A modern move Transforming Nestlé Headquarters in Vevey

Richter and Dahl Rocha architects

Preface – Mario Campi
Introduction – Jacques Gubler

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Pages 4–5: Nestlé Headquarters building after Richter and Dahl Rocha transformation, south facade illuminated for inaugural festivities on 11 April 2000. *Pages 8–9:* South facade and park seen from the ground level of the new Liaison Space.

Pages 12–13: View from the ground floor across the park toward Lake Geneva and the French Alps, showing Tschumi's original concrete pilotis and Richter and Dahl Rocha's new profile for the Burckhardt extension. *Pages 16–17:* New skylight over staircase linking the executive offices on the 5th floor with the 6th or 'Communication Floor'.

We wish to express our gratitude to Nestlé for the cultural engagement and enlightened decision-making they demonstrated with respect to the fate of the headquarters building Jean Tschumi designed for them in 1958. The firm of Richter and Dahl Rocha has been privileged to contribute to this phase of the building's life with the present transformation.

We wish to thank the members of the Nestlé Steering Committee for their sustained support, in particular Peter Brabeck-Letmathe, Chief Executive Officer, whose personal involvement made him our most astute critic as well as our most stimulating design partner.

We wish to thank each of the Nestlé employees and all of the consultants, organizations, and independent companies and agencies whose efforts contributed to realizing this project as a genuinely collective and rewarding endeavor. Among the many individuals to whom we are grateful, we wish to thank David Panchaud and his team for providing us with valuable guidance and insights into the corporate world of Nestlé. We also wish to thank the department of Historical Monuments, Canton Vaud, whose expertise proved to be invaluable in the process of renovating Tschumi's remarkable building. Finally, we thank our associate Kenneth Ross, who successfully fulfilled the demanding role of Project Architect.

This book, supervised by Andreas Müller and Ria Stein from Birkhäuser Publishers, justly honors a collective effort. We wish to thank Jacques Gubler and Mario Campi for their involvement and contributions, which have offered us new perspectives on the subject. We wish to thank Oscar Riera Ojeda, who initiated the publication, as well as Denise Bratton, Isabella Carpiceci Hahne, Esther Mildenberger, and Brian Switzer, who put their talent and energy into its realization.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the major contribution Nestlé has made to the book project itself. Their enthusiasm, cooperation, and support at every stage of the process expressed, once again, their extraordinary engagement with the art of architecture.

Jacques Richter
Ignacio Dahl Rocha

I have learned over the years that what counts in architectural thought is the honesty and thoroughness of the work. The presence of these basic qualities is virtually palpable in the architecture of Jacques Richter and Ignacio Dahl Rocha. Their works are impressive in many respects, but to recognize this requires looking at architecture from a point of view other than the one taken by current criticism in the field. Instead of more superficial concerns, one is moved to talk about the inherent qualities of architecture itself.

First, the projects of Richter and Dahl Rocha demonstrate a continuity of architectural intentions that responds to what one might define as a breaking loose of cause and effect in today's architectural thought. Simultaneously, their work gives shape to a possible response to issues currently affecting the discipline. Issues which, by mirroring the present state of the art, invoke the disturbing attitude and creeping sense of intellectual discomfort that is surfacing on the worldwide architectural scene. A cultural scene where one might be tempted to say that architecture is no longer the stage for social life; on the contrary, it has become the rule to elevate the architect onto the stage, and as such, to support and legitimize a world where an increasing number of architectural objects totally disconnected from the body of the city assume supremacy. Richter and Dahl Rocha's design approach, and specifically their built work, is indicative of a strategy that critically opposes these tendencies.

Second, their work pays due attention to the meaning of fundamental architectural theories and concepts. Attentively observing the present state of the art, one could argue that architecture is pervaded by an obsessive repetition of always identical patterns, inscribed with the same marks, the same signs, the same imprints, the same materials. And thus, in my view, the result is an architectural horizon against which the compulsion to define personal identities has attained a level of assertiveness and visibility that even surpasses the haunting pervasiveness of corporate identity.

In such a world, Richter and Dahl Rocha are much more concerned with the production of works that put the inevitable architectural lesson of Vitruvius on stage. It is this lesson they confront. Their insistence on design solutions based on distinctive and clear architectural concepts such as the traditional and irrevocable relation to *utilitas*, *firmitas*, and *venustas* demonstrates sufficiently enough that it is not *ideas* that are killing architecture, but something more banal, the absence of architectural cunning. In this regard, the conscious and sustained effort of Richter and Dahl Rocha in pursuing their goals eventually expresses a certain antagonism toward the increasing mutability, fickleness, and theoretical uncertainty that characterizes today's architectural production.

