

Localarchitecture

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Anthology 24 – Notat

Heinz Wirz

Ten years ago, Manuel Bieler, Antoine Robert-Grandpierre and Laurent Saurer founded their own architect's office in Lausanne with the name Localarchitecture, which is also a reference to their programme. Their first projects were in the area of Lausanne in smaller areas dominated by agriculture. They incorporate building shapes and conditions that are characterised by a rural tradition and mix these with their own contemporary ideas and architectural interventions. They enrich their projects with this "melange". As a result, the stall for 30 cows in Lignièrès for example, has been transformed from a conventional gabled roof to an elongated, folded roof with eaves that slope upwards and downwards. In the case of a semi-detached house in Maraçon, the elongated building has been distorted by a compartment concept, not only in order to achieve an unusual shape but also to greatly benefit the utilisation and the climate protection. The three-dimensional shape of the provisional chapel of Saint-Loup in Pompaples has a strikingly poetic appearance. The conspicuous solitary, artistic form in the midst of a spacious, park-like territory is a far cry from a provisional "shack" and has been enhanced to form a noble and appropriate vestry. With a playful, cheerful gesture, the architects have responded to the task of creating a roof for the marketplace in Renens. Light like the wings of a butterfly, concrete slabs, only 15cm-thick, unfold on sloping steel columns and characterise the high quality of this newly-designed marketplace. Recently, further fascinating projects were completed, which generally follow the same strategy: the architects reflect on the location, the environment, the conditions of the task, and use these aspects to create their own formulas, which are often imaginative nuances and deviations from traditional forms.

Lucerne, November 2012

Stall for 30 cows, Lignières

The property Cerisier is a large agricultural facility, situated at the foot of the Chasseral – at a height of 1000 metres. The new stable has been constructed in the extension of the main building and takes up the topography of the site. The project is based on certain principles and elements of the building style traditional of the region and transforms these into contemporary forms and shapes. The building is hence characterised by a roof made up of three sections, which allows for the building volume to be incorporated into the context of the existing farm buildings, while at the same time the south façade opens up towards the valley. Built using a regular wooden supporting structure, which naturally ventilates the barn, this façade reinterprets the construction style of traditional farms, typical of the French architect Ramée. The inclinations of the roof ridge and ledges are in line with the hilly Jura ridges. The whole construction is made from trees taken from the nearby woods and the details have been designed in such a way that they enable the farmer to build the structures himself.

Nine pavilions in the Parc des Rives, Yverdon-les-Bains

The pavilions have been integrated into the new Parc des Rives, which was developed on the occasion of a competition held by the town Yverdon-les-Bains, in order to breathe new life into this location on the banks of Neuenburg Lake, long-neglected by the town inhabitants. The Swiss National Exhibition – the Expo.02 – was held here. The rhythmic shape of the promenade, which runs along the Canal de la Thièle in the direction of the lake, is determined by theme sequences (picnic, music, meditation, bar etc.). The pavilions highlight certain aspects in dialogue with the green areas and link the canal visually to the park. The pavilions, which are open in two directions, are situated on two side-walls, the height of which can be varied, in the style of picket fences, which are covered by a sloping roof. The supporting structure of the pavilions consists of posts and beams from Douglasie. The bracing structure of the construction is guaranteed by a system of solid, visible wooden braces, which have been installed between the vertical supports at irregular intervals. The fixed installations respond to the respective function of each of the pavilions and are constructed using the same principles as the supporting structure.

Semi-detached house, Maracon

The construction can be incorporated into the ensemble of the surrounding site as its sloping building shape and the scale of the building is in accordance with the other buildings located along the street. The project has been inspired by local architectural recommended practice and shapes and reinterprets it to fit with the contemporary utilisation standards and aesthetic approach. The building shape strikes up a harmonious relationship with the local topography and is also incorporated into the landscape.

The construction consists of a series of supporting walls of different proportions, which determine the spatial design of the building. The construction responds to the specification that two families should be able to live separately under one roof. The concave, closed north façade with a shared entrance seems to have been bent by the strength of the north wind. The convex design of the row of windows in the south façade creates a visual division of the garden into two parts, hence providing more privacy for the two families. On the south side a large projecting roof protects the glazed façade from the sun and takes up the motif of the neighbouring farms. With the roof it is possible to adapt the passive energy supply to the seasons; the external extensions are harmonised spatially. Large blinds on the exterior allow the temperature to be regulated on the interiors in light of the seasonal differences. At night, the illuminated rooms give the building a striking presence in the town.

