

EASA 2005 : a review of the European Architecture Students Assembly in Bergün

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EASA 2005

A Review of the European Architecture Students Assembly
in Bergün

Web

www.easa.tk
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EASA History

2008 LETTERFRACK/Ireland, adaptation
2007 ELEFSINA/Greece, city_index
2006 BUDAPEST/Hungary, common:place
2005 BERGÜN/Switzerland, trans – transit –
transition
2004 ROUBAIX/France, métropolitain –
micropolitain
2003 FRILAND/Denmark, sustainability
2002 ISLAND OF VIS/Croatia, senses
2001 DEREKOY/Turkey, –
2000 ANTWERP/ROTTERDAM/Belgium/The
Netherlands, DisSimilarities
1999 KAVALA/Greece, –
1998 VALLETTA/Malta, Living on the Edge
1997 THE TRAIN/Scandinavia, Advancing
Architecture
1996 MONTPELLIER/France, DreamBuilders
1995 ZAMOSC/Poland, Beyond the Borders
1994 LIEGE/Belgium, Consommer
l'inconsommable
1993 SANDWICK/Scotland, The Isle
1992 ÜRGÜP/Turkey, Vision 2000 Environment
1991 KOLOMNA/USSR, Regeneration
1990 KARLSKRONA/Sweden, Exploration
1989 MARSEILLE/France, Héritage et créative
1988 BERLIN/Germany, The Dimension
Between
1987 HELSINKI/Finland, Architecture and
Nature
1986 TORINO/Italy, Architettura latenti
1985 ATHENS/Greece, Interpretation and Action
in the City
1984 AARHUS/Denmark, Turning Point in
Architecture
1983 LISBOA/Portugal, Social Spaces
1982 DELFT/Netherlands, Architecture of an
Uncertain Future
1981 LIVERPOOL/England, Starting up the
EASA Experience

Introduction

In the present issue of trans we will present articles concerning the European Architecture Students Assembly (EASA). We want to create a framework for the reader to understand what EASA is, how both the organisation and the event work, and what the goals of the annual meeting are – especially concerning the assembly in the summer of 2005 in Bergün organised by swiss students of architecture.


EASA as an Organisation – more than Definitions

EASA is a summer school for architecture students from all over Europe. It takes place every year since its foundation in Liverpool in 1981. It is an enthusiastic gathering of about 400 students from up to 40 countries (see map), altering according to political changes, open borders, new definitions of Europe or simply the foundation of new countries or universities (latest example 2003: a new Faculty of Architecture in Reykjavik, Iceland) and the participation of guests of non-European background.

Although that is how an official presentation of EASA would sound, it is difficult to explain the passion evident every year when over 400 students convene. Despite the absence of any fixed organisational structure, or of continuous duty of its officers and therefore without any possible abuse of power, this loose network has been beating the odds since 1981 (see “history”). At that time, the emerging enthusiasm was sufficient enough for Dutch students to take over and organise a follow-up model one year later, and a small crowd agreed on spreading the news amongst fellow students in their countries. Besides the fact that these contacts meet nowadays once a year to draw the balances concerning the past summer and prepare the basic ideas for the following one, nothing has changed ever since. The contacts are called NCs (National Contact), their meeting is the INCM (Intermediate National Contact Meeting), organised by students of another country every other year.

This means that the organisation continues to depend on thrilled new organisers on the one hand, and on contacts spread all over Europe on the other – this and nothing more. One might raise the question of what holds everything together, as an event of this kind implies a considerable turnover of people involved: it is the “EASA-Spirit,” as fashionable as this labelling may appear – nobody has ever managed to describe it properly. But the transfer of responsibility may herewith be accredited to it!

Year after year, EASA creates considerable opportunities for a large number



Map showing the participating countries.

of architecture students to broaden their perception of Europe and its cultural peculiarities. Such insights, resulting from discussions, but above all journeys, during which one does not only perceive the respective destinations as a tourist venue, but from the point of view of the local participants, must not be underestimated. Interpersonal relationships across geographic and cultural borders, a new experience and understanding of mobility, the discovery of places one would never find on one's own, new approaches to architecture and its education – the list could easily be continued – define the EASA experience.

EASA – the Summer School

EASA meetings usually follow a similar structure, altered freely when needed. Principally, various workshops take place, brought-in by the different countries. This goes back to 1981 when the EASA founders had sent their call for help to all the architecture faculties of Europe, calling for action in their problematic hometown, trying to apply changes directly, and to comment on the situation in a manner that would be listened to. Since then, the practical element of actually building on a 1:1 scale has been central to the assemblies.

