

# BETWEEN MANIFESTATIONS OF POWER AND INFORMALITY

Speculations on Contemporary Life in  
Institutional Spaces

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2026

Chalmers School of Architecture  
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Examiner: Daniel Norell   Supervisor: Naima Callenberg



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Figure 2: Glass roof of the Grand Cashier Hall with newly added light element during renovation, observing the space below. Author's photograph.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates how power is embedded in built space. Although these spatial structures of power are not always immediately visible, they shape how bodies move, pause, gather, and behave. While all architecture influences behaviour, this thesis focuses on buildings in which power is deliberately expressed and articulated. Institutions such as churches, parliaments, and banks have long used architecture to portray authority, stability, and trust.

Power is not expressed only through monumental façades or formal architectural elements. It also operates through spatial organisation, including sequences of thresholds, controlled access, hierarchical arrangements, and the regulation of visibility. Through these elements, architecture structures how space is entered, perceived, and used. In this way, architecture does not simply represent authority, but actively stages and reinforces it.

The thesis examines the Postsparkasse in Vienna, a former bank building that still carries the institutional logic of its original function. Beyond its monumental façade lies a carefully organised interior designed for efficiency, control, and hierarchy. Its spatial order determines, for example, what is visible and what remains hidden, where bodies may pause, where they must move, and even how they are expected to sit.

Originally, the building projected the values of banking: efficiency, profitability, trust, and the smooth circulation of both bodies and money. Today, however, its function has changed. Most of the Postsparkasse is used by university institutions in Vienna, while the central cashier hall is open to the public and contains a café.

Through this shift into a more informal and public programme, a tension emerges: A tension between the old and the new use. A tension between an institutional spatial order and the less

structured rhythms of contemporary public life.

This tension leads to the central research question:

*How can an institutional building shaped by highly articulated architectural manifestations of power be spatially realigned to support contemporary needs, while preserving its historical identity?*

Through on-site mapping, desk research, modelling and photography, the initial phase of the thesis investigates the building and analyses the experience within it. To further identify and examine the power structures, the thesis uses design as a method of inquiry. Rather than imposing a new programme, the project strengthens the building's ongoing transformation towards public and informal use. It imagines the cashier hall as an urban living room: a shared extension of the home, accessible to everyone and filled with everyday activities.

Following this investigation of power, thresholds are identified as key sites where preservation and contemporary use collide. The design develops across different scales: from the overall spatial order of the cashier hall, to thresholds and circulation, to adaptable modules and reconfigured details. At the larger scale, the intervention introduces a second spatial layer that emerges from the building's existing axes and thresholds. At the smaller scales, this layer introduces modules and reconfigured architectural details that invite users to appropriate and inhabit the space in ways that differ from the building's original intent.

Through interventions that are respectful, yet radical and playful, the project realigns the Postsparkasse with contemporary needs while keeping its historical identity visible and active.

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**AIM**

This thesis aims to develop a design approach that responds to the tension between the Postsparkasse's institutional order and its emerging informal public use. Rather than erasing the building's embedded manifestations of power, the project seeks to engage with them critically and explores how architecture can position itself against these structures while opening the building toward more informal and public forms of use.

**THESIS QUESTIONS**

***How can an institutional building shaped by highly articulated architectural manifestations of power be spatially realigned to support contemporary needs, while preserving its historical identity?***

Sub-question:

*How can a new spatial layer engage with the building's original scripts of authority without silently reproducing them?*

**DELIMITATIONS**

The design proposal of the thesis is speculative and investigative in nature rather than a fully resolved architectural project. Technical, structural, economic, and regulatory aspects are therefore not examined in detail. Instead, the thesis focuses on spatial experience, thresholds, appropriation, and the relationship between institutional order and contemporary informal use

**DICTIONARY**

*Manifestations of power;* Spatial, material, or formal elements through which power becomes experienced, felt and identifiable.

*Spatial script;* Instructions embedded in space that guide how people move and behave. Spatial scripts can be understood as a form of architectural language

*Threshold;* A spatial moment of transition. It can be a physical threshold, such as a doorway, but also a felt difference between spaces, atmospheres, or degrees of access.

*Informal use;* Uses that are less prescribed and more open to everyday activity, appropriation, and public life.

*Playful;* A spatial attitude that encourages experimentation, appropriation, and unexpected use.

*Author's definitions.*

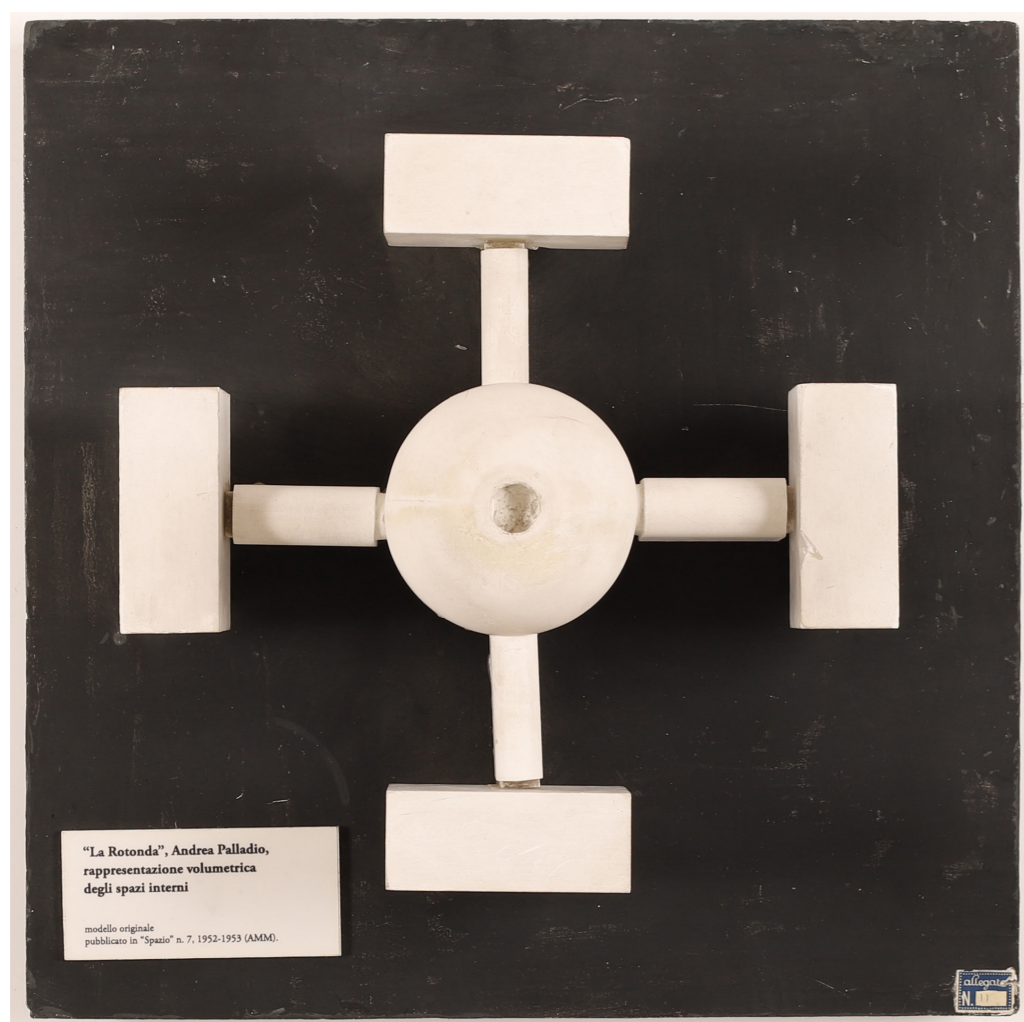


Figure 3: Negative model of Villa Rotonda. Luigi Moretti, 1952–1953. MAXXI Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Rome. MAXXI Architettura Collection, MOD438. With permission from MAXXI – Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo

## ARCHITECTURE OF POWER

Architecture is not neutral. Rather than serving as a passive backdrop, it actively shapes how we move, perceive, and behave within space. Through spatial organisation, thresholds, and repeated patterns, architecture guides our actions. Architecture therefore reveals itself as a subtle tool of power (Katyal, 2002).

However, this influence rarely operates through explicit instruction. Rather than imposing behaviour directly, architecture guides through subtle cues. As Katyal (2002) suggests, the built environment functions like a language whose signals we intuitively interpret. It “whispers” rather than commands, steering behaviour in ways that often go unnoticed. Yet for attentive observers, these spatial signals become legible.

This guiding capacity is essential in organising life, particularly in dense urban environments. By structuring movement, access, and visibility, architecture contributes to the regulation of collective behaviour, often without being perceived as such. This makes architecture not only an expressive medium, but also a regulatory one. As Schindler (2015) argues, built form can influence behaviour as powerfully as legal frameworks, while remaining far less visible as a mechanism of control. Theories such as Foucault’s concept of disciplinary space in *Discipline and Punish* (1977), developed in relation to the disciplinary institutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, help to describe how institutional architecture can regulate behaviour through spatial organisation. In the example of the *Panopticon*, a prison model in which cells are arranged around a central observation tower, behaviour is not controlled through direct force, but through spatial arrangement and the possibility of being observed (Foucault, 1977).

A distinction must be made, however: while all architecture guides behaviour, not all architecture explicitly expresses

power. This thesis focuses on forms that do. This becomes particularly evident in buildings that deliberately communicate authority. Renaissance palaces such as those of the Medici in Florence, for example, express power outwardly through their façade, the so-called face of the building. Here, power is staged and made visible to the public (Ferretti, 2016).

However, this expression does not end at the exterior. Within the building, power is further structured through spatial organisation. Sequences of thresholds, controlled access, and hierarchical arrangements guide movement and define how spaces can be entered and used. In this way, power is not only represented, but embedded in how the building is navigated and experienced. These mechanisms are not always immediately visible. They often operate through voids, spatial relationships, and the organisation of space itself (Dovey, 1999).

To understand these conditions, attention must shift from built form to the space it encloses. Concepts such as negative space allow architecture to be read not only through its objects, but through the spatial structures that shape movement and perception. This inversion can be seen in Rachel Whiteread’s *Ghost* (1990) and Luigi Moretti’s *spatial model of La Rotonda* (1952–1953), both of which make the void itself visible. By casting or modelling the air, the empty space of a building becomes visible. This reveals spaces of movement, encounter, threshold, and organisation that are usually perceived only indirectly (National Gallery of Art, n.d.; Chircă, 2024).

However, power does not only operate through what is shown, but also through what remains hidden. Buildings of authority often aim to present a coherent and controlled image, where everything appears seamless and carefully designed. In this context, the architectural

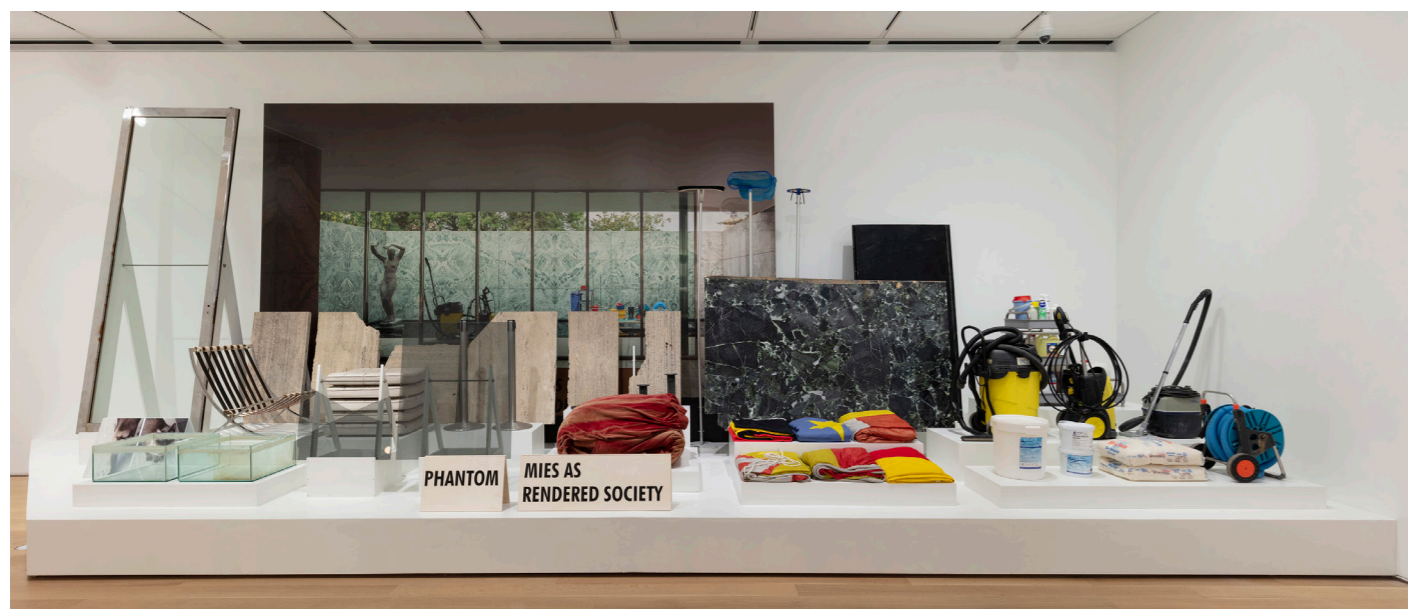


Figure 4: PHANTOM. Mies as Rendered Society. Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation, 2012–2017. Mixed media installation, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. Image credit: The Art Institute of Chicago / Art Resource, NY / Scala, Florence. 2026 © Photo Scala, Florence. With permission from Scala, Florence.

concept of *poché* becomes useful. Traditionally, *poché* refers to a drawing technique in which walls, residual zones, service areas, or solid parts of a building are shaded or filled in, allowing the primary spaces to stand out more clearly. It helps distinguish between the spaces that are made visible and those that remain in the background. In this sense, *poché* contributes to a perfected and idealised representation of the ground floor by placing functional or residual areas in the background, while allowing the more representative spaces to appear more clearly (Castellanos Gómez, 2012).

Institutional buildings often depend on a similar separation. Public spaces, ceremonial routes, and representative rooms are made visible and legible, while the systems that support them are concealed. Labour such as cleaning, maintenance, storage, administration, and technical infrastructure sustain the building and its appearance but is often hidden behind the perfect image. By excluding these processes from view, architecture constructs the impression of a space that functions effortlessly, where order appears natural and self-sustaining. The less visible the effort behind it, the more convincing and powerful the image becomes (Jaque, 2012).

In this sense, the absence of these systems is not neutral. Their invisibility reinforces the image of control and perfection, making the building appear more stable, autonomous, and powerful.

This dynamic is critically addressed in the project *PHANTOM. Mies as Rendered Society* by Andrés Jaque (2012). The project focuses on the Barcelona Pavilion by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, originally constructed for the 1929 International Exposition in Barcelona and later reconstructed as a museum space. Today, the pavilion presents a highly controlled and idealised architectural image to its visitors. Jaque's intervention disrupts this image by exposing the hidden systems

and forms of labour that sustain it. Instead of reinforcing the pavilion's perfection, the project reveals the technical infrastructure, maintenance processes, aged and no longer used materials, and human work that are usually concealed. By bringing these elements into visibility, the project challenges the notion of architecture as a self-contained and flawless object. It frames architecture as a continuous process shaped by both visible and invisible forces, while critiquing the perfected image through which architectural icons are often represented (Jaque, 2012).

Architecture can therefore be understood as a system that expresses power not only through what it makes visible, but also through what it pushes into the background. It guides behaviour through spatial organisation, makes authority visible through form and material presence, and hides the systems and labour that sustain its image. For this thesis, these mechanisms become tools of reading and intervening. Rather than treating architecture only as form, the project approaches it as a critical practice: one that can reveal, question, and challenge the visible and invisible structures that shape space.

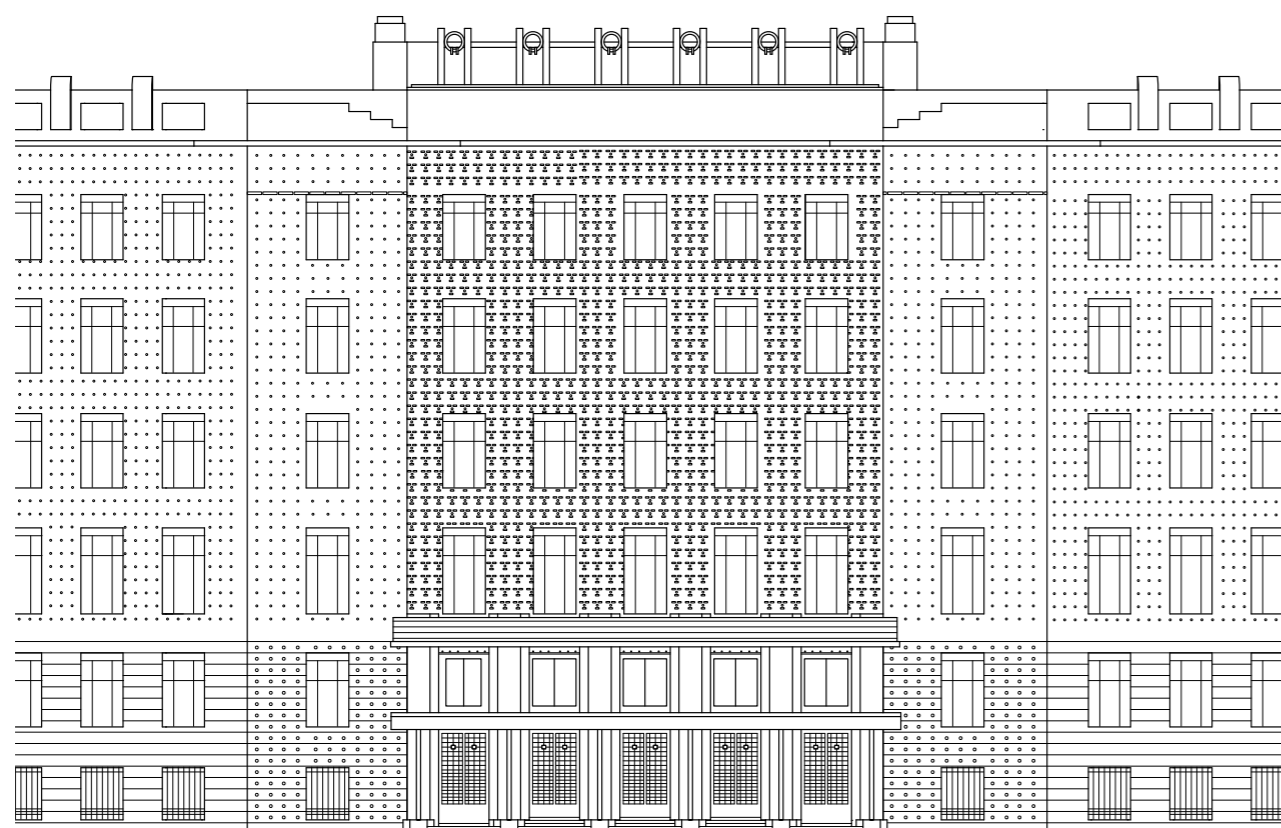


Figure 5: Line drawing of the main entrance facade of the Postsparkasse, Vienna.  
Author's drawing.

## BETWEEN POWER AND TRUST

Architecture has often been used by institutions to make their authority visible to the public. In institutional buildings, different social, political, religious, and economic forms of power are translated into spatial form. Institutions such as churches, parliaments, courts, and banks can therefore be understood as architectures through which power is not only located, but also made visible and spatially experienced. These buildings do more than provide shelter for institutional functions: they communicate power, hierarchy, legitimacy, and control (Dovey, 2018).

The bank occupies a distinct position within this lineage of institutional architecture. The bank occupies a distinct position within this lineage of institutional architecture. It does not only need to appear powerful, but also trustworthy enough for people to place their money, assets, and financial security in its care. As an institution concerned with money and economic stability, the bank depends on public confidence. This need for trust became especially visible after the financial crisis of 2008, which challenged public confidence in banking institutions (Carbo-Valverde, 2014). However, the role of architecture in producing trust is not limited to moments of crisis. Banks have long relied on spatial organisation, material expression, and legibility to present themselves as rational, reliable, and in control (Dovey, 2018).

Throughout history, the architectural language of banks has shifted, demonstrating that there is no single way of producing trust. While older bank buildings often relied on solidity, material weight, and "brick and mortar" (Parks, 2024) construction to suggest security. Later examples used transparency to produce trust through openness and visibility. Trust is therefore not tied to one specific architectural form, but can be produced through different spatial and material strategies (Parks, 2024).

This image is also shaped by the internal organisation of banks. As de Wit notes in his review of *Money Matters: A Critical Look at Bank Architecture* (1991), bank buildings often followed a recognisable spatial logic in which each banking function has its own clearly defined place. This legibility helped customers understand where to go and reinforced the impression of an institution that was orderly, competent, and in control. In many banks, even the vault was made visible upon entering, turning security itself into a spatial image of trust (de Wit, 1991). This idea of the visible vault should be kept in mind for the upcoming chapter.

Within the architectural typology of the bank, trust and power are closely intertwined. The same spatial and material qualities that make the institution appear powerful also make it appear trustworthy. Bank architecture therefore does not only represent economic power, but helps make this power appear reliable and secure (Dovey, 1999).

This complex relationship becomes the entry point for reading the Postsparkasse in Vienna, which will serve as the thesis's central case study. Here, power is expressed less through conventional monumentality than through precision, rational organisation, material clarity, visible security, and spatial legibility.



Figure 6: Main entrance of the Postsparkasse.  
Author's photograph.

## POSTSPARKASSE

The Postsparkasse is one of Austria's best-known works of early modern architecture, due to both its architectural significance and the innovative character it represented when it was built. Beyond its architecture, its location is particularly relevant for this thesis: The building is situated on Vienna's Ringstraße, a representational boulevard surrounding the first district, the historic center of the city. This street is lined with many monumental buildings, including the State Opera, Parliament, Hofburg Palace and City Hall. As part of this corridor of civic and imperial representation, the bank participates in a public language of authority and power.

### Relevance

This thesis uses the Postsparkasse as a case study as the building contains highly articulated architectural manifestations of institutional power. Values such as authority, hierarchy, credibility, and control become spatially legible through form, materials, and choreographed movement. It is particularly suitable for this thesis as it was originally designed as a bank, yet no longer functions as one today. Although its program has changed into a public informal one, the institutional atmosphere remains strongly perceptible when entering and moving through the building. This persistence makes the Postsparkasse an ideal site for examining how a historically charged institutional body can be reinterpreted for contemporary use without erasing its past.

Rather than analyzing the entire building, the thesis focuses on the most public and accessible areas, where the bank originally addressed its customers most directly. The focus therefore lies on the axial sequence from the main entrance to the large cashier hall. These spaces form the public core of the building and provide the clearest setting for examining thresholds, transitional zones, and the friction between preservation and new routines.

### Historical Background

Despite its prestigious location, the Postsparkasse was originally established as a bank for the lower classes in 1883. One of its first buildings was located on the former site of the Franz-Joseph-Kaserne, but after 1902 the institution required more space. To find an architect, a design competition was announced (75 Jahre Österreichische Postsparkasse, 1958). With his revolutionary modern approach, Otto Wagner won the competition with 10 out of 12 votes, defeating competitors who had proposed historicist designs. The building was constructed between 1904 and 1912 (Graf, 1994).

### Representation and Facade

Despite the building's restrained, and highly functional appearance, it still communicates power, stability, authority, and trust. Symmetry plays a central role in this effect. It structures the façade, the entrance sequence, and the cashier hall, creating a sense of order and institutional control. As Stix (2019) notes, the central risalit is staged like a ceremonial entrance, with five doors beneath a glazed aluminium canopy, followed vertically by entrance hall windows and the balcony of the director's rooms. This repeated five-part order gives the façade a controlled rhythm and strengthens the building's institutional presence (Stix, 2019).

One of the most distinctive elements of the facade is the visible iron rivets that give the building a monumental appearance. This image evokes associations with an iron-bound treasure chest, suggesting that the valuables inside are securely protected. In this way, the facade communicates security, stability, and reliability. However, what appears today as ornament was originally functional: the rivets held the marble plates in place while the mortar dried (Tomaselli & Hasler, 2019).