Interim chapel in Saint-Loup, Pompaples

The new chapel is located in a central location on the plateau de Saint-Loup. Originally planned as an interim building during the refurbishment of the old chapel, the new place of prayer became an element that connected the entire location. Beginning with concepts for traditional chapels and a constructive analysis of the origami principle, a folded building structure was created, which provides the parish of the deaconess with a spacious entrance area that opens out onto the forecourt. At the rear, the building narrows and becomes higher, ending in a vertical façade. The construction made of grey laminated wood panels creates a light interior, a pleasant place for contemplation. Each fold of the façade reflects the light in a different way and hence emphasises the increase in height and the distorted shape of the building structure. The gable facades are covered with a copper-coloured, transparent textile material. Both the east and the west facades consist of a post-and-beam construction, the skeletal structure of which is reminiscent of church windows.

Ecole de Pierrefleur, Lausanne

With its simple volumetry and alignment parallel to the street, the new building for the Fondation de Verdeil is incorporated into the existing morphological and functional structures of the district of Pierrefleur.

The schoolyard, which can be accessed from the street and is situated on a lower level, is directly linked to the entrance area of the school, creating a transitional space that helps incorporate the school into the quarter. The three storeys of the building are linked via a central stairway. The classrooms are located on the first floor while in the basement the rooms for the special subjects are directly linked to the sports facility. The concrete supporting structure is emphasised by protruding ceiling slabs. In order to strengthen the evident visual relationship between the school and its environment, the façades are designed using relatively large glass elements. The rhythm and scale of the window frames enhance the incorporation of the building into a group of trees situated further down the slope and determine the appearance of the school as seen from the street.

Apartments in Corsy-sur-Lutry

One of the main characteristics of the countryside in Lavaux, in which the small village Corsy-sur-Lutry is embedded, is the steep slopes with terraces enclosed by long stone walls. These provide a wonderful view of Lake Geneva and the Alps. The buildings have terraced gardens set in the slope, in line with the local topography. The material used for the buildings – exposed concrete and yellow gravel from Lavaux – is a reference to the stony structure of the ground. The construction of two monolithic buildings with hexagonal floorplans provides an optimum amount of open space and private space; the residents have an uninhibited view of the surrounding landscape. The window openings become larger further south and direct the gaze out of the interior towards specific elements in the landscape, which are close at hand or further away. In harmony with the geometry of the facades and the sequence of views, the residential units are situated one next to the other around centrally-located utility rooms. Each of the apartments, which extend into the garden and all have individual interior fittings, provide maximum levels of privacy.

Hall for agricultural equipment, Lignières

The farm Cerisier is a large agricultural site, located at the foot of the Chasse-ral at a height of 1000 metres. The sheds nestled against the slope supplement the buildings of the existing farm.

The project has been conceived in such a way that it is possible for the farmer – who is traditionally very familiar with the skills of felling wood and the simple carpentry work – to carry out this construction himself. With a precise description of the construction process, the details and the extent of the farmer's work can be precisely determined. The structural design of the hall is the result of a close collaboration between the farmer and the different trades and reflects the different functions of the project. Two (wooden) frames support the entire building and define a shape that lengthens the existing building and allows it to slope down towards the adjacent fields. Designed and tailored with the aid of modern computer technology, the supporting structure was initially made in the workshop and then set up and assembled on location. The construction combines untreated timber from the farm's own wood and triple-layered blocks of fir wood.

Roof for marketplace, Renens

The goal of constructing the roof for the marketplace in Renens is to merge architecture and nature in a unique and symbolic way. Its new presence in the heart of the town is not only an urban assignment but also a technological challenge. A seemingly weightless, 15-centimetre-thick slab is spread between five sycamore trees. Its shape, formed by triangular facets, comprises the structure of the building and allows for differentiated utilisations beneath its roof: a stage for performances, some benches to relax on and playground equipment for children.

The wood for the installations enters into a dialogue with the exposed concrete of the roof. The framework, consisting of three metal posts, creates a relationship with the sycamore trees. The diagonal positioning of the posts widens out considerably from the floor to the sky and in this way forms a decorative frame for the trees. Rainwater is collected via the inlays in the roof facets and is directed through the inside of the posts into the ground, hence reaching the tree roots in a natural way.

