

# English

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toujours plus floues. Certes, elles l'ont toujours été, mais dans des cadres différents: Le commerçant se voyait ennoblir chaque fois qu'il constituait parallèlement une collection, mais le collectionneur passait pour être sans scrupule lorsqu'il s'enrichissait en revendant chers des objets acquis à bon compte.

Depuis, des galeries telles que Hauser & Wirth à St. Gall entretiennent déjà leurs musées privés et banalisent encore plus la différence entre intérêt économique et engagement culturel. Pourtant, on ne devrait pas condamner ce développement avec un tel acharnement comme le font certaines critiques que l'explosion du marché prive également de leur compétence en matière de canons. Seule la postérité décide des canons et, n'ayant aucune chance de le prévoir, on peut calmement attendre son jugement. Il est probable qu'elle ne s'intéressera plus à l'art de notre temps comme nous le faisons. Un effondrement de valeurs massif ne serait pas une première; l'art représentatif si prisé du 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle l'a déjà vécu avant de disparaître pour de bon.

Doit-on donc laisser les musées privés définir ce qui vaut officiellement comme art contemporain? Les pouvoirs publics n'abandonnent-ils pas ainsi définitivement leurs musées auxquels ils ont jusqu'à présent refusé l'argent nécessaire mais sans jamais contester leur rang? L'interprétation et la compétence de juger en matière d'art contemporain ont toujours été incertaines. En regard de l'art d'aujourd'hui, l'étude de l'histoire de l'art n'a pratiquement jamais apporté d'aide; c'est en cela que la position du collectionneur privé a toujours été avantageuse. Alors que le conservateur doit administrer plusieurs grands départements spécialisés, le collectionneur peut, sans contrainte, sacrifier à sa partialité. Le musée ne pouvant se permettre ni les dépenses ni la passion orientée du collectionneur privé, il ne pouvait que perdre le combat quant à la compétence pour définir les canons de l'art contemporain.

#### Un menu unique d'artistes renommés

De même que les musées vivent le défi lancé par les collectionneurs privés comme une atteinte à leur privilège de compétence, on pourrait aussi apprécier la position libérale disant que la concurrence anime les affaires et diversifie l'offre. Les collectionneurs privés ont toujours stimulé la variété. Mais la hausse actuelle des collections privées annule pratiquement cet avantage, car les inventaires sont standardisés à un point tel que même leurs propriétaires n'oseraient le contester. Vingt à trente noms d'artistes dont les combinaisons alimentent les grandes collections privées contemporaines s'imposent à l'opinion publique et nous menacent d'une nourriture unique.

Les musées devraient même se réjouir lorsque certaines offres de collections privées leur échappent pour être évacuées par les musées privés: Si toutes les collections d'art contemporain privées affluaient simultanément dans les musées publics, nous serions menacés d'entropie, d'une asphyxie par uniformité surabondante.

# English

Irma Nosedá (pages 8–15)

English translation: Michael Robinson

## Shaping the authentic location

The museum and park at Kalkriese near Osnabrück by Gigon/Guyer and Zulauf/Seippel/Schweingruber

The story of the foundation of the German nation has found its authentic location in a piece of open landscape. The Kalkriese archaeological museum park has made this location accessible to the public. It is a bloody battlefield, with a good metres of humus on top of it, and its history had to be revealed and interpreted. The design concept has now been largely realized. It appeals to the senses as much as to the mind, and creates the right conditions for a critical appreciation of German mythology. Landscape architecture, architecture and museum didactics are firmly linked to create a new type of archaeological museum.

The background to the museum park is the battle conducted by Varus in the Teutoburger Wald in AD 9. Three Roman legions commanded by Varus were ambushed by several Germanic tribes under Arminius, and were annihilated. Roman historians record over 20,000 dead, men cornered between forest and marsh and then massacred by the Germanic armies. This defeat led to a revision of Roman expansionist policies in the north and is presumed to have been a key reason why the part of Germany on the right bank of the Rhine never became a Roman province. In the late 18th and 19th centuries, at the time the German nation was being built up, Varus's battle and the Germanic leader Hermann (Arminius in Latin) became increasingly significant in German cultural circles. This led to the immediate establishment of a myth: at first it was used to invoke national unity against Napoleon, and later it served the cause of chauvinism in the context of the foundation of the German Reich. Until 1987 it proved impossible to find the authentic location of the "birthplace of the German nation", but as soon as it was found, efforts were made to ascribe a more appropriate meaning to this historically exaggerated and ideologically distorted event. The idea of an archaeological museum park started to develop.

