



06

bogevischs buero

Profile



bogevischs buero

Munich-Isarvorstadt: neither the Schlachthof (abattoir) nor the Südbahnhof (south station) nor the Grossmarkthalle (retail market hall) could halt the progress of what was once known as the “broken glass district” into the “bohemian” quarter. Today, the façades are freshly plastered, the stucco has been repaired and the trail of project developers has moved on to the Westend and the Schwanthalerhöhe districts. Between the cars here, symbols of a modest affluence, you will occasionally find a Citroën DS Break, a Saab Cabrio, a Volvo Amazon or a Mercedes 280/8 CE Coupé; numerous bars, bistros and cafes have taken up residence in the corner houses between Thalkirchnerstrasse and Isartalstrasse.

Change of scene: no. 19, Dreimühlenstrasse, diagonally opposite. Once you go through the narrow entrance to the courtyard, you immediately say goodbye to the spruce chic of this “in” district of Munich. On the left-hand side, there is a tall wall and, at the opposite end of the asphalted inner courtyard, you find yourself staring at a brownish-gray commercial building with the plaster peeling off from all three stories. Parked cars in front of an old-fashioned wooden bicycle stand, two washing troughs, a board partition for the garbage bins, and behind them, apartments with rusty iron balconies. Welcome to bogevischs buero.

Only known at best to insiders as recently as three years ago, this bureau with the odd-sounding name now has a firm place amongst the top 100 in the most recent BauNetz ranking, on an equal footing with Kollhoff, Gatermann Schossig and Mäckler. In the past, it has really only been the young Austrians who have enjoyed such meteoric rises to fame.

The first project at the end of 2000: an eight-story service center in an exposed location in downtown Stuttgart, almost 20,000 square meters of usable floor space and a building contract worth €20 million. Not bad for a bureau that had officially been in existence for four years but until then was only to be found as a letterbox company because Rainer Hofmann and Ritz Ritzer were earning their money with other firms of architects. Ultimately, the two made up the name of bogevischs buero, a name they operated under exclusively when participating in competitions.



Bülowbogen, Stuttgart,
first prize in the competition,
2000, realized 2003-2005

Events subsequently snowballed. The next competition resulted in a contract for 545 student apartments on Panzerwiese, former military terrain in Munich-Hasenberg. And whilst Hoffman's earlier bureau in London, Horden Cherry Lee, is designing an 18 cubic meter cuboid residential block known as "micro compact home" for the Munich students' union, Hofmann alias bogevischs buero is currently planning a 250 meter long bar-shaped building, three stories high and 18 meters across with five residential towers.



Ritz Ritzer, Rainer Hofmann

The company's most recent project, also for the Munich students' union, is a joint venture with Prof. Werner Wirsing, who is now almost 90 years old. The plan is to completely rip down the latter's famous "Frauendorf" (women's village) built for the 1972 Olympic Games and erect something new in its place. To refurbish it would be too expensive. Five phases of construction, 1,052 apartments, completion date 2010.



Reason enough for a visit to no. 19 Dreimühlenstrasse. bogevischs buero is accessed via a stairway that has seen better days at the front end of the building, the kind typical of Munich. But once you go inside, the whole feeling is very different. White-washed brick walls; along the long wall your attention is commanded by an ox-blood red table which is surely ten meters long, opposite a small meeting room partitioned off by a sliding door as tall as the room itself. Inside it, rows of anthracite gray shelving alternating with Eiermann table-top supports, Artemide luminaires and flat screens in white. When the afternoon light shines in through the five large windows with their steel frames the polished industrial concrete floor looks almost like terrazzo...

Interview



Rainer Hofmann, Ritz Ritzer
www.bogevisch.de

We always like to tell the story about having bought up a Polish architecture bureau....

How did you get hold of the rooms here?

Rainer Hofmann

Previously, we sub-rented rooms in Zentnerstrasse. Then, we won our second competition and had to employ people and look for new rooms. We wanted something with a workshop feel to it and spent quite some time looking around. When we walked in here it still looked incredibly rundown. There were ten other people interested in it but we were the ones who got the contract in the end.