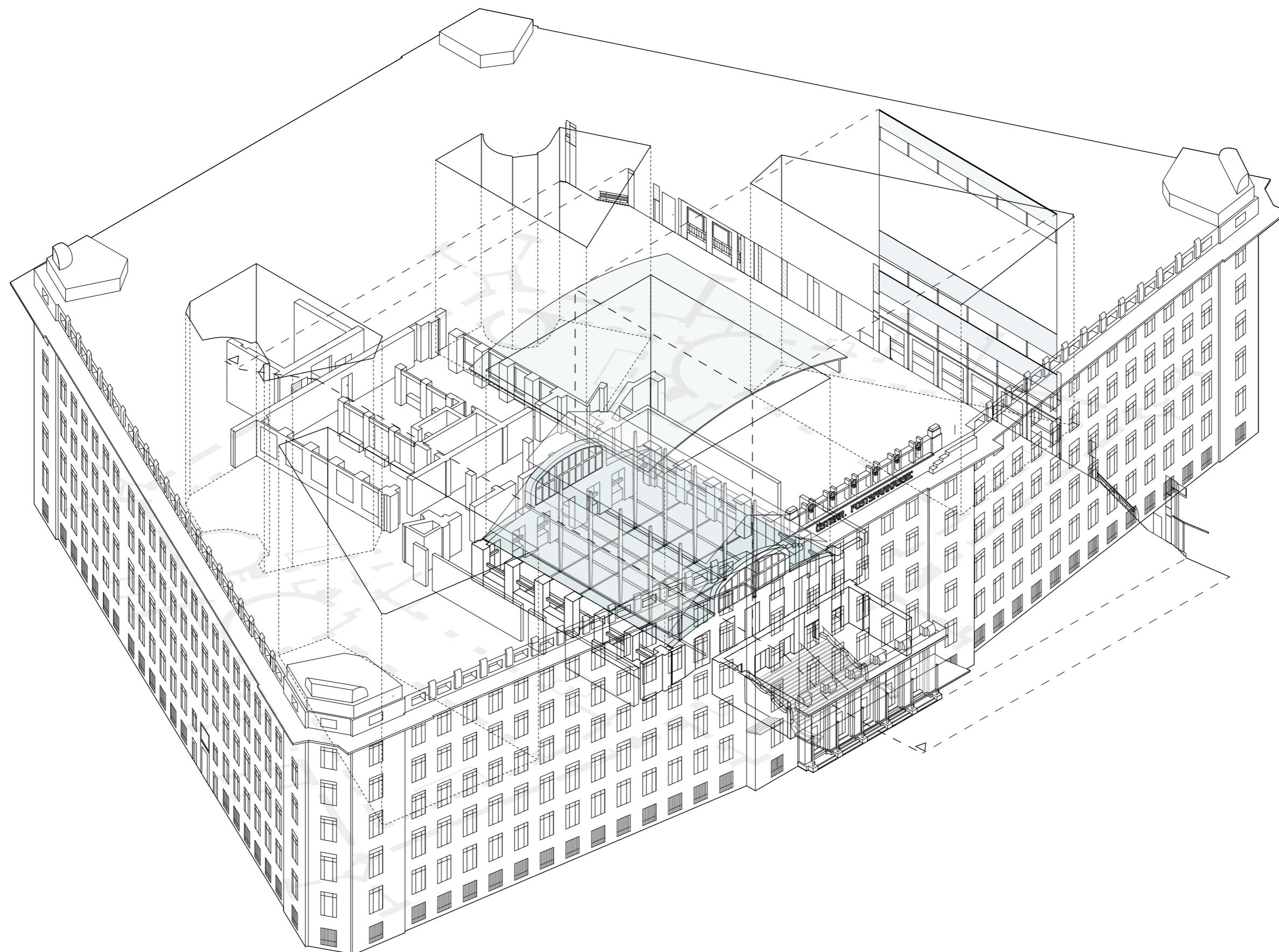


Figure 7: Axonometrie of Postsparkasse with focus areas:staircase and grand cashier hall.  
Author's drawing.

This detail reflects Wagner's strategy of remaining truthful to materials and construction. Throughout the building, technical and structural elements are deliberately visible. Ventilation systems and structural components are openly displayed, allowing the building to reveal how it operates. In the context of a bank, this exposure becomes a message of honesty, precision, reliability, and transparency.

#### The Grand Entrance

Upon entering through the large doors, visitors are greeted by a grand staircase. To the left stands a statue of the former Austrian emperor, overlooking the entrance area. As one ascends, three doors come into view. This first sequence turns arrival into a deliberate, almost ceremonial gesture.

This sense of control is further produced through spatial depth. Traditionally, centers of power were often located deep within a building, while visitors remained limited to shallower areas. The number of spaces one had to cross could therefore indicate status, access, and institutional hierarchy (Dovey, 1999).

This principle of spatial depth is also apparent in the Postsparkasse. After passing through the three entrance doors, visitors encounter another sequence of thresholds. Six additional doors frame the transition from the corridor into the large cashier hall. The corridor and doors guide the body through the building, while also introducing moments of hesitation. Visitors are confronted with several thresholds, requiring them to decide whether to enter not once, not twice, but three times.

#### The Grand Cashier Hall

Beyond this sequence lies the large cashier hall, a spacious interior flooded with daylight from a glass roof. Wagner created a bright and architecturally impressive room that communicates openness and transparency. This operational transparency suggests that the bank has nothing to hide

and is willing to make its processes visible, thereby generating trust (Grzonka, 2024). Yet this openness is carefully controlled. The hall was not designed for lingering, but for efficiency and the rapid processing of clients. A grid pattern in the floor subtly directs movement and supports orderly circulation. Within the hall, controlled visibility was reinforced by a small observation structure. According to Neumayr (personal communication, February 2026), a bank employee was originally stationed inside this small "house," from which the hall could be overseen, functioning almost like a Panopticon. This reveals that transparency served not only to communicate openness and trust, but also to enable surveillance and control.

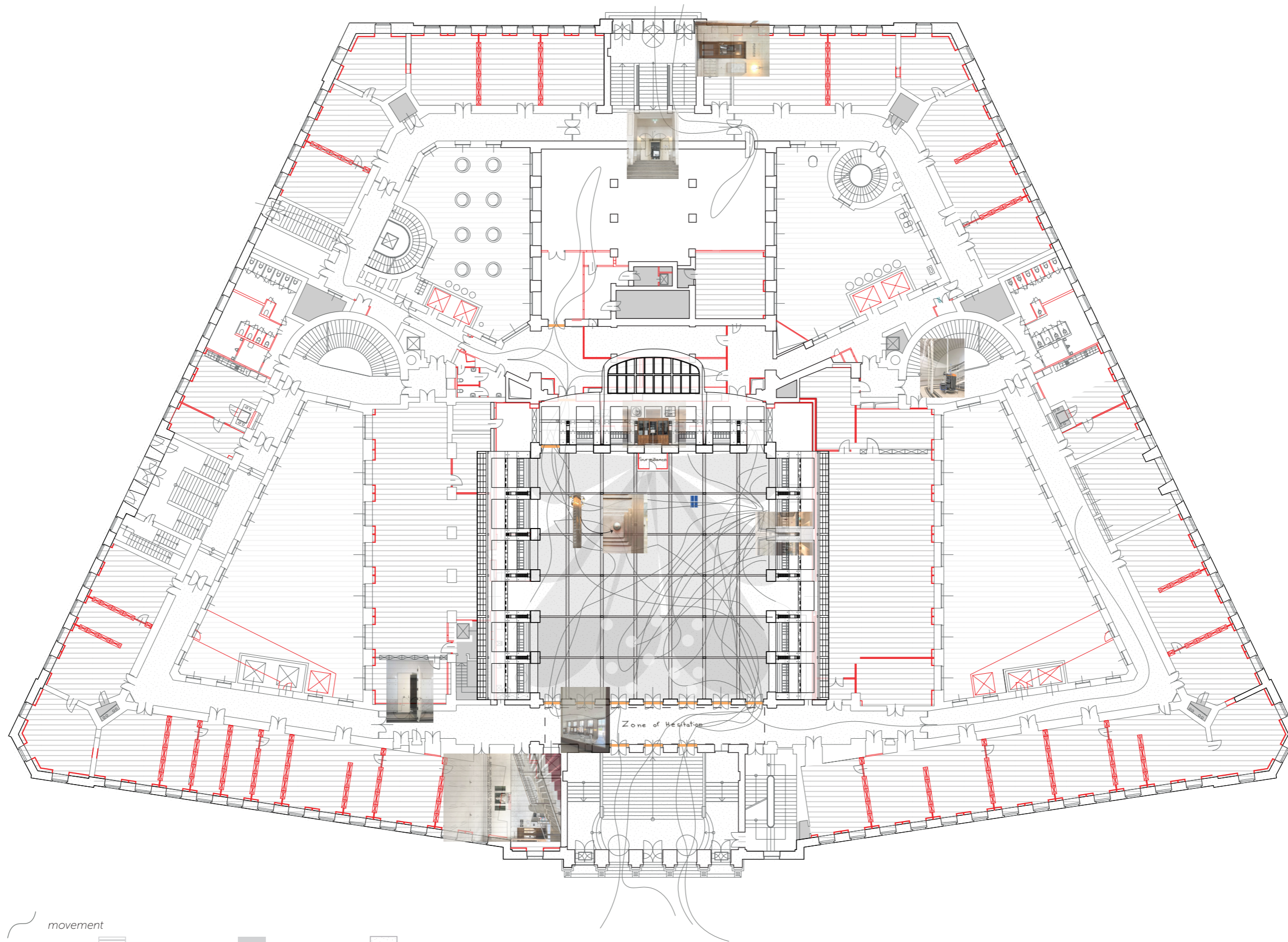
#### Trust Devices and Hierarchy

Trust is further reinforced through visible signs of security and hierarchy. Immediately upon entering, the vault door can be seen to the left, sending a clear message that money is kept safe within the institution. Hierarchy is also expressed through materials and furniture: oak was used on the first floor, where the director's offices were located, while cheaper wood on the upper floors was used but painted to resemble oak. Wagner also designed chairs whose height corresponded to the rank of the person using them (Secessions, n.d.).

Reliability therefore becomes a central theme throughout the building. By making selected materials, construction methods, and technical systems visible, the Postsparkasse suggests honesty, order, and stability, transferring these qualities onto the institution itself (Grzonka, 2024). However, this transparency does not dissolve institutional power, rather it constructs an idealized image: it reveals selected elements while concealing others. In the Postsparkasse, transparency stages openness and produces trust, while hierarchy, control, and authority remain active.



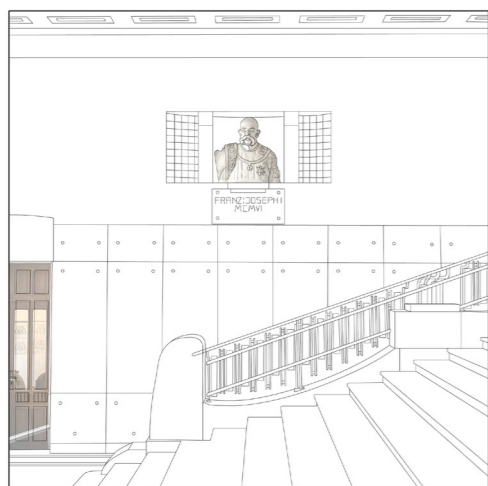
Figure 8: Entrance area with generous staircase, emperor statue and porter door on the left. Author's photograph.



— thresholds    movement  
— changes during renovation    non public areas    technical areas    strict heritage protection

Figure 9: Mezzaninefloor Postsparkasse. Mapping of Power-Traces, Movement of People, changes during renovation and protected areas. Renovation changes are based on Hoppe und Partner's plans. Author's drawing.

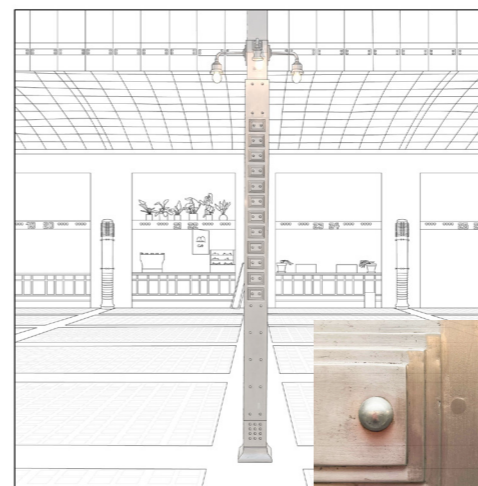
## TRACES OF POWER



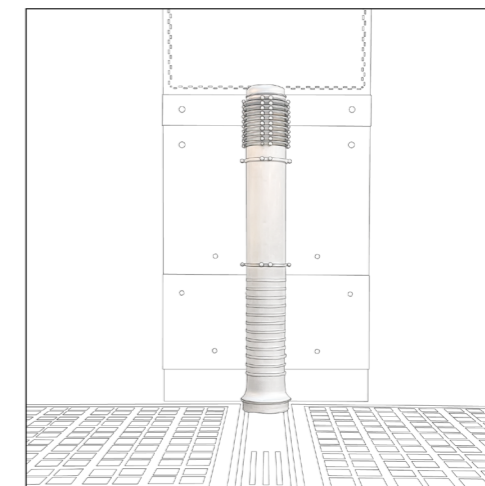
Entrance area: The statue looks over the space, while the monumental staircase and the porter door on the left makes arrival feel both controlled and ceremonial.



Small house in the cashier hall: A former surveillance point from which the bank could oversee its clients



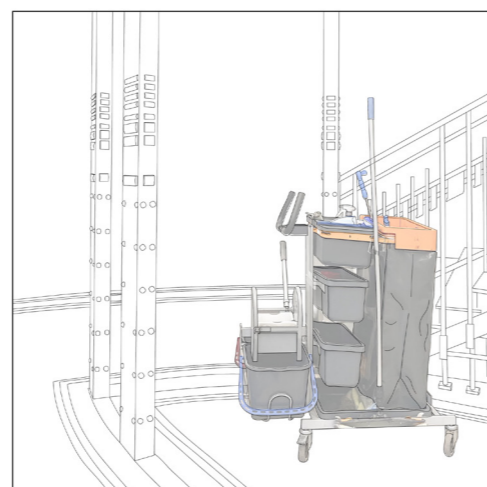
Column detail: Here, Wagner's strategy of revealing construction is interrupted. The visible nail is ornamental, while the actual structural connection remains concealed.



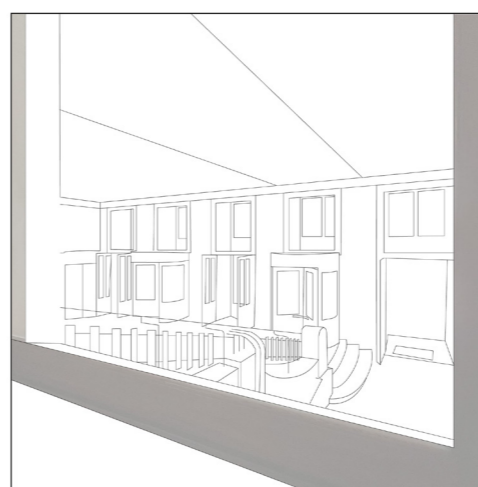
Ventilation shafts in grand cashier hall: Openly displayed rather than concealed, suggesting transparency and reliability.



Vault door: One of the first things seen when entering (to the left of the doors to the cashier hall) it communicates trust by visibly suggesting that money is kept safe



Cleaning supplies: Seen in a less public area of the building, keeping maintenance work out of sight.



Corridor window: positioned to overlook the entrance, it enables visual control over who enters the building.



Vault door 2: positioned at the entrance to the small cashier hall. Also communicates trust by visibly suggesting that money is kept safe.

Figure 10-17: Traces of Power. Author's collages.

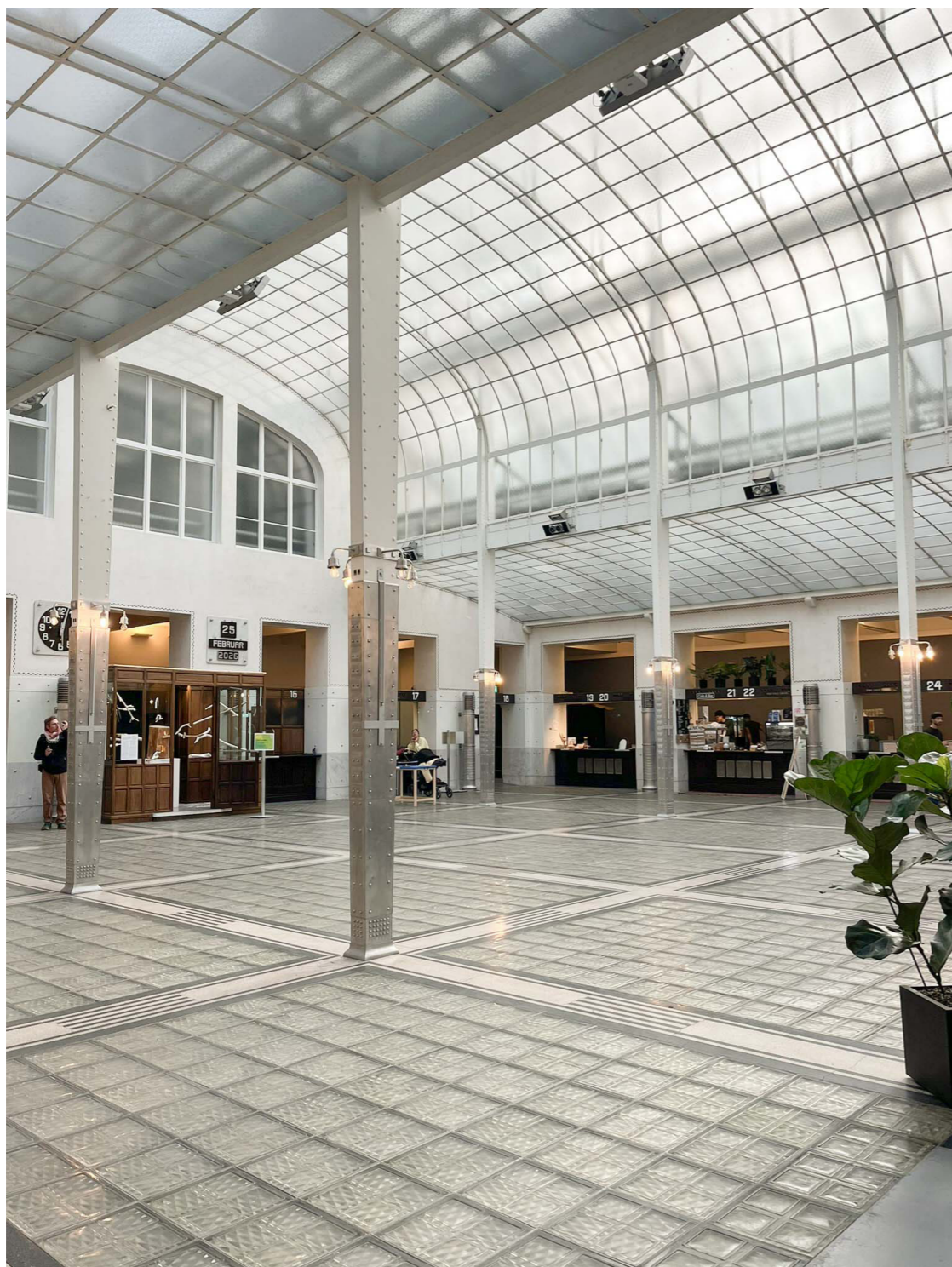


Figure 18: Grand Cashier hall looking to left side from same position, same time 12:26. Looking at former counters, small (observation) house and the café counter. Author's photograph.



Figure 19: Grande Cashier hall looking to the right side from same position, same time 12:26. Looking at the entrance to the cashier hall and the seating area of the Café Exchange. Author's photograph.

### Renovation

The architectural firm Hoppe und Partner was commissioned in 2003 to carry out the renovation works of the Postsparkasse. As Neumayr stated in the interview (R. Neumayr, personal communication, Vienna, February 27 2026), particular care was taken to preserve the original architectural idea. For this reason, most of the work focused on returning the building as closely as possible to its original state. The renovation works, which continued until 2016, therefore mainly involved reversing the changes made in the 1970s. This included removing suspended ceilings, upgrading technical systems, and inserting new walls in the office areas (see Figure 10, changes are in red).

One major new intervention, however, was the construction of a new glass roof above the atrium and above the existing glass roof of the large cashier hall. The reason for this was to protect the cashier hall, as the old roof had been leaking. In the large cashier hall, the space was restored to its original condition, with the exception of the counters, which could not be returned to their original state (R. Neumayr, personal communication Vienna, February 27, 2026). More information about the interview can be found in the appendix. After this renovation, the building remained in use as a bank for one more year. One other Renovation was conducted from 2020-2023, which focused on the creation of internal escape staircases (Kastner, 2024).

### Reuse-Today

Today, the building no longer functions as a bank and has been opened to the public. Large parts of the complex are now occupied by institutions of the University of Vienna. Within the core of the building, the grand cashier hall, a new informal use has emerged: the "Café Exchange".

Despite this shift, the fabric of the building has remained largely untouched (R. Neumayr, personal communication, February 27, 2026). The new use therefore adapts to the existing structure, rather than the architecture responding to new conditions. This approach reflects the logic of the renovations undertaken between 2003 and 2016, which prioritized the preservation of Otto Wagner's original vision. Consequently, the building has never fully shed its institutional character. Its spatial clarity, material precision, and carefully choreographed sequences continue to convey authority and control.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the grand cashier hall, where informal public use intersects with the center piece of preserved institutional order. Here, a clear tension emerges: between past and present, formality and informality, control and appropriation. The building was designed for a different type of institution, a different rhythm of use, and different priorities than those of contemporary public life. As long as the architectural fabric remains largely untouched, this tension persists. Within this thesis, this tension becomes a starting point, revealing the limitations of the existing structure and opening possibilities for more informal ways of inhabiting space. The aim is therefore not to erase the building's institutional manifestations, but to make them readable and place them in dialogue with new, more open forms of use.



Figure 20: Café counter in the grand cashier hall.  
Author's Photograph



Figure 21: Negative model of the grand cashier hall, visualizing the space of the visitor and the spatial sequences. Author's model.

## METHOD

The thesis began with an interest in how architecture organises movement, behaviour, and experience, and gradually developed into an investigation of architecture as a highly articulated expression of power. Through theoretical research, institutions, and more specifically the institution of the bank, emerged as a relevant typology. Building on the previous analysis, the Postsparkasse was used as a case study through which institutional spatial structures could be examined and reworked.

The design process began with the drawing and modelling of historical records, translating textual and documentary material into spatial representations. This included the production of a negative model, which was used to examine the grand cashier hall through its voids, spatial sequences, and patterns of movement. In this way, design is approached as a method for working with, interpreting, and questioning both archival material and the building itself. Research and design were therefore practised simultaneously, each continuously informing the other throughout the process.

On-site research was conducted to experience the building directly through photography, observation of use, and the mapping of movement patterns in situ. Additional insights were gathered through an interview with Robert Neumayr, the architect responsible for the building's renovation between 2003 and 2016 (R. Neumayr, personal communication, February 27, 2026). The interview can be found in the appendix.

Desk research and on-site research informed the design process in parallel. Ideas initiated through research were developed further during the site visit, while new questions, tensions, and potentials emerged on site. Throughout the process, the design was informed by theoretical research, precedent studies, spatial analysis, and speculative thinking.

The design proposal develops from these findings. Rather than treating design only as a final solution, the thesis uses it as an investigative tool to test how the building's existing spatial scripts can be questioned, disturbed, and reworked. Through drawings, models, and spatial interventions, the project explores how the Postsparkasse might support more informal public use while keeping its historical identity visible.

## DESIGN

The design responds to the current condition of the Postsparkasse, where the building's former institutional role is still strongly present, while new public and informal uses have already begun to enter its spaces. The existing order of the former bank is still visible, but it is no longer the only way in which the building is used or experienced. The design takes this tension as its starting point and introduces a new layer of time, use, and occupation.

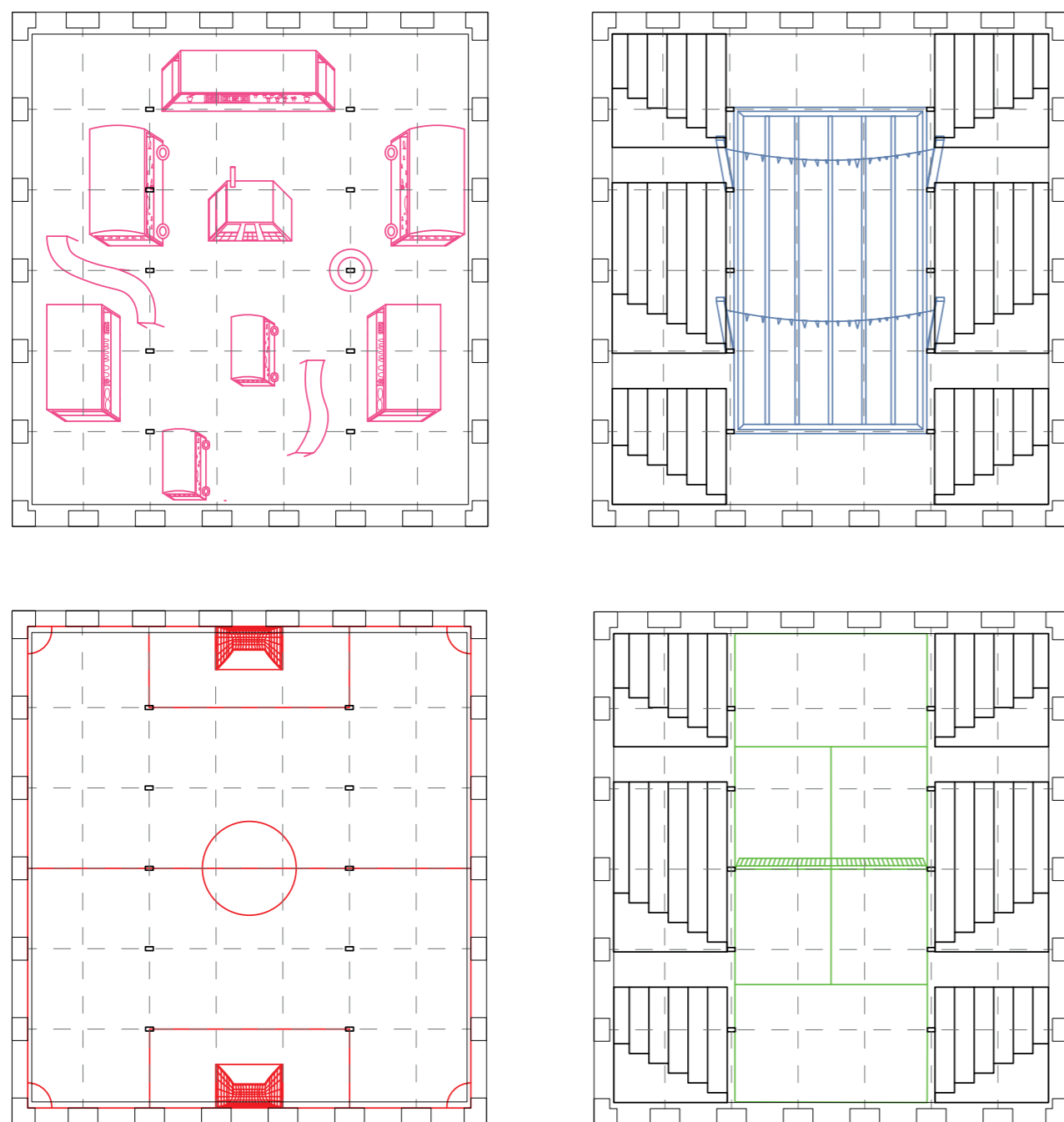
This new layer acts as a tool that enables people to inhabit the space more freely and appropriate it for themselves, in ways that were not originally intended for the building of a former bank. It does not attempt to erase the institutional character of the Postsparkasse or remove its manifestations of power. Rather, it places a new informal layer in dialogue with them. The existing order remains visible, but it is confronted with new possibilities for inhabiting, appropriating, and using the space differently.

