

Learning from Tokyo

Press Release February 2nd, 2012

«Learning from Tokyo» is an exhibition and a symposium planned for March 2012 in Zurich that showcases small scale housing projects by young, creative architecture offices in Japan. The exhibition will focus on the quality and diversity of living space produced on small building lots with limited budgets in the center of a city such as Tokyo. The symposium will feature some of the protagonists of this new generation of architects and aims to establish a dialogue with Swiss architects, planners, city officials and the interested public. The topic contrasts two very different cities and cultures which in many unexpected ways still have a lot in common.

Tokyo

The greater Tokyo Area is one of the most densely inhabited areas in the world with a population of approximately 36 million people. Yet the city is also a patchwork of many small villages that have been integrated into a poly-centric metropolis by infrastructure such as the train and subway system.

Tokyo is in constant change: It has been devastated by earthquake, fire and war several times in the first half of the 20th century. In the second half, its building stock changed two to three times due to the frantic industrial and economic post-war development. Exorbitant land values, zoning laws and the traditional small building plots have resulted in a very heterogeneous mostly high-density and low-rise urban fabric.

After the burst of the real estate bubble in 1990, the rate of redevelopment slowed down. Architects had to rethink their approach. One line of inquiry was concerned with the reinvention of architectural language. Diagrammatic clarity, formal reduction and structural and material innovation led to some of the aesthetically most interesting projects in contemporary architecture. The other line of inquiry was involved in researching the urban context of Tokyo and aiming for typological innovation. Architects learned to exploit every possibility of the building perimeter and zoning law while creating rich and diverse spaces for living and working. The collective effort of the post-bubble generation of architects resulted in new typologies for innovative buildings in a dense urban context.

Zurich

The Zurich metropolitan area with 1.2 million inhabitants is much smaller than Tokyo. But currently the region is growing rapidly with a projected population increase of 200'000 inhabitants until 2030 in the Kanton of Zurich alone.

Infrastructural projects such as the «Bahn 2000» and the S-Bahn system enabled the region of Zurich to react elastically to the global burst of urbanization over the last ten years. The polycentric urban region allows for a high quality of life. Yet, traditional areas of growth – green fields in the suburbs and industrial brown fields in the city – are limited. Continued urban growth might lead to an increase of sprawl and further burden the region's infrastructure – rail as well as road.

Possible answers are to promote urban infill and urban renewal. But how can this be achieved? What incentives are necessary? Will the resulting projects be attractive and adopted by their users? And are the potential and the market large enough to have a palpable effect?

Currently, planning is being complemented with new formats, from the agglomeration program by the State to the Metropolitan Conference Zurich and experimental projects such as a masterplan for a city in the Glatt Valley. In architecture, Zurich has a diverse housing culture with high quality, innovative typologies and development models.

But are Zurich and the region around it able to think of themselves as metropolitan, a self-image which would allow to plan strategically and build innovatively – to experiment with city? Maybe it helps to show how a global village like Zurich seen as a region is also a metropolis and a metropolis like Tokyo looked at in detail is also a village.

Learning from Tokyo

The exhibition and symposium look at the intersection of urban policy and architectural projects. The comparison of strategies and solutions from Tokyo and Zurich highlights the potential to produce spaces and places which are meaningful, enjoyable and sustainable and yet more dense and diverse than what we are used to today.

Symposium and Exhibition

The exhibition at the Architekturforum Zurich opens in March 2012 for two weeks and will be launched by a symposium of two days (March 9 and 10, 2012). Leading practitioners and academics from Japan and Switzerland will address the questions raised and examine in four sessions four specific topics. Each session features two keynotes which will be discussed by a distinguished panel. The symposium is held in English and the documentation and proceedings will be published with select media partners.

For further press inquiries and interview opportunities please contact: info@learningfromtokyo.ch
For more detail: www.learningfromtokyo.ch

LFT Planning Team

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Learning from Tokyo Group

«Learning from Tokyo» is a not-for-profit project by the «Learning from Tokyo Group» initiated by Hiromi Hosoya and Markus Schaefer and established in 2011. «Learning from Tokyo» received grants from the Japan Foundation, Sakae Stünzi Foundation and the IKEA Stiftung Schweiz and is supported by ANA, All Nippon Airlines, Zurich Airport and the City of Zurich. «Learning from Tokyo» will be the topic of a forthcoming issue of the group's media partner ARCH+. The logo of «Learning from Tokyo» has been designed by büro destruct (www.buro-destruct.com), the website «www.learningfromtokyo.ch» has been made possible by iA (informationarchitects.ch).

«Learning from Tokyo» Symposium

Friday, March 9, 2012

- 14:00 – 14:30 Introduction, Symposium start / free admission fee
- 14:30 – 16:30 Topic 1 : Relationship with the City
– Riken Yamamoto, Architect, Yokohama
– Go Hasegawa, Architect, Tokyo
Panel – Roger Diener, Architect, Basel
- 17:00 – 19:00 Topic 2 : Housing Typology
– Sou Fujimoto, Architect, Tokyo
– Piet Eckert, Architect, Zurich
Panel – Frank Argast, City Planner, Zurich
– Mathias Heinz, Architect, Zurich

Saturday, March 10, 2012

- 14:00 – 14:30 Introduction, Symposium start / free admission fee
- 14:30 – 16:30 Topic 3 : Economy and Policy
– Ryuji Fujimura, Architect, Tokyo
– Daniel Niggli & Mathias Müller, Architects, Zurich
Panel – Marc Angélli, Architect, Zurich
– Wilhelm Natrup, Cantonal Planner, Zurich
- 17:00 – 19:30 Topic 4 : Structure and Materials
– Akihisa Hirata, Architect, Tokyo
– Christian Kerez, Architect, Zurich
Panel – Mitsuhiro Kanada, Structural Engineer, Tokyo
– Fabio Gramazio, Architect, Zurich
- Moderators Markus Schaefer and Hiromi Hosoya, Architects, Zurich

«Learning from Tokyo» Exhibition

- Date March 9 – 24, 2012
- Gallery hours Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday 12:00 – 18:00
Thursday 16:00 – 22:00, Saturday 11:00 – 17:00
- Vernissage & Apéro Friday, March 9, 2012, 19:00 – 20:30
- Curator Learning from Tokyo Group
- Participants Riken Yamamoto & FIELDSHOP, Kazuyo Sejima & Associates, Taira Nishizawa Architects, Contemporaries. inc., aat+makoto yokomizo, architects Inc., Sou Fujimoto Architects, akihisa hirata architecture office, ON design partners, ryuji fujimura Architects, GO HASEGAWA & ASSOCIATES, Tsukamoto Lab. at Tokyo Institute of Technology, Hosoya Schaefer Architects