

Weightless

Gewichtslos

En apesanteur

Leggerezza

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1. Philosophy

Innovation and "art de vivre". Today's techniques and technologies are subject to rapid change. Fortunately, advances in architecture occur at a much slower pace, primarily when it comes to the use of new construction techniques and technologies but also in terms of the relationship between the art of constructing and materials. The greatest architectural inventions essentially focus on a new definition of the "art de vivre", on the interpretation of a theme or a programme, on the quest for new spatiality. There is a history of the evolution of techniques but there is also a history of the method in which space is appropriated.

Our role as architects is to understand that creativity must be part of an architectural continuity if it is to make sense. Architecture must understand the very essence of the sources and links between social realities, then translate them to arrive at a coherence in architectural form and language. In this climate of evolving tradition and form, we feel the need to give meaning to the processes of change in which we inevitably participate. Our responsibility derives from the encouragement to change, from the integration of innovating elements and the recognition of their quality.

2. Projects

2.1. Multipurpose Sports Hall, Villaz –St. Pierre, 1999-2002

The village of Villas-Saint-Pierre is built on a hilltop facing the Plateau and the Fribourg Alps in a setting of gently rolling hills sometimes shrouded in fog.

The new multipurpose sports hall is located below the church and the village square. In reference to the principle of terraced sitting typical of this land, the new hall hugs the slope: the upper level constitutes the main access through a foyer while the large hall on the lower level opens up to afford a view of the countryside. The construction of multipurpose sports halls is a recurrent theme in many communities of western Switzerland. By accommodating the practice of sports activities – and therefore by an entire community due to its flexibility.

The treatment of the façades is expressed by successive layers which reveal the thickness of the cladding through the interaction of transparency. As if to assign these layers to the structure's different functions, the covering in untreated larch wood extends beyond the base. With planks positioned so as to allow the visitor to see through the cladding, the new structure acquires a strong presence, an identity. Mounted on rack supports, the slope of horizontal towards the bottom. This focus on expression underscores the horizontality of the volume while attenuating its volumetric impact.

As the facility's user's move about, their journeys are accompanied by magnificent views and plays of light. Upon entering the building, the foyer affords a frame and distant view of the countryside and the Alps, while three meters below, on the level of the hall, this same setting of the landscape nurtures a feeling of proximity to the natural surroundings. As expressed by the foyer's large opening, certain perspectives are filtered to reduce their impact on the visual experience of users inside.

The roof structure features a frame of laminated wooden beams with a 2.45 m grid and affords a feeling of ample space to the interior, beyond the perimeter of the hall. The use of one and the same panel cladding of beech plywood helps to integrate and merge all community space.

By avoiding the tenet of single use and by betting on values of community and multiple purposes, this new construction manages to integrate an imposing project within a rural environment. In addition, the use of wood has allowed to keep the expression and scale of volume under control through simple means without adversely affecting the public and representative character expected of a multipurpose hall.



