

Call for paper

(Re)building the Alps? 100 years from the publication of *Die alpine Architektur* by Bruno Taut

Bruno Taut's volume *Die alpine Architektur* was published in 1919. The book was written during the First World War, against a background of mass massacres and destruction.

By placing himself "above the fray", Taut turned his gaze towards the mountains and their peaks as a free area in which to express the constructive and edifying potentialities of the human being where human community could reconcile.

Initially considered an extreme and hostile place for humans, Taut's project was to gradually transform the Alps into an architectural and decorative playground; and the humanity would finally be free to transform the Alps into a house of the future.

The Mountains represented contemporaneously a sort of "diving board towards the stars" and towards infinite potential for transformation and construction.

Die alpine Architektur, in the intentions of its author, was oriented more towards a spiritual rather than an architectural progress, aimed at erasing the archetypal opposition between *low* and *high*, characteristic of Alpine symbolism, preserving only the *top*.

The strength of Taut's visions, addressed to the radical modification of the alpine natural environment, has been interpreted in different ways by the culture of the twentieth century, creating both "embarrassment" and contrast with the solid work of the working class architect.

A hundred years later, the book poses a series of huge problems, and involve many types of scholars. Here below some possible themes are proposed without excluding others:

1. How can the "visions" of Taut be understood from the point of view of a landscape designer, an environmentalist, an art historian, an architecture historian and an historian of the Alps?
2. Is it possible to interpret them simply as the outcome of the transformation processes of the alpine landscape, which were particularly violent in the nineteenth century (with the occurrence of mountaineering, elevators leading tourists to scenic places, *Grand Hotels* on the peaks, technologization of the Alps) and further aggravated in the twentieth century with the explosion of the skiing economy?
3. Shall the images of Taut be traced back to the antecedents represented by Violet-le-Duc and Hablik? To the French utopians or to the lesson of the "architect" Paul Scheerbart?
4. What links exist between the practical dimension of the projects presented by *Die alpine Architektur* and the utopian dimension of the projects of the 1920s?
5. What are the links with Gothic architecture and the «perception of the Alps as a gigantic cathedral»?
6. Are the "full" valleys of the 21st century to be related to the visions of Taut?
7. Do the projects of *Die Alpine Architektur* have an economic potential similar to that of Christo's achievements (The Floating Piers)? As Le Corbusier writes about the economic potential of the reconstruction of Paris' town centre, does also Taut imagine he can produce wealth through construction?
8. What are the mountains according to Taut? A place of utopia or dystopia if the "consumption of land" and the "consumption of landscape" are brought to their extreme consequences?
9. What is the relationship between the views of *Die alpine Architektur* in which "the drawings of non-conventional free forms [and giant decorations] change the natural landscape as if they were allowed to invade the globe" and the admiration for "neatness" and the simplicity of Japanese architecture?

10. How can such a strongly colonizing vision of architecture be reconciled with the political positions of Taut and its life paths excluding him from Germany, the Soviet Union and see him forced to emigrate to Japan and Turkey?

The study days may be the moment to take stock of the situation of the studies dedicated to this interesting intellectual, architect and artist and will help to ask new and more stimulating questions about his work, even on that "dark side" that today appears so obvious.

The conference will be held at the Academy of Architecture in Mendrisio, on the 7th and 8th November 2019.

The deadline for submitting the proposals is set for 15st March 2019. The abstracts should clearly indicate: paper title; author/s of the paper; institutions of reference of the author; email address and phone number of the author.

Abstracts should not exceed 2000 characters (including spaces).

For sending your abstracts and for further information contact please:

roberto.leggero@usi.ch

sonja.hildebrand@usi.ch