BUILDING UPON

BUILDING

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Contents

0 Preface – Building upon Building 11
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1 Chapter one 17
  Essays
  The Perceptive Professional 19
  Architecture as the Art of Seeing
  by Lara Schrijver
  Highest Fidelity by Christophe 26
  Van Gerrewey
  The Living Historical City 34
  by Dorine van Hoogstraten
  Towards an Architecture of 46
  Accumulation by Arjan Hebly

2 Chapter two 59
  Projects
  Hydra by Monadnock 61
  Chandos House by Stephen Bates 64
  Third Apartment Building, St. 67
  Alban Tal, Basel by Hugh Strange
  An extension to Scuola Grande 69
  di San Marco by Mark Pimlott
Goethe’s Gartenhaus by Dow Jones  72
Striping the Block by Sub Office  75
Rosary by Murmuur  78
Jacob’s Ladder House by Lütjens Padmanabhan  81
St. James’s Place by Diederendirrix  84
More not Less! by Adam Khan  86
The View of the Maschinenmeister by Jules Schoonman  88
Picturesque Ratio by Humble Martens  91
Flatbuilding Westzeedijk by De Kort van Schaik  94
Linnaeus, Competition for the Extension to the Stockholm Public Library by Baukuh  97
Restoration by OMMX  100
"The jammed house in the corner pulls itself up by its own hair" by Nbudim*  103
San Miniato al Monte by Veldwerk  105
Picnic Cloth by East  108
Flirting With The Past by re:architekti  110
In dialogue with Gion A. Caminada, common ground & distinction by Barnaby Hughes & Hamish Warren  113
Kaleidoscope by Studio Thys Vermeulen  116
Alienation & Adaptation by Donna van Milligen Bielke  119
A Sculptural Colonnade by Anne Dressing  122
AEG am Humboldthain by Studio Ossidiana  125
Two Chapels by Lilith Ronner van Hooijdonk  128
My house in the former farm Gut Garkau by Gunnar Daan  132
Apartment Block Ippolito Nievo, 28 by Edelaar Mosayebi Inderbitzin  134
O.M. Ungers Perimeter Block Extension by AMUNT  136
Perspectives by Korth Tielens  140
as rational as possible. No more brick, but an abundance of glass and aluminum. The horizontal composition of the building volumes allows for a vertical addition. In fact, it seemed to have been missing all along.

Linnaeus, Competition for the Extension to the Stockholm Public Library by Baukuh

Luckily, the question of what to add to the Asplund building in order to transform it into a contemporary library has already been answered by Asplund himself in 1928. The solution is available; we only need to discover its richness and understand how it fits the requirements and challenges the organization of a contemporary library. Gunnar Erik Asplund’s 1928 scheme for four thin

fig. 64 Stockholm Public Library, Gunnar Asplund, Stockholm, Sweden (1922–28)
towers and terraces along Odengatan shows a solution able to reconcile the openings towards the Observatory Hill, the attention towards the existing Library and the strong urban character of the new building. Our

fig. 65 plan and Elevation of the original 1928 extension design by Gunnar Asplund

first decision is not to waste this knowledge, not to refuse a suitable option, not to look for alternatives if an easy solution is at our disposal. There is no nostalgia in a choice that is just about volumes, only

fig. 66 new extension to the Library based on Asplund’s original drawings

about the best disposition of built matter in a given place, and about the easiest way to link this part of the city with the landscape of the Observatory Hill. This outspoken neoclassical attitude simply means that we trust the possibility to share aesthetic values with the past (and, that is the same, with the future) and to work starting from a collective architectural knowledge.
45 European architects were given the task to design a fictional building expansion in line with the principles of the existing building. A relevant question in an era when architecture increasingly seems to occur without the context being taken into account. The result is a collection of dialogues between contemporary architects and the past.


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