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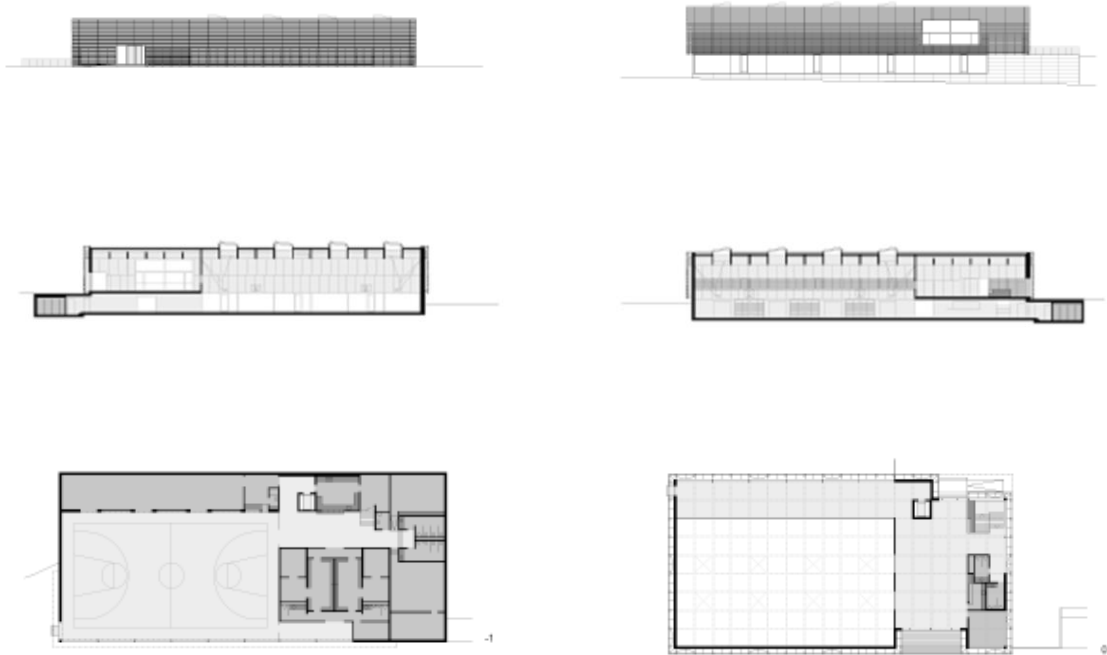
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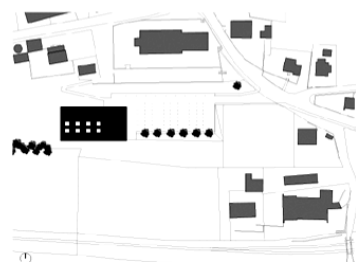
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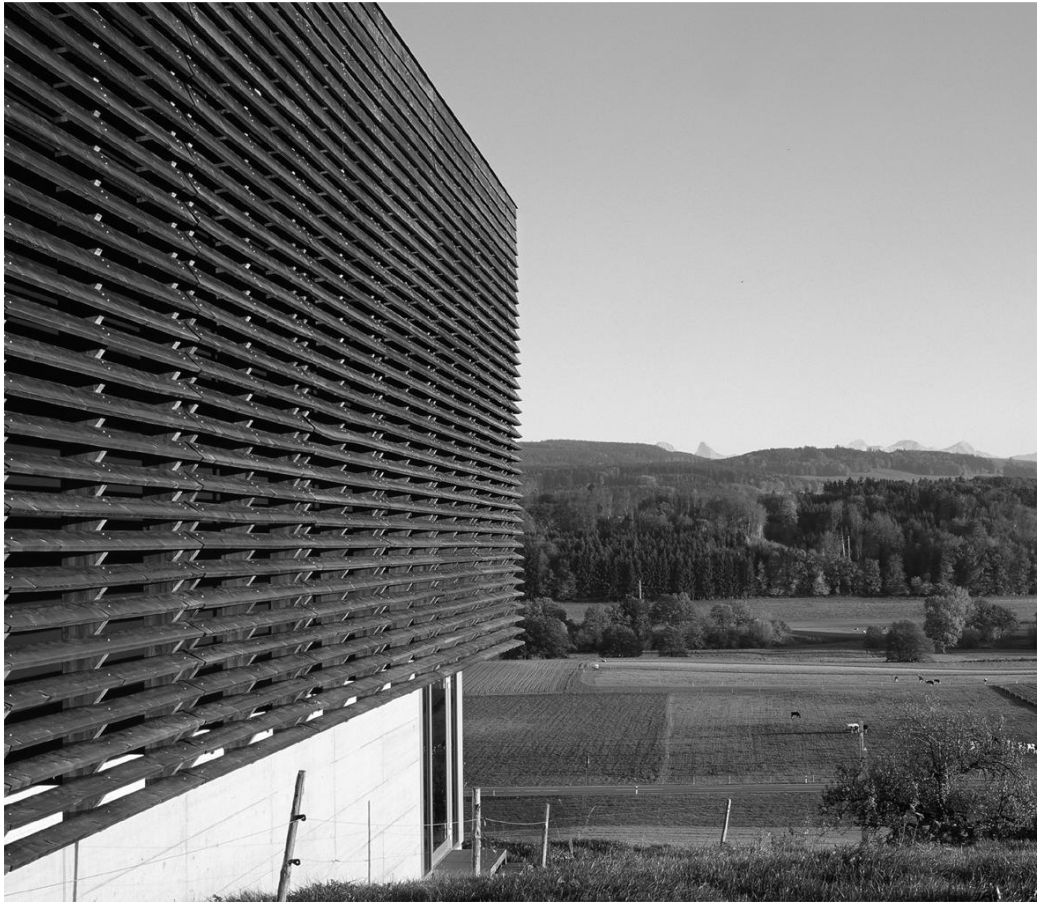


