

experimentadesign
Lisboa/Amsterdam

EXPERIMENTADESIGN LISBOA 2009 WARM-UP
PETER ZUMTHOR
BUILDINGS AND PROJECTS 1986/2007
WITH A FILM INSTALLATION BY NICOLE SIX AND PAUL PETRITSCH

CONFERENCE 6 SEPTEMBER 2008
EXHIBITION 7 SEPTEMBER – 2 NOVEMBER 2008

an exhibition
produced and presented
in association with 

Kunsthau Bregenz

PETER ZUMTHOR AT THE LAUNCH OF EXPERIMENTADESIGN LISBOA 09

The pinnacle event of the Biennale's launch, Peter Zumthor: Buildings and Projects 1986-2007, is his first major worldwide exhibition.

With an indepth approach to the work of one of the most acclaimed figures in contemporary architecture, Peter Zumthor: Buildings and Projects 1986-2007 surveys the creative process and the complex relationship the author establishes with time, the sites, atmospheres and inhabitants of his buildings.

Apart from examining Zumthor's remarkable body of work, the exhibition echoes and introduces the theme for the 2009 Biennale – "It's About Time" - in an incisive, multidimensional manner, in sync with the prevailing trends and lines of discussions in culture today. In this way, the Biennale benefits from a high-impact peak of media projection, aimed at stirring audience interest for its main issues and participants.

The lecture by Peter Zumthor will no doubt broaden the scope of the debate and the appeal of this prominent architect.

PETER ZUMTHOR: THE EXHIBITION

Peter Zumthor: Buildings and Projects 1986-2007 is a Kunsthhaus Bregenz (KUB) initiative in collaboration with Experimenta. One of the world's most prestigious contemporary art centres and in a building designed by Zumthor himself, KUB hosted the opening of the exhibition in 2007. Its presentation in Lisbon as part of the launch of the 2009 Biennale represents its first international outing.

It features 29 projects and buildings represented by an impressive collection of documents from the Zumthor Atelier archives: drawings, sketches, plans and models. Powerfully representative and impacting also on a physical level, six large-scale models and two video installations propose a new way of showing and appreciating architecture in an exhibition context.

Overing 2000 m², the exhibition shows Zumthor's work from an anthological perspective, offering a privileged insight into his creative process. It focuses on the painstakingly precise methodology behind the development of his ideas, from the earliest stages onto the implementation phase, revealing the intricate reasoning that structures the conception, formulation and testing of his projects.

In keeping with the author's philosophy that architecture should, above anything else, be experienced and inhabited, Peter Zumthor: Buildings and Projects 1986-2007 enables the visitor to come into contact with the buildings in alternative ways. The film installations replicate, in real time and life-size, the physical experience of walking through Zumthor-designed spaces.

Unique in its depth and breadth, Peter Zumthor: Buildings and Projects 1986-2007 constitutes a reference in both Zumthor's career and the study of contemporary architecture.

The Venue

The exhibition takes place in Lx Factory, a vibrant cultural venue in the city of Lisbon. In Alcântara, this set of factory buildings and warehouses is in the process of being awarded the status of industrial heritage site. It has been converted into a centre for experimental, multidisciplinary artistic practices, shared by several artists and hosting a lively programme of events.

LX Factory

7 September – 2 November, from 12h00 – 20h00

R. Rodrigues Faria, 103 - Alcântara

PETER ZUMTHOR: EXPERIENCING ARCHITECTURE

To experience Zumthor's work two video installations were created showing twelve life-size buildings, shot from six different angles. At the exhibition, the viewer will feel transported to the reality of the architectural spaces. The installations (re)create the distances, shapes, light and sound of Zumthor's buildings, in a fully enveloping sensation that manages to erase the physical absence of the constructions themselves.

Shot in 40-minute segments, the projections are shown in loop, in a non-stop flow of images. At different times of day, the exhibition visitor can find him or herself "visiting" Kunsthhaus Bregenz, the Thermal Bath Vals or any other of 12 featured buildings.