Ritz Ritzer

Probably partly because we had the advantage of being architects and the owner of the building thought that we would spruce the place up. There was originally a tannery here, then a locksmith and finally a joiner's workshop.

bogevischs buero – the name sounds a bit Slavonic. Where does it come from?

Rainer Hofmann

I've never heard that question before...

Ritz Ritzer

There are various versions of that tale. We always like to tell the story about having bought up a Polish architecture bureau ... and about old Bogevisch – our alter ego – who was very big in the 1960s and who wanted to retire. We can stretch that one out to fill entire evenings. Another version is that it is made up of our wives' maiden names.

Rainer Hofmann

The name is a construct and, in principle, is made up of a geometry of letters. When we established our bureau in 1996 we were looking for a name that did not mean anything because, at the time, there were an incredible number of extremely meaningful names, especially in England, where I studied. On the other hand, neither



Bülowbogen, Stuttgart,
first prize in the competition, 2000,
realized 2003-2005

In principle, to begin with, the office consisted of a cell phone.

Competition DLR control center,
Munich 2005

did we want a three-letter acronym followed by the word “architects”. The name has now become a kind of trademark – it is easily recognizable and there are people who know the name without actually knowing us.

It also suggests the possibility of line extensions such as bogevischs bistro, bogevischs branch office etc.

Rainer Hofmann

At the beginning, before we received any commissions, we certainly did have ideas about spreading ourselves around. But then this was no longer necessary. However, our one-man exhibition that will be opening in January at the DAZ in Berlin goes under the working title of ‘bogevischs stadt’ (bogevischs town)...

How long has bogevischs buero been going now?

Rainer Hofmann

Rainer Hofmann: Shortly before we graduated, we rented a studio together from the Technical University on Richard-Wagner-Strasse, and this led, in 1996, to the idea of opening up a bureau together and attempting to become involved in projects via competitions and selection procedures. We did not otherwise engage in acquisition, partly because until the end of 2000 we were in separate physical locations. Then we won the Bülowbogen in Stuttgart and we had to try to win the contract, as well. That really was a very precarious situation: I was in London with Horden Cherry Lee and had a teaching job at the AA, Ritz was involved in research and teaching at the TU Munich – in principle, to begin with, the office consisted of a cell phone.

Ritz Ritzer

Since then, we have just about been able to make a living from it.

One significant point: the importance of competitions. Other comparable young bureaus make their livings mainly from commissions acquired from people in their circles of acquaintances who are friendly with clients. What is the situation with you?



Ritz Ritzer

Even though I have occasionally designed a building for friends or done the planning – up until now we have not enjoyed this privilege. Besides, we are both interested in starting things from scratch and in fact it is pretty well the case that this is only possible in a competition situation. In our experience, a project that comes into being through a competition possesses a different quality from a project that is the result of a direct commission. I don’t want to say whether this means worse or better, but it is different, „more radical“.



Wagnis 3 Riem,
96WE for wagnis e.G.,
Munich 2006-2008

Does this mean that you think things through more carefully within the framework of a competition?

Ritz Ritzer

Exactly, you have more freedom.

Rainer Hofmann

These days, we also sometimes acquire contracts directly. On the one hand, this requires a leap of faith, on the other, it involves great expectations which we then struggle to keep up with. In the case of competitions exactly the opposite occurs. Here we design something on the basis of our own ideas and a necessarily very circumscribed competition text. That is a completely different situation. Besides, a prize-winning design represents a „stake“ in the discussion which makes things considerably more simple. But of course it is incredibly difficult to win competitions.

Particularly since you are not a bureau with a typical „signature“, the kind that always comes up with the same type of recognizable designs.

Ritz Ritzer

Right, we take our orientation from the context every time, from what is going on in the vicinity, what is called for and what the site has to offer.

Looking back, when did you make your breakthrough?