#### Competition and brief

A competition by invitation for the architectural implementation of this plan was announced in 1998, and the team of Gigon/Guyer and Zulauf/Seippel/Schweingruber won this against seven other competitors. The unusual brief was to make

it possible to understand an ancient battle that was documented by ancient historical records and some found objects, and to reappraise the history of the response to this event. And so it was not possible simply to present relatively unspectacular individual finds on the 20 hectare site. What was needed was to establish an apparently random piece of countryside as the scene of the battle and to redesign it as a specific place. The jury felt that the team of Gigon/Guyer and Zulauf/Seippel/Schweingruber had succeeded outstandingly well in doing this with their "comprehensive concept, in which buildings and open space form an integrated whole".

The designers of *Intégral Concept* and the curator then took the idea a step further by developing a detailed approach together for the exhibition and the pavilions. After various delays and financial bottlenecks the museum will open in April 2002, while the viewing tower, park and pavilions were handed over to the public in spring 2000.

#### Giving the authentic location a voice

The authentic site is at the heart of the project, and so landscape architecture is a key feature. Its role is to bring the history concealed under the present-day landscape back to the surface, as it were, and to make it accessible to the public. The landscape design is responsible for illustrating this on the spot. But the architecture with its pavilions and museum creates places for reflection and for assimilating what has been seen, places for conveying knowledge, presenting the finds and interpreting them against the background of the present state of research. In this way architecture and landscape design are interdependent and complementary. This is all very cleverly done, wonderfully poetic and compellingly rational: sensibility stimulates the intellect and intellect enhances sensibility and adds nuances to sensitivity. The conclusive nature of the project lies precisely in the almost symbiotic interplay of sensuality and rationality, that functions on various levels.

It is possible to identify various principles that give this unusual project its convincing coherence:

- The museum park retains the character of an open piece of landscape, thus conveying the idea that the park is part of a greater whole. The historical battle took place on a site that was about 15 km long.
- The site is damaged as little as possible. For the architecture, this means that it is permitted to make contact with the historic soil that has yielded so many finds only at a limited number of points; all the buildings are on stilts. The paths that have been laid are reversible superimpositions.
- The martial events are not reconstructed. The intention is to stimulate the imagination instead. This is done by placing non-representational signs. One exception is the naturalistic reconstruction of a piece of rampart, the only element that can be copied with some sense of archaeological certainty.

– So that the interventions are not lost in the open landscape and are intelligible as a whole, the resources used for visualization are entirely uniform; they are abstract, and thus provide a counterpoint to nature. The material is rusting steel.

– The materials and elements used to place signs are borrowed from contemporary civilization: standard prefabricated elements like iron bars, sheet-pile walls and sheet steel. All the buildings are clad in rusting steel as well. A wide variety of surface treatments make it possible to adapt the materials for the different tasks. So rough chromium steel sheeting is used for the floors inside the museum, blackplate in the exhibition gallery, pickled sheet steel in the hall.

#### Interplay of landscaping and building

The unity of architecture and landscape design gives the site an impressive overall coherence. The tower and the pavilions mark out the perimeter of the museum park. They create a force field and a sense of internal unity in the archaeological park, which is fundamentally without boundaries and intended to blend into the surrounded landscape without any transition. The intervention draws an abstract image on the natural landscape that frames it. Park and landscape draw their vigour from this constellation.

The forest was reestablished to give an impression of the former boundary of the Teutoburger Wald, which was presumably hugged by the Germanic rampart; some clearance was undertaken in the side where the marsh used to be. This created an important landscape requirement for the archaeological park. The subtly designed path systems also play an important role in illustrating the historical situation. Along with the present-day agricultural paths, they produce an impressive image of the historical change the landscape has undergone. The probable flow of the Roman troop movement is illustrated with large steel sheets of the kind used in road-building placed on the surface of the fields. And in contrast with this, behind the rampart in the wood, the tightly-knit paths trampled by the Germanic tribesmen are marked with wood shavings. The choice of materials and geometries does not just stand for differences in dynamic, it also illustrates the cultural differences between the two unequal opponents: on the one side the high culture of the Romans and on the other the “barbaric” Germanic culture. Texts by Roman historians appear at selected points on the steel sheets. They provide information about what happened 2000 years ago; at the same time they are an invitation to pause. Visitors are required to take an active part in the visit to the site, to change their points of view, to bring their own ideas into play and include the present in their thoughts, as it is intentionally integrated into the park as a whole.