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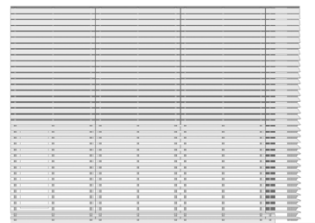


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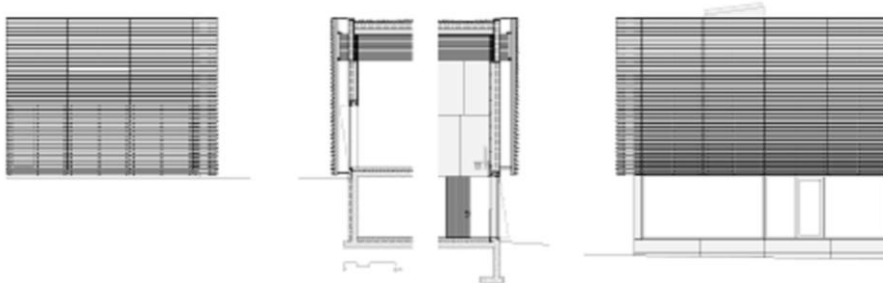


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2.2. Dual Sports Hall, Borex-Crassier 2004 – 2007

Borex and Crassier, two villages located at the foot of the Jura mountains and near the city of Nyon, share a school complex located on their border. The particular characteristics of this site derive from its structural fabric made up of a variety of heterogeneous buildings - in terms of design and allocation: residential homes, cemetery, cable network station and telephone relay.

The expansion of the existing sports hall is the result of a competition and left little margin of freedom because of a limited perimeter. Due to its position, the new extension reinforces the western boundary with the countryside and takes advantage of the break in terrain in order to reduce the impact of volume on the site. The quest for continuity with the existing building dictates the rules in terms of extension volume. The "fusional" approach adopted towards the existing structure allows to define a single entrance for the three sports halls.

This new entrance located on the same level as the schoolyard gives direct access to the foyer, which, like a balcony, overlooks the new hall. From this foyer, an architectural promenade enables visitors to enjoy changing ambiance, daylight and views as they walk down to the lower level intended for the dressing rooms and sports halls. The lookout on the surrounding countryside through a large opening reinforces the notion of lower level. Showcasing the view, accentuated by the absence of vertical uprights over a length of thirty-two meters, is made possible thanks to a multi-trellis wooden beam six meters high and prefabricated in solid pine wood.

The static system of the building derives from the intertwining of these multi-trellis beams. Their composition in three layers of wood of different thickness – a vertical layer flush with the interior cladding to guarantee the beam's structural resistance, and two diagonal ones – reinforces the effect of transparency.

The interior space of these halls is defined on three of its sides by this play of wooden beams and affords a particular atmosphere further enhanced by the play of light which brings the beam's cane texture to life. These effects are accentuated by the exterior covering, in translucent glass, and the interstitial space, one meter thick, which regulates the inside temperature and the intake of outside air through mechanically controlled louvers.

Reinforced by the play of light and the uniform use of materials for its coverings, this structure features abstract aspects which reorganise the site and allow recalcitrant children to daydream during physical education classes.



