

Jury Report

Swiss Pavilion 16th international architecture exhibition The Venice Biennale in 2018 Two-stage competition in a selective procedure

Zurich, 30.06.2017

The competition met with a great degree of interest, with the Jury remarking upon a high level of participation and high quality of entries. The adjudication of the competition in the form of an open call for entries for "the presentation of a national pavilion" is only partly comparable to the adjudication of a normal architectural competition, as the spectrum of the various subjects, all very different in content, is broad, and a cross comparison would be extremely challenging. The following quality criteria used in the discussion, as already mentioned in the call for entries, significantly contributed to the structuring of the evaluation process:

- Clarity, contemporary relevance of the chosen theme.
- Aesthetic and visual potential of the exhibition concept.
- Curatorial and spatial potential of the theme proposed.
- Capability of the team to reflect in a clear and innovative way a contemporary architectural theme.
- Representative of the contemporary Swiss architectural scene.
- Integration of the concept into the architecture of the Swiss Pavilion.
- Communication, comprehensibility and ability to appeal to a large international public.
- Adherence to the ceiling price of CHF 250,000, including fees, execution costs, visual and communicative support.

The process comprised three rounds of adjudication. The first evaluation stage was devoted to an in-depth study and comparison of the project entries. It was the primary task of every member of the jury to individually rate the 81 projects and then to select 10 of them for a short list. In the subsequent first round of judging, the results were compared, whereupon the following 22 entries were selected:

- 'Who's Talking'
Philipp Frisch, Angelo Romano
- 'Opération Béton'
Archizoom, Karen Scrivener, Léopold Banchini, Cyril Veillon, Joanna Schaffter
- '2:1, Gute Wohnung',
Li Tavor, Alessandro Bosshard and Matthew van der Ploeg
- 'architecture animée'
Isa Pasqualini, Nadine Schütz, Marie Sacconi, Daniel Bisig, Olaf Blanke
- 'Schwellenräume des Wohnens'
Florian Kessel & Roland Züger, Caspar Schärer, Marcel Bächtiger
- 'Rifugio Svizzera'
Käferstein & Meister, Berger + Stadel + Walsh, Senem Wicki
- 'Concrete Utopia. Il "Making Of" dell'Architettura Cooperativa svizzera'
Antonio Scarponi, Marie Antoniette Glaser, Andreas Hofer
- 'Education Matters- Venice Free University'
Alexandra Midal, Dieter Dietz, Daniel Zamarbide
- 'OUTLAW'
Charles Pictet
- 'Souterrain Superlatif'
POOL, Mathias Heinz, Raphael Frei, Silvia Berger Ziauddin, imRaum, Fabian Furter, Martin Handschin, Clemens Goetzinger
- '(A)CASM–Architectural Client Assembly Language?'
UNDEND/OUC, Urs Egg, Christian Meili, Brett Davidson, Anne Koskiluoma
- 'dis / appearance'
neon/deiss, Nicole Deiss, Michèle Mambourg, Barbara Wiskemann, Claudia Schmauder, Sabine Flaschberger, Christina Schumacher
- 'Materia Helvetica',
Aita Flury, Roger Boltshauser, Nicola Braghieri, Philipp Schaerer
- 'Senden und Empfangen - Der Schweizer Pavillon als Echoraum'
Evelyn Steiner, Laura Pregger, Sibylle Stoeckli, Jacques Borel
- 'Typisch Schweiz? Serielle Unikate'
Duplex Architekten, Anne Kaestle, Dan Schürch

