



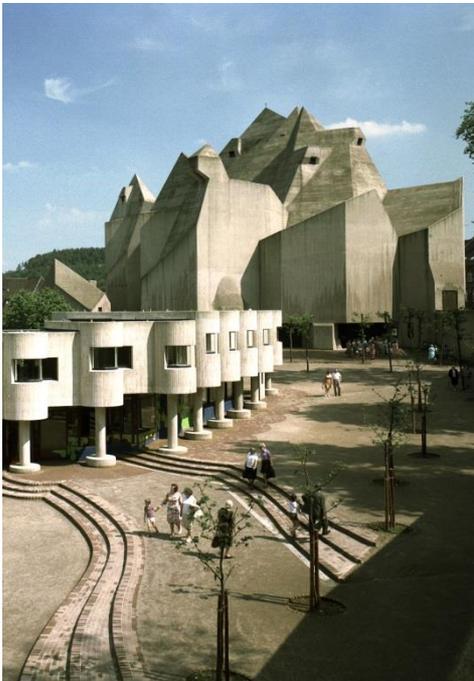
PRESS

INFORMATION – January 17, 2020

Frankfurt/Main

BÖHM 100: **The Concrete Cathedral of Neviges**

On the occasion of the 100th birthday of Gottfried Böhm.



Gottfried Böhm: Sanctuary of Mary Queen of Peace Church, Neviges / 1963–68 Photo: Inge and Arved von der Ropp / Irene and Sigurd Greven Stiftung, approx. 1968

January 18, 2019 – September 27, 2020

Deutsches Architekturmuseum (DAM)
Schaumainkai 43, Frankfurt am Main

EXHIBITION OPENING:

Fr, January 17, 2020, 7 p.m.

PRESS CONFERENCE:

Fr, January 17, 2020, 10 a.m.

OPEN:

Tue, Thu – Sun 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. \ Wed 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. \ Mon closed

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DEUTSCHES ARCHITEKTURMUSEUM IS CELEBRATING THE 100th BIRTHDAY OF THE ARCHITECT GOTTFRIED BÖHM WITH A FOCUS EXHIBITION DEDICATED TO ONE OF HIS BEST-KNOWN BUILDINGS – THE PILGRIMAGE CHURCH IN NEVIGES:

The architect Gottfried Böhm is celebrating his 100th birthday on January 23, 2020. Among his best-known works is the pilgrimage church dedicated to “Mary, Queen of Peace” in Neviges in North Rhine-Westphalia.

This mighty church in the town of Neviges, which lies between Wuppertal and Essen, is now around 50 years old. With seating for 800 and standing room for 2,200 more, it is the second biggest sacred building in the Cologne archdiocese, surpassed only by Cologne Cathedral, from which it takes its name “Mariendom”, or “Cathedral of the Virgin Mary”. Built of exposed concrete, the ensemble dates from Böhm’s brutalist period and was built between 1963 and 1968. In 1986 Gottfried Böhm became the first German architect to win the Pritzker Prize, the Nobel Prize of architecture. His sketches, as well as the legacy of his father Dominikus Böhm, form part of the DAM’s collection. Following on from the comprehensive exhibitions dedicated to both the Böhms in 2005 and 2006, the museum is now marking the centenary by supplementing this retrospective with a look forward – all the more fitting since the church in Neviges is currently being given a new roof covering that uses innovative textile-reinforced concrete technology.

The exhibition

For the first time in the DAM’s history, the front wall of the presentation room is being covered with floor-to-ceiling photographs to create the illusion of an internal view. On display will be a collage of interior photos of the Neviges Mariendom. With numerous photos of the church’s construction and a number of Gottfried Böhm’s expressive sketches, this key work of 20th century religious architecture will be presented more extensively than ever before.

The pilgrimage to Neviges

Pilgrims have been coming to Neviges since the late 17th century to pray to a small image of the Virgin Mary kept there by the resident Franciscan monks. When the pilgrimage first began in 1681, the region was predominantly Protestant, and the veneration of the Virgin Mary of Neviges stems from the time of the Counter-Reformation. After the First World War and post-1945 the number of pilgrims rose significantly, hence the small monastic church was no longer adequate to host them. The Franciscans developed plans for a new, enormous pilgrimage church that could hold 8,000 people and staged a competition in 1962-1963, to which there were 15 entries, to choose the architect.

Competition and consecration in 1968

In the first round of the competition, Gottfried Böhm’s design was criticized for its expressive formal idiom, but in the second stage it triumphed. He was the only entrant to propose positioning the church as the final point on an uphill pilgrim’s way. The story goes that Archbishop Frings of Cologne, who was virtually blind, felt the model of the design with his fingers and gave it his approval on that basis. The ground-breaking ceremony took place in 1966 and two years later the monumental concrete church with its boldly folding roof was already towering over the small, slate-roofed gabled cottages of Neviges by a considerable margin.