The design approach is both respectful and radical. It is respectful in the way it takes the existing building seriously and avoids irreversible damage to its historic substance. At the same time, it is radical in the way it questions the spatial order the building produces. The project does not treat the Postsparkasse as untouchable, but as a space that can be re-read, re-used, and reconfigured.

To guide the design process, the following principles were established:

1. The new layer should remain clearly recognisable as a contemporary addition.
2. The new layer/ intervention should engage with the existing built form in a manner that is both respectful and critically reflective.
3. The intervention should actively challenge the symmetry, hierarchy and order embedded within the building.
4. New elements should generally remain reversible and removable.
5. Direct alterations to the existing structure must be conceptually grounded and respond to manifestations of power within the building.

In this sense, the project does not try to neutralise the Postsparkasse. Instead, it keeps the existing order readable while allowing new forms of public and informal use to emerge alongside it. The project is therefore respectful in its treatment of the existing substance, but radical in its attempt to question, disturb, and reconfigure the spatial order of the former bank. These principles form the basis for the following programme and concept, in which the new layer is developed as a spatial, material, and programmatic strategy.



Figures 22 - 25: Early sketches of programme studies exploring possible uses within the cashier hall. Author's drawing.

## PROGRAMME

The programme developed through this thesis builds on the Postsparkasse's ongoing transition toward more public use. Rather than assigning the hall a single fixed function, it proposes a flexible spatial framework for everyday activities, different users, and changing situations.

This approach strengthens the open and communal use (café exchange) already emerging within the building, by giving them greater spatial presence. At the same time, it challenges the institutional hierarchies, thresholds, and codes embedded in the architecture. Following the example of *Folkehuset Absalon* in Copenhagen, the hall is imagined as an urban living room.

### Folkehuset Absalon

Located in a former church, *Folkehuset Absalon* functions as a community space that welcomes people of different ages and backgrounds. It hosts everyday activities such as communal dinners, games, workshops, movement classes, talks, concerts, markets, and events. As Absalon describes itself: "Think of Absalon as an extension of your own living room, filled with friends, table tennis, music, film, bingo, food, dance, coffee, chess, yoga, markets, parties, talks and everything in between" (Folkehuset Absalon, n.d.).

The activity categories offered at *Folkehuset Absalon* served as references for defining the programme of this project. For the Postsparkasse, they were grouped into broader spatial categories that help define what qualities the elements of the intervention, need to support. The following concept explains how this programmatic intention is translated into a design strategy across different scales.

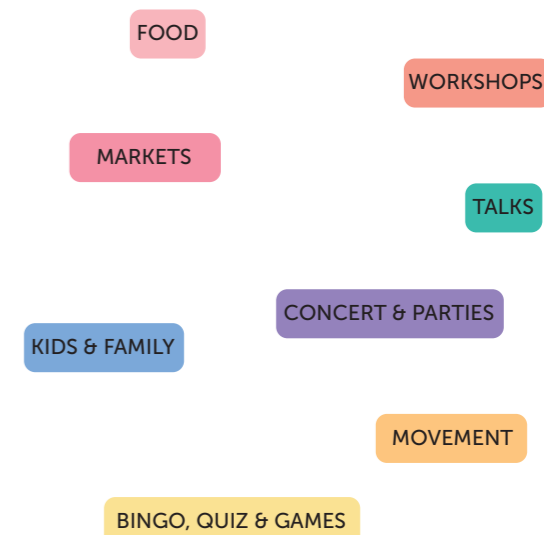


Figure 26: Focus categories of activities at Folkehuset Absalon. Author's drawing, icons drawn by the author, with colours and visual appearance based on Folkehuset Absalon's website.



Figure 27: Reconversion Planning, "Attrezzature urbane per la collettività". Ugo La Pietra, 1979. Reinterpretation of a cabinet as a shower. Courtesy of Archivio Ugo La Pietra, Milan.

## DESIGN CONCEPT: WORKING ACROSS SCALES

The concept begins with the question of how a building shaped by institutional power can be opened up to more informal and public forms of use. The Postsparkasse is strongly defined by symmetry, hierarchy, repetition, and material precision. These qualities are not removed or hidden in the project. Instead, they become the background against which a new, more open layer can appear.

Two references helped to define the attitude of this new layer: Enzo Mari's *Autoprogettazione* (2002) and Ugo La Pietra's *Attrezzature urbane per la collettività* (1979). They were used as references for questions of use, construction, and appropriation.

Enzo Mari's *Autoprogettazione* (2002) proposes furniture that can be built by people themselves through simple instructions and direct construction principles. For this thesis, Mari's work became important because of its rough but clear way of making. The furniture is assembled from ordinary wooden boards and shows the logic of its own construction. This creates a contrast to the clean, precise, and controlled material language of the Postsparkasse.

Ugo La Pietra's *Attrezzature urbane per la collettività* (1979) became important for its playful appropriation of public space. Existing urban elements are transformed into new situations of use: a construction site becomes a playscape, a found cabinet becomes a shower, and two poles become fixing points for a hammock. This attitude of taking over and reinterpreting space felt relevant for the strict order of the former bank.

From these references, both playful appropriation and a more radical approach became important design attitudes: working with what is already there, while transforming it through new uses, forms, and materials.

From this attitude, the intervention was developed across three scales: the large scale, the medium scale, and the small scale.

The large scale addresses the spatial order of the hall through a new grid. The medium scale translates this spatial logic into modules and possible forms of use. Materiality forms a link between the medium and small scale: it shapes how the modules are read, while also connecting them to details, joints, and material associations of the existing building. The small scale focuses on selected details of the Postsparkasse and explores how they can be reconfigured into new uses and combined with the modules to establish a direct connection to the existing building.

The following chapters move through these scales, beginning with the large scale.



Figure 28: Sedia 1 Chair. Enzo Mari, designed 1974. Untreated pine and nails, 83.9 x 50.2 x 53.4 cm. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. Gift of Artek, 2017.415.1. Image credit: The Art Institute of Chicago / Art Resource, NY / Scala, Florence. 2026 © Photo Scala, Florence. With permission from Scala, Florence.

## LARGE SCALE: SPATIAL ORDER AND GRID

On the large scale, the main aim is to work against the existing order of the Postsparkasse. The grand cashier hall is strongly defined by symmetry, axes, repetition, and a clear structural rhythm. Rather than ignoring this order, the project uses it as a starting point.

The new grid is generated from existing conditions in the hall. One direction follows diagonal relationships between the existing columns, while the other responds to the threshold through which people enter and move around (Figure 29). At the intersection points of this grid, circles are placed (Figure 30). Besides rectangles and squares, circles are one of the primary geometric forms of the cashier hall and therefore form an essential part of its formal language.

The new forms are developed through the intersections between these geometries. Whole and formal shapes are cut, overlapped, and recombined into more informal and playful forms (Figure 31 + 32). In this way, the intervention emerges from the building's existing geometries, but transforms them in order to question the hall's symmetry and order.

The grid does not replace the original order, but introduces another spatial logic within it. Through the new grid, new positions and forms emerge. The modules that grow from these forms are therefore not placed randomly, but are generated through a direct engagement with the building's existing order through the new grid. At the same time they positioning themselves against the old order.

This spatial strategy forms the basis for the modules, which translate the new grid into usable elements for public and informal occupation.

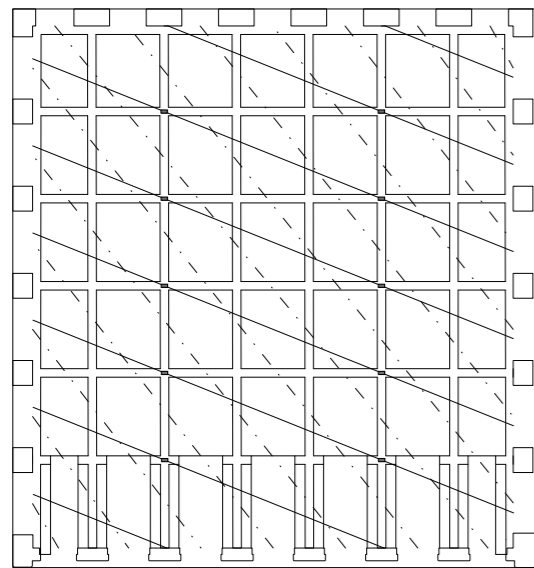


Figure 29: Establishment of the new grid layer. One direction is derived from the central columns, while the other emerges from the thresholds through which visitors move. Author's drawing.

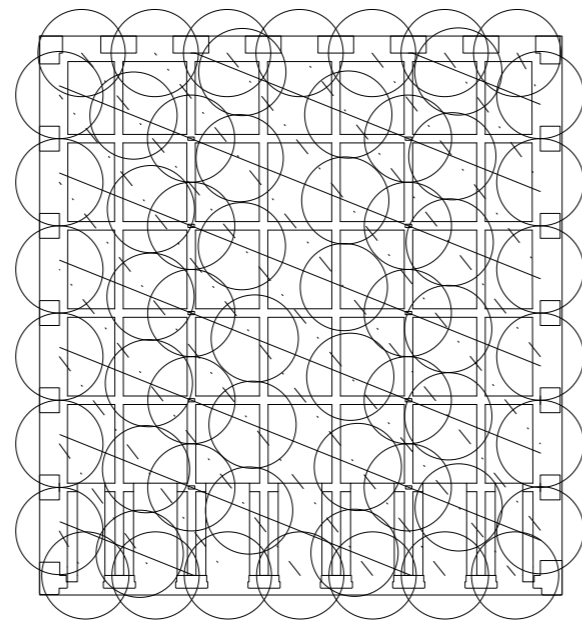


Figure 30: Circles are placed on the intersection points and at origin points of the grid. Author's drawing.

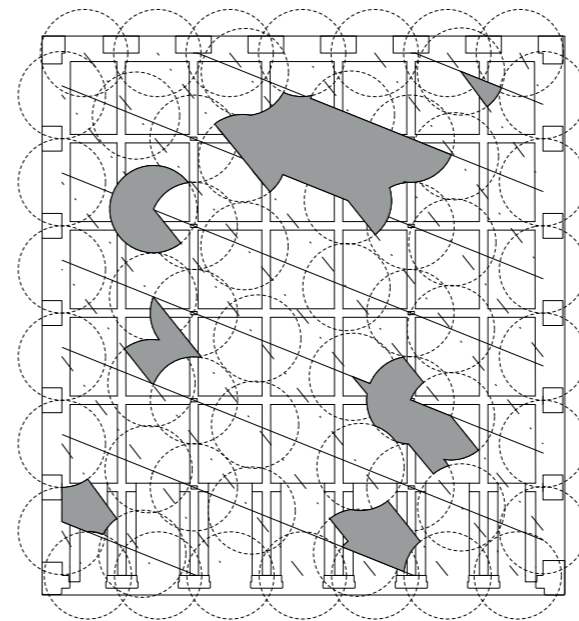


Figure 31: Forms emerge from intersections of lines and circles of the new grid-layer. Author's drawing

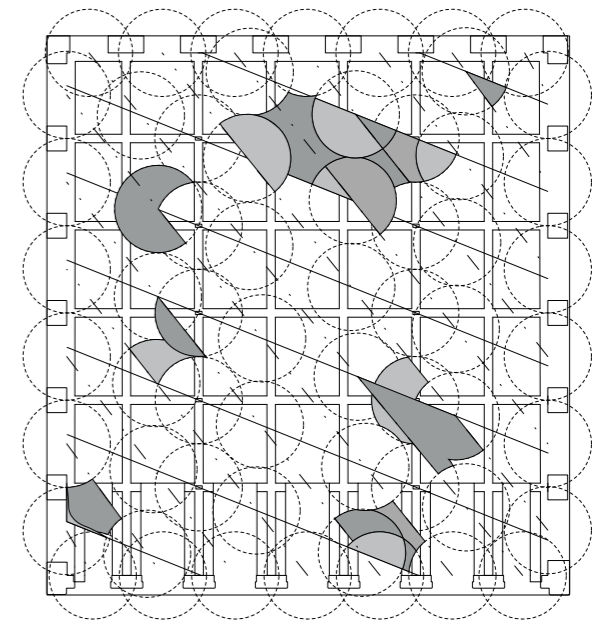


Figure 32: Within the generated forms, subdivisions are established using the same new grid layer. Author's drawing

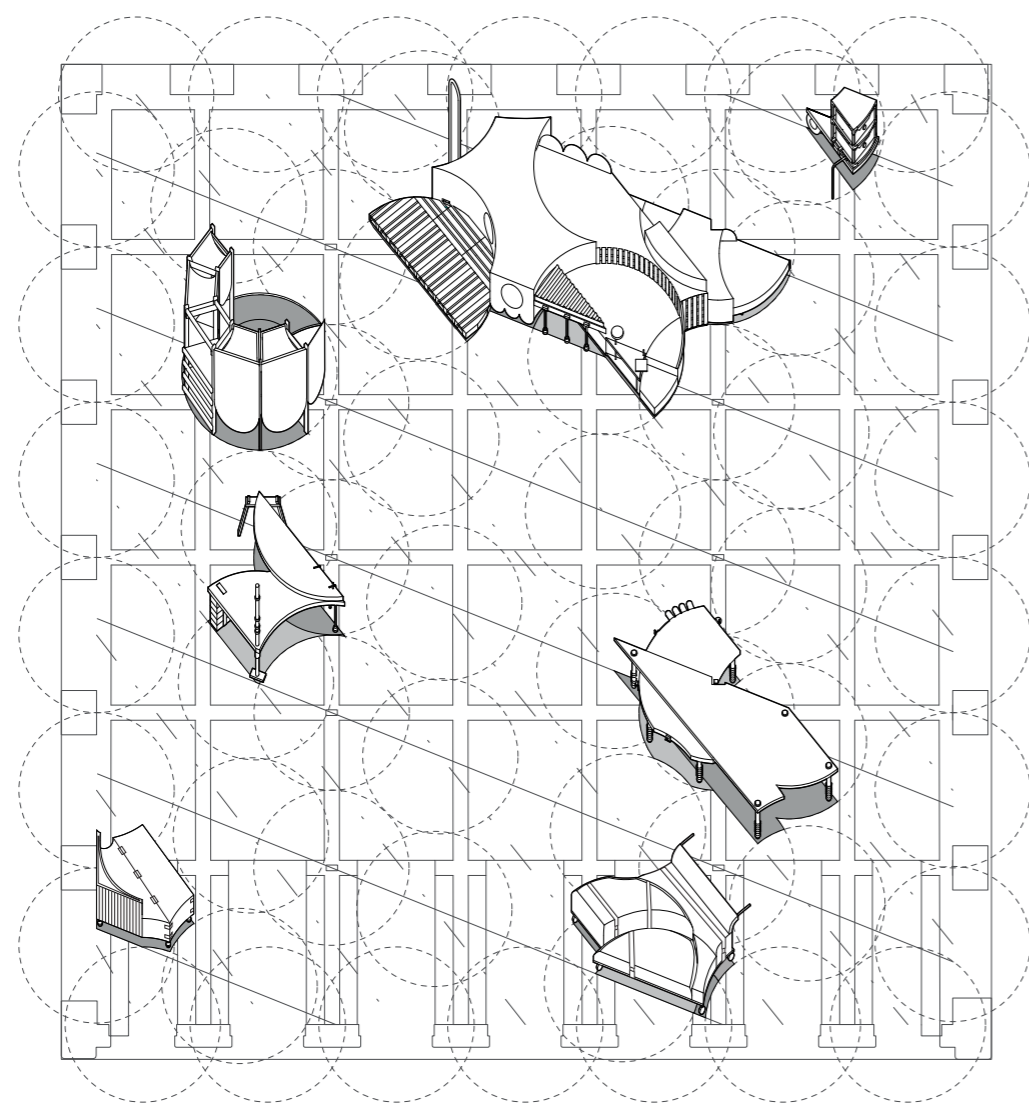


Figure 33: Translation of grid-based two-dimensional forms into three-dimensional modules.  
Author's drawing.

## MEDIUM SCALE: MODULES

Building on the activity categories derived from Folkehuset Absalon, the module design translates the programme into a set of spatial conditions for the cashier hall. Rather than defining fixed rooms, the proposal identifies recurring requirements: open areas for collective events, platforms for performances or talks, tables and working surfaces for workshops and communal dinners, play elements for children, seating for resting and gathering, and storage for movable furniture and materials. Together, these elements support the idea of the cashier hall as an urban living room: a space that can shift between openness, activity, and informal occupation.

From this translation, six spatial groups are extracted: open space, stage, play zone, seating, tables, and storage. These groups do not define separate rooms, but describe the spatial qualities needed to activate the hall while keeping its openness present.

In the next step, these groups were positioned within the cashier hall in response to the existing architecture, the entrances, columns, movement, visibility, and already existing informal uses. Some areas are kept open for circulation, movement, concerts, or larger events, while others support more specific activities such as eating, working, playing, or resting.

### Fixed or movable?

A central question in the development of the modules was whether they should be fixed or movable. Since the forms of the modules emerge from the new grid layer, they are connected to the specific geometry of the hall. However, making all elements fully fixed would risk turning the intervention into another controlled and institutional layer. Additionally, some uses require open space. For this reason, selected modules remain movable. Especially seating and storage modules can be shifted, rolled, or temporarily moved to other parts of the building.

A module moved out of the cashier hall can temporarily activate another space and create a new relationship and dialogue between the historical building and the contemporary addition. This creates an in-between condition. The modules are placed in relation to the existing architecture, but they are not all completely fixed in their use or position. They support different activities, while also allowing appropriation by users.

### Materiality

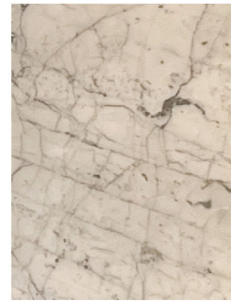
When the two-dimensional forms were developed into three-dimensional modules, the question of materiality became important. As introduced in the design concept, materiality forms a link between the medium and small scale: it shapes how the modules are read, while also connecting them to details, joints, and material associations of the existing building.

The project works with a material vocabulary that moves between connection and contrast. On one hand, it draws from materials already present in the Postsparkasse, such as aluminium, glass, and marble. On the other hand, it introduces materials associated with informality, softness, and everyday use. Rather than choosing one material logic over the other, the proposal combines both. This challenges the boundary between formality and informality, while maintaining a clear relationship to the existing building.

The following pages present this material vocabulary and show how it is applied to the individual modules.

MATERIAL VOCABULARY POSTSPARKASSE

Figure 34: Author's photographs



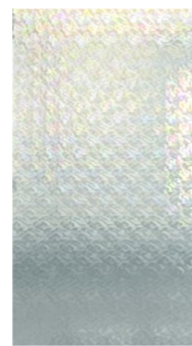
Marble



Aluminum



Terrazzo



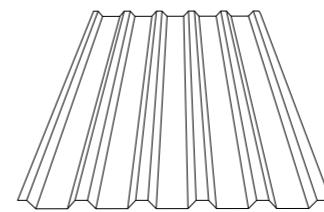
Glas



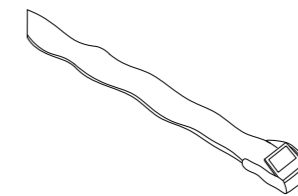
Wood

SPECULATIONS ON INFORMAL MATERIAL AND ASSEMBLY

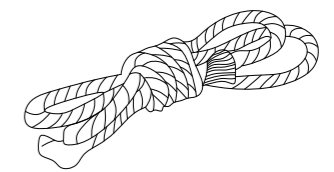
Figure 35: Author's drawings.



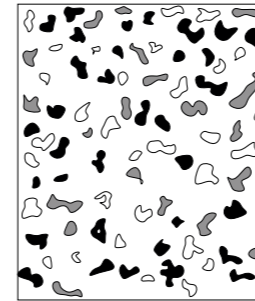
Corrugated Metal Sheet



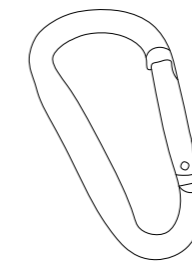
Tension Strap



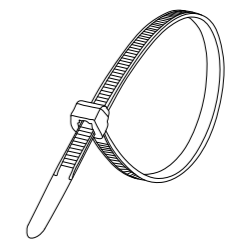
Rope



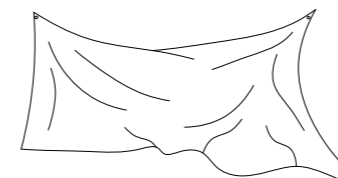
Reconstituted Foam



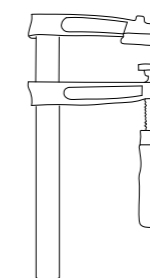
Carbine



Cable Tie



Fabric



Clamp



Particle Wood

MODULES - with materials

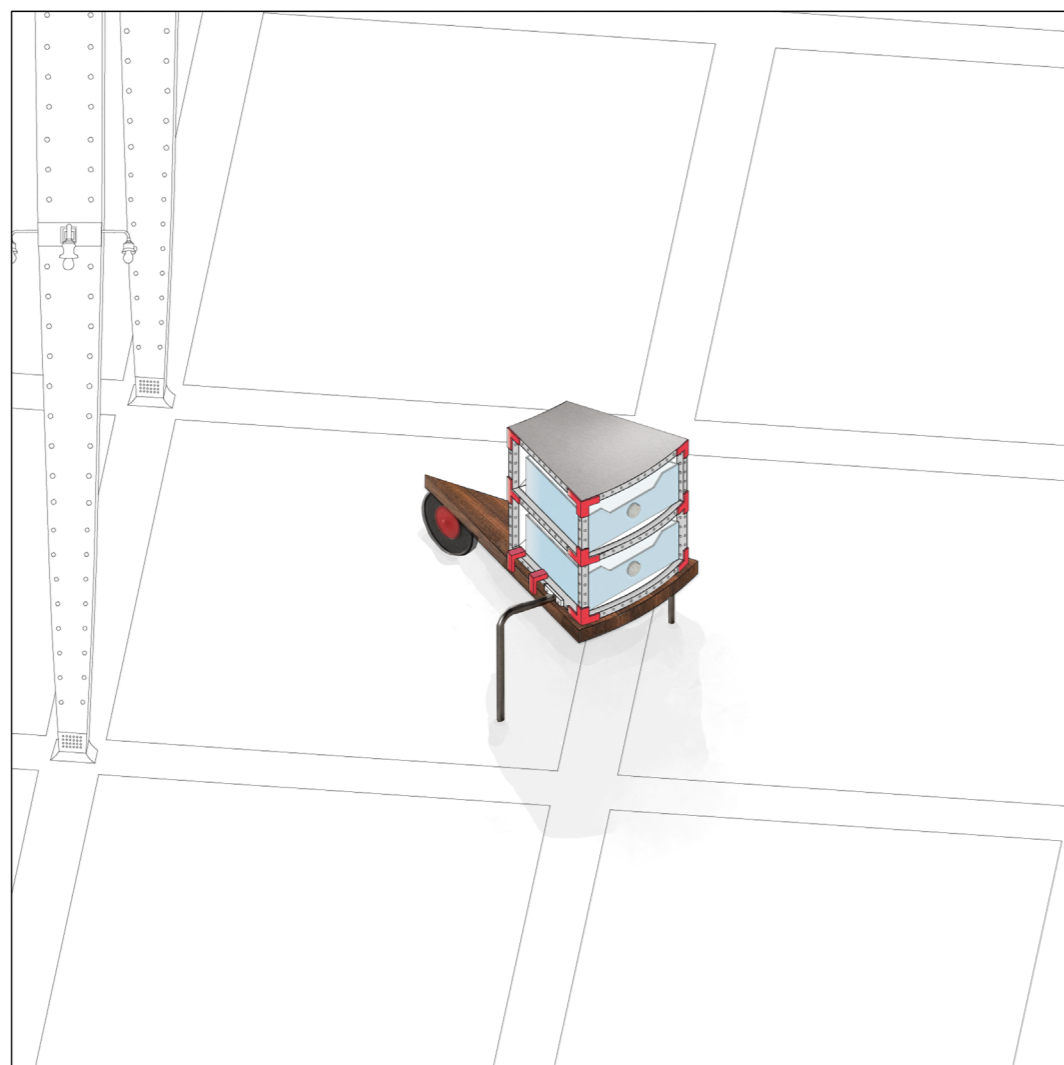


Figure 36: Storage Module 1. Designed to fit beside Table 1 within the triangular space. Movable. Author's drawing.

