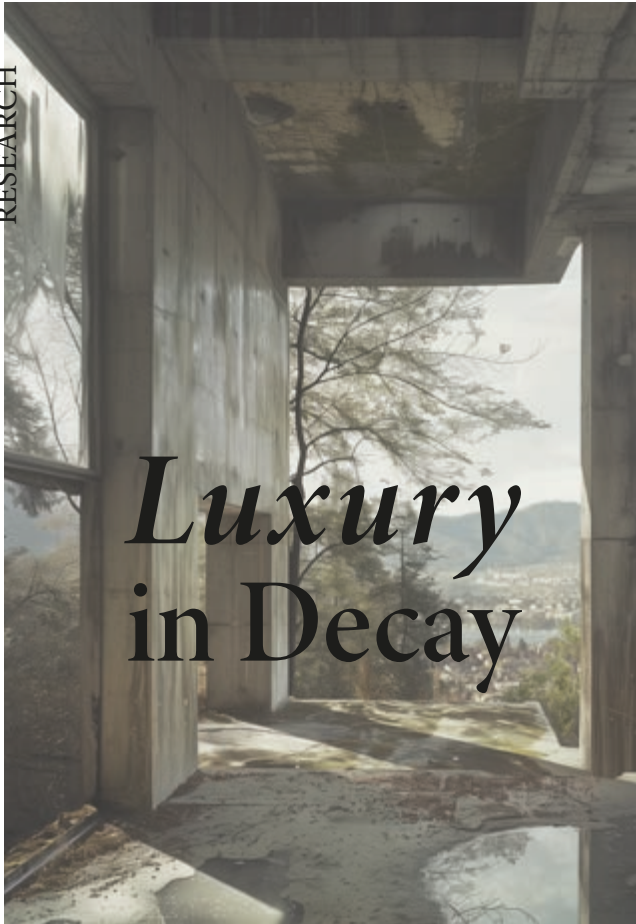


RESEARCH



Luxury in Decay

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Master Thesis Spring 2024

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Luxury in Decay

Embracing naturalization and decay, the Waldhaus further evolves into a modern ruin. Transforming into a reservoir of organic growth and establishing an exclusive environment for a new sense of luxury amidst an unregulated landscape.

ABSTRACT

The process of naturalization and decay are leaving their first traces on the Dolder Waldhaus. A new spatial order in the balance between nature and built transforms the structure. Shifting away from the triumph of modernist technological advancements and human superiority over a landscape. In this extended lifespan of the buildings otherwise destined future of demolition, the site becomes a reservoir of organic growth and evolves into a unique ecosystem.

By acknowledging the current state of the structure and enhancing the natural processes through precise interventions, allowing sunlight and water to reach interior surfaces, the Waldhaus develops into a laboratory of nature's reclamation. Where new growing conditions allow spontaneous vegetation to emerge. Their potential design role, their cohabitation with native plants and their interactions with anthropogenic factors are tested.

The disturbance of this process around the base, through protective borders offers secured and static spaces for the reintroduction of a boutique hotel located on the

garden level and ground floor. Immersed in an exclusive and rare environment of wild unregulated spaces, the hotel pronounces a new sense of luxury. The opportunity of the unique value of a ruin permitted by a contemporary society and their commodification of everything, even their own decay.

The design of these two worlds of ecological value and luxurious hospitality is developed through the topic of circulation. The movement of nature and its research is incorporated in the existing realms of guest and service flows.

This reading of the site as a modern ruin allowed for a certain freedom of challenging the questions of use, function, and standards. The project addresses a different strategy, other than to the classic concept of refurbishment, for the future of the Waldhaus, where behind a layer of cynicism a landscape can develop of real value, foreign to the contemporary urban fabric. Becoming a monument that refers partly to the temporality of human interventions and partly to nature's vital regeneration mechanisms.



ADLISBERG

Along with Zürichberg, the Adlisberg, marks the western end of Zurich's hill chain. Shaped by the Linth glacier, it features conglomerate, sandstone, and marl layers, visible in ravines like Wolfbach and Klossbach near the Waldhaus. The landscape surrounding the Waldhaus Dolder has evolved, with forests receding and vineyards emerging.

Adlisberg's transformation from a hostile area to a romantic destination in the 19th century is exemplified by the Dolderpark. Villas and gardens now adorn the hillsides, preserving ecological connectivity. While the forest serves various societal needs, it remains a symbol of yearning today.

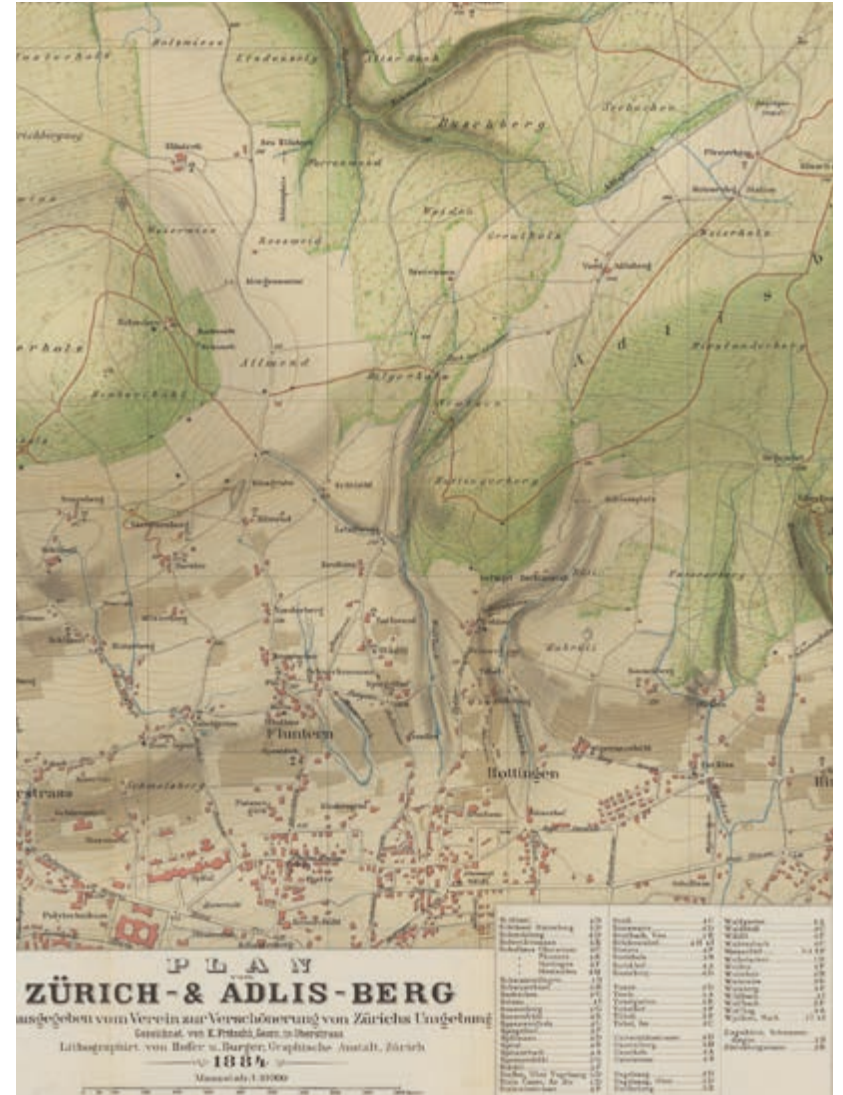


The view of the lake from the forest.



top Drone image, Mar 24.

right Map of Zürich- & Adlisberg Fritschi, Emil Zürich, 1884.





top Proposal for new building plots in the Dolder Park, Archives Dolder AG, early 1900.
right Dolder Park, Archives Dolder AG, date unknown.





top Spectators on ice rink, Archives Dolder AG, early 1900.

right Map for the building of the Waldhausstrasse, Archives Dolder AG, date unknown.



WALDHAUS

On the threshold where the city transitions into forest, one encounters an architecture: the Waldhaus Dolder, linked to the town by its cable car. During the era of Alps exploration, establishments like the Dolder sought proximity to untamed nature and the awe-inspiring vistas of the Alps. Designed by Jaques Gros, the Waldhaus stands as Zurich's premier Kurhaus, marking a significant milestone in architectural history.

Construction of the Waldhaus, characterized by its heimatstil architectural style, commenced in 1894. Just a year later, it was inaugurated alongside the opening of the Dolderbahn. However, its prominence was short-lived as it was overshadowed by the newly constructed Dolder Grand in 1899, rendering the Waldhaus a lesser counterpart. However great its success allowing the extension in 1906, this marked the beginning of its decline. In 1972, the Waldhaus, representative of heimatstil architecture, met its demise—a momentous event that stirred heritage protection circles. However, it didn't take long to recognize the value of preserving historic buildings, leading to a shift in perspective within a few years. This shift has moved further in today's world, rendering every built mass as valuable.



The 1906 extension viewed through the forest.



top south elevation, 1894.
right Extension project, Archives Dolder AG, Mai 1905.



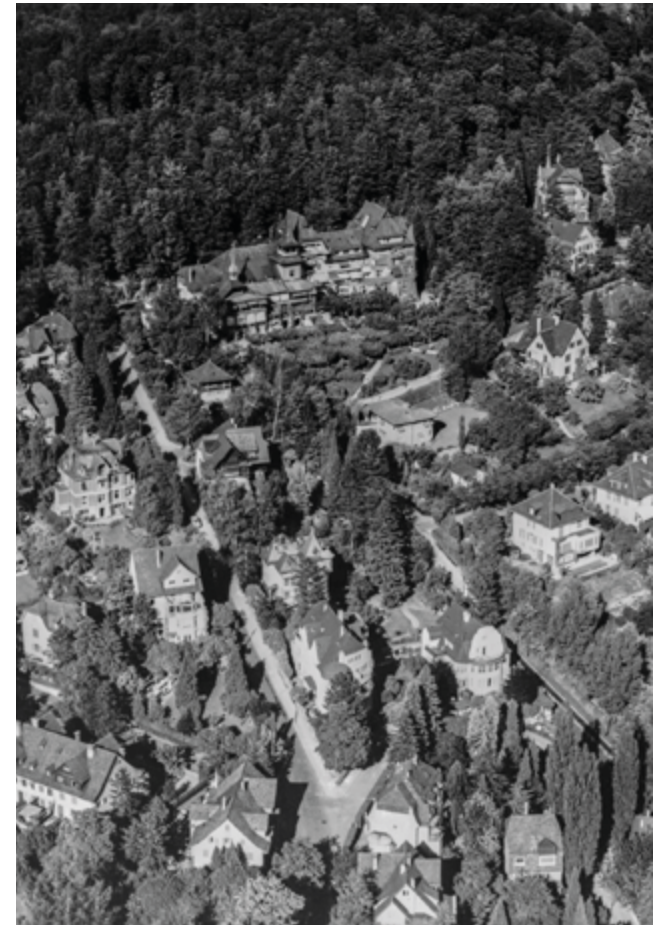


top Garden restaurant, Archives Dolder AG, date unknown.

left Climbing plants growing up the veranda, Archives Dolder AG, date unknown.



top Advertisement, Archives Dolder AG, date unknown.
right Tiefgeflogen, Friedli Werner, 1949.





top Hotel Waldhaus, Archives Dolder AG, date unknown.
right Dolder Amenities, Archives dolder AG, 1946.