The spatial impression of this complete artwork

Anyone who enters the church immediately feels like they are in a huge, dark cave. Then, even on dull days, they start to make out the extraordinarily vibrant red church windows, which Gottfried Böhm

designed himself, along with the pews and all the details of the interior furnishings. Of particular note are the rose window and the snake window, which are symbolic of the Virgin Mary and the triumph over evil.

The refurbishment

For decades now, cracks in the reinforced concrete roof have repeatedly allowed water to penetrate the interior of the pilgrimage church. Now, a new, thin layer made of “textile-reinforced concrete” is being applied. For this, two layers of sprayed concrete with integrated carbon matting are laid over a base coat and a color-matched top layer applied, in some cases by hand using a trowel where the geometry of the 2,700-square-meter roof surface poses problems. Thanks to the multi-layered textile-reinforced concrete system, the cracks allowing the water in will be transformed into a finely distributed and thus harmless crack pattern. The innovative process was developed at the Institute for Building Research at RWTH Aachen University, with Peter Böhm in charge of artistic direction.

The Böhm dynasty of architects

Gottfried Böhm’s father Dominikus (1880-1955) was one of the most important architects of expressionist church design. Gottfried Böhm was born on January 23, 1920 in Offenbach, where his father taught at the Werkkunstschule (now the Hochschule für Gestaltung). The first buildings completed after his architecture degree in Munich were designed by father and son together. In 1948 Gottfried Böhm married the architect Elisabeth Haggenmüller, who was also involved in most of the projects, although the architecture firm bore his name alone. Three of their four sons are also architects: Stephan, Peter and Paul. The film “The Böhms –Architecture of a Family” (2014), which is being screened as part of the extensive supporting program, brings together two generations of Böhms.

Böhm and Frankfurt

The exhibition does not explore in greater detail the links between the Böhm family and the city of Frankfurt/ Main, but for readers in the region of southern Hesse the following may be of interest for reporting purposes:

Gottfried Böhm designed the Church of St. Ignatius in Frankfurt’s Westend (Gärtnerweg 60). He designed it in 1964, i.e., in the same year in which he was chosen as the architect for Neviges. The folded concrete roof is not the only feature common to both buildings –Böhm also included a rose window in the Frankfurt church too.

On the edge of the Europaviertel district stands the headquarters of the former Deutsche Bundesbahn, which was designed by Gottfried Böhm’s son Stephan (1991-1993). The building is notable for its prefabricated concrete façade but is soon to be replaced by a new Deutsche Bahn building at the main railway station, so its future is uncertain.

EXHIBITION TEXTS

INTRODUCTION

We're celebrating Gottfried Böhm's 100th birthday with this exhibition on one of his most famous churches, "Mary, Queen of Peace"—after the Cologne Cathedral, the second largest church in the Archdiocese of Cologne. This Catholic pilgrimage church was built between 1963 and 1968 in Neviges, a protestant-leaning district of Velbert situated in the Bergisches Land region between Wuppertal, Düsseldorf, and Essen. The church and its bold concrete folds are the highlight of a building ensemble that belongs to Böhm's "brutalist" phase. In 1986, Gottfried Böhm was the first German architect to be awarded a Pritzker Prize, the Nobel of architecture. A significant portion of Böhm's drawings archive is housed in the Deutsches Architekturmuseum, including a number of his expressionistic works in pencil and charcoal.

BIOGRAPHY

Gottfried Böhm stands in the center of a dynasty. His father Dominikus Böhm (1880–1955) was one of the most important architects of expressionist church buildings. Gottfried Böhm was born in 1920 in Offenbach, where his father taught at the Werkkunstschule (known today as the Hochschule für Gestaltung, or HfG). Father and son worked together on Gottfried's first buildings after receiving his architecture degree in Munich. In 1948, he married the architect Elisabeth Haggemüller. She would be involved in most of his projects, although the architecture firm bears his name alone. Of their four sons, three are architects: Stephan, Peter, and Paul. In the documentary film *Die Böhms: Architektur einer Familie* (2014), two generations of Böhms are gathered under one roof.

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE MIRACLE

The history of the Neviges pilgrimage began in 1676 with a Marian apparition. In Dorsten, 50 kilometers away, a Franciscan monk is said to have heard a voice while praying to a small portrait of the Virgin Mary. The voice told him to travel to Neviges, for "I want to be worshiped there!" There was a religiopolitical backdrop to this apparition, as the area around Neviges was—and remains today—predominantly protestant. The pilgrimage would not only serve to generate income for the Franciscans, who ran a monastery in Neviges after 1681, but would also function as a means of Counter-Reformation.

