

TOWARD URBAN INTEGRATION

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Abstract

Mobilizing available geography, whatever the scale, in its immediate physicality.

“Contemporary architecture, in its relation with geography, topography and the landscape, goes beyond the simple field of construction, which is closed and limited and which becomes stylistic or academic. If one considers architecture as an element of the transformation of the landscape, one enters into a much more complex and uncertain relation. It has to be capable of transforming a place into another place. For me, architecture that doesn’t achieve this does not exist.”

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“The site [geography] is a material to be utilized in the project. It is not just a question of sliding into it, but of sculpting, transforming, adapting, and manipulating it, in a very physical relation. This is not a delicate intervention. These are all powerful gestures, which confront the physicality of the place head on. But in this case, powerful does not mean violent. This force sets up a system, an organization, which then makes it possible for the architecture to be delicate, aerial, heavy, transparent, present, absent, whatever. But it will be organized in relation with a system that is tectonic.”

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“I am not working in a romanticist vein. I am not working with narration. I am not recounting the history of the geography. But I do manipulate the geographic reality as if it were a building.”

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“It’s a question of the status of the ground, which is of foremost importance for me. The ground is an element enabling one to get one’s that lets us get our footing. Without the ground, there is no place. The intrinsic nature of the ground is going to be the identity, it is going to give the project its meaning and its roots. There has to be a ground for there to be a place. It can be created underground, in negative, but it must also be created above ground. This taking into account of the ground is in my view the major contribution of my generation to the architectural debate of the second half of the 20th century. Whether consciously or not, it is a very critical attitude toward the modernist movement, which cultivated a very puritanical relation with the ground. For example, I have always been very skeptical about the work of Le Corbusier. Not from the point of view of his architectural “writing”, which I find extraordinarily brilliant, but for the relation of his objects to the ground, which corresponds to a distancing, as if he didn’t want to touch it. Le Corbusier gives me the impression that for him, the ground is dirty. He does not allow it to go toward the sublime. I, to on the contrary, think that the fact of assuming that the

ground is our earth, in the original meaning of the word, actually frees architecture. If one is able to give the ground a presence, to make it a reference that is consciously assumed as such, then that opens the possibility for diversity, exchange and experimentation.”

From the interview conducted by Anna Hohler, held in March 2013 at the Dominique Perrault Architecture office in Paris. Published in “Dominique Perrault Architecture – Territoires et horizons” on the occasion of the inauguration of the architect’s first building in Switzerland, on the EPFL campus.

Urban integration is about creating tension between elements in order to allow new situations. Architecture is an art of sewing, of forging relationships. Architects are like tailors, they seam. Architecture is always tailor-made, always contextual.

*I will develop my conception regarding **urban integration** through 3 outlooks:*

- *Large scale urban planning*
- *Architecture & heritage*
- *Underground architecture*