



Alan Holgate

The Art of Structural Engineering: The Work of Jörg Schlaich and his Team

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The office of Schlaich, Bergemann und Partner has a worldwide reputation for its innovative structures of striking aesthetic quality. The work ranges from cable-net and membrane roofs through bridges of a unique inventiveness to new devices for the utilization of solar energy. This account of their work concentrates on their leader Jörg Schlaich without losing sight of his partnership with Rudolf Bergemann and a steadfast team of designers and researchers based in his consulting office and in his Institute for Conceptual and Structural Design at the University of Stuttgart.

Schlaich's holistic approach to structural engineering combines science, pragmatism, and meticulous attention to detail with concern for the natural and built environment. It embraces the theoretical »Berlin« tradition of Franz Dischinger and the pragmatic, experimental »Stuttgart« tradition of Emil Mörsch, maintained by Schlaich's mentor and teacher Fritz Leonhardt. Schlaich's drive to combine scientific theory, engineering design, and aesthetic art has links to the great German tradition of the Werkbund and the Bauhaus.

The range of structures is impressively wide and varied. In the design of utilitarian structures Schlaich and his team have made a major contribution to the art of structural engineering, taking responsibility for all aspects of design and achieving close integration of its technical and aesthetic components. In architectural design Schlaich is increasingly sought by prominent architects who value a spirited advocacy of the engineer's point of view.

This survey of Schlaich's oeuvre portrays the world of the structural engineer with its many demands and its opportunities and the satisfaction to be gained in the creation of fine structures. Brief sketches relate the history of most of the projects in which Schlaich and his partners have been involved and tell something of the man himself and his philosophy of design.

Alan Holgate taught, until his retirement, in the Department of Civil Engineering at Monash University in Clayton, Australia. His writings include the books *The Art of Structural Design* and *Aesthetics of Built Form*, both published by Oxford University Press.

See also: Jörg Schlaich, *The Solar Chimney – Electricity from the Sun*.

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