

30.06. – 29.08.2005

**CONSTRUCTIVE PROVOCATION  
CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE IN VORARLBERG**

Opening: Wednesday 29.06.2005, 7pm.

Press Conference: Wednesday 29.06.2005, 11am

**THE VORARLBERG "ARCHITECTURE MIRACLE"**

— From rumour to myth. This would be a fitting summary of the architecture in Vorarlberg over the last few decades. What began as a resolute stance adopted by a number of non-conformists was later declared as the basis for the identity of a whole provincial state, even at a cultural political level. Today the region has become a place of pilgrimage for architecture tourists and people looking for insight into how and why a single region in the heart of Europe redefined the notion of a culture of building, making it fruitful for our time. The westernmost provincial state in Austria counts today as a regional centre for contemporary architecture in Europe, one internationally celebrated as such by the cognoscenti.

The challenges to be faced in Vorarlberg are at face value no different than those in the neighbouring regions (settlement of the countryside, economic changes and changes in society, the increasing disintegration of social and cultural structures), however over the past few decades they have succeeded in having a regional architectural policy that is neither discouraged nor detracted from by short-term economic interests.

The reasons behind the model role played by Vorarlberg are, as is generally known, plentiful: starting with the commitment of the local architects, the importance laid on craftspeople, who used to be and still are a major partner, the impulse-giving power of the design committees, or the lively competition culture that has flourished since the late 1980s and a growing awareness on the part of the local public funding agencies, along with committed and courageous clients and the successful establishment of trust between the protagonists and the press. The movement was one of the developments to have come from a 'grass roots' level, as Kapfinger and Achleitner have both pointed out. As a consequence of this, the dominant leitmotif is one of innovative architecture between the Bodensee and Arlberg in terms of sustainability, technology, environmental factors and design.

**THE EXHIBITION**

Constructive Provocation provides a survey of the substantial number of buildings of high architectural quality completed in the "Ländle" (little province) since the 1960s. Instead of spotlighting the work of individual architects, the exhibition shows a topography of the society with a network of protagonists and events. The exhibition consists of a series of departure points, 'Thematic Portals'. Different levels of reading permit the visitor to go from a general overview of each theme to a careful study of it. The first level of reading is provided by Ignacio Martínez's large format photographs on the front of the cubes. Brief texts provide supplementary information and explanations of the different themes. A second level is provided by retracting showcases in drawers and wall elements bearing more details and examples of architecture relating to the topic concerned.

13 THEMATIC PORTALS tell of the broad effect and innovativeness of the architecture in Vorarlberg and the interaction between different groups of people, institutions and interest groups:

**Radical Beginnings** describes the pioneering projects of the 1960s.

With the **Intelligent Exploitation of Scarcity** the simple modern construction methods created spaces of functional and spiritual generosity. Towards 1980 there followed a generation of architects whose aims lay in social development. Under the slogan **Communal Building** this very economic approach to an environmentally functional culture of building was marked by a high proportion of cost-cutting self-build and self-administration. After the school building boom of the 1950s, at the end of the 1980s a new wave of buildings and extensions were planned for kindergartens and schools – which are grouped in the exhibition under the topic heading **Places for Play, Spaces for Learning**. The image of **Experiencing the World of Nature** and the historic setting constitute the basic capital for tourism. Far removed from the cosy image of the Heimat (homeland), examples from the Bregenzerwald and Arlberg (forest and mountain areas) show a new awareness of nature and alternatives to the stereotypes of mass-tourism. The architects' initiatives provide pioneering examples for the **Modernity of Ecology**. From 1990 onwards the Energieinstitut Vorarlberg made environmentally aware building a top level local government policy issue. With **A Culture of Cooperation**, examples are shown of adaptations of abandoned industrial sites within predominantly rural structures and inner-city zones. The theme **New Handcraft, New Industry** does justice to the development whereby a large number of woodworking firms turned out new high-quality architectural products. Lustenau Millenniumspark is an example for the **Texture of the Periphery**: a high-tech campus that looks like almost 1:1 like the grounds of an architecture Expo. Of decisive significance for the **Quality of Living Space** from the end of the 1980s was the successful implementation of a well conceived network of public transportation. **The Revitalisation of Resources** contributes to the supplementation of traditional craftsmanship with technology, continuing to bring it up-to-date.

The topic **Primary Urbanity** provides a summary of the functional and structural accentuation to strengthen the community centres, which became a trend across Vorarlberg. The new symbols of **Architecture – a Sign of Civic Pride** have been situated on the Bregenzer Pfänderhang since the 1990s, where a chain of dream homes with waterfront view is being built in the midst of still in-tact farmyards.

Since June 2003 the exhibition has been touring France with great success, from June 30 this highly promising show will provide the Viennese public with an insight into the 'architectural miracle' that is Vorarlberg.

**An exhibition by the Vorarlberg Architekturinstitut (vai) in cooperation with La Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine – Département IFA (Institut français d'architecture).**

As a supplement to the main exhibition, the Architekturzentrum Wien is showing **RESIDENCES**: 40 single-family houses by architects who participated in the exhibition 'austria west' have been selected, and built as 1:1/3 scale models in white pine. Free postcards provide information on each of the projects. **RESIDENCES** focuses on "building on a small scale" that most individual of commissions the single-family house, with which the Vorarlberger School has been able to find such widespread acceptance – along with crucial opportunities to develop.