

Foreword

The 'Neufert' continues to be the most comprehensive, yet compact, first source of information on the design of buildings. Just as the daily office grind of the architect proceeds in many small steps and a few long strides, the sustained progress of the 'Neufert' is characterised not only by meticulous attention to standards and regulations, whose omnipresence in construction is undeniable, but also by reflection of the great issues of our time as they affect building project design. These important matters undoubtedly include concern for our environment and the absolute demand for sustainability in architecture. Sustainable building has many aspects, to be weighted differently according to the design brief.

The team working with Professor Johannes Kister has set out, right through the book, to emphasise new sustainability standards and perspectives using the criteria 'objective information' and 'topicality', which is presumably how Ernst Neufert would have approached the task. We hope that this new edition, which continues the redesign commenced in the previous one, will further consolidate the Foundation's reliable and exhaustive reference volume on building design.

Neufert Foundation, March 2009

The new German edition has once again been produced at the same location that was formative for Neufert's development as the office manager for Walter Gropius – the Bauhaus in Dessau. The decision to return to the roots here seems to have been the right one, because the previous edition was greeted positively by architects, students, lecturers and other interested parties. The concepts in this edition have been developed further by Nicole Delmes, née Neufert, and Ingo Neufert. My thanks are due to them both, for the trust and understanding they have shown, which made our collaboration straightforward and enjoyable. Also, I would especially like to thank Mathias Brockhaus, Matthias Lohmann and Patricia Merkel, a team that works in an exceptionally professional manner, the students of the Hochschule Anhalt – Fanjuan Kong, Tobias Schwarzwald and Mandy Wagenknecht – and the external consultants, whose valuable advice and reliable collaboration made an essential contribution to the success of the project.

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Johannes Kister

External consultants:

Prof. Dr. Dirk Bohne
Karl-Heinz Breuer
Paul Corall
Thomas Ehrenberg

Olaf Gersmeier

Lydia Haack, John Höpfner
Karl-Josef Heinrichs
Prof. Alfred Jacoby
Stefan Jäckel, Tobias Mücke
and Andreas Kotlan
Dr. Jörg Junhold
Lür Meyer-Bassin
Hans-Peter Mühlethaler
Prof. Dr. Gunther Nogge
Marcellus Puhlemann

Hermann Schnell
Finn Stoll
Wolfgang Thiede
Carsten Thiemann
Heiko Uelze
Prof. Susanne Weber
Carola Wunderlich

Building services
Basics
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Building physics
Synagogues
External works
Zoos
Theatre
Restaurants
Zoos
Design and construction management
Facility management
Administration
Health
Railways
Catering
Lighting
Air transport

Preface

This handbook developed from the notes made for my lectures at the Bauhochschule in Weimar. They derive from measurements, experience and understanding gained from practice and research in the human sphere, necessary for the design of buildings, but also keeping an eye open for new opportunities and demands.

On the one hand we stand on the shoulders of our forebears but, on the other, everything is fluid and we are children of our time with our gaze towards the future, though the outlook of each individual is often different. This results from differences in education and training, the influence of the environment, personal predisposition and the relevant degree of internally driven self-development.

Whether the 'fixed opinion' of today is absolutely correct remains to be seen, however, because it is only valid at the time of formation. Experience shows that fairer judgement develops with time than is possible immediately, since we do not have the necessary detachment for breadth of vision. This makes clear what reservations need to be imposed on teaching to prevent heresy. All teaching remains subjective and determined by its time and environment, despite all efforts to achieve truth and objectivity and all intentions to critically examine our favourite opinions. The danger of heresy can be avoided if the teaching also makes clear that it is not an end product but rather serves, and is subject to, all that is vital, upcoming and unfolding

This will then provide for our students the attitude meant by Nietzsche when he said, 'Only those who change themselves remain associated with me.'

The essential feature of such teaching of continuous progress, the servant of development, is that there are no ready recipes, no 'canned wisdom', but rather only building blocks, components or corners requiring the addition of combination, construction, composition and harmony.

Confucius put it like this more than 2500 years ago: 'I give my students a corner and they will have to find the other three themselves!' Born architects, or those who yearn to build, will keep their ears and eyes closed when a solution to a task is prescribed, because born architects are full of their ideas and ideals, and only need the elements in order to set to work and make something of them!

Those who have found faith in themselves, an insight into connectivity, the play of forces, materials, colours, dimensions, who can absorb the reality and the appearance of a building, study its effect, investigate it critically and rebuild it in the mind, are on the only true path to the great satisfaction offered by active creation. This view of life should help them on their way. It

should liberate them from all teachings, when it comes down to it even from this one, and lead them to their own creative work. It should provide initial assistance: run – everyone must build for themselves.

The architectural forms of our time are the result of the same process, which our predecessors underwent in order to produce their splendid temples, cathedrals and palaces. They had no models other than their own imaginations and intentions, ideas and ideals, with which they neared their aspirations. The commission formulated along these lines was enough to enliven concepts, which took solid form in line with the technological possibilities of the time and local conditions, and only bore a remote similarity to what had gone before. These new buildings could be technically much better and deliver more because of improvement in the state of technology. They could, however, also be compared artistically to similar structures from the past.

If we compare an industrial building of today – light, roomy, with good dimensions and slimmer, lightweight construction – with a factory from the 18th century or a workshop of the 15th century, then the advantages of our modern buildings will be apparent even to the most blinkered conservationist. This means that, whenever construction projects serve a genuine requirement of our time, work can be expected from energetic contemporary architects that will bear comparison to, or even overshadow, the best of old buildings.

A lively-minded university should offer primarily a view of our time and a look to the future, glancing back only to the extent that this is advisable or unavoidable. This was the advice of one of the greatest of our profession, Fritz Schumacher, when he warned a young student in his architecture lectures against getting too lost in art history issues while researching the past. Being led astray by a doctorate into learned byways could be at the cost of the energy required to meet the more varied requirements of the profession.

In contrast to this, it is better just to hand students the elements of architecture, as is done in this *Architects' Data*, where I have attempted to reduce the building blocks of design to the essentials, to schematise and even to abstract in order to make imitation difficult and force students to produce form and content from within themselves. Their various design ideas will be coordinated anyway to a certain extent by current fashion, that idiosyncratic feeling of community which characterises mankind's joint efforts at a particular time and finds a durable and visible expression in contemporary style.

Ernst Neufert