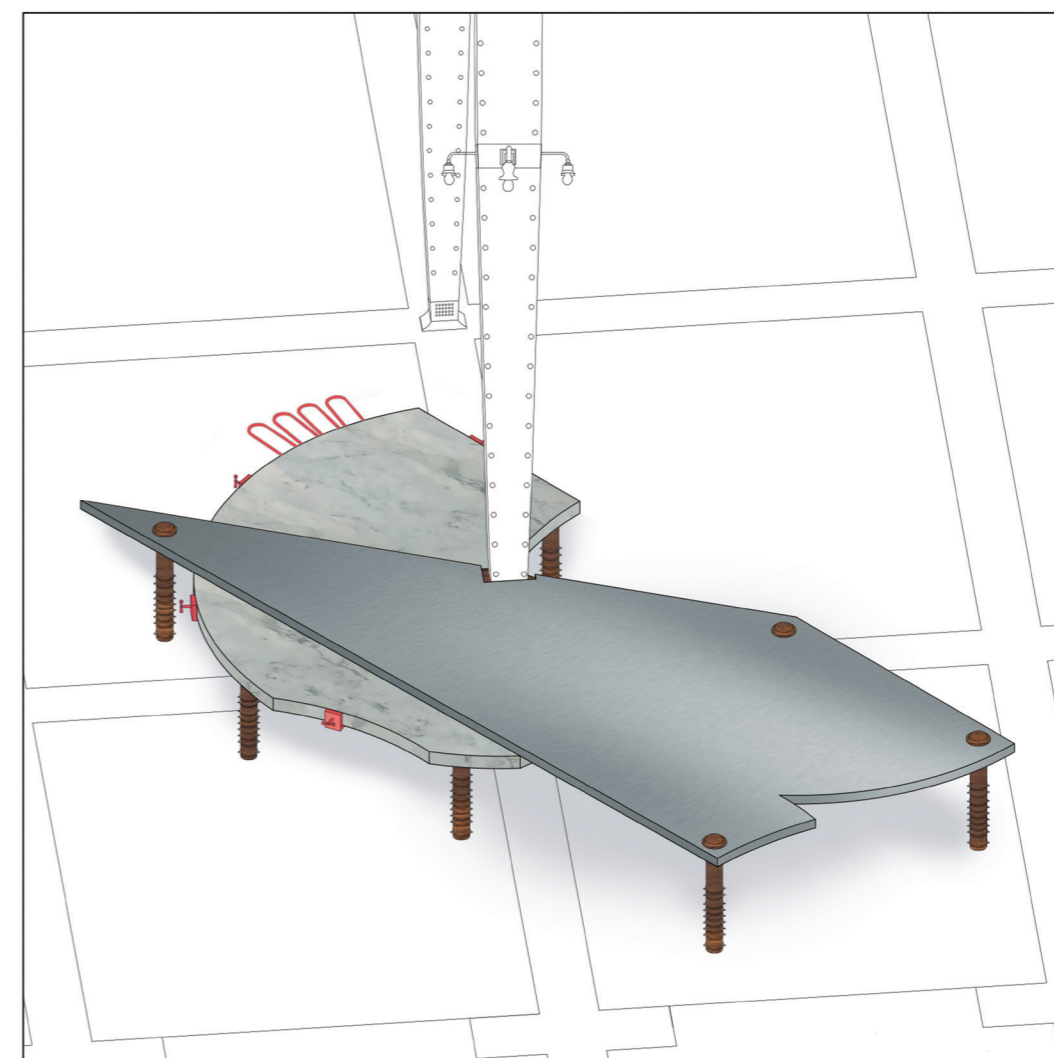


Figure 37: Table 1 with Details 2 and 3. The module is fixed to the column and is therefore hardly movable. Author's drawing.

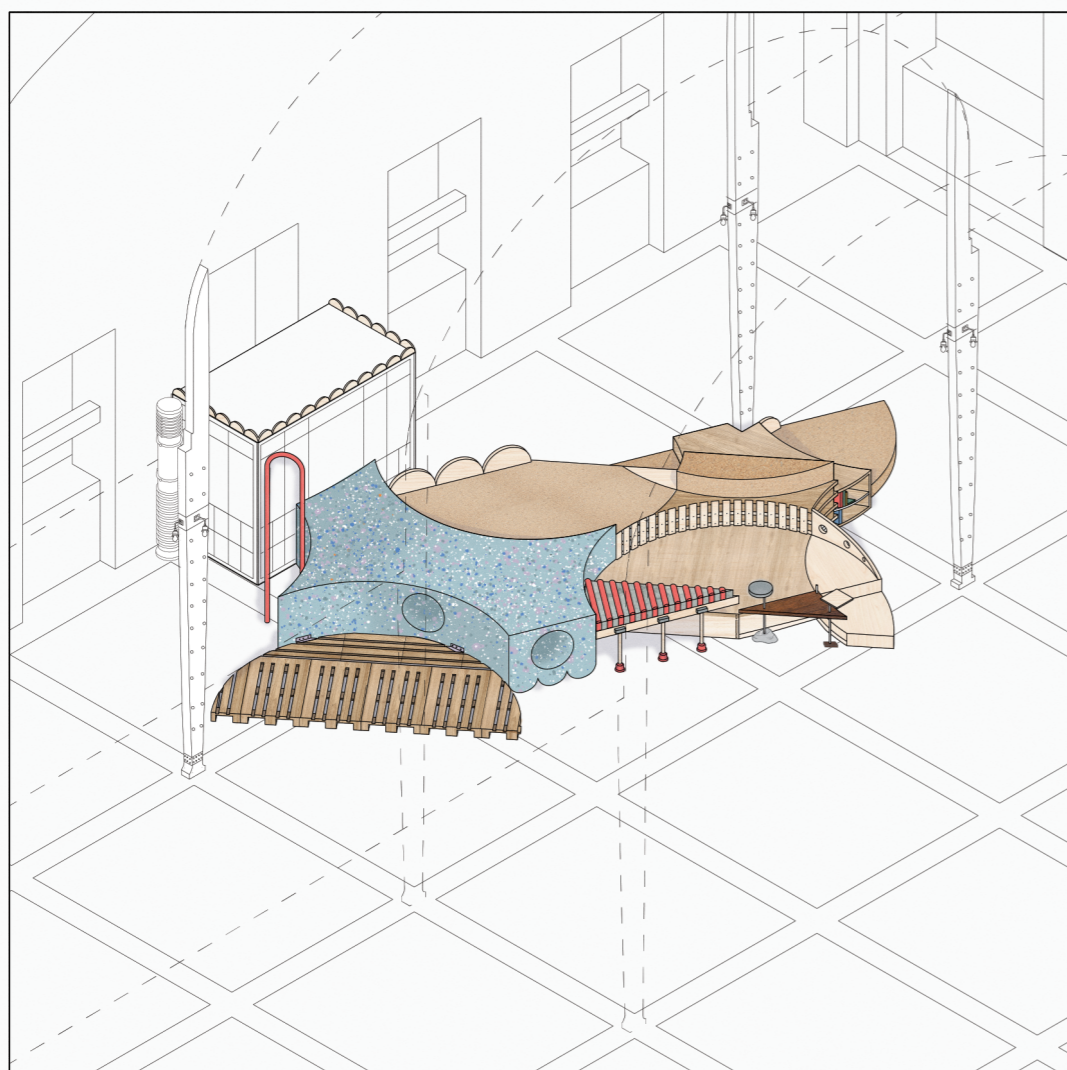


Figure 38: Playstage with Detail 1. Stage, play, and resting area combined. Connected to the small observation house through a play tunnel, transforming the observation landscape into a play-scape. Not Movable. Author's drawing.

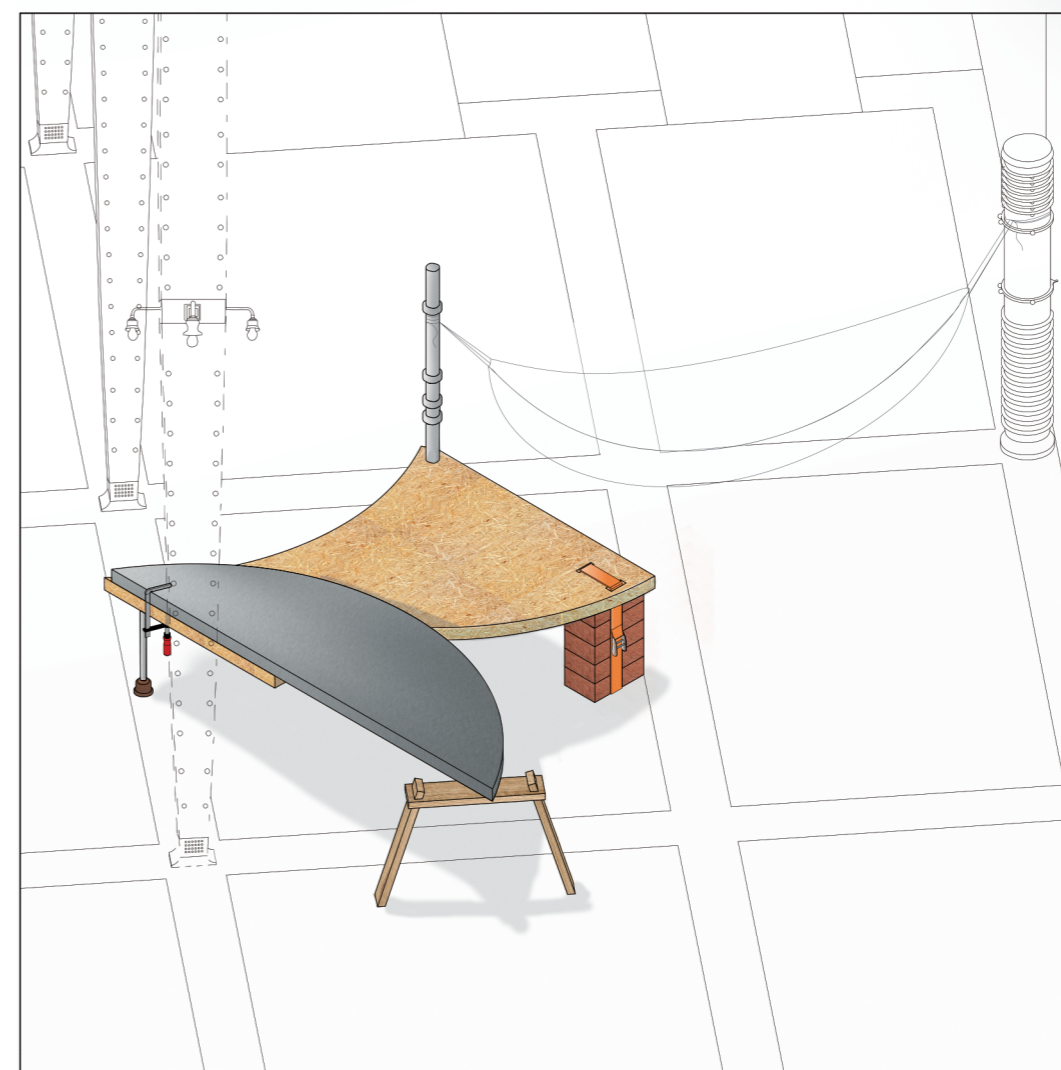


Figure 39: Table 2 with Detail 1. A scaffolding pole primarily supports the table, but is re-appropriated as a connection point between the ventilation shaft and a hammock. Movable and designed to fit together with Table 1. Author's drawing.

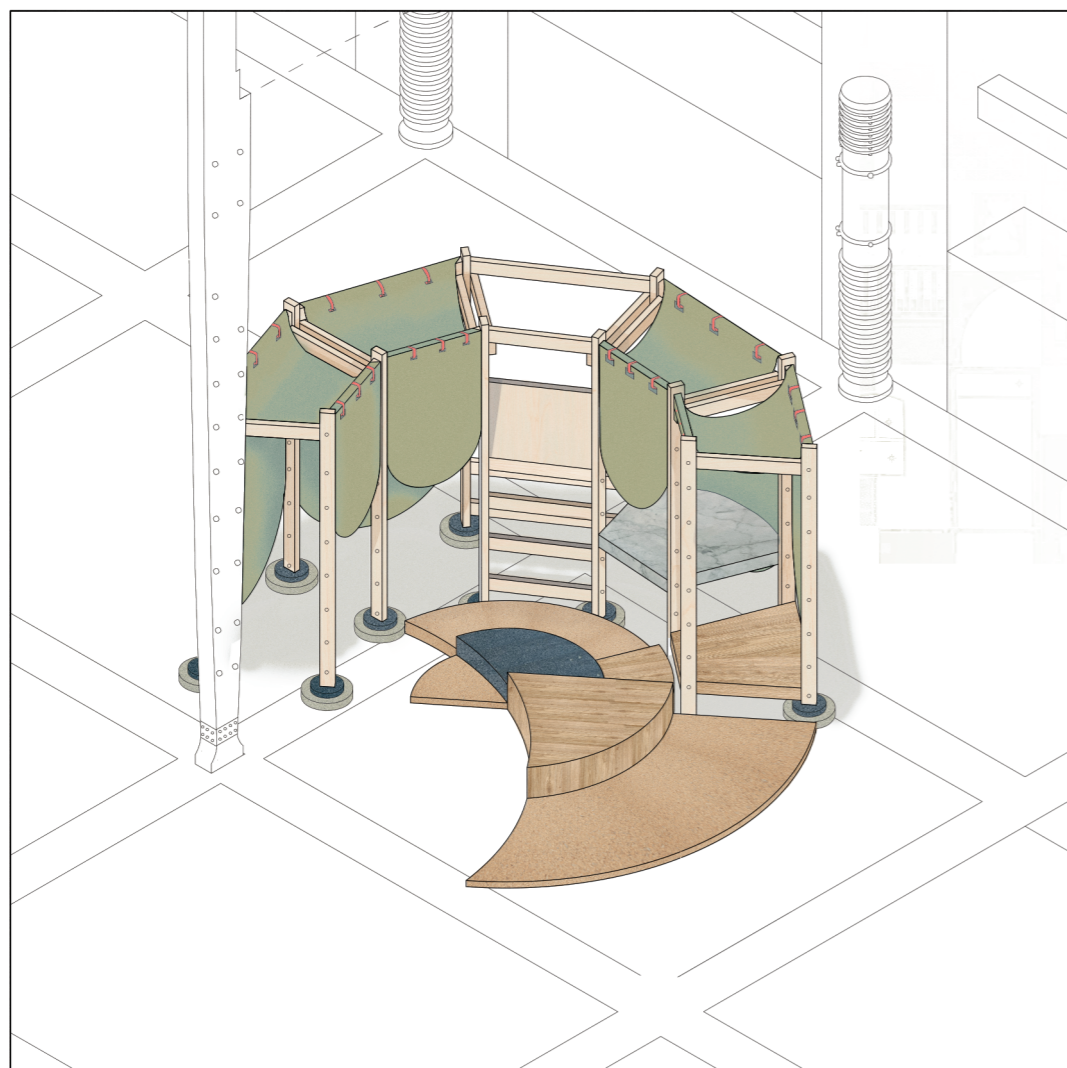


Figure 40: Play Circle. Timber construction serving as a play-scape and resting area for children and adults. Attached to the column with rope and fabric. Hardly movable. Author's drawing.

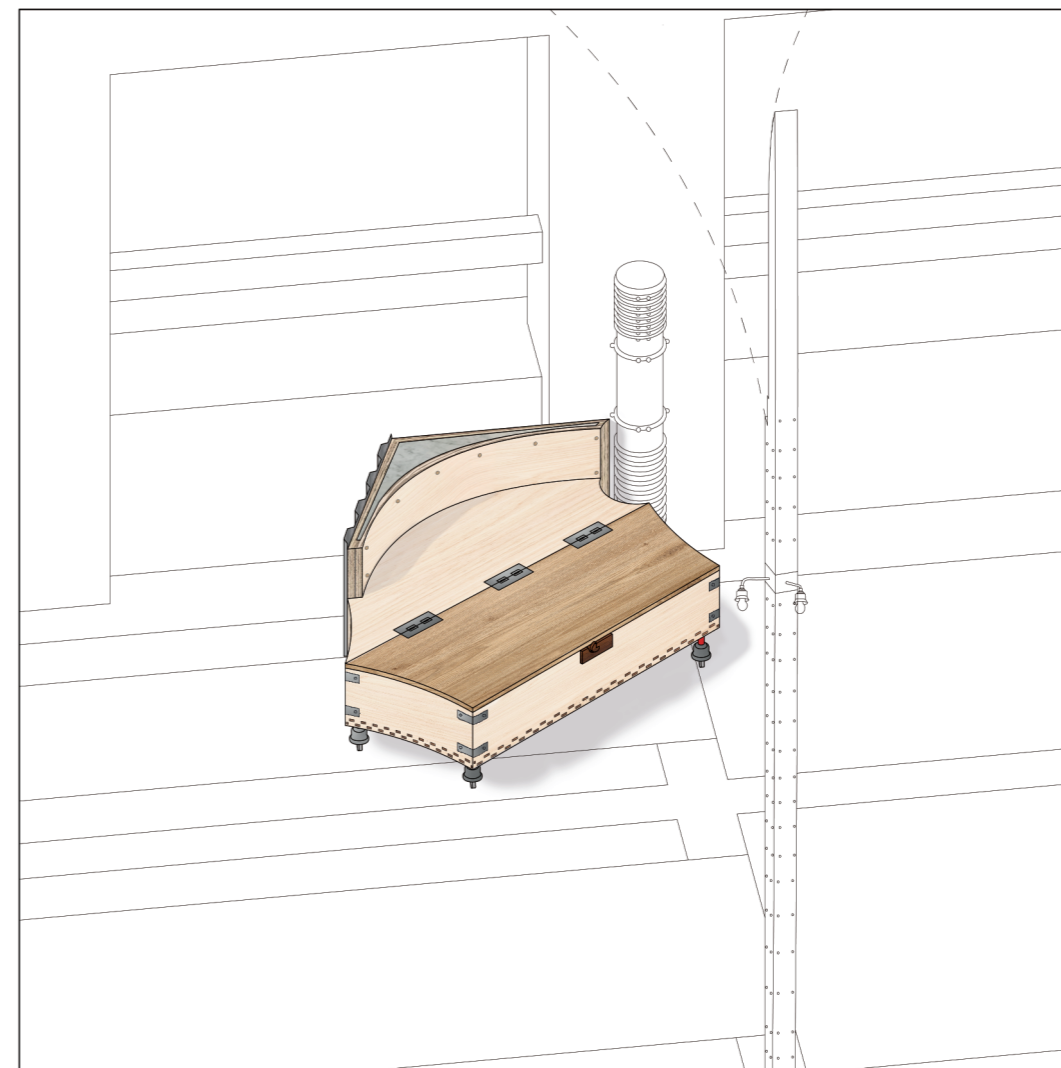


Figure 41: Storage 2 with Detail 4. Combined storage and seating element. Storage space used for foldable tables. Movable. Author's drawing.

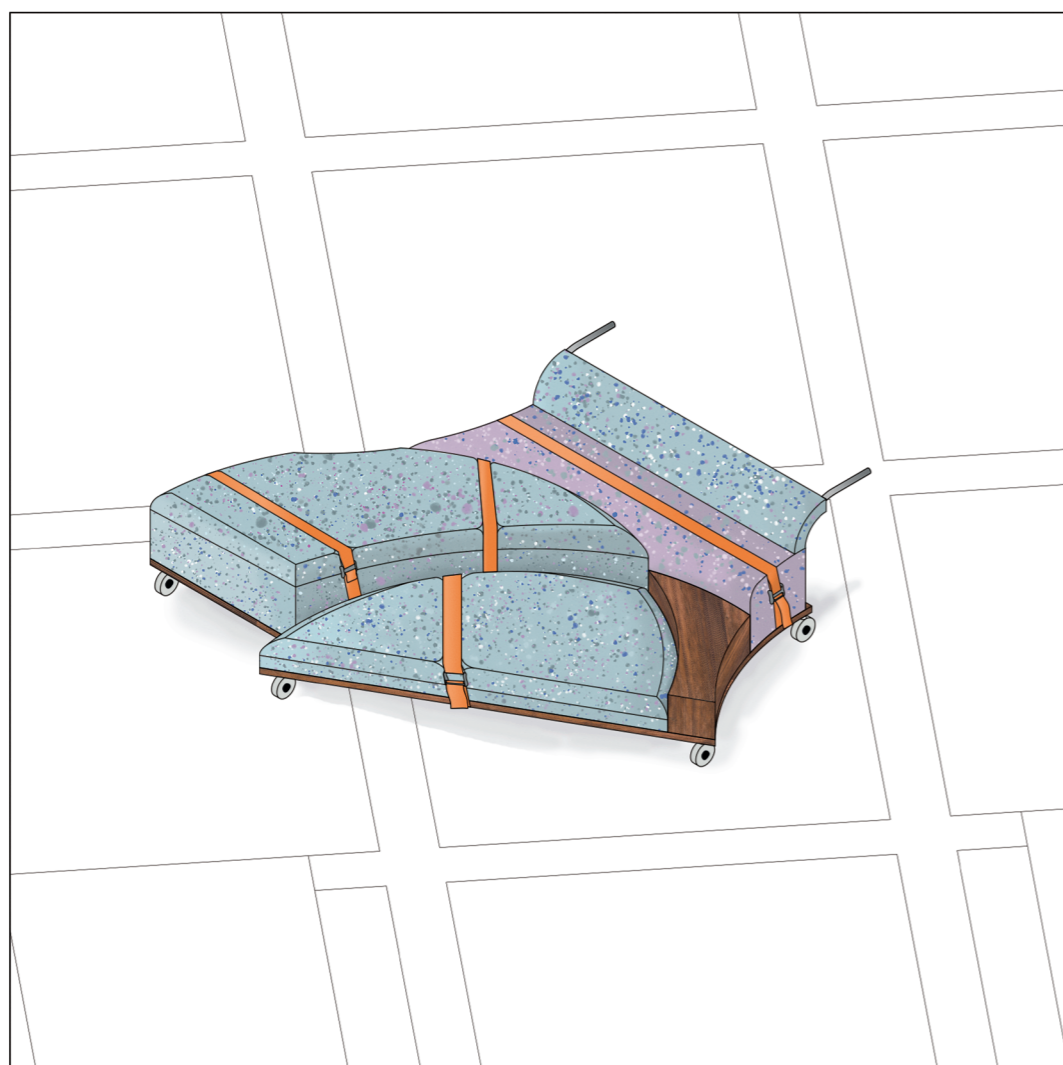


Figure 42: Seating. Designed as a highly movable element that can be easily transported and rolled to different parts of the building. Author's drawing.

## SMALL SCALE: RECONFIGURING DETAILS

At the small scale, the idea of playfulness is explored through selected details from the Postsparkasse, which are studied, reinterpreted, and reconfigured for new uses. The design process can therefore be understood as a form of play with existing elements, asking what else they might become when placed in a different context.

These details are translated into new spatial and functional roles and combined with the modules to establish a direct connection to the existing building. In this way, they allow the new layer to remain closely related to the Postsparkasse while developing a more informal spatial language.

The reconfigured details create both contrast and continuity. They respond to the existing architecture without merely imitating it. Instead, they operate both with and against the formal order of the Postsparkasse.

The following pages present the details individually. Most of them have already appeared alongside the modules in the preceding pages. Feel free to move back and forth between these pages.