Six screens, six projectors, six cameras

On the film installation by Nicole Six and Paul Petritsch at the Kunsthhaus Bregenz

[...]Six stationary cameras directed simultaneously at six points of a building for forty minutes produce a constant stream of images in which the structure appears from frequently to randomly as part of the surroundings or as the spatial setting for a particular living or recreation situation in the building's interior. The magic of the images will come from the interaction of these six film sequences as they are simultaneously projected exactly as they were filmed onto six large screens. The screens are freestanding and face in different directions throughout the room. The projectors in the exhibition space have been set up exactly as the cameras had been while shooting the building. The directions from which the films were shot also conform to the alignment of the film projectors; the films were all shot at eye level and with normal lenses. The playback situation at the Kunsthhaus therefore corresponds 1:1 with the shooting situation on location. Since one sees all six films simultaneously and experiences them together from different angles in a way that would not be possible in real life, the visual and acoustic impressions start to overlap and consolidate. The installation conveys a feeling of the presence of the buildings in their surroundings and in everyday life, a feeling of the life taking place in and around them. And that is a lot.

Peter Zumthor

Eckhard Schneider, Director of KUB

The presentation at the KUB covers Peter Zumthor's buildings and projects from 1986 to 2007 and comprises materials on the design process, working drawings, models, and detailed plans, as well as a film installation by the artists Nicole Six and Paul Petritsch, which features almost all buildings completed during this period. Peter Zumthor and Thomas Durisch, a longtime collaboration partner at Atelier Zumthor and curator for this part of the exhibition, are responsible for the selection and presentation of the works on the ground floor and third level.

It was Peter Zumthor's express wish that the filmic form of cooperation between the artists become the core concept of the exhibition. Six and Petritsch were proposed because their approach is closely related to fundamental issues of architecture. The works they are known for consist of simple actions and interventions which they document on film or video and stage as installations. They realized a film installation for the exhibition "Tu Felix Austria" at the KUB in 2005. Shooting lasted six days, during which time Paul Petritsch stayed on the bare third floor of the Kunsthaus, filmed at eye level and in real time by six stationary video cameras facing in various directions. Six and Petritsch applied this stringent artistic concept in the documentation and projection of all of Zumthor's buildings. Again, six stationary cameras were used and the same distances maintained throughout. Again, there are six projection surfaces. Six and Petritsch do away with the usual camera movements, editing, and montages. Each building seems to present itself matter-of-factly on six projection surfaces for 40 real-time minutes in the changing daylight, surrounded by everyday sounds and embedded in the landscape. What the viewer sees is tied to his movement within the room. The screenings are staggered, so that every 20 minutes a new film begins on one of the floors; thus, the viewer can experience all the buildings in four real-time hours.

PETER ZUMTHOR: THE LECTURE

For the first time ever in Portugal, this lecture by Peter Zumthor underscores the presentation in Lisbon of his first major exhibition.

This is a rare opportunity to get acquainted first-hand with the work and creative process of this rather reserved author. Zumthor will conjure up a musical atmosphere to introduce his lecture, echoing the famous statement by philosopher Schelling "Architecture is music in space, as if it were frozen music".

Conceived by architect Porfírio Pardal Monteiro in 1961, with interiors by seminal Portuguese designer Daciano Costa, the Aula Magna (Main Auditorium) of Lisbon University is the chosen setting for this lecture. One of Lisbon's leading event halls, situated in the city's main University campus, Aula Magna has welcomed a host of renowned performers and academics, whose ranks Peter Zumthor will now join.

Aula Magna

6 September 2008, 5 pm

Tickets for sale at www.ticketline.sapo.pt

PETER ZUMTHOR: THE ARCHITECT

Unparalleled

Peter Zumthor is an absolute, inescapable reference in international architecture and an object of study in this as well as many other related fields. His striking creations stem from a bedrock of meticulous draftsmanship, coherence and flawless conceptual quality. A staunch believer that architecture is made and meant to be experienced first hand, inhabited and used, Zumthor's buildings are rooted in principles of sustainability, balanced integration in the natural surroundings and an extreme sensibility in the treatment and application of materials, drawing upon their tactile, plastic and reactive qualities.

