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THE VOLKS-ROCK'N'ROLLER FROM STYRIA

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The symbolism of a city

Never one to shy away from challenging projects, the intimate team at the Zurich-based studio Hosoya Schaefer Architects are working on a range of projects, from large-scale urban redevelopments (most notably, Areal V-Zug) to public buildings and spaces, residential properties and multimedia installations. Something of a polymath, Hosoya Schaefer takes a wider approach to urbanisation.

TEXT: EMMIE COLLINGE | PHOTOS: HOSOYA SCHAEFER

The combination of Hosoya's Japanese aesthetics, succinct urban planning and the team's foresight has garnered the studio an international following since opening in 2003. Named after its founders, Hiromi Hosoya and the Swiss Markus Schaefer, the studio doesn't limit itself to restrictive briefs and instead is dedicated to "the process of finding and formulating the correct question." As vague as that sounds, an important part of their expertise, explains Schaefer, is how to understand a project in its larger context, leading them to a holistic and systematic approach to architecture and urban design.

This altruistic manner of thinking has led the team to the fore of Swiss urban planning and testament to this is their position at the helm of this year's Salon Suisse at the



Venice Biennale for Architecture 2014. Schaefer's enthusiasm for this prolific venture is contagious as he outlines the studio's discursive approach to Switzerland's future, a topic they are broaching in a series of dialogues, under the title *The Next 100 Years, Scenarios for an Alpine City State*.

Bottom: The graphic patterns of the AnAn restaurant were designed by a select group of young Japanese graphic designers. Photos: Iwan Baan

Bottom, opposite page: The light and airy Butterfly House keeps the garden as the focal point. Photo: Visualisierung Rendertaxi



Left & below: VZug project. Photo: Visualisierung Rendertaxi



The urban predicament

The urbanisation of his home country fascinates Schaefer, which, he explains: “stubbornly resisted the accumulation of urban mass as well as of political power and built a federated, polycentric country held together by a perfectly oiled clock-work of infrastructure and common sense.” Across the Alpine landscape, there is, however, a growing dissatisfaction with services, he says. “The biggest gap is where the desire for urban convenience meets the idyllic dreams of living in the countryside. In Switzerland, the urban periphery is called the ‘agglomeration’ or ‘agгло’ for short. Neither urban nor rural, we are only gradually finding the tools to support this agгло.”

The role of the architect

While urbanisation appears to be inevitable, Switzerland’s attitude is uncertain. With space at a premium for ensuring our quality of life, architects and town planners have to not only tackle current infrastructure and administrative boundaries, but also the overwhelming necessity to find environmentally sound ways of accommodating this urbanisation. Yet the Zurich-

Right, below: The project ‘Europahof’ on Zurich’s Europaallee. Photo: Visualisierung Rendertaxi
Right, middle: The Badrutt’s Palace Hotel and an added extension to house a new NOBU restaurant. © Adrien Buchet

based studio benefits from Hosoya’s Japanese roots, where architects have been forced to respond to radical urbanisation. “Japanese cities are fascinating in the density of experience they provide,” continues Schaefer. “Many functions that are private in European cities are public and shared in Japan. The individual consumes less space; communal spaces gain importance.” With Hosoya’s touch of Japanese design, the studio are ideally placed to deal with these matters in Switzerland.

Regularly approached to take on more unconventional projects, ones demanding a wider, more holistic approach, Hosoya Schaefer enjoy a variety of projects. “Good clients who bring the right mix of tenacity in vision and openness for solutions are necessary for any good project,” says Schaefer keenly. “For such clients we travel the path together from initial idea to final result as a team. Such collaborations are ultimately what we live for.”

Citing their areas of expertise as building design and realisation, media installations, strategic planning and consultants, the team of 12 full-time architects (specialists in urban design and/or technology) recognise that outside input can be invaluable in certain projects. In the light open-plan office there is also a scenographer and an art historian working alongside the team.

Notable projects include a refurbishment for the iconic St Moritz landmark, Badrutt’s Palace Hotel, which now includes the celebrated NOBU restaurant. In Ain, France, the team’s efforts to create a second home alongside the client’s parents’ house, resulted in the delightfully light and airy so-



called butterfly house given its wing-like structure and the garden as the focal point. In Toronto, the studio created a unified image for four train stations on the new Union Pearson Express line, with London’s Winkreative developing the overall corporate identity. Relying on local and natural materials, and in collaboration with local firms, these stations are reaching the end of construction phase while the entire project has already won several international awards.

A more long-term project that veers away from traditional architecture towards media comes in the form of MobiGlobe, a ‘visual databank’ made in collaboration with Volkswagen that addresses questions relating to the future of transport, lifestyle, resources and city development.

An infrastructure for culture

Architecture projects in their wider context have an irrefutable appeal to Hosoya Schaefer, as Schaefer explains in his eloquent manner: “Cities feel right when they are built for people and their manifold ways of exchange, not cars or GPS systems. Cities resonate with us. They are an infrastructure for culture; they form us while we form them.”

www.hosoyaschaefer.com