

The Softbag

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Think of a travel bag in contrast to a suitcase!

Hard bags are predefined in their shape. Their structure is determined by the stiffness of the shell. Filling hard bags, room has to be found for each piece. The predefined shell reduces the possibilities. In contrast, travel bags “softbags” are formed through their fillings, they are molded from inside, their structure is based on swelling up the skin.

The concept of the softbag is a thought model for the architectural concept and design process. In architecture, shape itself has no value. Form is determined by the formulation of contents,

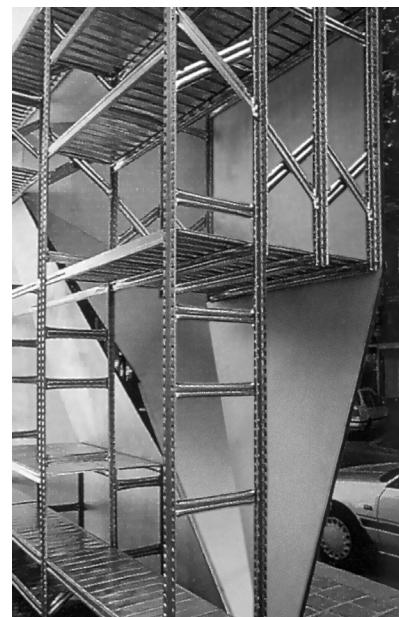
which again is influenced by realities and dreams, thoughts, theories and facts within the context of philosophy, art, sociology, natural science and technology. Paradigms are changing with time and its’ philosophy of thinking. While a linear thinking process was dominant also in scientific research in the western hemisphere for many centuries, a shift to a relatively new approach of the research of complex systems had been recognized.

Since it has become clear, that the whole is more than the sum of its elements, the networking of single parameters has become highly important. This encourages our ideas for the architectural design. It is the idea of the spirit of a softbag; the network of contents, made up from visions of space and its sequences, light, atmosphere, context, circulation, material qualities, structure, etc. that determines the form.

Softbag is a complex design methodology versus a monoparametric approach, “softbag” is an urban strategy versus an urban master plan. Softbag is the unpredictable result. It is the surprise.

Exhibition Installation, Vienna/Berlin

This principle of the “softbag” was also used for the house for two. As a prototype, a membrane facade was erected for an exhibition in front of the gallery *Raum aktueller Kunst* in Vienna’s 2nd district (1997) and in Berlin’s street on June 17th (1998). The structure of an industrial shelf system with changing depths gives stiffness to the covering membrane like the filling of a softbag. It allows the inner space to extend into the facade. Each piece itself is finding its room, swelling the “softbag” and stabilizing it. The use of space is optimized.



House for Two, Vienna

A low-cost house for two with the possibility of expansion in the future was the requirement.

The softbag principle formed this house. Two separate housing units were established on a steep and narrow site. Two occupants, divided by a folded wall, the primary structure of the house, making room for each other in order to displace it elsewhere reaching for the optimized balance between view and width of space. An industrial shelving in four meter distance to the primary structure meets with its load capacity and versatility for the requirements of easy internal expansion. The inside space of the house tends to expand

and swell to the outside as it deforms the skin of the building. The variety of construction depths of the shelf offers extra space and creates needed highs and lows for the stability of the skin, a membrane which allows complex geometry.

