



HERZOG & DE MEURON
NO. 250. AN EXHIBITION

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MEDIA RELEASE

For its second exhibition, this year Schaulager is offering a survey of work by the architects Herzog & de Meuron. It is an unusual architectural presentation in that it focuses on the creative process and the attitude behind it. It is not an exhibition of the achievements of the Schaulager's 'house architects'. Rather, it presents the complex paths of development of what might actually have been built, thus offering visitors a glance into the workshop of the renowned architects.

Just as every building project is given a number in Herzog & de Meuron's archive, the larger exhibitions are also included in their list of works and treated as autonomous projects. *No. 250* is thus an independent project and not simply a presentation of what has been achieved. The architects are making an original statement that can be presented only in this form. The exhibition focuses on the design process and the attitude behind it. It collects research material found on site, drawings, model sketches and models, tests of materials and mock-ups. They are taken not only from the very first attempts by the young architects but also from the most recent large projects that the office of Herzog & de Meuron is currently producing; they extend from Basel to Beijing; and they cover a period of twenty-five years. Taken together, all these objects narrate a process of development, and the abundance of a later design can be illuminated in any one of them.

Like the first exhibition, this second one, too, is exemplary of Schaulager's sense of itself as a new place for art, one that responds flexibly to the particular, changing circumstances and needs of creative work in our time. The result is a *Schaulager* (display storeroom) within Schaulager, which invites discussion of the creative process that takes place behind the scenes. Herzog & de Meuron's particular approach to their projects can be described as a fundamental openness towards the various circumstances of a given project. The architects exploit this openness in order to initiate a dialogue with the context, to integrate it and to react to it. This combination of transparency to the outside and simultaneous concentration on the question posed is encountered in its purest form in research and in art. These are fields in which a way of thinking that is not goal-focused and that transgresses borders can sometimes open up unexpected possibilities or discover surprising images of a completely new quality.

The exhibition is divided spatially into different parts. In a large open space, the multipartite archive is displayed on tables. Like a market square, this area is surrounded by five booth-like spaces where specific approaches in Herzog & de Meuron's creative process are explored more deeply. Behind these cabinets unfolds another open zone that is devoted to life in motion, to the use of buildings. Here video sequences by the Swiss artist Zilla Leutenegger, the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei and Armin Linke, who lives in Milan, establish a bridge from the objects from the workshop to the buildings used throughout the world.

Spread out on more than a hundred tables are the remains of the design process. It is a rich and multiform collection of objects and parts. They take many forms and formats and are utterly disparate in material and technique. Here banal objects, there polished models – occasionally they reveal a distinctive and astonishing beauty. They do not, however, lay any claim to an artistic aura, but instead tell of the paths and detours, of the thought process that ultimately stands behind the finished buildings. The objects are placed on printed rolls of paper that, together with the labels, provide information about the project for which they were created. The objects can be assimilated directly, as wondrous objects or unidentifiable foundlings. At the same time, the presentation offers an opportunity to follow the manifold attempts to establish form, the spatial research and experiments with materials and surfaces within the context of a given project.

The five surrounding rooms give a concentrated look into specific sub-areas. One area is devoted to drawings – the medium that is probably most closely related to the thought process, and one that was a particularly important instrument in the early stages, when the architects' goal was still to find their own language. All of the sheets exhibited originated in the context of particular building projects, and they are grouped accordingly. Another area concerns two urban-planning projects in China. The city as a complex cultural form that was invented by human beings, that is built up and then repeatedly destroyed – this idea has long fascinated Herzog & de Meuron and inspired their investigation. What is a city? What are its inherent laws and structures?

Another room is devoted to the method of collaborating with artists – illustrated by the example of Rémy Zaugg, who has collaborated with the architects on several projects over the past fifteen years. This is not an attempt to document collaboration related to a specific project; rather, it is a demonstration of what has united the artist and the architects in a dialogue over the years: a view of perception as an instrument to understand and change the world.

Schaulager has been documented worldwide as a project and exhibition site that points the way to the future and whose very function reveals the process of its becoming a finished building. From the first sketches by way of the so-called sourcebook on to the design of its characteristic features, the same project is constantly being revealed inside Schaulager. The viewer becomes part of the whole, and piece by piece the viewer's perception helps determine the function.

The exhibition was produced as a collaboration between Schaulager and Herzog & de Meuron, and is shown here for the first time. Other exhibition sites are being negotiated.