THE FIRST COMPETITION

In the wake of two World Wars, the number of pilgrims to Neviges rose significantly. Because the monastery church was too small, many services were held in the open air on the Marienberg, where even the 4,600 available seats were often insufficient. The Franciscans developed a plan to build a pilgrimage church with room for 8,000 visitors. In 1962–63, an architectural competition was held with 15 anonymous participants. What's striking about the competition is that nearly all the submissions were sculptural and symbolic in approach, including many whose forms were nearly caricatured in their expressiveness (funnels, spirals, crosses). Only the first-place design by Kurt Faber proposed building a "box"; it was rejected, however, by Cologne's Archbishop Frings. Five architects were then asked to revise the plans, including Gottfried Böhm.

THE SECOND COMPETITION

Böhm was the first to propose staging the church as the terminus of an ascending pilgrimage path and using other buildings to create an ensemble. Since the competition was no longer anonymous, and Böhm already had an exceptional reputation for his sculptural churches, the jury incurred no risk by selecting him.

THE CONSTRUCTION SITE

After the groundbreaking in 1966, construction in Neviges proceeded rapidly. The piping and steel mats of the reinforcement were laid in the wooden formwork first, then the concrete was poured in. The walls have a different structure from the sloping roofs: the vertical exterior walls were sandblasted after hardening, whereas on the angled roof the detailed structure of the wooden formwork is still visible. The

roof work demanded adventurous climbing skills from the construction workers, who were well aware that something unusual was being created here. The foreman allegedly claimed that he'd be converting to Catholicism when the work was finished.

THE DRAWINGS

Gottfried Böhm is known not only for his sculptural buildings, but also for his drawings. When designing the pilgrimage church, Böhm and his employees made various sketches of the building in pencil, charcoal, and chalk. They experimented with different versions of the angled roof and dispersal of light through the interior. One drawing shows the architects considering whether to cover the roof in slate or sheet metal. The precisely manufactured steel and plastic chairs were also developed through a series of lively charcoal sketches.

THE INTERIOR

When you enter the church, at first it feels like you've entered an immense, dark cave. Then, even on gloomy days, the church's unusually glowing red-tinted windows begin to come to the fore. The rose window refers to the Virgin Mary venerated in Neviges, while the snake window makes reference to the defeated evil. All the details of the furnishings were developed by Böhm's office. The chairs can be arranged freely. The church originally had the same streetlamps inside as were found along the pilgrimage path outside. The interior space of the church also functions as a public square, intended not only for various church services but also for public events.

CRITICISM

When SPIEGEL magazine reported on the dedication of the pilgrimage church in Neviges, it didn't fail to mention that Bensberg residents had dubbed their recently finished town hall the *Affenfelsen*, or "monkey rock." This sculptural, exposed concrete town hall was also designed by Gottfried Böhm. Heinrich Klotz, the DAM's founding director, was skeptical as to whether the pilgrimage church was properly reacting to its environment. For architect Wolfgang Döring, Böhm's concrete structures were technologically outdated. He compared the tower of the Bensberg town hall to a World War II bunker.

THE REFURBISHMENT

The roof of the pilgrimage church is currently being renovated. Due to cracks caused by thermal stress in the reinforced concrete, water has been leaking through for decades. The white-stained surface of the roof stems from the 1980s, when attempts were made to seal the leaks with a coat of epoxy resin. Now the strategy is to apply a thin new coat of textile concrete. For that, a base layer shotcrete, two layers of shotcrete reinforced with carbon mats, and a top layer of pigmented shotcrete were applied. On geometrically challenging areas even a trowel was used when necessary. The amount of handcraft is stunning. The multilayer textile concrete system acts as a sealant for cracks caused by thermal stress, and redistributes those as a harmless formation of microflaws throughout the layers. This innovative procedure was developed at the Institut für Bauforschung at RWTH Aachen. Peter Böhm is the artistic director of the renovation works. As the last step, the original formwork board pattern is being imitated with carvings made by hand.

PUBLICATIONS



Böhm 100

Der Beton-Dom von Neviges

Herausgegeben von Oliver Elser und Miriam Kremser

Gestaltung: Rahlwes.Pietz

28 Seiten, Format 28 cm × 42 cm

Im Museumsshop erhältlich für 12,- EUR.



Postkartenset BÖHM 100 **Der Beton-Dom von Neviges**

Neun Ansichten der Wallfahrtskirche "Maria, Königin des Friedens" als Postkartenset mit Banderole.

Im Museumsshop erhältlich für 8,- EUR. –

IMPRINT

BÖHM 100

The Concrete Cathedral of Neviges

January 18, 2020 – April 26, 2020

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