

THE REICH CHANCELLERY

A WORK ANALYSIS

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THE ENTRANCE TO THE FÜHRER'S APARTMENT

ALBERT SPEER

Old Reich Chancellery/ Interior/ Wilhelmstraße 77/ 1937-1950

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The significance of the spatial concept of The Führer's Apartment

The Führer's Apartment occupied a large portion of the two main floors in the central building of the Old Reich Chancellery. During the construction of the New Reich Chancellery, Albert Speer connected the new building with The Führer's Apartment. In 1939, Speer had the historic main entrance leading into the Court of Honor of the Old Reich Chancellery blocked with furniture and later walled up inside, so that access was now only possible through the door in the passageway of the Old Reich Chancellery or through the newly created Small Courtyard. The central main door in the central building of the Old Reich Chancellery, with the porch built by Albert Speer in 1937, was preserved, but due to the obstruction from 1939 onwards it was only usable on special occasions¹ and was no longer usable after the doorway was bricked up.

A special feature worth mentioning in this context is that the bricked-up door continued to be secured by guards, thereby giving the public the appearance of a functioning door.

With the construction of the Small Courtyard, Speer relocated the main entrance to The Führer's Apartment to the southernmost end of the Old Reich Chancellery grounds. This meant that representative ballroom in The Führer's Apartment was now furthest from the official entrance. By relocating the entrance to The Führer's Apartment, Albert Speer artificially extended the sequence of rooms that stretched from south to north through the entire central building of the Old Reich Chancellery and beyond. He thus created a sequence of rooms within The Führer's Apartment that visitors to Adolf Hitler's private receptions had to pass through before being received by Adolf Hitler in the winter garden or ballroom. This was a spatial planning concept that Albert Speer also implemented in the construction of the New Reich Chancellery.

1. The only occasion known to the author on which the cupboard blocking access to the interior was moved was on April 20, 1939, when Adolf Hitler presented himself to the public through the open door of the porch on the occasion of his 50th birthday.



Fig. 5 This photo from 1940 shows a changing of the guard at the already walled-up main entrance in the Court of Honor of the Old Reich Chancellery. The guards referred to this guard as the Führer Guard.

