



Bananenhaus
Ausstellungsstrasse 100 – 8005
Zürich

October 2022

Storybook

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Chair of Affective Architectures
Chair of History and Theory of Art

100 things to see
a on-going collection

High up on the balcony stand two figures, mirrored twins. They have frozen smiles on their faces and big, open eyes that make them look sceptical, a little puzzled. (♣ *title page*)

They are round: round eyebrows; round jug ears; round lips that curve above the chin. They are almost as tall as they are wide, like children with adults faces, with huge feet and hands.

The legs are invisible under a kind of cloak, perhaps a long shirt, only a flat longitudinal foot peeks out from underneath. Arms and hands have neatly been divided into three parts: the upper arm is almost square due to its bulging biceps, the lower part disappears into the large hand. In one hand they carry their tool, a broad, long sickle and slung over the shoulder a bag for the bananas. A wide-brimmed hat protects the curly hair from the sun.

These blackamoors, standing high up on the Bananenhaus, were created in 1926 by a local artist whose name is as forgotten as the workers he depicted. When the Limmathaus was built five years later, the banana ripening plant disappeared into a side street that was not wide enough to give a good view of the figures. (♣ *invisibility*, p. 8)

Only the lettering B A N A N E N (♣ *typography*, p. 10) on the south-east façade hints at the past of Ausstellungsstrasse 100: it is said to have been the first banana ripening factory in Switzerland (Amt für Städtebau, 2015). This is the story of colonial and trade relations in which European masters owned large tracts of land in Central and South America and exercised enormous political power to secure their profits (cf. wobei 4/20). It is also the story of the rise of the banana as Switzerland's most popular fruit. Neo-colonial trade structures make it possible for consumers to eat a banana every three days (Vogel, 2015).



At the beginning of the 20th century, the first reeper ships enabled the traditional fruit trading company “Fyffes” to import bananas from the West Indies to England (Fyffes, 2021) and later to the Netherlands. They were then transported by rail to the various ripening plants throughout Europe, where “the proper tropical climate is imitated, so that the banana centre [...] has its own equator” (NZZ, 1926).

Stephen Taylor started as an apprentice at Fyffes in England and later built up the import business in the Netherlands and in 1926 the banana headquarters in Zurich. He worked with the architect Jakob Geiger, who ran a construction company together with Albert Gull (Gustav Gull's brother) (Amt für Städtebau, 2015).

The industrial quarter between the main railway station and the Escher Wyss factories developed into a hotspot for small-scale industry. Foodstuffs were imported into the city in large quantities by rail and sold to the intermediate trade at the Vorbahnhof (today Zollstrasse, Neugasse / Ackerstrasse). The proximity to the main food distribution point and the location in the working district, where both workers and consumers were located, made the site near Limmatplatz ideal for the establishment of a banana factory (Springmann, Tagesanzeiger, 1979).

Geiger and Taylor envisioned the factory to be traditional as well as modern and highly functional. This led to a compromise in the architecture of the building itself:

The grid of the representative façade is completely independent of the grid of the reinforced concrete pillars, and the façade deceives the viewer into thinking that the ground floor is on one level,

when in fact only half is elevated as a mezzanine. Half of the ground floor remains at street level to allow the passage of trucks. The fact that the trucks drive in and out of the building in a kind of parcours seems to be more of a fun play on functionality, as it would be more obvious to just have them turn around in the large courtyard.

The styles of the representative façade show the same juxtaposition. The (neo-)classical elements are pilasters in the classical giant order, framing mullioned windows over three storeys, above a first horizontal band framing the mezzanine and a slightly off-centre avant-corps housing the staircase and decorated with an egg-arrow ornament below the band on the ground floor. The curved roof and mullioned windows, the ornamentation in all four entrance doors and the bay window of the attic flat added in 1928 are typical of the Heimatsstil popular at the time (Amt für Städtebau, 2015).

The rear façade is very rational in comparison and perfectly shows the functions inside: the toilet block, for example, is very easy to recognise as such from the outside. The building must have been very innovative because it houses one of the earliest “mushroom ceilings” to allow for greater width between the columns. These mushroom columns were introduced to Europe by Robert Maillart in 1910 when he built the Mangili building in Zurich (ETH Kurzporträt, 2022).

The Banana Centre was drawn mainly as an office building with a penthouse for a tenant, originally used by Taylor himself and later by the caretaker. The basement and ground floor were intended for the banana ripening plant, the other three and a half floors were to be rented out. The



building was used by various tenants, most notably the Food Administration and the Unemployment Fund. In 1938, the Schule für Gestaltung, the School of Applied Arts, moved in. The school mainly taught painters (on building sites) and body painters (of cars).

Since then, it has gradually expanded and took over most of the building in the summer of 2020, kicking out, among others, the Franco family, who had lived in the building for 40 years, and the fitness club vif, which had been there for 37 years. Another tenant was the “transcultural, participatory [...] theatre” Maxime, a non-profit organisation that aims to provide a space for different people to meet (maximtheater.ch, 2022). At various times, the building was deemed impractical to serve as a school building or as a venue for public events in general. A competition held in 1999 produced a winner but was not carried out, allegedly because of a political dispute between the owner, the Canton of Zurich, and the tenant, the Schule für Gestaltung, which is owned by the city (Baudirektion Kanton Zürich, 2000).

The Bananencentrale is a multi-layered building. It holds not only the colonial legacy of its first use, but also the history of the city, its tenants, its conversions and absurdities.

I have tried to collect the stories of the building, which are presented on the following pages. This is not a definitive overview of the building, nor does it attempt to be. It is a subjective view that excludes many other parts of the building itself.

There are three main categories that interest me:

function | colonial imagery | (neo)colonial history

alphabetically

16	air pocket
46	apse
32	back – front
14	banana factory mechanisms
6	blackamoors
62	character
22	closed shutters
56	closed balconies
48	covering of materiality
50	unCovering of materiality
40	embedded façade
58	evacuation plans
54	floor collage
38	heating
18	hidden doors
26	independent grid
8	invisibility
28	irregular grid
60	observation
44	opinions
64	outlook
34	relief stones
20	representative entrance
52	rough renovation
12	Stephen Taylor
24	style
30	swallowed windows
36	swiss exclusive
42	timeline
10	typography

following the text on the previous page

6	blackamoors
8	invisibility
10	typography
12	Stephen Taylor
14	banana factory mechanisms
16	air pocket
18	hidden doors
20	representative entrance
22	closed shutters
24	style
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38	heating
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50	unCovering of materiality
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58	evacuation plans
60	observation
62	character
64	outlook

TEXT	PHOTO
6 blackamoors	20 representative entrance
36 swiss exclusive	22 closed shutters
44 opinions	24 style
60 observation	30 swallowed windows
62 character	32 back – front
64 outlook	48 covering of materiality
	50 unCovering of materiality
	52 rough renovation
PLAN	DIAGRAM
14 banana factory mechanisms	12 Stephen Taylor
16 air pocket	26 independent grid
22 closed shutters	28 irregular grid
26 independent grid	38 heating
28 irregular grid	40 embedded façade
46 apse	42 timeline
54 floor collage	
58 evacuation plans	
FAÇADE	
8 invisibility	
10 typography	
18 hidden doors	
24 style	
32 back – front	
34 relief stones	
56 closed balconies	



NZZ, 23.09.1925

...wichtige Geschäftshaus in die Höhe, das heute das schweizerische Bananenhaus darstellt. Sechs Stockwerke birgt es, und oben auf der Terrasse lugt kühn die Statue des bekannten **Bananen-Niggerboy** über das Industriequartier hinweg. Die Bananenzentrale bewirtschaftet die Kellerräume und das Parterre. Hier sind ein Duzend technisch vollkommene Ausstellfabriken unterge-

Schweizer Handwerkszeitung
Band 42, 1926

Nach wie vor sehen wir die beiden aus hartem schweizer Granit gehauenen **Negerbuben** auf dem Gebäude, bereit, mit dem großen Messer die herrlichen Bananen-Büschel vom Baum zu schneiden und so als Zeugen stehend dafür, daß auf der ganzen Linie gearbeitet wird.

Neuzürich in Wort und Bild, 1940

löst mit Zwerghaus und Attika. Bauschmuck wie Bananenbündel und **zwei Messer schwingende Buben** weisen auf das hier vertriebene Produkt hin. Taylor durfte mit Recht stolz sein, war

Protokoll Stadtrat Zürich,
25.02.1987

Gebäude zur Genusstauglichkeit reifen liess, unter dem Namen «Tyttles»-Banane in der Schweiz zu etablieren. Bauschmuck wie Bananenbündel und **messerschwingende, exotische Knaben** weisen auf das hier vertriebene Produkt hin. Typologisch eine Synthese zwischen Industriebau und Geschäftssitz. Markanter, **unmittelbarer Giebelbau** am Übergang von Jugendstil zur Neuen Sachlichkeit mit **Flachdach**.

Baukultur in Zürich,
2004

in der Schweiz den Bananenhandel ein. Fünf Jahre später liess er das Gebäude erstellen, an dem bis heute gross der Schriftzug «Bananen» prangt. Bananenbündel und **messerschwingende Knaben** schmücken die Fassaden des Industriebaus und weisen auf seine Funktion hin. Hier brachte Taylor die Früchte zur Reife,

Architekturführer Zürich,
2020

Zwei **Steinskulpturen** auf der Terrassenbrüstung flankieren den Aufbau. Sie stellen **Erntehelfer** dar, die in einer Hand ein grosses, geschwungenes Messer, in der anderen ein Bündel Bananen halten.

Abklärung der Schutzwürdigkeit,
07.12.2015

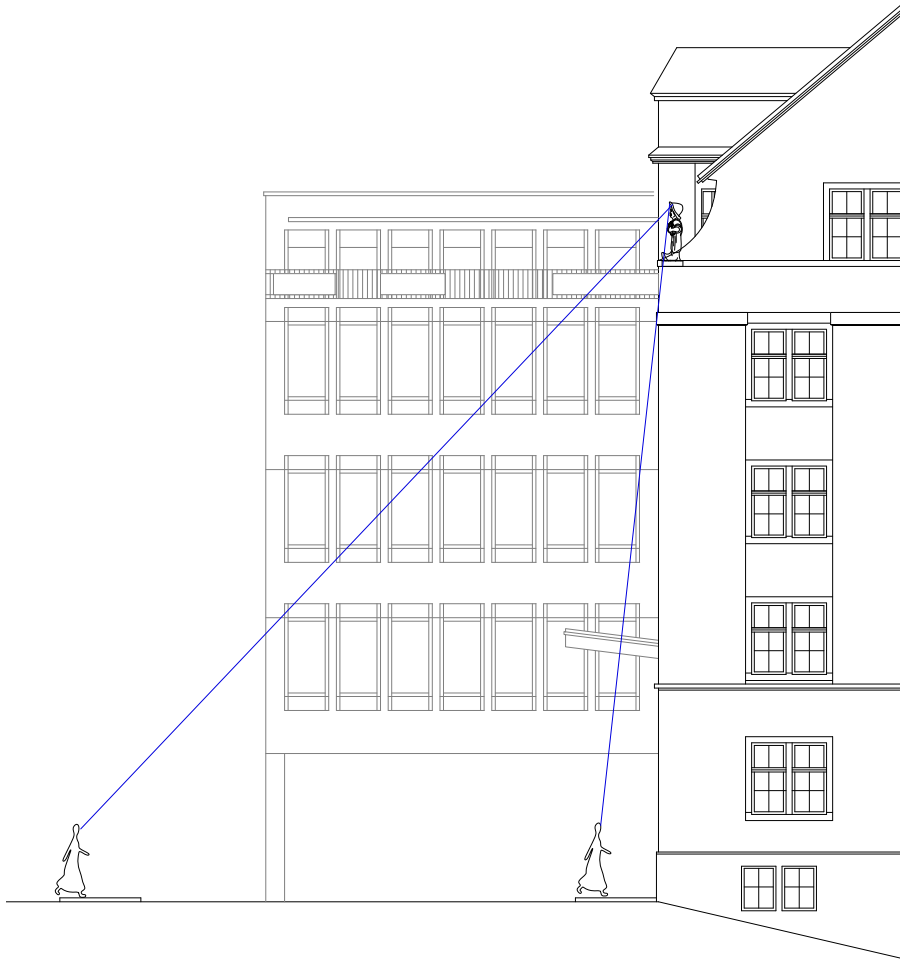


Masterthesis,
10.10.2022

yellow: banana factory
red: predate banana factory
purple: built in the 10 years after
green: 1978

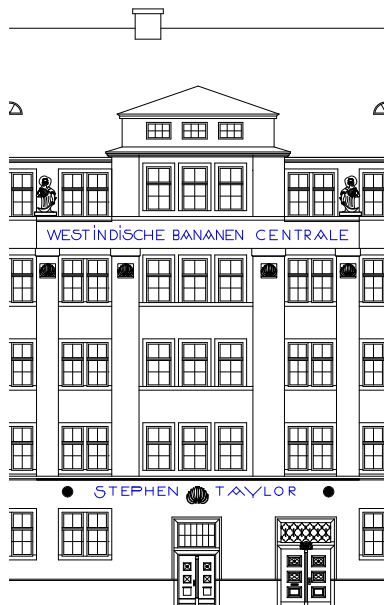
In the ten years following its construction, Ausstellungsstrasse 100 became more and more separated from Limmatplatz and thus also from the view.