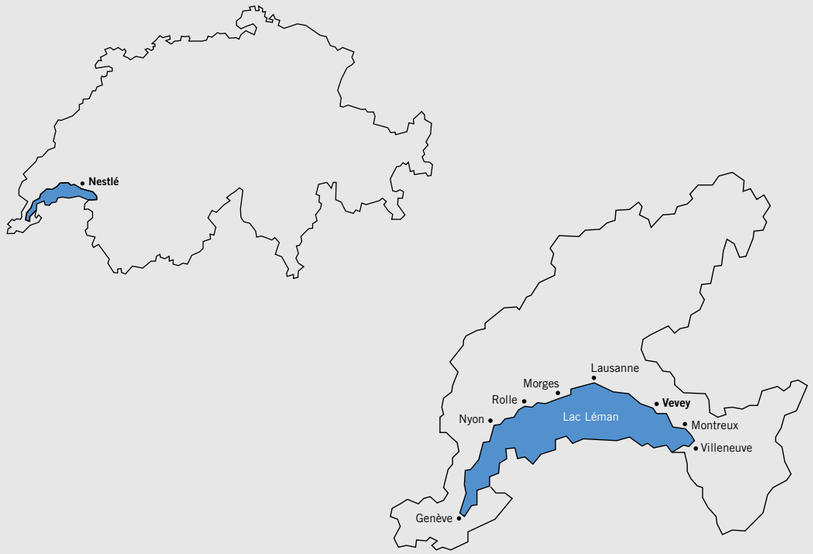
When Jacques Richter and Ignacio Dahl Rocha asked me to contribute to this publication, I decided to pay a visit to their buildings, which until then I knew mostly through publications. Looking at their projects, I was confronted with a whole range of sensations related to the very different works I was amazed to discover. Most evident was their precision in solving extremely diverse problems, reminding me of Corbu's remark that "*l'architecture est chose difficile*."
For Richter and Dahl Rocha, design solutions stem from their habit of simultaneously defining and reflecting, bringing to each new problem their tendency to analytical research, their methodological approach, and their profound capacity to answer intelligently each challenge set before them. Their strategy is twofold: to propose and find the material for the foundation of their architectural idea in the very vein of the problem itself, and at the same time, to derive their comprehensive architectural language from the object of their aesthetic interest.

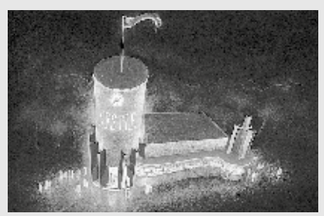
In their sensitive handling of the two previous incarnations of Jean Tschumi's Nestlé's Headquarters building, dealing with architectural objects that are by now part of the historical heritage of modernity, Richter and Dahl Rocha succeeded in the difficult task of re-assembling two disparate architectural episodes. The introduction of their own architectural contribution to the project, the Liaison Space, is an invention that can be sensed and understood as a space of mediation between the earlier projects. In the Liaison Space, you are confronted with an extraordinarily cunning solution, an elegant tectonic collage. What could at first sight be taken as an eclectic attitude toward architectural expression in Richter and Dahl Rocha's work actually speaks of deeper insight, an extremely attentive and thoughtful capacity for interpreting the status of the two existing buildings in a contemporary context. In their studied manipulation of ideal affinities, spatial relations, and material properties, Richter and Dahl Rocha again demonstrate their unfailing ability to surprise and stimulate.

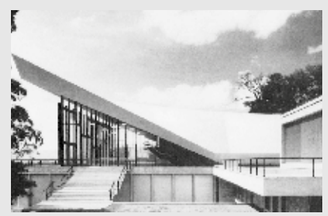
All too often I have asked myself what causes the profound astonishment that we experience in the presence of an important architectural space. Generally speaking, this effect of stupefaction occurs with relative frequency in our younger years, while it is gradually mitigated by age. Richter and Dahl Rocha's Liaison Space for the Nestlé Headquarters arouses this feeling. It is important to assert that here, as elsewhere in the works of these architects, one is confronted by their passionate architectural intentions, tempered by an intense and uncompromising adherence to the basic principles of the discipline.

This is why I believe that in their future work, Richter and Dahl Rocha shall surprise us again and inspire in us the wonder of astonishment. Incapable as they are of being satisfied with solutions that are merely variations on a familiar theme, they approach each design problem as a catalyst for the generation of new form. This approach will guide their future adventures in architectural production, always supported by the acuteness of their relation with the history of ideas, the history of construction, and the history of architecture.

