

OSKAR VON MILLER FORUM

Press Release

Architecture as an 'agent provocateur' of remembrance

A lecture by Roger Diener, Diener & Diener Architekten at the Oskar von Miller Forum on 3 December 2015 at 6:30 pm

The work of Diener & Diener addresses the mechanisms that are inherent to human memory. Take for instance a conversation where you are searching for a word but fail to recall it right away, no matter how hard you try. This unexpected, yawning gap leaves behind a sense of unease that lasts until the word, at a certain point, resurfaces from the context that seemed to have passed into silence.

Despite the characteristic diversity of the projects, the designs by the Basel-based firm have something in common. Drawing from the theoretical considerations of Aldo Rossi and Robert Venturi, the architecture of Diener & Diener seeks to connect with the location's historic strata, thereby creating a temporal and spatial pattern. Far from fashionable discourses, the special role of memory is actually best expressed in projects involving expansions of existing buildings. Although such projects offer only limited leeway and are therefore certainly unique, the architects from Basel do not deem them substantially different from other projects. Yet their symbolic character reveals some facets of the approach pursued by Diener & Diener.

About Roger Diener

Roger Diener was born in Basel in 1950. He studied at the ETH in Zurich and Lausanne, under Aldo Rossi and Luigi Snozzi among others. In 1976, he took up work in the firm of his father, Marcus Diener, which he has managed since 1980. Roger Diener held a professorship at the ETH Zürich from 1999 to 2015, where he lectured and published at the Studio Basel together with Marcel Meili, Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron. Roger Diener has won numerous awards, including the French Grande Médaille d'Or, the Prix Meret Oppenheim and the Heinrich Tessenow Medal.

Projects

The first residential buildings designed by Diener & Diener are located at Hammerstrasse (1978-81) and Riehenring in Basel, they were followed by residential buildings at the port of Amsterdam, in Paris and in Boulogne Billancourt, in Antwerp, in Turin, The Hague, as well as Zurich West (Mobimo Tower) and Basel (Turm market hall). In many cases, the construction of these buildings followed the design of master plans by Diener & Diener.

Notable public buildings by Diener & Diener are located in Berlin (Swiss Embassy, Museum of Natural History), in Biel (Centre Pasqu'Art), in Malmö (university building), in Lucerne (Rosengart collection) and in Drancy (Mémorial de la Shoah).

Diener & Diener also made a name for themselves designing office buildings. In Zurich, Diener & Diener are currently implementing the headquarters for the Swiss Re reinsurance company at Mythenquai, after completing the first new campus project for Novartis in Basel in 2005.

Most recently, the jury selected the design submitted by Diener & Diener for the headquarters of the Baloise insurance company, which will constitute an important component of Baloise Park, an ensemble that is located in close proximity to the Central Station and will have formative influence on Basel's skyline.