DOLDER GRAND HOTEL
APPARTEMENTS MIT BAD UND WOHNZIMMER
GROSSER FESTSAAL UND ZAHLREICHE SALONS
FÜR BÄLLE, HOCHZEITEN UND SITZUNGEN
SPEZIALABKOMMEN FÜR LÄNGEREN AUFENTHALT

HÔTEL WALDHAUS DOLDER
BEHAGLICHE ZIMMER MIT UND OHNE BAD
FREILUFTRESTAURANT MIT HERRLICHER AUSSICHT
GROSSE UND KLEINE RÄUME FÜR BÄLLE
FAMILIENFESTE UND SITZUNGEN
DIREKTER ANSCHLUSS AN DIE DOLDERBAHN

DOLDER WELLEN- UND SONNENBAD
SPIEL- UND TURNPLÄTZE
SCHWIMM- UND GYMNASTIK-UNTERRICHT
KÜNSTLICHE HÖHENSONNE

DOLDER GOLF- UND TENNISCLUB
9 HOLES GOLFLINKS
18 HOLES IN DER NÄHE
6 TENNISPLÄTZE - CROQUET
200 000 .m² WALDPARK
MIT SCHÖNEN, BEQUEMEN SPAZIERWEGEN

DOLDER KUNSTEISBAHN
NOVEMBER - MÄRZ
EISLAUF BEI JEDER TEMPERATUR
HOCKEY - KUNSTEISLAUF
ERSTKLÄSSIGE LEHRER

DOLDER DRAHTSEILBAHN
UNUNTERBROCHENER VERKEHR
VON 7 UHR BIS MITTERNACHT
ANSCHLUSS AN TRAMLINIEN 3, 8, 15
VERBILLIGTE ABBONNEMENTS



top The remains of the 1905 extension after demolition, Baumann Heinz, 1972.
left Bundesamt für Landestopografie, 1956

DOLDER WALDHAUS

After the first ideas during the 1950s in January 1975, amidst the economic recession of the post-war period, a replacement building for the former Waldhaus Dolder was inaugurated. This new structure emerged from the planning phase with significant alterations, as a large portion of the intended hotel rooms were repurposed into flats for extended stays—a measure born out of necessity rather than strategy, serving as a desperate plan B.

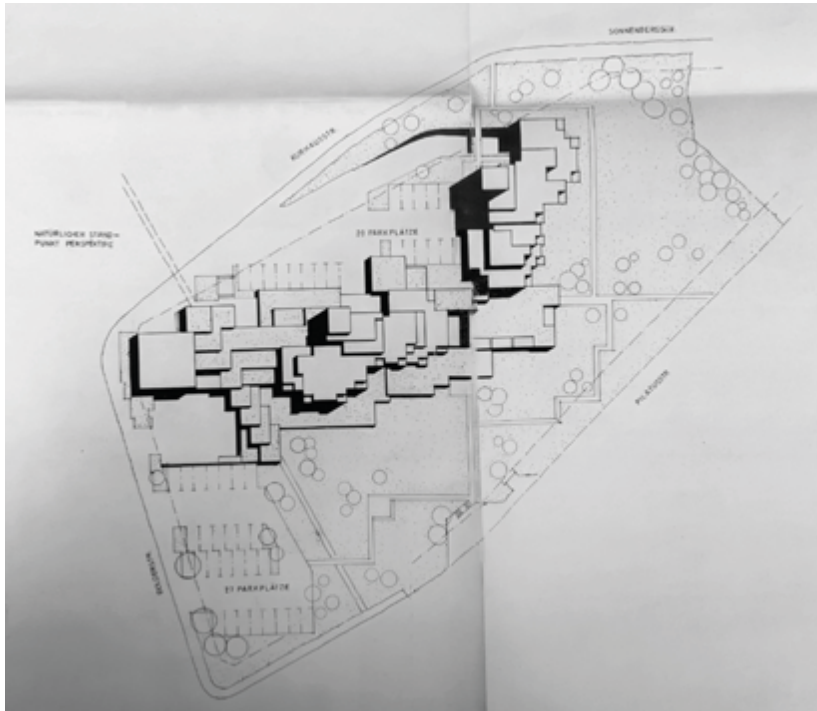
Initially, architects Robert Briner and Herbert Wirth proposed a horizontally oriented, five-story volume. However, this design failed to garner support from the building committee from the city of Zurich. Subsequently, they recommended dividing the room program into two high-rise buildings. These structures were constructed with a staggered façade and small corner balconies, clad in exposed aggregate concrete prefab elements—a deliberate effort by the architects

to juxtapose the surrounding forest with the built environment, offering a scenic view.

The resulting juxtaposition of the building's structure is striking, notably distinct from the affluent villa neighborhood of Hottingen. Its imposing presence gives it a monument-like quality, seemingly isolated both from the surrounding architecture and the maintained landscape.



The funicular arriving at the base of the towers.



top plan, Robert Briner and Herbert Wirth, Jan 1971.



Neues Hotel Waldhaus Dolder eröffnet

Reduktion der Bettenzahl von 220 auf 170

Auf Wunsch der städtischen Bauverwaltung ist die der Bauherren durch den Bauherrn mit zwei Hochhäusern ersetzt worden. Der Architekt hat die beiden Türme sowohl in der Horizontalen als auch in der Vertikalen sehr lebhaft gegliedert.

Am Freitagabend ist das neue Hotel Waldhaus Dolder feierlich und fehmlich eröffnet worden. Es steht da, wo früher das alte, in weitem Kreise als Anziehungspunkt und Ort geistiger Versammlungen beliebte Waldhaus gestanden hatte, an dem nach Südwesten ebenfalls ein abfallendes Hang unterhalb der Kuchelstrasse, dem Wald nahe benachbart, mit offenem Blick auf Stadt, See und Berge und in derselben ruhigen Umgebung. Mit der Gestalt des alten Waldhauses, dieses Jahresrückwärtens von Tieren, stellen Dolder, Erker und Terrassen, hat das neue freilich nicht mehr gemein, und auch der Name «Waldhaus» ist nur noch traditionellberühmt. Die beiden neuen Türme, welche bis zur Höhe von Tannen und Föhren (über 30 Meter) aufragen, drohen viel eher, den neuen Fort zum «Hauswald» zu deuten.

Gründer Bauwerke

Es ist denn auch die Baugesellschaft, die auf den ersten Blick eher schockierend ins Auge fällt, und zwar sowohl aus architektonischer Sicht als auch, zumindest an kleinen Tagen, aus der Ferne. Das Turmhaus ist nicht zu übersehen, es setzt hart vor dem Wald einen von vielen als brutal empfundenen gewalttätigen Akzent und nimmt mit seiner Fläche auf den ersten Blick kaum für sich ein, die Gasse der verbliebenen Fassadengliederung. Diese allerdings eine alles intensive Fernwirkung. Zu dieser Baugesellschaft ist es liegen, dass sie im Rahmen der Verwirklichung, Gärten und verschiedenen Ausstattungsleistungen zu Recht beliebt. Das Anst, das sich (als das Grand Hotel) die Waldhaus, städtische Teilung, die Kuchelstrasse u. a.) in Besitz der Dolderbau-AG befindet, hat eine derartige Ausstattung erhalten: es war eine Ausstattungsleistung, die sich nicht mehr an die nach Zerstörung zerstörte Gebäude zu haben brauchen.

Die Frage war nun auch, wie die Baugesellschaft gestaltet werden sollte. Architekt Robert Briner hatte den Auftrag, alle Gästezimmer sowie auch Hallenbad und Restaurant nach Südosten, Süden oder Westen zu orientieren; die heutigen unter allen Umständen eine gewisse, modernisierte Gestaltung. Ein erstes Projekt sah einen

flügelreichen, dafür ziemlich langen Trakt vor. Das Hotelgebäude, ein Gemisch von Fachwerkbau, das die städtischen Behörden bereit, lebte diese Lösung ab und schlug die Verteilung der Baugesellschaft auf zwei Hochhäuser vor. Damit erklärte sich die Bauherrenschaft einverstanden, obwohl betriebliche Nachteile in Kauf zu nehmen waren. Der Architekt hat dann ein Geistes, indem er die beiden Türme sowohl im Horizontalen als auch in der Vertikalen stark gliederte, staffelte und schuf. Das hat eine epische «Aufhebung» der Baugesellschaft vor allem bei sonstigen Wetter in Licht- und Schattenpartien zur Folge. All das ändert freilich nicht daran, dass man den ganzen Hotelkomplex an dieser empfindlichen, weil viel Blicken zugewandten Stelle der Stadt für überdimensioniert hält.

Ansicht auf Doldergasse

Die Qualifikation «überdimensioniert» liegt einem auch auf der Zunge in Bezug auf den Hof, in dem letzten Jahress sind in der Stadt und in deren unmittelbaren Umgebung zahlreiche grosse Erdbeben entstanden, die das Resten umgeben sprengt und, wie es sich wissen sollte, recht wesentlich über den Bedarf hinaus anrichten ließen. Die Erdölung des neuen Hotels Waldhaus Dolder fällt deshalb in eine unglückliche Zeit. Der Präsident des Verwaltungsrates der Dolderbau-AG, W. Schweizer, was zur Rechtfertigung darauf hin, dass die Planung in einer ganz anderen Zeit aufgenommen worden sei (es hat viele Jahre in Anspruch genommen), dass man ein bestehendes Hotel ersetzt habe (das alte «Waldhaus» hatte 80 Gästezimmer) und dass die Erberberung von Güten seit 1935 das Erberberber der Gesellschaft sei.