Mario Campi







Opposite page: Jean Tschumi, 1904–62; Maps of Switzerland and Canton Vaud surrounding the Lake of Geneva. *Above, left to right:* Tschumi's proposal for a Nestlé Pavilion for the World Exhibition, Paris, 1937; Headquarters of the Mutuelle Vaudoise Assurances (MVA) in Lausanne; Lecture Hall, École polytechnique fédérale, Lausanne (EPFL), 1957–62.

Jean Tschumi revisited by Richter and Dahl Rocha

At the turn of the millennium, a new architectural configuration was imparted to the Nestlé Headquarters in Vevey, Switzerland, the "flagship" of the company.[1] Where there had been two (dis) connected buildings that stood glaring at one another like cat and dog, the design of an unprecedented monumental stairwell achieved a new synthesis, connecting the earlier structures by means of a symbolic core that would become, in effect, a third building. The countdown began when Nestlé publicly announced that the firm would undertake the renovation of the earliest of its buildings on the dramatic site at Vevey on Lake Geneva: *En Bergère*, a veritable palazzo, Jean Tschumi's internationally acknowledged masterwork – which had been declared a historical monument by the Swiss Canton of Vaud. The renovation *per force* would have to be negotiated with the Service des Monuments historiques. Nestlé corporate management selected their architects from a pool of seventeen candidates, of which six made the short list. The jury weighed the merits of these firms point for point, eventually naming the Lausanne-based partnership of Richter and Dahl Rocha.

In order to grasp the contours of this slightly intricate story, it is useful to review the chronology, to acknowledge the three stages of construction at Vevey, and to distinguish among them. The history of the Nestlé commissions at Vevey raises two distinct issues in architectural criticism: first, the role played by management in commissioning the image and machinery of their own *corporate identity*; second, the question of the creative potential of an architectural 'renovation' when a building has been inscribed in the book of Modern Heritage – a situation rife with contradictory possibilities. And so, let us look at the chronology, a series of three moments, three *chantiers*:

May 1956 to April 1960 – the first building erected, Jean Tschumi's masterwork;

October 1973 to September 1976 – a second building erected, an extension designed by Martin Burckhardt and Partners;

1996 to 2000 – a third initiative, consisting in the renovation of the first building, the emendation of the second, and the construction of a new core joining the two earlier structures, undertaken by the architects Jacques Richter and Ignacio Dahl Rocha.

Jean Tschumi's first steps

Born in 1904, the son of a cabinetmaker who established his practice at Renens, near Lausanne, Jean Tschumi was raised on the strong perfume of wood glue and sawdust. As often happens in the social milieu of the arts and crafts, the father wanted his son to attain a higher degree of professional and corporate dignity. The boy was sent to the Technicum in Bienne, where he gained the skills required to take the examination for entrance to the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. In effect, Tschumi managed to arrive at the study of architecture through the decorative arts. He developed a deft and talented hand in sketching, whether the subject was furniture or an entire building decorated with sculpture. His skilled craftsmanship enabled him to find work in order to support his extended studies at the École, where he was granted the French government diploma in architecture in 1922.

As a Swiss living in Paris, Tschumi frequented the Colonie suisse, an informal club active in business, industry, and social spheres. His first contact with Nestlé is documented in 1937, the year of the World Exhibition, when Tschumi submitted his design for the unrealized Nestlé Pavilion. Meanwhile, the first commissions came from another Swiss multinational corporation, also located in France: the Sandoz Group. Tschumi had become friends with the sculptor Édouard Marcel Sandoz, a member of the corporate board of directors of the company, while studying at the École des Beaux-Arts. The Sandoz Group specialized in the development of chemical components applied to the production of pharmaceuticals such as liquid calcium, and they needed office space, research laboratories, and production facilities. On various occasions over a period of twenty years, Tschumi worked as the architect for Sandoz in France.[2]

During the Second World War, Tschumi was offered an opportunity to return to Lausanne, where a school of architecture was founded in 1943 as a division of the school of engineering at the university.[3] He became the first member of the faculty in architecture and urbanism, adopting the French model of the Beaux-Arts atelier, a vertical structure, which he merged with the horizontal strata of technical instruction. Within ten years, the school would manage to gain international recognition. In 1953, an exhibition of student work was visited by delegates to the Lausanne congress of the Union Internationale des Architectes (UIA) of which Tschumi was a prominent member and for a time, president. The scope of the association was to promote international exchange.[4] The founder of two architecture offices, one in Paris, one in Lausanne, Tschumi switched domiciles from River Seine to Lake Léman every week. At age fifty-eight, he would meet his premature death by heart attack aboard the night train from Paris.