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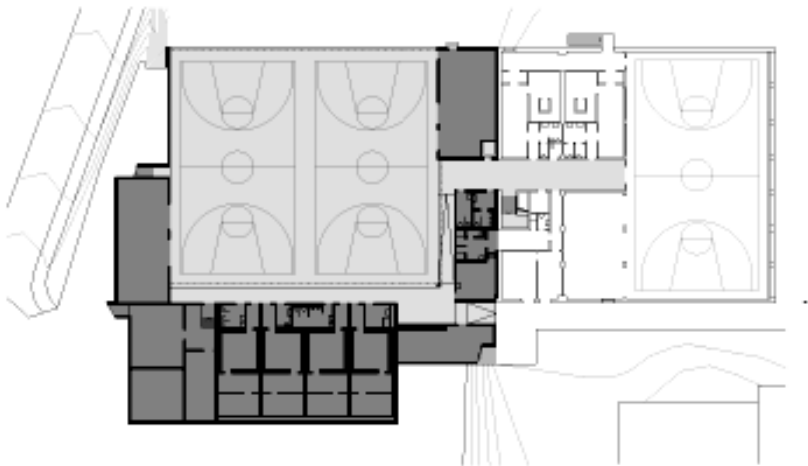
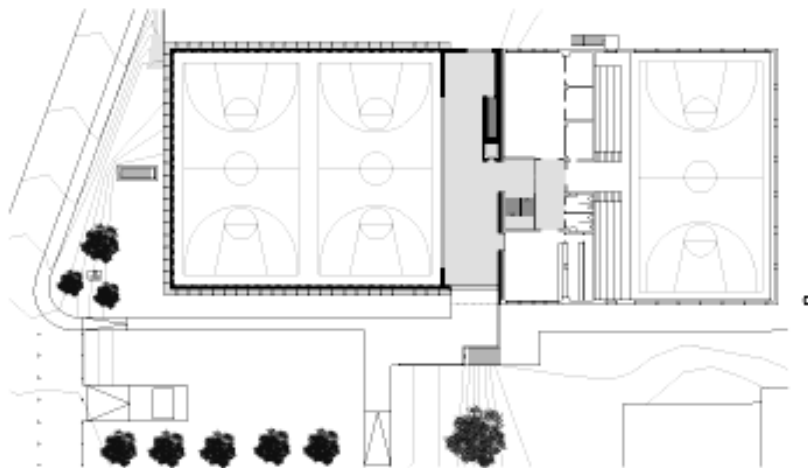
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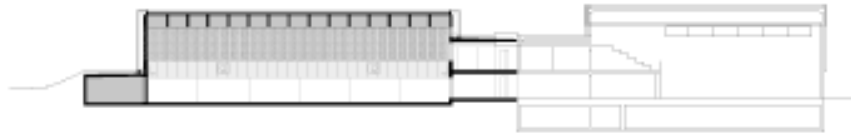


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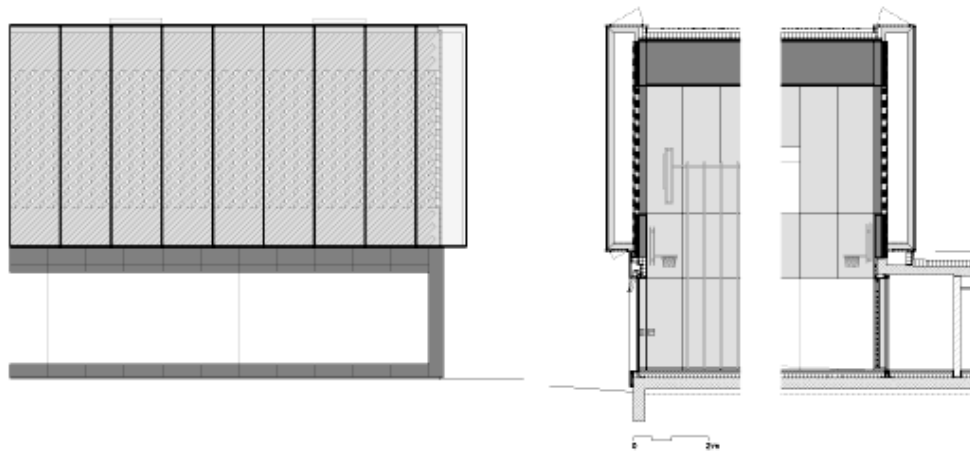
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