Wenn man die Erklärung eines weiteren Erdbebens nicht gerade mit Begründung begründet, so ist doch hervorzuheben, dass es sich bei diesen «Waldhaus» um einen Betrieb handelt, der neue Manöver setzt. Durch die Entwicklung gezwungen, haben sich die Verantwortlichen ein Konzept erarbeitet, das nicht nur auf die neue geordnete zügigen Geschäftsteile und Touristen ausgerichtet ist, sondern auch andere Gästeleistungen anseht, namentlich Doldergasse. Zu diesem Zweck ist man von den ursprünglich geplanten 220 Gästebetten abgekommen und hat zahlreiche Apartments eingerichtet, die sich aus einem kleinen Schlafzimmer, einem meist überraschend geräumigen Wohnzimmer und einer kleinen oder Küchenküche zusammensetzen; Küchenküchen gehören auch zu allen übrigen Zweibettzimmern, und 150-Liter-Kühlschränke findet man gar in allen Gästezimmern. Die Apartments eignen sich als kleine Geschäftsunterkünfte, als Wohnungen für Alleinreisende oder Ehepaare, die sich von der Hotelküche entlasten wollen (und frischen Köchen) und auch als kleine Abwechslungen. Billig ist ein Dauererhalt freilich nicht: Die Mieter zahlen grundsätzlich die Hotelpreise, wobei Rabatte bei Vertragsdauer von einem Jahr bzw. drei Jahren gewährt werden.

Die beiden Türme erhalten zusammen insgesamt 20 Einbettzimmer, 65 Doppelzimmer oder Zweibett-Apartments und 5 grössere Suiten, insgesamt 170 Betten, wobei der obere Ostturm vor allem die Doldergasse, der grössere Westturm die Passanten anziehen soll. Die Zimmer sind alle überdurchschnittlich gross, gut und geschmackvoll eingerichtet und gegen Lärm verhältnissmässig isoliert; überall gibt es selbstverständlich Dusche und Bad, Telefonanschluss und TV-Anschluss sowie Direktwahltelefon dazu. Und gerade einzigartig ist die Aussicht, die man von fast allen Zimmern und den ihnen zugeordneten grossen Balkonen und Terrassen aus gewinnt.

Drei Restaurants und ein Hallenbad

Das neue «Waldhaus» wird nicht mehr in gleichem Masse wie das alte Ort geistiger Zusammenkünfte sein. Das Saalangebot ist auf einen unterstellbaren Konferenzraum zusammengedrängt, dazu gibt es drei Restaurants, nämlich das eigentliche Tagessalon mit einem Esstisch im Mittelpunkt und zahlreichen Deko-

rationenstücken an den Wänden, die an Wald und Wälder erinnern, den danebenliegenden Gästebereich, den farbige Jugendstilgemälde aus dem alten «Waldhaus» das Gedächtnis geben, und die Balkone auf der Galerie darüber, deren Charakter von Dolderbauherren bestimmt wird. Das Angebot reicht, in dem einzelnen Abteilungen abgeteilt, vom städtischen Platz und vom offenen Weis bis hin zu lokalen Spezialitäten und gemackelten Tropfen; Kinder, Fischkochen und Schokoladekuchen hat man nicht vergessen.

Ein wichtiger Bestandteil zeitgemässer Hotelanlagen ist das Hallenbad. Es findet sich an ebener Erde unter den Restaurants, ist gut besetzt und verfügt im Freien über eine Liegezone. Das Becken misst 11,5 mal 7 Meter; die 125 Kubikmeter Wasser (25 bis 28 Grad) werden alle drei Stunden umgewälzt und mit Boot automatisch entleert. Das Hallenbad ist mit Unterwasserstrahlungs-Einrichtungen versehen, ausserdem sind das eine Sauna, eine Solarium-Kabine und ein Massagezimmer angegliedert. In einer Tiefgarage haben rund 70 Autos Platz, weitere Parkplätze gibt es im Freien. Eine ganz dimensionierte Zentralheizung dient auch dem Grand-Hotel Dolder. Direktor des neuen Hauses ist Hans Jörg Föllmer, der vor Jahren einmal Vize-Direktor des Kongresshauses gewesen ist.

An architecture created to view, to allow an immersion into nature but at the same time a distancing towards it. Its panoramic windows and balconies frame the landscape, whereby the vast view over the city and lake becomes a picturesque image of a nostalgic longing for boundlessness. The sublime feeling evoked by the wilderness belongs to the picturesque as soon as an attempt is made to stage or artificially reproduce it. Yet, as with many man-made structures, buildings are often perceived as expendable and easily replaced—even though they rarely become truly obsolete.

Following its failure to meet expectations as a larger hotel, a architecture competition was held in 2011 to replace the Waldhaus once again, this time with a new glass palace still emphasizing the scenic view. The proposed plans by Meili Peter resembled a curved iteration

of the original design by Robert Briner and Herbert Wirth.

Now, over a decade later, the fate of the Waldhaus remains uncertain, existing in a state euphemistically termed “temporary-use” while awaiting economic opportunities for replacement. Recent inquiries about the land price hint at potential interest from future investors, while plans for refurbishment by Fanzun architects are slated for submission this year, adding another layer of complexity to the ongoing saga of the Waldhaus.

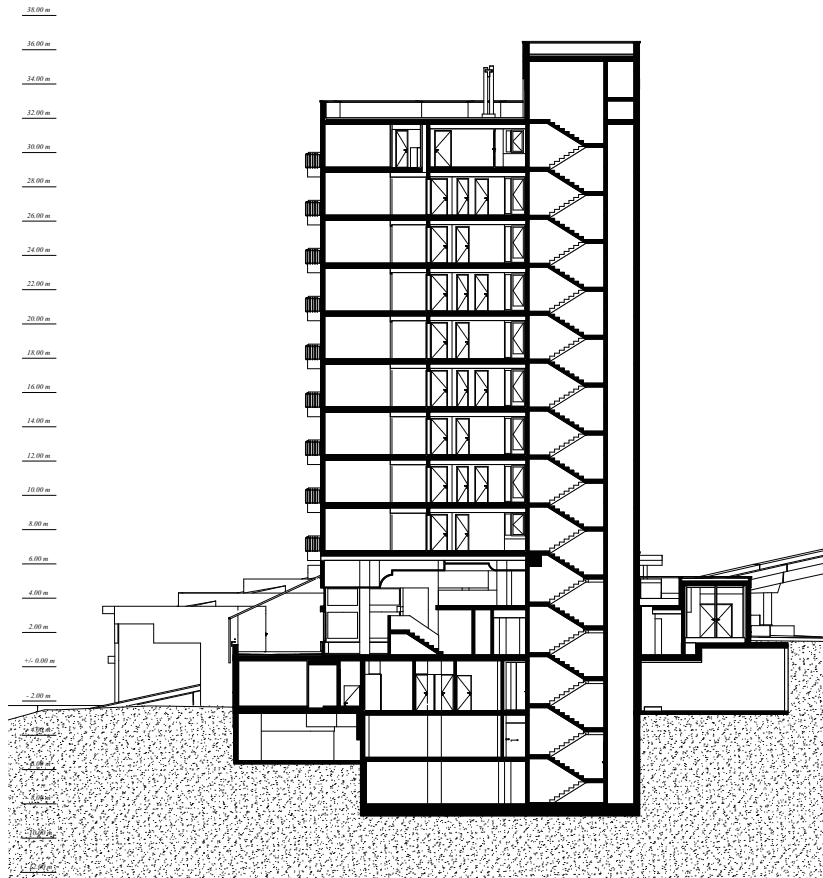


right tower west rising up above villas, Feb. 2024.

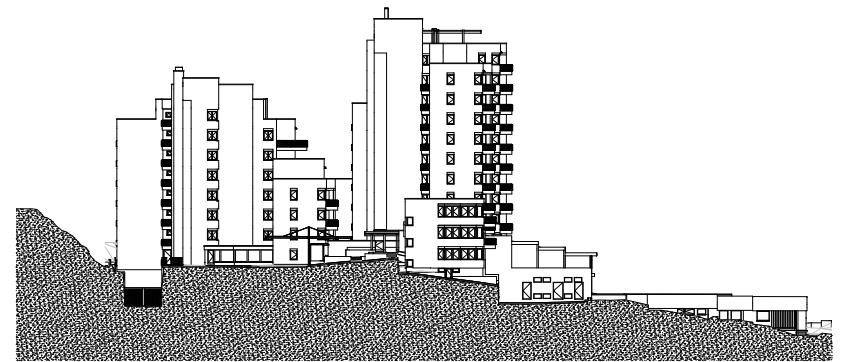


top Construction site, Archives Dolder AG, 1974.
right View over the Pilatusstrasse, Wolgensinger Michael, 1982.