To guide the workshops into a certain direction and towards a common statement, a theme is chosen by the organisers. Greater depth and anchoring of that theme in the event, as well as in the minds of the participants, is achieved by lectures and presentations held by invited professionals and students, who contribute their own perception concerning relevant aspects.

As a third column in the row of the core elements, the development of spontaneous events, must be mentioned. While the main activities are framed by a cultural programme with concerts, film screenings, and theatre performances arranged by the organisers, planning in terms of space and time needs to provide space for what emerges from the presence of 400 creative people from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

The Way to Switzerland

How EASA finally came to Switzerland is easier to explain from a personal perspective. In addition, the chain of events described below brings to light an important part of the unwritten concept behind EASA: chance, a quintessential factor within the fast development and constant renewal of the organisation and its assembly.

Theme 2005: trans – transit – transition

(extract from the tutor information package)

- Europe is growing together. This does not happen automatically, it has to be actively achieved. Borders have to be crossed not only politically, but in many other senses, too. The fall of the iron curtain is 15 years gone, but its wounds and chances are still there. If we want to learn from each other in clever and constructive ways, if we want to evolve, then we have to communicate.

Switzerland has often been called a miniature paradigm for Europe, because it has achieved the unification of many different languages and views into a well-functioning democratic country. In fact, there are four different languages spoken, and the Italian, French, and German speaking parts are each quite strongly related to their big lingual neighbours. Nevertheless, there is a strong Swiss identity. We hope that EASA 2005 can profit from this Swiss spirit.

- We live in an age of communication, and not only information is communicated, but also goods, persons, and ideas. Architecture is the place where all this starts and ends up, and urbanism deals with managing contribution and distribution. The multitude of things transported can almost not be grasped. As architects, we have to know about those processes and be able to deal with them.

The Alps, and especially Switzerland, have always been strongly influenced by the transit of goods between North and South. Many of the effects of transitional processes can be observed when traversing the alpine valleys. Roads, highways and railways are often crowded into a narrow valley, joined by factories and power stations on the way. The efforts being made to tunnel the mountains are still enormous, the most current example being the new Gotthard tunnel.

- Our cities change constantly, more than ever before building and rebuilding themselves. This permanent evolution has its effects on both very large and very small scales. As architects, we have to deal with the complexity of these processes, without getting overwhelmed or megalomaniac. Solutions have to be found to make transitional streets, houses, and cities worth living in, without neglecting contemporary demands.

All Workshops

- The Pavilion // Heini Dalcher, Mauro Dalamini, Simon Nägeli // The winning project of the competition was built in the park of the Kurhaus Bergün.
- Umbrella/para-plövgia // Kotryna Sokolovaite, Natalia Makarenko (IT) // The EASA newspaper, information source, and gossip platform during EASA and afterwards.
- Bridge // Christoph Schindler, Margarita Salmeron and Russell Loveridge, // More or less from Ludger Hovestad's chair for computer aided architectural design (caad) built bridges, experimental projects and a real one in collaboration with locals.
- Industrial Roughness // Philipp Hauzinger, Anna-Lena Heldt (CH), Wiel Arets (NL) // Industry-compatible housing in an industrial site in the heart of Zurich, tutored by the office h2c and introduced by Wiel Arets.
- Folie // Benedikt Boucsein // What is place? What will we place? Answer these questions by leaving a "folie architecturale" to the village of Bergün.
- The Architecture of Shrinkage // Anja Meyer, Judith Gessler, David Ganzoni // Tried to find a clear position towards the phenomenon of shrinking areas and work out a project, a strategy for the Safien valley, one of the exemplary regions in Switzerland that is shrinking constantly.
- Sitting in the Mountains // Daniela Villiger, Annette Haas // A practical design on a 1:1 scale for seating opportunities in relation to the surrounding mountains through "spacial sketches"
- Map of European Architecture // Cirył Riha, Ondrej Busta, Jan Magasanik (CZR) // A sociological study of the architectural students' travelling paths between our very own monuments in Europe.
- Onion Cube // Panos Sakkas, Giannis Spanakis (GR) // A multifunctional, unfoldable cube that can adjust its onion skin structure to many different needs.
- trans.id // Alexander Bauer, Sebastian Kreusch, Anne-Céline Grosch, Frederik de Smedt (BE) // The questions whether architectural quality can be imported/exported was explored at the example of a mobile parasite that carries quality from Bergün to eastern Belgium – and further?
- The Curious Suitcase Incident // Mikkel Sørensen, Adam Pedersen (DK) // Three small installations were the final product of an expedition to your personal reality that is going to be a tool for your orientation in a world of parallel and overlapping realities in a state of constant flux. They were beautiful!