In the area between the forest and the Roman route the line of the rampart is marked out with poles – close together for sections that are historically certain, further apart in case of conjec-

ture. In the open field a pit opens up to the level a good one metre lower where the archaeologists located the finds and where the battle must have taken place. The soil of the battlefield was turned into fertile arable land and meadows by centuries of thorough and systematic application of organic material (plaggen fertilization) and thus gradually covered up. This meant that many relics of the battle were left lying on site and have been astonishingly well preserved. The walls of the pit are secured with the standard sheet-pile walls used in civil engineering. A rampart 5 metres wide and 1.5 to 2 metres high with a woven wicker parapet has been constructed in a naturalistic manner. This is, as mentioned, the only location – and it is very precisely defined – where a naturalistic approach has been used for the presentation.

#### Architecture as part of the concept

The architecture is an integral part of the museum park to the same extent as the open-air design. The tower was originally intended as the starting-point for the trip round the exhibition, but it is in fact used to survey the scene before the tour. It affords a general view of the historically important landscape and is at the same time an orientation point in the large area of parkland. It is 38 metres high and rusty-brown in colour, a sign that crops up somewhat surprisingly in the countryside alongside Bundesstrasse 218. The museum section is intended to convey information about traces of the event that have been discovered in the park, and that are far from having been exhaustively interpreted. The pavilions are placed at three selected points in the park. They are black boxes that help to sharpen the sense that visitors need to be able to read to the story by looking at the landscape.

The small structures are formally related to the museum and stand for seeing, hearing and understanding. Visitors who go into them are kept at a distance from the authentic location and the historical events as presented: they are referred to their own perceptions here. In the pavilion of understanding they are stimulated by videos to make a link between the historical event of the battle and wars as we know them from television today. Here at the latest visitors are made aware that the museum park is not a place for flag-waving patriotism or trendy event culture, but a horrifying place – a reason to think about war and peace.

The pavilions scarcely make contact with the ground either. They stand on stilts and dock with the terrain of the museum park only at certain points, with planked ramps – another sign that the site carries a historical charge. At the same time the ramps make it clear with an inviting gesture that the abstract structures are spaces that visitors can enter. They give the cubic forms an individual appearance and, enhanced with a pupil and an ear trumpet as accessories, they transform the little buildings into absurd creatures that enliven the site. A fleeting reminiscence of the follies of classical park design.

All the structures above ground level are simple steel skeletons clad in steel sheets without profiling. The iron sheets are abandoned to a (controlled) oxydization process. Despite the abstract quality of the forms, this creates an immediately comprehensible point of contact with nature. The reduced architectural language reaches a high level of abstraction. It is suitable for expressing the process of acquiring history academically, using an objective and distanced approach, and placing it in a fruitful relationship of tension with the authentic location. It could be compared with the antagonistic relationship between history and memory as described by the French historian Pierre Nora: according to Nora, it is concrete elements of space, gesture, image and object that stick in the memory. But history, as it is an intellectual operation, requires analysis and critical argument. “Memory shifts a remembered event into the sacred sphere, history drives it back out of it. History is concerned with breaking spells.” The concept of reappraising the ideologically explosive scene of the battle in the Teutoburger Wald is a promising attempt to create a “place of memory” where the sensual component of the irrational memory and the analytical component of history can enter into an intensive process of exchange with each other.