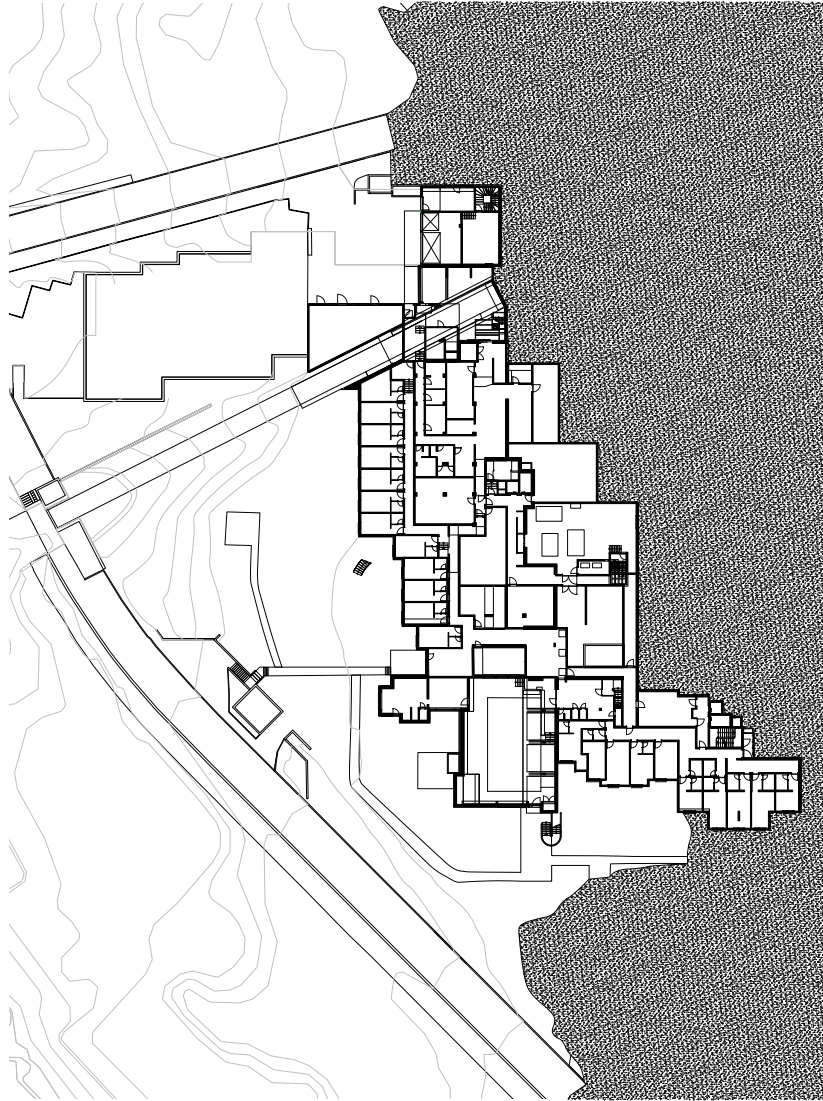




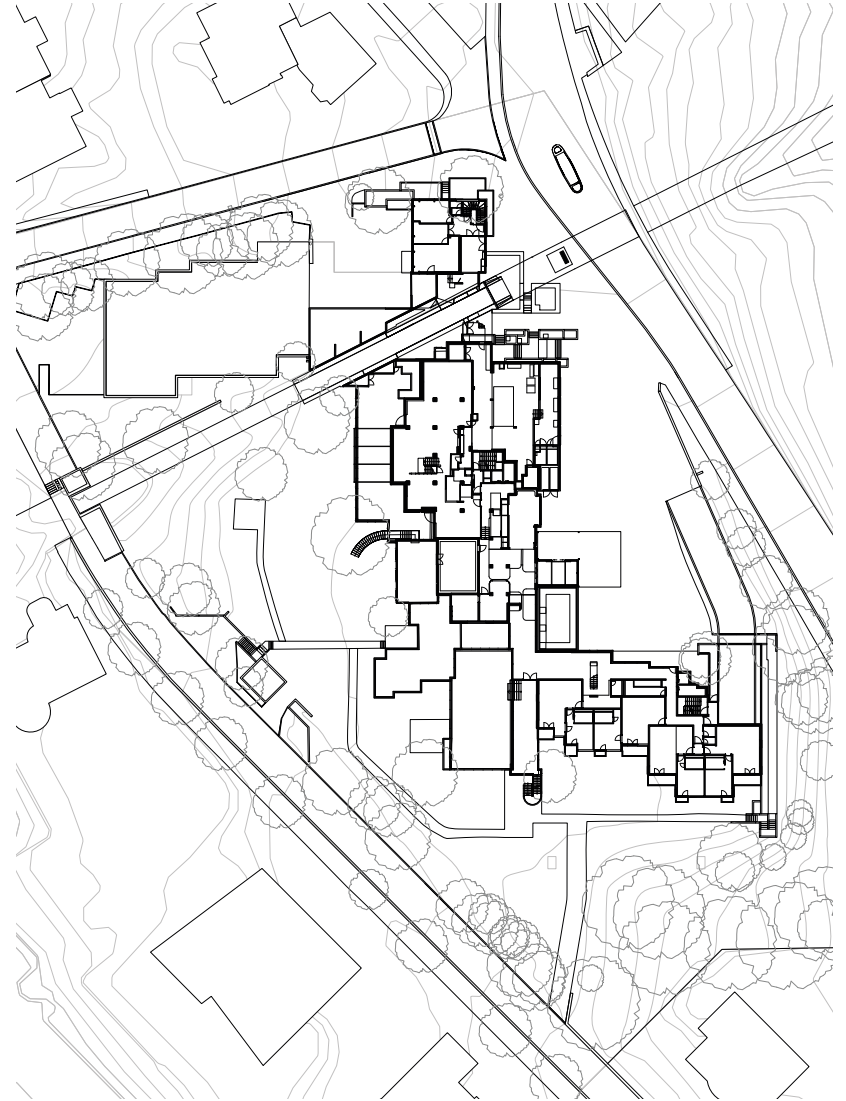
Section
1:500



Elevation
1:1000



1st Basement
1:1000



Groundfloor
1:1000

My subtopic of circulation resulted in an analytical survey about the circulation architectures reaching out from the base of the two towers. Their arrival and destination points, the ongoing naturalization processes they are subjected to since the Waldhaus lost its function as a hotel in 2016. These Tentacles once connecting the Sockel down to the Garden, are becoming ladders for ivy and other plants to grow upwards from the garden. Slowly taking back the architecture and enhancing its decay process.

Additionally, the analysis of the interior spaces started the urge of recreating, imagining how the hotel once functioned. The atmosphere, haptics and design of two separated movements. Again, focusing on the Sockel, as exactly there the separation of guest and service personnel happens.

Leaving with me a certain memorable-ness and entropy (the inevitable and steady deterioration of a system or society) towards the building and reminded me of an attraction to a ruin, it being incomplete and only by an act of imagination becoming completed.



CIRCULATION

In contemplating the circulation dynamics of the Waldhaus, a narrative unfolds that speaks volumes about the interplay between design and function, tradition and modernity.

At its core, the Waldhaus pulsates with the rhythm of technical circulation systems, orchestrating the flow of water, electricity and other essential infrastructures with a quiet efficiency. These hidden arteries once robust and reliable, ensuring functionality and comfort, now stand as relics of a bygone era, reminders of a time when the demands of hospitality were met by simpler means. They're lifespans long overdue causing issues in the interims use strategy of less and less maintenance.

The corridors and stairwells are metaphorically referred to as "arteries of guest movement," highlighting their importance in guiding the flow of people through the building.

From the lobby, there is a "short promenade" or walkway that leads to two main circulation hubs. Each core containing a stairwell, a smaller elevator and a larger service elevator.

There is a practical design aspect that separates guest circulation from service circulation, which is a standard practice in hospitality architecture to ensure efficiency and guest comfort.

This layout emphasizes the thoughtful architectural planning involved in creating functional, efficient, and guest-friendly spaces in hospitality settings.

But it is the separation of the ground floor and first basement level, the Waldhaus Sockel where the true dichotomy unfolds. Here, accessibility to the garden, located one level lower, elevates the architecture above the constructed landscape. While the first basement level, predominantly dedicated to staff areas, establishes a direct connection to the verdant outdoors. The swimming pool, nestled in the basement, serves as the sole recreational area for guests to step directly onto the lawn.

The natural topography finds itself subdued by the expansive underground garage, its contours erased from view. Yet, within the confines of the building, glimpses of this lost landscape emerge, manifested in level changes that hint at the terrain outside.



Human circulation when snow was still predominant, Moser Adolf, 1901.



top Circulation in Adlisberg forest, Feb 2024.
right Dolderbahn arriving at station Waldhaus, Feb 2024.





top Waldhaus hotelkiosk and corridor, Wolgensinger Michael, 1975.
right Rainwater drain, Feb 2024.



GARDEN

Spanning an expansive 3600 m², whereas 75% of the area is elevated above the expansive garage, the garden around the Waldhaus encompasses a realm where the man-made and the organic coalesce.

Moving through its expanse, multiple stairs intertwine levels and terraces, connected by a small tiled path that guides the way through this constructed landscape.

Historic images of the active hotel unveil glimpses of an era, where the sprawling, meticulously maintained lawn was a rare stage for human activity. Today, however, a contrast emerges as the garden yields to the reclamation of nature. Sprouting from various corners, flora reclaims its rightful place.

But beyond its aesthetic allure, the Dolder Waldhaus garden holds deeper significance. Enshrined within a “Gestaltungsplan” for the Dolder area, it stands as a testament to a commitment to preserving the surrounding “Baumbestand”—the tree population. Mandating the maintenance (or replacement) of the trees, this directive not only safeguards the ecological integrity of the region, but was an important factor in the discussion of an “Ersatzneubau.”



right Empty lawns and elevated terraces, Wolgensinger Michael, 1982.



top drone image, Mar. 2024.
right Orthofoto, Feb 2021.



TENTACLES

This subjective reading of the architectures of circulation surrounding the Sockel, begins with an examination of a certain connection. Between the ground floor, where the main entrance plaza resides, and the surrounding landscape and garden.

Analyzing the various ramps and stairs that encircle the two towers, one is met by their sculptural appearance and tactile qualities. Their pathways are characterized by distinct departure and arrival points, designated uses, varying extents of reach, and different states of maintenance. These structures serve not only a functional purpose but also contribute to the visual and spatial dialogue between the Waldhaus and

its surrounding landscape. Specifically, the language of a architecture colonizing the landscape. Their presence speaks to a relationship between the built environment and the natural world. The former setting itself above the constructed landscape, as the modernist triumph of the man-made architecture over nature.

In this exploration, one finds the structures of circulation extend like tentacles, reaching out into the surrounding environment. The boundaries between built form and natural landscape blurred. Resulting in a photographic essay and a drawing documenting these spaces.



Unused water basin for swimming pool patio, Feb 2024.



bottom Waldhaus garden, Wolgensinger Michael, 1982.



MOVEMENT

In observing the movement and flows of humans within the Waldhaus, a narrative of inhabitation and reclaiming space emerges. Today, the corridors in the upper floors of the two towers, housing the apartments, bear clear traces of human activity. Rather than the gradual impact of natural processes on the outside, it is the imprint of human presence that defines these spaces.

Here, amidst the green plush carpet adorned with red-white stripes reminiscent of a bygone hotel era, one encounters a tableau of everyday life. Chairs, shoes, whole wardrobes, strollers, garden sculptures and stickers next to the room number on the front door stand as silent witnesses to the rhythms of existence.

Yet within this domestic landscape, a dichotomy emerges—a separation of guest and service circulation inherent to hospitality architecture. The analysis of human flows on the interior of the Waldhaus echoes this division, as in former guests traverse corridors distinct from those trodden by former staff, each pathway delineated by purpose and function.

This survey prompted a drawing overlaid with archive material and personal images of today. Visualizing how the circulation spaces were used, how they looked and how they acted in the by-gone era of the hotel. Revealing a certain memorability and entropy, both characteristics of ruins.

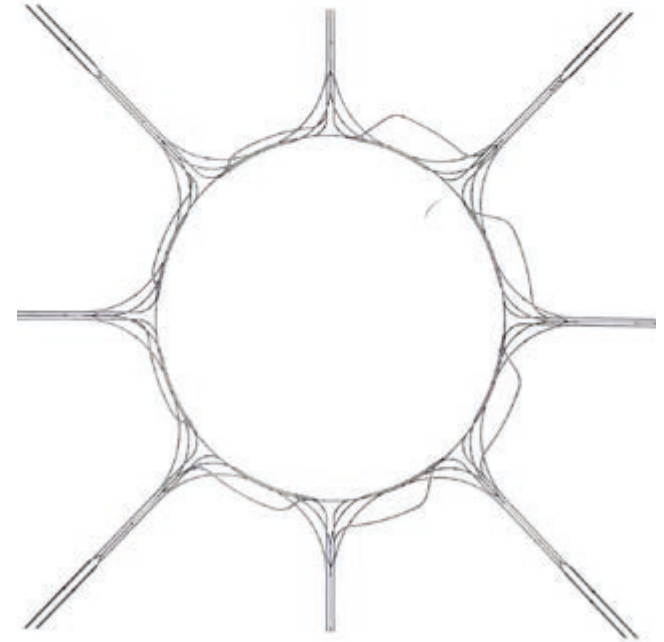


right Atrium, original Waldhaus, Baugeschichtliches Archiv der Stadt Zürich, 1970.