In Lausanne, he was commissioned to build the two main buildings of what would become the École polytechnique. He also met private clients among the local business community. For one of those clients, Mutuelle Vaudoise Assurances (MVA), he successfully constructed a headquarters building which would become a decisive factor in Nestlé's decision to select him as architect for the project in Vevey. Assuming Jean Tschumi demonstrated to his future clients that he was a specialist in office buildings, the competencies involved at this point in time are worthy of mention:

- development of a full range of constructive systems in combination; interest in the technology of reinforced concrete and steel; attention to the latest developments in the industrial catalogue of materials and technical supply, including fluorescent and neon lighting, linoleum, elevators, telephone lines, and so forth; up-to-date knowledge of mechanical systems, including the concentration of electrical supply and climate control (heating connected to air-conditioning) in vertical shafts and horizontal ducts;

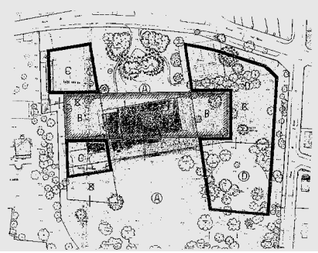
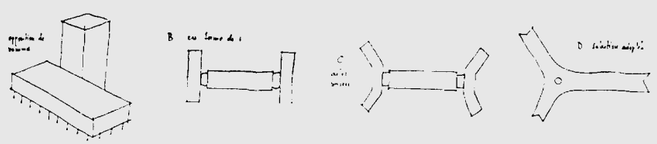
- knowledge of the latest American innovations in office organization and time management technologies, including the use of modular systems and adjustable partitions to articulate open and cellular spaces, the application of social innovations like the installation of a canteen to maximize the midday break, and the five-day work week (called in French *semaine anglaise*);

- control of interior furnishings, whether custom-made or ordered through the Knoll International catalogue, together with the commission and installation of murals, sculpture,






Above, left to right: Bird's-eye view of Vevey at the beginning of the 1900s, with the old Grand Hôtel on the site of the future Nestlé building; Facade of the Grand Hôtel; Film footage documenting demolition of the structure in 1956; *below, left:* Plan d'extension de Vevey, 1956 (Archives, Vevey); *below, right:* Tschumi's studies of different building typologies for the site. *Opposite page, above:* Construction phases of the new Nestlé Headquarters, circa 1957–58; *below, left to right:* Examples of Tschumi's many large, gouache perspective *variantes* for the Nestlé Headquarters – entrance facade elevation, and interior view of the executive board room.

and other artwork as part of a resurgent 1950s obsession with the '*intégration des arts*';[5]

• pursuit of a freestanding, almost sculptural architectural form abstracted from the urban context, an overall monitoring of the profiles and joints, and an approach to styling best described by the notion of elegance;

• understanding of the concept of 'corporate identity', in light of an excursion to the East Coast of the United States, not only as something to be cosmetically applied, but rather as a formal and moral discipline stemming from the substance of a corporate enterprise.[6]

These five competencies were evident already in Tschumi's MVA insurance building in Lausanne, completed in 1956,[7] which functioned for the architect's clients both as a formal referent of architectural quality and a guarantee.

Tschumi's meeting with Bignami and Corthésy

When Jean Tschumi was approached to design the Nestlé Headquarters in Vevey, he was already fifty years old. "At the time, Nestlé was growing fast. It was already a dynamic and sizeable business, but still run on small-company lines by two managing directors, Jean-Constant Corthésy and Enrico Bignami. They were appointed at a relatively young age, in their early forties, and formed a strong partnership for many years. They complemented one another well. Corthésy was a local Vaudois, a quiet, thoughtful administrator, whereas Bignami was a more excitable Italian. It was Bignami who masterminded the whole concept of a new Head Office building."[8] Enrico Bignami had been greatly impressed by the personality of Adriano Olivetti, and knew that in Ivrea, modern architecture and design were supported as the impetus for the industrial development of Olivetti products.[9] There is no doubt that Tschumi represented efficient modernity from the point of view of Nestlé's corporate directors.[10]

In January 1956, the company acquired the site, a majestic park on the lake designed and grown together with the Grand Hôtel de Vevey, one of numerous small and grand palaces built during the years 1880–1910 when Montreux and Vevey came to be known as cosmopolitan and picturesquely rustic resorts along the Riviera Lémanique. The demolition of the Grand Hôtel in 1956 by the Swiss army was filmed, and these moving images of the structure disintegrating into a cloud of dust have remained a familiar sight through their appropriation by the mass media.[11]

