Van Alen Institute is committed to improving the design of the public realm.

Our program of Projects in Public Architecture promotes education and action through design competitions, workshops, studios, forums, websites, and publications including the Van Alen Report.

While the Institute grounds its work in New York City, we structure our projects to engage an interdisciplinary and international array of practitioners, policy-makers, students, educators, and community leaders.

Chair’s Letter

This issue of the Van Alen Report, devoted to "The Swiss Section," our current exhibit, comes hard on the heels of the announcement of the selection of a Master Plan for the Whitney. It has been gratifying to see designers and architects once again in the public spotlight (even on Oprah!), regardless of one’s reaction to the alternatives and final selection. I am convinced that this attention will raise the bar for public designs, even as we continue to debate design directions in our neighborhoods.

As Chair, I am pleased that our ongoing programs highlight the value of investment in public design. The many exhibits, discussions, and design competitions featured at Van Alen Institute have been important platforms for emerging and experienced voices to push that design bar upward. This most recent exhibit makes plain that those values—a commitment to education, design, and buildings of the highest quality—are realized by Swiss governmental policy. The exhibit’s featured projects exemplify the profound benefits of this attention to the public realm, including support for young designers and design competitions, key objectives of VAI.

The Trustees and I look forward to a challenging but fruitful 2003. Following the closing of "The Swiss Section," the gallery will feature the groundbreaking OPEN: new designs for public space exhibit. This exhibit will feature projects from around the globe, from vigorous reinventions of traditional public spaces such as plazas to new types of spaces for new programs of memorialization, environmental reclamation, and contemporary recreation.

This exhibit will open in June and continue through the fall, with an integrated program of lectures, symposiums, and on-line and printed publications dedicated to showing how these global new directions can inform decisions in our own cities. Join us in celebrating renewed public commitment to great Projects in Public Architecture. SHERIDA PAULSEN

Editor’s Note

Like all Van Alen publications, this Van Alen Report is a collaboration and relies on numerous interactions. We would like to express our appreciation and thanks to Nina Rappaport who admirably guest curated "The Swiss Section" and wrote the title article for this issue. Peteres Learnt and Are New York for their ingenious exhibition design that embodies the exhibition concept, David Reisfort of DBN, Inc. for his exquisite graphic design, curatorial consultant Ingo Donath for being our woman "on the ground," the support of the swissinfo/FESTIVAL, and the Consulation General of Switzerland in New York City which made this exhibition happen and of course the featured firms whose exceptional work proves Switzerland’s dedication to the design of the public realm.

On p12 we report on VAI’s recent programs including the forthcoming exhibition "OPEN: new designs for public space," which features projects that range from India to Africa and from Europe to New York’s backyard. Look out for full information about this exhibition and a calendar of related events at: www.vanailen.org.

As always we welcome dialogue. tzeryan@vanailen.org/ DUE YRIN
THE DILEMMA OF 21ST CENTURY IDENTITY surfaced in developing "The Swiss Section." The exhibit was never based on notions of "Swissness," but rather on the condition of designing and constructing the built environment in Switzerland. Contemporary design identity is increasingly global and regional, and not only for internationally renowned practices. But just as all politics are local, ultimately all building is, too, and it is only in cultures whose formal and informal political structures are committed to design excellence that we can expect an engaging public environment. Switzerland is one of those cultures, and its example has never been more important to the local building culture of New York, as the city rebuilds not only "signature" and "cultural" projects, but the spaces and places of everyday life. The most shared public experience today is one of movement, on the train, on the road, in the street. "The Swiss Section" reveals design's power to value that experience. RAYMOND W. GASTIL
INFRASTRUCTURE
AND MOTION

NIKA RAAPAPORT Guest Curator

Switzerland’s infrastructure of movement is a connective tissue of public spaces, which contribute to the fluidity of urban experience. Since the development of the first trains, highways, and public works, integrating these important connectors into the public realm has been a major design challenge. In today’s Switzerland, functionally efficient hubs accommodating travelers grow more and more essential in the ever-expanding urbanization of Europe. Yet where these nodes and links connect people and places, architects have had to define a new design territory, from urban centers to mountain passes. Younger architects and innovative practices have seized the opportunity to work with engineers to design tunnels, bridges, and highways as partners in the conceptual plans. Interchanges and public transit works, as a series of seemingly minor elements in the landscape, facilitates a new mobile culture where activities from tourism and recreation to daily commutes are an “urban” condition, where it is critical to create thoughtful insertions.

