THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

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DELUGAN MEISSL'S PORSCHE MUSEUM

Grafton Architects in Milan Richard Murphy in Colombo Baumschlager Eberle in Austria

BOATHOUSE, FUßACH, AUSTRIA
ARCHITECT
BAUMSCHLAGER EBERLE

2

PROJECTION BOX

Baumschlager Eberle's new clubhouse creates a waterside kaleidoscope.

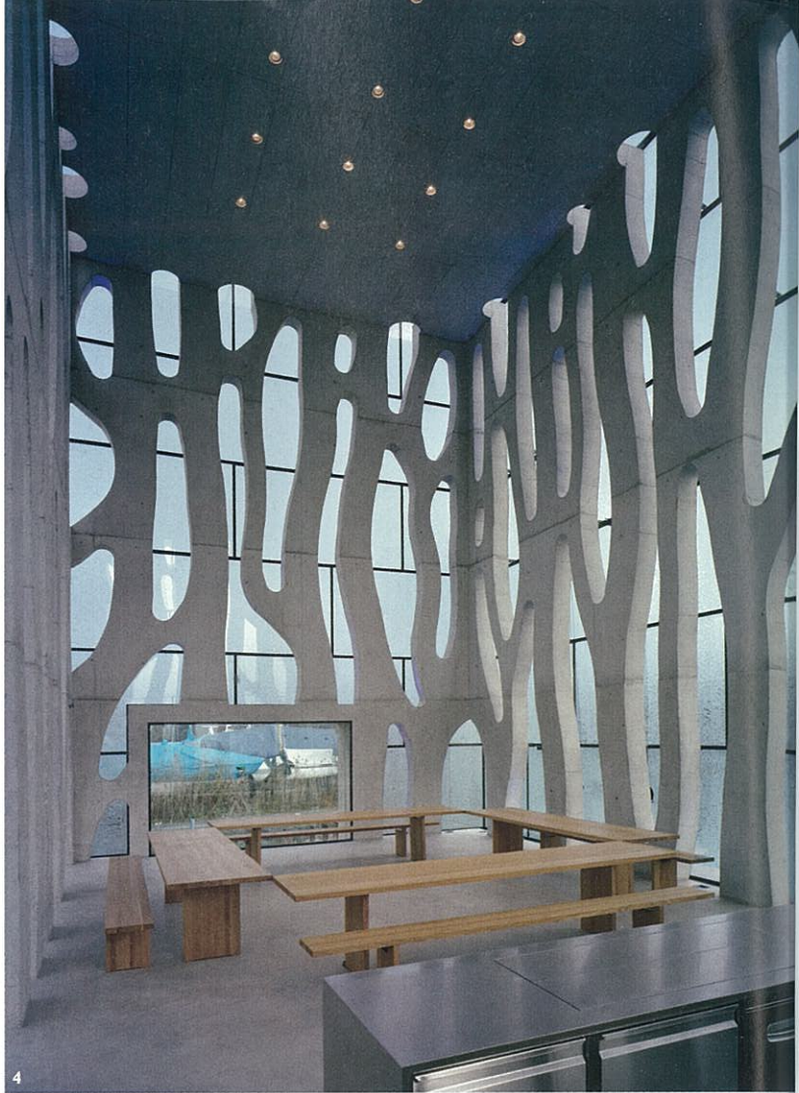
1
Occupying the space of a single mooring, Nordwesthaus rises 12m out of the water. Giving the illusion of a built-on barge, the structure in fact bears firmly on concrete piles and does not rise and fall with the seasonal tides.
2
In 2000, the architect completed the port office building. This is the view from that building, looking towards the new multipurpose hall and boathouse.