As with other Swiss communes, regulations codified by the Plan d´extension of 1956 and adopted by the Canton governed the use of the land. For instance, the footprint of the building was not to exceed fifteen percent of the area of the entire site.[12] The site had been subdivided into six parcels, originally adapted to the development of dispersed small-scale condominiums facing the lake, with different prescriptions for height and layout, a veritable puzzle for the architect confronted with the design of a single building. Thus, Tschumi's choice of parti, the basic Y-shaped composition with its curved unequal arms, was a clever answer to the Plan d'extension as well as a response to the requirement for maximized use of space. The parti established a dynamic configuration. In order to respect the legal height limits and local aversion to high-rise structures, the north-west arm of the Y facing the town had to be 4.5 meters lower than the other two wings. This constraint led to the proposal of an open-air roof garden, the level of which would meet the attic floor above the main wing occupied by the executive directors. A special dispensation was to be negotiated with the city of Vevey in order to integrate the pergola and cornice of the roof garden into the attic of the building.Eventually, this imposed irregularity, a missing volume merging with the profile of the building, would reinforce the sense of a dynamic whole.

The spatial articulation and volume of the building were also conditioned by the ghost of the demolished Grand Hôtel, whose surrounding park was to be spared. The inventory of trees under protection there – pines, cedars, catalpas, chestnuts, and so on – had been listed and drawn on the Plan d´extension, and indeed the Y-shape of the building would spare the trees.[13] The architect verified that the maximum height of 27.5 meters over the street to the north could be divided into nine levels: two underground floors for mechanical systems and parking, a large *rez-de-chaussée*, five office floors, and an attic floor for common use. The capacity of the building was projected at a volume of 150,000 cubic meters (5,300,000 cubic feet) on a surface area of 35,000 square meters (370,000 square feet), providing space for an estimated average of 800 employees in 1956.[14] These figures were presented to the clients.

In order to communicate with the two directors and interpret their desires, Jean Tschumi, himself a rather untalented speaker, submitted proposed solutions in *variantes*. The practice of the *variante*, an empirical method taught at the École des Beaux-Arts but inherited from schools of engineering, allowed the architect to develop his project in relation to practicality, the appropriateness of the 'style' or expressive quality of the facades, but also the *cost* of a building. At Vevey, Tschumi used the *variante* not only to test the rationality and viability of his proposal, but as a game of seduction: the Nestlé directors were shown colorful renderings, large gouache perspectives cinemascope size with cut-out cardboard trees or aluminum panels glued on the paper support. These spectacular plates presented alternative solutions to important problems without calling into question his basic solution: the Y-shaped parti.

The *variantes* manipulated the full range of possibilities: the plasticity of the building, the choice and expression of the *rez-de-chaussée*, the decoration of the blind walls (*mur pignon*) at the intersection of the wings in dovetail, and the cornices of the attic floor, but also the internal organization. Bignami and Corthésy acted in complicity with the architect, and the building became their child.[15] They decided that the directors' offices would be situated on the third floor, exactly halfway up to the attic floor. Tschumi summarized their options in a presentation model that he initially kept in his own flat; he only showed it to his clients and the public when the building permit was applied for.[16]

The office floors are situated over the reinforced concrete frame of a monumental portico that recalls a soaring hull. The explanation given to the public was that the ground floor would not conceal the park and the lake, but rather reveal the landscape "in transparency."[17] The architect had brought together in his design all of the materials and techniques at the forefront of the contemporary building industry. The reinforced concrete structure of the lower levels functioned as the plinth for the steel and concrete structure of the office floors and the aluminum and glass curtain wall. Within professional






Above, left to right: Inauguration of the Nestlé Headquarters building, with Jean-Constant Corthésy presiding, 1960; Bird's-eye view of main entrance facade accomodating the trees from the old Grand Hôtel park; Interior of the main lobby and reception area on the day of the inauguration. *Opposite page, above:* Lakeside elevations and view toward the park from the lobby; *below:* Entrance canopy on main facade; Double helical 'Chambord' staircase seen from the ground floor; Interior of main lobby with Tschumi's furnishings and floor lamps.



circles of contractors and engineers, Tschumi enjoyed the reputation of an 'efficient' modernist. Due to the prestige of the Nestlé commission, he had the opportunity to work with leading engineers like Alexandre Sarrasin (1895–1976), an innovator in the realm of reinforced concrete vaults, shells, and bridges. Nestlé's directors also offered Tschumi the opportunity to collaborate with Willi Bühlmann, who would supervise operations on the building site and oversee the planning.[18] Far from impeding progress, these harmonious collaborations gave Tschumi more time to develop his design.