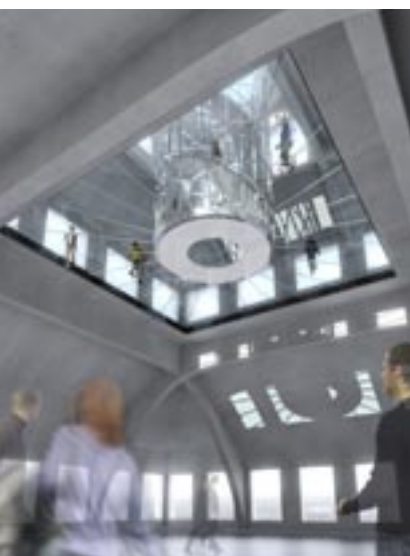
Rainer Hofmann

Without a shadow of a doubt, Bülowbogen in Stuttgart, which we won at the end of 2000, subsequently fighting to win the contract for more than nine months, in fact, right up to the point when the client said: we trust you, even though he knew that our bureau was just getting itself established. Of course, this was an amazing opportunity for us. OK, we had won the first prize, but there were a total of five prizes and the client was involved in negotiations with all of us until the very last moment.

Ritz Ritzer

At the time, we had just about managed to finish two attic stories as bogenvischs buero. It certainly was a risk for the client, particularly since the prize-winners included people who had already worked for him. But as far as I'm concerned, the breakthrough in terms of „the time as of which the bureau has been functioning reliably“ rather came with the student halls of residence on Panzerwiese.

This came later.



Competition U-shaped tower,
Dortmund, 2006

**Student halls of residence
at Felsenelkenanger**
for Munich students' union,
Munich 2002-2005



We had three weeks,
nothing else to do
and took part in the
competition.

Ritz Ritzer

This came directly after we had submitted our entry for Stuttgart. We had three weeks, nothing else to do and took part in the competition using extremely simple tools: Photoshop illustrations, no renderings, we built the model ourselves. Fortunately we won and for the Munich students' union we were lucky enough to be able to work with an absolutely great client. I must say, those were good times.

For this competition you must have been up against bureaus with Swiss model-builders and CNC machined oak models.

Rainer Hofmann

Of course, these days we have also succumbed to the illusion that the presentation needs to be more and more elaborate, but we also realize that thank goodness this is often not so very important. We took part in a competition only recently and the people who won the first prize had an appalling presentation but they still won, and deservedly so.



**Competition stadium with
hahne+mauz architektur,**
Brunswick 2006

Panzerwiese was finished almost two years ago now, the students have moved in, the client is very satisfied and the project led to another commission – we are now designing the Oberwiesenfeld residential estate, together with Prof. Werner Wirsing. With Panzerwiese we were very fortunate to be able to complete the project on time and within budget. Moreover, the construction time was very short for such a recently established bureau. We supervised all the work phases ourselves which gave people great faith in us – quite apart from the architecture, which could have been quite different.

What you mean is: the client sees that you are also in charge of the relevant processes.

Rainer Hofmann

One very important aspect for us is the fact that we handle most of the project that we are entrusted with through all work phases. We want to see quality, not only in the design, but also in its execution down to the very last screw. It is very important to us that all the details are perfectly right.

On the other hand, you then have nobody else you can blame.

In the course of the process, it is often the case that we reinvent the wheel.

Competition to add an extra story to City Hall, Frankfurt 2001, prizewinner

For me, architecture is like a game of chess without a winner.

Ritz Ritzer

Fortunately, there are two of us.

Rainer Hofmann

That is true admittedly, it's always good if you can beat up the construction manager. However, in our experience, the construction manager is normally inevitably on the very good terms with the client.

I would now like to come back to a topic that we have already briefly touched upon: how would you describe your attitude to the design process?

Ritz Ritzer



In principle it is a dialogue that takes place between three participants: the two of us and the building site. In the course of the process, it is often the case that we reinvent the wheel.

In other words, you don't always agree from the word go.

