



L'Escalier d'Eau

temporary installation
Lausanne (CH), 05-11/2004

2. price
with SPAX Architekten, Biel
competition 2003

planning: 2003-2004

size: 100m²

cost: 25.000 CHF

phases: 1-9

client: Association Lausanne Jardins

photography: Sebastián Secchi
Lausanne

Site

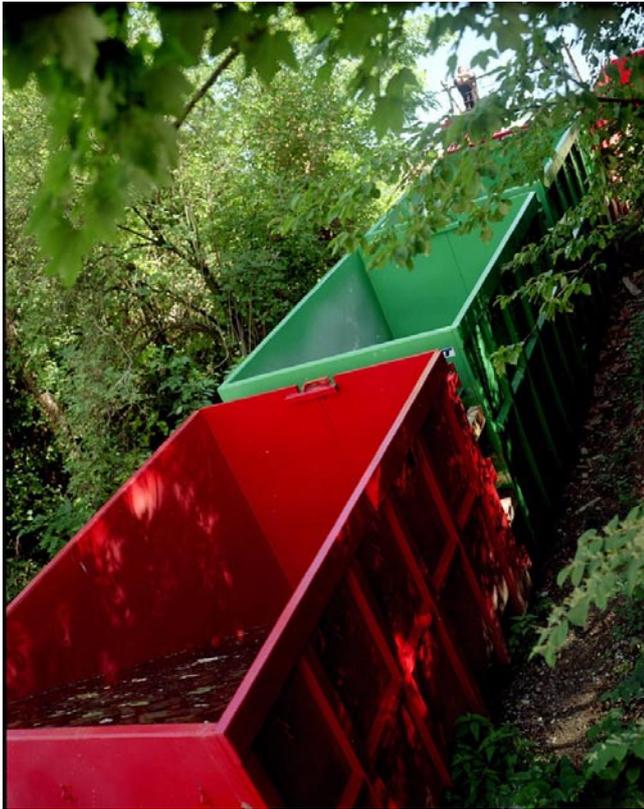
The Flon Valley is a site of its own, immersed in the city of Lausanne. In the area of the Pont Chauderon, buildings, bridges and slopes form a series of barriers in the valley. Behind the Arsenic Theatre, potentially oriented towards Lake Geneva, a neglected slope, strewn with dense ruderal growth, blocks passage and view. It is a site, still unfinished, a site in movement.

The industrial program of the Flon Valley has given way to a new, mixed cast of users. In a finely woven network the city is linked to these various, mainly cultural institutions through a multitude of access ramps and stairways. Along the Plateforme de Sevelin they exist in great formal and functional variety: improvised, proper, and decorative stairs provide the valley with an eclectic mixture of access.

Staircase

The water-staircase consists of four containers, which are set onto the slope as a diagonal stack. They are filled with gravel and water and planted with water lilies. The upper, accessible container is filled with gravel only. The opened container doors and a large steel-plate form the gate to a garden. It is simultaneously a Bellevue: From the edge of this first step of the Escalier d'Eau one has a view through the canopy of trees into the valley and onto water-basins below.

In its two-sidedness the staircase is interpreting the characteristics of the different spatial levels of the place. At the foot of the containers, the viewer is down in the valley. From here, the containers are mysterious vessels whose content can only be vaguely guessed. Inside the upper container, one is above the valley and the inner life of the Escalier d'Eau is revealed: a garden.



The planting with water lilies adds a moment of wonder to the industrial shell of the water-staircase. It temporarily turns the containers and the slope into a blossoming garden.

Intervention

The intervention "Escalier d'Eau" takes up the theme of the staircase, at the same time offering an alternative approach to the valley and towards the lake. By positioning this "bellevue" next to the course of the subterraneously channelled Flon River and by temporarily opening the thicket on the steep slope with a stairway of water, we enable a moment of sight of the valley and the notion of an opening city-space. With the tiered water-basins, we provide a gardenesque notation of the site. The Escalier d'Eau sets a stage for perceiving the valley. The installation is intended as a temporary intervention. Containers conventionally used in construction, are during the course of a garden-season transformed into a water-staircase. In the months to follow they will return to serve their inherent purpose.

In this, the water-stairway is also an interpretation of the existent: different forms of containers are currently stored on the adjacent site of a construction company. The water-stairway is closely connected to the "working-landscape" of the site. It is not an imposition of something foreign, but rather enables a modified perception of the existent. On the unfinished and undefined slope - a location, which is still a challenging construction site of urbanity - we use the ephemeral character of the containers for a brief reanimation of the industrial spirit of the place.

