

Preface

The project *Dialogue Architecture* was launched a few years ago at the Department of Architecture of ETH Zurich based on the idea of tracing prevailing trends within contemporary architectural practice in Switzerland. Architecture as a discipline relies fundamentally on individual protagonists; established and young architects were thus asked to reveal the basic assumptions, motives and desires that inform their work – as radical as they may be. And because the intellectual approach within the field can be recounted thanks to internal dialogues, communities of discourse with similar focuses and common subjects were sought out. The focus of this research was not placed on questions of style but on potential relationships between thinking and making. While seeking common threads within a specific group, the project aimed at identifying ruptures within a proposed line of argument, unraveling deliberately or unwittingly suppressed issues that nonetheless affect the work in its physical presence. What gradually emerged were the outlines of a map, a kind of cartographic notation of terrains of thought, delineating a common culture of architecture as a craft and art form dedicated to the production of the man-made environment – despite all expressed differences and quibbles about what is right or wrong. What also emerged is a type of skepticism, if not resistance, vis-à-vis sensational formal expression as surplus value within the contemporary international architectural market. What becomes clear is the contemporary struggle of architects to maintain high standards in an era driven by the global cheap, fast and dirty, by layers of managers and developers operating solely in the name of efficiency as the means to attain their short term objectives. Yet it is the task of the reader to interpret the consequences in following the various strands of thought into known and unknown territories.

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