- 'Competition Culture'
Tanya Zein, Jean-Paul Jaccaud, Simon Lamunière, Fanny Noel, Ingeni Structure
- 'Café Ekphrasis'
Marcel Bächtiger, Tim Kammasch, Stanislas Zimmermann, Atelier POL
- 'No man is an Island - Shared resources'
Corina Ebeling, Charles O. Job, Cornelia Faist, Brigitte Lampert, Katharina Hofer
- 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly - Have we ever been Postmodern?'
Ron Edelaar, Elli Mosayebi and Christian Inderbitzin, Fredi Fischli and Niels Olsen
- 'Into the Light. Uncovering Female Contemporary Practices'
Syndicat Culotté, Charlotte Malterre-Barthes, Dubravka Sekulic, Harald R. Stühlinger, Lorenz Bürgi, Torsten Lange
- Playful Density,
Tristan Rohrbach, PeterWehrli, Davide Pellegrino, Lydia Wilhelm, Nicole Seeberger
- 'Inside out'
Martino Pedrozzi, Sidi Vanetti

The second round involved a joint discussion focusing the closer examination, questioning and comparison of the themes proposed and their potential for development. Finally, five projects were selected.

Shortlist

- 'No man is an Island - Shared resources', Corina Ebeling, Charles O. Job, Cornelia Faist, Brigitte Lampert and Katharina Hofer
- 'OUTLAW', Charles Pictet
- '2:1, Gute Wohnung', Li Tavor, Alessandro Bosshard and Matthew van der Ploeg
- 'Competition Culture', Tanya Zein, Jean-Paul Jaccaud, Simon Lamunière, Fanny Noel, Ingeni Structure
- 'Schwellenräume des Wohnens', Florian Kessel & Roland Züger, Caspar Schärer and Marcel Bächtiger

Final adjudication

The final phase of the judging was split into two parts: in April, the shortlisted teams presented their results to the jury. After a revision phase in which the individual projects were optimised and refined with respect to content and form, the final adjudication took place in June after a further presentation, and the winning project was selected.

The jury voted unanimously for the project with the working title 'Svizzera 240' - the more recent version of the project '2:1, Gute Wohnung' - of Li Tavor, Alessandro Bosshard and Matthew van der Ploeg. The jury was impressed by the precision, power and freshness underlying the proposal of this young winning team, and is convinced that

the project will be enthusiastically greeted as a kick-off for the new procedure for presenting the Swiss Pavilion of the 2018 Biennale 2018 in the form of a public tender.

roma, milano, venezia
new york
san francisco

'Competition Culture'

The project 'Competition Culture', by Tanya Zein, Jean-Paul Jaccaud, Simon Lamunière and Fanny Noel, deals with the subject of the Swiss architectural competition and focuses on its unique character and high quality. 'Competition Culture' is a celebration of Swiss competition culture, which is made possible not least thanks to a functional democracy. However, this open competition culture is under threat, which is why it is time for the team to rethink the present state of affairs. The open nature of competitions in this system allows to discover new talents, develop other ways of thinking, expand experiment and research, and stimulate public architectural debate. Finally, based on the countless competition projects submitted, a collective project of an imaginary town can be developed.

The idea of 'Competition Culture' is to convey this fictional city in the form of a spatial collage vision. The central element is a collection of competition models from eleven representative Swiss architectural firms which are actively engaged in competitions, such as Herzog & De Meuron, Hasler & Stauffer or Fickert & Knapciewicz. Video interviews give the points of view of the authors, and graphical exhibits introduce the topic of the exhibition.

The public is guided on a pathway through the pavilion up to the immersive, spatial installation in the upper skylight room. In the dark, labyrinthine ground floor the visitor plunges into a soundscape of various voices emanating from the video portraits of the eleven architectural studios. The trail continues up eleven individual stairways into the glass roof of the Giacometti Pavilion where a spectacular view of the model assemblage opens up in the bright light of Venice, in the hope of discovering some fragments of the imaginary, collective town that is constantly re-created in the Swiss architectural laboratory.

Assessment criteria of the jury

Thematic relevance: Medium – the theme is well-known nationally, but presented in a new light, it is interesting for an Architectural Biennale. It reflects Swiss competition practice as a democratic culture and examines the architectural consequences of the implemented and non-implemented projects in a nationwide context, both in practice and in theory. The choice of 11 Swiss architectural studios as being representative of the national competition culture was questioned by the jury.

