

Das Konzept von ›Heimat‹ und Tradition in der Tiroler Moderne

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ABSTRACT: In Tyrol a special form of modernity emerged during the interwar period. On the one hand it aimed to connect with the international modern movement, on the other hand it draws on the rich regional building tradition. New building tasks such as cable cars and hotels, which were demanded by the emerging mass tourism, led to new design solutions in Tyrol. Pitched roofs, wooden facades and structures, brick plinths and other vernacular elements explicitly embed these modern buildings in the Tyrolean region.

Tyrol is defined by its alpine character. To this day many valleys are inadequately connected. Therefore, traditions have survived much longer than in large cities. The assumption that the special topography of Tyrol is directly related to the development of a regional architectural language, is obvious. Other cultural assets such as traditional costumes and dialects also provide clues. Topography does not only exert this indirect influence on Tyrolean modernity, but also a direct one: Building in Tyrol has always meant dealing with the topography; different altitudes and accessibility, sometimes extreme weather conditions and the danger posed by mudflows and avalanches have

had and continue to have a direct influence on the formal, constructive, and functional design of buildings. This confrontation with the regional conditions represents a central point of view in the architects' work then and now.

After architectural historiography primarily focused on the avant-garde for a long time, in recent years the traditional modernity has also moved into the spotlight in many places. This has also led to a reassessment of the picture of modernity.

The dissertation aims to frame Tyrolean modernity, which is situated between tradition and avant-garde, to elaborate its regional specificity and thus to contribute to the international discourse on the broad spectrum of modernity.

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Transcript Audio Contribution in English

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Contrary to what the pictures I show you here suggest, I am not engaged in historical farms, but quite the opposite, in modernity. My research is about modern architecture in the interwar period in Tyrol, and I am focusing primarily on the concepts of tradition and ›Heimat‹ within Tyrolean Modernity. Even if you don't have anything to do with architecture and building history, most people have heard of the *Bauhaus*. The *Bauhaus* is an art school founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar 1919. The influence of this school within the architectural world can hardly be overestimated. The so called ›Bauhaus style‹ to this day shapes the idea of modernity. Only in recent years, and to a much lesser extent, has attention been paid to modernity outside the Bauhaus. This also includes Tyrolean Modernity. Unlike the ›classic, white modernity‹ and by that I mean the *Bauhaus* and the so-called ›International style‹, most of the buildings of the Tyrolean Modernity show reminiscences of the local building tradition.

The pictures you see here belong to the estate of the architect Hans Fessler, an architect of Tyrolean Modernity. An important building by Hans Fessler, that you may know, is the valley station of the *Patscherkofel* cable car in Igls, which is unfortunately currently -despite being a listed building- in decay. In Fessler's estate there are probably about 100 such photographs and postcards, which are kept in a box labeled ›Important as a source of ideas‹. This inscription is more likely not by Fessler but rather by his son or someone else, but it shows that Fessler drew on historic buildings and forms in his design process. A very good example of this blending of tradition and the modern is the *Nordkettenbahn* ensemble by architect Franz Baumann. You can even see the buildings through the window here.

When dealing with modernity, one always begins with the question: What is modern in the first place? In addition to modern forms and building materials, modern construction tasks certainly represent one possible answer. At the beginning of the 20th century there was a massive boom in tourism in many places but especially in Tyrol, one could say it was the beginning of mass tourism, which is still the most important industry in Tyrol today. With this new type of tourism, new construction tasks developed, such as sports hotels and, of course, cable cars.

The *Nordkettenbahn* from 1927/28 by Baumann was one of the first in Austria and thus an absolute breakthrough. The *Hungerburg* station, the bottom station, provides an example of the use of traditional elements. As you can also see here in the pictures from Fessler's archive, plastered brickwork and wood have always played a major role in Tyrolean architecture. This combination of materials also characterizes the valley station of the *Nordkettenbahn*, thus Baumann establishes a clear connection to the local building tradition. This connection or continuity is not only evident

from the outside but is also recognizable in the interior: Both the waiting area of the valley station and the restaurant rooms of the other two buildings are clearly inspired by a Tyrolean farmhouse parlor due to the wooden benches and the solid wooden furniture. In 1929, Josef Garber, the former state conservator of Tyrol, wrote about the buildings of the *Nordkettenbahn*: » The three buildings of the *Nordkettenbahn* are an exemplary solution to the problem, also from the point of view that they do not lack the local touch without being ›Tyrolean‹.«¹ If you are more interested in this aspect, I recommend a visit to the *Volkskunstmuseum*, right next to the *Hofburg*, where historical Tyrolean parlors are exhibited. Afterwards you can walk up to the *Hungerburg* and have a look at the station building by Baumann.

As already mentioned at the beginning, these references to building tradition, the use and further development of traditional forms, materials and constructions, and a modern architectural approach are characteristics of Tyrolean Modernity. An exception is a group of buildings by architect Lois Welzenbacher. Welzenbacher was the only Austrian architect to participate in the groundbreaking exhibition ›The International Style- Architecture since 1922‹ in New York. The *Haus Treichl*, with which he was represented there, was unfortunately destroyed in the war, but other buildings of this group were not, you are actually standing in one of them right now. The former brewhouse of the *Adambrauerei* was built in 1926/27 and is one of three ›high-rise buildings‹ by Lois Welzenbacher. The other two are the nearby *IKB* building next to the *Landhausplatz* and the *Parkhotel* in Hall. In contrast to the buildings of the *Nordkettenbahn*, these three buildings lack the ›local touch‹ as Garber said quite well; another point of criticism from contemporaries was the height. In today's cityscape, these three ›skyscrapers‹ are hardly noticeable, but if we imagine how the buildings appeared when there was no casino, no new hospital, no *Perna Towers*, no court and no *Geiwi*, it becomes clear how extraordinary these buildings were for that time. Critics argued that skyscrapers were too ›metropolitan‹ and that the height would literally compete with the surrounding mountains. In addition to its architectural-historical significance and its importance as an industrial monument, the brewhouse of the *Adambrauerei* also shows how a conversion of such a unique structure is possible. After brewing operations were ceased in 1994, it was adapted in an exemplary and atmospheric manner for use by the *Aut*, and the *Archive for Architecture*, after a long discussion in the early 2000s.

I hope the past five minutes have given you a little insight into my research topic, if you want to know more then check out the linked literature list and of course the buildings I mentioned.

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¹ Garber, J. (1929). Die Bauten der Nordkettenbahn in Innsbruck. Architekt: Franz Baumann Innsbruck. *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, 55, 473-480.