While most exhibitions about Swiss architecture have focused on the purty of forms, the experimentation with materials and the aesthetics of new designs, primarily for the object oriented building culture, one aspect of the architecture culture which is evident in every village, town, and city is that of infrastructure. The agglomeration of cities, extending from Lake Constance in the east to Geneva in the west with 7.3 million inhabitants spread over 25,566 square miles, contributes to a dynamic urban culture, a national commitment to building well-designed transit infrastructure for cars, planes, trains and tunnels that foreground those structures rather than ignore or hide them from view. They are part of the synergy of the Swiss topography, the Swiss section.

Internally Switzerland is a land of borders between small cantons (states) and between languages (four of them) creating the need for shorter distance links at low speeds and longer distance links at high speeds. Regionally and functionally, Switzerland is a tightly knit network, a multi-core conurbation located in the heart of Europe. Angulus...
Organized by themes—Between, Together, Across, Through, Up/Down—the exhibition features projects that move people or permit their movement. Some are minor works that have a large impact, and others are dramatic interventions frommicural stations to train stations and fog-lit boxes, kiosks and bridges, and airport terminals, as public spaces of interaction. Often the projects combine programs in unexpected juxtapositions, creating hybrid designs. The theme “Together” focuses on projects that unite people in transportation hubs such as the 1990s innovative train stations by Santiago Calatrava, which demonstrated design and infrastructure. More recently, Santiago E. at the Zurich International Airport, by Angela Haloupi, Graham, Blesinger, Seidlm, with Martin Schöfer features an underground People Transport System, which brings travelers to and from a naturally lit and sustainable arrivals and departures hall. In downtown Zurich, Meli & Peter with Kocher & Kranepool open up the station to the cityscape with a meadow and field roof that shelters the tracks. In Lausanne, the first phase of Bernard Tschumi’s Place de l’Europe further links the underground funicular to the train that travels up and down from the take up to the top of the city with bus, and train stations converging on a shared framed bridges and a landscaped plaza—optimizing the central section of an urban hillside. For Ursula Stoll and Beat Mathys of Smish, a regional train station in Worb near Bern, became an opportunity to create a striking jewel box of banded stainless steel ribbons, which includes an upper level parking lot in a hybrid program for cars, people, and local trains to guide to their destinations.

Railway systems form networked connections in the theme “Reframe” in the SBK’s (Swiss Federal Railroad) works to automate stations and logistic systems, enhancing the passenger’s experience. Initiated with Hering & de Meuron’s refined copper-banded Signal Boxes of 1994 and 1998 in Basel, it continued with Giger & Gueret’s rust red concrete version in Zurich, and Moller & Degrada’s smaller adaptable concrete series of 50. Smaller insertions include the SBK’s program to redesign 220 regional stations with colorful structures and user-friendly ticket machines, with architects such as Peter Zumthor (1989). The precious land adjacent to many regional stations now have master plan proposals in the works, such as one by Christ & Gantenbein for the town of Liestal, showing that spaces around the stations are start to urban life. And the underground pedestrian passages have become an essential element of shopping centers connecting one side of the city to the other, in Omg & Flamin’s Zurich station passage.