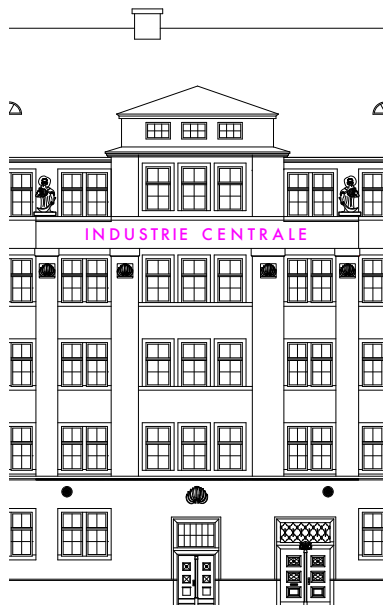


invisibility

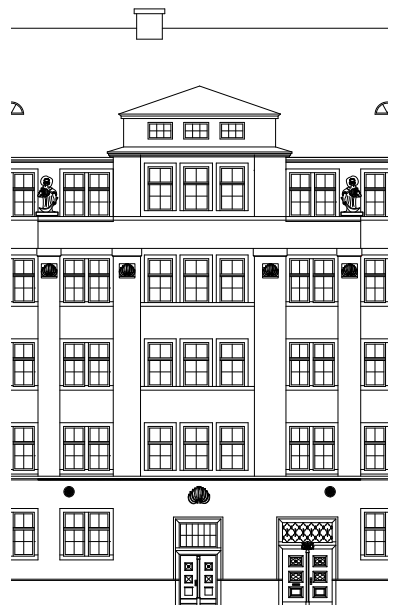
1926 — 1928



1928 — 1939



1939 —



1939 —



somewhere between
1912 — 1914
or 1918 — 1921

builds up the logistics center of
banana import for Elders & Fyffes Ltd
Rotterdam

Dec 1889
born in Sculcoates or
Howden, UK

1904
enters as apprentice into company
“Elders & Fyffes Ltd” in Kingston
upon Hull

1914 — 1918
officer in the British Army, specially
noted for Battle of Arras
— returned to Elders & Fyffes Ltd

1921
founds “Westindische Bananen
Centrale” in Zurich, located in the
old gas factory at Sihlquai 85 — as a
dealer for Elders & Fyffes Ltd

1926
builds the building at
“Ausstellungsstrasse 100” as the
headquarters of “Westindische
Bananen Centrale”

in newspaper “he traveled with his
architect to Europe’s largest cities
to look at the most modern Banana
factories” (Handwerkerzeitung, 42
(1926))

Stephen Taylor

1927
moves into
Ausstellungsstrasse 100
he is noted as “owner of the
building”, he also lives there
(Adressbuch, 1927)

1929
the building is sold to the company
“Ausstellungsstrasse 100 AG”

his apartment on the top floor is
doubled in size

NZZ writes: “Taylor owns plantages
of 15'000 ha² in the Westindies”
(NZZ, 1929)

1939
Taylor gives up his position as head
of “Westindische Bananen Centrale”,
keeps living at Ausstellungsstrasse 100
(Handelsauszug, 1925 – 2022)

Westindische Bananen Centrale
become “Bananen und Frucht AG”

to survive the war the company now
also deals in other fruits

Bananen und Frucht AG gives up the
spaces on the ground floor and confines
itself to the basement floor

1941
Taylor moves out of Zurich

March 1956
A Mr Stephen Taylor dies in Kingston
upon Hull, UK, close to his hometown

Ship: West Indies — Antwerpen, Rotterdam
Train: Rotterdam — Zurich (directly to the factory)

1 Bananas are loaded into the factory by “metal wire systems”

2 They are brought to ripen in special chambers by using “steam, gas and electricity, to do the work that the West Indian sun has been deprived of” (NZZ, 1926) | Usually around minimum 23°C for about six days (Bytyci, 2022).

3 Different sizes of chambers help to coordinate different sizes of shipments
packaging and check point for unripe bananas

4 trading, loading on trucks to sellers

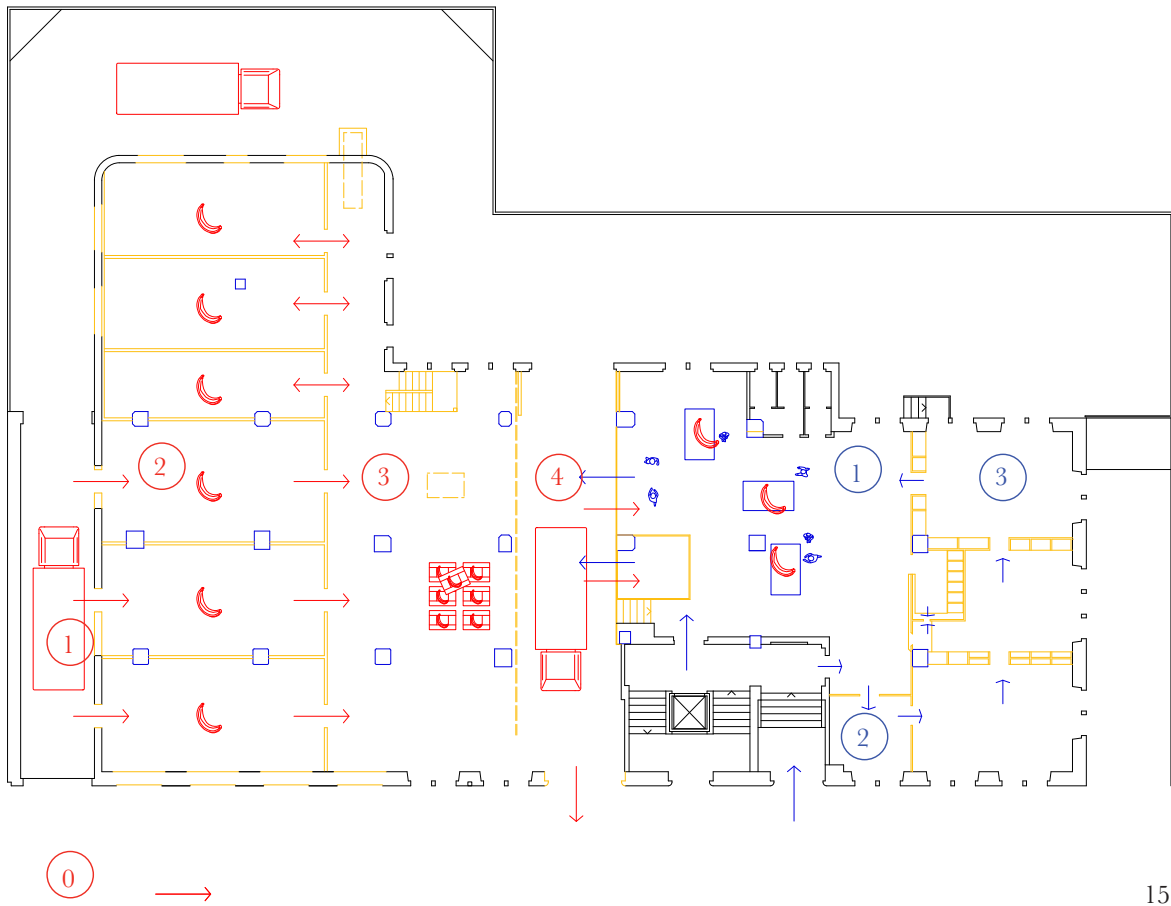
trading hall

1 potential resellers trade in bulk, prices are decided, goods are inspected: works like a market hall but only bananas

2 secretaries office and front door

3 Mr Taylor’s office





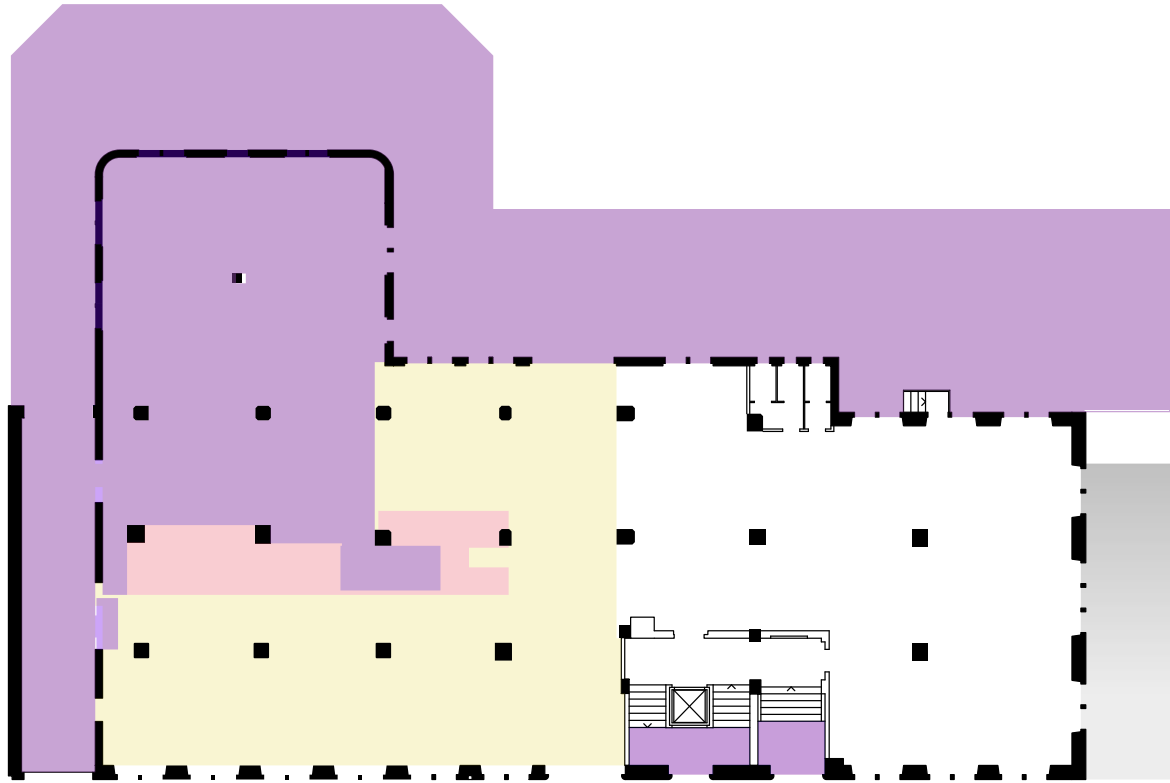
banana factory: mechanisms

In 1926 trucks passed through the building, so that half of the ground floor was built at street level (yellow) and half at 1m above (white).

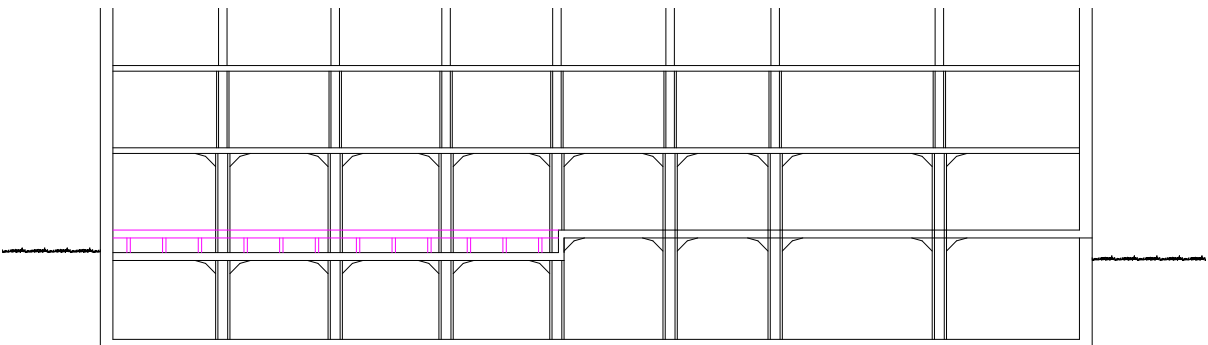
With passing time more and more floor has been lifted to the mezzanine level, creating an empty space below the new floor.