Rainer Hofmann

No, in fact we tend to be opposites and to complement each other. Nowadays, we have managed to develop a very good working relationship. In our work we attempt to uncover things and to work out relationships from what we have discovered. This tension subsequently extends to our dialogue with the client and to the task at hand. I hope that our projects become better in the course of this process – at least this is the great appeal. And every project changes, something that does not necessarily make it any easier...

Not for the client, either.

Rainer Hofmann

For them, this tends to be a matter of satisfaction, because as a rule they are involved and participate in the design process. Whatever the case, it appeals to us to cover all work phases and to take charge of construction management. This may be anachronistic, since architect tends to do less and less, but what they do do, they do all the more intensively. But we still see it as a great strength that we cover a large number of areas. Not because we can do all that any better – of course we have a network of consultants and specialists – but because we believe that a building of this kind is more powerful than a design that someone then implements somehow.

Ritz Ritzer

For me, architecture is like a game of chess without a winner – if one person makes a move, then the other one makes another move and this continues until something becomes apparent.

You worked in different offices for a long time. Have you had role models, teachers, favorites?

Ritz Ritzer

For a long time, I was interested in anonymous construction, for example, Edoardo Gellner. From the time when I worked as an assistant until the former's death two years ago, I did a great deal with him. Via him I discovered anonymous construction as a source from which I was able to derive things for myself – from details of how to organize ground plans all the way to typologies for housing developments and strategies. Practices have developed in this context that it is almost impossible to improve – almost a kind of evolution. With regard to residential construction the most important persons was Hermann Schröder from here in Munich.

Rainer Hofmann



Competition
noise insulation building,
Munich 2004, second prize

For a long time, I had a great weakness for the architecture of Sauerbruch Hutton, where I worked in London for a short time. That was definitely an influence but even greater ones were my studies in London and my work with Christine Hawley and Jennifer Bloomer, with whom I studied in Iowa. They are two very interesting women, who taught me more about thinking than about formal things. Jennifer Bloomer is the author of "Architecture and the Text", in which she compares the structures of Joyce and Piranesi – a wonderful book. From her I learnt how to think laterally and to search and research in a given context. Overall, this has exerted the greatest influence on me.

On the subject of Sauerbruch Hutton – Bülowbogen does evoke the odd memory of the GSW Tower.

Rainer Hofmann

I see the main parallels in the fact that both buildings take their free form from their urban setting and without doubt we have allowed ourselves to be inspired by this setting in the way that urban buildings can be seen as different from perimeter block developments. With regard to the building shell and the HVACR, Bülowbogen is much more simple and practical than the GSW Tower.

Ritz Ritzer

In principle, the design came into being on the fax.



Competition Grube Messel,
Messel 2006, acquisition

But it does also possess a certain modernist freedom. Shortly before this I had been in Brazil, seen a great deal of Niemeyer and brought back a mass of ideas from him. At the time we spent a great deal of time on the phone and faxed drawings back and forth and the whole thing grew out of that. In principle, the design came into being on the fax.

Talking about faxes: today you work consistently with Macs. Is there a practical reason for this or is it more of an aesthetic statement?

Ritz Ritzer

The practical reasons were that when we started out Rainer owned one and that there are no viruses with it.

Rainer Hofmann

Compared with many of the bureaus we know they are also very reliable and you can take the Mini Mac with you anywhere.

Ritz Ritzer

Apart from that they are simply beautiful pieces of equipment.

Rainer Hofmann

I find it interesting that even today my first computer – a Power Book 520c that looked like a racing car designed by Colani – defines the bureau's IT equipment. At the time, when I was doing my master's at Iowa State, students used to be able to get Apples for 40 percent of the retail price. In retrospect, a good marketing strategy.

What are your next projects?