In the tradition of Robert Mallard’s (1872-1940) arched bridge designs, the theme “Across” focuses on bridges that link people over valleys, streets, and bodies of water for all topographies and scales. An innovative pedestrian bridge by

Gallerie, Ruchat and Tramway in Bellinzona (1970) became an essential urban insertion at one level of the section, while more recently Gatasch. Bonsu, Gatteris’s Sarnen’s Footbridge, plays with how it brings thinkers weightlessly through a variety. A wooden pedestrian bridge by Walter Buehler and Roth Zingale across Lake Zürich stresses the slow pace with a dramatic 52-meter-long high bridge over a valley by engineer Christian Menè with architectural liaison Andrae Depecker at Sutblinde near Küssnacht, provides a speedy access across a steep hillside.

‘Through’ recognizes NEAT (Alp Transit Gotthard), the new train tunnel—the country’s largest undertaking—in which high-speed passenger trains and freight trains pass through mountains both to get traffic off the streets and to elevate the travel experience between Munch and Milan. This Swiss version of the Channel. Although the European high-speed system only got underway in 1995, the new 147 miles of 614.5 million cars, have drastically curbed the environment. In the 1960s to ease the land change tunnels can make on a landscape, architects such as Roos Fairens (1960-1964) designed the Ticino highlevel with abstract sculptural entrances and overwings. reminiscent of those installations, in 1999 Flora Ruchit-Roberti with Renato Siva, designed concrete culverts and ventilation shafts on the Automatic Tramspan from Bellinzona to Porrentruy, which appear to be sand sculptures for the passersby. In Zurich for a study to transform an urban elevated highway into an inhabitable space, architects LMN designed new circulation systems and public spaces along the route. A curved market place in the central area designed by architects Matter & Moller separates pedestrian and vehicular traffic by creating a covered space as a connecting point through the town.

Now designs for vertical movement are featured in “Up/Down" from the Carretera Chellat landfill Terminal of Arroyo by Barniti & Depresso, with a zinc façade, to the skypark in Ersilk byk Rossmeister, they contribute innovative mountain forms to a design vocabulary. Piero Bugl’s landscaped promontory in Carcassia, Ticino—a modernist stucture suspended for views over the mountains—and a proposal by Debernardi & Lamassone to renovate the 1962 Salvee quarry and site above Geneva, but in France—visionary new gathering places with views of route, movement, and public spaces for all topographies.

The infrastructure of movement is a fluid element to negotiate varying topographies, respects and enriches experiences at all scales, whether passing through stations, city centers, or on mountain tops at every level of the Swiss Section.
As part of Van Alen Institute's research for this exhibit we have engaged an esteemed group of design professionals, critics, artists, curators, academics, and public space activists who have contributed a wealth of ideas. Through a series of roundtable discussions many important issues were raised including the idea of control in public space.

Jarelloyd, Associate Professor of Urban Planning at Howard University's Graduate School of Design ISIS200 explained that it was important "to engage at the creation, that is not to ignore, operationally, security an issue, but to be there from the get go and say it's one of many issues." Favela Art and Culture, Curator, Department of Architecture and Design, Museum of Modern Art agreed saying, "There is no amnesty when it comes to design." Lisa Higgin who is in economic development at Ken Edmon to the dual nature of security, "there is hard security.

Accompanying the exhibition will be a fully illustrated catalogue, published this fall, with essays by a range of experts engaged in the field, as well as a series of public programs. Look out for information on our website: www.vainen.org.

VAI updates

This June, Van Alen Institute presents OPEN: NEW DESIGNS FOR PUBLIC SPACE, an exhibition exploring innovative examples of new thinking and approaches to public spaces around the globe. Projects that inspire us: WALTER SIGULU SQUARE in Soweto, South Africa by StudioMASH Architecture and Urban Design, scheduled to be completed in 2005; Sodnetta OPERA HOUSE in Oslo, Norway, which is currently under construction and planned to open in 2006; Weiss/Mendes' design for the SEATTLE ART MUSEUM'S OLYMPIC SCULPTURE PARK opening in 2004; Vito Acconci's ISLAND IN THE MUR, a temporary, floating, open-air theatre constructed for Graz 2003 with a café and children's playground; and the FAVELA-BAIRRO PROJECT, an ongoing endeavor, spearheaded by architect Jorge Mario Aragui, to transform a shantytown in Rio de Janeiro. New directions? The full roster of projects, which will range from public parks, waterfront developments, squares, transportation hubs, and cultural facilities, illustrates both the challenges and opportunities for design that engages on a physical and experiential level.