Conceptual clarity: Very clear – a well-structured, comprehensible concept. The Swiss competition system is of high quality (hypothesis) and the urbanity of Switzerland can be visionary (utopia). A visionary imagination of town and architecture are celebrated.

Critical enlightenment and threats such as the instrumentalisation of the open competition culture are less addressed.

roma, milano, venezia
new york
san francisco

Performative potential: The presentation of the Swiss competition models as architectural caprice in the upper skylight room of Giacometti's painting studio is enticing and a lovely reference to the town of Venice. The voices of the 11 architects selected are very performative as a collective echo of the architectural subconscious. The guiding pathway through the installations in the ante-rooms of the pavilion (vestibule, sculpture room, graphics cabinet) has still more performative potential. However, at the end of the pathway the ascent into the upper echelons of the Swiss competition scenery is precarious from a socio-political standpoint: not every member of the public will manage to climb the 11 stairways and gain access to the view.

Feasibility: High – the project is certainly workable, and the project team bring the best architectural and curatorial professionalism and competence to bear on it.

Budget: Good, the budget is viable.

'No man is an Island - Shared resources'

The strength of this project resides in its political and social thought: to reaffirm that an individual – and implicitly a country – is not an island becomes, today more than ever, a strong, courageous and necessary message. While the earth's resources are diminishing, the need to face up to demographic growth is increasing. The need for space is growing along with great social and economic divisions which favour only a minority of the globe. Therefore, reflection on how to divide up in terms of provision, combating the densification of the existing urban fabric, is highly necessary.

The team proposes to improve the historical heritage in the city in order to contribute to this process. In the case of Giacometti's pavilion, it does this physically, by inventing a new volume on the roof, thus freeing space to be divided up for everybody. The surface of the ground floor is made available to a very densely populated country, like Nigeria, offering a country unrepresented in the national pavilions the possibility to imagine an exhibition of its own, in collaboration with Switzerland. Our national pavilion is thus transformed into a collaborative exchange and learning platform.

A light and slender wooden pavilion is planned in the attic as a space for meeting, reflection and freedom, presenting the possibility of a new point of view on both countries and on the pavilion itself, in the meantime offering a raised, unfamiliar view to the gardens and lagoon. The experience of the harmonious and half-open pavilion on the roof is intended to stimulate in the visitor openness to the other and their view to broader perspectives.

On the basis of a further open call, various and multiform Nigerian proposals are selected which are based upon re-use of materials and public space recovery programmes, primarily in the exhibition in the rooms on the ground floor. Topics such as low-cost architecture, adaptability, collaboration, participation and the possibility to carry out unplanned activities are addressed, all contributory elements to the constitution of a

sustainable and democratic society. The projects are accompanied by video interviews of local and Swiss personalities, who critically discuss the topics raised.

The project marks the start of a dialogue between cultures, between what exists and what is new, an invitation to challenge predetermined boundaries and conventions. To signify that nothing is fixed and untouchable, our country and its pavilion can be transformed into a place of welcome and appropriation. From this meeting, a cultural, aesthetic and programmatic hybridisation could and should be born, which, by avoiding possible colonialist misunderstandings, might provide a growth opportunity for both nations.

In the absence of a definite choice of exhibition content and local partners, too many unknown factors remain which are difficult to handle. The nature of the desired exchange with Switzerland remains vague, as does the physical manifestation of the pavilion itself, despite the interdisciplinary, collaborative and varied team of this courageous project. The architectural intervention, lacking hybridisation with the Nigerian world, does not have the force of the political message that it intends to transmit, and still highlights the distance between two separate worlds.

Assessment criteria of the jury

Topic significance: relevant

Conceptual clarity: the topic still has to be elaborated further

Feasibility: the organisation and the construction are related to potential risks

Performance potential: the concept proposed is very promising

Budget: reliable yet still connected with unknown aspects

'OUTLAW'

"Everything that was built and placed under protection by man over thousands of years has become illegal in the last 25 years..." On the basis of this initial declaration Charles Pictet intends to address the question of over-regulation in contemporary architecture and so opens up an important discussion in this field, which has seen its potential for development limited by the exponential intensification of norms and laws in recent years and decades. This project is not only relevant with respect to architectural issues, but also concerns all those spheres of life affected by increasing legal restrictions. Over-regulation is a macrosocial phenomenon which moreover can be observed worldwide. The aim of 'OUTLAW' is to present the effects in an attractive and occasionally humorous way without falling into the melancholy frame of mind which the concept usually conjures up.