Rainer Hofmann:

There is a cooperative building project for Verein für Volkswohnungen (Society for Apartments for the People) in the middle of Neuhausen, that has currently become entrenched at the planning stage. Authorization is due at any moment. We have pulled down the old building and the new building shell is under starter's orders. It is due for completion in one and a half years. In this case we have attempted to use the cooperative and its structures as a design criterion and to implement access from a common courtyard, an item which until now has not been in existence and which will be constructed like a Shakespearean theatre: deep inner walls, round corners, with everything focused on the center. Occupants will see one other, come into contact with one another and the four core access points will be in the corners: giant staircases lit centrally from above and leading to a common deck. The inner courtyard will have a folded aluminum façade and, because the neighboring buildings have



Conversion of Federal
Police Headquarters (South),
Munich, 2005-2006



Olympic Village, Munich, 1972

protected monuments status, the outside façade will have to adhere more closely to conventions.

Courtyards in general appear to be rather important to your architecture.

Rainer Hofmann

This is something that should not be underestimated, because courtyards form the point of contact between the public and the private spheres. Staging this transition is without doubt one of our pet concerns. And this is the reason why we would also like to turn our attention to our own courtyard sometime – we have been engaged in negotiations with our owner for quite a long time already but so far nothing concrete has been decided.

As mentioned, we are also planning that development for students at Oberwiesenthal, together with Werner Wirsing, the complex he designed in 1970 and that served as the „women’s village“ at the 1972 Olympic Games: flat, two-story buildings with decks, incorrectly described as bungalows, buildings that are now in need of refurbishment in terms of sanitation facilities and waterproofing. And the refurbishment costs were so high that the client decided to rebuild them.

How did this unusual joint venture come about?

Rainer Hofmann

As the author of the original project, Werner Wirsing, who is 87 and no longer has his own bureau, had been asked to design the new development and was looking for somebody to assist him and so the students’ union suggested us. Collaborating with somebody who opened his bureau in 1946 is a fascinating prospect in itself – even if it is not always easy. We are now designing 1,052 new small houses based very closely on the old pavilions. Today, of course, we have different requirements as regards heat insulation and fire protection but the areas involved are the same, the size and the proportions are closely based on the originals.

I myself lived in one of the apartments for three and a half years and am very familiar with them from the inside as well. We have submitted the design plans, a 1:1 model will be produced before Christmas and we hope to start building at the beginning of next year.

At the time, the project was extremely well received and won many prizes. We

We are now designing 1,052 new small houses.



**Olympic Village, low-rise buildings,
Munich, architect Werner Wirsing
2006**

recently discussed, for example, what to do with the metal that the BDA (Association of German Architects) furnished it with at one time, that also needs to be moved now. Of course, it is very difficult for the architect to tear down something like this, knowing full well that there is no other solution and that the subsequent project will probably fit in better with the original idea than would refurbishment. Nevertheless, it is a very painful process.

Ritz Ritzer

It is also interesting that this is a project dating from the 1970s, a time which, as we are gradually beginning to realize, produced its fair share of worthwhile buildings. As a group of buildings, the Olympic Village does boast protected monument status and it is not every day that you get the opportunity to think about what monument protection really means in this context and, on the other hand, how far it is possible to go as an architect.

And one pavilion will then be preserved in its original state?

Rainer Hofmann

12 in total, three groups of four buildings will be preserved and restored to their original state. But this is also the most expensive aspect of the whole project.

Born in 1964, Jochen Paul studied Romance languages and psychology, culture and media management in Berlin and, after five years in the editorial office of „Bauwelt“, has been working in Munich since the year 2000. He writes on architecture and design-related topics for customers such as Bauwelt, Baumeiser, Industriebau and now for BauNetz, as well.

Projects

Photo 1/2:

Bülowbogen, Stuttgart,
first prize in the competition,
2000, realized 2003-2005



Photo 3/4:

Student halls of residence at
Felsennelkenanger, for the Munich
students' union,
Munich 2002-2005



Photo 5:

Student halls of residence at
Felsennelkenanger, for the Munich
students' union,
Munich 2002-2005



Photo 6/7:

Student halls of residence at
Felsennelkenanger, for the Munich
students' union,
Munich 2002-2005



Photo 8:

Student halls of residence at
Felsennelkenanger, for the Mu-
nich students' union,
Munich 2002-2005

