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VIDEO WORK FROM THE MEDIA LAB: A SCHOOL OF SEEING AND PICTURING LANDSCAPE

by Susanne Hofer

We investigate landscape. We would like you to explore landscape using the medium of video to sketch your discoveries.

Look at the topography, examine movements, find thresholds, observe changes, hear grass growing, overlook buildings, sketch the terrain, and forget to look at things as objects.

Video (the moving image, sound, and the cut) is an integral component of design at the Institute of Landscape Architecture of Professor Christophe Girot.

Compared to architects, landscape architects engage in dynamic environments requiring a special manner of observation. Video allows both movement and time to be portrayed. The moving image is not only able to envelop the dynamic landscape but also integrate the entire atmosphere of a space through perspective and approach as well as sound.

We use the video camera as a sketching tool to observe, analyze, and survey landscape space and sequence editing to organize the information.

Video is a dynamic and interactive medium. The filmed images seem direct, although social and cultural aspects of the images must be critically addressed and investigated next to form and composition. Each perspective and cut explains a certain attitude or consciousness towards the shown content, making a state-

ment on our individual cultural perception.

Consciousness is built on information. Accordingly, the sketch with the video camera is an awareness and identity-building tool that not only transmits information of a certain space, but also of its author.

As a result, the video sketch is a communication medium that is not only used on our Chair to analyze and document but also to present design work.

The focus of the first semester emphasis is placed on the level of documentation, analysis, and mapping of the landscape. Students are introduced to the medium of film through 4 short exercises.

In the first three exercises, students are taught how to use the camera and handle the view through the video camera in comparison to the still image of traditional photography. These first three exercises are linked with themes of observing landscape through which students are to investigate specific aspects of a given place.

With the fourth exercise, the students begin to determine a thematic as well as spatial emphasis directly manifested in the design work. The resulting output is presented in order to illustrate the design process during the critiques.

An intensive video workshop served to immerse stu-

dents in the topic of view as well as the investigation of landscape.

This year's workshop at the Rhine Gorge in Ilanz was led by Marc Westhoff, a professional documentarian who addresses issues of global scope, such as human rights and themes involving the environment. Within the four-day-long workshop, 6-minute video shorts and other documentation were produced.

The experiences gathered during the workshop often have great impact on the videos of the final presentation. These last video works are strongly coupled with the design process and require a deeper and more sophisticated handling of the thematic focal points. They strengthen an understanding in the students' way of thinking and inform the design process.

A number of the videos have been recorded on the accompanying DVD. They require a reading in conjunction with the students' designs.



