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EXPO 1964

THE SWISS NATIONAL TOURIST OFFICE PAVILION AT THE 1964 EXHIBITION

By PETER GESSLER

The Holiday Pavilion at the Swiss National Exhibition in 1964 rises head and shoulders above all its neighbours. In this prominent building the Swiss National Tourist Office is showing how large the travel business and holidays loom in Switzerland. The magic of a holiday begins with our discovery of a landscape, whether it be some tract of unspoiled nature or a busy urban scene, and with our contact with another people, another language, another culture. It is precisely such experiences that will be evoked for visitors to the Holiday Pavilion, where an entirely new panoramic projection system will spirit them away into landscapes representing every holiday region of Switzerland. "Ramble in Europe — Rest in Switzerland" runs the slogan, and it epitomizes the essential ingredients of a holiday: a change of scene, rest and recreation, the unknown and the familiar.

A supplementary exhibition in the Foyer will show the social and economic importance of the hotel and travel business in Switzerland. In terms of turnover and the number of people it employs, it is far and away the most important service-rendering business, and, taking all sectors of the Swiss economy into account, it comes second in order of importance. In recent years the net proceeds from the hotel and travel business have become the largest receipt item in the balance of payments.

The Swiss National Tourist Office has been instrumental in developing the novel "Polyvision" system of photography and projection used to show these holiday-scapes. The projected picture is like a sphere which encloses the viewers and creates the illusion that they are standing in the midst of a landscape. Whereas the motion picture must constantly sustain the illusion of movement, the slide is still, and this greatly enhances the impression of restful tranquillity in the landscape. Visitors are not distracted by a continually changing scene but stand rather in front of a picture which they can enjoy at leisure. They can focus their attention on the most beautiful features of the landscape and marshal their impressions with a critical eye so that they are left with a memory which is personal and vivid.

Continuity between the panoramas will be provided by a series of single pictures. These take the form of photographs, drawings and a small number of texts and will form a lively contrast to the serenity of the panoramas.

The Polyvision system installed in the Holiday Pavilion of the Swiss National Tourist Office illuminates a spherical surface of some 8,000 square feet, which must be one of the largest screens to be used anywhere. It is divided into fifty-six pentagonal or hexagonal fields, each of 130 – 180 square feet, on to which fifty-six projectors specially designed for continuous operation throw the appropriate section of the total image. The projectors are arranged outside the sphere and work by a system of mirrors. Visitors stand in the centre of the sphere on a platform.

The room is not dark because, when the picture is projected all round, the impression received is of an open dome, light and spacious, whose walls dissolve into landscape and sky which appear in spatial and colour perspective exactly as in nature.

Each projector contains sixty slides, and each slide can be projected for as long as the programme requires it and then changed with great rapidity by a new automatic system. The translucent sheets serving as projection screens have been treated with a special substance so as to obtain optimum light transmission coupled with an evenly distributed brightness. The sequence of pictures shown by the fifty-six projectors is remote-controlled by an automatic unit which permits the 3,360 slides to be changed simultaneously, singly or in groups, whichever is required. The show runs continuously and visitors can enter any time and walk round as they wish.

The Polyvision process was developed by the architect Victor Würzler on behalf of the Swiss National Tourist Office in close collaboration with the firm of Ganz & Co., who designed the special projectors. The programme "Holidays in Switzerland, a Journey in four thousand Pictures" was devised under the direction of René Creux, graphic artist and stage designer, who worked in close collaboration with the photographers Stamm and Saxod in Lausanne on the photographic side of the project. The photographer Friedrich Engesser of Feldmeilen organized and directed the work of taking the panoramic photographs by the Polyvision process all over Switzerland. The special Polyvision camera was built to the specifications of Ganz & Co. in the precision engineering workshops of Volpi Bros., Zurich. The automatic control system for the programme was designed by Infranor S.A. of Geneva.

[S.N.T.O.]

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By

RAOH SCHORR

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