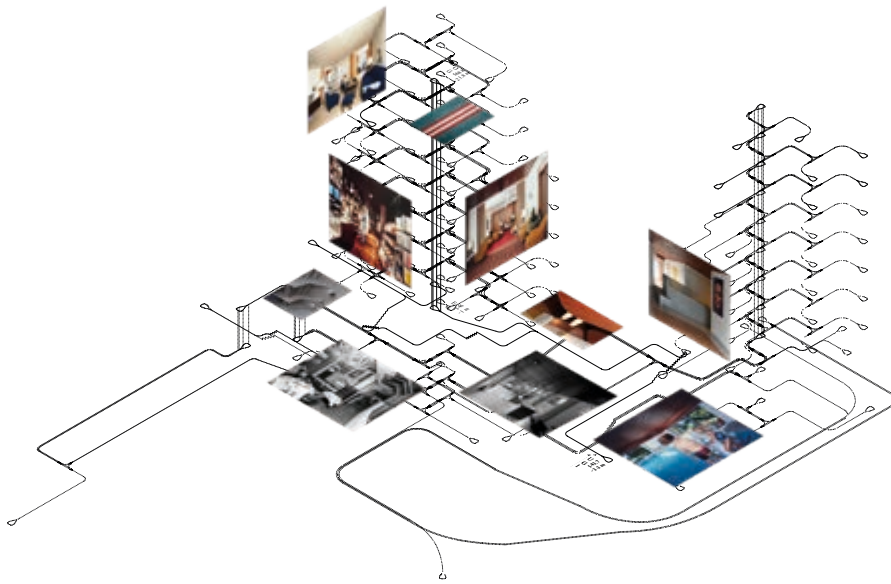


top Wäscherei, Bramaz Hans Ruedi, 1978.

right "Fussgängerverkehr" *Integral urban. a global model. second study*, 1975, Fritz Haller.

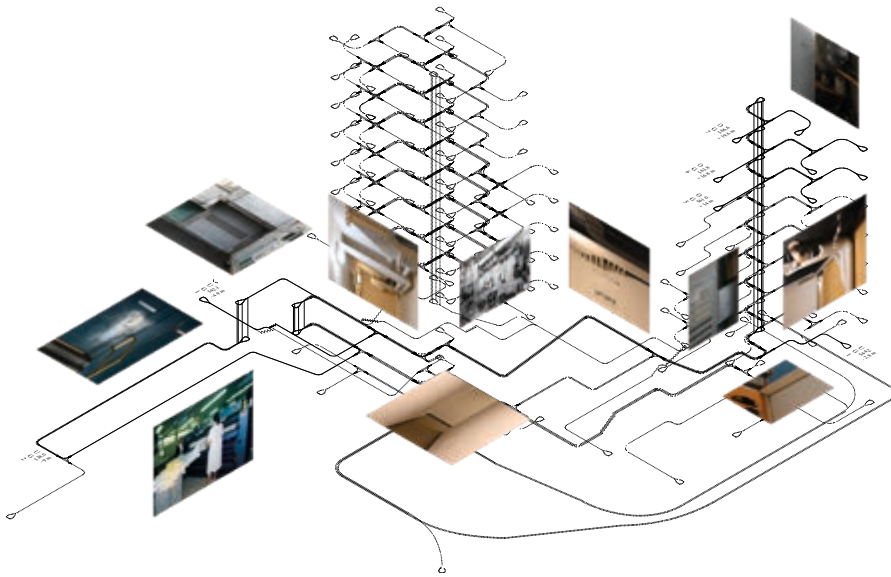


GUEST FLOWS



Person X steps out of room number 1773 on the seventh floor of the larger west tower. They find themselves in the hotel corridor, where a soft green carpet with what seem to be red and white stripes guiding the way to the elevators. While opening the door to the restaurant their hand grasps the large, messing door handle. After visiting the hotel kiosk, they make their way to the swimming pool, crossing the lobby adorned with its suspended wooden ceiling.

SERVICE FLOWS



Person Y steps out of their small staff room in the first basement of the east tower. They find themselves walking through the corridor, where all the walls have a bland white plaster. Finished with the cleaning of the nine rooms in the top 3 stories of the east tower, they make their way to the large laundry facility. After a final smoke break, they swing open the blue painted door to the staff changing room to end their daily shift.



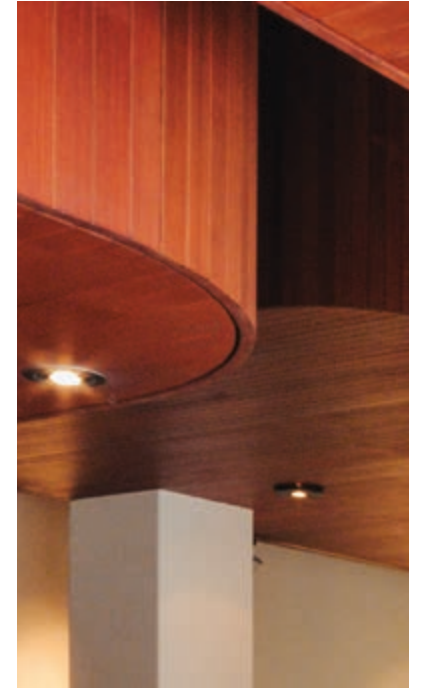
service



guest



service



guest



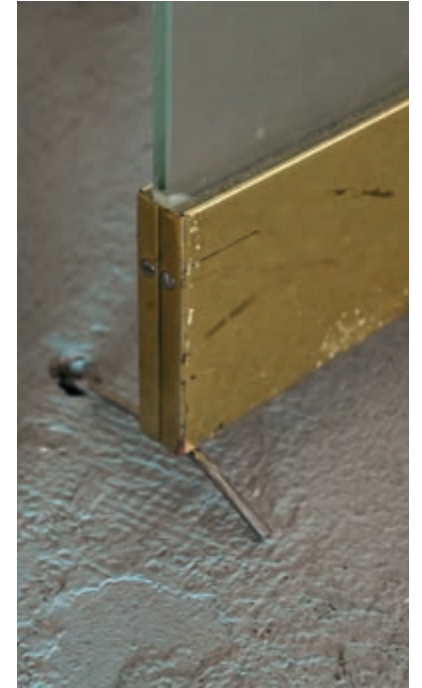
service



guest



service



guest

The diverse discussion we had that was formulated by the produced atlas, unraveled complex tensions between topics. But a specific term ruinous; stayed with me. This topic of decay of the structures and reclamation of nature acted as basis to create a specific reading of the site. And while researching in these two fields several connections to the Waldhaus started to unfold.

Reading the building as a ruin, which in a sense can no longer function in the evolution of today's standards and economics allowed me to set questions of efficiency and use aside. Of course, an "Ersatzneubau" could breathe new life into the site, however, there seems to be little value for the owner of the Dolder AG, nor for the city in this solution. For a second time in the history of the Waldhaus an idea emerged from the planning phase with significant alterations—a measure born out of necessity rather than strategy.



THE VIEW

I'd argue that since the construction of the "Waldhaus" in 1975 its setting, especially the view from there has become more and more expensive. Making it the driver to adjust the quality and expression of architecture to the economic, real-estate developments. Therefore even the most durable of concrete structures can be forsaken as the economy dictates their replacement or obsolescence.

Knowing the existing structure can never provide the equal economic value of an "Ersatzneubau", the Dolder AG has no real interest in keeping the building. At the same time their chance of creating a contemporary hotel and apartments becomes impossible in the changing world today. Where the 9300 cubic meters of reinforced concrete are arguably the most valuable material due to its carbon footprint. Resulting in the solution of a renovation, transforming the Waldhaus into a housing block for the upper class with no real benefit for the city.



Overlay elevations, both versions of the Waldhaus share an elevating "Sockel".



top View from the top floor, Wolgensinger Michael, 1975
right View from the "Heimatstil" tower, Archives Dolder AG, early 1900s.



THE SUBLIME

The Dolderbahn creates the very first tentacle of the Dolder area evolution and until now is still a key circulation artery for the city's inhabitants. Transporting citizens of Zürich into the realm of recreation and leisure on the Adlisberg. Upon its inauguration, it offered a solution for those seeking breathtaking views, catering to the aspirations of the emerging middle class. It provided a unique experience of viewing the Alps while also offering close proximity to a seemingly untamed nature.

Nature proves less and less likely to provide us with sublime experiences— where is the refuge for this sublime feeling today? Perhaps it's no longer about being above and looking from a distance, but rather about becoming part of the landscape and being immersed in nature.





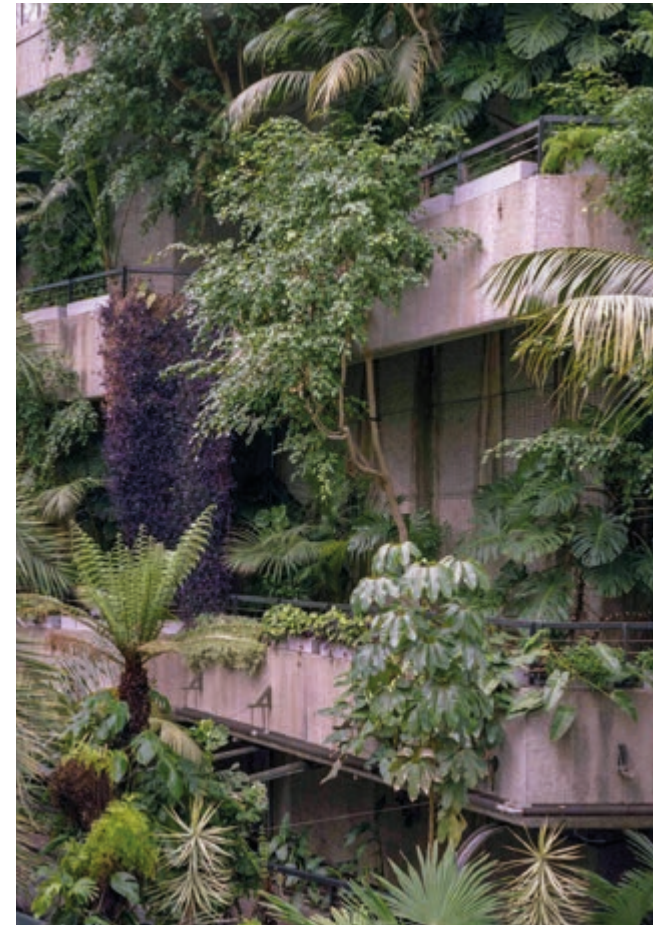
top The oldest tentacle reaching down to the city, unknown, 1896.

right Above the trees of the veranda of the Heimatstil Waldhaus, unknown, early 1900s.





top Bühnen der Natur. Henrys Geissblatt (*Lonicera henryi*) © Markus Bühler.
right Barbican Conservatory © Luke Hayes.