Now, the magnitude of this opportunity had already been grasped by certain contractors and industrialists: right from the beginning, the project was advertised as "the largest office building in Switzerland." The Swiss aluminum industry, window and panel manufacturers, immediately took advantage of the situation by offering to produce new standard pieces with refined profiles and improved surface appearance.[19] The salient moments of the construction were photographed and filmed in color. One of these documents shows the steel skeleton painted minium red wedded to the vertical gray blade of the blind wall and set upon the curved gray bridge of the ground floor. The gray tone of the reinforced concrete is as creamy and beautifully edible as one might expect. Great care was taken in casting the pentagonal faceted oblique pillars of the portico, which would be sanded, not to say sculpted, after the removal of the wooden formworks in order to become the major plastic event of the lobby.

On each floor of offices, the steel structure organized a central bay and two larger lateral bays with pillars set back from the facade. The central bay functioned as a service core to consolidate machinery and sanitary equipment, while two outer bays conveyed the cellular modulation of the offices. A blind corridor ran along the service core and was illumined by a continuous neon tube. It was located in the lakeside bay and offered perpendicular passages through to the mountain-side bay. Such a principle of organization in three parallel compartments, as Jürgen Joedicke has shown, had been used in Europe since 1949, when Egon Eiermann built offices and laboratories for the CIBA Company in Wehr (Baden).[20]

A promenade

Glimpsed from the north parking lot, the signal event of the main entrance was a spectacular canopy, a virtuoso performance in aluminum jointing, closer to aircraft than ship building.[21] One entered the lobby only to be confronted with the reception desk. Two large perspectives opened up: the first looked out to the backlit panorama of the park, which with an often dazzling effect recalled the ghost of the Grand Hôtel; the second was the huge longitudinal sequence of the reception hall, a showcase for materials and furniture. The triangles of the floor set in colored marbles played with the faceted geometry of the pillars and frames. This room illustrated the Beaux-Arts concept of *salle des pas perdus*, a corridor in which to chat and wait in a courthouse or parliamentary building. The architect determined the design of the furniture at a scale of 1:1, not only the low tables and deep armchairs, but also the dark metal floor lamps spanning the inner perspective of the glass box. The fluted oblique mast on a tripod supported a split ovoid shell. This geometry reinterpreted the profiles of the pillars of the framed portico. The display of materials and colors achieved an effect of luxury invoked by the extremely fine craftsmanship of the joints and angles. In the lobby, the architect formulated Nestlé's corporate identity in an allegory of precision and assembly. The multiple and interactive reflections produced by the glass panes only added to the preciosity of the ensemble.

The longitudinal perspective of the lobby was foreclosed by the opaque box of an elevator shaft, which did not entirely hide the double aluminum spiral of the stairwell at the junction of the Y. Instead of a spiral, and in concomitance with the mechanical metaphors used by Tschumi, one should rather call it the double 'propeller'. This stair offers a second technical and visual event. Whereas in the United States the elevator lobby had become a major space, while the stairs, almost always hidden from view, operated as fire escapes, it was not uncommon in Europe, after the Second World War, however strict the fire safety regulations, to find a central stairwell at the core of a significant building, a new city hall or embassy, but also corporate headquarters. In addition to their social connotation of the commonplace, the physical presence of stairs makes a strong plastic gesture, as in the case of Hans Hofmann's headquarters for the Swiss Aluminum Company, which was a reference point for Tschumi as well as his clients.[22] Hofmann had positioned a single spiral spanning four levels, a freestanding sculpture in the main hall. One can imagine that there was a relationship of mutual admiration and inspiration between Hofmann and Tschumi. Among numerous Swiss modernist architects, Hofmann was certainly the colleague that Tschumi took into consideration. But one should add that, from his first projects of the late 1930s, the French-Swiss architect had obsessively adhered to Beaux-Arts themes in architecture, in particular the sublimation of the cornice, the canopy, and the stair. In this way, the double aluminum spiral of the stairwell at Vevey confirmed his recurrent poetics in the sculpture of the technical event.

A priviledged visit to the directors' suite on the third floor would reveal that the architects were eager to create ensembles – whether conference rooms, waiting rooms, or private offices – in their combination of structural systems, furniture, sculptural and pictorial decoration. The varied scale of materials and colors again satisfied the tastes of the clients, perhaps with a slight tendency toward picturesque beauty. On the more accessible sixth or attic floor, where the common and corporate facilities were situated, a curved bar met the double helical staircase, and a panoramic canteen looked toward the lake, while the kitchen view was toward the mountainside; private dining rooms for the directors and their guests were located in the east wing, while the roof garden was situated to the north, and a small cinema was housed in the southern wing. This configuration of rooms, where bright light, the seductive aroma of coffee, and the smell of food would predominate, evoked an atmosphere synonymous with corporate culture.

