing. Project director was the NÖ Hypo Bauplan. Responsible for IST Austria were Chief Operating Officer Gerald Murauer and buildings manager Stefan Hipfinger.

Further Information

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