RENEWING, REBUILDING, REMEMBERING

From January 25 until March 14, 2003 "Renewing, Rebuilding, Remembering," the Institute organized an exhibition inspired by the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001 was presented at the Lighthouse, Gracie's design center. Exploring how Brussels, Berlin, Kobe in Osaka, Oklahoma, San Francisco and Switzerland has redesigned and rethought urban life after disaster, the exhibition illustrates the necessity for creative solutions to urban rejuvenation. On March 11, the Institute's director Raymond Gaski spoke at the Lighthouse's international conference, "Seni and the City" that was held in conjunction with the exhibition.

In an article in The Scotsman newspaper in January 2003, Stuart MacDonald, director of the Lighthouse said, "There are lessons in this exhibition for all cities. A disaster can be an opportunity to think about new ways of living in the public realm, and how people enjoy cities. All seven cities have second disasters and injuries as opportunities. The key thing is, how do you strike the balance between collectively remembering and looking to the future?"
ARCHITECTURE + WATER

Selected for and shown at the Institute in 2001, and curated and designed by architects Lewis Tschuma & Louis, "Architecture + Water," was presented at the University of California at Los Angeles and the Centre Architectural Center at the Carnegie Museum in 2002. From November 16, 2002 - March 23, 2003, the exhibition was on view at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The projects - Foreign Office Architects' Yoyodera International Port Terminal in Japan, MVVA's Guang Wu in Foshan, the Netherlands, Diller + Scofidio's Blu Building created for the 2002 Swiss Expo in Yoyodera, and firms - Steven Holl Architects and Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates' Whitney Waste Treatment Plant in Connecticut and Kaloo Architects' Blackfriars Bridge Station in London - intricately illustrate key connections between architecture, landscape, and infrastructure and their engagement with water.

"San Francisco has proven to be a fertile city for the exhibition. In a city where the most unusual intersection of public life and the water is set in motion by a Bay Bridge's home run, the exhibition has provoked much curiosity and debate about architectural design's potential role in planning the waterfront." - Paul Lewis, Lewis Tschuma & Louis

RECENT FORUMS

MEMORY & THE MASTER PLAN: NEW DIRECTIONS FOR MEMORIALS AND PUBLIC SPACE

In the lead of a series of "curated design" looking up to the Institute's public space exhibition, Van Allen Institute, Architecture magazine, Civic Alliance and Humanities organized a panel discussion on March 4 to ask: How can we make a public space, be it a piece of public life, where commerce and community provide a vital and energetic dialogue, and a place of memory, where lives lost are commemorated in ways both intimate and communal? Panelists included Diane Bianchi, Diller Scofido, Landscape/Urban Design, Gaudioso Bonati, Public Space Studio, Co-creator Tribute in Light, Pablo Lopes, Munro, Landscape Consulting Engineers, WXY, Stark, LMDC, Families Advocacy Council and Marci Weiss, Whole Woman Architects, www.vanallen.org

NYC WATERFRONT: HISTORY AND FUTURE


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PARR: John Pederson Fox Associates P.C.

SUSTAINING BENEFICITORS: Architecture magazine, Diane Bianchi, Elane Jaffe and Jeffrey Brown, Cornell University; Leslie Gill, Quackenbush Architects; Peter T. Joseph Foundation; Leslie Klaas; Kupiec Architects; Marian Stein Imperial, Metropolitan magazine; New York Community Trust; New York Foundation for the Arts; Politech Partnership; Susan T. Rodriguez; Rykiel Porter Architects; Weiss/Manfredi Architects, M.