SLSP Head Office Building

Tomášikova 48
83237 Bratislava, Slowakei

ARCHITEKTUR
Jabornegg & Pálffy

BAUHERRSCHAFT
Slovenská sporite??a, a. s.

FERTIGSTELLUNG
2008

SAMMLUNG
Architekturarchiv Slowakei

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In the sense of Central European architectural tradition

Slovenská sporite??a (Slovak Savings Bank) belongs to the oldest savings banks in Slovakia. Its history began in the middle of the 19th century when it was established as a branch of the First Austrian Savings Bank. After 160 years Slovak Savings Bank has just returned to this tradition: in 2001 it became part of financial group Erste Bank der österreichischen Sparkassen AG. Its remarkable history can be continued in architectural context as well. All over Slovakia the bank owns real estates, which in the past contributed to the history of local architecture. The building of the former City Savings Bank in Bratislava (Square of Slovak National Uprising No. 18) is the best-known example of those constructions. It was built in 1930 in accordance to the project of an architect Juraj Tvarožek. At that time it was a groundbreaking solution that included curtain-wall façade used for the first time in Slovakia. Contemporary scholarly press described the façade as “an altogether specific chapter…, an innovation used in the western cities”. An enthusiastic reviewer eagerly appreciated the institution as well: „If we had more clients like that we would not need to catch up with the world architecture“.
After 70 years Slovak Savings Bank has tried to renew its reputation of enlightened client. In 2005 an architectural competition on the project of a new headquarters was announced. Five architectural studios from abroad (Dominique Perrault Architecte, Ingenhoven und Partner Architekten, Jabornegg ? Pálffy Architekten, Rieger Riewe Architekten, Querkraft) and two studios from Slovakia (Architectural Office of ?ubomír Závodný and Atelier BKPŠ) were invited to participate in the competition. The jury presided by an architect Dietmar Eberle recommended to implement the project of Jabornegg ? Pálffy, an architectural office from Vienna. This project belonged to the most elaborated plans, though it was somewhat conservative. However, it was the very conservativeness of the project that for a client was a guarantee of identifying with a proposed architectural plan. Being conservative in the context of the competition by far did not mean an altogether conservative solution. Later it even appeared that many aspects of the proposal were too innovative for the client.
The concept of the competition proposal was simple: a building appearing as a transparent glass box with a roofed atrium in the centre of disposition. This simple concept, however, was complemented by a variety of essential features: proportion of floor surface and height of atrium walls; water and green in the atrium; pneumatic construction of the roof; partially encased first floor springing from the ground; and ingenious narrow arm of the main entrance. The simpler concept is, the more difficult

to accurately implement it: it is hard to remove elements or to add anything to it. The tenability of such a concept was already proved by its successful application on the building of Schoellerbank in Vienna completed in 2000. Nevertheless, the mentioned plan could not avoid some changes that in the end weakened the resulting solution.

Slovak Savings Bank chose a prospective place for the building of the central office. The peripheral quarter would most likely become a lively centre of the New City district of Bratislava. The savings bank with its 1 500 employees will be quite independent part of the city, a kind of office quarter. This independence is reflected in the building that is rather self-centred and keeps a certain distance from the environment. In the case of financial institution it is not a deficiency, but rather an advantage. In the past a beehive as a symbol of assiduous accumulation of resources ornamented the façades of the savings bank buildings. That tradition was put an end by functionalism when the long cultivated comprehensive symbols were replaced by abstract art vocabulary of modern architecture. Thus a clear-cut glass cube is appropriate for the savings bank, in particular when its effect is complemented by a visible everyday swarming of hundreds of employees: it is an excellent counterpart of the historical symbolic of beehive. After all, already in 1930 a fashionable glass façade was used by the mentioned City Savings Bank in order to hold up its image of modern transparent institution.

Two elements of the building grab attention from architectural perspective: the atrium with its pneumatic roof and the transparency mentioned above. The inner atrium appeared in several competition proposals of the headquarters. In the proposal of the architects Jabornegg and Pálffy it was presented in the most minimalistic form, but at the same time it had the most poetical outline. It reminded a modern park. Catwalks of communication lines complemented by the surfaces of green and water were crossing on the rectangular basis. Today the whole atrium is paved, which multiplies the minimalist effect. However it still can become a lively square of this city of the offices. The most attractive element of the atrium is its pneumatic roof. It retains rain and snow but at the same time transmits daylight and provides natural ventilation. Thus the atrium has a pleasant climate characteristic for exterior space where it never rains and the temperature is never too low. The cushions of the pneumatic construction of the roof could be puffed out or puffed up if needed. The steel carrier beams, drawbars and plastic foil together form a harmonic and even beautiful construction.
Transparency, the second essential architectural leitmotif, presents a formative characteristic of the building. Regularly latticed double façade without parapets is

complemented by an elegant system of screening. It is a high standard solution and provides the building with necessary nobleness. Its only deficiency consists of the changes made in the first floor that eliminated an original tension between the distinct transparent box consisting of offices and the latticed full surfaces of the first floor. Thus the building lost certain expression; the impression today is more monotonous in comparison with the original project.