- 1926: northwest of building at ground floor
- 1939: annex, stairway to annex and to the street-side workrooms, archive remain at ground floor
- 2022: annex and staircase to annex remain at ground floor





air pocket



1926 (left) – 2022 (right)

ground floor windows:
designed as “mock windows”
opened up in 1939
today almost undistinguishable

cellar windows:
enlarging of two windows (left for the
office of the fitness club, right to the
fitness club itself)

main door:
door wasn't used anymore, floor was
lifted 1m above ground, door turned
into a window





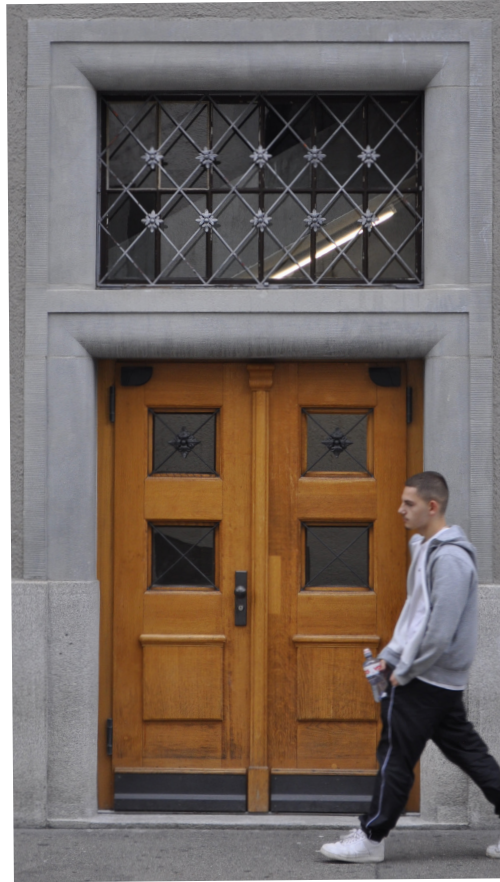
hidden doors

The main entrance as of now is shown in red.
In pink are past paths that have also been used on
the upper floors.

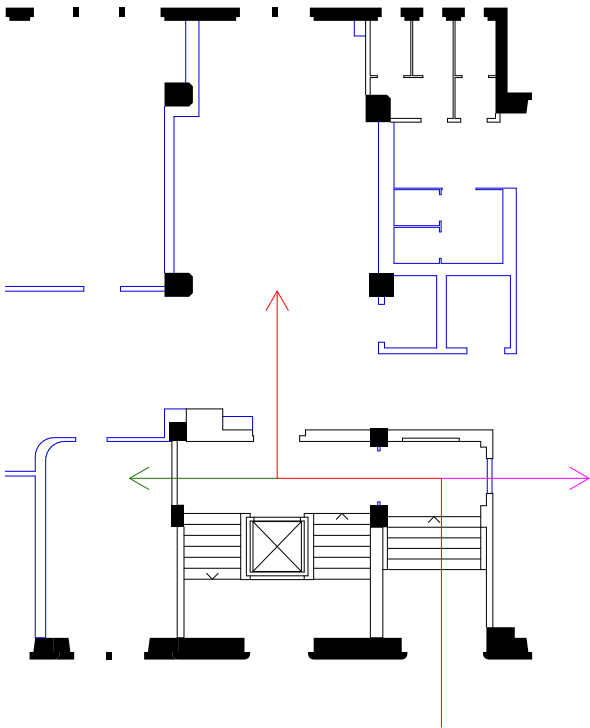
In green the second entry way as thought by the
architect initially but never executed.

The sign below shows that the proper exit is
unclear. The same happens when looking at the
two doors of the facade from outside.

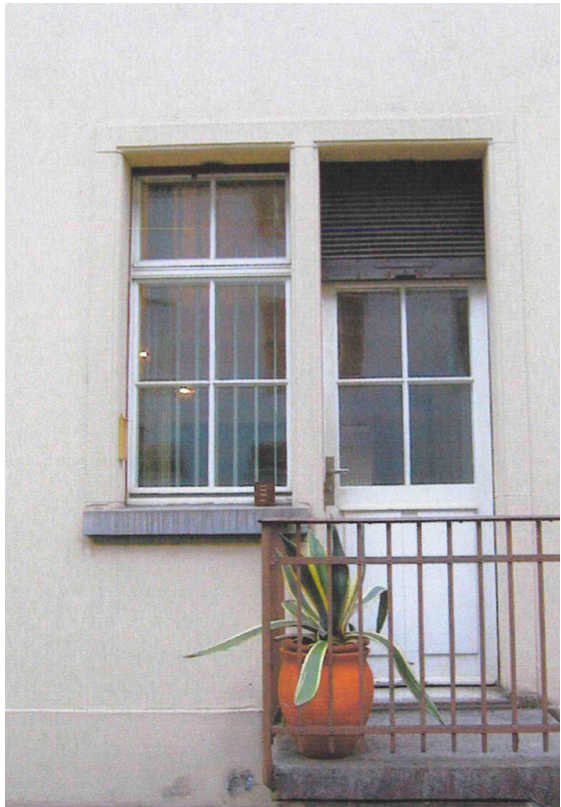


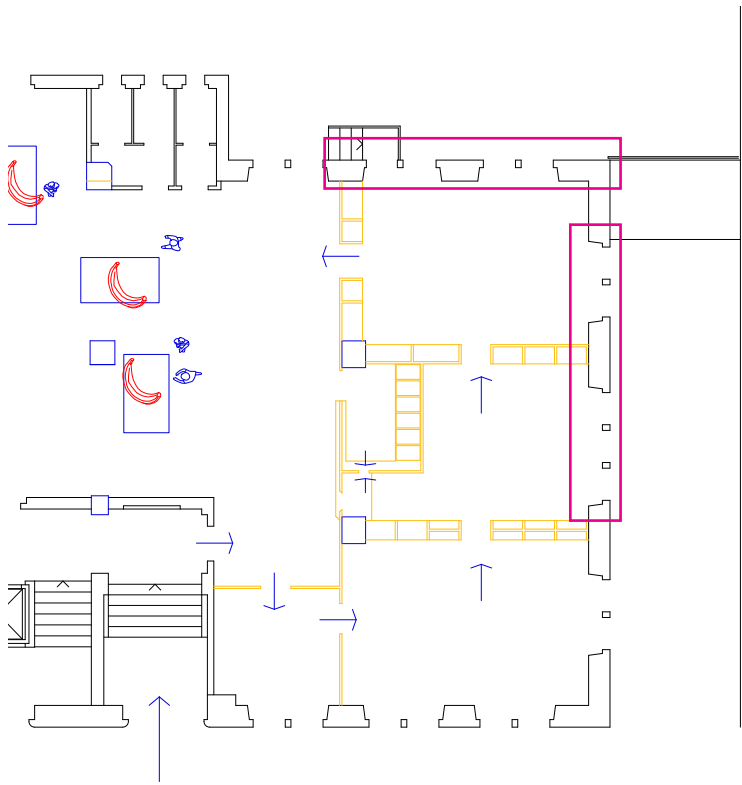


representative entrance



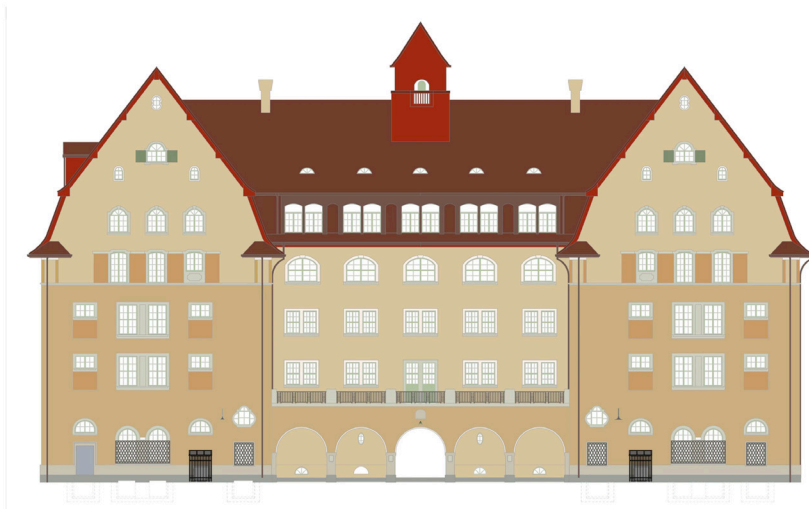
In 1926 only four windows (plan, right side) had shutters. They can completely disappear in the window lintel. The originals were made from metal, can be moved by a cord and were lockable – this enable Mr Taylor to “lock” his office at night to keep safe from burglars.





closed shutters

Schulhaus Limmat A
 Otto und Werner Pfister
 1909 – 11
 Illustration: Joos und Mathys Architekten
 Heimatstil



Limmathaus (background Bananenhaus)
 Karl Egger
 1931
 Neues Bauen

Heimatstil:

rounded forms, mostly visible in the sweeping roof on the southeast facade
ornaments and wooden pilars at entrance doors
lattice windows

Classical Elements:

giant order, mullioned windows, avant-corps

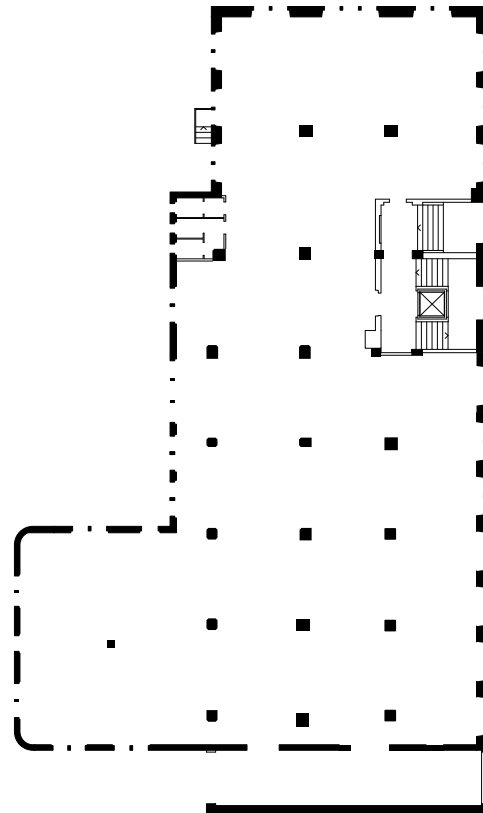
Neues Bauen:

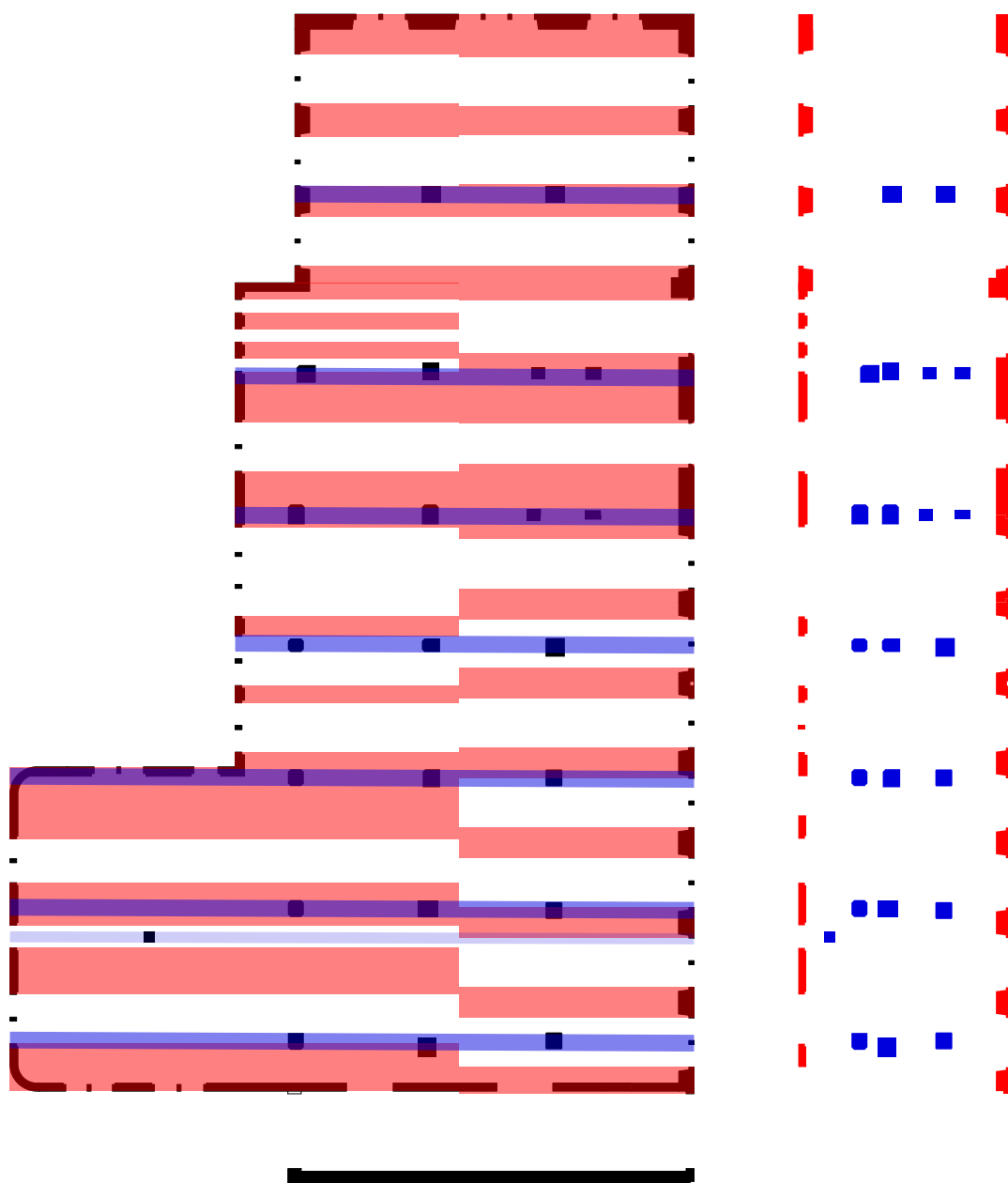
already much simplified forms

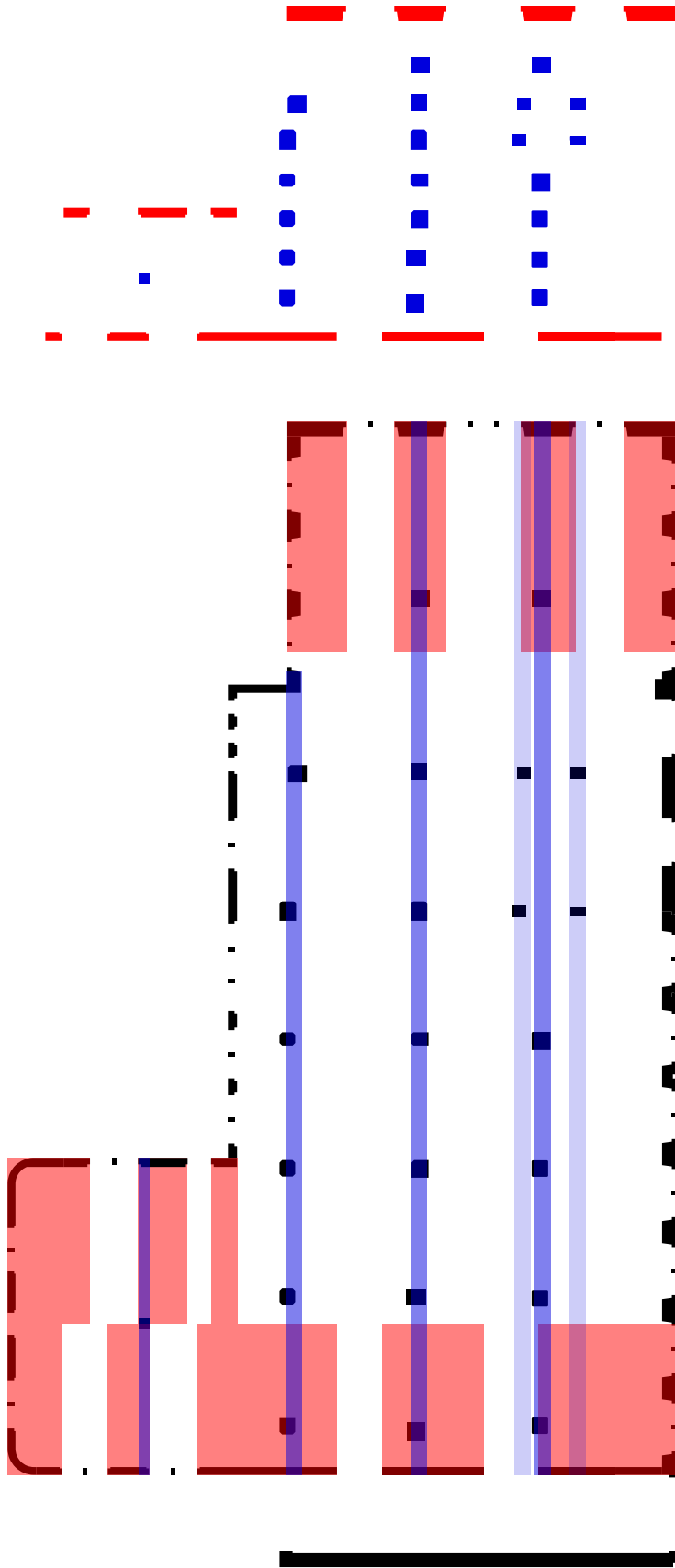
back facade rational and showing functions (windows of toilet block)

Pilzdecken: structurally very innovative

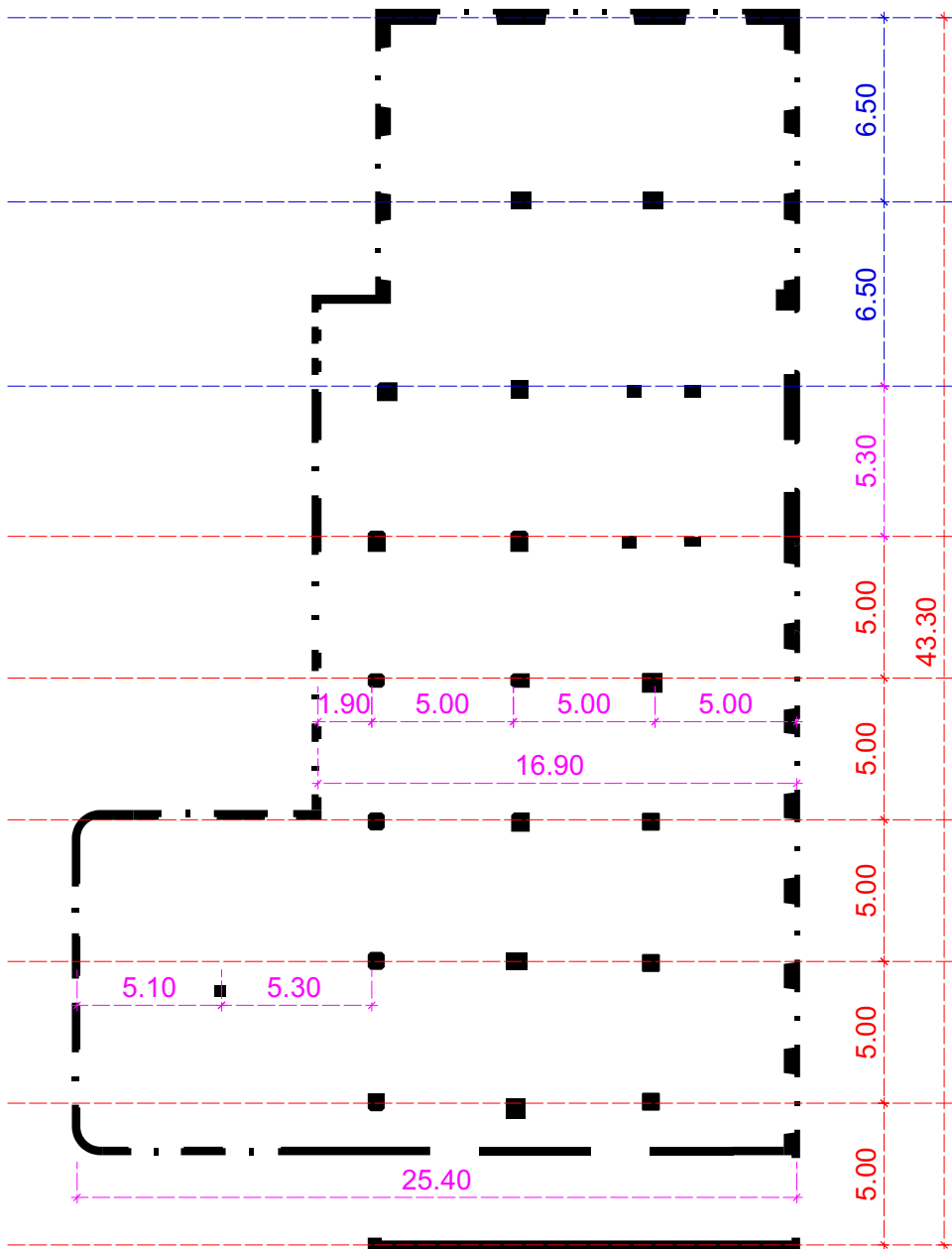
Pilzdecken were brought to Europe by Robert Maillart in 1910
when he built the Mangili building in Zurich







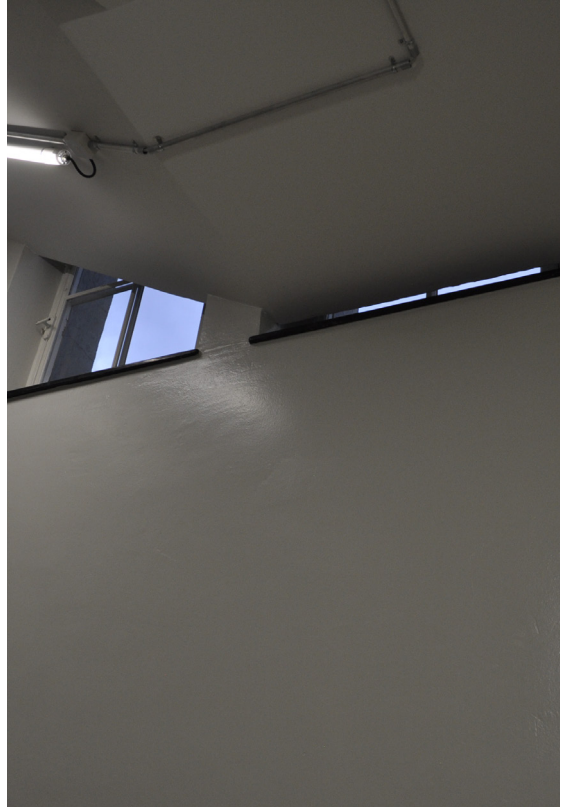
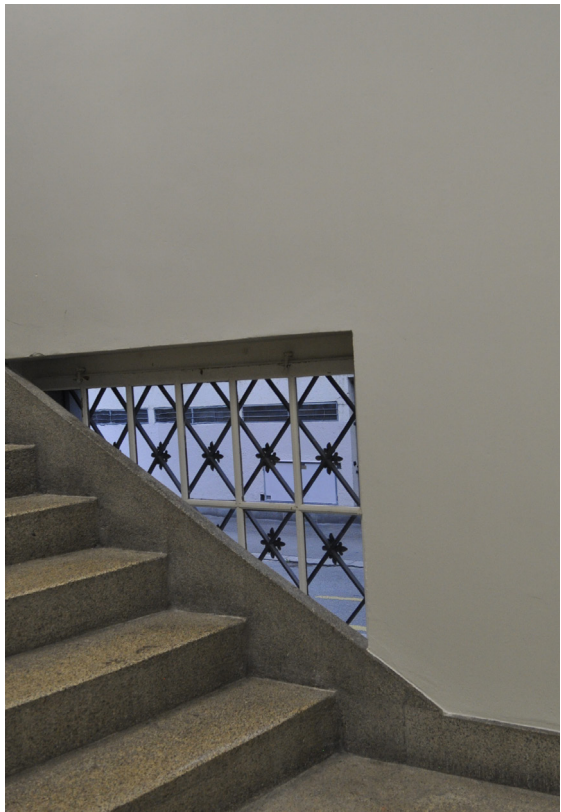
independent grid



irregular grid

The representative facade leads to windows that get swallowed up by the staircase.
The baseboard must be newer but the staircase itself should be original.