#### Afterword on the need for financial viability

The open countryside and free access to the site are among the principles on which the concept is based. This principle has now been dropped, and admission is charged to help to cover the running and maintenance costs. One result of this is that the site has to be fenced. The ticket office and the museum shop will be housed in an existing farm building. This will be the main entrance in future. The planned promenade architectural through the “museum gate” and thus a close link between the architecture and movement around the place can now no longer be made. Once admission is charged, people expect an event that is often misunderstood as a show concealed under a veneer of culture – the opposite of a museological concept intended to trigger thought and recognition processes, that requires imagination and consciously accepts questions that remain open. Action is being taken that runs counter to the intentions of the architects and the curator by providing populist material (like the reconstruction of a Germanic pit dwelling immediately adjacent to the museum!). It would be all too easy to destroy the code for reading the landscape and the signs that have been placed and thus to impair the intellectual concept, and also the concept that involves the senses as well.

Walter Grasskamp (pages 34–39)  
English translation: Michael Robinson

## Museums and private collections: twins and opponents

Private collections have been seeking public attention recently. Architecture often has an important part to play here. Collectors with private museums have their own way of doing justice to the notion that art is essentially common property, and so should be accessible to the public. Museums and art galleries, the traditional cultural facilities par excellence, are increasingly faced with competition from fleet-footed and wealthy collectors and their attractive shows. And so property considered to be public is increasingly being privatized, and conversely, privately acquired cultural property is becoming increasingly accessible. This process creates a new distribution of roles for collectors and museums, but in fact its history is a long one.

For centuries, museums and collectors have had a tense relationship that has been one of the most fruitful in the history of culture. Museums have inspired collectors and collectors have inspired museums. The collectors were in the forefront here. If they had not made their imperial gestures, which were as much about the spoils of war as the manifestation of power, we would have lost even the sparse remnants of ancient art that are still there to be admired in our museums. And unless there had been demand from competing princes, a large number of the works of art that were suddenly *de rigueur* all over Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries would never have been created. And if the French revolutionaries had not treated their spoils in such a civilized way, bourgeois museums everywhere would not have acquired their crucial model, the Louvre.

So the extravagant sovereigns of feudalism gave access to their treasures – some willingly, some unwillingly –, but lost their influence. Despite this, they still set the pattern for the bourgeois collector, who now took over the principal role. Since then he has been the museum director's twin, and his chief opponent.

### Museum directors as leading figures

At first the museum director – and it is easy to forget this – was the stronger partner: Vivant Denon, the first director of the Louvre, provided the *métier* with a brilliant leader. It was in this form that the traditionally educated middle-class intellectual appeared as the hero of the Enlightenment – only recently the former avant-garde writer Philippe Sollers devoted a fictional biography to Denon as a distant initiator of Modernism. The museum director now set the example for the bourgeois 19th century, as industrial tycoons and factory owners usually needed some basic

training as collectors. Legendary museum directors like Wilhelm von Bode knew how to get their protégés collecting with one eye on the museum; key promoters of Modernism like Hugo von Tschudi and their collector friends were thinking ahead too.

But once the 20th century was under way, these fledgling collectors started to try out their wings: collectors like Oskar Reinhart in Winterthur, patrons like Karl-Ernst Osthaus, the founder of the Folkwang Museum in Hagen, promoters of “degenerate” artists like Bernhard Sprengel in Hanover, were now superior to the museums, and not just in the provinces. Now the collectors were in the forefront again, and ever since the international expansion of the art market in the sixties the museums have increasingly been unable to follow them. Since the Ludwig Collection at the latest, which operates internationally, in Switzerland as well, the heroes have swapped places completely in Europe: the collector sets the pace.

The private museums of modern and contemporary art that are being founded and heatedly discussed at present have taken these twin opponents into a new phase: collectors who have been brought up to keep a careful eye on the museum are emancipating themselves completely from their models. The museums are afraid that this development could make them fall behind. They have good reason for this. And anyway, the public purse is increasingly less inclined to feed the great picture stores and exhibition machines in the manner to which they have become accustomed, and so the glamour of Modernism, which the houses of memory have long used to lure in a large proportion of their public, could well be lost.

### Temple of consumption or youth hostel

If more up-to-date collections are being offered elsewhere in agreeably bite-sized pieces and manageable contexts, how is the museum's brittle charm supposed to compete against this? Anyway the private collector's esteem does not derive only from his possessions. It also depends on his consumer competence, for which he is envied, and whose most elegant form he represents. This means that he fits in much better with the consumer society's horizon of perception than the museum with its youth hostel atmosphere of historical awareness. The museum does have its weaknesses: like any public institution it is ultimately subject to the law of inertia as applied to institutionalization. This is expressed in the slowing of cultural initiatives through public funding; in the creation of jobs in which two people have difficulty in doing what the founders of institutions used to do on their own, and probably on the side as well; in the change from work undertaken as a personal responsibility to official work, and in the fact that in-house commitment is increasingly inclined to opt for solutions that can be achieved between weekends.