'OUTLAW' treats the subject from various angles and is convincing thanks to its precise selection of the most diverse partners from the fields of visual arts, design, graphics, illustration, film and typography, all of whom examine developments from their own

particular perspective. Central to the project as a whole are 180 individual projects of iconic value from throughout history that contravene current norms. These are selected by members of the Association of Swiss Architects, collected in advance and serve to illustrate the absurdity of over-regulation in exemplary fashion. The projects will be analysed by the students of architecture at the EPFL (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne) and brought into line with current norms, before being represented in radical fashion by students of the ECAL (Cantonal School of Art and Design, Lausanne).

In a diverse and creative manner the project deals with a current and relevant problem which affects contemporary architecture and opens up a discussion on the role of architecture in modern society. It not only deals with the question of quality, but also with the relationship between the architect and society, which should be based on confidence in professional competence but is nowadays increasingly reduced to complying with legal regulations (Rules-Based Architecture).

The planned implementation is limited to the often absurd effects of these developments. The great potential of the outlaw proposal lies perhaps in the debate between those who set the norms and those who implement them. However, its critical message can be potentially reconstructed as extolling deregularisation, with all its problematic social, economic and political associations. Moreover, no account is taken of those examples which despite multiple regulations manage to generate convincing quality through their creative interpretation, and offer the possibility of new, creative solutions by the very use of subversive, outlaw strategies.

Assessment criteria of the jury

Topical relevance: very good, the topic gave the jury a lot to talk about.

Conceptual clarity: easily comprehensible and rich, the concept shows different facets of rebellion and absurdity and scrutinizes developments from different angles. The project would provide the perfect basis for a public debate, a potential that is, unfortunately, not fully exploited.

Feasibility: high, the project can be implemented without any problem.

Performative potential: ranges from average to very good; numerous fascinating and diverse approaches which highlight the topic and question, while nevertheless remaining manageable. The central installation of the table in the hall is not very convincing for the jury, in contrast to the precise integration of the partners from the fields of visual arts, film and graphics.

Budget: good, the project entails hardly any financial risks.

'Schwellenräume des Wohnens'

The scheme addresses the trend towards urban densification that increasingly underlines housing production in Switzerland and abroad. It convincingly assessed the social and architectural potential of the intermediate territories that mark out the passage from the public realm of the street to the private one of the apartment. Based on research arising from first-hand editorial knowledge and professional press coverage, the team have amassed a catalogue of exemplary case studies (Swiss and European) that document the various interfaces and configurations of such thresholds, from recesses from the street, open and closed courtyards, raised entrances, verandas, covered and exposed walkways to porticoes, garden rooms, loggias etc. Such devices / spatial sequences are analysed in a variety of means, from full-scale installations to drawings, films and photographs documenting their everyday use. The ethical premise is that architects should view themselves as agents of social transformation, and encourage through their residential designs meeting and communication between neighbours, spaces for shared leisure and collective participation, that can forge a sense of solidarity and community.

The exhibition comprises several components. The entrance to and courtyard of the Swiss Pavilion, as literal threshold spaces, are charged by the addition of a raised platform finished in coconut matting (recalling an extended entrance mat) that penetrates the pavilion spaces. This platform acts as unifying device, accommodating two sitting areas (inside and outside the pavilion precinct), communication points (posters, 'house-rules' and 'non-house rules' panels, advertising column, takeaway newspaper) and facilities (water fountain, post box). Around this, several stations fulfil each a discrete function: a table with books, give-away postcard stand, an exhibition of axonometric analyses of iconic references, and in the main space an elaborate installation of screens, on which films of five exemplary projects are projected. The video installation was perceived by the Jury as "ingenious and inventive".

