

Institute of Landscape Architecture

The Institute of Landscape Architecture (ILA) is a new academic research and teaching platform at the ETH. Teaching and research are based on both classical analytical methods as well as experimental inductive design methods. The Institute is part of the Department of Architecture at the ETH. It is also part of a multidisciplinary research and teaching platform called *Network City and Landscape* (NSL). Within the NSL, the activities of the institute focus on the role of landscape architecture in both public and private open spaces.

Work at the ILA is divided into three main areas of teaching and research. The first area focuses on the history and critical theory of 20th-century landscape architecture. Main research topics encompass not only design but also the theory and history of landscape architecture. The second area focuses on innovative visual analysis, rendering, and cognitive representation of landscape architecture through media. Particular emphasis is given to visualisation through the use of digital video technology. The third area of teaching and research focuses on landscape architectural design and construction, especially within the context of large-scale landscape projects for cities and their peripheries. This area is also complemented by assignments in small-scale open spaces designs and private gardens. While the emphasis of the former is on topology and systemic thinking, smaller scale designs include the added dimensions of contemporary aesthetic and stylistic issues.

In all three areas, the scale of work at the ILA extends from the garden to the entire urban landscape and its periphery. Projects developed at the institute contribute to the history of landscape architecture as well as to decisive debates on the development of urban environments of high ecological and cultural quality.

The goal of this institute is to lay the foundations for a new understanding of environmental design. This will contribute, on the one hand, to the improvement of the cultural landscape in general and, on the other hand, to the development of contemporary concepts specific to the Swiss context.

The ILA has two Chairs, Prof. Christophe Girot (Head of the Institute) and Prof. Günther Vogt.

Research at the Chair of Professor Girot

The main research topics at the Chair of Professor Girot are organized under the three didactic areas taught at the Chair: Theory, Design, and Media.

Research projects engage with 20th century Swiss landscape architecture and present survey studies as well as monographs on outstanding landscape architects. Developing methods for designing large-scale landscapes integrate the diverse demands of accelerated change in our environment and formulate new design approaches for landscapes. The contemporary representation and reception of urban landscape depend largely on the manner in which it is represented through various and changing media. One focus of research at the chair is on the relative value of the moving image for the way today's society perceives landscape.

Ongoing Research Projects

For more information on the research projects, please see the Chair's website: www.girot.arch.ethz.ch

The Grey and the Green. Dieter Kienast's (1945–1998) Contribution to Contemporary Landscape Architecture.

Anette Freytag (Dissertation)

Academic Advisor: Prof. Christophe Girot, ETH Zurich

Second reviewer: Prof. em. Arthur Rüegg, ETH Zurich

Planned completion: 2009

The research traces the development of landscape architecture in German-speaking countries and their relationship to architecture and urban planning between the 1970s and 90s based on the multifaceted oeuvre of the Swiss Dieter Kienast (1945-1998). At a prominent turning point in society's understanding of nature, he sought to make a contemporary synthesis between design and ecology, between the city and nature, that responds to the intellectual, artistic, and academic climate of the times. Within the framework of this dissertation, Kienast's early works will be investigated and put into context with the more well-known works of the 1990s. The goal of this dissertation is to offer critical commentary to Kienast's work in its entirety. Since April 2008, Anette Freytag's research is associated with the Swiss National Fonds ProDoc program 'Art and Science'. First results of the dissertation project were presented on December 5, 2008 within the framework of the Symposium *Natur entwerfen* at the Schaulager in Basel (see www.ila.arch.ethz.ch/NaturEntwerfen).

The Aestheticization of the Imaginary. Representation of Urban Landscapes in Berlin Through Film.

Sabine Wolf (Dissertation)

Academic Advisor: Prof. Christophe Girot, ETH Zurich

Second reviewer: Dr. Brigitte Franzen, Münster

Planned completion: 2009

The research is dedicated to the communication of urban landscape in film. To this end, the audio-visual medium of film is made legible as cultural material in a planning context. Based on films shot in the city of Berlin and their generation of moving images of urban space, the effects on and potentials for the perception of the urban landscape today will be investigated. Despite its dynamic nature and the increasing influence of media on the spatial experience, the medium of film has not yet been drawn upon extensively for the generation of reference images for the perception of urban landscape. This research project makes a contribution to this somewhat neglected field of the examination of landscape architecture through the depiction of urban space with the moving image. The publication of research results is planned for 2010.

Eduard Neuenchwander – Architect and Environmental Designer.

Claudia Moll, Axel Simon (Publication Project)

Research results will be released in summer 2009 with a publication by gta Publishers.

Eduard Neuenchwander (born 1924) belongs to one of the most important exponents of the Modern Era in Switzerland. He combined the disciplines of architecture, landscape, biology and archaeology in his work and was able to draw upon a deeply felt notion of the environment in which we live. After his architectural studies at ETH Zurich, Neuenchwander worked from 1949 to 1952 in Alvar Aalto's office in Helsinki. After returning from Finland, he began to build on his own architectural oeuvre. In addition to his architectural works, which lean towards a materials-oriented humanistic variation of the modern era, Neuenchwander took a key position in the development of the natural garden movement and maintaining the valuable legacy of old buildings. His magnum opus in architecture is the extensive complex of the Kantonsschule Rämibühl in Zurich (1970). He was able to realize his ideas on natural gardens in the western part of the Irchel campus of the University of Zurich (1986). The rescue and successive renovation of the property Rindermarkt 7 in Zurich (1992), threatened by demolition, is his most well known contribution to the area of historic conservation.

Modernism for the Public. Swimming Pool Landscapes in Switzerland.

Dr. Johannes Stoffler (Postdoctoral Research)

Research results will be released in summer 2009 with a publication by the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

The history of the open-air baths of the modernist period in Switzerland exemplifies the evolution of notions of physical well-being, moral conceptions and the understanding of nature that took place during this epoch. The open-air bath not only represented a piece of 'liberated living' (Befreites Wohnen) with the 'light, air, and opening' for the physical strengthening of the public at large as demanded by Sigfried Giedion, General Secretary of CIAM and from Zurich, in his manifesto of the same name in 1929. It successively changed from an institution of body hygiene and strengthening to a place of mental regeneration and the subjective enjoyment of nature. Contrary to the functional aesthetic accentuated in the early open-air paths of the modernist avant-garde, these so-called park baths embedded their functions in a backdrop of picturesque nature – a sentimental interpretation of pre-industrial natural and cultural landscapes. This connection of function and sentiment, of engineering and nature, became a great popular success and stood for a paradigm change in the self-conception of the modernist era: following a period of elitist manifestoes, the movement had accommodated itself to the needs of the populace. The project examines this development from the enclosed baths of the 19th century lying on natural waters, used solely used for cleansing the body, to the park baths of the leisure society after World War II.

The theme was presented on October 17, 2008 at the symposium "Modernism and Landscape Architecture 1890-1940" of the National Gallery of Art Washington D.C. and the Centre for Garden Art and Landscape Architecture Hanover (CGL). The symposium proceedings will be published in the Studies in the History of Art series of the National Gallery of Art, to be released in August 2009.

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