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**Addition, continuity and interweaving**

The addition of small units is a general theme of Atelier 5. But this is not addition in the linear sense of alignment, but in the sense of assembling into an interconnected fabric or a three-dimensional structure in which the interior volumes adjoin one another. This may have something to do with the fact that they work as a team. Opinions and ideas from several standpoints are finally meshed together into a designed whole. The process can be seen with especial clarity in the student residences in Stuttgart, in the university canteen there, in the Bossi home in Gerlafingen or in the project for Vockert-Widdert, which Atelier 5 describes.

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**Between outdoors and indoors**

We assume that the relationship between Atelier 5 and its surroundings and the relationship between the latter and what it encloses is one of the most important aspects of the work of these architects – and planners.

Whoever enters these urban

districts (and if only theoretically by looking at a plan), these housing colonies and individual buildings, experiences a close meshing of the outdoors and the interiors, devoid of abrupt transitions, but in which there is always a clear distinction between decreasingly public zones and increasingly private ones. Nowhere is there a no-man's land, simply left open and forgotten, with no specific function assigned to it. It is possible that this aspect has to do especially with the group: from the "social stage" gradually staggered zones, which are precisely legible transitions, lead into the absolutely private nooks. The retreat into the private sphere, however, is balanced by an equally possible return to the major public zone; one simply retraces one's steps; also every house in a group possesses its own share of external space – in the shape of terrace, garden, courtyard – which is optically if not acoustically insulated from the neighbours.

Mediterranean influences no doubt play a role here. The criticism has been made that in our climate these courtyards, arbours and loggias do not mean very much, but this objection seems to spring from the idea

that environment is only environment if it is postcard green and blue. What is forgotten is that Atelier 5 is not interested in little patches of lawn but in the subtle interplay between approach and withdrawal.

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**Light and aspect**

If we stop and consider where the light comes from in the buildings designed by Atelier 5 and where we can look through, we can observe that illumination and outlook are often treated separately. Variants of skylights, windows through which the outdoors is experienced in small sections – also in the open in the terraced houses – are typical ways of controlling light incidence. So as to obviate any misunderstanding: this is not the baroque, dramatic management of light. On the contrary, here we must linger in order to perceive the subtle ways in which the light has been controlled.

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**The finish: materials, surfaces and colour schemes**

Here finally the formal aspect is approached; if we ask what the buildings in the end look like,

whether there are constants in the treatment of materials, colours and shapes, what Atelier 5's idiom really is, we come up against a contradiction, which is formulated by Bernhard Hoesli in his introduction. A group of architects get together on the basis of a joint understanding, their orientation by the architectural vocabulary of Le Corbusier. However, the selection is immediately intensified. The argument is carried on with purely functional and technical data, with social or moral considerations. Le Corbusier is no longer in the forefront. The Master's "béton brut" has been adopted, but not his colour scheme. The materials are in general left untreated, not only the concrete. Timber, too, or bricks are visible, "unfinished", without any extensive treatment. There is something very puritanical about this reduction to very little, almost untreated material, this renunciation of refined finish. And if the architects ever use colours, they simply leave them to an artist. – Here is another, attractive aspect of Atelier 5: their confidence in professionalism. Thus Rolf Iseli in Flamatt painted the inside balcony partitions, in the colour scheme of the Unité of Marseilles.

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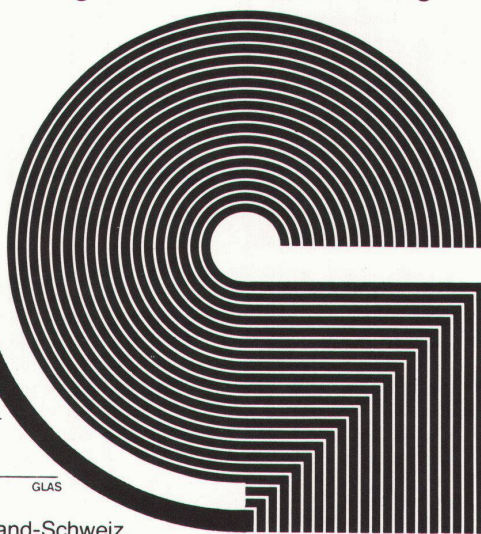
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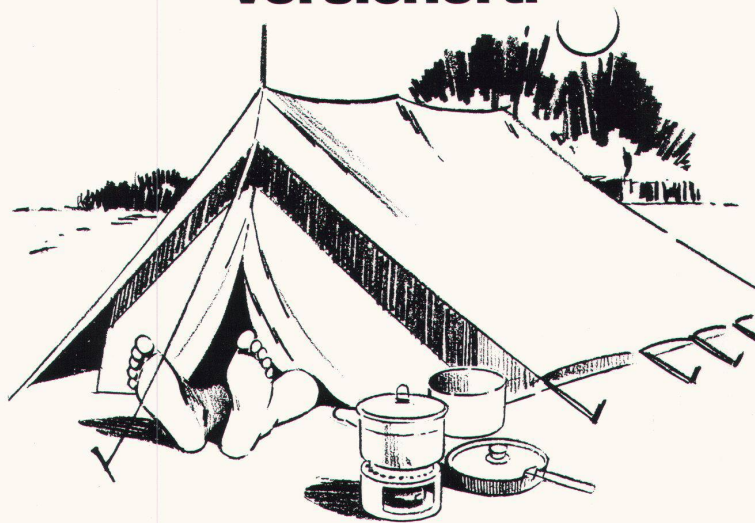
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