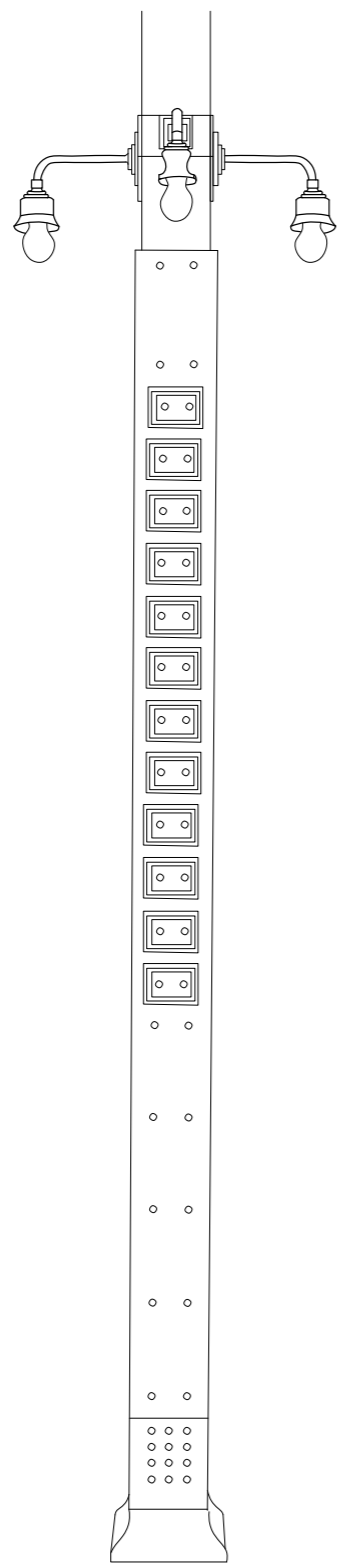


Figure 43: Lamp detail on the columns in the Grand Cashier Hall.  
Author's drawing.

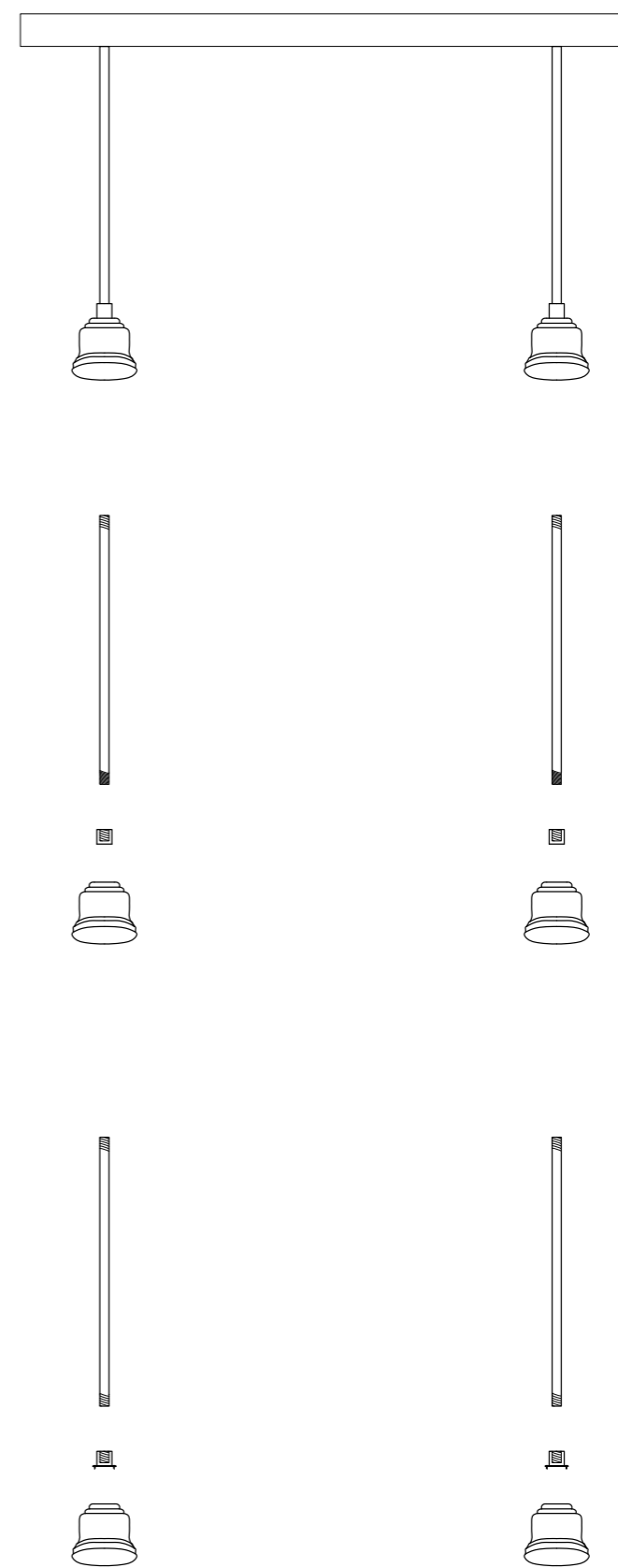


Figure 44: Detail 1. Lamp detail reconfigured as table legs.  
Used in Table 2 and Play-stage, Author's drawing.

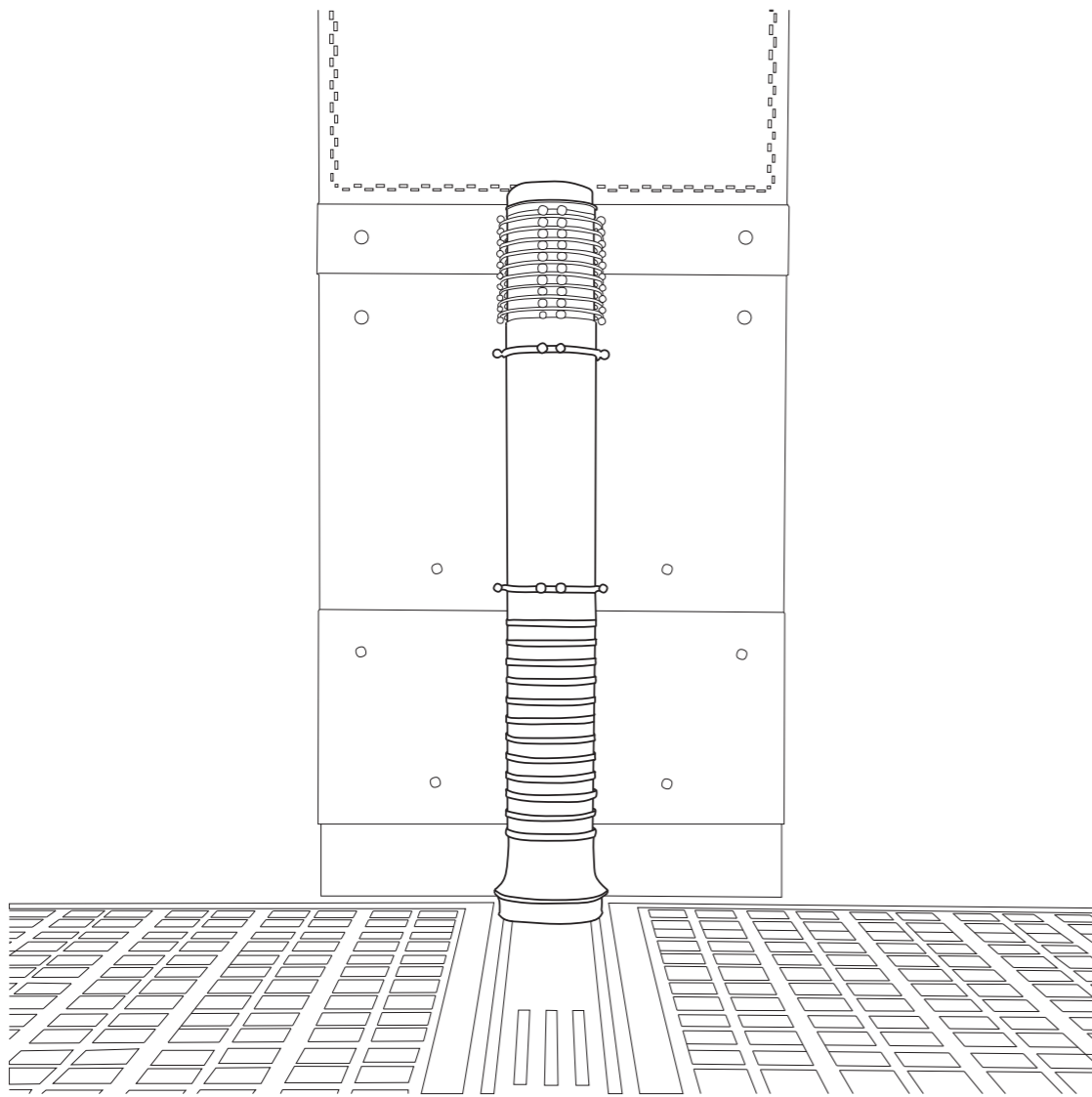


Figure 45: Ventilation shaft in the Grand Cashier Hall.  
Author's drawing.

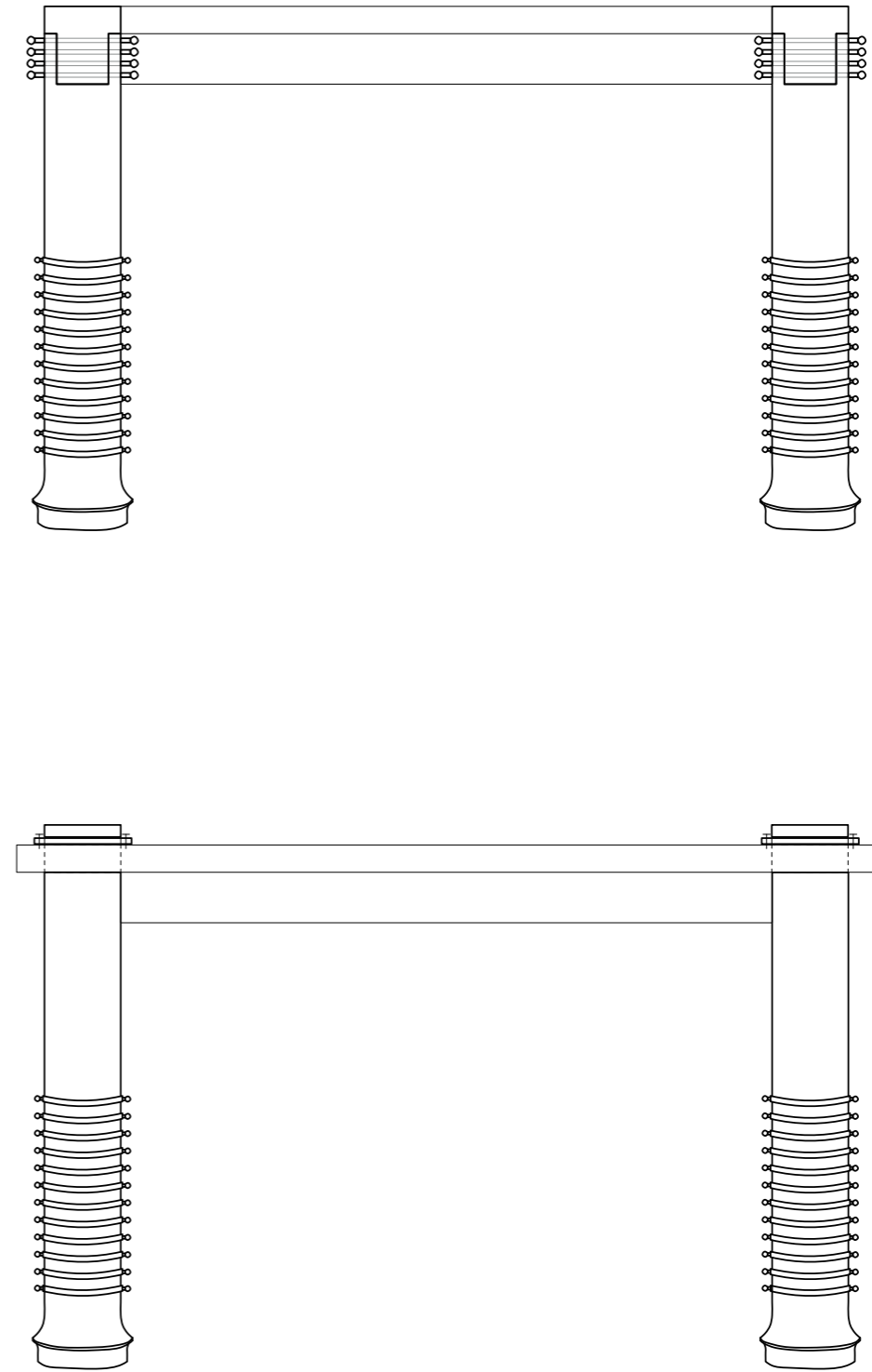


Figure 46: Detail 2. Ventilation shaft reconfigured as wooden table legs in two different options.  
Used in Table 1. Author's drawing.

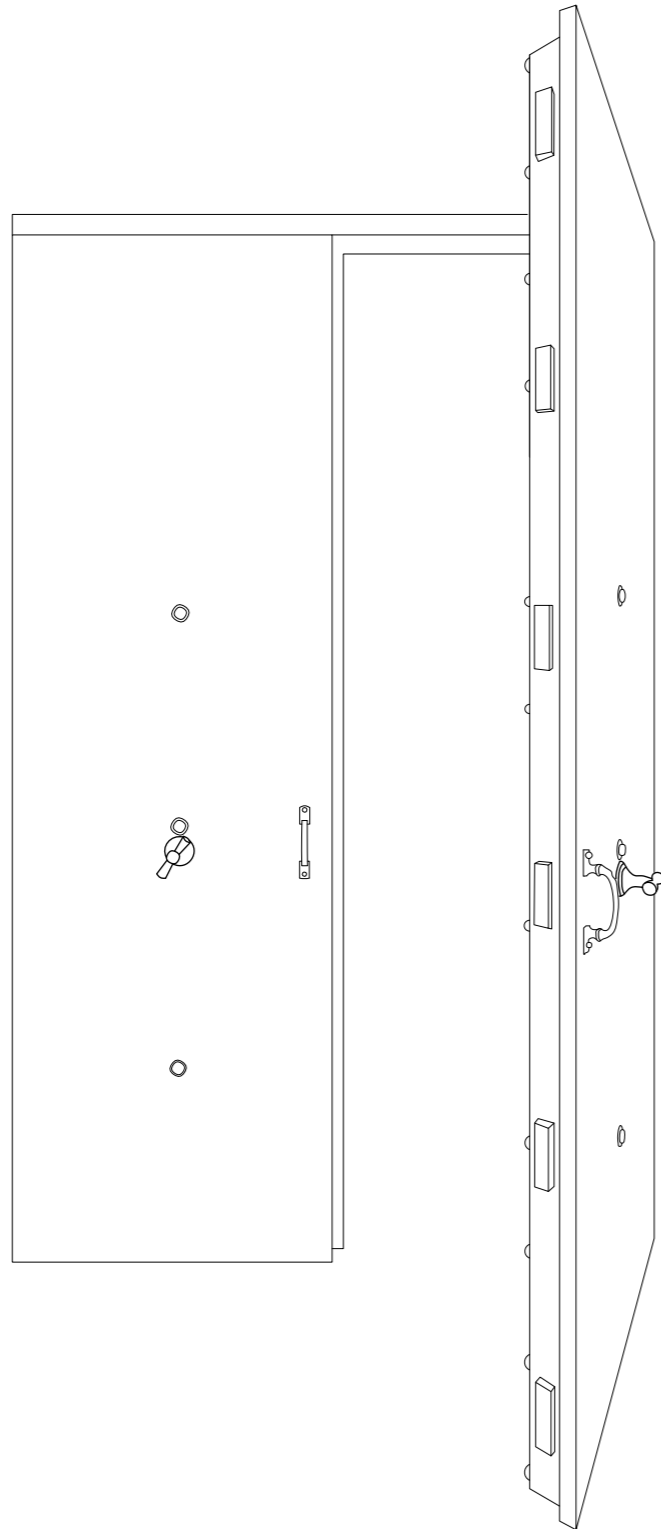


Figure 47: Opening-detail on vault door.  
Author's drawing.

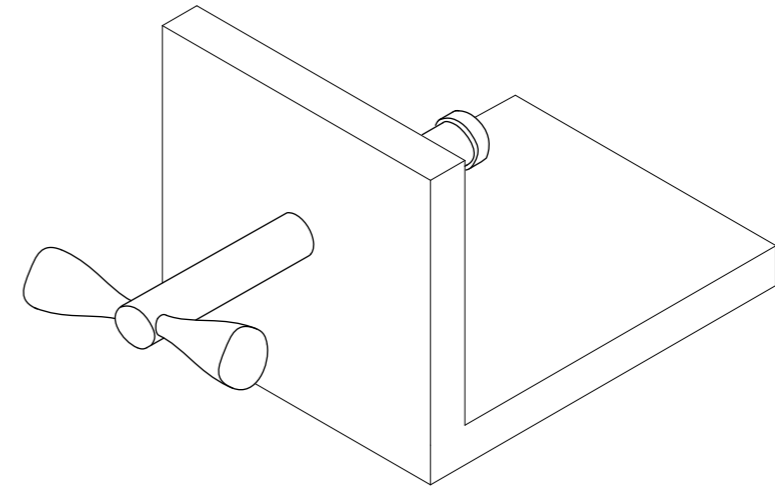


Figure 48: Detail 3. Opening detail reconfigured as a clamp. Used together with the wooden frame in Table 1 to hold the module in place without damaging the marble. Author's drawing.

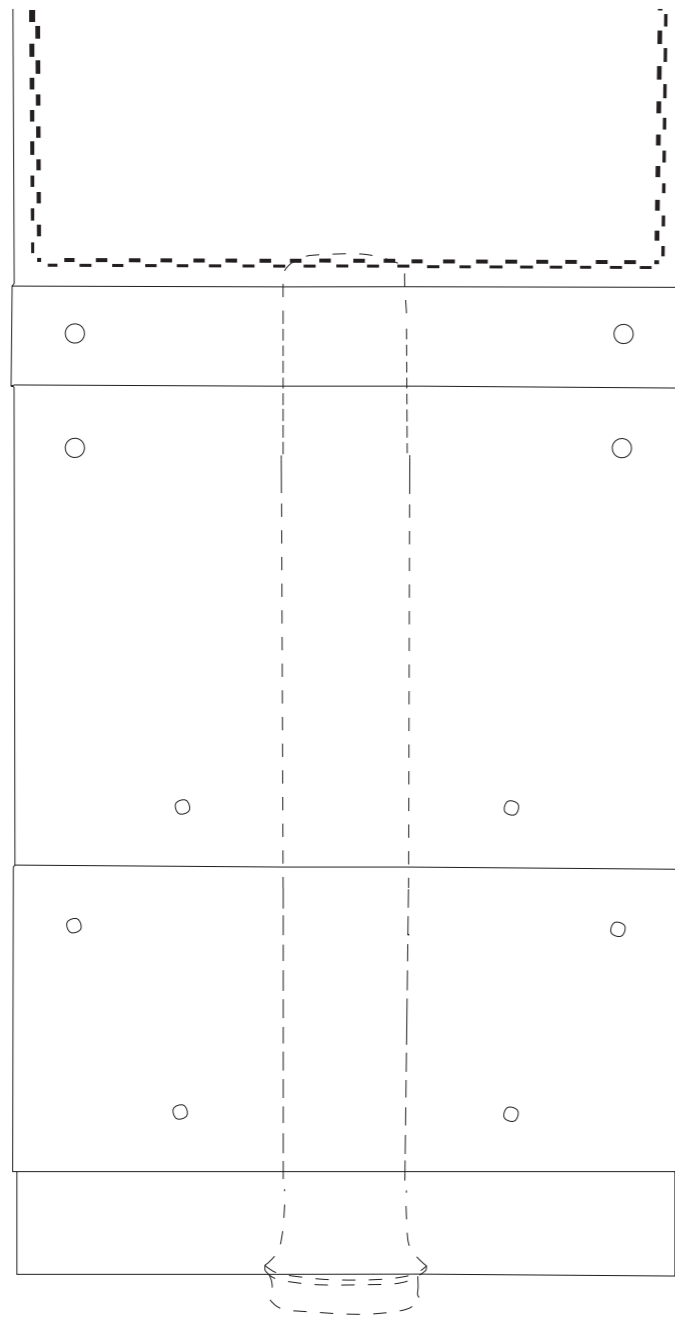


Figure 49: Decorative pattern on the wall edges.  
Author's drawing.

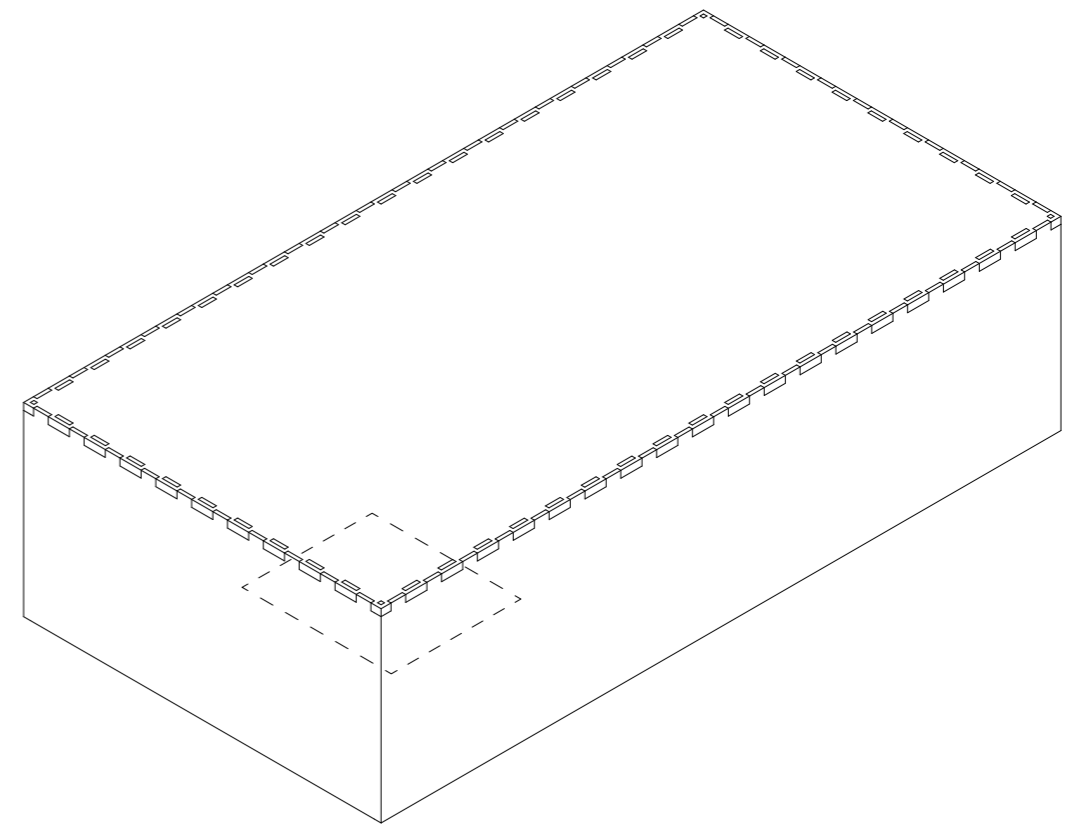
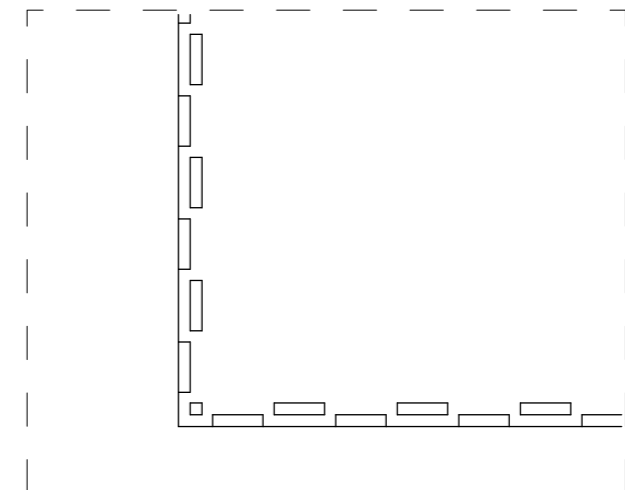


Figure 50: Detail 4. Decorative pattern reconfigured as wood joinery. Used in Storage 2.  
Author's drawing.



