



Ernst Giselbrecht + Partner ZT GmbH



Haus der Ingenieure (House of engineers)

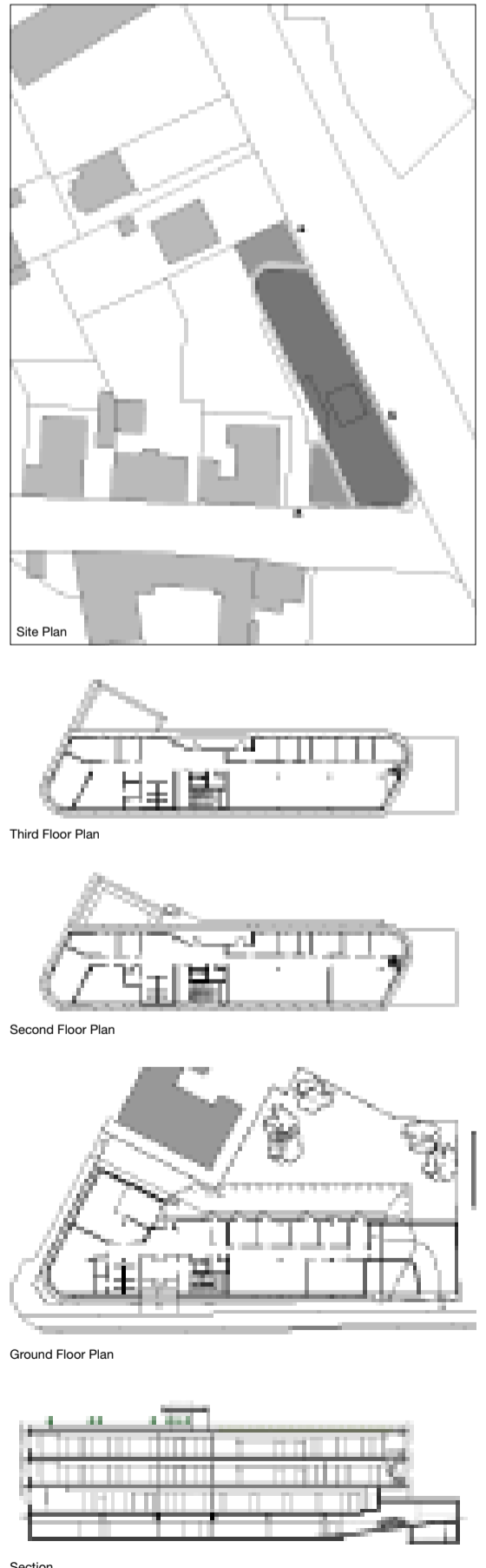
Construction engineers make a considerable contribution to each building project. The very best of architects' designs might fail if implementation does not involve all stakeholders pulling together and delivering best quality. Thus it should be logical that construction engineers, if building for themselves, would make architecture and building culture their ultimate ambition. This makes sense because, in this way, they can present themselves and their work in the cityscape and to society.

However, what seems so logical is not always the case. On Raiffeisenstrasse in Graz there is now such a kind of gift of building culture – the new House of Engineers: Rudolf&VP, Peter Mandl and Thomas Lorenz are construction engineers and decided to construct a building they would share.

In addition to architecture and urbanism they focused on future-oriented, in-house engineering and, above all, energy efficiency. They also saw it as important to create a space of communication, where they could relax as a refuge from work. This space was implemented in the form of a generous roof terrace, from which one enjoys extensive views of the cityscape of Graz and its surroundings.

A succinct façade, a circumferential loop that does not break at corners or reformulate, but rather attracts attention to the fact that the building, being a dynamic element, is intended to give impetus to a new kind of urbanism. The offices are suffused with daylight, are equipped with new LED technology for artificial light and are heated in an environmentally sustainable way by means of geothermal loops. In addition to all these technical qualities, the quality of space is a particular concern of the architect and the clients so a lot of emphasis was given to light and acoustics.

This building demonstrates, over and above the many architectural investment projects, that striving for a high-quality workspace of their own does provide both positive spatial conditions and an urban signal, which invites the immediate neighbourhood to new thinking with regard to quality and quality-orientated activity.



Atelier Thomas Pucher and Bramberger Architects



The NIK building: strength and lightness

A freestanding office building created for a top branding agency, the NIK stands at the centre of a small, green square on the banks of the river Mur. Its form is sculptural in its simplicity: a stack of golden cubes. At the same time, the NIK is the culmination of a complex and meticulous design process responding to the site's serious technical obstacles and intricate planning and financial considerations.

The chief problem to overcome was how to increase the number of floors by 2.5 (a double-storey storage shed previously stood on the site), while keeping the new construction light enough to rest on the 1980s underground parking garage beneath. This was achieved by designing a consistently lightweight construction and also by using a complex distributor grid underneath, which invisibly spreads the concentrated loads of the steel frame girders over the garage's supports.

Before the arrival of the car park and its 1980s redesign, the square next to the Mur river course was home to a bathhouse dating back four centuries. While Nikolaiplatz's architectural styles and usage changed over time, the plot's dimensions remained constant. The new building is sized to fill this site to the last few centimetres, and also reacts precisely to its heterogeneous urban situation. On one side—towards Entenplatz—the NIK becomes a boundary of space that fits in with surrounding buildings, while on the other—facing Nikolaiplatz and the riverbank—it forms an independent sculptural entity.

In this way, the steel-framed structure with clear vertical alignments and plenty of glass mediates between a high-density urban environment and an open green space. Calm and reduced, yet coated with a playful sheen of gold, the chunky facade blocks are also put to good use on the inside as shelves and archives. The result is a construction that is solid, practical and inviting but at the same time manages to be aesthetically and literally light.