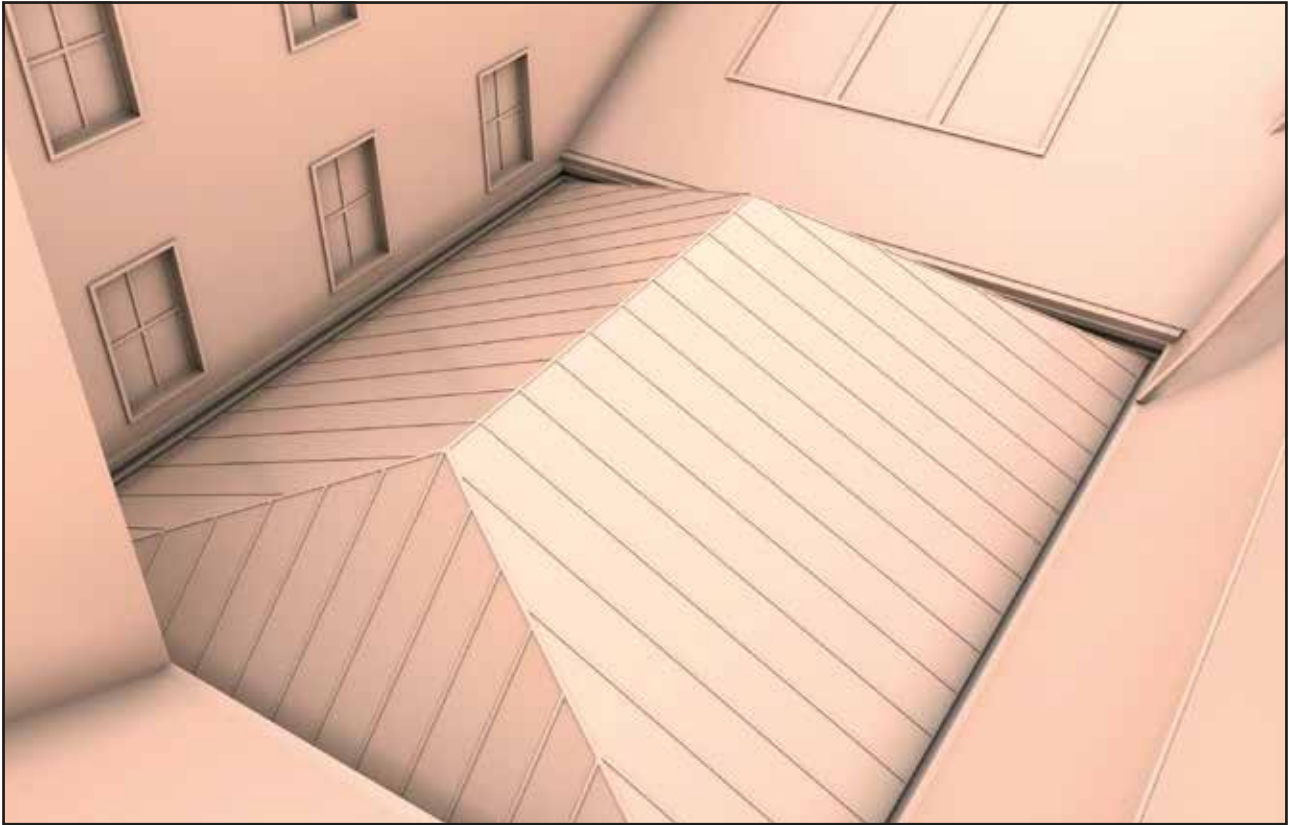


Fig. 23 A view of the glass covering of the courtyard roof.



Fig. 24 Longitudinal cross-section through the Small Courtyard with a glass roof and attached ceiling.