THE RUIN

We are all familiar with the profound fascination that the collapse of buildings evokes. From the 18th century's fascination with ancient ruins to Cyprien Gaillard's work on modern ruins, documenting their demolition.

Like Gaillard's buildings, the former Heimatstil "Waldhaus" was not worn down by the passage of time; it was not even, properly speaking, a ruin at all. It was demolished in a sudden spasm of violence, imploded in seconds by carefully planted explosive charges, leaving nothing behind but a pile of debris and a void that in my view was never filled by the modern brutalist towers.

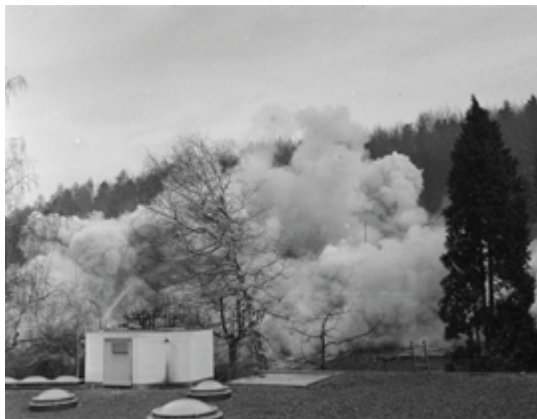
The images of the explosion evoke the connection to Cyprien Gaillard. Gaillard's works often explore themes of urban decay, destruction, and the fluidity of capital. In particular, his fascination with the transformative nature of landscapes and structures resonates with the concept of controlled ex-

plosions as symbols of capitalism's inherent instability and its tendency to abandon once-valued structures in favor of new economic imperatives. As Tom McDonough aptly notes, "Images of controlled explosions are first and foremost signs of capital's fundamental fluidity, its retreat from fixed form..." This fluidity reflects Gaillard's exploration of the shifting dynamics within urban environments, where the built environment is in a constant state of flux.

Moreover, McDonough's observation about the fascination with scenes of destruction aligns with Gaillard's artistic portrayal of urban landscapes undergoing transformation, inviting viewers to contemplate the complex relationship between destruction, creation, and societal change. Thus, the connection between the imagery of controlled explosions and Cyprien Gaillard's artistic vision underscores the interplay between capitalism, urban landscapes, and the allure of decay.



Observers fascinated by the demolished Waldhaus.



top Demolition on the 18.2.1972 10:00 with the use of 126 kg dynamite.
right Partially Buried Woodshed, Robert Smithson, Ohio, 1970.



The existing structure although its interim usage and continued habitation is starting to show traces of degradation, weathering, and naturalization. The contrasting images of the landscape of the Waldhaus from today and 50 years ago, exhibiting the process of time and making a visible statement towards the lifecycle of a contemporary building. However, I would argue that the Waldhaus, like the landscape of the Barbican, can in some respects be seen as a ruin from the start. Their appearance was the result of a modernist ideology: its vast scale, repetition and exposed concrete clearly expressing the credo. And with the publication by Charles Jencks “The language of postmodern architecture”, starting from the late 1970s, its design became the materialization of a previous generation’s dream.

The Waldhaus I depict correlates with Allison Smithson remark on the construction of robin hood gardens. Remark in 1976 that the process of ruination commences the moment construction workers first engage with the site, and it persists while the building is in use. This process further evolves once the building is no longer inhabited, gradually transforming it into a ruin in advance. What if we let the Waldhaus become a ruin in advance? Starting a new cycle in the history of the Waldhaus and designing the process of naturalization and ruination, the process of change, decay and reclamation.

Architecture is something we have problems seeing as something other than permanent or intact. This is prevalent in Zurich, especially in the neighborhood of the Waldhaus, where a building that is no longer intact is swiftly renovated, erased or replaced by something else that is complete.

Cities have become neat consumption environments, landscapes have been cemented and unregulated, lost spaces are a luxury now. The modern ruin can be a liberation from the dominant spatial and cultural narrative of productivity and function that is tightening in cities, something arguably only the rich can indulge in.



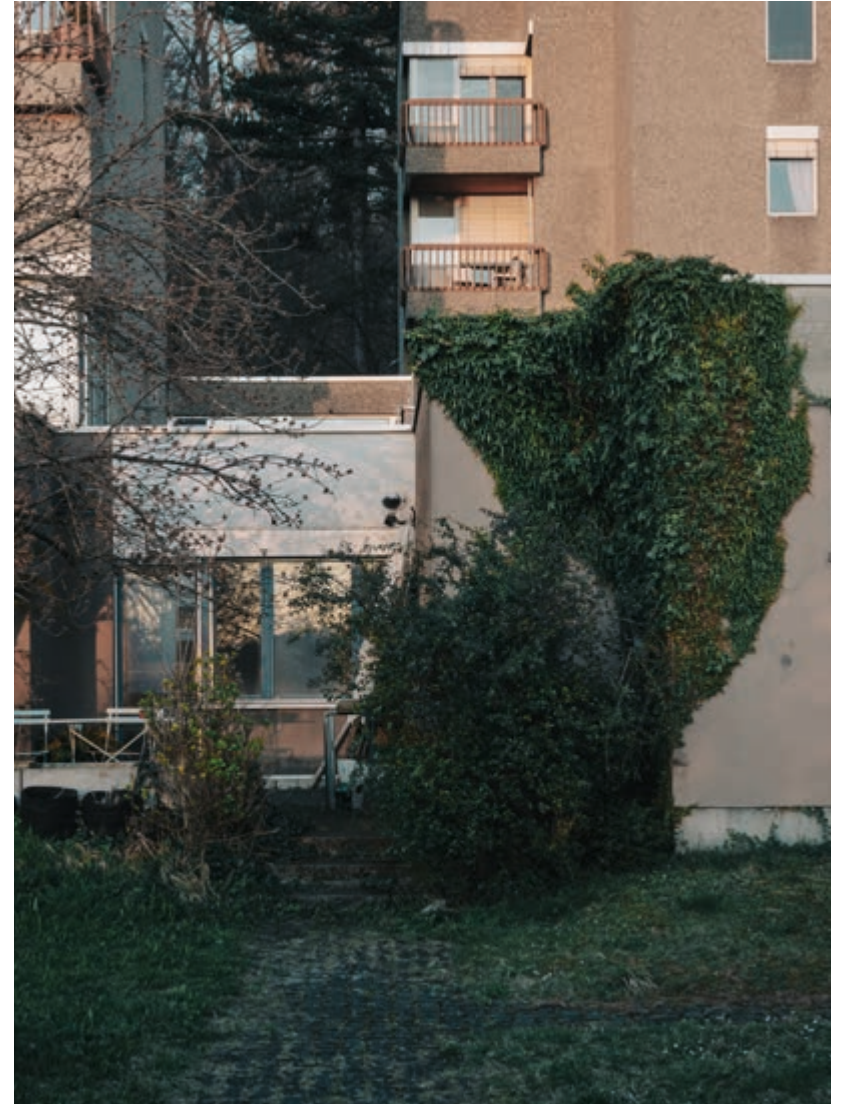


Naturalization processes around the "Socket".





Naturalization processes around the "Socket".



DEFINING RUIN

Ruin comes from the Latin word “ruere”, which means “to fall”. When we hear the word “ruin”, almost everyone will have a very similar image come to mind—an image of the “classical ruin”. Whether it be an old castle or church, the weathered stones intertwining with ivy create a mysterious and romantic picture. Despite its origins, the classic ruin we envision portrays a state of decay that appears almost frozen in time, where ruination has reached a point of stasis and is no longer perceptible.

However, ruination is far from static; it is a dynamic process that begins the moment construction begins, continues while the building is in use, evolving further once it becomes uninhabited, gradually transforming it into a ruin in advance. This transformation unsettles one of the fundamental boundaries of mo-

derernity. Between nature and culture. The ruin, as described by Willis emerges as architecture stripped bare, its meanings accessible only through the imaginative faculties of its beholders. Without the confines of protective boundaries and restrictions within a ruin, users experience a sense of freedom rarely found in constructed spaces.

In “On Weathering: The Life of Buildings in Time”, Mostafavi and Leatherbarrow explore the notion that decaying buildings enter a productive relationship with nature, irrespective of their visual resemblance to natural forms. In this productive dialogue, natural processes take precedence over predetermined shapes or boundaries, highlighting the dynamic interplay between human construction and the forces of nature.