Stepping out into the park, one discovered the fuller scope of the structure. Its insertion into the arboretum is also a radical abstraction from any urban context. One might ask if the building answers to the Bauhaus assumption of the freestanding autonomous configuration emanating its electrical energy, or if it belongs to the classical strategy of positioning the harmonious form in front of a backdrop (*il fondo e la forma*). In this case, the background would be the alpine circus and romantic scenery *En Bergère*. Whatever the answer, the perception of the mass in relation to the volume creates a dynamic effect of wholeness. The reason for this modern sculptural effect might be sought in the notion of *modénature*. In classical architecture, the Italian *modenatura*, or the French *modénature* relates to the modulation of building profiles by light. It embraces the use of the Orders






Opposite page, above, left to right: Bird's-eye view of Vevey looking across the vineyards, Tschumi's Nestlé building to the right; View to the east, Vevey and the Swiss Alps from the Nestlé building; Roof terrace overlooking Vevey and the vineyards; *below:* Tschumi's bar, cafeteria, and Nestlé 'canteen' surrounding the Chambord staircase on the 6th floor. *Above:* Bird's-eye views of Tschumi's Nestlé building; *below:* Nestlé staff at work – switchboard operators answering phones, workers sorting the mail, a coffee tasting session.





and prescribes the superposition of elements: the capital and the architrave or the entablature and the cornice. Its modern equivalent still concerns the control of the profiles, but it relates to the modulation of other repetitive elements, prefabricated or not, which enter into the regulation of the elevation.

Of course Tschumi was taught the classical Orders at the Beaux-Arts. He wanted to develop his personal means of translating the antique tradition of *modénature* into the technical milieu of modern industrial society. In Paris, he could ruminate in front of works by the Perret brothers. His first important commissions for Sandoz in Orléans or MVA in Lausanne were approached under the star of reinforced concrete facades in which he modulated the superposed frames of the elevation with intimate connections between base and cornice. In Vevey, in 1956, Tschumi tackled the problem of the aluminum and glass curtain wall for the first time. He focused his attention on the aluminum profiles that would frame over one thousand standard glass fenestration panels and become vertical *brise-soleil*.[23] The shape of the *brise-soleil* varied according to the orientation of each facade. The ultimate rationale for *modénature* is the qualification of the parts in relation to the whole, from the scale of the detail and of the joints to the perception of the entire body, a sort of zoom effect which gives meaning to the structural presence
of the building. The materiality of the construction was defined by its respect for the rule of the 'nature' of the materials.
The color and texture of each component – reinforced concrete, steel, aluminum, or glass – in fact were made to correspond to its most commonly identifiable industrial treatment. The polychromy of the building, a muted palate of gray and blue-green, was quick to respond to the warmth of the light patches emanating from office windows at dusk or on rainy days.

The reception

The building was immediately published by the major architecture magazines in Switzerland, France, Germany, Italy, England, and the United States.[24] One reason for this sustained attention was the news that the Richard Samuel Reynolds Memorial Award had been awarded to Nestlé's Headquarters in March 1960 – the jury was chaired by Walter Gropius. The Reynolds Award, worth US $25,000, promoted on an international scale the application of aluminum to architecture. Out of ninety-nine candidates, Tschumi was distinguished for his 'sensitive' use of the elements, the varied vertical profiles of the *brise-soleil*, the boldness of the canopy, and the originality of the double helical staircase. The architect flew to San Francisco in April to accept his award at the annual meeting of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Once he was back in Lausanne, he declared to a journalist that European practitioners should visit the United States every three years.[25]

But the sheer number of articles on Tschumi's Nestlé building is also related to the particularly high graphic quality of the drawings and photographs produced and lavishly distributed by Nestlé, and later housed in the archives of the "Bureau technique." Bruno Zevi's chronicle in the Italian weekly *L'Espresso* developed an interesting argument. The Italian critic shows that Tschumi's Y-shaped parti in Vevey is a critical answer to the slightly earlier Y of the UNESCO building in Paris (1958), a multi-national collaboration between Marcel Breuer, Bernard Zehrfuss, and Pier Luigi Nervi. In other words, Nestlé's architect wanted to teach a lesson to his colleagues. For Zevi, the UNESCO building is dull and weak, whereas the Nestlé building is "a wonderful study in rationalist mannerism (*manierismo razionalista*)."[26] According to Zevi, the merits of the two buildings reside, in the first place, in the terminal points of their three wings: orthogonal and monotonous in Paris, oblique and dovetailed in Vevey. Zevi's apologia for Tschumi's work derives from his Italian polemics against *l'architettura razionale* and a devout admiration for Wright. The ultimate proof of the "end of rationalist architecture" would be inscribed in Ronchamp itself. In this sense, Breuer-Zehrfuss-Nervi participated in the lethal crisis of the "Ex-Le Corbusian", and Tschumi's mannerism played the swan song: tomorrow, rationalism would be dead.