All windows also have handles that can't be used.





swallowed windows

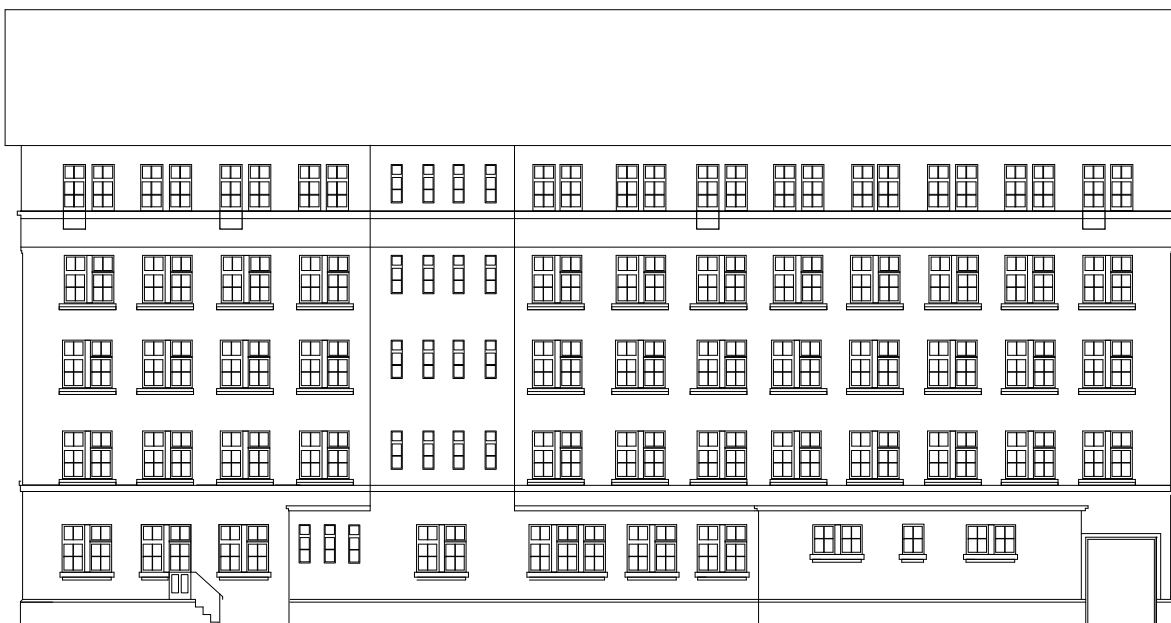


The front facade (top) is much more structured and representative – it also gets much less appropriated and used by the public

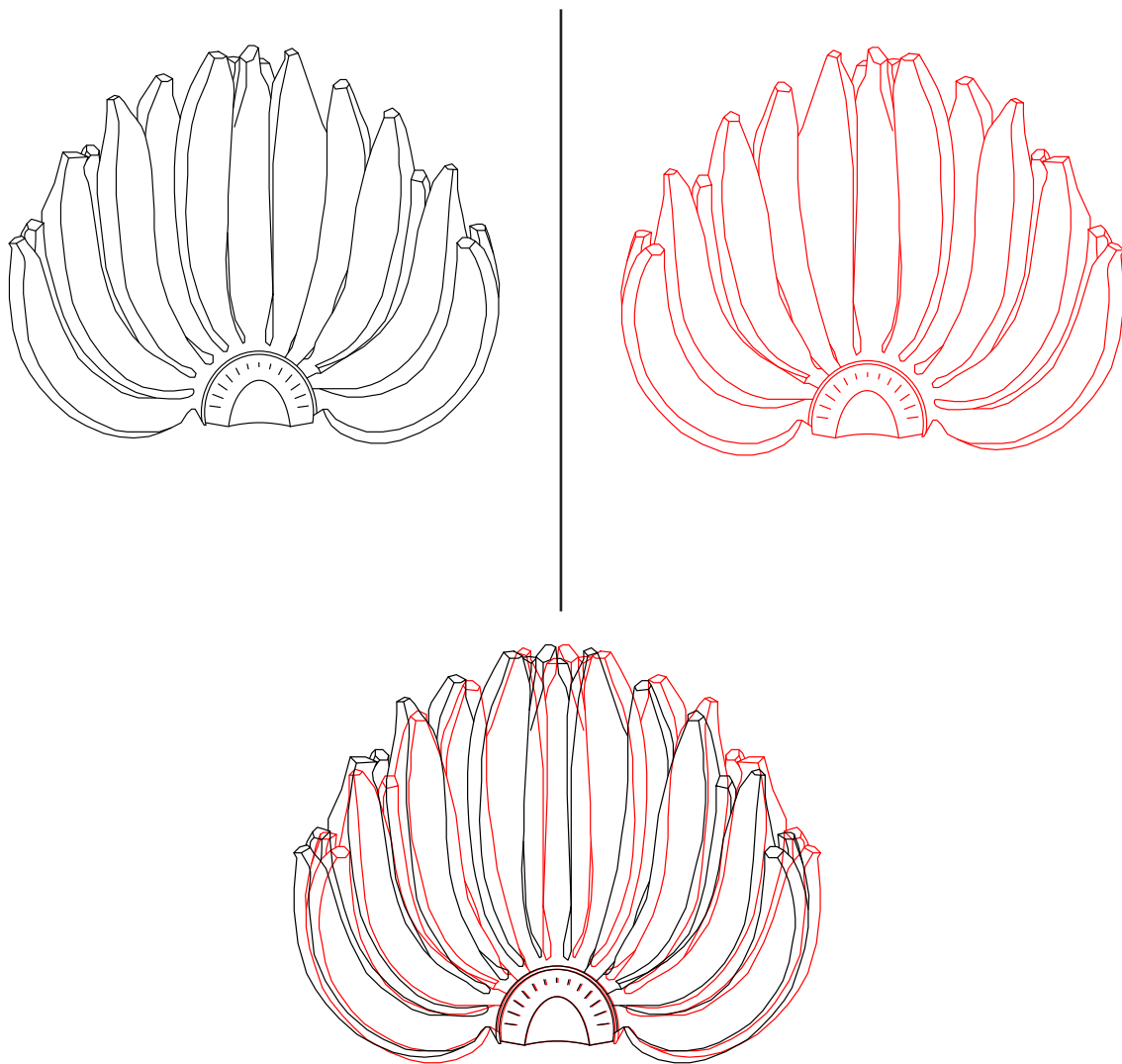




back — front



The relief stones are unsymmetrical even though a symmetrical cast would technically have been easier to make.





Und einer bei vornehmer Gesinnung eines
Ausländers selbstverständlichen Übung sei hier
noch besonders gedacht: Mister Taylor beschäftigt
ausschliesslich Schweizerische Arbeitskräfte und er
hat den Beweis geleistet, dass er sich dieser feiner
Mitarbeiter stets in vorbildlicher Weise annimmt.

And a practice that is self-evident in a foreigner's
genteel attitude should be especially remembered
here: Mr Taylor employs **only Swiss** workers and
he has proven that he always takes care of these
fine employees in an exemplary manner.

Mit Ende Oktober ist das Haus dem Betriebe
übergeben worden. Es ist **ausschliesslich von
Schweizerischen Firmen, Schweizerischen
Arbeitern, Schweizerischen Fachleuten**
ausgeführt worden. Das ist die Schweizerwoche
des Ausländers in ihrer schönsten Auswirkung.
Was internationale Unternehmungsluft schafft,
was nationales Verständnis baut, was die
Zusammenarbeit westlicher Unternehmer
herausbringt, das war im Zürcher Bananenhaus
wirksam. **Hier feierte in der Stille Schweizerische
Schaffensfreude, gepaart mit angesächsischer
Untermungslust Triumphe. Der Erfolg wird weder**

**den Schweizerischen Kräften, die da tätig waren,
noch dem weitschauenden Briten versagt bleiben.**
The house was handed over to the company at
the end of October. It was built **exclusively by
Swiss companies, Swiss workers and Swiss experts.**
This is the Swiss week of the foreigner in its
most beautiful effect. What creates international
entrepreneurial air, what builds national
understanding, what brings out the cooperation
of western entrepreneurs, that was effective in the
Zurich Banana House. Here, in silence, the Swiss
joy of creation, paired with Saxon enthusiasm for
enterprise, celebrated triumphs. **Success will not be**

Illust. Schweiz. Handw.-Zeitung („Meisterblatt“)

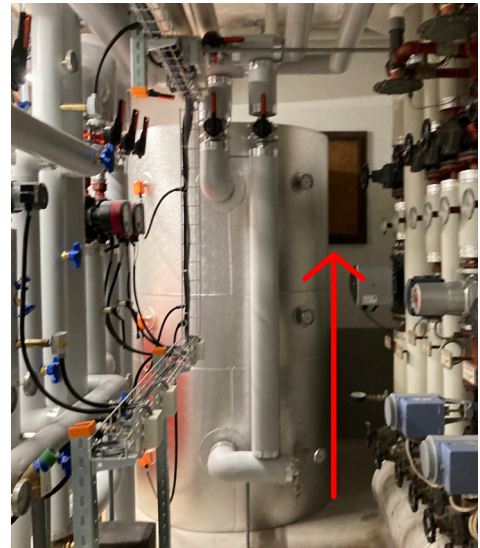
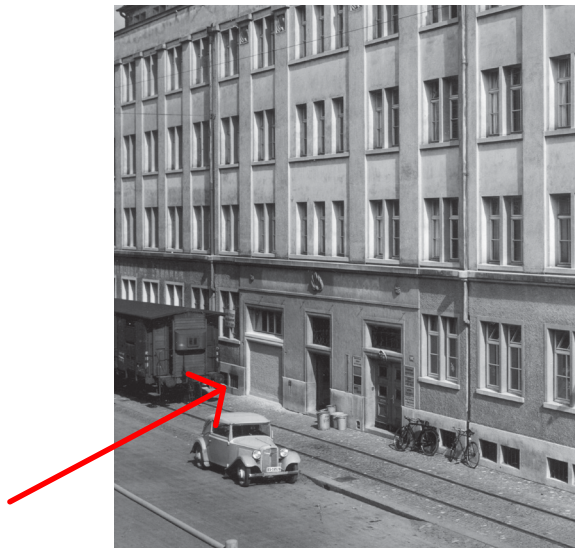
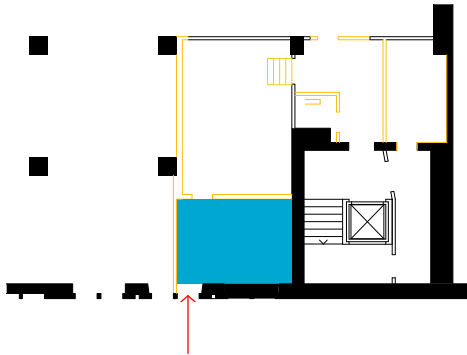
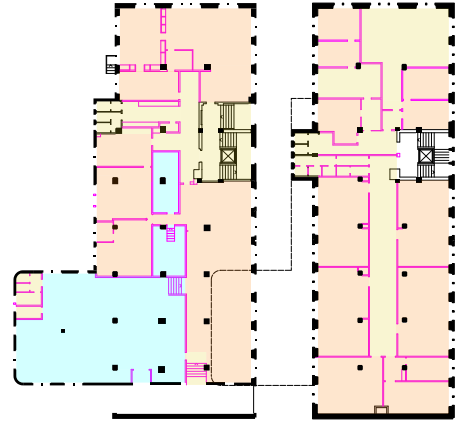
Und etner bei vornehmer Gesinnung eines Ausländers selbstverständlichen Übung sei hier noch besonders gedacht: Mister Taylor beschäftigt ausschließlich schweizerische Arbeitskräfte, und er hat den Beweis geleistet, daß er sich dieser seiner Mitarbeiter stets in vorbildlicher Weise annimmt.

Mit Ende Oktober ist das Haus dem Betriebe übergeben worden. Es ist ausschließlich von schweizerischen Firmen, schweizerischen Arbeitern, schweizerischen Fachleuten ausgeführt worden. Das ist die Schweizerwoche des Ausländers in ihrer schönsten Auswirkung. Was internationale Unternehmungslust schafft, was nationales Verständnis baut, was die Zusammenarbeit weltstichtiger Unternehmer herausbringt, das war im Zürcher Bananenhaus wirksam. Hier feierte in der Stille schweizerische Schaffensfreude, gepaart mit angelsächsischer Unternehmungslust Triumphe. Der Erfolg wird weder den schweizerischen Kräften, die da tätig waren, noch dem weltschauenden Briten verfaat bleiben.

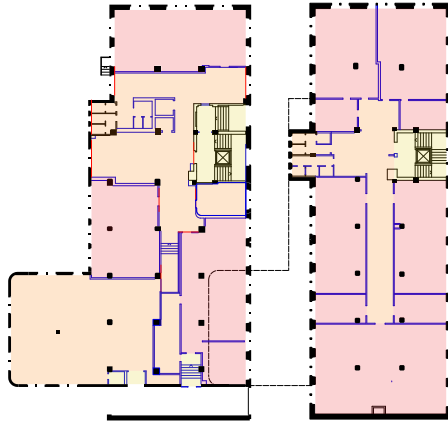
No mention is made on any of the workers who originally produce the goods that make these Swiss and English rich.

Schweizer Handwerkszeitung
Band 42, 1926

When the oil heating was switched to gas, the old oil tank remained empty as the owner (canton of Zurich) didn't want to pay for it's cleaning and removal. The entrance to the oil tank can still be seen in the plant room.

38

heating



In 1939 rooms were heated to 11°, 15° and 18° C, whilst today most classrooms are heated up to 21°C.

Different teachers say that it remains quite cold in the winter.

Signor Franco said that sometimes it was 15°C in the top floor flat.

