

Finland

Aesthetics of the Practical Die Ästhetik des Praktischen

Lectures and Discussion

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HDA Graz, Engelgasse 3-5, 8010 Graz

General Introduction

In 2004 and 2005, the Haus der Architektur is organising a series of events on the theme of "Ort" – specifically the aspect of planning work that reacts to local conditions, typologically, functionally, formally, materially and socially, with the aim of promoting the sustainable development of a region, i.e. architectural promotion of the development of humane and comfortable living conditions in a clear and self-determined region, be it urban agglomeration or rural district, independent of global influences. This objective is currently the focus of topical international architectural discussion and should therefore also generate some attention for the programme, developed in collaboration with Dr. Matthias Boeckl (editor in chief of "architektur aktuell").

Finland: The internalized Landscape Finnish lyrical pragmatism

Like all the arts, architecture articulates and expresses our fundamental existential experiences. The art of architecture creates spatial and material metaphors of our existential encounter with the world. The metaphors of architecture are highly abstracted and condensed structures that fuse the multitude of human experiences into singular images.

The primary condition of architecture is the encounter with nature, landscape, and the continuum of culture and time. Architecture takes place in the context of landscape, both natural and man-made, but it is also a dialogue with history. Architecture acquires its very meaning and specificity from this framing.

Finland has traditionally been a remote edge of European culture, between the western and eastern cultural spheres. Besides, Finland is the least densely populated country of Europe with the largest area covered by forests. This geographic and cultural condition, and landscape has given rise to specific ways of existential response, which are also reflected in the arts and architecture. The characteristic line of Finnish architecture, since early peasant structures, can be called 'the architecture of forest'. Forest architecture tends to be polymorphic and -rhythmic, and emphasize materiality and the tactile sense over geometry and vision. The cultural tradition favours restraint, temperance and modesty, the aesthetics of 'noble poverty', over exuberance and excessive expression.

Juhani Pallasmaa (b. 1936), Architect, Professor, Helsinki.

Juhani Pallasmaa has practised architecture since the early 1960s and established his office Pallasmaa Architects in 1983. In addition to architectural design, he has been active in urban, product and graphic design. He has taught and lectured widely in Europe, North and South America, Africa and Asia, and published books and numerous essays in twenty languages. Pallasmaa has held positions as eg. Professor at the Helsinki University of Technology (1991-97), Director of the Museum of Finnish Architecture (1978-83), and Rector of the Institute of Industrial Arts, Helsinki. He has also held visiting professorships eg. at the Washington University in St. Louis (1999-2004), University of Virginia (1992) and Yale University (1993). His books include: Encounters: Architectural Essays, Helsinki 2005 (in press); Sensuous Minimalism, Beijing 2002; The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema, Helsinki 2001; Alvar Aalto: Villa Mairea, Helsinki, 1998; The Eyes of the Skin, London 1996; and Animal Architecture, Helsinki 1995.

Olli-Pekka Jokela (b. 1955), Architect, Helsinki.

Degree at the Helsinki University of Technology (1982). Worked in the offices of Heikki und Kaija Sirén (1977-80); Kaarina Löfström und Matti K. Mäkinen (1981-82); Vilhelm Helander und Juha Leiviskä (1982-86). Jokela established his own practice with Pentti Kareoja in 1987.

Two particular Projects are the Government Office Building in Rauma (1992) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Helsinki (1986-1993).