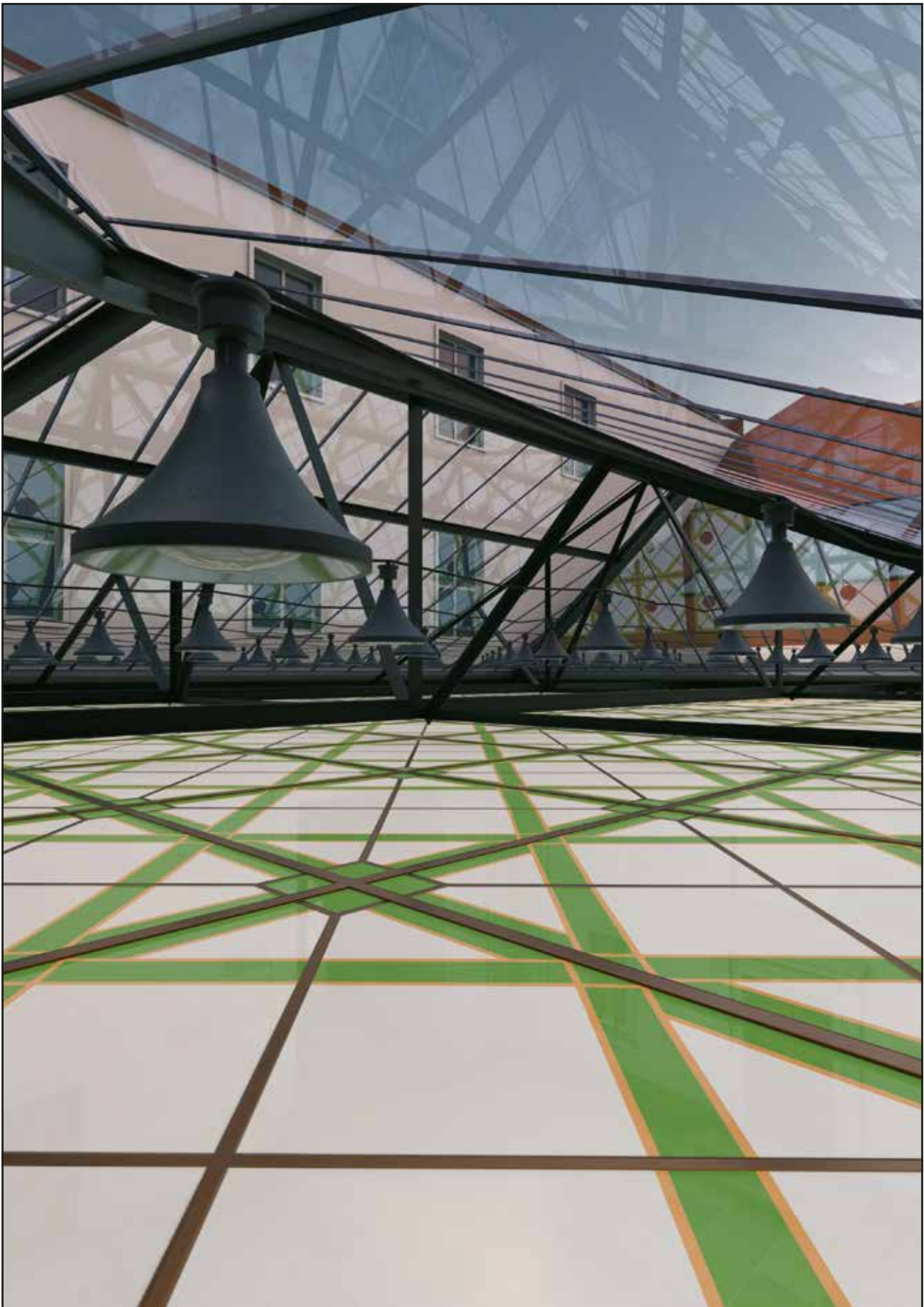


Fig. 39 View of the roof structure above the ceiling.

The portal in the Small Courtyard had a special feature that it shared only with the portal in the Court of Honor of the New Reich Chancellery, which served as the main entrance to the Führer Building. Only at the portals in the Court of Honor and the Small Courtyard

could a red carpet be laid on the stairs for special occasions. This placed the portal in the Small Courtyard on the same level of importance as the main entrance to the Führer Building in the Court of Honor of the New Reich Chancellery.



Fig. 62 The red carpet and the open door further visually highlighted the portal.

Considering all the previously described architectural details of the west façade as a whole, it becomes clear that regardless of where the viewer entered the Small Courtyard, the main portal was the first thing that came into

view. By deliberately enhancing the architectural design elements toward the center of the façade, Albert Speer directed the viewer's eyes directly to the portal and thus to the most important point in the Small Courtyard.



Fig. 66 The portal, further visually emphasized by a mosaic, would have attracted the eye even more.

The East Façade

The east façade was dominated by three garage doors. Albert Speer retained the existing height of the garage doors in the new façade he created for the courtyard. This meant that the garage lintel was one row of natural stone lower than the lintel of the driveway

in the north façade. However, by lowering the floor of the courtyard as described above, Albert Speer achieved a tall, rectangular shape for the doors, thus better fitting their proportions into the overall design concept of the Small Courtyard.



Fig. 73 View from the west façade of the three garage doors integrated into the east façade.

However, considering the outstanding importance of the Entrance to the Führer's Apartment within the Reich Chancellery complex, it is surprising that photographs of only four receptions held in the Small Courtyard have survived. Two of these were on the occasion of Adolf Hitler's 50th birthday. The only other official photographs that have survived are those of the reception of the Czech ambassador to Berlin, Dr. Mastry, on March 31, 1939, and the reception of wounded soldiers on July 6, 1940. It can be as-

sumed, however, that the courtyard was used far more frequently than the number of official photographs suggests. It is known that Adolf Hitler made most of his military decisions in The Führer's Apartment's situation room. At the outbreak of war, military personnel arriving for these meetings were instructed to enter the Reich Chancellery through side entrances. From there, they were to proceed through the corridors or across the Court of Honor, unseen by spies, to the briefing in The Führer's Apartment.



Fig. 93 Hitler enters the Court of Honor (New Reich Chancellery) from the Small Courtyard. (February 12, 1939)