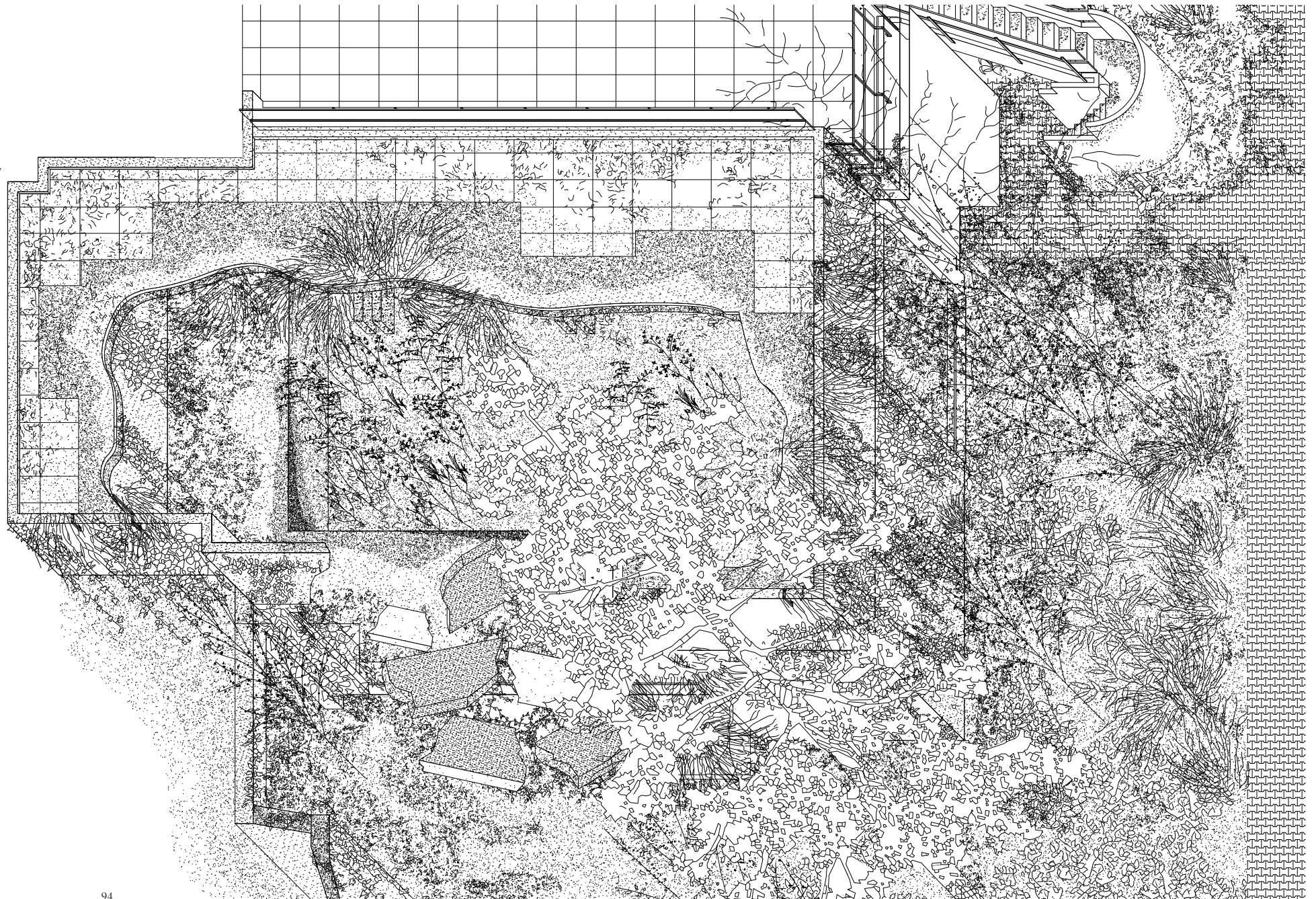
A ruin is space, where the balance between decay and growth, architecture and nature has shifted. Encompassing not only the built but also the natural as part of the term. This balance is described by Simmel in his essay “Die Ruine” written in 1911. He describes ruins as the place where “nature” and “spirit” find a balance with one another. “Spirit” meaning man’s claim and triumph over “nature” through the act of building and creating architecture. In the ruin, “nature” begins to take back what was once hers but doesn’t bring it back to any past form. Instead, it creates something different, a new unity—the ruin.

However, the romantic idea of abandonment and reclamation by nature hardly ever occurs without some sort of human involvement. And this is where my design starts. In this sense I add to the definition as being something set into motion by human actions, rather than simply occurring naturally over time. Allowing myself a certain degree of designing what remains accessible, in use and includes adding, securing and keeping.



Ruination processes around the "Sockel".





URBAN WILDSCAPE

The rate of colonization of plant and animal life depend greatly on the regional climate and ecology. Quality and pollution of the soil, materiality of the site and present biodiversity plus a factor of chance create a diverse spectrum of growth. The initial colonizer or pioneering species shapes its environment, thus rendering every landscape different. However, there are some plants, present in many Western cities, which are almost omnipresent in derelict, non-maintained spaces. Pioneering the wildscape are the weedy, ruderal vegetation types. These plants are mostly of the fast-growing, deep-rooted, and plentiful-seeding type, generating

offspring fast and colonizing large spaces in a short time. Although their preferred habitat differs from each other, many species thrive in the urban wildscape. From pioneering species to tall grass and herbs to shrubs and eventually trees, plants offer shelter and food to local wildlife. It is these areas that thrive in biodiversity, and it is here it should be left to develop.

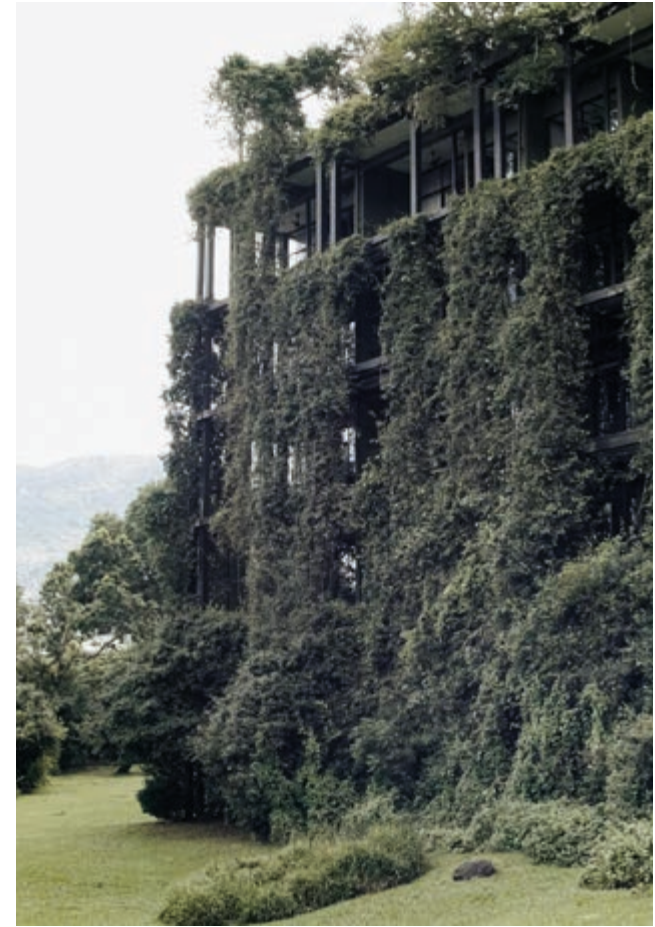
The parcel of the Waldhaus is listed as a potential area to be part of the strategy to enhance the connectiveness of greenspaces for “Grünstadt Zürich” and becoming an important ecosystem for the city.



Waldhaus Plaza, by C. Trueb, Apr 2024



top The Waldhaus garden once much denser in plantation, 1931.
right Geoffrey Bawa, Kandalama Heritage Hotel



THE THIRD LANDSCAPE

Landscape architect and philosopher Gilles Clément (b. 1943) for the particular richness often found in forgotten and overseen areas which for long periods have evaded the subjection to monoculture that results from agriculture, urbanisation and so on. These places—often disused industrial areas—are not merely empty sites waiting for someone to build on them. Because they have evaded regulation, they have become refuges or breeding grounds of biodiversity. They form the bio-bank on which we shall have to rely in future. With this idea Clément completely reverses the idea of ruinous industrial areas as having no value. They have a value now, and will have far into the future, and the strategy is to allow nature to play out its own processes under the discreet and protective attention of the “gardener”.

The concept of ecological restoration, as developed over the past 20 years, rests on the mistaken assumption that we can somehow bring back past ecosystems by removing invasive species and replanting native species. This overly simplistic view of the world ignores two basic tenets of modern ecology—that environmental stability is an illusion, and that an unpredictable future belongs to the best adapted.



Parc Henri Matisse, Gilles Clément, Lille. Inaccessible for humans since 1995.

Many landscape architects feel conflicted by the restoration debate, trapped between the profession's idealistic rhetoric about the innate superiority of native ecosystems and the constraints imposed by the financial and ecological realities of a particular site. Over the past 250 years, people have altered the basic trajectory of modern ecology to such an extent that going back to some earlier native condition is no longer possible and is certainly not a realistic solution to the increasingly complex environmental problems that we face.

Landscape architects—and anyone else who works directly with vegetation— need to acknowledge that a wide variety of so-called novel or emergent ecosystems are developing before our eyes. They are the product of the interacting forces of urbanization, globalization and climate change, and are made up of organisms that have been brought together by the elimination or neutralization of barriers that had kept them separated for millions of years. The concept of a novel ecosystem applies not only to our cities and suburbs but also to many landscapes that have been subjected to the disturbance-intensive practices of agriculture, industry and mining. It is unrealistic to assume that turning back the ecological clock will be any easier than reversing the economic forces that created these landscapes.



Klaus Littmann, For Forest 2019

DESIGNING THE STATIC

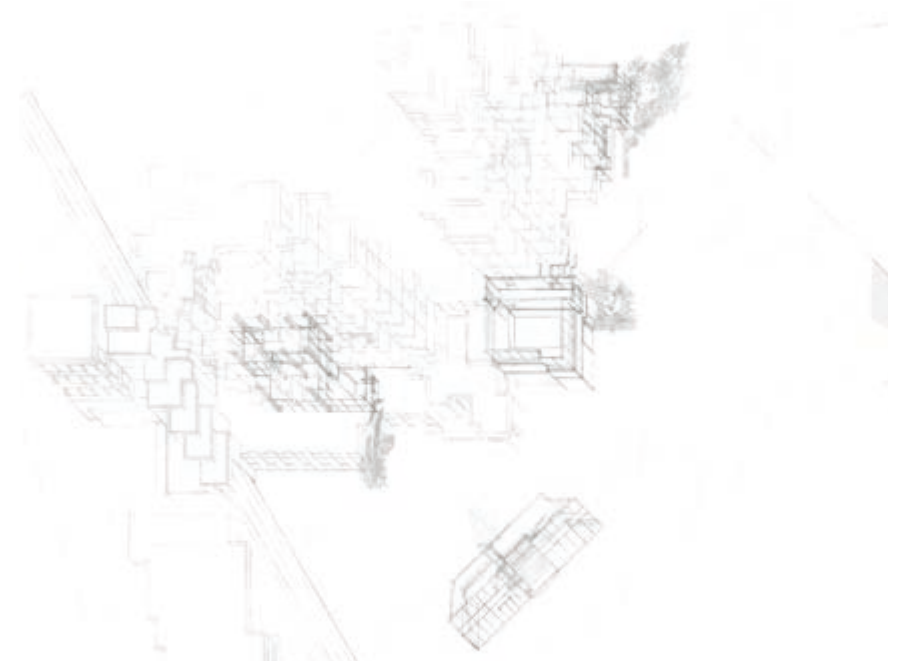
The Base of the two towers and its connection to the garden is secured and solidified. It functions as a connecting element, allowing circulation through the underground area, which extends far beyond the footprint of the towers. This is crucial for the serviceability of a luxury hotel. Additionally, the base acts as the foundation for the structural integrity of the towers. The Waldhaus aims to address the potential long-term durability of a modern ruin. Therefore, specific interventions have been made to address and reinforce the structural weaknesses.

Specifically meaning the East-oriented facades are the most critical, exhibiting the highest degradation levels due to the greater intensity of driving rain, wind and thus higher humidity levels. Additionally, the columns in the west tower are more sensitive, as they set a delicate base for the west tower. Also, the on-site observations show a pronounced decay of the former indoor pool. Its exposure to chloride from the pool water has impacted the materials and the growth

of climbing plants have reached the former sun terrace, slowly covering the outside walls.

These three areas coincide with the circulation architectures connecting the garden level with the ground floor. Their sculptural appearance and tactile qualities, their function allowing accessibility makes them worth securing. The three designated areas and their access become the place of static in the changing, unregulated landscape and decaying building. They are maintained, protected by reinforcement, envelopes or covers and secured by adding protective layers and infrastructures.