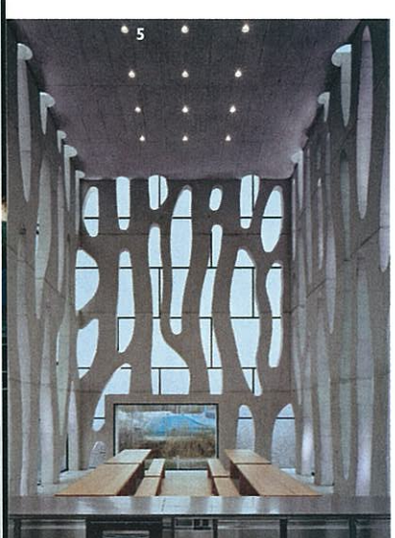
Having previewed this project in the January 2007 edition of the *Architectural Review,* the opportunity to revisit Baumschlager Eberle's Nordwesthaus, a boathouse in west Austria, allows us to consider how well the focus of the original architectural vision has been sustained. This is the third phase of a project that started a decade ago, and as such, maintaining vision is essential if the finished building is to amount to more than the sum of its parts. Phase one of the waterside development, completed in 2000, comprised construction of an ambitious and precarious cantilevered concrete extrusion containing port offices. Under the watchful gaze of this brooding mass, phase two, completed in 2004, included the harbour wall itself, constructed in local stone to create a man-made sustainable habitat for wildlife and plants.

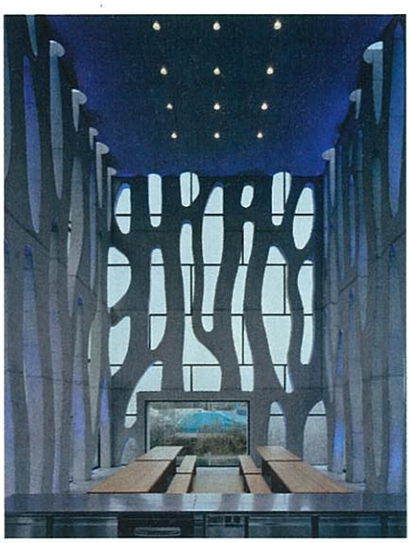
As with phase one, this part of the project adds a freestanding floating element to the waterside ensemble. This time, however, the boxy form really does appear to float, rising directly out of the water. Described by the architect as a 'boat-box', the pavilion provides space for boat storage and maintenance at water level, and a multipurpose hall above serving as a meeting point for the sailing community. The 14m-high structure occupies the space of a single mooring, adding to the analogy of building as boat.

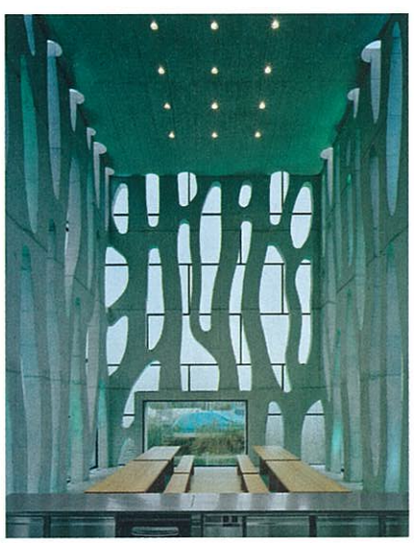
The original design statement described the building's misty skin as a glaze which, along with an alluring physical model, conjured images at the time of a translucent coating that would encapsulate the fluidity of the structure's concrete profile. In reality, skin became cladding and as such, the built outcome is far more prosaic and slightly disappointing: glazed in the more traditional sense of the word, with a separate skin held off the surface by bracing props. However, putting the original image out of our minds, the end result is extremely well executed, the architect having exploited the articulation of each layer of construction to maximum effect.

