

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE ARCHITECTS HENKE SCHREIECK

THE PROJECT TRIIIPLE



Photo: Georg Molterer

How did you arrive at the idea of the three towers? What was your thinking behind it?

Mag. arch. Dieter Henke: The Triiiple project was an invited competition. The brief was based on an urban development study. This study only envisaged two tower blocks. A five or eight-storey block had been conceived facing the Danube Canal screening the towers, which would be set back slightly, and extending the line of buildings along Erdberger Lände. That was the concept the city put forward in the specifications for the competition. We couldn't really get on with this – for us it was “neither one thing nor the other.”

We really wanted to make sure that TownTown would not be cut off and that the site would be porous. We wanted people in TownTown, the business district, to be able to look between the towers of Triiiple and see the Prater. Just as in the other direction, looking from the Prater, there would not be a high wall blocking off the site. We wanted to offer a solution which was visually porous. That was the primary idea.

Mag. arch. Marta Schreieck: One important issue in the brief was that of usage. The competition stipulated that the project should create 80% offices and 20% apartments. We didn't want to decide where people should work and where people

should live. Instead we put forward a concept where everything can be done in each structure. This is a matter of the geometry and the footprint of the building. And this ambition led us to the three towers. Essentially the concept arose out of the urban planning requirements and our own desire to create maximum flexibility.

DH: A big office block would not be sufficiently flexible to be used for apartments because the spaces would be too deep. The idea of the three towers allowed us to develop floor plans which work well both as offices organized along a variety of systems and as living spaces.

How did you decide on the shape and volume of the three towers?

DH: The reason the towers have such strong sculptural forms is because it was very important to us that the space in between them should connect the blocks together. The idea was to create three blocks which are in dialogue with each other.

MS: The individual towers should not be isolated, but interact spatially. The towers talk to each other.

DH: The strong sculptural forms were important to give the whole thing a sense of scale. With the lowest section of the buildings, for example, we reference the neighbouring

housing built by the city of Vienna. We have applied height zones which reflect the scale of the city.

MS: The advantage of this is that the residents are able to describe where they live: I live in the top section, for example, or above the main terrace. It gives them a location within the tower: they're not anonymous inside some large mass. It's important to us to be able to create communal areas and the large terraces are brilliantly suited to that.

Can you tell us about the design for the Triiiple Plaza?

DH: The adjacent TownTown site already has a raised platform because the underground line U3 runs underneath it. We are extending this urban plateau and combining it with our own platform. We also have a two storey base which integrates communal areas, restaurants, shops, an indoor market, kindergarten and library etc. We see this as a chance for Triiiple to become a lively and urbane district of the city. Schnirchgasse is extended at ground level into a public square that is framed by a two storey plinth. This has a pleasant human scale which leads you into the site. A gently rising stairway takes you up to the plateau. Covering the A4 creates additional open spaces and direct access to the bank of the Danube Canal with plans for moorings and



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THERE'S A UNITY IN DIVERSITY.

an observation pavilion. The cycle path will run along here and we will create attractive recreational areas that are also suitable for children and young people.

MS: Every project has to enrich its environment. And we keep working on that until it does. With such a large development you have to think of society as a whole. That's why the developer is going to construct a public space which will also benefit the neighbourhood as well as the whole of Trillple Plaza. Schnirchgasse will be turned into a pleasant civic space. The project has also been greeted very positively by neighbouring residents.

Were there specific models for or discoveries behind Trillple?

MS: We've spent a lot of time looking. We travel a great deal. And we draw on those experiences. But there is no specific model for Trillple because we always look for an individual solution which is the perfect fit for each commission.

DH: What we're interested in is that the proximity between the buildings generates a relationship between them. You can see this in New York if you're in a hotel in Midtown Manhattan and you look over at the high-rise opposite and this is then contrasted with an urban canyon opening up a view into the distance. This quality of a certain proximity and tension on the one hand and yet experiencing the spaciousness of the city on the other - is present with Trillple in the view of the green of the Prater and the 1st District.

Do you think about the lifestyles of the people who are going to live here?

MS: People have very different lifestyles and they are inventing new

ones all the time. Our response to that is maximum flexibility and that's exactly what this building, a steel and concrete skeleton with balconies on all sides, offers. The partitions between apartments can be installed on an individual basis. This is something that's important for the future, that everything can be altered. Small and large apartments, spaces for shared living, offices and lots more are all possible. It was extremely important to us to keep the basic structure usage-neutral. We believe that mixed-use buildings are the future because they have the potential to revitalise cities.

What will it be like living in Trillple?

DH: We have achieved a high quality of living with the Trillple project. By using an intelligent geometry in creating the floor plans, many floors have more than the classic four corners. As a result, many apartments receive light from two directions. There is also a strong relationship in the apartments with the city outside and the Prater because of the balconies running all the way round the building. These help us to design apartments which are flexible in size and they also offer protection. By planning to use French windows with their generous full-length glazing we can achieve the greatest possible relationship to open space.

MS: Privacy in the apartments is very important to us - they do not

overlook each other. There are also no apartments which are purely north-facing. All the apartments are of the same quality. The small apartments appear larger visually because of the French windows, the balconies and the generous ceiling height. The interior and exterior flow into one another with the help of these architectural devices and this extends the space visually.

DH: The generous ceiling height is something special in the field of domestic architecture. This is one benefit residents have from Trillple's flexible concept: because the same spaces can also be used as offices which require greater height. That quality is space. It brings with it more air and greater volume, especially for the small apartments. Troughs have already been provided on the balconies for plants which can be cultivated as the residents please, with herbs or flowers for example. That's another new feature in a tower block.

Are there differences between the towers in your concept of the facade?

DH: The blocks should not be too different. There's a unity in diversity. Each building is an individual but together they are a family.

MS: It's one whole and has to remain one.

Thank you for the interview.



Rendering: ZOOM VP



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