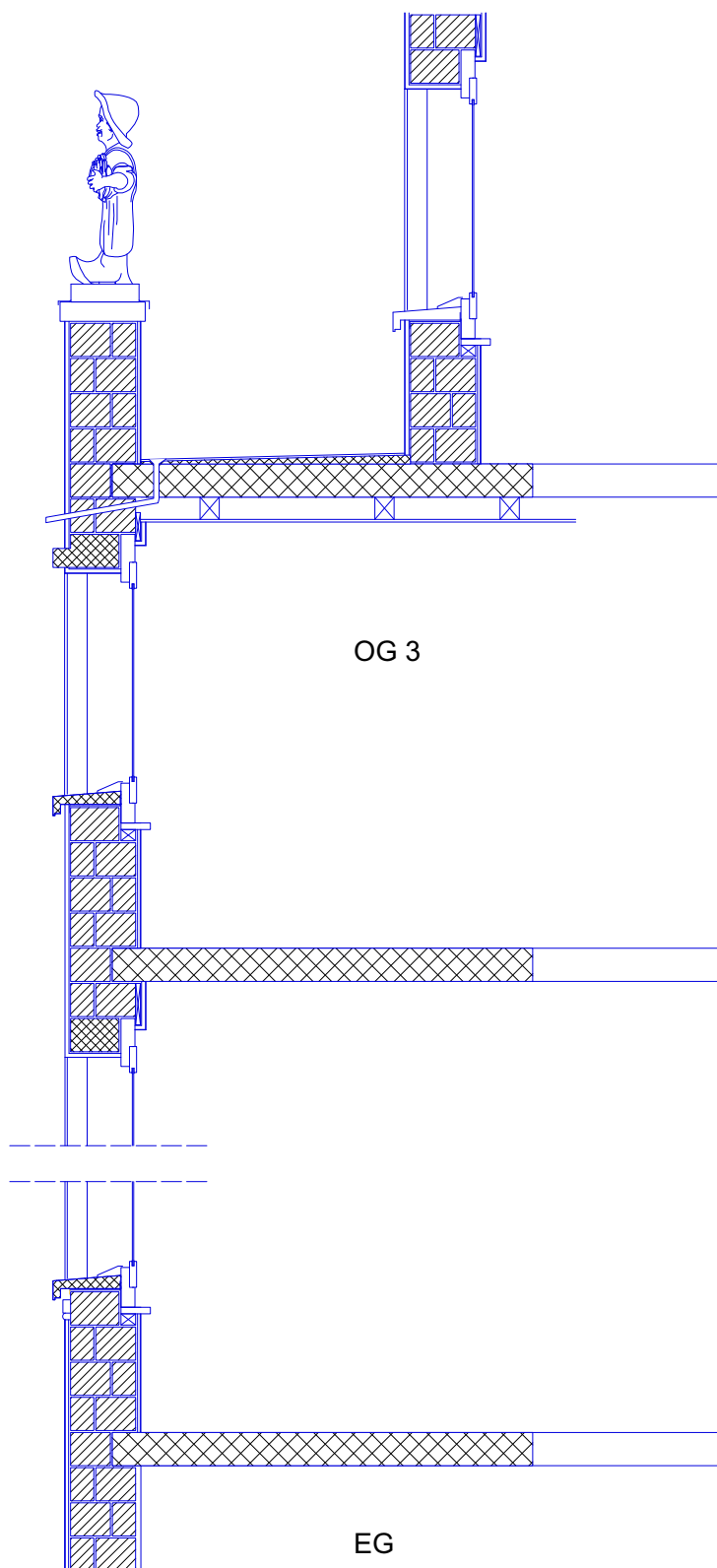
In 1926 the bananas had to be heated up to 23°C, which was achieved using vapor, gas and electrical heating at once (for stable temperature).

Before the corona crisis the annual cost for heating was at about 25'700 Fr. per year (during the crisis and renovation it slightly sank).

1994
Gas

If these building parts were constructed today, it would need around 152kg CO² Äqv. / m² for the bricks and another 16 kg CO² Äqv. / m² for the cement mortar. This is equivalent to about 410 kWh/m².

On the whole facade of 960 m² this would make 161.28 t CO² Äqv. or 393.6t kg of CO² Äqv.



embedded façade

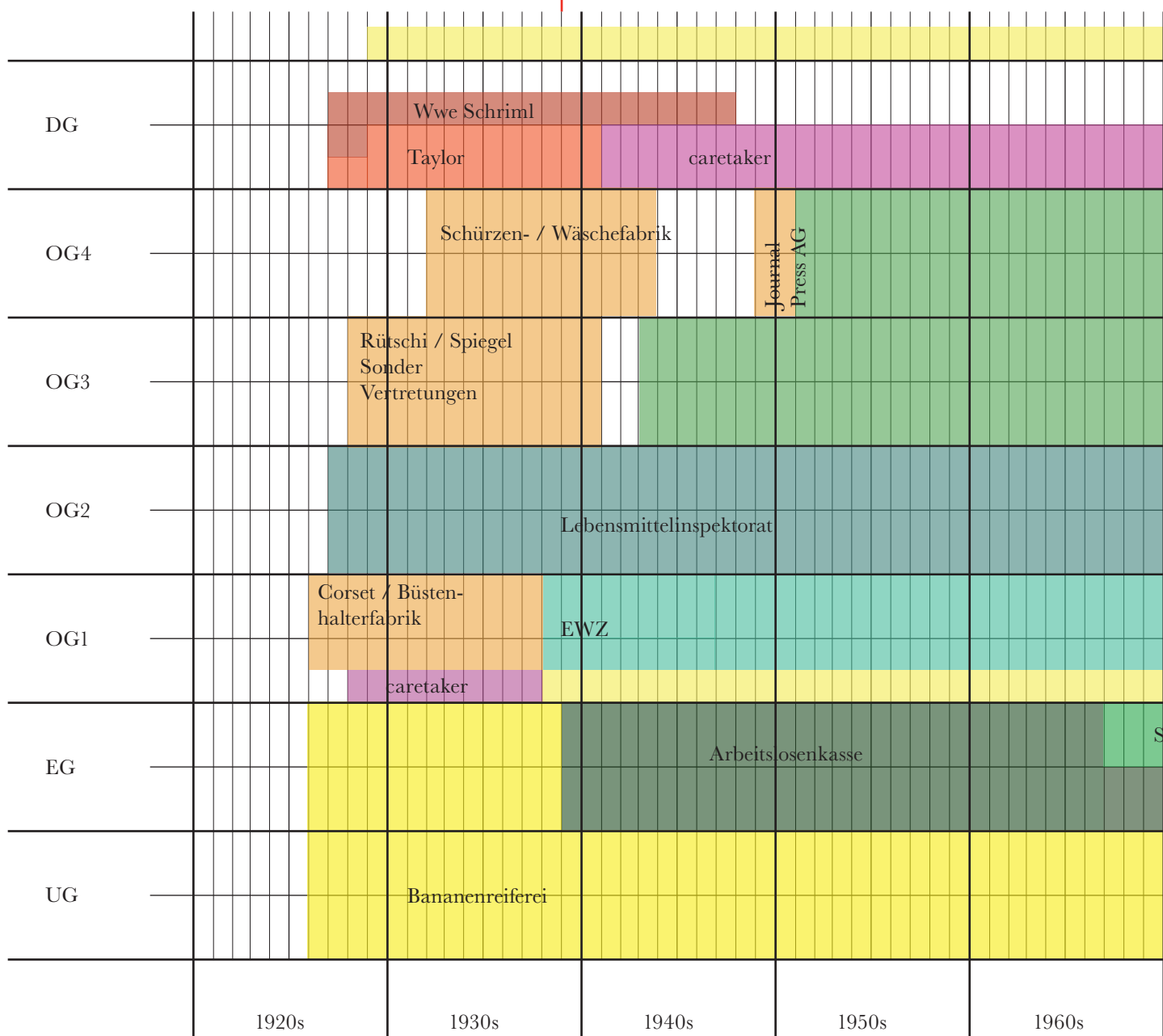
reds / purple: housing
 green: public (school, food office, disemployment insurance)
 orange: commercial
 yellow: banana factory

story of the company
 Westindische Bananencentrale

owner of the building

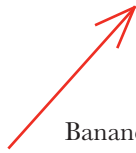
offer from Taylor to city:
 “not counting on a long-term use for the school of the unemployment fund”, therefore best not to buy

the building is not suitable for school purposes and in plan, height of storeys [3 structural possibilities



for offices
is lacking
[3.4m] and

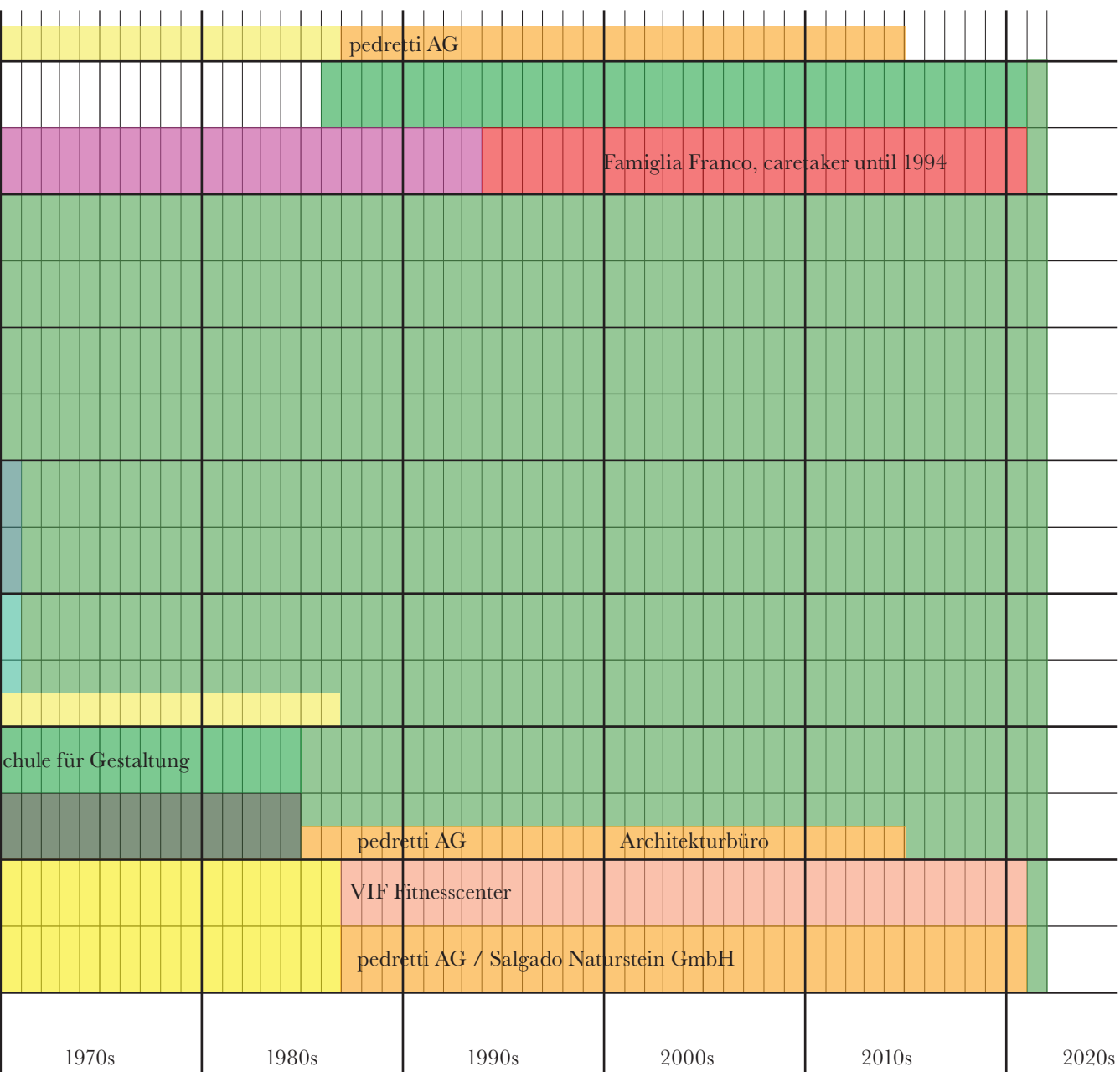
BaFru moves to engros market at Herdern



Bananen und Frucht AG, owned by Ernst Welti AG

Ausstellungsstrasse 100 AG

timeline



**Placido Franco,
former caretaker, and former tenant in the
top floor apartment for 40 years:**

“The boys on the top floor. Yes, you know, they helped to pick the bananas. They are *negro*, *schwarz*, you know. I used to work in this building. I have the formation: to mature bananas. Two years after I got here they gave me the apartment. It was a bad area. But the last two years were worse then ever – the impact hub in the courtyard was too loud. Worse than the drug scene in the 90s.”

