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declares Peter Disch, "but buildings which should be protected are being gutted, deprived of their insides and put to new use – all that remains is the facade as a shell, or trick. Harmony is destroyed".

...unhappiness in Basle

In 1984, the first and so far the only architectural museum in Switzerland was opened. Shortly after, a number of pioneering projects came to life near the railway station and by the river. For all that the city on the Rhine does not lack critical voices. Fault is found with the fact that after much hesitation and delay a conservative engineering project was chosen to restore Wettstein Bridge, although a unique proposal by Santiago Calatrava had been put forward.

After Peter Zumthor, Michael Alder is writ large in Basle's architectural history. He builds houses like the ones children draw. But the path towards sim-

plicity and economy is not easy to find. Not much lies between the simple and the banal. In his search for basic structures, Alder has studied the buildings of peasants and artisans. For years he took his students to sketch Alpine barns. Back to basics is his aesthetic principle. Another feature of his distinctive houses is their wood exteriors. Reminiscent of tobacco-drying barns, wooden laths produce a feeling of protection and comfort.

Ideas are the thing

These are archetypes which tap into memory and the soul's dimension. His intellectual approach to building means that 90% of Alder's work is devoted to ideas. They are what determine the material used and the way it is used. Roger Diener works in a similar fashion. By introducing ferric oxide, he gave the cement structure which he built behind Basle's railway station

exactly the appearance of shabbiness and rustiness which you would expect near the railway.

Attention to detail, not show

New Building distinguishes between white (chalk sandstone), grey (stone, concrete, weather-bleached wood) and silver (aluminium) in its architecture. The last of these gives an impression of movement and lightness – elements well known in vehicle and aircraft construction. But this is a trend which is described by some experts as "non-Swiss". Typical of Switzerland, they say, would mean paying more attention to detail than to show...

Dolf Schnebli, a Zurich architect with an international spectrum, replies to this self-criticism very pragmatically: "I do not believe that there can or should be 'Swiss-German architecture', but I think I am justified in hoping that there will be a lot of good architecture in German-speaking Switzerland". ■

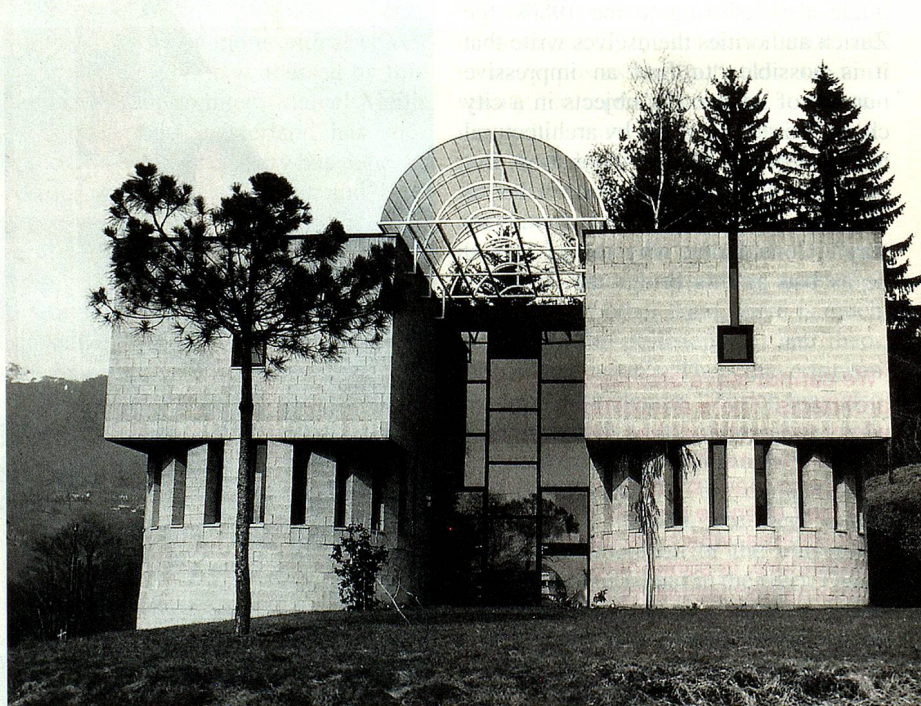
Ticino: Central to architecture

No one doubts that Ticino is at the edge of Switzerland. But perhaps the economist, Rimigio Ratti, is also on the right track when he says that it is in the centre of Europe. This certainly seems to be true for architecture. We conjure up with ease the names of the great builders from Ticino and Lombardy, such as Fontana, Maderno, Borromini, Trezzini and Solari, who played no small role in creating the great European cities from Rome to St. Petersburg in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. To them Ticino owes its reputation as a land of artists and architects. Clichés have the annoying characteristic of losing the specific in the general. But in

the case of Ticino, the cliché contains much truth, because today the name and works of its contemporary architects are also known to a wider public, well beyond the closed ranks of the initiated.

