
Lynnette Widder

Technology as Thought, Technology as Fact

Sep Ruf's Changing Architectural Expression, 1951–59

Abstract

Sep Ruf's prolific post-war career reflects technical and stylistic shifts from the material-poor, filigree style of the post-war years to the more robust, material standardization of the Wirtschaftswunder. By examining the technical documents from which his work was constructed, we can learn much about his technique and finesse; by reading some of the few public statements he offered about his architectural values, we can understand his intentions. But, to explain his attitude towards technology, we need to contextualize and compare his oeuvre within the larger discussion about the role of technology in determining the essence of a specifically German Modern architecture in the post-war period.

Technology as fact and as concept was central to the debates that characterized the early 1950s, when Germany's pre-war technical dominance had been, at least temporarily, lost. By the mid-1950s, as German building construction technology had regained capacity and found a new model of production, the discourse around technology and architectural expression shifted again to reflect these new realities. This paper discusses three projects by Ruf as touchstones against which to gauge German construction technology in the post-war period and, in concert with his own statements and those of architects close to him, to speculate about the location of technology as a driver in his work.

Keywords

German Architecture 1949–59; Sep Ruf; Darmstädter Gespräch.