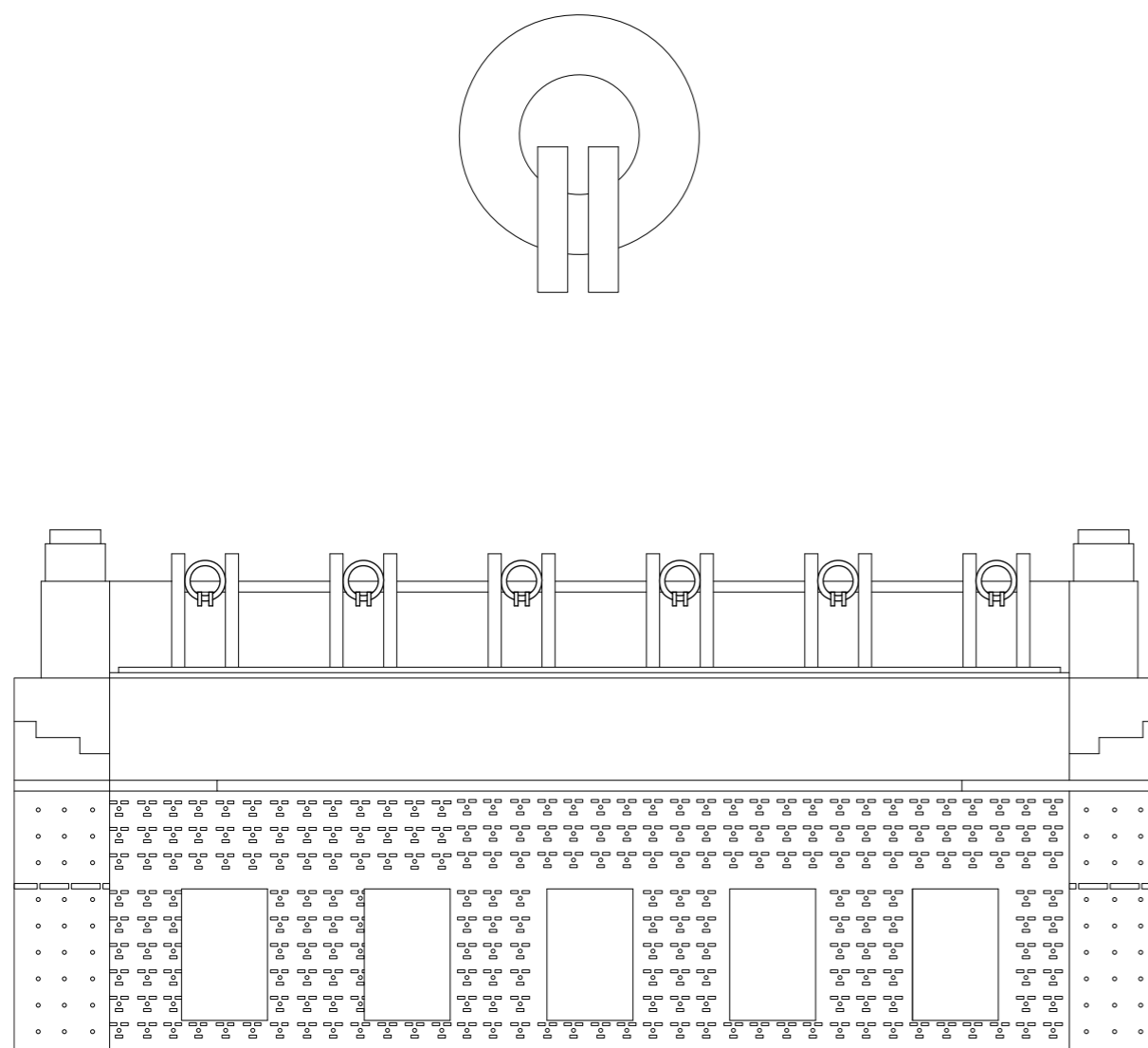


Figure 51: Laurel motif on the façade of the Postsparkasse, symbolising power and wisdom.  
Author's drawing.

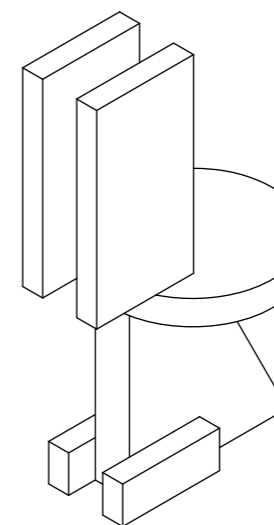
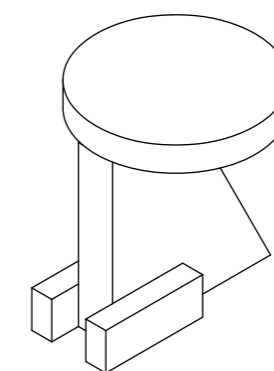
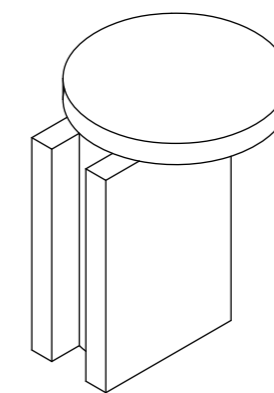


Figure 52: Detail 5.3 Variations of chairs created based on laurel motif.  
Author's drawing.



Figure 53: Atmospheric representation of the Grand Cashier Hall with modules in use between workshops and events. Author's drawing.



Figure 54: Atmospheric representation of the entrance hall with seating modules in use before and after events. Author's drawing.

## THE ENTRANCE

The entrance area still functions as one of the building's most representative spaces. It transforms the act of entering into a ceremonial gesture, reinforcing authority, dignity, and institutional order. On the left, a statue of the former emperor overlooks the space, adding another layer of hierarchy and symbolic power. Nearby, the porter's room occupies a strategic position: on the one hand, it assists and guides visitors, on the other, it helps maintain control and order within the building.

Today, the entrance is a rather calm and quiet space mainly used for passing through. Although spatially generous, it does not invite people to stay, pause, or rest. The atmosphere remains formal and institutional, and the entrance is experienced more as a threshold to cross than as a space to inhabit.

The design proposal responds to this condition by transforming the entrance into a space of pause, arrival, and informal occupation. It also serves as the first encounter with the intervention and new layer. Using the same design strategy as in the cashier hall, a new grid layer is placed over the existing order. From this overlay, new forms emerge as platforms integrated into the staircase. In this way, the generous entrance hall is transformed from a purely transitional area into a place of occupation and use.

The platforms do not remove the representative character of the entrance, but allow both conditions to exist alongside one another. While the former emperor continues to overlook the space, people can now sit, read, wait, and appropriate the staircase in their own way.

### Thresholds

The entrance intervention also addresses the threshold between the entrance hall and the cashier hall. This zone is currently shaped by hesitation. The sequence of door passages reinforces the feeling of entering a more restricted and institutional space.

A possible further intervention would be to open this threshold more directly. This could include removing selected doors or widening parts of the side passages, making the transition into the cashier hall more visible, accessible, and inviting (Possible intervention seen in Figure 53, dashed lines). Unlike the platforms, such an intervention would not only add a new layer to the building, but would directly alter one of its spatial expressions of control.

The threshold is one of the clearest, yet also one of the most subtle manifestations of power in the Postsparkasse. By addressing this zone, the project makes visible how control is embedded not only in monumental spaces, but also in small moments of transition.

## DISCUSSION

This thesis explores how architecture can engage with a building characterised by highly articulated manifestations of power. It focuses on the Postsparkasse at a moment of transition, where its former institutional order increasingly encounters more open, public, and informal forms of use. Rather than treating manifestations of power as a background condition, the project approaches them as active parts of the architecture, embedded in spatial order, movement, visibility, hierarchy, thresholds, materiality, and use. Instead of providing one fixed answer, the Postsparkasse is used as a case through which questions of power, reuse, informality, and architectural intervention are tested and translated into design.

Analysis and design are used together to understand the building's embedded power structures and test possible interventions. Its symmetry, spatial hierarchy, controlled circulation, and representative rooms contribute to an experience shaped by institutional power. At the same time, the building is already undergoing a transformation. A new public and informal use is entering through the café, creating a tension between the building's original institutional logic and its emerging public role. This tension becomes the starting point for the thesis and the design intervention.

The design responds by proposing a playful and informal spatial layer within the focused areas of the building. Through elements that can be occupied, moved, adapted, or appropriated, the intervention opens the space to new forms of use while reinterpreting selected spatial logics and material references from the existing building. Instead of erasing the existing order or imitating Otto Wagner's architecture, the intervention enters into dialogue with it. It interrupts, reuses, and reinterprets selected elements while remaining distinguishable as a contemporary addition.

### Positioning I

The project positions design as a method of critical engagement. It does not approach the Postsparkasse as a monument to be left untouched, but as an active spatial condition that can be questioned through design. The intervention does not attempt to erase or neutralise the building's manifestations of power. Instead, it identifies these manifestations, interrupts them, and confronts them with new forms of use. It is therefore both respectful and radical: respectful because it keeps the building's spatial order, historical identity, and architectural value legible; radical because it questions the institutional logic of the building and introduces informal, collective, and public uses into a space originally shaped by order and control. Rather than simply conserving or completely transforming the building, the project operates as a speculative layer, creating a dialogue between its institutional order and more public, informal forms of life.

### Reflections on the outcome

In relation to the research question, the project suggests that an institutional building shaped by architectural manifestations of power can be realigned without removing these manifestations. Instead, they can be made visible and placed in tension with new forms of use. The intervention introduces a new layer of informal occupation into the preserved institutional order of the Postsparkasse. Rather than resolving the tension between past and present, the project uses this friction as a driving force.

The building's authority, hierarchy, and choreographed movement remain legible, but they are softened and no longer operate as the only spatial logic. They are placed in tension with a new informal layer that opens the space to more diverse and everyday forms of occupation. In this way, the project supports contemporary needs without erasing the building's historical identity. Change happens through addition, friction, and reinterpretation rather than through replacement.

The new layer remains distinguishable from the existing building through its informal language, irregular forms, and unfamiliar material compositions. It does not imitate Wagner's architecture, but enters into dialogue with it. By taking up elements of the building's existing order and turning them into new spatial forms, the intervention engages with the original scripts of authority without silently reproducing them. In this way, the design outcome becomes both a spatial proposal and a critical reading of the building.

### Reflections on the process

One central finding during the process was how strongly the existing order of the Postsparkasse shaped every design decision. The symmetry, axes, column grid, and ceremonial spatial sequences constantly pulled new elements back into the building's original logic. Especially in the Grand Cashier Hall, the space almost demanded that additions follow its order. Working against this without producing arbitrary contrast became one of the main challenges of the project. For this reason, the new spatial grid layer became crucial. It allowed the intervention to emerge from the existing building while still shifting its logic. Instead of ignoring Wagner's order, the project used it as a starting point and redirected it.

Another important reflection concerns the difficulty of intervening in a highly valued architectural work. The Postsparkasse is widely regarded as one of the masterpieces of Austrian architecture, and this produced resistance during the design process. Intervening in such a building raised questions of respect, authorship, responsibility, and care. However, this resistance became one of the key drivers of the project. It showed that culturally valued buildings are often protected not only physically, but also conceptually from being questioned or transformed. The thesis argues that precisely these buildings should not be excluded from critical engagement. Their value should not prevent intervention but demand a careful and conscious form of it.

The question of reversibility also became central. Because the building carries high historical and cultural value, many elements are designed as removable, adaptable, or replaceable additions. If the existing fabric is directly altered, this should be carefully considered and justified by strong spatial and conceptual reasons.

The project also raised the question of whether informality can be designed at all. Informality is connected to spontaneity, everyday use, collective action, and appropriation, qualities that cannot be fully planned or designed. As soon as informality is drawn and placed into a specific architectural setting, it risks becoming formalised. The thesis therefore does not claim to design informality itself. Instead, it tries to come close to this condition through simple joining techniques, diverse materials, and spatial elements that allow different uses to emerge. The modules function as invitations for new appropriation rather than fixed prescriptions.

### Positioning II

Ultimately, the thesis suggests that engaging with architectural manifestations of power does not require rejecting the value of historically significant buildings or erasing their institutional character. Rather, it means recognising these structures, challenging them, and opening them to new forms of interaction. In a time when the reuse of existing buildings is becoming increasingly important, architecture must not only preserve physical structures, but also critically examine the spatial orders and power relations they embody. Existing buildings carry history, value, and memory, but they may also contain structures that no longer correspond to contemporary public life. Therefore, it becomes important to ask how such buildings can be brought into daily use without being frozen, erased, or simply reproduced. In the end, the value of such buildings lies not only in what they preserve from the past, but also in their capacity to accommodate new, more open and more public forms of life.



Figure 55: Author of the thesis in the director's staircase of the Postsparkasse. Author's photograph.

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## APPENDIX

## Interview Postsparkasse

## ENGLISH

Speaker 1 {00:00}

Yes, so it was more of a historical emphasis rather than, or did you also contrast it with something new, as you wrote? Did you do that in some parts as well?

Speaker 2 {00:13}

Yes, well, in the Postsparkasse, which is a huge building, yes, it was actually the case that, or this is actually the case with every building, there are areas that are more important and less important for the building, and in most cases the Federal Monuments Office also has internal lists of which areas are important and which are not. So the first step is usually to coordinate and decide where I can remove something or where I can do something modern, where it's definitely not possible. And in the Postsparkasse, the façade and the entrance area, when you go up there, and then the cashier's halls and the first floor are actually, well, there was nothing to change there, which is okay, because they're also great. So the idea was to restore them, and the biggest intervention we made was to put this new glass roof on top, which was quite a big job and actually quite interesting. But it was also somehow, well, I still like it, the glass roof, which is relatively old, almost 20 years old, but it actually came from a conservationist perspective. Well, I don't know if there are any photos of the old cashier hall, which was relatively leaky, so there were always these rainwater collection basins and such, which stood in the cashier hall, and the problem was that it couldn't be renovated. The ticket hall has two levels, with the beautiful frosted glass vaulted ceiling that everyone knows on the lower level and a normal glass roof on the upper level, which you can also see. Now you can go up there, and when you stand in the corridor on the third floor, you can see the old glass roof directly, and it was so thinly constructed that it couldn't be repaired. So it couldn't be renovated to restore it to exactly how it was back then, but those were glass panels that were cemented in place or something like that, so there weren't actually any strips on top of them, and there wasn't any space for them, and the structure wouldn't have been able to support them anymore, and so on. That was the only way to renovate it in a sustainable way, to put something on top, and that's what we did.

Speaker 1 {02:50}

To protect it even more, so to speak?

Speaker 2 {03:41}

Exactly, right, and that was then, so then all the other possible problems come up, like fire safety is an issue, ventilation is an issue, lighting is an issue, and so on, and you just have to solve that, but that was actually where you see the intervention most of the time. We were actually very cautious and careful with all the other things we renovated, including the office areas, of course, because they were outdated and there is little leeway there. In order for a building to be used in a contemporary way, I have to provide people with the technology and infrastructure they need to work properly, otherwise no one will move in. A lot has already been done in this regard.

Speaker 1 {03:41}

So then also in that area, for example in the cashier hall, it was listed, but if it hadn't been listed, for example, would you probably have preserved it anyway?

Speaker 2 {03:54}

Yes, the ticket hall, definitely. It's a pretty good space and it's important for many reasons. Firstly, because it's a beautiful space, but also because it occupies a special place in Otto Wagner's oeuvre. There are earlier buildings by him where he developed this idea, architecturally speaking. If you look at the buildings he designed, this idea of a covered atrium occurs quite often, and you can really see how, which is of course interesting for architects, but not for anyone else. But architectural history is fascinating, how architects develop their designs over the course of projects. It's not that the brilliant ideas suddenly came when the task was assigned, but rather that there were decades of preparatory work and experimentation, trying it out on a small bank to see how it worked, and back and forth. And that's exciting. And the space only works if the side areas are clearly visible, otherwise you don't get that ship-like atmosphere, so it was particularly important to clear it out. And the cashier hall only works with light-coloured materials, because otherwise you don't get that light effect. And in the 1970s, there was only dark wood and things like that, so we cleared it all out.

Speaker 1 {05:32}

Would you say that, because it was the idea for banking institutions to build this way for efficiency, you can still feel it in the buildings, that the idea is still continuing, that it's still the case now, that you can still really feel it?

Speaker 2 {05:52}

Well, the idea, banks weren't like that back then, banks were decorated differently back then, let me put it that way. It's not that different now, but back then there was this semiological component, I look at something and understand what it is, and it has to convey the message I want to hear. For example, a bank has to be secure, or a bank has to be solid and expensive and posh, because otherwise you don't believe they have a lot of money. The old banks were much more wood-heavy and much more posh, with lots more carpet and so on. And the Postsparkasse wasn't like that, because it wasn't a posh bank, but the Postsparkasse was founded back then for the little man and, basically, similar to the post office, it transported money back then in this huge monarchy, I don't know, from what is now Ukraine to South Tyrol or something. That means there are lots of different, small amounts and lots of small savings accounts, not huge rich people, and

accordingly, the atmosphere there was much, much more modern and much more minimalist and much clearer and much simpler. Otto Wagner conveyed that relatively ingeniously in the competition, if you look at the other projects. But take the first floor, for example. I don't know, if you can go in, take a look. It's still very stuffy, still the way you would imagine a bank headquarters to be, with the director sitting there smoking a cigar. Have you ever been to the Eiffel Tower? So that's right at the top, where Gustav Eiffel has an office. He built the tower himself because no one else wanted to finance it. So he set up a small office up there, and when the tower became a great success, he received all kinds of people there. This office still exists and is furnished as it was back then. There is also a rather embarrassing Eiffel figure sitting inside, which I don't particularly appreciate. However, it was also a gentleman's study, with a large armchair and carpet, a scissor desk, and so on.

That's quite interesting, because the contents don't always move with it. The Eiffel Tower was certainly the most modern building at the time, and one would expect the interior to reflect that, but of course that's not the case at all. It's very similar with the Post Office Savings Bank, which was the most modern, efficient, fastest and easiest to clean building from the outside, but in the executive suite, people still sit as they did 50 or 100 years ago.

Speaker 1 {09:16}

I also find it exciting because they say it's totally modern, but then also, for example, because he designed everything, including the chairs, and then I just saw that there are different fittings on the chairs at the bottom and that they are different heights, depending on the hierarchy. I find that exciting too.

Speaker 2 {09:43}

You are already very well informed. The whole building is full of these details. Except that something for the masses back then, 120 years ago or so, did not mean that these monarchical hierarchies had been abolished. Of course, they still existed. The chairs are a great example, because the chair is always the same and the fittings show you which floor it belongs to. The door materials are the same. On the first floor there are oak doors, on the other floors there is cheaper wood that has been painted to look like oak, and so on. That's interesting. You could see it in every detail.

Speaker 1 {10:35}

A bank always wants to show that it can be trusted so that people will give it their money. I once read an article about the Postsparkasse. Because it is so abstract and because Otto Wagner shows exactly how it was constructed, there is a basis of trust. He shows exactly how the building is constructed, and this makes the bank appear trustworthy.

Speaker 2: {11:10}

Yes, exactly, but also that, for example, the vault doors were all on display and so on. And, for example, that everything on the lower ground floor is barred. These are also things that make customers see that no one wants to or can break in, so I'll bring my money here. These bars on the lower ground floor have always been there, precisely for that reason. And on the upper ground floor, they were only installed in the interwar period. Probably because times were a bit more turbulent then, so people wanted them. And then we took them away again. They're no longer there. Because, of course, when you're working, it's not great if you always have to look

out like you're in prison. And that was okay too. We didn't want to do it on the lower ground floor, and they wouldn't have allowed it anyway. And then, in one of the first two months, one of these grilles was removed from the lower ground floor because the construction companies were simply bringing building materials in through the window. And that was removed. Then, the very next day, four people called. Four BAWAG customers, who said, hang on a minute, why are you removing the bars? It was really funny. So this idea that something is secure if it has bars on it, that still existed 15 years ago. It's still there in people's minds somehow.

Speaker 1 {12:44}

And how did you see the vault doors, for example, because they were down in the basement.

Speaker 2 {12:51}

No, there's one up there. So when you go in upstairs, there's a huge vault door on the left, which is open and fixed in place. So you can see how secure it is. And that was also the case with the counters, which used to look completely different; they were much more closed off. The current counters are all from the 1970s. We didn't rebuild them because it wasn't possible to dismantle them. In the past, they were closed at the top because everyone had money behind them, so to speak. That hasn't been the case at the bank for a long time. Nowadays, these security measures are no longer necessary. And they were changed in such a way that they couldn't be restored. That's why they've simply remained as they were in the 1970s. But there's also this, which is semiological, right? It's a grille and it's closed, and in the middle there's this little house, which is still there. That's where the guard sits and watches, like in a panopticon, to make sure no one steals anything. It's very much based on surveillance, of course. That's how society was back then.

Speaker 1 {14:12}

Was there, for example, a decision where you hesitated for a long time during the process, whether you would really do it, or?

Speaker 2 {14:37}

Yes, well, we thought about it for quite a long time, whether to do it, because there's a major intervention in the cashier's hall, and that is, when you go in, there are these side wings on the left and right where the desks used to be. And now there's an opening there. So the side walls of the cashier's hall have huge holes and you can walk into the next rooms. And they weren't there before, because the row of desks used to run through there. But at the time, the bank wanted to connect the cashier's hall with the offices behind it. Because that's where the consultation areas were, which of course didn't exist in that form in 1906, because it wasn't a modern bank yet. So we made relatively large holes in the walls, which could then be closed again with large white doors. This means that when they are closed, you can't actually see the holes. Then the white border is preserved again, but during the day they are open. And then one desk had to be removed at the front. That was a relatively long discussion because it changed the room extremely. But actually, it worked out well. I think it turned out well. It doesn't bother me. There's an openness to it, which I think is important. I've been doing this for a long time, but I'm always surprised myself at how things actually look, how they're built, when you'd imagined them differently when you were thinking about them. It was a relatively long discussion process.

Speaker 1 {16:22}

How is or was the process for you? Do you also build with models? Or is it more a case of trying things out with plans?

Speaker 2: {16:30}

Back then, it was still very sketch- and drawing-heavy. Today, we do a lot with models. Take the façades of the Dorotheum, for example, which we are currently renovating and where the façade is to be changed. There is actually almost only a model, because you can't see where things will end up from the drawing. It's all about depth. What can I remove now and what can't I remove? But to be fair, the 3D printer helps me enormously. That didn't exist back then. Back then, we still used traditional sketching and crafting methods. Small models did exist, and they still do. But I can't remember us ever building a cash hall model.

Speaker 1 {17:31}

Looking back now, would you say there is anything you would have done differently if you could see it now?

Speaker 2 {17:42}

Quite a lot, yes. Definitely. I was talking about that yesterday, funnily enough. We now have a glass roof over the courtyard at the Dorotheum. We talked about the glass roof. I would do the glass roof differently today. Because I don't think it was fully thought through at the time. It looks great from below. Which is the idea, because everyone looks up from below, very nicely differentiated and minimised in terms of construction, the structural engineer did a relatively good job. But from above, it's not very nice. When you stand on the roof, it's not designed. At first glance, that doesn't bother me, but of course it annoys me more and more because you have to think more and more about what you can do about it. And then you think about it more and more, and it annoys me more and more. Google Maps didn't exist back then either. Nobody saw it back then. Now, for example, everyone can see it. That the edges aren't designed through. I would do that very differently. During the restoration, you would probably do some things differently too. Simply because the state of the art or the level of knowledge has evolved. Or the way we approach heritage conservation issues has also changed over the last 20 years.

Speaker 1 {19:27}

To what extent would you say?

Speaker 2 {19:30}

On the one hand, you can think it's good or bad that the climate is much more conservative. Things that would have been relatively easy to do 20 years ago are unthinkable today. Personally, I don't think that's such a bad thing. More thought needs to be given to things, more discussion is needed. The question of what characterises a monument has been addressed much better than was previously the case. In the past, more adoption was permitted. Today, that is a little more difficult. That is not always an advantage. The idea is that I must be able to convert a building to such an extent that those who want to use it can do so. Otherwise, the building will eventually stand empty. That is the worst thing that can happen to a building. If it

stands empty. Then it is not used, not heated and not renovated, and it falls into disrepair. The goal must always be to be able to repurpose the building so that it functions again. On the other hand, I would probably not do some things so lightly anymore. Taking something away or something like that. For us, the process has naturally evolved. The question is, what do I want to preserve? What is important to us? There is what is important to the client. That is always the one thing. Then there is that. As an architect, I have to mediate, at least that is how I understand it. I have to tell the client that it's okay, but I don't know if it's the best idea to make this hole for these reasons. And then there's what the National Monuments Office wants. And we're somewhere in between, so you have to try to mediate. And in doing so, develop your ideas about the character of the building, what do I want to preserve? Where can I generously break it down? What can I add to it? With this question, for example, when something new comes along, what style should it be in? If you need a new fire door, that's a very simple example, does it have to be historicising? Or can it be a new, attractive fire door? Twenty years ago, you would have said, yes, of course, new, no problem. And now nobody does that. That's a shame. I really like this contrast. A lot has changed. In technology, too, of course. How do I analyse plaster, for example? There have been some incredible technical ideas and innovations in the last 20 years. What materials do I have available to restore it? But that's often more craftsmanship than architecture.

Speaker 1 {23:03}

When you say that the fire door is now presented in a more historicised way, is that to preserve the image to the outside world? Or of the building? What is the background to it now being more conservative?

Speaker 2 {23:16}

I think it's the general desire to see this thing again as it perhaps once was, and not as it is now. This idea of temporal stratification, for example, which has always existed. In the past, everyone had a Baroque altar in the Catholic Church. That was one theme, for example. And the fact that these layers then become part of the building itself no longer exists in this form. Carlos Scarpa, for example, the whole Palazzo, has nothing to do with that. But there is a sensitivity in terms of the materials and the compositions. These are appropriate additions to an old, beautiful thing. I know that not everyone is Carlos Scarpa. And that it doesn't all work out so well if you're not as good at it as he is. But the approach has changed a bit. Whatever we do, where it's not really critical, we're also relatively ruthlessly contemporary. That's the case with the Postsparkasse, but it's not a good example because its uniqueness means it's very much the focus of everything. And of course, that limits you a bit. We also do a lot of Ringstrasse parlours, there are several, where it's not quite so critical. There are a few very nice ones, but it's just a residential building on the Ring. You have to be careful there. There are areas where you can do more. We've already demolished entire wings and rebuilt them in the background. If it looks reasonable from the street, then you can still do it. The things are then also contemporary. That was two years ago. With things like that, the interventions are very contemporary. The stairwell itself has been beautifully renovated, of course. But the doors are new. The old doors were still there, they were remade. And the stairs are contemporary. I also like this contrast.