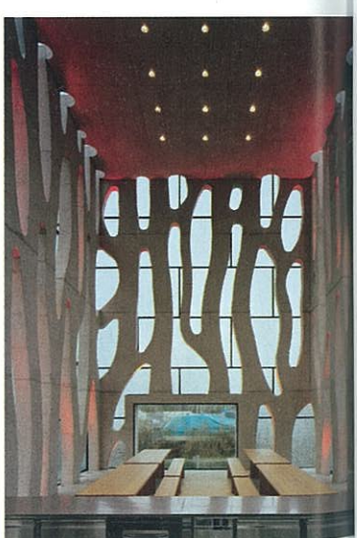
With standard panels of glass, suspended and lightly held away from the concrete in a more conventional manner, the thickness of the composite wall

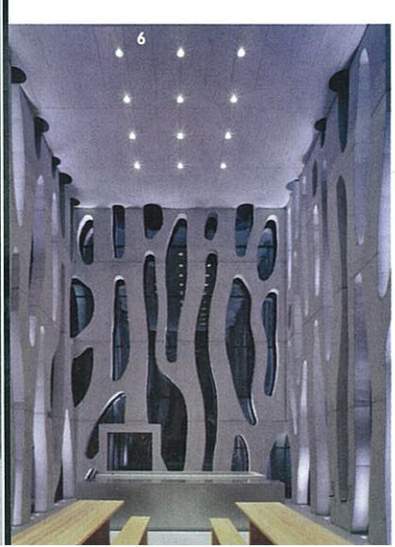


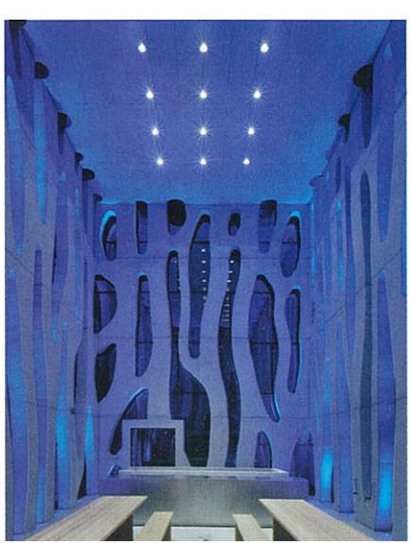


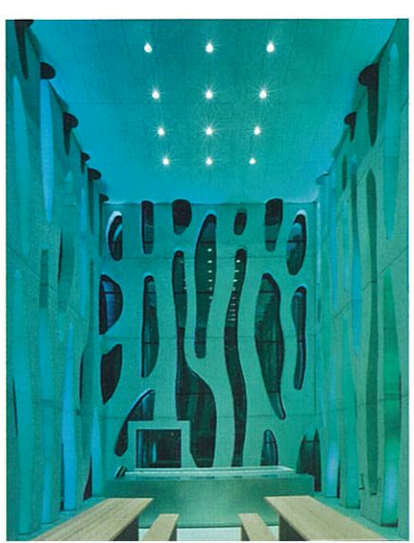












3
Rising up one level from the entrance, the curvaceous concrete frame sits within the building's glazed skin.
4
The hall is 8m high, giving the tree-like forms plenty of space to stretch their limbs. A solitary aperture provides a single vantage point.
5
Lighting plays an essential part in the sceneography.
6
Looking towards the landward elevation.

creates additional depth. This adds to the range of optical effects produced during the day and night, as modified glass filters and reflects the perpetually shifting scenes of artificial and natural light. ICE-H, the new product by Austrian glass manufacturer Glas Marte, produces translucency without having to use colours or add layers of external materials. Effectively chipping away at the surface, varying degrees of opaque, transparent and translucent patches – created by the manufacturing process upon imperfections in the glass – transform the surface into a natural filter. The architect specified this material to 'avoid too sharp a contrast between the core and the envelope', adding that the purpose of these overlays is to allow light and shade to move around the inside.

Used in this application, the 8.8m-tall interior is transformed into a kaleidoscope, exploiting the changing play of light and shade between the layers. The interiors seem to make light almost physically tangible, adding to a strong sense of enclosure. Views out are very deliberately limited to two apertures of clear glass set into deep concrete frames. At night, internal lighting in the ceiling, augmented by feature lighting on the structure itself, creates X-ray projections of the internal organisation, visible across the water.

