

Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

by Christophe Girot and Pia Fricker

The student work featured in this publication represents the culmination of the one-year Master of Advanced Studies in Landscape Architecture (MAS LA) program of ETH Zurich. The Chair of Landscape Architecture, led by Professor Girot, has offered international students from the areas of architecture, landscape architecture, and other art-related disciplines a postgraduate program since 2003 with English as the language of instruction. The goal of this intensive program is the critical study of issues of sustainability in the design of large-scale urban landscapes. During the last few years, this work took place against the thematic backdrop of Zurich Airport. The program in 07/08, however, was concerned with the area around the Rhine Delta of the Lake of Constance.

The master program is divided into two main areas: the design studio and the theory seminar. The perception of landscape through video and the use of film as both an analytical and representational tool is integrated in both areas to the same degree. Next to the conceptual structure of the program, the heterogeneous composition of the participants comprises an integral component of the didactic concept. The twelve students from 10 different countries bring exciting aspects as well as perspectives into their work arising from their different cultural and educational backgrounds. The didactic concept that has been developed

is broadly based and supplemented with a lecture series given by international speakers and various workshops and excursions.

This documentation begins with the presentation of concrete strategies developed in the design studio for redesigning the area of the Rhine Delta on the Lake of Constance. The work was completed individually as well as within teams. The students were challenged to address global as well as local economic and sociological concerns and integrate them into their design. In addition, a one-week workshop under the leadership of landscape architect Maïke van Stiphout expanded the studio's scope.

The theory seminar focused on strategies for developing concepts next to the study of contemporary and historical landscape architecture. The ambition of the seminar was to orient the students through investigation and enable them to develop a research agenda that will help the architecture of landscapes enhance its relevance and efficiency as both an art of memory as well as an art of hope. This publication presents the results of this research: the creation of a three-dimensional paper based on the 'portable museum' by Marcel Duchamp.

The design studio and theory seminar were completed, both in terms of content as well as technical know-how, through a 'Toolkit'. The Toolkit was com-

prised of the Fieldtrips, the video laboratory, and the use of 3D modelling and visualization techniques.

The Fieldtrips were conceived as a supplement to the theory seminar in order to examine different contemporary urban natures in detail. The abstract representation of the spatial experience is illustrated throughout this publication using the 'mapping' examples of the students.

Video sketches on the accompanying DVD illustrate the possibilities of video as a communication medium within the discipline of landscape architecture.

The design process was supported throughout with the teaching of the latest modelling and visualization techniques. CAAD CAM technologies allow students to explore innovative possibilities for portraying their design ideas and introduce them to an interactive method for quickly testing concept variations.

In closing, we would like to heartily thank all those involved for their exceptional contribution to this publication: Christophe Girot for writing the foreword, James Melsom for the documentation of the design studio, Guest Professor Sébastien Marot for leading the theory seminar, Jacqueline Parish for the documentation of the Fieldtrips, Susanne Hofer for the documentation of the video laboratory, Alexandre Kapellos for his piece on 3D modelling, and Franz Oswald for the afterword. In addition, we would like

to acknowledge the support of our secretarial staff, especially Alessandra Naldi, as well as all of the other colleagues of the Institute who were involved.

Last but not least, this past year would not nearly have been so interesting or successful without the dedicated effort of the participating students: a warm thanks to you all and best wishes for your professional future!

MAS LA teaching team

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