Despite all mentioned strictures the building of Slovak Savings Bank continues architectural tradition connected to the building of the City Savings Bank described in the introduction. Although it does not present a radical innovation, it belongs to the Central European architectural culture characterised by certain system of values: quality of architectural expression and tendency to shape the city while preserving a convenient scale as well as aesthetical values. Those values might refer to the modern styles or solutions in constructions, space or materials that continue local architectural traditions and are comprehensible for European people. Essential characteristics of this culture include moderation, avoiding ostentatious gestures, and certain degree of nobleness typical for the triangle of Vienna, Brno and Bratislava.
Henrieta Morav?íková

DATENBLATT

Architektur: Jabornegg & Pálffy (Christian Jabornegg, András Pálffy)
Bauherrschaft: Slovenská sporite??a, a. s.

Interior design: Siebert & Talaš

Maßnahme: Neubau
Funktion: Banken und Börse

Wettbewerb: 2005
Planung: 2005 - 2008
Ausführung: 2006 - 2008

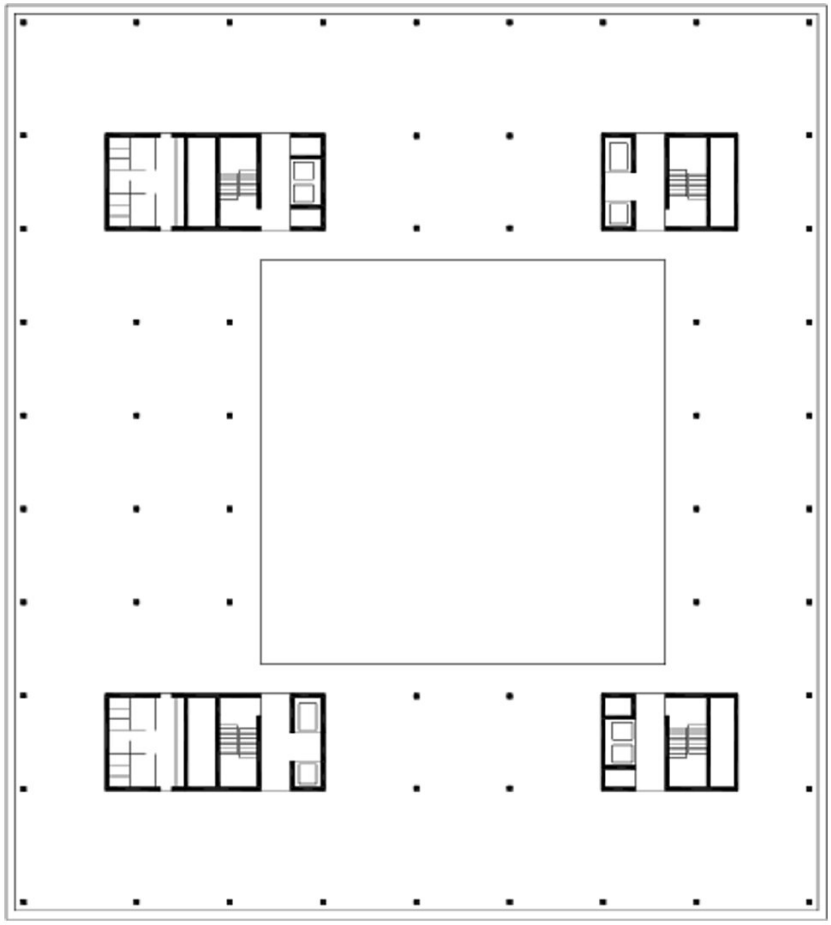
Grundstücksfläche: 14.000 m²
Bruttogeschossfläche: 55.200 m²
Nutzfläche: 50.900 m²

AUSZEICHNUNGEN

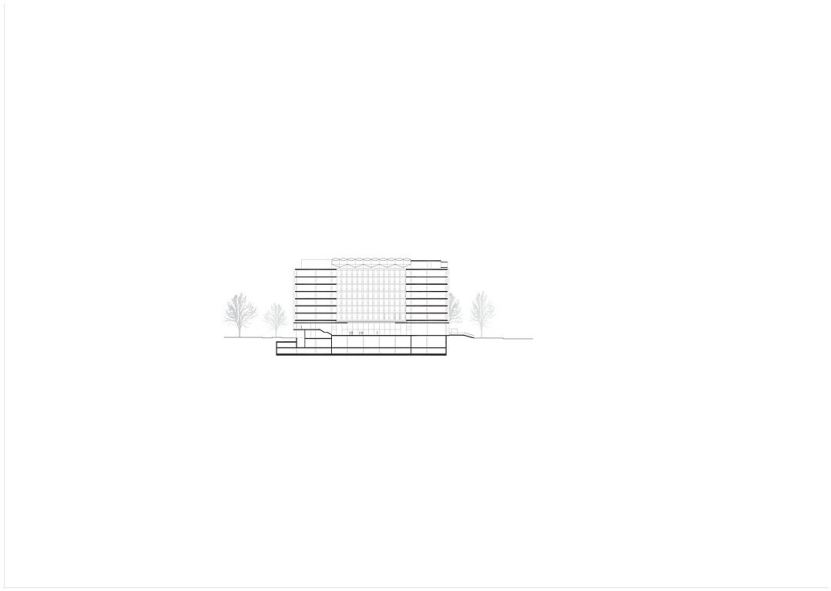
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Regelgeschoss



Längsschnitt