



Opus 21

**Norman Foster, Commerzbank, Frankfurt am Main**

With an introduction by Volker Fischer, a technical survey by Horst Grüneis and photographs by Ralph Richter. 72 pp. with ca. 70 ill., 280 x 300 mm, hard-cover, German/English  
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Norman Foster, one of the most consistent advocates of architecture based on modern technology, achieved a world-wide reputation with the headquarters for the Hongkong & Shanghai Banking Corporation in Hong Kong, Stansted Airport in London, Century Tower in Tokyo and his telecommunications tower in Barcelona. His most important projects in Germany are the conversion of the Reichstag building in Berlin and the new Commerzbank headquarters in Frankfurt am Main.

The Commerzbank building, situated in the middle of the city centre, is an exceptional complex in many respects. The plan of the building, which, including the aerial, is almost 300 m high, is triangular in form with slightly concave sides. Within the transparent tower gardens totalling 4000 sqm are set aside in a spiral configuration, stepping up throughout the building as 15 m high climate buffers. The office floors are combined to create so-called »villages«; in conjunction with the gardens a central atrium, which is ca. 160 m high, brings daylight even to the offices in the centre. The balance of energy use achieved through most advanced operating systems is much more environment-friendly than in other high-rise buildings. It can be stated that the new Commerzbank headquarters is a landmark of contemporary architecture, comparable in its historical significance only with the works of a Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier or Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

The internationally known architecture and design historian Volker Fischer was deputy director of the Deutsches Architekturmuseum in Frankfurt for over 10 years. For some time now he has been building up a new design department in the Frankfurt Museum für Kunsthandwerk. After studying at the Fachhochschule in Dortmund, Ralph Richter rapidly made a name for himself as an architectural photographer. He has photographed buildings by Santiago Calatrava, Coop Himmelblau, Norman Foster, Volker Gienke, Uwe Kiessler and Alessandro Mendini.

»... The selection of titles is determined simply by quality, of which he [Axel Menges] is the judge. Luckily, he has an inquisitive mind and a keen eye, and the series avoids duplicating what is readily available elsewhere. ... Each volume begins with an illustrated essay written by a scholar which is – remarkably – articulate and accessible. ...« (Steven Spier on the *Opus* series in *The Architects' Journal*, London, 11 April 1996.)

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