The big share of the responsibility can be attributed to the 2002 summer school in Vis, a Mediterranean Island in Croatia. Many among the 13 participants of the Swiss team had never been to an EASA before and were immediately infected by enthusiasm. The then-NCs grasped the opportunity and offered the two of us a chill-out in Denmark at the INCM in November, and we decided to go there to "get a picture of such an NC-Meeting" – which actually meant that we were the new NCs of Switzerland.

As we found out there, this meeting in Bornholm was going to contain the proposal to organise EASA in Switzerland, in 2004 to be precise. It was only a few weeks after the event in Bornholm, that we realised that voting for the French proposal for 2004 and the subsequent postponement of EASA Switzerland to 2005 would place the whole responsibility on us.

Though first preparations were in process and a rough concept for the Swiss EASA was presented in the NC-Meeting 2003 in Ljubljana, the event itself still seemed far away – and with it the consciousness for the responsibility and the loads of work it would implicate. The final decision on the last day of the INCM awarding EASA 2005 to Switzerland over Hungary's proposal was a shock. But as big as it was, we immediately decided to do our best to prepare the greatest EASA ever – as everybody before and after us has done and will continue to do.

Before EASA 2005

At the very outset we had to find our theme. Neither the search for a location, nor for tutors and lecturers, nor any contact to a sponsor would be possible without defining the framework of the event first. In 2003, we were convinced that the best thing we could do was to join in the vivid discussion about urban planning in Switzerland at that time, especially as one of its central focuses was the development of Alpine areas, where we were searching for a suitable location. The goal was to offer valuable experience to all participants, and we formulated the very general title "trans – transit – transition," opening a variety of possible approaches from the specific to the general.

From an overall view, this proved successful, but many of the workshops, for which the title was the main inspiration, drifted away from the core of the topic, especially as the event tends to practical work and hands-on experience.

For the location quest, the thematic indications proved to be very valuable. Looking for an old art déco mountain resort, we found the Kurhaus in Bergün (see "Kurhaus Bergün"). We immediately liked the building and its incredibly



Kurhaus and Arsenal, Bergün, photo by Florian Schrott, 2005.

forthcoming owners, and the Kurhaus as well as the village of Bergün (see “Municipality of Bergün”), situated on the formerly important “Albula” alp transit route, fit the theme perfectly as both were in the middle of a process of transition and redefinition.

easa005.ch – The Event

A powerful start upon arrival of all participants at the location in the spirit of the theme was a must. As it is neither uncomplicated nor cheap to reach Bergün, and as we wanted as many of the participants as possible to travel by train, enjoying the impressive Albula railway, we decided to organise a common arrival, with a first night in Zurich and an extra train to Bergün the next day. When we arrived the population of Bergün was doubled at once. Direct collaboration with an open and very flexible municipal council, the tourism office, and again the owners of the Kurhaus averted possible inconveniences in advance.

The above-mentioned difficulties of the chosen theme were addressed by a two-day lecture marathon, introducing the participants to the topic at the beginning of the assembly and creating a buffer time for both the hosts and guests to acclimatise to the new surroundings. Most lecturers (see “All Lectures”) were ready to stay for the whole day, and thanks to that we enjoyed four lectures and a final moderated discussion on either of the first two days in Bergün. The distinguished guests whom we were able to attract, but mostly the fact that we actually had to chase them out of the house on both days in order for them to catch the train in time prove that this was a successful start.

A further important ingredient of the recipe, the competition, must be mentioned. The international students’ competition for a garden pavilion in the Kurhaus park started in the middle of April 2005. The project was to be placed on top of the old foundation walls of a former pavilion. Following the example of EASA 2003 in Denmark, the pavilion would be built during the two weeks as one of the workshops. For the winner of the more than 70 entries, this would be the greatest possible prize.

Besides the Kurhaus, which was the heart of many activities, the rest of the assembly – accommodation, workshops, and parties – took place in the old arsenal, beautifully massive in its appearance, and with large spaces inside separated only by delicate wooden structures. It is situated between the station and the Kurhaus and was completely empty when we at first passed by. Its conversion into a museum dedicated to the Albula railway line is now in process (see “Zeughaus”).