This sometimes provides – along with leveling down by the controlling authorities – a

stark contrast with the squandering of existence in which artists and collectors meet, and therefore costs a lot of museums their credibility. But the other museums, which are dominated by the usual self-exploitation by committed employees, are the preferred takers for public funds. They are praised by nobody, but kept in strict training by shortage of funds, so that they never get out of practice. They are now even asked to abandon their original serious research brief in favour of event management. This is intended to further the cultural populism of the political parties, but also supposed to perceive itself as democratization.

### Blurred distinctions

There is no doubt that for a long time the museum was competent to shape the art-historical canon, because more than one hand was doing the collecting here, neutrally, with a sense of responsibility and on a sound academic basis, and at a distance from all the other events on the market. But the private collector proceeds single-handedly and subjectively, and more often than not deliberately one-sidedly. The less educated he is, the more open to influence he will be considered to be, given that he does not enter into discreet and opaque alliances with certain dealers as whose Trojan horse he has previously appeared to the museums. But the distinctions between collectors and dealers have become more blurred than ever. They always have been, but on an unequal footing: the dealer was felt to be ennobled if he built up a collection at the same time, but the collector was seen as a rascal for selling off pieces expensively that he had acquired at reasonable prices and that had not become dear to him.

In the mean time, admittedly, galleries maintain their private museums – like Hauser & Wirth in St. Gallen – and further trivialize the difference between economic and cultural commitment. Nevertheless there is no need to argue as bitterly with the development as some critics do, who have also been deprived of their canonical competence because of the market explosion. Posterity always decides about the canon, and it is possible to wait for its judgement all the more calmly, given the scant likelihood of finding out what it will be. Possibly it will not be as interested in the art of our times as we are today. It would not be the first time there has been a massive collapse of validity; the prestigious art of the 19th century had to go through this before it had really come to an end.

And so can private museums be left to determine what should be seen in public as contemporary art? Is the State not now finally leaving its museums in the lurch by colluding with this, where previously it had just denied them the necessary money but never contested their status? The ability to interpret and judge contemporary art has always been fragile. The study of art history has scarcely ever been of any assistance in terms of contemporary art; the private collector always had a positional advantage

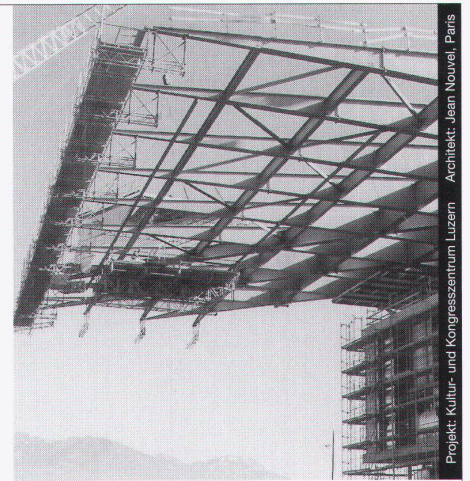
here. While the custodian has to master several large specialist areas, the collector can persist in his oneness without reproach. Because the museum cannot afford either the private collector's expenditure or his specialized passion, it was bound to lose the competition for canonical competence with a view to the present.

#### Artists' names as uniform fare

If the museums see the challenge from private collectors as an attack on their lead in terms of competence, one could also put forward the liberal view that competition is good for business and extends the range on offer – private collectors have always fostered diversity. But it is precisely this point that can scarcely be said to apply to the present range of private collections, as their contents are standardized to an extent that not even their proud owners would be in a position to deny. We are threatened with the uniform fare of twenty, thirty artists' names that combine in some way to make up the large contemporary private collections that are now pushing their way into the public eye.

And so perhaps the museums should even be pleased if some acquisition opportunities pass them by and are disposed of in private museums: if all private collections of contemporary art found their way into public museums at the same time – a condition of entropy would be bound to threaten, heat death through an excess of equality.

# Stahlbauten



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