

Analogen

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Analogen! By saying that, the Swiss mean to say something similar as those Dutch who talk about Brick Fundamentalists. This is about architects who don't withdraw from the reality of the daily living environment and the production thereof. A lukewarm dish, because without big ideas, is the allegation. The practice oriented attitude of the Analogen is difficult to esteem within the bastions of academia and criticism. Except derogative, the term also comes across as envious. Just like the Brick Fundies, the Analogen do well in everyday design practice and, secretly, they joyfully wear their byname.

Miroslav Šik is the frontman of the Analogen and until recently professor at ETH Zürich. At the occasion of his retirement a thick book on his education appeared. Šik supported his teaching with consciously open formulated neologisms, again not a proper ticket for academic recognition. The book is called *Analoge Altneue Architektur*.

At Šik's farewell gathering, ETH's director Philip Ursprung, succeeded to clarify that 'Altneue' in an original way. Šik had never bothered to explain him that didactic term. Waiting for the tram, Šik had let on that he liked to go to Liverpool when he was a young man, studying in Czechia behind the Iron Curtain. Šik was present at the first gigs of the Sex Pistols. Ursprung suggested that Šik felt comfortable within the energetically communicated No Future of the punk movement in the grey 70/80-ies. Today, we don't regard punk anymore as a sombre, negative anti-movement. The suspicion of No Future, and Šik, was not directed against progress as such, but as the futuristic thinking which had caused Tsjernobil, Bopal, the Cold War and other disasters.

Šik's teaching in the 80-ies was indebted to the notion of the Analogue City which was formulated by his predecessor Aldo Rossi. His former student and co-worker Lukas Imhof demonstrated in the book that Šik elaborated that notion at the scale of the building. He did so by the empiric study of traditional sources and built references, i.e. analogies. He for instance found those in the Netherlands in architects like Frits Eschauzier and in the 1941 exhibition catalogue *Nederland bouwt in baksteen* (the Netherland build in Brick). His first generation of

students yielded prominent architects: Andrea Deplazes, Valerio Olgiati, Quintis Miller, Paola Meranta, Christian Kerez, Andreas Hild.

Šik required these students to immediately start with making enormous perspectival drawings of their designs in their location. These were labour intensive studies in charcoal and chalk, often in desaturated colours. They were certainly no presentation drawings. It is better to speak of task definition, prepared with blood, sweat and tears, in which the materials of the buildings are part right from the beginning. Glass for instance, shows as it is the misty Alpine climate: indistinct or shiny, but rarely transparent.

In the last decade the step was made to the computer rendering. References became less exotic. Commonly, students worked at housing projects in which practical givens such as budgets, safety, sustainability and construction technology were part of the task. During design development off-the-shelf products were preferred by Šik. He demanded a self-evident synthesis of all these design aspects. Šik touches the core of the architectural profession: the ability to transpose divergent types of information into a practical design.

At Šik's farewell Lukas Imhof told an anecdote. As a student he had not supplied his housing design with proper storage space and Šik asked him where the child boots and bike helmets were supposed to go. When Imhof did not manage to answer the question satisfactorily, Šik looked at him and said solemnly: 'Lukas, you have to love the people.' At this point I surely understand the critics of the Analogen quite well. Of course, this can easily be taken as lukewarm kitsch. For long I have not understood how and erudite, accurately articulating man like Miro Šik engaged with such wooliness.

But what if we do not try to understand such statements for their normative content, but as a didactic gesture, as an expression of the Show-don't-tell that belongs to the upbringing and education? This is how Barack Obama convinced people. A lukewarm dish? I don't think so. At least, Šik's positioning is courageous and politically charged to a degree that unfortunately has become unusual. And furthermore, there is not eroticism without the lukewarm of body temperature.

Concept-country is on the eve investing enormously in the sustainability of its housing stock. Paradoxically, the very land in which Vermeer painted his Street of Vermeer, just moderately succeeds in researching everyday volume building within the architectural domain and develop it further.

Analoge Altneue Architektur is beautifully produced. If we want the investments in dwelling to go beyond everyday humdrum and to produce stabile buildings and cities, then this book deserves to be studied extensively.