

Aug 06, 2018 08:00 BST

Porcelain Factory Rosenthal am Rothbühl

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In 1963 Walter Gropius received a very special request, which Philip Rosenthal, son of the company founder and long-standing CEO of the then Rosenthal AG, had initially dismissed with the following words: 'Perhaps I can ask the Pope to christen my daughter too' – that is how unlikely he felt it was that the most famous architect of the time would design a new production plant for Rosenthal. But Gropius agreed.

The Rosenthal am Rothbühl porcelain factory and the glass works in Amberg were created between 1965 and 1969. With both industrial buildings, Gropius created outstanding late works that have maintained their functionality and aesthetic to this day. Both buildings combine state-of-the-art technology and workplace design with people in mind.

In building the factory, Gropius and Rosenthal not only attached great importance to the technical modernity and architectural aesthetic, but also looked for opportunities to design the working environment positively. Philip Rosenthal (1916 – 2001) was concerned with the 'designed environment' featuring original art and design not only in living spaces, but also in cityscapes. 'To me it was clear that a factory – or a business, a Rosenthal Studio shop – could be not a blight but an adornment on the cityscape and landscape.'

When observed from a distance, the porcelain factory lies flat and, due to a strictly composed arrangement, like a sculpture on the landscape. The individual components of the area appear to be geometric elements that stand together rather than next to each other. The mighty winged roof, which is an almost magical sign to the entrance of the Rothbühl factory, makes a striking interruption in the ensemble. High window elements create generous visual contact with the outdoors and low-key coloured areas consistently break up the frequent monotony of the large hall structures. The glass wall

'greenhouse' is located in the centre of the production facility, providing a quiet green island for relaxing views. Gropius was sensitive to the human and social aspects of a building. In the old factory, employees adorned the windowsills with potted plants. This didn't happen in the new factory. Gropius heard about the custom and then thought: 'If individual flower pots can't be displayed for technical and spatial reasons, then we'll build a large flower pot for everyone.' The workforce was very happy with the greenhouse and its flamingos.

The factory itself is an elongated low-rise building that is accentuated in the centre by a protruding hall-like wing. This hall is suspended in externally visible U-shaped concrete girders, which demonstrate the construction principle of the entire building. The vertical division of the entire structure through the concrete pillars that were typical for Gropius (known as 'hammerhead supports') follows a module that corrects the horizontal emphasis of the elongated building as an optical-aesthetic principle.

Despite all of the necessary soberness of the industrial facility, the technically strong structure was nevertheless designed with care and detail. The ground beams were furnished with rough structures – inspired by Tapio Wirkkala's 'Variation' tableware format – and given muted colours in sections to create a vivid, airy impression. The most significant and greatest architect remained a normal person. After losing a bet with Philip Rosenthal, Walter Gropius designed a pigsty for the Rosenthal am Rothbühl factory but it was never actually built.

In Selb, Gropius put his idea of 'total architecture', proposed decades ago, into practice – no molecule detached from the others, and no aesthetic that basks in the brilliance of its self-interest but instead is always subordinate to its purpose and integrated into the whole.

On 5 October 2017, the Rosenthal am Rothbühl factory celebrated its 50th anniversary. Today, it remains a testimony to the ideas and great design power of the Bauhaus movement and is a listed building. Here Rosenthal produces vases, artistic pieces and teapots, also from real black porcelain with the greatest accuracy and craftsmanship.

Rosenthal am Rothbühl:

Architect: Prof. Walter Gropius, Alex Cvijanovic (The Architects Collaborative Inc.)

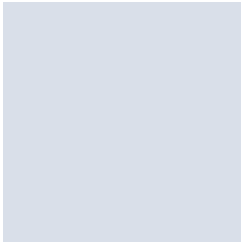
Start of construction: April 1965

Opening: 5th October 1967
Building area: 21,000 square metres
Award: Silver plaque from the Federal Ministry for Regional Planning, Building and Urban Planning in the 'Industry in the Landscape' competition (1975)

From Porcelain Pioneer to International Design Company

Founded in 1879, Rosenthal reflects on its longstanding company history. The story of Rosenthal is the story of a father and son – founder Philipp Rosenthal Senior and the visionary entrepreneur Philip Rosenthal Junior. The former laid the foundation for modern porcelain production, while the latter built Rosenthal into a renowned international brand. His credo: a passion for everyday luxury and a heartfelt commitment to design. For well over a century, established designers, artists, and trendy newcomers have crafted elegant, high-quality tableware collections and exclusive pieces that enhance living spaces. Rosenthal's clientele includes not only households worldwide but also 800 international restaurants and hotels. Rosenthal is already on the path of green transformation and established the "Corporate Sustainability" unit in 2022. The company actively addresses sustainability in environmental and energy management and social responsibility. The Rosenthal portfolio features the Rosenthal, Hutschenreuther, and Thomas brands, along with collaborations such as Rosenthal meets Versace and Swarovski x Rosenthal. Since July 2009, Rosenthal has been part of the Italian Arcturus Group.

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