Speaker 1 {26:24}

It's always a bit of a game, how contemporary you can be.

Speaker 2 {26:30}

Yes, of course, that's always the big question. But what we're already doing, for example, is that the slant isn't just for fun, but because the staircase behind it is so crooked. And that's simply the maximum size without having to touch this staircase. So I always like it when you find arguments that look the way they look. When you follow the logic of the building, things are usually no longer symmetrical. Instead, they are asymmetrical, which is pressing because something usually doesn't work. So it all depends; at the Postsparkasse, it was actually very little. You have to be very careful.

Speaker 1 {27:42}

Even when you read a lot about the Postsparkasse online, you really notice that it's important to many people. It's an important building. And that it should be preserved exactly as it is. You also notice that many people want it to be preserved exactly as it is.

Speaker 2 {28:00}

Yes, I think that's the case among architects or people who are involved in this field anyway, because the longer you work with it, the cooler it actually is. So, of course, there is this formal leap. From historicism to Art Nouveau and then on to modernism. It already contains many modern architectural elements. The last unrealised halls, which he drew in 1916. It could just as well be a Bauhaus building in Weimar. He didn't live to see it, it's like a stopover. But I think the Viennese themselves have an ambivalent relationship with the Postsparkasse. Everyone knows it because it looks like no other building. Not everyone finds it beautiful, but it has been standing there for 120 years.

That's why people like it. It is a beautiful building. It's fascinating to look at it constructively, how it was built at the time and all the things that were tried out for the first time. How the floors were constructed back then and how they concreted those reinforced concrete ceilings without knowing how to calculate it. It was all a process of trial and error. That's really interesting. The window constructions are innovative and had never been built that way before. That's super interesting. Not everything caught on, but there's an incredible amount in there. It is also incredibly precisely constructed. The submission plans from back then, the movement plans, are coded relatively accurately, and the building does not deviate from them at all. The largest deviation is perhaps 2 cm. For such a huge structure, that is truly impressive. It would be impossible to achieve that today. It requires tolerances. 2 cm was the size. That was no problem back then. It is built to a high standard.

Speaker 1 {30:35}

Even with the bolts on the façade. For a long time, people thought they were ornaments or that they weren't structural at all. Then they realised that they were also necessary for structural reasons.

Speaker 2 {30:48}

Yes, but only at the beginning. It's relatively complex. The current situation is that when we renovated it, no one had ever damaged the façade. It was only sandblasted once in the 1990s. Renovated, you can hardly see that either. If you walk around now, you can see that these nails are steel nails and had aluminium heads on them. A stubble on top. They weren't covered at the time. They are very rough and soft. But they should actually be shiny. Many of the heads are already missing. It wasn't renovated properly in the 1990s. At the time, this wasn't known. The

scientific consensus was that it was decorative. But there's even a photo. It's a photo where you can see it. You can still see it there. It's at the top of the attic. Above the main entrance, where the cornice is with these borders. You can see how it worked. If the slab springs, it means that this rivet is load-bearing. So it was clear that it was supporting the weight. That it was firmly anchored. You can see it there too. You can see the plaster patches that were used to attach it. The point is that it's actually a decorative feature. These are typical Art Nouveau elements. But during the first few days, while the plaster was drying, this nail held the slab in place so that it wouldn't fall down. Then the plaster held the slab in place.

Speaker 1 {32:59}

It really is an exciting building. Did you already know what the new use would be while you were renovating? What new use would the building have?

Speaker 2 {33:14}

There was no new use. It was an office before. It was an office before. Afterwards, it was an office. The staff of the two banks were merged. In the 1970s, the building was divided into small departmental offices. Bawag had open-plan offices. It wasn't huge. Otto Wagner didn't have any partition walls. It was one room. It was a large room. Three or four axes were always shared. We developed a system where these things could be set up anywhere. The use has changed. It was an office. Then it became an office again. We then added functions. We built in a nursery. Upstairs there was a dining room where many people worked. We added quite a lot. But the function itself did not change during our renovation.

Speaker 1 {34:47}

Okay. Thank you. That's it for my questions.

## Interview Postsparkasse

Speaker 1 {00:00}

Ja, also es war dann mehr quasi das historische Hervorheben anstatt, oder haben Sie dann auch eben, wie Sie geschrieben haben, sowas Neues entgegengesetzt? Haben Sie das in manchen Teilen dann auch?

Speaker 2 {00:13}

Ja, also in der Postsparkasse, das ist ein Riesengebäude, ja, war es tatsächlich so, dass, oder das ist eigentlich bei jedem Gebäude so, es gibt halt Bereiche, die sind wichtiger und weniger wichtig für das Gebäude und meistens gibt es beim Bundesdenkmalamt auch quasi so interne Listen, welche wichtig sind, welche nicht. Also der erste Schritt ist normalerweise, man stimmt sich ab und macht sich aus, wo kann ich was wegnehmen oder wo kann ich was Modernes machen, wo geht das also auf keinen Fall. Und in der Postsparkasse, also die Fassade sowieso und der Eingangsbereich, wenn man da so hinauf geht und dann die Kassensäule und der erste Stock sind halt tatsächlich, also da war nichts zu ändern, was ja auch okay ist, weil die sind ja auch großartig. Und also da ging es darum, wir müssen das wieder herstellen und die größte Intervention, die wir gemacht haben, ist, wir haben da oben dieses neue Glasdach drauf gesetzt und das war eine ziemliche Action und das war eigentlich ganz interessant. Aber das war auch irgendwie, also ich mag es immer noch, das Glasdach, das ist schon relativ alt, fast 20 Jahre alt, aber das kam auch aus einer konservatorischen Logik eigentlich. Also ich weiß nicht, ob da auch so Fotos drin sind vom alten Kassensaal, der war halt relativ undicht schon, da standen dann beim Regen immer so diese Regenauffangbecken und so, da stand dann in der Kassenhalle und das Problem war eben, dass das nicht sanierbar war. Also der Kassensaal hat halt zwei Ebenen, unten diese schöne Milchglasgewölbe, die jeder kennt und oben dann noch ein normales Glasdach, das kann man sich auch anschauen, jetzt kann man ja rauf, also wenn man im dritten Stock steht am Gang, sieht man ja direkt das alte Glasdach und das war halt so dünn konstruiert, dass man das irgendwie nicht mehr ertüchtigen konnte. Also man konnte es nicht mehr sanieren, sodass es halt genau so wie es halt damals war, wieder ist, aber das waren halt dann Glasplatten, die eingekittet waren oder so, also da gab es jetzt tatsächlich keine Leisten, die dann noch drauf waren und für die war auch kein Platz und die hätte die Konstruktion nicht mehr getragen und so weiter. Das war dann die einzige Möglichkeit, das irgendwie nachhaltig zu sanieren, da oben noch was drauf zu setzen und das haben wir dann auch gemacht.

Speaker 1 {02:50}

Um das dann quasi nochmal mehr zu schützen?

Speaker 2 {03:41}

Genau, richtig und das war halt dann, also kommen dann alle anderen möglichen Probleme, also Brandschutz ist ein Thema, Lüftung ist ein Thema, Belichtung ist ein Thema und so weiter und das muss man halt dann lösen, aber das war eigentlich das, wo man meistens die Intervention sieht. Alle anderen Sachen haben wir eigentlich sehr zurückhaltend, vorsichtig renoviert und in den, also die Bürobereiche natürlich auch, weil die halt nicht zeitgemäß waren und da gibt es halt auch wenig Spielraum, damit ein Gebäude zeitgemäß genutzt werden kann, muss ich halt, weil es ein Büro ist, die Leute die Technik und Infrastruktur zur Verfügung stellen, dass sie halt vernünftig arbeiten können, sonst wird dort keiner einziehen. Das hat sich jetzt schon viel getan.

Speaker 1 {03:41}

Also dann auch in dem Bereich, zum Beispiel bei der Kassenhalle, es war ja so Denkmalgeschützt, aber wenn es zum Beispiel nicht so Denkmalgeschützt gewesen wäre, dann

hätten sie es wahrscheinlich auch so bewahrt?

Speaker 2 {03:54}

Ja, die Kassenhalle sowieso. Also das ist ja ein ziemlich guter Raum und er ist aus vielen Gründen wichtig. Erstens weil er als Raum schön ist, aber auch weil er in der Werkfolge von Otto Wagner seinen besonderen Platz einnimmt. Also es gibt Bauten von ihm vorher, wo er sich das erarbeitet hat, quasi architektonisch. Also wenn man sich anschaut, welche Gebäude er gemacht hat, also diese Idee des überdachten Lichthofs kommt öfter vor und da sieht man halt echt gut, wie, das ist natürlich für Architekten interessant, für sonst niemanden, aber Architekturgeschichten sind spannend, wie sich Architekten ihre Entwürfe über Projekte drüber selber entwickeln. Es ist nicht so, dass die genialen Ideen dann plötzlich kamen, wie die Aufgabe gekommen ist, sondern da gab es schon jahrzehntelange Vorarbeiten und Ausprobieren und bei einer kleinen Bank schon mal machen und schauen, wie das funktioniert und hin und her. Und das ist spannend. Und der Raum funktioniert halt auch nur, wenn die seitlichen Bereiche klar sichtbar sind, sonst gibt es diese Schiffs ähnliche Atmosphäre nicht und da war es besonders wichtig auszuräumen. Und die Kassenhalle funktioniert ja auch nur mit hellen Materialien, weil sonst dieser Lichteffect nicht entsteht. Und in den 70er Jahren gab es halt nur dunkles Holz und solche Sachen und das haben wir halt alles raus geräumt.

Speaker 1 {05:32}

Würden Sie denn sagen, dass es sich bis jetzt, weil es ja die Idee ja auch war für Bank Institutionen das so zu bauen und für Effizienz so, dass man das immer noch spürt in den Gebäuden dann, dass sich die Idee eben immer noch weiterführt, dass eben jetzt auch so ist, dass man es jetzt immer noch richtig spürt?

Speaker 2 {05:52}

Also die Idee, also Banken waren ja damals nicht so, sondern Banken waren ja damals anders dekoriert, das sage ich jetzt mal so. Also es ist halt auch nicht anders, aber damals war ja diese semiologische Komponente, also ich schaue was an und verstehe, was es ist und das muss mir quasi die Nachricht geben, die ich hören will. Also eine Bank muss irgendwie sicher sein zum Beispiel, oder eine Bank muss fest sein und muss teuer sein und Nobel, weil sonst glaubt man nicht das sie viel Geld haben. Die alten Banken waren ja viel holz lastiger und viel nobler und viel mehr Teppich und hin und her. Und die Postsparkasse war das nicht, weil sie ja auch quasi keine noble Bank war, sondern die Postsparkasse wurde ja damals gegründet für den kleinen Mann und hat halt auch, grundsätzlich so ähnlich wie die Post, hat quasi die Geldbeträge damals in diese Riesen Monarchie, ich weiß nicht, von heute Ukraine bis nach Südtirol oder so, transportiert. Das heißt, da gibt es ganz andere, viele kleine Beträge und viele kleine Sparbücher, nicht riesige reiche Leute und dementsprechend war halt das Ambiente da auch viel, viel moderner und viel reduzierter und viel klarer und viel einfacher. Das hat der Otto Wagner da relativ genial in dem Wettbewerb rüber gebracht, wenn man sich die anderen Projekte anschaut. Aber zum Beispiel der erste Stock, ich weiß nicht, wenn Sie reinkönnen, schauen Sie mal, der ist halt immer noch sehr stuffy, also der ist immer noch so, wie man sich halt eine Bankzentrale vorstellen würde, wo der Direktor sitzt und Zigarre raucht. Waren sie schon mal am Eiffelturm. Also das ist ja ganz oben, da hat der Gustav Eiffel so ein Büro, also er hat den Turm selber gebaut, weil ja die Kosten sonst keiner finanzieren wollte. Also da oben so ein kleines Büro eingerichtet und wie der Turm dann ein großer Erfolg war, hat er dann dort eben so alle möglichen Leute empfangen. Und dieses Büro gibt es noch und das ist noch so eingerichtet, wie es damals eingerichtet wurde. Das sitzt ja auch eine ziemlich peinliche Eiffelfigur, sitzt da drinnen, das finde ich nicht so gut. Aber das war auch so ein Herrenzimmer, mit großem Foteu und Teppich und mit Scherenschreibtisch und so weiter. Das ist ganz

interessant, weil der Inhalt nicht immer mitwandert. Der Eiffelturm war damals sicher das modernste Gebäude und man würde sich erwarten, dass das Interieur das dann reflektiert, aber das passiert natürlich gar nicht. Bei der Postsparkasse ist es ganz ähnlich, das war von außen das modernste, effizienteste, schnellste, einfachste zu reinigende Gebäude, aber bei der Chefetage sitzt man immer noch wie vor 50 Jahre früher oder 100 Jahre früher.

Speaker 1 {09:16}

Ich finde es auch spannend, weil sie sagen, dass es total modern ist, aber dann auch zum Beispiel, weil er alles entworfen hat, auch die Stühle und dann habe ich nur gesehen, dass an den Stühlen unten verschiedene Beschläge gibt und dass die unterschiedlich hoch sind, je nach der Hierarchie. Das finde ich auch spannend.

Speaker 2 {09:43}

Sie sind schon sehr gut informiert. Das ganze Gebäude ist voll mit diesen Details. Nur, dass irgendetwas für die breite Masse hieß damals ja nicht, vor 120 Jahren oder so, dass diese monarchistischen Hierarchien aufgehoben waren. Die gab es natürlich immer noch. Die Stühle sind ein super Beispiel, weil der Stuhl ist immer der gleiche und der Beschlag zeigt dir dann, in welches Geschoss er gehört. Auch die Tür Materialien sind so. Im ersten Stock gibt es Eichentüren, im anderen Stock gibt es billigeres Holz, das dann als Eiche angestrichen wurde und so weiter. Das ist etwas Interessantes. In jedem Detail war das zu sehen.

Speaker 1 {10:35}

Eine Bank will ja auch immer darstellen, dass man ihr auch vertrauen kann, damit man auch das Geld hergeben kann. Ich habe mal einen Artikel über die Postsparkasse gelesen. Dadurch, dass das so abstrakt ist und dadurch, dass Otto Wagner ganz genau zeigt, wie sie konstruiert worden ist, dass dadurch auch eine Vertrauensbasis da ist. Er zeigt genau, wie das Gebäude konstruiert wird und dadurch stellt sich die Bank als vertrauenswürdig dar.

Speaker 2: {11:10}

Ja genau, aber auch, dass zum Beispiel die Tresortüren alle gezeigt wurden und so weiter. Und zum Beispiel, dass im Tiefparterre alles vergittert ist. Das sind auch so Sachen, wo man als Kunde sieht, dass keiner einbrechen will oder kann, da bringe ich mein Geld her. Diese Gitter im Tiefparterre, die gab es immer schon, eben genau aus dem Grund. Und im Hochparterre sind sie erst in der Zwischenkriegszeit montiert worden. Wahrscheinlich, weil die Zeiten da ein bisschen unruhiger waren, dass man sich das wünschen würde. Und die haben wir dann wieder weggenommen. Die gibt es jetzt nicht mehr. Weil es natürlich, wenn du dann arbeitest, ist es nicht super, wenn du wie im Gefängnis dann immer rausschauen musst. Und das war auch okay. Im Tiefparterre wollten wir es nicht machen, hätten sie es auch nicht erlaubt. Und dann gab es, also gerade in einem der ersten zwei Monate, war eins von diesen Gittern ausgebaut im Tiefparterre, weil die Baufirmen einfach Baumaterial durch das Fenster reingebracht haben. Und das wurde entfernt. Dann haben sofort am nächsten Tag vier Leute angerufen. Also vier BAWAG-Kunden, die haben gesagt, Moment mal, wieso entfernt sie die Gitter? Das total war lustig. Also diese Idee, dass etwas sicher ist, wenn es vergittert ist, also das gab es vor 15 Jahren immer noch. Das ist immer noch irgendwie geistig da.

Speaker 1 {12:44}

Und wie hat man, weil sie gesagt haben, dass man die Tresortüren zum Beispiel gesehen hat, weil die waren ja unten im Tiefparterre.

Speaker 2 {12:51}

Nein, es gibt da oben eine. Also wenn man oben rein geht, ist links so eine riesige Tresortüre, die ist offen und fixiert. Also dass man eben sieht, wie sicher das ist. Und das waren auch die Counter, die haben früher völlig anders ausgeschaut, die waren viel geschlossener. Also die jetzigen, also diese Tresen sind eben alle aus den 70er Jahren noch. Die haben wir dann nicht mehr umgebaut, weil ein Rückbau war nicht möglich war. Also früher war das ja bis oben geschlossen, weil ja jeder quasi Geld dahinter hatte. Das gibt es ja schon lange nicht mehr von der Bank. Jetzt braucht man diese Sicherheitsvorkehrungen nicht mehr. Und die waren so verändert, dass man sie nicht mehr zurückführen konnte. Und deswegen sind die einfach so geblieben, wie sie in den 70er Jahren waren. Aber da gibt es auch diese, also das ist ja semiologisch, oder? Das ist ein Gitter und das ist zu und in der Mitte gibt es dieses Häusschen und das gibt es eh immer noch. Wo dann eben der Aufseher sitzt und schaut, das ist Panopticon-ähnliche, dass keiner was stiehlt und so. Das ist schon sehr, natürlich sehr auf Überwachung aufgebaut. So war die Gesellschaft damals eben auch.

Speaker 1 {14:12}

Gab es zum Beispiel so eine Entscheidung, wo ihr lange gezögert habt, so im Prozess, ob ihr das wirklich macht, oder?

Speaker 2 {14:37}

Ja, also wir haben relativ lang überlegt, ob man, also im Kassensaal gibt es eine große Intervention, und das ist, wenn man reingeht, gibt es links und rechts diese Seitentrakte, wo früher die Pulte war. Und da ist jetzt eine Öffnung drinnen. Also die Seitenwände vom Kassensaal haben riesige Löcher und da kann man in die nächsten Räume reingehen. Und die gab es vorher nicht, weil früher die Pult Reihe ging so durch. Und der Wunsch war aber damals von der Bank, dass man die Kassenhalle mit den dahinter liegenden Büros verbindet. Weil da waren die Beratungszonen, die gab es ja natürlich 1906 in der Form nicht, weil es ja noch keine moderne Bank war. Da haben wir dann so relativ große Löcher in die Wände gemacht, die man dann wieder mit so großen weißen Türen verschließen konnte. Das heißt, wenn es zu ist, sieht man die Löcher eigentlich gar nicht. Dann ist der weiße Rand wieder erhalten, aber unter Tag stehen die offen. Und dann musste vorne jeweils ein Pult weg. Und das war schon eine relativ lange Diskussion, weil es den Raum schon extrem verändert hat. Aber eigentlich hat es dann gepasst. Ich glaube, das hat sich gut entwickelt. Das stört auch nicht. Es gibt eine Offenheit. Die finde ich auch wichtig ist. Ich mache das schon lange, aber ich bin selber auch immer überrascht, wie Sachen tatsächlich ausschauen, wie sie gebaut sind, die man sich eigentlich anders vorgestellt hat, als man sie überlegt hat. Das war ein relativ langer Diskussionsprozess.

Speaker 1 {16:22}

Wie ist oder war bei euch der Prozess? Bauen Sie dann auch mit Modellen? Oder ist es viel mit Plänen ausprobieren?

Speaker 2: {16:30}

Damals war es noch sehr skizzen- und zeichenlastig. Heute machen wir viel mit Modellen. Diese Fassaden z.B. vom Dorotheum, wo wir jetzt gerade general sanieren, die Fassade geändert werden soll. Da gibt es eigentlich fast nur ein Modell, weil man an der Zeichnung nicht sieht, wo was ankommt. Da geht es um Tiefe. Was kann ich jetzt noch wegnehmen und was nicht. Aber da hilft mir der 3D-Drucker extrem, muss man fairerweise sagen. Das hat es damals nicht gegeben. Damals haben wir noch klassisch skizziert und gebastelt. Kleine Modelle gab es schon, die gibt

es immer wieder. Aber ich kann mich nicht erinnern, dass wir ein Kassensaal Modell gebaut hätten.

Speaker 1 {17:31}

Wenn Sie jetzt rückblickend schauen, würden Sie sagen, es gibt irgendetwas, was Sie anders gemacht hätten, wenn Sie es jetzt sehen?

Speaker 2 {17:42}

Das ist ganz viel, ja. Klar. Ich habe gestern darüber geredet, lustigerweise. Wir haben jetzt beim Dorotheum auch ein Glasdach über dem Hof. Wir haben über das Glasdach geredet. Das Glasdach würde ich heute anders machen. Weil es damals nicht fertig überlegt war, finde ich. Von unten sieht es super aus. Was ja auch die Idee ist, weil ja alle von unten nach oben schauen, sehr schön ausdifferenziert und minimiert von der Konstruktion her, der Statiker einen relativ guten Job gemacht hat. Von oben ist es aber nicht sehr schön. Wenn man am Dach steht, ist es nicht designt. Das stört auf den ersten Blick nicht, aber natürlich nervt es mich immer mehr, weil es ja so ist, dass man sich immer mehr Gedanken machen muss, was man da machen kann. Und dann ist es so, dass man sich immer mehr Gedanken macht, es nervt mich immer mehr. Google Maps gab es damals auch noch nicht. Damals hat das auch keiner gesehen. Jetzt sieht es halt jeder zum Beispiel. Dass die Ränder nicht durch-entworfen sind. Das würde ich ganz anders machen. Bei der Restaurierung würde man wahrscheinlich auch einiges anders machen. Einfach weil sich der Stand der Technik oder der Wissensstand weiterentwickelt hat. Oder die Art und Weise, wie man an denkmalpflegerische Themen herangeht, hat sich in den letzten 20 Jahren auch verändert.

Speaker 1 {19:27}

Inwieweit würden Sie sagen?

Speaker 2 {19:30}

Einerseits kann man es gut oder schlecht finden, dass das Klima viel konservativer ist. Sachen, die man vor 20 Jahren auch relativ leicht gemacht hätte, sind heute undenkbar. Finde ich persönlich gar nicht so schlecht. Es muss mehr überlegt werden, mehr diskutiert werden. Die Frage, was für ein Denkmal charakteristisch ist, ist viel besser aufgearbeitet. Als das früher der Fall war. Früher hat man mehr Adoption zugelassen. Das ist heute ein bisschen schwieriger. Das ist auch nicht immer ein Vorteil. Die Idee ist ja schon, ich muss ein Gebäude so weit umbauen können, dass der, der es verwenden will, es verwenden kann. Sonst wird das Gebäude irgendwann leer sein. Das ist das Schlechteste, was einem Gebäude passieren kann. Wenn es leer steht. Dann wird es nicht genutzt, nicht geheizt und wird es nicht saniert, dann verfällt es. Das Ziel muss immer sein, das Gebäude so umnutzen zu können, dass es wieder funktioniert. Andererseits würde ich einige Sachen wahrscheinlich nicht mehr so leichtfertig machen. Etwas wegnehmen oder so. Bei uns hat sich der Prozess natürlich weiterentwickelt. Die Frage, was will ich erhalten? Was ist uns wichtig? Es gibt das, was den Bauherren wichtig ist. Das ist immer das eine. Dann gibt es halt das. Als Architekt muss ich vermitteln, so verstehe ich das zumindest. Ich muss dem Bauherrn schon sagen, das ist eh ok, aber ich weiß nicht, ob das die beste aller Ideen ist, wenn wir jetzt da dieses Loch hinein machen aus diesen und jenen Gründen. Und dann gibt es auch das, was das Bundesdenkmalamt will. Und wir sind irgendwo dazwischen, da muss man dann versuchen zu vermitteln. Und dabei seine Ideen entwickeln, was am Charakter des Gebäudes, was will ich erhalten? Wo kann ich das großzügig abbrechen? Was kann ich dazu fügen? Bei dieser Frage zum Beispiel, wenn etwas neu kommt, in welchem Stil das sein darf, wenn man eine neue Brandschutztür braucht, das ist ein ganz einfaches Beispiel, dann muss die dann historisierend sein? Oder darf es eine neue, schöne Brandschutztür sein? So hätte man vor

20 Jahren gesagt, ja klar, neu, kein Thema. Und mittlerweile macht das keiner. Das ist schade. Diesen Kontrast mag ich schon gern. Da hat sich viel getan. Natürlich auch bei der Technik. Wie analysiere ich jetzt z.B. Putz? Da gibt es in den letzten 20 Jahren technisch wahnsinnige Ideen und Innovationen. Welche Materialien habe ich zur Verfügung, um das wiederherzustellen? Aber das ist auch einfach oft mehr Handwerk als Architektur.

Speaker 1 {23:03}

Wenn Sie sagen, dass die Brandschutztüre jetzt mehr historisiert dargestellt wird, ist es um das Bild nach außen hin zu behalten? Oder von dem Gebäude? Was ist der Hintergrund, dass es jetzt eher konservativer ist?