“I left the factory after 13 years because they didn’t treat me with respect.”

“Also now, they just threw us out, after 40 years. I had to throw away all my books because in our new flat there is no space.”

“We used to pay 400 Fr. with Mr. Schulthess. That was wonderful. When the canton took over as owner they increased the rent to 900 Fr. monthly but I also lost my stipend as caretaker.”

**Kuni Kuoni,
general knowledge teacher, ground floor:**

“Some of my students come from Wallis. So it’s important that the school is close to the trainstation. They only come for the day.”

“You can definitely tell that the painters [walls and cars] are more stupid. It’s very difficult to discuss political issues with them.”

“I have the best room. It’s the prettiest. I have the nice shutters and the marble sink. And my own staircase. It’s the best room I have ever had in all my career.”

“I cannot believe it. It’s a negerbueb, of course. But it is important that satire and caricatures have a place.”

Umi and Lou, students, Vorkurs:

Umi: “The rooms get very hot in summer.”

Lou: “It is impossible to ventilate, it feels like a greenhouse. I really like the old windows. We would hate if they would tear down the building.”

“I have never seen these statues. That’s completely awful.”

**Daniel Bräuninger,
Bräuninger AG, former tenant:**

“It was Walti Sauter who gave me the contact. And we had the office at the same place for a while. With Freddy Schuhmacher.”

“There used to be some tropical wood in the cabinets in Taylor’s old office. I remember, we paid 130 Fr. / m² of office space and 65 / m² for storage space. It was great.” [It was about 110 m² for the three tenants, so that is about 400 Fr. / tenant / month.]

“Oh yes, the statues. I didn’t think about it when I was there but now that you say it, yes, I understand that they could be problematic. I like how the ETH is starting to look at these things.”

**Gianmarco, Layla, Christian,
students, body painters (cars):**

Gianmarco: “Statues look Chinese, somehow”

Layla: “Terrible air, especially in the downstairs sports rooms. I feel like I am suffocating. I think the new toilets look cheap and most of the tables wobble when we use them.”

Christian: “I think it used to be a banana factory. You can see bananas on the floor when

**Rikard Bytyci,
Migros Banana Factory, Dierikon:**

“I love that the house has decoration. It doesn’t look like a factory. It looks like a place where they show you respect for what you do. You can have pride in your work. The statues symbolize the bananas, of course.”

“I don’t know. Most of the workers here aren’t white. But you know, it’s good that at least they have a job here.”

**Stefanie Janssen,
teacher Vorkurs, 2nd floor:**

“In summer it gets so hot we cannot concentrate. I cannot keep the shutters down all day, I teach art and we need the light. But worst of all, I cannot ventilate. The room also has a terrible format: It’s too long, if we watch a movie, half of the class has to switch chairs for the duration of the film.”

**Thomas Beer, Meier-Ehrensperger AG,
renovation 2021:**

“They didn’t expect it when I told them that the renovation of the facade would cost around 200’000. The money wasn’t there. So we decided to redo only the ground floor to the street which was in the worst condition. On the top floors we scraped the top coat of the plaster and only left the base. I had never done this before either, it was almost innovative.”

Leander Egger, stone mason:

“I think the statues are well done. The technique I mean. Formalistically I might have chosen another motive, but technically they are very well done. They are almost identical even though they must have been cast completely one after the other.”
“Most of the artificial stone was cast in situ and then carved. It was a very advanced technique at the time, top of the game. I think they executed much more in artificial stone than they would have otherwise”
“Didn’t we do lead joints? I do lead joints all the time. It’s the way to do it.”

Melanie Fries, main administrator:

“No, we the students didn’t participate in the renovation. They have their own work places and we cannot sacrifice their education to use them for our renovation purposes. The graphic students did the signage.”

Daniele, caretaker:

“I think it’s ugly. What did they do? Look at the floors! At least they could have cleaned up a little or something. You cannot even see what they have done”

**Matthias Köhler,
Denkmalschutz Stadt Zürich:**

“The building was put under protection when it was privately owned. Only the facade but we are trying to put it all under protection.”

**Francisco Peier, Werkhof GmbH,
renovation 2021:**

“The new elements are made from plywood, French pine, *pin patiné*. The floor on the ground floor must be from the 70s or so. It’s a *Steinholzbelag*, it’s chipped wood mixed with stone powder and glue.”
“I think it can be a great advantage to work with little money. It made us become more creative.”
“Well, I hope your work won’t make them take down the statues. So many old things have already been taken down and it would be a pity.”
“Me and the electrician, Gino Esposito, made the lamps. We tried to make them look like the mushroom pilasters. I took Gino forever but I think it was very well worth it.”
“Generally they like what we’ve done. But not the painters. They hate that the walls are not smooth. It doesn’t go with the pride they take in working.”

**Martin Bruhin,
Bruhin und Spiess Architekten,
renovation 2021:**

“The only thing I disagreed was closing the door to the right in the entrance. But you win your battles, you lose your battles.”
“Don’t we have bigger problems than to worry about these statues? I cannot believe it.”
“We couldn’t do the lead joints to the statues because they are obviously poisonous, maybe ask Leander.” “We had 4.5 million of budget.”
“We tried to do as little as possible, not to destroy any of the existing so that in the future renovation, maybe in about five years, someone can decide what to keep.”

Gino Esposito, Egger Elektro:

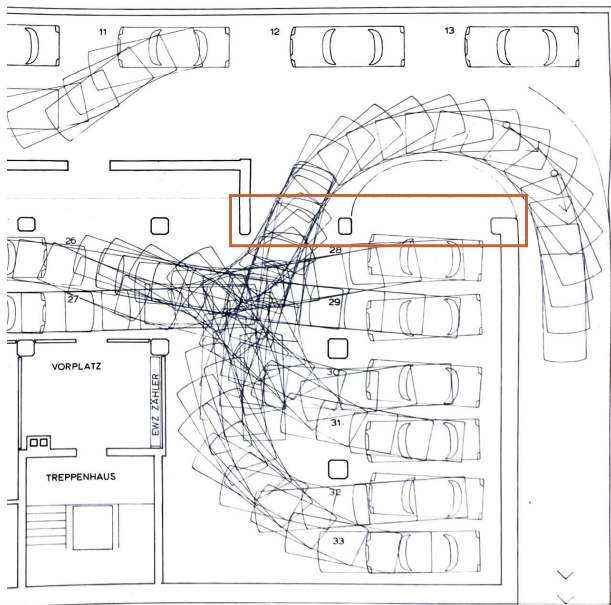
“Pretty usual [construction site]. Nothing difficult. Quite cheap. Would have cost much more if we’d had to open up the walls. Cheap. Fast.”

On the underground floor is an round wall that gives the room itself almost the appearance of a church.

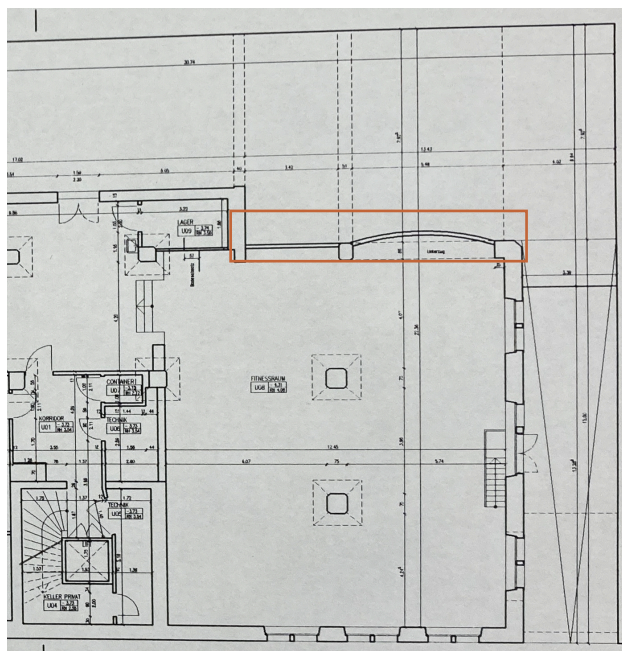
It can be found only on one plan in 1999 and has by 2021 disappeared from the plans itself again.

Silvio Zuppinger founded the vif fitness center in 1887 when also Mr Pedretti moved his stone trading company there – in a dispute on square meters in the underground space, the curved wall served as compromise: Mr Zuppinger could very well use it for spin classes and Mr Pedretti's trucks could easily pass on the other side.

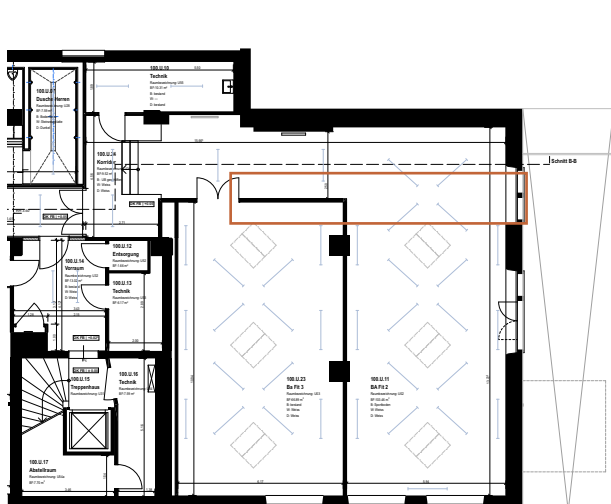




1979 — never built



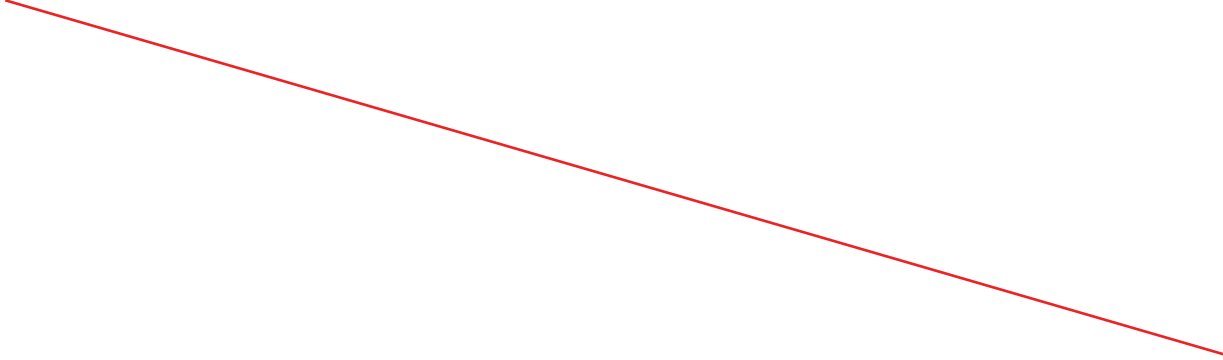
1999 — plans for competition



2021 — newest plans

apse

The reconstructor Johanna Vogelsang tells me that the statues were covered in a synthetic coat of paint, maybe in the 80s, in light brown. She is unsure why, maybe protection?





covering of materiality

2015 (bottom left) – 2019 (top right) – 2022

To save costs, the craftsmen Thomas Beer along with the architect Martin Bruhin decided, to tear down the top 3mm (“Deckputz”) on the main levels and to only keep the 20mm mortar used directly on the bricks. Herr Beer told me, he had never done this before.