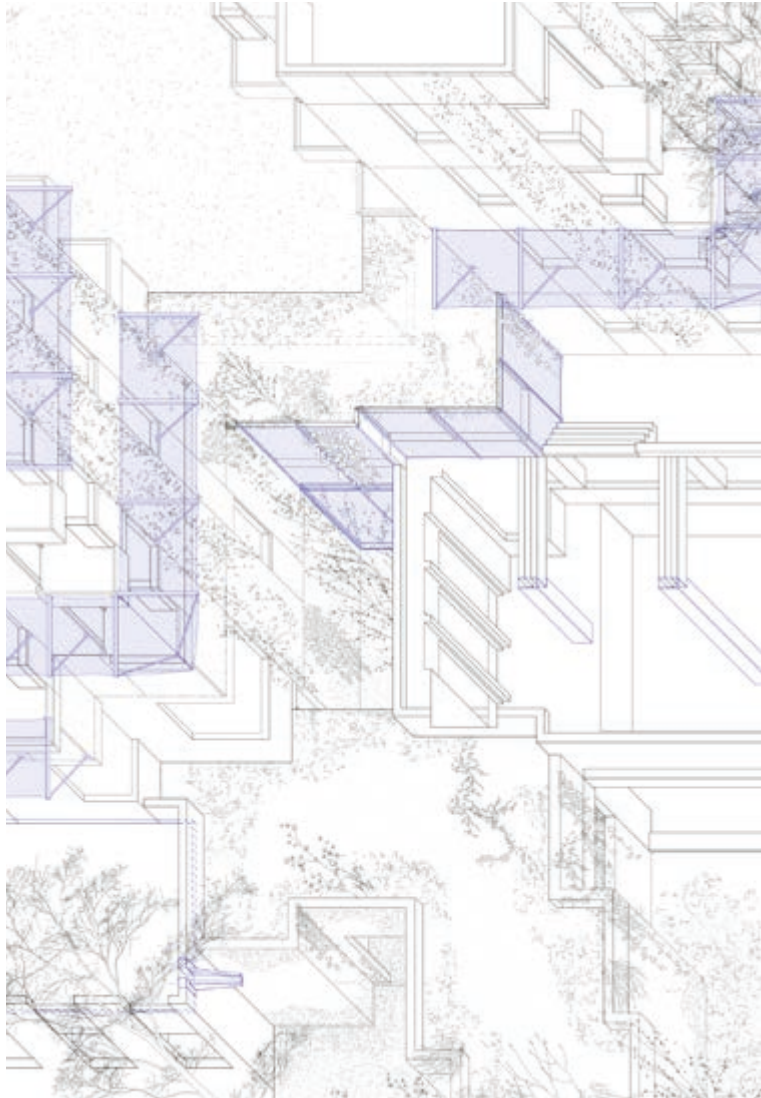
There is a certain inversion of the Waldhaus, altering its relationship to the ground and its concept of the view. The secured spaces establish a new connection to the constructed landscape, finding their place close to an unregulated natural environment. Instead of viewing over it.





top MVRDV, The Hanover Expo 2000 – 20 years after
right Jakob-Rope-Systems, Rotbach Bridge





Safety Nets, Construction Site ZH

A NEW SENSE OF LUXURY

This unregulated and rugged landscape, inaccessible and therefore useless for humans becomes a unique, rare and exclusive environment.

The reintroduction of a hotel function in this dilapidated setting instills a fresh notion of luxury. It transitions from the grandeur of vast spaces, symbolizing affluence and social standing, to the simplicity of emptiness, signifying liberation from materialism and consumer culture. Yet, it further evolves into a realm of ruins, embodying decay, neglect, and abandonment, thus evoking a poignant sense of simulated loss. The survival of a ruinous Waldhaus permitted by contemporary society and their com-

modification of everything, even their own decay.



SITE; Forest House.



top Vector Architects Alila Yangshuo hotel in Yangshuo, China
right Wagon Landscape Architects, growing conditions due to water leak.



top Convent wing St. Peter's seminary, Cardross. *abandoned 25 y.*
right Before/During/After – Arsenal – Paris Pavilion Wagon Landscaping

ENHANCING THE DYNAMIC

Above the base the built structure of the two towers is abandoned, evolving in constant exchange with the environment. The main three environmental conditions that have the greatest effect on the built fabric are temperature (ambient and surface), humidity (absolute and relative) and sunlight (ultraviolet), along with atmospheric pollution.

Modernist architecture can refuse to return to nature. Concrete first becomes dirty before it cracks, rust stains its surroundings, rain-water leaches plaster and the prefab façade elements decompose rather unpredictably.

Similarly, the rate of colonization of plants and animal life depend greatly on the regional climate and ecology. Quality and pollution of the soil, materiality of the site and present biodiversity plus a factor of chance create a diverse spectrum of growth. This is what the re-naturalization laboratory observes.



Can we imagine a space that anyone can use and transform freely, without imposing upon it the notion of the survival of the fittest? Can we conceive of a common space that exists precisely because of this? Does organizing mean planning everything, and leaving no room for the unforeseen, or does it mean creating the best conditions for something unexpected to take place? And what if minimal care was enough to leave room for spontaneity, without turning everything into chaos?

Maintenance becomes an important topic and is differentiated into 3 categories. While areas like the entrance plaza, the gap between the towers and the former “Wäscherei” are left alone. In the towers the research influences clear strategies of modifying the succession through disturbance. The garden level is subjected to periodic weeding, which consists of selectively removing undesirable plants to maintain other vegetation compositions.



top Geoffrey Bawa, Kandalama Heritage Hotel
Experiments indicate that the weedy species (rice) on the right is better able to adapt to climate change and higher CO₂ concentrations than the cultivated rice on the left.

right Empty home, Drafi, Greece.

THE RECLAMATION LABORATORY

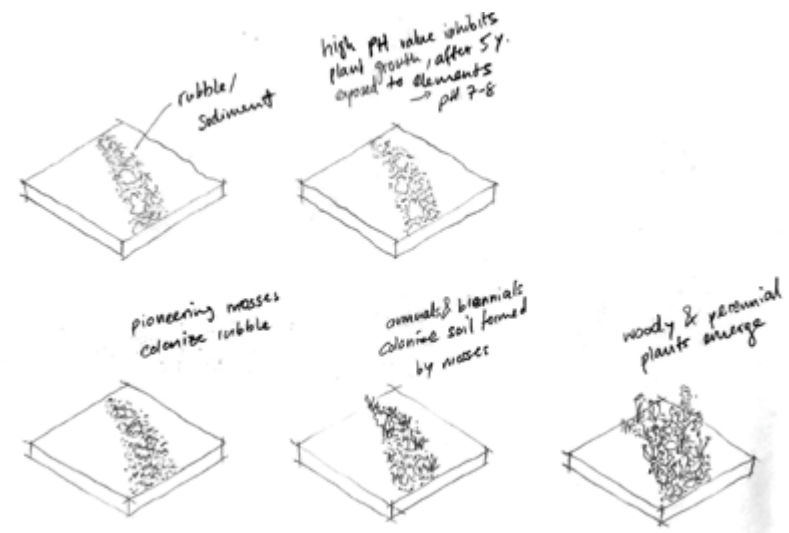
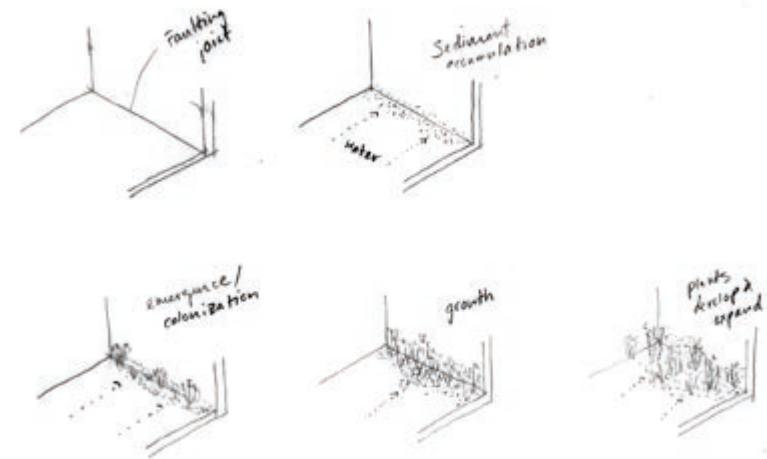
Plants that emerge spontaneously in urban areas are remarkable for their ability to grow in harsh urban conditions. Often, the interaction of natural and anthropogenic processes, as typically found in urban growing conditions, generates dynamic plant compositions. Ecologists define such plant compositions as novel ecosystems because they are not found in any native biome (Hobbs et al., 2006). Furthermore, spontaneous vegetation found in urban novel ecosystems often exhibits striking aesthetics. Examples include cottonwood emerging out of pavement cracks, cattails forming on top of concrete, prairies forming on rubble soils after demolition, or mosses and lichens creeping across unmaintained concrete surfaces.

The harsh urban conditions that most landscape architects design today suggests the need to re-examine the species that have adapted to their conditions. The plant palettes landscape architects are comfortable with nowadays often struggle to survive the altered conditions of urban areas without regular maintenance and substantial interventions.



The critical question designers should ask in regard of the altered urban conditions is not how spontaneous vegetation found in urban novel ecosystems can be eradicated, but rather how they can be integrated and utilized in design. The unsettling truth that non-native spontaneous vegetation thriving in urban novel ecosystems often proves most adaptable to city life discomfords many ecologists and community members alike.

This unease surrounding the ecological significance of such vegetation within urban settings marks the initial indication of a paradigm shift in how these plants are perceived and integrated into urban planting designs. An exciting range of resilient urban planting design typologies will emerge as more learn to embrace the resilience and ecological value spontaneous vegetation found in urban novel ecosystems provide for cities. This project has offered a glimpse of new urban planting design typologies that will be created as a result of increased knowledge and acceptance of the species best adapted to the new ecological order of cities.





Ruin Garden, Tanja Lincke Architekten



Haludovo Resort, Croatia.
35 y. abandoned

Flowering, resilient plants are added to the spontaneous plant societies



Verbascum thapsus
Common mullein



Ballota nigra ruderalis
Black horehound



Cnicus lanceolatus
Thistle



Cichorium intybus
Common chicory



Tanacetum vulgare
Rainfarn



Ailanthus Altissima
Tree of Heaven

Esisting spontaneous plant society



Calamagrostis arundinacea,
Rough small-reed



Hedera Helix
Common ivy



Saxifraga tridactylites
Rue-leaved saxifrage



Rubus fruticosus
Blackberry

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