- Transcape // Martin Laursen, Martin Krogh Hansen (DK) // On the basis of a simple construction system, they created a growing structure that shaped a picture of a rhizomatic, growing landscape.
- Mental Map // Judit Rab, Balazs Steiner (HUN) // They created a system of symbols that can help the orientation in physical and mental space, in the camp and in its surroundings, by projecting the participants’ exploitation and perception of space.
- Borders in Transition // Yehuda Greenfield, Karen-Lee Brachah (ISR) // The workshop demonstrated how borders, spatial occupation, and dialogue within space are evident in everyday human practices.
- Crossing Europe // Yana Golubeva, Mikhail Stepura (BLR) // How did we all arrive in Bergün? What are the students’ main transit routes through Europe? They presented the answers in a guide!
- Living Mobile // Joakim Haglund (SWE) // A transformation of an old VW camping bus into a decent living space for one to two persons.
- Stop Motion – 4d Sculpture // Günes Direk (TUR) // Sculpture experience in 4d.
- Emancipated Bastards // Kalle Jörgensen, Lewis Kinneir, Max Schneider (DK / UK / USA) // A fresh look at Bergün to discover sites with a potential to place a symbiotic intervention that lead to an addition of a specific programme.
- Video Mass // C. Alper Derinbogaz (TUR) // “Belonged object, leader, touching, eating, flirting, fetish”: day topics for movies, produced as a research on mass communication.
- PL461N PLAY // Mladen Hrvanovic Parazit, Milan Srdic, Janko Radojevic (SIM) // A reflection on the local and Swiss context in media modules called teleport modulators that keep moving through the EASA site and further.
- Transubstance // Zuzanna Ufnalska (PL) // Chose a space. Defined its surfaces. Recorded reactions to it. Translated the reactions into a volume and put the volume into a process of transition that influenced the way of reaction to the chosen surface. Transubstance.
- Realtime Audio Video Experiment // Ivan Lusicic, Josip Jerkovic (CRO) // Become a vj – but with a background.
- What’s in a Frame? // Jelk Kruk, Gerald Russel- man (NL) // An experimental approach to the range of themes “expression – texture – material.”
- September 28th – a Research on International Energy Infrastructure // Michael Prytula (GER) // Didn’t take place. Instead, Michael Prytula was wandering between the different workshops, giving valuable information to enrich these.

Municipality of Bergün / Bravuogn

- Bergün is situated at the foot of the Albula pass, 1376 m a.s.l.
 - 13. Century: first written mention of the municipality of Bergün
 - 1696 the street at the “Bergünerstein” is constructed
 - 1868 opening of the stagecoach connection over the Albula pass
 - 1903 opening of the Albula train line of the “Rhätische Bahn” from Thusis to Celerina
 - 1952 the first Heidi movie is shot in Bergün
 - 2005 easa005.ch takes place
- For more information see: www.berguen.ch

Students arriving at the Kurhaus, photo by Florian Schrott, 2005.



All Lectures

Monday:

- Peter Baccini, leader of EAWAG and chairman of the Swiss Academy for Natural Sciences: “The Emergence of New Urban Systems and the Evolution of Resource Management Strategies.”
- Josef Estermann, former president of the city of Zurich had a look at urban planning projects from a politician’s perspective.
- Ruedi Stauffer, Metron AG, presented their project for exchange of knowledge with the Center for Environment and Energy Tuzla (ceetz) in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Markus Schaefer, architect of the studio Hosoya-Schaefer is the former leader of both AMO and the Prada projects of OMA, Rotterdam.

Tuesday:

- Angelus Eisinger, historian of urban planning, “How the City and the Society Enter into Urban Design and Planning – Some Remarks on Current Research in Architecture.”
- Jakub Szczesny, Centrala Architects (PL), Warsaw.
- Carl Fingerhuth, urban planner, “Learning from China.”
- Ulrike Huwer, Basler und Hofmann Engineers, Zurich, this engineering office from Zurich has worked on many interesting infrastructural/urban planning projects.

Extra:

- Kees Christiaanse, KCAP Rotterdam/Zurich, project presentations:
- Matthias Mueller/Daniel Niggli, EM2N, Zurich
- Andreas Sonderegger, Pool Architects, Zurich
- Lars Mischkulnig, :mlzd, Biel/Bienne
- Christoph Kellenberger, OOS open operating system, Zurich

Zeughaus

- Constructed as an arsenal of the Swiss army
- Abandoned in connection to the transition of the Albula train line
- Taken over by the “Bahnmuseum Albula”
- 2007: Conversion into a museum for the Albula railway

For more information see: www.bahnmuseum-albula.ch

The only real problem was the weather. The week after EASA will stay in the memory of the whole of Switzerland as floods and landslides washed away railway bridges. That the weeks previous to these disasters were rainy as well does not need to be mentioned, the Euro 1’000 Neocitran – a cold medicine – bill we racked up during the assembly speaks for itself.