The proposal was overall favourably assessed as highly spirited and socially conscious, passionate without being moralistic, serious without being solemn. The team, comprising practitioners and architectural critics, engaged with the potential of architecture to act as agent of modest but pervasive social change, down to the level of everyday exchanges right outside the home. As an exhibition, the proposal was described as a "fun palace" of leisure, activity and information stations, playfully connected by the spatial device of the doormat platform.

Assessment criteria of the jury

Thematic relevance: medium/good, with the risk of aestheticising the social content of architecture

Conceptual clarity: very good, a transparent concept that communicates well. However, the exhibition was seen to comprise too many heterogeneous elements that would diminish the directness of its message.

Feasibility: high, all elements possible to assemble quite easily. Concerns were being raised about the potential of the external matting to withstand the effects of rain during the six months of the exhibition.

Performative potential: medium/good, a lot of material, quite demanding in terms of the time and attention it demands from the audience. It was remarked that this proposal would perhaps work better as an individual exhibition in a specialised venue (S AM, Architekturforum etc.).

Budget: the high cost, almost double the PH budget, was seen as a risk. Both cost and exhibition content could have benefitted from some extra editing.

roma, milano, venezia
new york
san francisco

'Svizzera 240'

(the more recent version of the project '2:1, Gute Wohnung')

The project 'Svizzera 240' addresses the theme of 'Wohnungsbau' (residential construction) in its full complexity. The subtle and fresh approach, to a subject that is profoundly Swiss in its production is at once surprising, entertaining and challenging. Perception is the key to understanding this project, which is presented in the form of an installation, an architectural model at full scale.

Bruno Giacometti's pavilion mutates into an apartment, becoming a 'catalogue' of interior spatialities and ambiances of the production of contemporary Swiss "Wohnungsbau". The standard height of 240 cm is taken as a reference value. The variations of scale given to the different standardised elements bring a new approach to the ensemble, thus challenging the essence of the spaces, identities and ambiances that are mass produced in Switzerland today.

The basic premise for the idea of 'Svizzera 240' is the recurrence of completed projects as they are publicly presented or published, bare, without furniture, viewed before the arrival of the user. This tendency reflects a fascination for the potential of the spatial range resulting from the fixed parameters defined by the contemporary housing market, as with the minimalist trend of the last century.

'Svizzera 240' raises the question of the relationship between man, society and the present times directly through constructed space. Architecture is an applied zone of projection where personal ideals come up against a reality that has become physical. This confrontation of habits through light modifications facilitates an individual awareness and opening up to the question of what could still exist and become.

The 'Svizzera 240' ensemble is composed of a series of spatial sequences of slightly varying scales. The visitor is guided through a series of rooms before ending the tour in the patio providing a vision of the whole model. Due to the variation in scale, the spatial experience takes place at the border between the habitual and irritation. Perception and body sensations are at the core of the project and enable the visitor to address the question of inhabited space from a new angle. The staging is an ironic reference to the 'Wohnungsbesichtigungen'(flat viewings) that are arranged when the building is completed. The object is bare and the spatiality revealed in its 'essence'.

The pertinence of the project in the panorama of Swiss architectural production has succeeded in unanimously convincing the Jury through its combination of a fresh, ironic and subtle approach to the theme and a promising spatial format.

roma, milano, venezia
new york
san francisco

Assessment criteria of the jury

Thematic pertinence: very pertinent, subtle and intelligent

Clarity of the concept: clear, direct and innovative in its approach. Should better define the rationale for the changes in scale and irritations introduced in the spatialities reproduced.

Feasibility: Realistic in the form of a theatre decor? Technical aspects such as ventilation and luminosity to be clarified.

Performative potential: good to excellent, depends on the finalisation and clarification of the rationale for the 'scale'. It is imperative that the concept be conveyed in a direct and comprehensible manner, so that the subtlety, intelligence and irony of the project are clearly understood.

Budget: to be reworked.