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«Every Garden is a Special Case»

translated quote from an article by Bernard Lassus, April 12th, 1980, Basler Zeitung

«SPECIFIC – LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE FROM SWITZERLAND»

May 24th – July 14th, 2007

The work of Swiss landscape architects is held in high regard both at national and international level. They have a remarkable track record in terms of output, completed projects and media coverage.

This exhibition investigates the length and the breadth of landscape architectural developments in Switzerland in all their variety. Presenting maps, plans and photographs of implemented projects, it gives a survey of the «thematic fields of gravitation» of Swiss landscape architects. What subjects, interests and obsessions do they have in common? Where do they differ? How do they deal with specific landscape architectural aspects (time, change, sensuality, use of plants, etc.)?

The trigger of this train of thoughts, which finally resulted in the concept and theme of the exhibition, «Specific», was a series of lectures about Swiss landscape architecture, which Dorothée Imbert, Professor of Landscape Design at Harvard GDI, gave at Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., in the late autumn of 2006. Looking at Swiss landscaping with curiosity and a benevolent eye, Imbert described contemporary Swiss landscape architecture as fretting at the myth of the Alps and inserting new, clearly different pieces of landscape into the alpine imagery and realm of ideas.

The view of an outsider stimulated us to look at the question from the opposite, i.e. an insider's, point of view: does Swiss landscape architecture have a «style», a «tendency» or at least a guiding theme?

This is what we think:

The individuality and potential of our country's landscape architecture lies in the fact that it brings out the «specific», intrinsic character of every project site and area; that it always relates to the «specific» place and that the chosen approach and solution cannot be transferred to other places or projects.

The exhibition and the «Kartenwerk» (maps and plans) belonging to it present forty very different projects by twenty-eight landscaping studios from all over the country, and we consider all of them as highly «specific».

In the selecting the studios and the submitted projects for the exhibition, we were actively supported by the three professors of landscaping design at Swiss institutes of higher learning as well as by the BSLA association of Swiss landscape architects,

- Professor Andrea Cejka (Rapperswil University of Applied Sciences)
- Professor Christophe Girot (ETH Zurich)
- Professor Michael Jakob (Ecole d'ingénieurs de Lullier)
- Peter Wullschleger (managing director of BSLA).

«Specific» focuses on the projects being anchored in their contexts, embedded in referential systems and rooted in place and time. They also deal with growth; the passage of time; change; with the sensuous quality of landscapes; horizons and layers; with the elements water, earth and air.

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The chapter headings of both the exhibition and maps represent the attempt to allocate poetical imageformulas to the different projects and to sort them according to thematic fields of gravitation. The design of the sets of maps offered the chance of using the exhibition as a publication – and the publication will be the touring exhibition. We hope very much that «Specific» will undertake an extensive tour of Switzerland and of its neighbouring countries!

Taking the idea of the «specific» further, one will inevitably arrive at a way of thinking which will forever produce new and different projects. These will be tailor-made, inexchangeable and unmistakable – in short, specific in every way.

The Architekturforum Zurich will organize various events during the exhibition. For more information, visit www.architekturforum-zuerich.ch.

Zurich, in May 2007

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