Speaker 2 {23:16}

Ich glaube, es ist der allgemeine Wunsch. Dieses Ding wieder so zu sehen, wie es vielleicht einmal war. Und nicht so, wie es jetzt ist. Diese Idee der zeitlichen Schichtung zum Beispiel. Die es immer gab. Früher hatte jeder einen barocken Altar in der katholischen Kirche. Das war ein Thema zum Beispiel. Und dass diese Schichten dann für sich selber auch Teil des Gebäudes werden, das gibt es in der Form nicht mehr so. Carlos scarpa zum Beispiel, das ganze Palazzo, das hat überhaupt nichts zu tun mit dem. Aber da gibt es eine Sensibilität, was die Materialien, die Kompositionen betrifft. Das sind gemäße Additionen zu einem alten schönen Ding. Ich weiß schon, dass nicht jeder Carlos scarpa ist. Und das auch nicht alles so klappt, wenn man es nicht so gut kann wie er. Aber die Herangehensweise hat sich ein bisschen geändert. Was wir auch machen, dort wo es nicht wirklich kritisch ist, da sind wir auch relativ gnadenlos zeitgenössisch. Das ist bei der Postsparkasse, aber kein gutes Beispiel, weil sie aufgrund ihrer Einzigartigkeit sehr im Fokus von allem steht. Und da ist man sich natürlich ein bisschen eingeschränkt. Wir machen auch viele Ringstraßenparlairs, es gibt mehrere, da ist es nicht ganz so kritisch. Es gibt schon ein paar sehr schöne, aber es ist halt einfach ein Wohnhaus am Ring. Da muss man schon aufpassen. Da gibt es Bereiche, wo man mehr machen kann. Da haben wir auch schon teilweise ganze Trakte abgebrochen und neu gebaut im Hintergrund. Wenn sich zur Straße ein vernünftiges Bild ergibt, dann kann man das schon noch machen. Die Sachen sind dann halt auch zeitgemäß. Das ist auch schon wieder zwei Jahre her. Bei solchen Sachen sind die Interventionen dann schon sehr zeitgemäß. Das Stiegenhaus selber ist natürlich super saniert. Aber da sind halt schon die Türen neu. Da sind die alten Türen, die gab es noch, die hat man neu gemacht. Und die Stiegen sind dann schon zeitgemäß. Ich mag auch diesen Kontrast gerne.

Speaker 1 {26:24}

Es ist halt immer so ein Spiel, dann auch, wie sehr zeitgemäß kann man sein.

Speaker 2 {26:30}

Ja, natürlich, das ist immer die große Frage. Aber was wir jetzt schon machen, das Beispiel ist, das Schiefe ergibt sich jetzt nicht aus Lust und Laune, sondern weil der Treppenlauf dahinter so schief läuft. Und das einfach die maximale Größe ist, ohne dass man diese Treppe angreifen muss. Also ich mag das immer gerne, wenn man so Argumente findet, die dann so ausschauen, wie sie ausschauen. Wenn man die Gebäudeloggik vollzieht, dann sind die Sachen meistens nicht mehr symmetrisch. Sondern asymmetrisch, was darauf presst, weil etwas meistens nicht funktioniert. Also es kommt ganz darauf an, bei der Postsparkasse war es halt tatsächlich sehr wenig. Man muss ja sehr behutsam sein.

Speaker 1 {27:42}

Auch wenn man online viel über die Postsparkasse liest, merkt man richtig, dass es für viele Leute wichtig ist. Ein wichtiges Gebäude. Und dass es auch genauso erhalten bleibt. Man merkt auch, dass viele möchten, dass es genauso erhalten bleibt.

Speaker 2 {28:00}

Ja, ich glaube, dass es unter Architekten oder bei den Leuten, die sich damit beschäftigen, sowieso so, denn je länger man sich damit beschäftigt, desto cooler ist es eigentlich. Also klar gibt es diesen formalen Sprung. Vom Historismus über den Jugendstil eigentlich in die Moderne. Es hat ja auch schon ganz viele moderne Architekturelemente drinnen. Die letzten unrealisierten Hallen, die er dann 1916 noch gezeichnet hat. Es könnte genauso gut ein Bauhaus-Ding in Weimar sein. Er hat es ja nicht mehr erlebt, das ist wie so eine Zwischenstation. Aber ich glaube, die Wiener an sich haben ein ambivalentes Verhältnis zur Postsparkasse Jeder kennt es weil es so aussieht wie kein anderes. Nicht jeder findet es schön, aber es steht schon 120 Jahre da. Deswegen mag man es auch gut. Es ist ja auch ein schönes Gebäude. Wie man sich konstruktiv damit auseinandersetzt, wie es damals gebaut worden ist und was da alles zum ersten Mal ausprobiert worden ist, das ist schon faszinierend. Wie die Fußbodenaufbauten damals waren und wie sie damals diese Stahlbetondecken betoniert haben, ohne zu wissen, wie man es rechnet. Das war alles ein Try- und Error-Verfahren. Das ist schon interessant. Die Fensterkonstruktionen sind innovativ und noch nie zuvor so gebaut worden. Das ist super interessant. Nicht alles hat sich durchgesetzt, aber es ist unglaublich viel drin. Es ist auch unglaublich präzise gebaut. Die Einreichpläne von damals, die Bewegungspläne sind relativ genau kodiert und das Gebäude weicht überhaupt nicht davon ab. Die größte Abweichung ist vielleicht 2 cm. Bei diesem Riesending, das ist wirklich beeindruckend. Das würde man heute gar nicht mehr zusammenbringen. Es braucht Toleranzen. 2 cm war die Größe. Das war damals kein Problem. Es ist schon hochwertig gebaut.

Speaker 1 {30:35}

Auch mit den Bolzen an der Fassade. Da hat man total lange gedacht, dass das Ornamente sind oder dass das gar nicht konstruktiv ist. Dann ist man draufgekommen, dass es konstruktiv auch nötig war.

Speaker 2 {30:48}

Ja, aber nur am Anfang. Das ist relativ komplex. Der gegenwärtige Stand ist, dass zu dem Zeitpunkt, als wir das saniert haben, niemand die Fassade jemals angegriffen hat. Die wurde nur einmal in den 90ern sandgestrahlt. Saniert, das sieht man auch sehr schlecht. Wenn man jetzt rumgeht, sieht man, dass diese Nägel, das sind Stahlnägel und hatten so Alu Köpfe drauf. Ein Stoppel drauf. Die hat man damals nicht abgedeckt. Die sind ganz rau und weich. Die sollten aber eigentlich glänzend sein. Viele Köpfe fehlen jetzt auch schon. Das ist in den 90ern nicht fachgerecht saniert worden. Damals gab es diese Erkenntnis auch nicht. Da war auch der Stand der Wissenschaft, dass es Deko ist. Aber da gibt es sogar ein Foto. Das ist ein Foto, wo man es sieht. Da sieht man es noch. Das ist oben auf der Attika. Über dem Haupteingang, wo das Gesims ist mit diesen Grenzen. Da sieht man, wie das funktioniert hat. Wenn die Platte springt, dann heißt das, dass diese Nieten tragend ist. Damit war klar, dass sie mitträgt. Dass sie fest verankert ist. Da sieht man es auch. Da sieht man diese Putzflecken, mit denen das dann befestigt ist. Der eigentliche Punkt ist schon, dass das eigentlich ein Deko-Ding ist. Das sind typische Jugendstil-Elemente. Aber während der Zeit, in den ersten paar Tagen, während der Putz getrocknet ist, hat dieser Nagel die Platte fixiert, damit sie nicht runterfällt. Dann hat der Putz die Platte gehalten.

Speaker 1 {32:59}

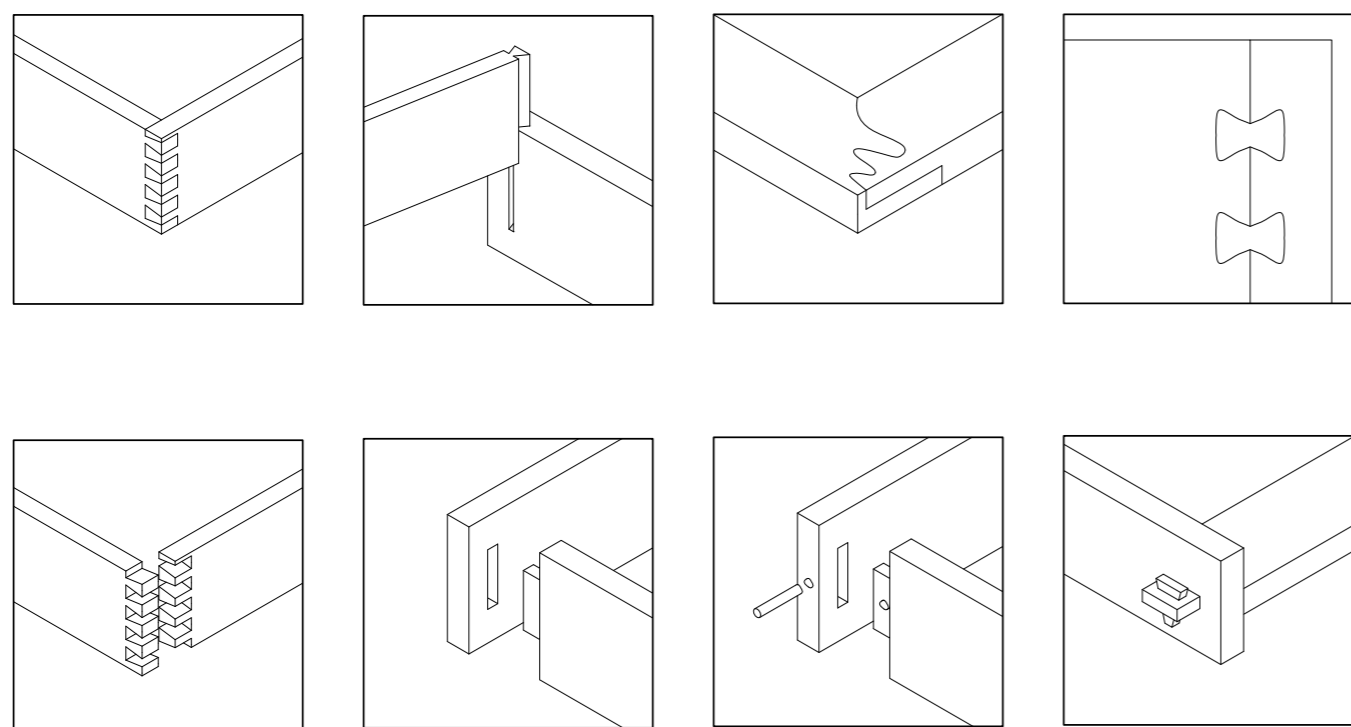
Das ist schon ein echt ein spannendes Gebäude. Während Sie saniert haben, haben Sie die neue Nutzung schon gewusst? Welche neue Nutzung dann in das Gebäude kommen wird?

Speaker 2 {33:14}

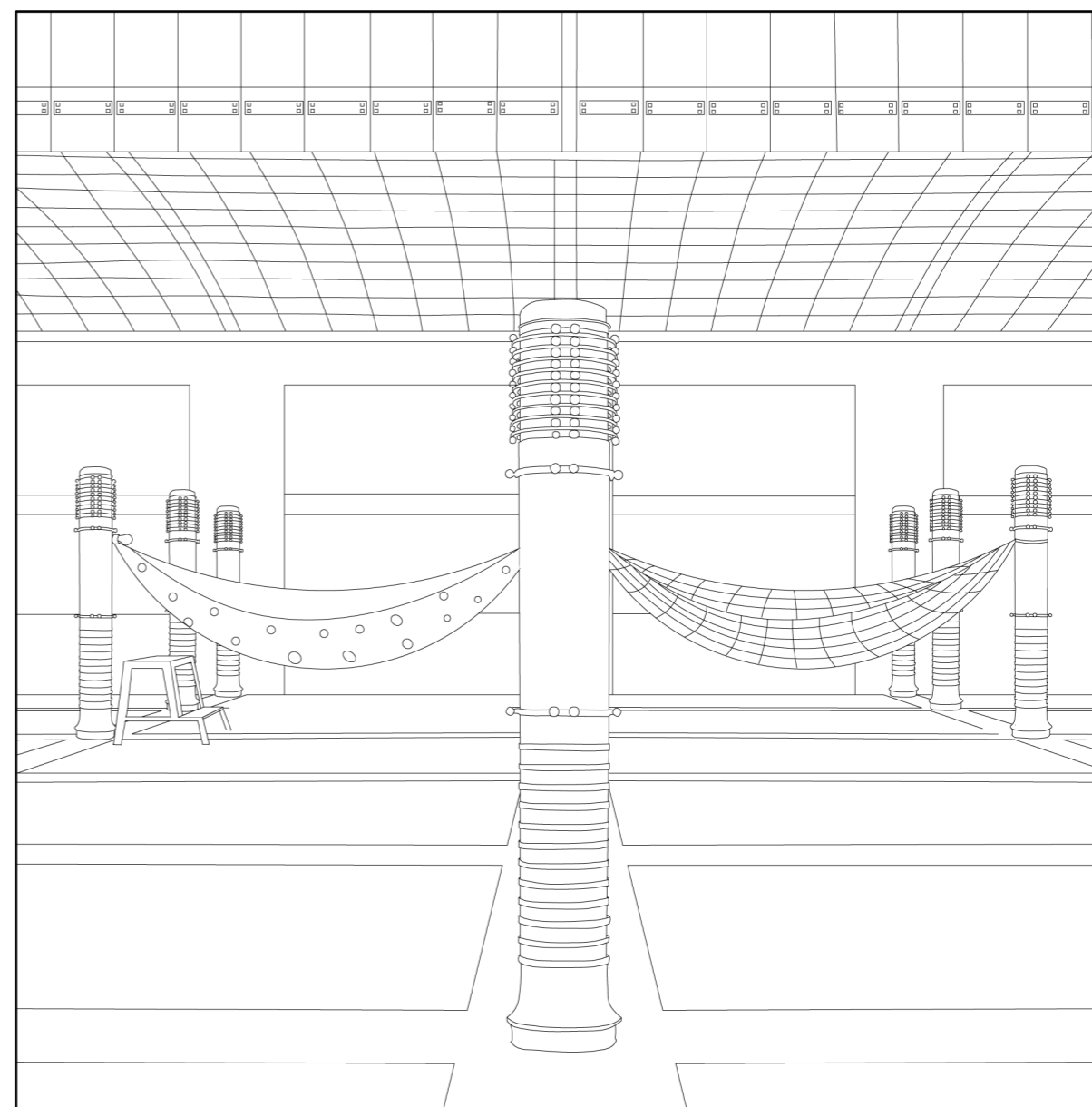
Es gab keine neue Nutzung. Das war vorher ein Büro. Das war vorher ein Büro. Nachher ein Büro. Die Belegschaften sind zusammengelegt worden von den beiden Banken. Die Aufteilung in den 70er-Jahren waren kleine Abteilbüros. Die Bawag hatte Großraumbüros. Das war jetzt auch nicht riesig. Otto Wagner hatte früher keine Zwischenwand. Das war ein Zimmer. Das war ein großes Zimmer. Drei, vier Achsen waren schon immer gemeinsam. Wir haben das System entwickelt, wo man diese Dinge überall aufstellen konnte. Die Nutzung ist geändert. Das war ein Büro. Dann ist es wieder ein Büro geworden. Wir haben dann Funktionen ergänzt. Wir haben eine Kindergarten eingebaut. Oben gab es einen Speisesaal, wo viele Personen arbeiteten. Wir haben halt relativ viel ergänzt. Aber an sich hat sich die Funktion bei unserer Sanierung nicht geändert.

Speaker 1 {34:47}

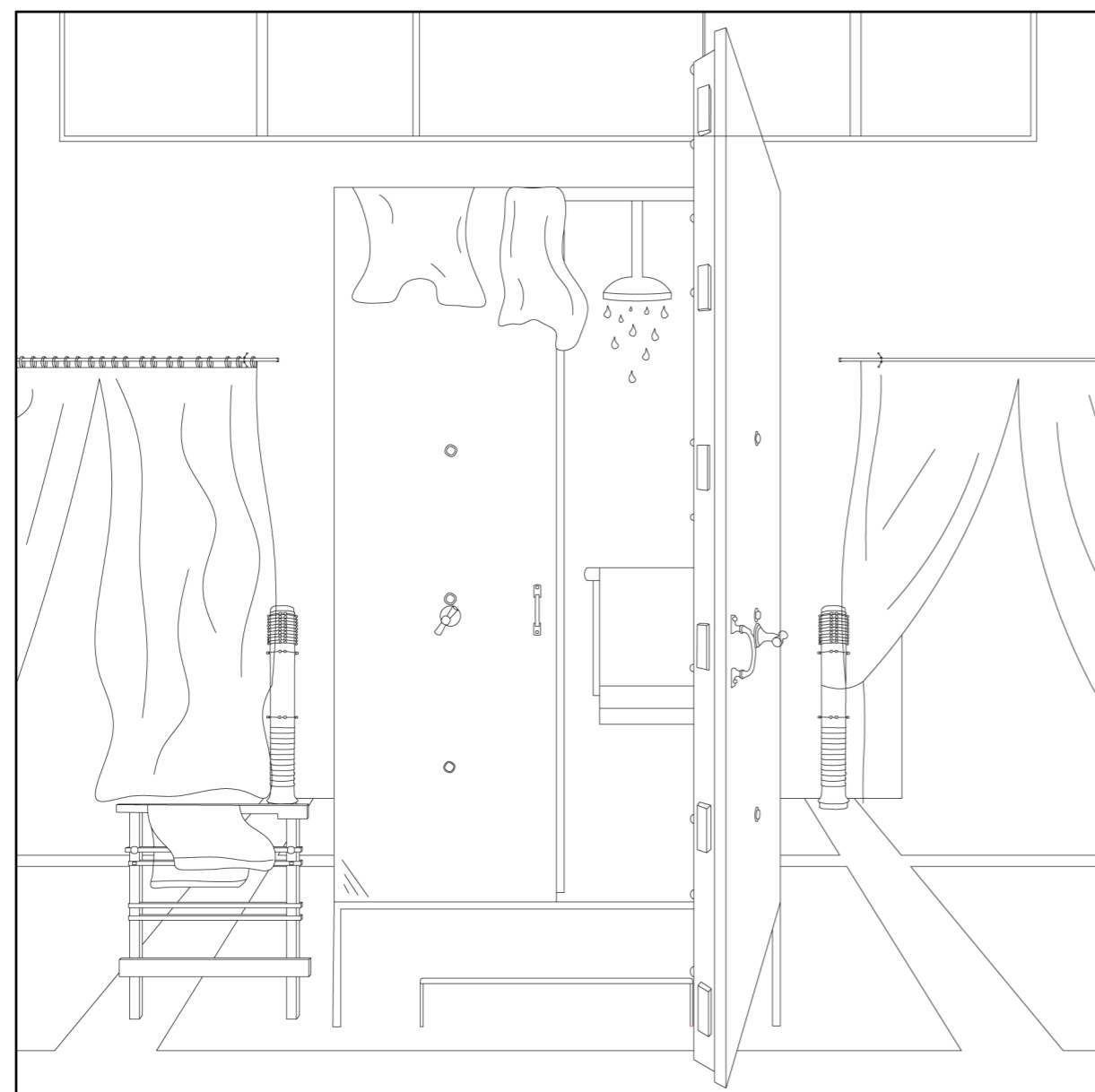
Okay. Danke. Das war es mit meinen Fragen.



Explorations in Wood Joinery  
Only timber-to-timber joints were explored, without glue or additional materials. Author's drawing



Early exploration through line drawing.

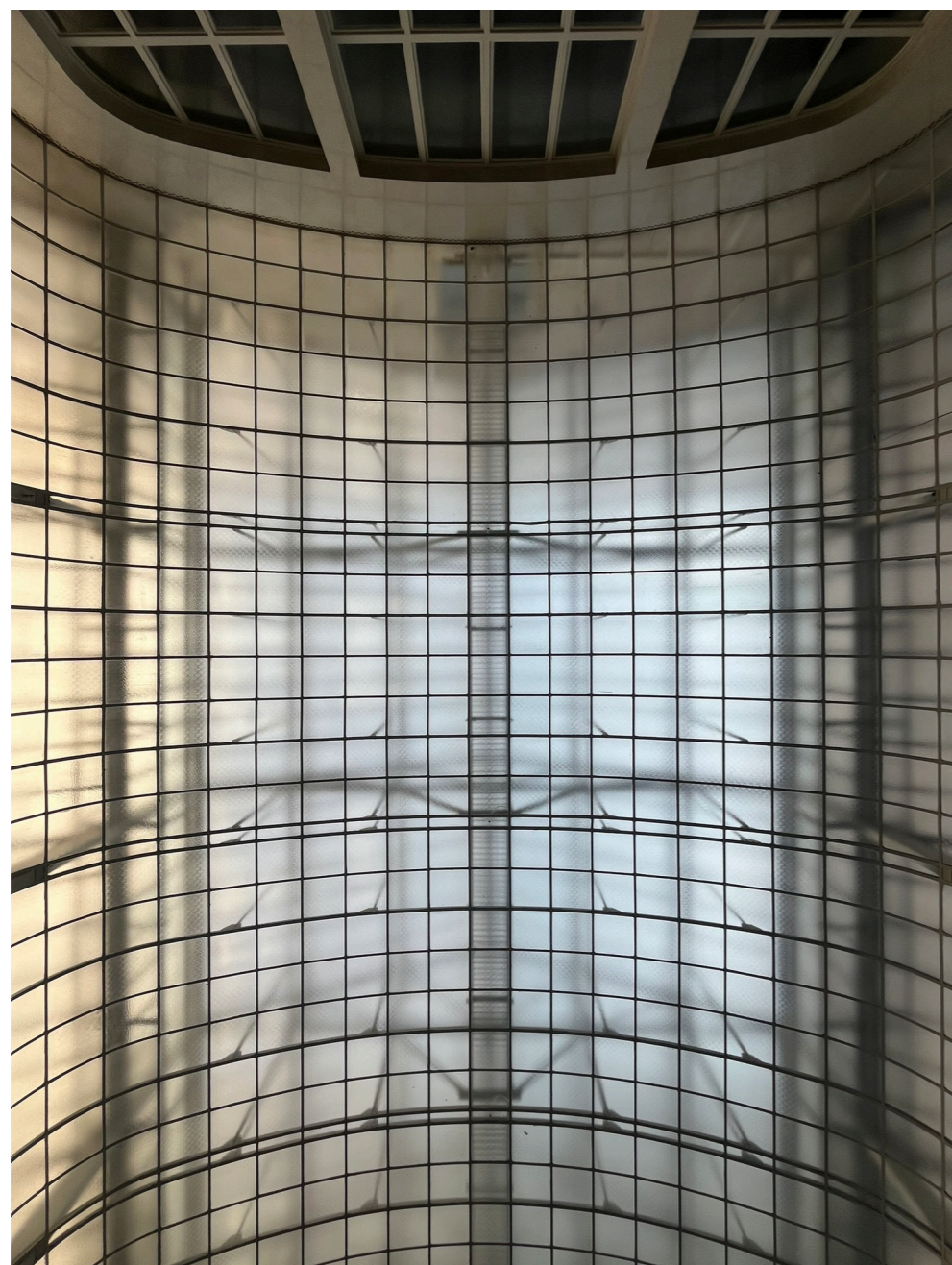


Early exploration through line drawing.

ADDITIONAL IMAGES



ping-pong table in grande cashier hall



glass roof in grande casheir hall



column detail in grande cashier hall (café exchange in the background)



*door handle (designed by otto wagner)*



*window handle (designed by otto wagner)*





glass roof addition from Hoppe & Partners Renovation  
2003-2016

#### Note on the Use of AI

AI tools were used during the writing process of this thesis. ChatGPT was used to help structure the text and to assist with spelling, grammar, language, and cohesion in selected sections. All ideas behind the written texts and in general, as well as the analyses, design decisions, and overall argumentation, are the author's own work.

All AI-generated suggestions were critically reviewed, edited, and adapted by the author. In the prompts, specific emphasis was placed on changing only the most important parts and preserving the language and tone of the original text. All AI-supported content was based on the author's own written text, thoughts, and ideas.

As an example, this text on the use of AI tools was developed from the following prompt of the author:

*"I need to include in the Appendix of my thesis a note on AI. I wrote this text, based on exemplary AI appendices that I found. Please check for grammar or spelling issues and refine the language of the text. Please change only words that need to be changed for reasons of cohesion, easier readability and grammar or spelling errors. Please also highlight what you changed and explain why. This is the text on the note on the use of AI: AI tools were used during the writing process of this thesis. Chat GPT was used to help structure the text while also serving as assistant for improving spelling mistakes, grammar, language and cohesion in selected sections. All ideas behind the written texts, all ideas in general, analyses, design and overall argumentation are the author's own work. Additionally, were all AI-generated suggestion critically reviewed, edited and adapted. There was a specific emphasize in the prompts to always change just the most important parts and keeping the language of the text. All AI generated content was based on the own written text, thought and ideas of the author."*

Elisa Hecher

2026

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