Visionary

A visionary of space built and existing in time, Zumthor's ground-breaking approach encompasses and articulates all the factors that influence the construction of a given building: light, climate, vegetation, altitude, the history of the site and the future of its inhabitants.

Unique

Disinclined to displays or derivations of his work in formats that are necessarily limited and limiting, such as exhibitions, books and catalogues, Peter Zumthor agreed to KUB's request, later backed by Experimenta, to put together an anthological exhibition, after over 40 years of professional activity and countless requests from the international community of academics and intellectuals. This is the exhibition EXD is bringing to Lisbon in September 2008.

PETER ZUMTHOR: THE WORK

Standing in the middle of a green pasture, a chapel rises silently and soberly towards the sky, like one more geological element. In a hidden valley, a thermal spa sprouts from the ground the same colour of the mountains cradling it, a smooth levelness surrounded by sharp elevations. On the edge of a Swiss lake, a translucent cube mirrors the light shimmering on the water surface.

Timeless

Peter Zumthor's works stand apart from the current architectural production for their sense of serene and self-assured inevitability. Free of excesses or dramatic gestures, the buildings do not want to dominate over their surroundings, they do not need to call attention to themselves. Their existence and relevance do not require external validation, quite the contrary. Each building is imbued with a distinct self-consciousness, with the confidence and feeling of belonging born of a strong, autonomous identity.

Living

The interior spaces designed by Peter Zumthor possess a perfectly timed and paced logic that is all their own. It is embodied in the formal minimalism, the richness of the carefully executed details and the profoundly symbolic and evocative narrative that arises from the combination of all these elements. These spaces, which should be experiences with all senses alert and eager, are in turn inserted in a wider context and perspective of harmony, integration and sustainability.

Challenging

Simplicity and subtlety are Zumthor's languages of choice to develop projects that feel "right" for a particular site, that challenge time and are destined to cross it and carve out their place in history as well as the landscape.

Selected Reference Works

- 1996 Thermal Baths Vals, Switzerland;
- 1997 Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria;
- 2007 Saint Bruder Klaus Field Chapel, Mechernich, Germany,
- 2007 Kolumba Museum, Cologne, Germany.

ABOUT THE ARCHITECTURE OF PETER ZUMTHOR

Hans-Joachim Müller, Art critic and essayist

“Architecture is music in space, as it were a frozen music,” wrote the Romantic philosopher Schelling, a statement reflecting the pride of the master builder who sees his calling not merely in that of a service provider. Where architecture is to live up to its proud lineage with music it must leave behind visible design marks to demonstrate the superiority of ordering reason over the chaos of natural forms. Peter Zumthor’s buildings have nothing triumphalistic about them. They seem to be free of the gestures of repressed arrogance, of the grandiosity of contemporary prestigious architecture, free from the urge to have to attract widespread attention in public space. Not that they timidly avoid anything that inspires awe. Not at all. And they are definitely not lacking in personal style and individuality. Almost all of them have become sightseeing attractions, tourist destinations for art lovers. Zumthor’s architecture is distinct, stands out from its surroundings, and needs no extravagant gesture to be noticed. It simply stands there, striking, self-confident, and somehow as if it had always been there – as if it could not be any other way. This architecture is permeated by a strong sense of dignity that includes respect for the vulnerability of the building site, for the preciousness of the building materials.

[...]

With Peter Zumthor one finds oneself in spaces that really do want to be interior spaces, that signal where the world ends, that do not use large glazed facades to pretend that inside and outside are one except for the temperature difference. These walls are much more than just the walls of a building, they have their own hermetic quality for which there is no comparison in contemporary architecture. But they are hermetic not in the sense associated with captivity, they do not arouse the instinct to flee. It is a hermetic quality that makes one feel at home and safe. That is why even without the artwork one feels quite comfortable on the three exhibition floors of the Kunsthaus Bregenz. Wherever one happens to be, it feels like the right place and one has no urge to leave the middle of the room and retreat to the safety of the walls. Even in the middle one can hold one’s own with the monumental proportions.

