The place and the rules of the game

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The Place and the Rules of the Game

There are two sorts of people with disabilities. The first are not yet disabled, the others already are. The nondisabled are people who will one day become disabled, in old age at the latest. Thus people with disabilities are not a minority to be pacified with special facilities and fittings, but the majority for whom it is quite clear that the building must be planned and constructed without barriers. For a building is only fit for human beings if it is fit for people with disabilities. "Learning from dementia" says it in a nutshell. Anything that helps someone with impaired perceptual abilities also helps those who are – for the time being – sharp-witted. It is only when it becomes unnecessary to insist on the "Access for All" principle, only when impediment-free access is natural and self-evident, only then will the aim have been achieved.

The experimental site of the second Schindler Award was very special: the Palais de Tokyo and the Passerelle Debilly in Paris. The Palais is a monumental building à la française, constructed in 1937 in watered-down classicist style, which nowadays stands around half empty and waits for a new utilization. There is an abundance of space, the future architects had a wonderful time. The footbridge, constructed in 1900, is both a coveted object and an impediment to be overcome, and in the background are the Eiffel Tower and Jean Nouvel's new museum on the Quai Branly. There was no way of dodging an urban planning analysis. The exhibition program stipulated not only the planning of appropriate rooms, the actual exhibition concept had to be created. Participants in this competition had to be urbanists, architects and scenographers. Not an easy profession.

There are two roads to the Schindler "Access for All" award: direct or via the schools of architecture. Students in their last two years of study could submit a project alone or in groups, whereby only work that survived a preselection process was submitted to the jury. In cases where more than twelve students of the same school took part, they qualified for a prize awarded to the schools of architecture. In these schools, each student was accompanied by a professor or an assistant. The schools selected and submitted the best proposals. There was no preselection for projects of this kind. There are five prizes: EUR 5,000, 3,000 and 2,000, and twice 1,000. Five more projects are awarded a special mention but no money. In addition, the jury may see fit to award special prizes. This year's jury is listed on page 21. A school prize will be awarded to schools that entered a prize-winning student and fulfilled all conditions of the competition. Benedikt Loderer