A positive mood prevailed however, despite the nasty conditions and apart from a few moments of melancholy – usually when the sun disappeared behind rain clouds again. Thanks to everyone’s great effort, this didn’t affect the results of the workshops. For us, the last night before the final presentation when the sound of saws and hammers kept Bergün awake until after midnight, was the most unforgettable moment.

Conclusion

Thanks to our good relationship with the village council, we discussed whether some of the workshop results could be kept as a contribution to the village. Once more, the weather destroyed these plans and we had to remove most of the traces, for the municipal council urgently had to take care of storm and flood damage. This was one of the most disappointing moments for us as we had strongly hoped to enrich the village context with our spontaneous actions. Nevertheless, the Kurhaus pavilion is still there!

Documentation of the event and its workshops was one of our primary concerns. It was also one of the selling points that convinced the NC’s in Ljubljana to support our proposal, as documentation had been neglected to extremes in the previous years. In total, there are now *transIt* covering the theoretical aspects of the event, a travelling exhibition presented in Zurich and Sofia already and currently on the way to Bucharest, Berlin, Stockholm, and Moscow, a DVD for the visual re-experience of a beautiful summer school, and as the centrepiece a book with almost 600 pages, aiming at the greatest possible completeness.

The success of the event in Bergün invigorated the whole EASA community. At the NC meeting in Brighton in November 2005, there were three EASA proposals for 2007, three applications for an INCM, promising perspectives

Lecture by Carl Fingerhuth, Kurhaus Bergün, photo by Florian Schrott, 2005.



beyond 2008, and to our pleasure even the announcement of two smaller, additional workshops in the spring 2006, in Macedonia and Belarus, which hadn't occurred in the past few years. The in-depth discussions in Brighton and the variety of concrete events that are organised demonstrate that the EASA community is alive and thriving in its continuing exploration and further development.

Finally, we main organisers and all dedicated co-organisers have learned a lot in all respects and enjoyed working together (see "Organisers"). In our meetings, an enjoyable culture of discussion has developed. Concerning the communication in our group, and also with the participants, sponsors, tutors, lecturers, and NCs, we realized how much the effort to maintain a certain standard of communication pays off. Furthermore, we were surprised by the level of support we received from the faculty and institutes at ETH in Zurich. As we learned in Budapest in 2006, this is not always the case, so we hope that the generous policies concerning student initiatives at our school will continue in the future.

In closing, we want to thank everyone involved who with their energy and commitment, their joy and their personalities, laid the foundations for a resoundingly successful EASA 2005 in Switzerland.

Tobias Baitsch and Florian Schrott have graduated from the architecture faculty of ETH Zurich in 2007.

Kurhaus Bergün

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1906 constructed in its full glory
1907/08 early end of winter operation
1949 devastating fire, reconstruction only thanks to the former builders who were part of the communal council at that time;
sold to the Swiss Association for Family Hostels
improvised partitions in the halls and salons, ceilings lowered, lead glass doors covered
2004 sold to the Kurhaus Bergün AG
2005 easa005.ch takes place in the Kurhaus
2005 a new garden pavilion is built on the old foundation walls

Organisers

- Main Organisers: Tobias Baitsch, Florian Schrott
- Location: Marcella Ressegatti, Saskia Plaas
- Workshops: Patrick Schneider, Marchet Saratz, Joy Indermuehle, Lilian Demuth, Boris Buzek, Leonard Gurtner
- Theme: Benedikt Boucsein, Cordula Puestow
- Visa / Application: Eliza Boganski, Burcak Onur
- Kitchen: Rafaella Tillie, Steffi Senkel, Eva Helg
- Competition and Pavilion: Simon Naegeli, Bettine Volk, Marcelline Ruckstuhl, Flavian Lekkas
- Exhibition / Documentation: Silvia Buehrer, David Bossert, Niklaus Schaedelin, Gabriel Walti, Melanie Bouteloup, Caryl Dietrich
- Excursions: Silvia Buehrer, Gabriel Walti
- Events / Bar: Johann Reble, Simon de Jong, Daniel Wahl
- PR: Lukas Sonderegger
- Computer Lab: Johannes Brauckmann
- Night in Zurich: David Bossert
- Support during EASA: Julien Ecoffey, Hauke Jungjohannes, Michael Knutti, Rudi Kuntz, Amelie Poncety, Maro Spanou, Charlotte Truwant, Arnaud Zein el Din