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This series of small, black volumes on buildings by Swiss architects who are all around 40 years old has existed since 2004. Their sum has gradually built up as a kind of memory of architecture in a period when more buildings are being erected than ever before. The publications are uniquely valuable as documents and also help the architects to explain and defend their architecture in texts and images.

This volume is dedicated to Vincent Rapin and Maria Saiz. After studying at the EPF Lausanne and gathering practical experience with renowned architects in Rome and Madrid, they have successfully participated in a number of competitions and were able to build a number of small projects at an early stage. That allows them to transpose their experiences from the international architectural scene onto the tone of regional settlements. For instance in converting a historic farmhouse in Belmont, they liberate the rural building from earlier installations, thereby exposing its qualities. With their meticulous, expertly designed measures, they manage to appropriately ennoble apparently everyday aspects of the building. The architectural couple also achieve the same kind of nobility in their new buildings. The three-family house outside Jongny is situated at an extremely inhospitable location, but creates as it were a metaphoric relationship with the rugged terrain through differently angled façades and the raw fair-faced concrete façade. Inside, that rugged character dissolves into a comfortable spatial sequence that opens out towards the light and the view. In the recently completed school in Marsens, such an integrative approach is even clearer. The solitary building with a slightly angled ground plan perfectly complements the scattered rural settlement and demonstrates what architecture can achieve when it rounds off the village structure in a fitting way to create a refined, harmonious unity.

Lucerne, July 2013

House outside of the town, Jongny

The building has been implanted in a steep slope situated between Lake Geneva and the Lake of Gruyère, between the street and the river. It does not participate in structuring or defining the location from which it takes its measure and derives its force. Like its site, the building expresses a certain ambivalence from the outside, appearing at the same time as an erratic block that due to the violent topography has been anchored in the slope but also refined and amiable thanks to the design of the roof and the user-friendly doors, windows and railings. The three apartments open up to the landscape, the downhill façade and its balconies fan out to fully exploit the view of the river, the forest, the lake, and the distant Alps.

In contrast, on the uphill side the building offers protection. It contracts and is closed except for some openings that like periscopes search out the rays of the setting sun...

Inside, the range of materials has been reduced to three elements: concrete floors, white walls and doors and windows of larch wood. This rather austere appearance is enriched by the landscape projecting itself in the rooms with its vibrations, reflections, lights and shadows.

Village house, Savuit

The building, which has been erected on the ruins of a derelict barn, has a unique position slightly set back from the street that traverses the hamlet of Savuit. The building does not form the boundary of the street; this demarcation is effected instead by the wall surrounding the closed garden.

The building stands on the ruins of an old barn/stable that became obsolete when horses were no longer used for work in the vineyards. To preserve the reminiscence of the past, stone and wood, the two materials typical of ancient barns and stables, have been retained as well as the simple and modest shape of the volume of the rural building.

The three apartments are hidden behind a façade clad with wooden boards. This allows for discrepancies between the dimensions of the openings in the façade and from the interior. While the openings have been reduced to small piercings in the cladding they are much larger from the inside. The discrepancy between the two layers is clearly visible at night.

Stine villa, Vevey

On a slightly sloping site high over Vevey, the Stine villa had been erected in the 1980s. Organized in split levels, the architecture of the building is interesting enough but does not exploit the possible relations to the garden and the panorama view of the town, the lake, and the Alps.

The aim of the project has been to transform the house by changing its expression, enhancing its area and improving its relation to the garden.

While preserving the split-level organisation the arrangement of the functions has been inversed. Sleeping and living rooms have changed their places and levels in order to improve the relation to the garden. Furthermore, a deviation in the existing volume allowed for an extension that amounts to one third of the original floor space.

The new building has changed in style, size and organisation; it has absorbed the original house and conveys the impression that nothing has changed while everything is different.

The house is informed by the Danish background of its owner, an artist whose engagement contributed considerably to the success of the project.

Mountain shelter, Sarreyer

This barn situated high in the Val de Bagnes dates back to the beginning of the 19th century. The planks of which it is composed show marks of previous assembly and reveal that the construction had been subject of prior recycling processes. As its function in the context of alpine agriculture has become obsolete the new programme has lodged itself in the dead, abandoned building envelope similar to a hermit crab moving into an empty snail shell.

The intervention retains the original identity of the building although some modifications of the extant container have been allowed; modifications that were caused either by programmatic needs or by opportunity.

The interior feels comfortable and autonomous, forming a strong contrast to the harshness of the site and the landscape.

Farm house, Belmont

The first traces of this farm house at the edge of a big pasture have been registered in 1832. Due to the ruinous state of the building rebuilding measures had to be taken. The challenge then was to draw up a selection of the multiple traces of previous interventions and to retain those representing the essential character of the building in order to regain this lost quality.

An annexe and a water basin – elements borrowed from the rural world – have been added to define a court that forms a transitional zone between the street and the garden.

Three materials have been used: limestone, larch wood and black concrete, the latter reminiscent of the veins of coal that in this region can be found deep under the soil. The project takes its drive from the delicate tensions between past and present, matter and light.

The apparently reticent intervention emphasizes certain selected qualities of the old structure and its exceptional site.

Garden pavilion, Conche

The Monti house is part of a series of annexes that have been added to a house built in 1923. Thanks to its reduced area and its autonomy from the main volume the character of the building is marked by ambivalence – it is at the same time a pavilion, a studio, and a summerhouse.

In the compact volume a bedroom, a bath, a kitchen, and a lounge/studio have been arranged in the ground floor and the open mezzanine.

In the interior, two windows have been placed and dimensioned precisely in order to establish subtle relations to the light and views. The big glass wall at ground level unexpectedly contrasts the scales of the small built volume and the much larger garden surrounding it. The second window is placed high up and reveals nothing but the sky, the clouds, and the weather.

Structurally, the building consists of a prefabricated wooden framework while the façade is made of raw, seared fir boards.

School and village square, Marsens

The new school has been erected along the old village street, thus continuing the original morphological organisation of the village. Slightly set back, the school – together with the church – defines a square of a scale appropriate in this village.

In its hinge position, the new school entertains direct ties to the other two school buildings to which it is connected by a pathway that crosses the site past other places. This intervention follows the trace of the valley basin formed by a small river.

With its expression and materials, the new school tries to set up relations to the old village buildings. The façades are made of plastered masonry with a distinct plinth and richly textured surfaces. The form of the roof and the folds in the façades allow for splitting up the volume and perceiving it in modified ways. Thus, the volume appears more vertical or smaller depending on which relations to the surroundings are being considered.

The building has three storeys, with two classrooms on each. The project reinterprets the school building typology of the old building.