



Opus 37

Schneider + Schumacher, KPMG-Gebäude, Leipzig

With an introduction by Fabian Wurm and photographs by Jörg Hempel. 56 pp. with ca. 65 ill., 280 x 300 mm, hard-cover, German/English

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Building in a historical context: does the new have to live in the shadow of the old? Or is the architect allowed to make his own self-confident mark? Till Schneider and Michael Schumacher have answered this question very decisively with their offices for the KPMG Deutsche Treuhand-Gesellschaft. Their steel and glass structure is a plea for modern building in old surroundings.

The architects were faced by a derelict site on the southern fringe of central Leipzig. The war had ripped open a massive gap near the town hall and the Reichsgericht, where Beethovenstraße joins Petersteinweg. A block dating from the 19th century had to be completed, and an urban square concluded. Schneider and Schumacher looked for a characteristic solution. But they did not want to cite the cylindrical corner turrets that are so typical of Leipzig. They also chose not to organize the volume of the building symmetrically.

Instead of this they opted for a smooth building with glazed façades. Distinct, sharp outlines meet up with stucco and ornaments. The large areas of glass shimmer as the light changes and the viewpoint shifts. They sometimes seem opaque, and sometimes dull, sometimes sealed off and sometimes transparent. In the daytime the façades of the surrounding buildings are reflected in the panes of glass, at night they open up a view of the filigree structure inside.

To a certain extent the KPMG building is intended as the antithesis of the stagey architecture of its neighbours, a counterpoint – glass versus stone. And yet here in Leipzig old and new fit together to form a whole: for all their determination Schneider and Schumacher's contemporary forms respond to the existing buildings, and take up their proportions and eaves heights.

The KPMG building makes a firm statement that is a valuable contribution to the discussion about transparent corner sections that started at the time of Walter Gropius's and Adolf Meyer's Fagus factory from 1910/11 at Alfeld an der Leine.

Fabian Wurm, literary scholar and sociologist, was an editor of the design magazines *design report* and *form* for many years. Jörg Hempel was co-founder of the Architekton picture archive in Mainz and teaches architectural photography at the Fachhochschule Dortmund; he is one of the most distinguished practitioners in his field in Germany.

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