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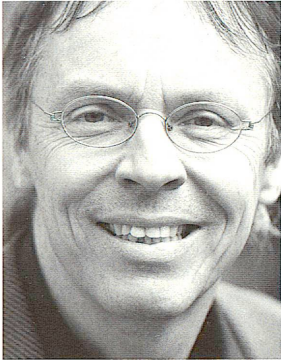
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LANDSCAPE AS PANORAMA

Raimund Rodewald



Our increasingly urban way of life is bringing with it not only a physical cementation of our countryside, but also a mental cementation of our imagination of what constitutes a beautiful landscape. From the distant urban perspective, the image of the countryside takes on an additional "charge", which is reflected in the growing public interest in landscape protection. One indicator of this is the current boom in (albeit questionable) viewing platforms in extreme locations above lakes, gorges, cliff walls or even at 4000 metres elevation (Zermatt and Saas-Fee in Valais). The panorama from a safe standpoint recalls the romantic landscape of Caspar David Friedrich's "Wanderer over the Sea of Mist" (1818). In the project for a viewing platform on the wall of the Stockhorn in canton Bern we have echoes of the sublime landscape experience. The numerous viewing towers high above the forests convey a picturesque face of Swiss landscapes, where from the heights even the housing soup comes across as almost placatory in its dimensions. In urban parks too we long for views, for example from the wooden pulpit in the Botanical Garden in Bern or the viewing platform in Neu-Oerlikon. Is the urge for a view of the landscape merely a passing fancy, or should we see it as escape from confinement and longing for views à la Friedrich? Certainly the dreadful way our spaces have been built

on and fragmented has reached a point where the central benefits of the landscape, such as recreation/experience, identification, and cultural/natural expression have been partly extinguished. The remaining landscape experiences no longer have anything to do with the picturesque or the Arcadian, but have been reduced to the sober. To appreciate landscapes means recognizing their symbolic and emotional charge. In the process we allow ourselves to be led by traditional ideas of landscape to a greater degree than we realize. Such idealized landscapes are deemed worthy of protection as a result. The fractal urban spaces do not fit in to this notion, they are becoming devoid of image and concept. Precisely because we no longer look into these inter-urban spaces, we lack the possibility of emotional bonding, and ultimately of an aesthetic language. As a result we give these landscapes no chance of a more conscious development. Maybe the urban viewing platforms will open our eyes anew to our urban spaces?



Lake Biel-Bienne with Hagneckkanal (canal)