And it is in Ticino – which apart from the Faculty of Technology in Lugano as yet possesses no university of its own – that the idea was recently born in the mind of Mario Botta to create an

"In the 1960s, a type of architecture grew up in Italian-speaking Switzerland which succeeded in combining various types of rationalist architecture – above all, Le Corbusier's – with the local style and with the living habits it expresses. As a result, German-speaking Switzerland became captive to the ideas of Aldo Rossi". (Architecture critic Martin Steinmann)
Construction: Mario Botta.
(Photo: Keystone)



Architect Jürg Grunder on his work

"Buildings are like people, they have their histories"

How do architects meet market conditions? An interview with Jürg Grunder, aged 45, partner in Häfliger Grunder von Allmen, a firm of architects specialising in public works, and lecturer in the architectural department of Burgdorf Engineering College.

Swiss Review: What does your architecture express?

Jürg Grunder: When I design a top-quality building, I am making an artistic contribution.

At the moment you are involved in a Sfr. 50 million project, the training

centre for the Insel Hospital in Berne. How is that going?

I am responsible for design, execution and the artistic side. I am part of a team comprising 17 people. We never work alone.

"He who pays gives the orders". In

your work, do you often hear that said?

If that argument is used, it means we have done something wrong: we have not provided the mandator with enough information. Such a remark is the equivalent of pulling the brake lever on an intercity train. But interpreting the mandator's needs and converting them to our ideas of design is always like walking a tightrope. We experienced that in Simmental, where chalet-style building is popular. When voters spoke out against our school project in contemporary wood, the municipal authority objected to the building contract it had itself awarded. We do not go along with such U-turns, since we take our responsibility as architects seriously.

Academy of Architecture as an important component of the future university.

It is also true that there exists in Ticino a contemporary architecture – indeed a very vital one – which, as Giuseppe Curonici writes, emerged from two "cultural movements" at the beginning of the century. One stemmed from the close contact between the Ticino architect, Mario Chiattoni, with the futurists, and the other from the group of artists, philosophers and scientists from the most varied origins who were drawn to Monte Verità. Later, other modern architectural movements also penetrated Ticino. The first important work to emerge from this remarkable combination was the cantonal library in Lugano which was built by the Ticinese, Rino Tami, in 1941. According to Tita Carloni, the new Ticino architecture really took off after 1968: "We find the roots of it in the work of the older architects (Rino Tami, Augusto Jäggi, Alberto Camenzind), the humus in the lives and work of the middle generation (Peppo Brivio, Franco Ponti and Tita Carloni herself), and they came to full fruition in the projects and buildings of Luigi Snozzi, Livio Vacchini, Aurelio Galfetti, Giancarlo Durisch, Ivano Gianola and of course in the work of the best known and most distinguished of them all, Mario Botta".

But what was really behind this second renaissance of Ticino architecture? Tita Carloni takes the view that a number of specific circumstances favoured this development. Amongst these were the very rapid and tempestuous transition from the old agrarian economy to today's new structure, dominated as it is by service industries; "the continued existence of old robust cultural and social elements in the midst of a progressive urban society"; the acceptance of cultural experimentation by the upper social strata; the construction of the motorway (in itself a remarkable architectural achievement); the maintenance of a high level of craftsmanship in the local building trade; and by no means least of all the fact that the architects of Ticino "put passionate involvement in their work and architecture as art above making money and raising bureaucratic structures". And I would add yet another reason: careful study of the local architecture of the past.

But what are the consequences of the increasing fame attached to Ticino's new buildings? This Swiss canton has become something of a guidebook to modern architecture, and it is visited by an increasing number of enthusiastic tourists from abroad, even from other continents.

Giuseppe Rusconi

How do you win contracts?

Our firm would not exist without the competitive scene. In 95% of all cases, we obtain our contract because of something special we have provided. What makes things rather difficult for us is that we do not belong to any special interest group or lobby, but only to professional associations. So we do not profit from any internal advertising campaigns. Instead we work independently, creatively, insisting on quality, with enthusiasm and chaotically – in the positive sense of that word. You sketch a project, you pull it to pieces, you start again you pull it to pieces once more – it is all a very long process.

But you still teach. Is that in order to survive?

I do not work at the Burgdorf Engineering College just to earn money, but as a missionary. The teaching work is exciting. I know I am training our future competitors, but we learn an awful lot from each other.

Every year the Federal Institute of Technology produces talented architects. Why is it that in Switzerland, particularly on the central plateau, there continue to be so many uniform one-family houses? Are the Swiss really so lacking in imagination? Or