



**Axel Schultes, Charlotte Frank. Bundeskanzleramt, Berlin**

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Because Berlin has already been the capital and seat of government several times in the course of German history, most of the parliamentary and governmental offices and departments that were moving could be accommodated in existing older buildings. Almost the only accommodation problem that needed to be addressed in a completely new way architecturally was the Federal Chancellery, as the centre of the executive. The winning design submitted in 1994 by Berlin architects Axel Schultes and Charlotte Frank has gone through years of revision, expressing a democratic consensus between clients, the public and the architects. In this way, this key political function has acquired a completely new face.

The Chancellery lays the foundations of a new approach to architectural representation of the state, effortlessly surpassing the discredited legacy of neo-classicism and linking up with one of the really great sources of inspiration in German architectural history: the orientally inclined collective architecture of Expressionism in the early years of this century. Here Schultes and Frank do not have a historicizing view of architectural history, but are simply updating building ideas that European architecture has not taken into account since the Renaissance. Buildings by Schultes and Frank are through-composed units that do not reduce the outer skin to façade and window-wall, but consist of remodelled spaces in-between throughout, and create the highest possible degree of porosity. In the case of the Chancellery, a horizontal and spatial dynamic emerges, using free-standing columns and open balconies to draw visitors into the building. Inserted, corrugated shear walls do not focus at a central vanishing point, but liberate links with a multiplicity of perspectives.

The architecture of the Chancellery is able to exist without being charged with symbols, because it illustrates the essence of democratic state architecture: it accommodates a temporary authority, an authority endowed by the popular vote. The architects have expressed these contradictions that are immanent in the constitution sensually by using architectural contrasts: by juxtaposing mass and emptiness, coarseness and refinement, abundance and plainness. This building has a physiognomy that is recognized and accepted by the general public, and perhaps even makes citizens want to share the world that knows how to create buildings like this. Thus Schultes and Frank have returned its fundamental definition to politics: the art of built belonging together.

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