Throughout the project's development, the architect has exploited the tension that exists between nature and the man-made; a relationship that is constantly amplified, not only in how the geometrically strong built forms sit in contrast with their immediate landscape, but more conspicuously through the use of the abstracted tree-like silhouette. While this motif traced by the concrete frame is not in itself new (Japanese architect Toyo Ito did something similar for Tod's flagship store in the dense urban context of Tokyo's exclusive Omotesando avenue), in this setting, the tree-like forms are less angular, alluding more specifically in this maritime context to the image of trees reflected in water. R.G.

Architect
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Project architect
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Photographs
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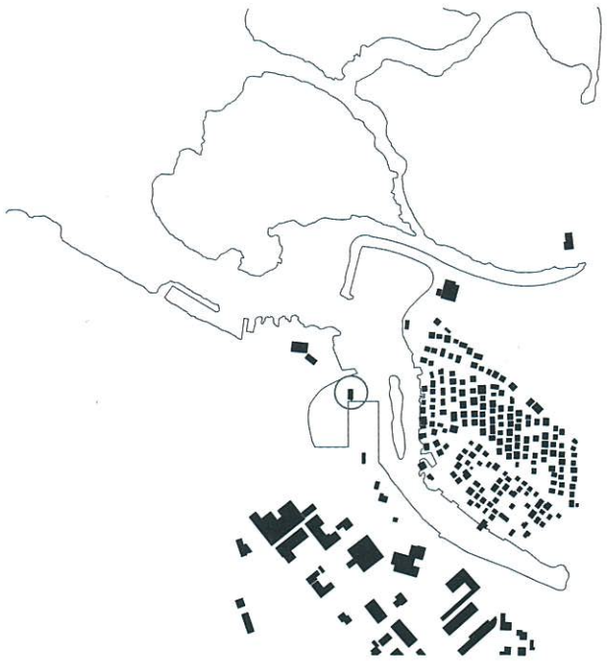
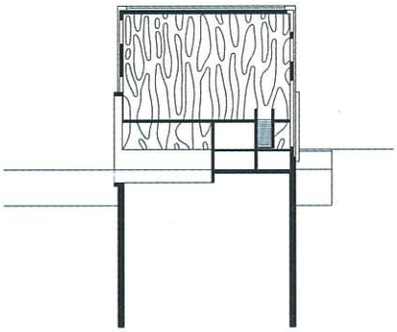
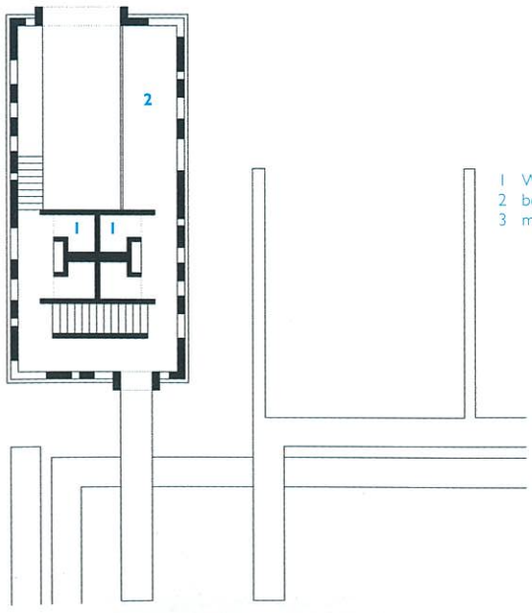


location plan

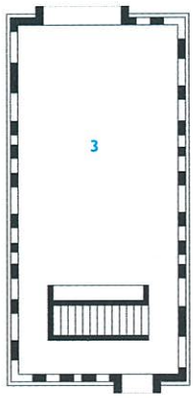


cross section



1 WC
2 boat storage/equipment
3 multipurpose hall

boat room plan (scale approx 1:650)



function room level plan

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