École de Bois-Genoud, Crissier

The École de Bois-Genoud is embedded in a green zone to the west of the metropolitan area of Lausanne, in a pavilion landscape that comprises of the school campus of the École Rudolf Steiner Lausanne. The building, divided into three storeys, takes up the exterior approach principle of the existing pavilions. The stairs and the ramp provide access to the wide arcades, which lead directly to the cloakrooms and classrooms. At the same time, the arcades serve as external extensions of the classrooms and in this way encourage a learning environment that is in harmony with the natural surroundings, in line with the basic pedagogical principles of the school. The building, designed completely in wood, has a closed north façade; this protects the institution from the noise of traffic on the nearby highway. The completely glazed south façade fulfils the function of a relatively large, passive solar panel. In summer, the façade will be protected by the arcades, in order to reduce the rate with which the building heats up. In order to emphasise the relationship between the interiors and the lush vegetation of the location, the arcades have been braced using steel rope attached to the roof.

Residential building in Chailly, Avenue du Temple, Lausanne

The building in the Avenue du Temple is situated next to the rows of trees lining the stream La Vuachère. This special location between the city and countryside provides the framework for the property with four apartments. The building responds to the curve in the street and extends upwards in the south, opening up, as a response to the trees, onto large, skilfully aligned terraces that allow a large amount of light to enter, providing a view of the trees.

The sharp-edged, indented volumes pay tribute to the different dimensions of the structures in the district and incorporate the building into the natural environment. Thick, angular concrete ceilings accentuate the facades. Between the ceiling panels, the rhythm of the floor-to-ceiling windows with their wooden frames is a reference to the vertical nature of the trees in the green area. This duality of vertical/horizontal and mineral/vegetable elements permeates the interior rooms and creates a harmonious ambience that is at the same time rich in contrasts.

Residential building, Conignon

Located on an elongated site, the new residential development occupies the entire developed area. Making use of the gently sloping orchard, the house is designed as a three-roomed structure. Each of the units is a different height, open towards the garden on two sides. The day rooms (living rooms and kitchen) are located in the central area, while the guestrooms are in the upper level of the building. The children's rooms are located in the lower part of the building. Another room is located in the basement. Two sanitary blocks separate the main rooms while a periphery ambulatory, which has a rhythmic structure due to the different heights, reconnects them. The concrete building shell that protects the inhabitants against the noise of the traffic from the nearby street, lends expression to the irregular building shape resulting from the different ceiling heights. The relatively large windows enhance the transparency of the building while the vertical alignment and depth and width of the pine-wood posts emphasise the close relationship between the individual rooms and their external annexes.

Cité Léopard, Carouge

The new district Cité Léopard is part of a master plan for the east of Carouge, which defines an urban ensemble comprising of blocks of houses as an extension of the building substance of old Carouge. The five-sided block is connected to the quarter via large passageways on the ground floor, which link the central courtyard to the public space. The natural slope of the site is reconstructed in order to bring the courtyard and the pathways onto the same level and to provide direct access to the commercial areas on the ground floor and the entrances to the living areas. The upper floors for the most part accommodate a continuous series of apartments with large, angular balconies overlooking the courtyard, which extend the space. The dimensions of the new volume vary: on the one hand the lower building height of the old Carouge has been accommodated, while on the other hand a stronger presence has been created in the direction of the intersection. The materials used incorporate the characteristic building materials of the old Carouge: stone facades with window openings facing the streets, while the courtyard with its wooden balconies creates a more homely ambience.

French grammar school in Zurich and apartments in Zwicky-Areal, Dübendorf

The French grammar school in Zürich and a housing project on the last plot of land in an industrial site undergoing transformation will complete the new quarter. The location is bordered in the west by a highway, in the south by a municipal road and in the east by the municipal railway, while the north side is bordered by the River Glatt. The new buildings have been designed to provide the best possible noise protection and utilisation of the quieter riverbank areas. The French Grammar School in Zurich is located in a high, elongated building in the south of the facility and is accentuated by a sports hall, which marks the entrance to the site and borders the local plaza. The three residential buildings are aligned perpendicular to the river, while the exterior courtyards open up onto the riverbanks. The underground carpark will create a basement volume, which gives the farms higher up a sense of privacy. Access to the sports hall via two stairwells makes it possible to situate the classrooms on the more peaceful side, while the corridors run parallel to the street.

The ceilings made of stained concrete, layered one above the other, the alignment of the wooden elements of the glazed façade areas of the school, as well as the diagonal views between the buildings, create an ambience that is reminiscent of the location's industrial past while at the same time emphasising its new identity.