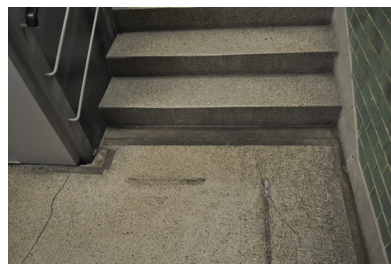


unCovering of materiality



on purpose unfinished ferrocement
duct

electroinstallations grown over
time



traces on floors from earlier uses
baseboards cut roughly

right: traces of former toilet
bottom: rough plaster work



rough renovation

traces of former walls are shown
with paint



ground floor

class room:
linoleum, new

toilets:
red tiles, potentially original

public area:
Steinholzboden
white glazed to appear more uniform
Banana pattern by Herr Flachsmann

entrance:
coconut mat to replace the existing

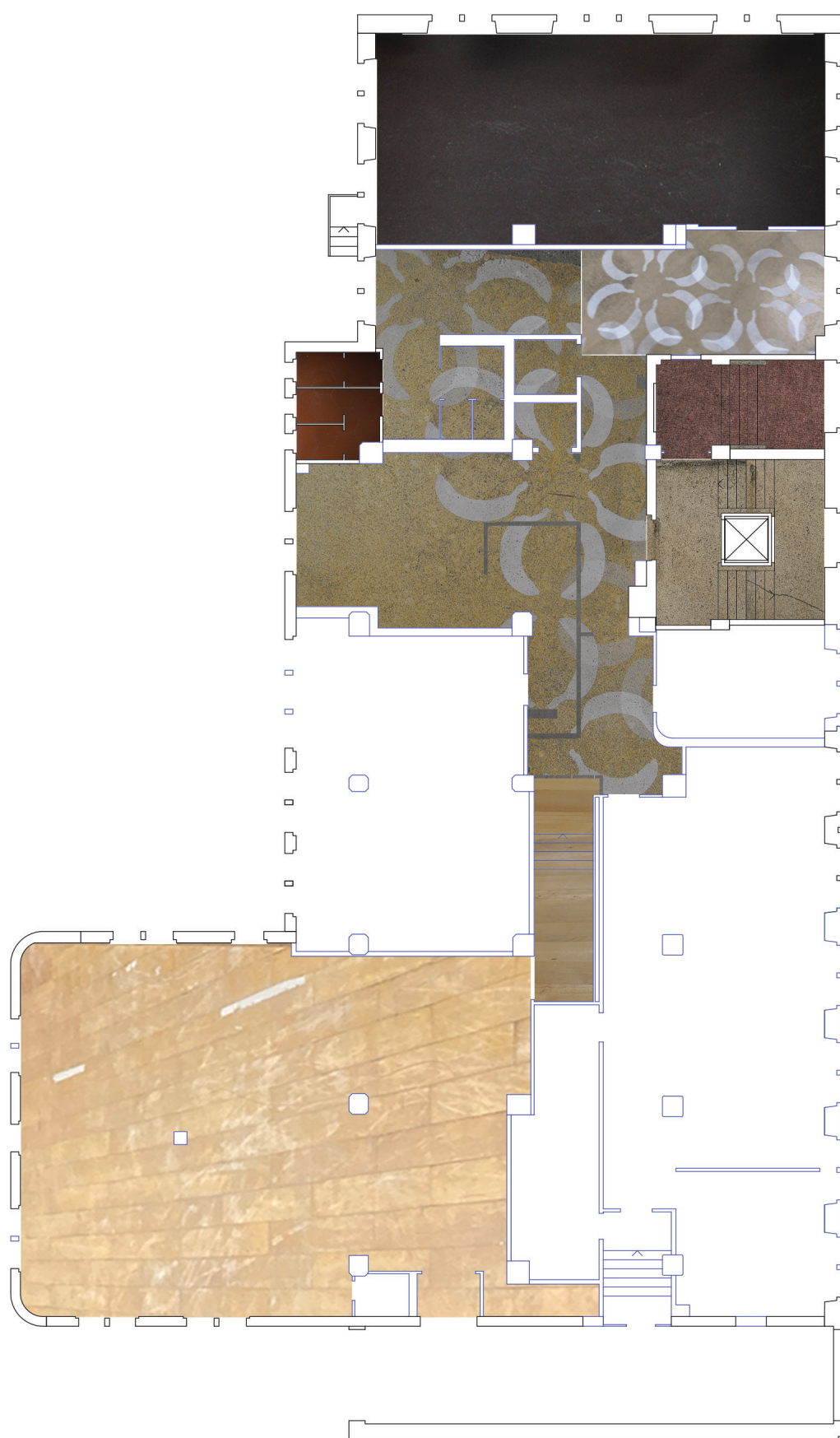
stairwell:
artificial stone (concrete core),
original

close up below:
traces of walls from 1939

path to annex:
wooden planks,
beech

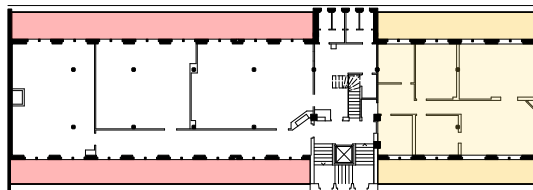
annex:
well used wooden floors boards,
maybe acer





floor collage

The top floor balconies can be overviewed by the main school building, next doors: Frau Fries, the administrator, told me, that the bosses over there keep watch, whenever a teacher exits with the students, they call her up.
The balcony remains closed to students.
Only teachers are allowed – and they already have their own two private balconies.
I wonder if it has to do with railing height.

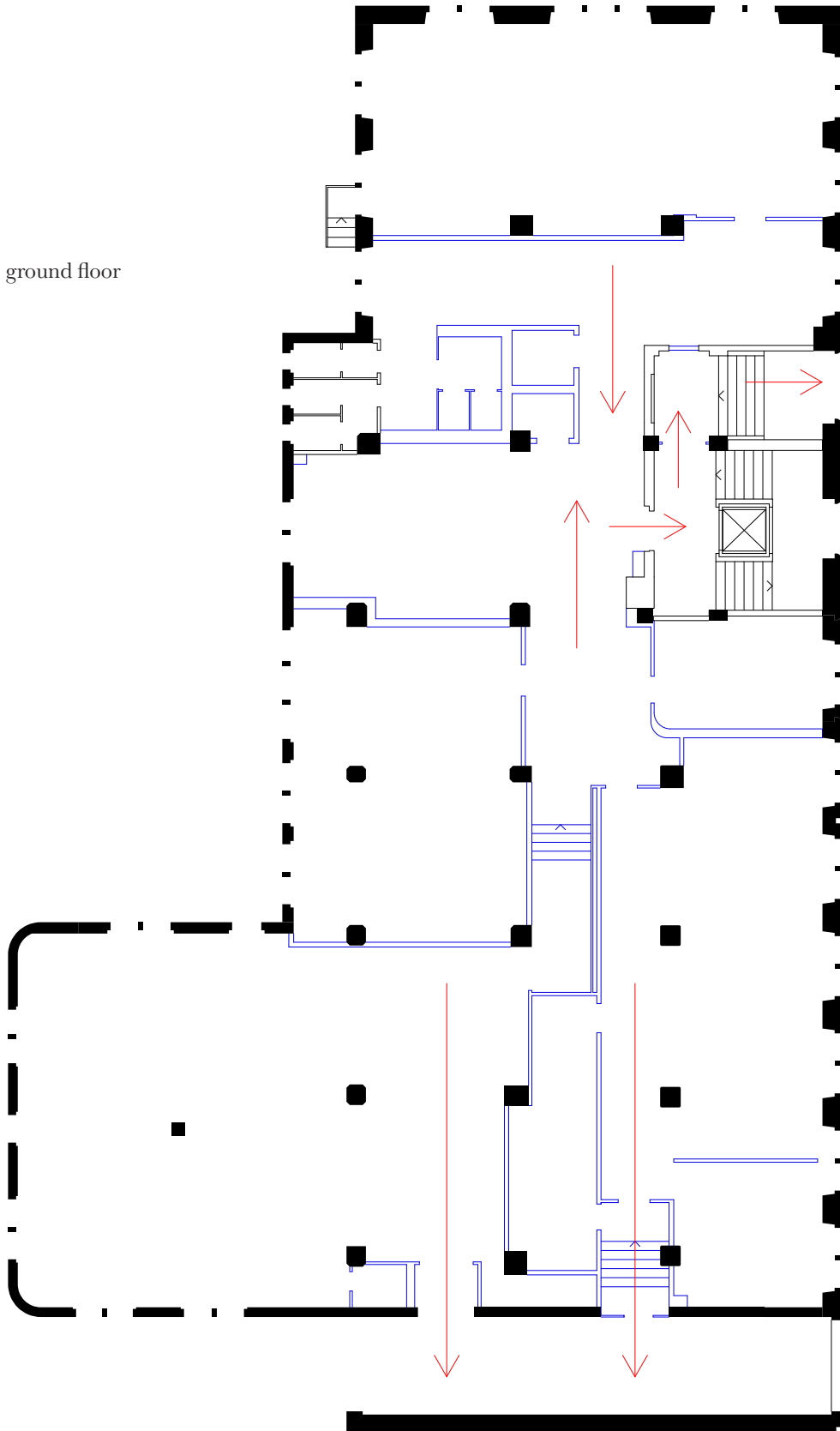




closed balconies

There are no evacuation plans hung up in this building, maybe because there is really mostly one way out: the staircase. There is no secondary exit in case the staircase burns (from the first floor up).

ground floor



evacuation plans

observation

The tarmac is warm. The students from the Vorkurs sit on the floor, the painters lean against the wall. They don't talk to each other, only *a lot about each other*. No cars are seen. It is a familiar street, a street I have been on many times. There are too few trees to listen to the birds and too much noise from Limmatplatz. But it feels secluded, almost like a secret to be here. I have learned that people use the banana sign to give directions. They call it the "banana house" as if it were a landmark. It blends in with the others, beige and pastel yellow factory buildings. Only when you start to look closer you notice the variety of architectural styles collected in this tiny area.

Kuni talks to me through the window of his class room. He calls the students and then faintly smiles at me. He has a photograph to show me. The students call me "photo journalist" because I carry my camera with me. I have become known here, the caretaker says hi and some teachers that walk by. Christian yells out something I don't understand.

Students don't sit. They are perpetually in motion once they are inside the building. They walk from one classroom outside for a smoke and inside again. I wonder if the common space is used more in winter. I kick the Selecta – when I am here I live of Malteser-balls, they taste of childhood and leave a dry taste in my mouth.

Upstairs on the second floor it's lively. It's the only floor that is almost always in use: students rumble around. Today they are grouped around the copy machine. Doors are wide open, I can see through the glass doors that the teachers are rearranging. The golden moving cat has disappeared, I am glad.

character

I like you the most when it's just you and me. I don't have a badge so Daniele leaves me inside when he goes. When I go outside, the door closes behind me. I have Ninsch bring me some food by the front door and I feel like a aristocrat receiving guests.

You feel palatial. And soggy, used by time and not really taken care of. At night, when we're alone, I trace your wounds. These spaces, three-and-a-half-meters high but confined in long, endless white corridors. Machines on walls and remnants of long-forgotten machines. Secrets that I try to understand – why do the body painters have a red tile floor that winds up on the walls, curved to build a gutter but no drain in sight?

I listen to music loudly and it echos around you. It echos in the staircase so loud I almost cannot hear. I wonder how Signor Franco and his wife must have felt like, being at home only with you. Maybe you suited each other, both remnants of another time.

You are melancholic at night. I want to open the window but in a minute, I know, the familiar beep-beep-beep of the new security installation will follow.

Does this bother you? Do you care that they have sprayed all over you in the courtyard? That they keep incising new windows and shapes and distorting your symmetry? You are right, you never really were very symmetric at all, you are just better at hiding it than I am.

I will walk by you tomorrow.

In the “Abklärung zur Schutzwürdigkeit” (2015) the Denkmalschutzpflege talks about

urbanistic relevance
witness of industrial district

relevance within social and economical history
banana as very popular fruit
probably first banana factory in Switzerland

typological relevance
synthesis of Heimatstil and Neues Bauen
storage and factory in one building

I would like to add another:
relevance within colonial history

and try to divide this into three parts

firstly, function:

I am interested here less in formalistic aspects and more in how daily rituals contribute to perpetuate colonial mechanisms. Does, and if so how does the buildings function depend on its colonial history? Is it still seen today? Are some structures reproduced? I am thinking about the building as a continuous building site; since 1939 noone has taken the care to invest money.
On the other side I am also interested in the forgotten ones: whom did the school use forget and overshadow? Could a more diverse use, not uniquely as a school, maybe be beneficial?
How could the entrance situation be simplified? How could we play with the air space in the northern part?

secondly, I am interested in colonial imagery:

mainly in the most obvious ones: the blackmoors on top of the balcony but also in the relief stones and the banana decoration. For most of its history the building has also been decorated with lettering: could or should this be brought back?
I am interested in exploring solutions with a range of other people –

This building shows formalistically three typologies: a sort of neoclassicism, decorative elements of the Heimatstil and mostly structural elements of the Neues Bauen.

Could I argue that all of these styles have their individual connections to colonialism?
Classicism continues to be the main architectonical reference – a style almost completely focused on Western ideals. Heimatstil was part of a campaign towards more nationalism that brought with it classifications of otherness. This seems the most obvious case.

Walter Mignolo described “coloniality” as the “reverse and unavoidable side of ‘modernity’ – it’s darker side, like the part of the mood we do not see when we observe it from earth.” Could I make this argument to the elements of Neues Bauen? The rational pragmatism of a factory that laudes the British thinker and the Swiss worker but leaves out anybody else?

thirdly, I am interested in neocolonial structures the banana continues to be the number one fruit consumed by the Swiss and most other Europeans, at the same time curry leaves are forbidden to be imported as they are classified as neophytes. Companies dealing in bananas continue to have huge influence in South and Central America – the monocultures of the Cavendish banana have brought about huge agricultural issues to deal with.

It seems to much to solve with one architectonical approach. I therefore would like to propose a variety of small interventions that aim to deal with parts of the above mentioned topics in different ways.