[...]

I have yet to come up with the right word for describing Zumthor’s architecture. In part it involves the indestructibility of archaic building forms. It involves the nobility of Japanese lacquerwork. It involves the rightness of the use of forms that are perfectly concentrated on themselves. Would “right” be the right word? Peter Zumthor’s architecture: the most convincing contradiction to the inconsolability with which Adorno refused to acknowledge the right life in a false life. Where the right place exists, life cannot be so false.

PETER ZUMTHOR: BIOGRAPHY

Born in 1943 in Basel (Switzerland), Peter Zumthor studied Design and Architecture in Kunstgewerbeschule Basel and the Pratt Institute in New York. The son of a cabinet-maker, he was himself an apprentice of this craft, an experience that would shape his sensitive and discerning regard for the physical and aesthetic qualities of materials, as well as his keen eye for detail.

In the beginning of his career as an architect, Zumthor worked in several restoration projects, which enabled him to acquire a vast knowledge of rustic materials and construction techniques, which he would later apply to Modernist-inspired projects.

Zumthor has led a highly prestigious teaching career, having lectured in the Southern California Institute of Architecture in Los Angeles, the Technical University of Munich, Università della Svizzera Italiana and the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Since he believes architecture should be lived and enjoyed first-hand, his work is mostly unpublished.

Peter Zumthor lives and works in Hadenstein, Switzerland, where he founded his own Atelier in 1979.

Main Awards and Distinctions

- 1987 Auszeichnung guter Bauten im Kanton Graubünden, Switzerland;
- 1989 Heinrich Tessenow Medal, Technische Universität Hannover, Germany;
- 1992 Internationaler Architekturpreis für Neues Bauen in den Alpen, Switzerland;
- 1993 Best Building of 1993 award from tv's '10 vor '10 programme, Switzerland;
- 1994 Auszeichnung guter Bauten im Kanton Graubünden, Switzerland;
- 1995 International Prize for Stone Architecture, Fiera di Verona, Italy;
- 1995 Internationaler Architekturpreis für Neues Bauen in den Alpen, Graubünden, Switzerland;
- 1996 Erich-Schelling-Preis für Architektur, Germany;
- 1998 Carlsberg Architectural Prize, Denmark;
- 1999 Mies van der Rohe Award for European Architecture, Spain;
- 1999 Grosser Preis für Alpine Architektur, Sexten Kultur, Italy;
- 2003 Dottore Ad Honorem in architettura, Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Italy;
- 2006 Thomas Jefferson Foundation Medal in Architecture, University of Virginia, USA;
- 2006 Spirit of Nature Wood Architecture Award, Finland;
- 2006 Prix Meret Oppenheim; Federal Office of Culture, 2006, Switzerland.

PRESS QUOTES

«A brilliant retrospective.»
Roman Hollenstein in www.nzz.ch,
Outubro 2007

«Peter Zumthor: Buildings and
Projects 1986 - 2007 has been
the most successful [exhibi-
tion] in the history of the insti-
tution since opening in 1997.»
in www.nonstarvingartists.com,
Janeiro 2008

«All the main projects are rep-
resented, from the exquisite
hand-rendered elevations of
the Zumthor Studio to the
technical drawings of Therme
Vals, and various guises of
Kunsthau Bregenz repre-
sented in model form.»
Tim Wolfe-Murray in
www.bdonline.co.uk,
Janeiro 2008

HIGHLIGHTS

2.000 M² EXHIBITION SPACE

29 PROJECTS

2 DOCUMENTARIES

4 HOURS OF PROJECTION

20 YEARS OF ACTIVITY

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Peter Zumthor
© Peter Zumthor, Kunsthaus Bregenz
Photos: Markus Tretter



Kunsthau Bregenz exhibition
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Kunsthhaus Bregenz exhibition
© Peter Zumthor, Kunsthhaus Bregenz
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Peter Zumthor
Feldkapelle Bruder Klaus, Wachendorf, Eifel, 2007
Photo © Thomas Mayer

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