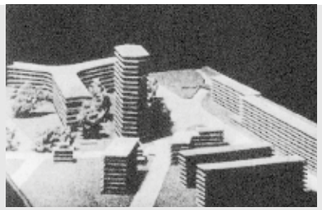
Zevi's juxtaposition of the UNESCO and Nestlé buildings calls for another passing observation. When Tschumi was approached by Bignami and Corthésy in the spring of 1965, construction had just begun on the Breuer-Zehrfuss-Nervi's building, and the project had been published by the magazine *Architecture d'aujourd'hui*. The Swiss architect in Paris was not only attentive to the media: as an old Beaux-Arts comrade of Bernard Zehrfuss, he realized that the emulative effect later observed
by Zevi was a risk. However, two striking things distinguish the buildings from one another. In Paris, the Y-shaped parti is urban and highly conditioned by its context. It refers to the *tracé* of Place de Fontenoy and the scale of its two curved palaces.
In Vevey, the building is freestanding in the park. In Paris, the structure is homogeneous; the floors are built on a hollow cellular beam of reinforced concrete.[27] The constructive logic and economy requires orthogonal wings. In Vevey, a more flexible steel structure rests on the reinforced concrete portico. The differences are not only stylistic, whether brutalist or mannerist, but rather stem from basic structural and urban choices.

Burckhardt's *Bourgeois*: the extension of 1973–1976

Did the architectural success of the first building anticipate or illustrate the industrial power of the company, which would be confirmed in the next decade? The question is probably inappropriate to corporate culture, in which the existence of an enterprise is rooted in the necessity to continually outpace the competition and increase production and profitability.
There is no doubt that the new headquarters offered itself as a palace for the *mise en scène* of Nestlé's corporate identity and rituals. Did Tschumi's ideal of harmonious unity effectively impede the construction of an addition? A document in the Nestlé archives shows that Tschumi had anticipated the probability of an extension and proposed the solution of a separate tower-shaped building to the northeast in direct rapport with the intersection. Such a solution was sound, offering a contrast and emphasizing the essence of the main building.[28] But it was also unrealistic in view of the immediate and even more removed neighbors who despised skyscrapers – even those a mere sixteen stories low.

The necessity to build an extension became urgent for Nestlé management at the beginning of the 1970s, a little more than a decade after the completion of Tschumi's building. The rational agenda was to double the capacity of everything: employees, and thus office floors and reception rooms. In the meantime, Tschumi had died. The corporate management of the company had evolved into a new constellation of directors. It is probable that the key decisionmakers considered the extension to be a routine job, a 'natural' fact of 'normal' corporate planning.

The architect selected for the job, Martin Burckhardt from Basel, was chosen in compensation for a delayed commission.[29]





Opposite page, above, left to right: Model of Tschumi's proposal for a tower-shaped extension of the Nestlé building; Model of Burckhardt and Partners' projected extension, circa 1973; *below:* View of Tschumi's building showing the external passageway linking it to the Burckhardt extension; Low-angle view of the freestanding trapezoidal stairwell connecting Tschumi's building with the Burckhardt extension; Interior view from the top of the Burckhardt stairwell showing the ramps connecting the floors of the two buildings. *Above:* Bird's-eye views of Tschumi's building and the Burckhardt extension, circa 1976; *below:* View of Burckhardt extension and connecting passageway across the park toward the lake and Swiss Alps.




Without a shadow of a doubt, the architect came with all guarantees of competence, efficiency, organization, Swiss patriotism, and humor. A member of the famous Burckhardt family, Martin was also born to an architectural dynasty. He had developed the inherited firm into an international platform for production. Their numerous commissions were the result of personal contacts with the managers of some of the important chemical firms of Basel, and their global expansion was inseparable from the architectural exportation of their corporate identity. The name of Martin Burckhardt was associated with office buildings and labs built for Sandoz in several latitudes from Barcelona, Rueil Malmaison, Brussels, and Vienna, to New Jersey and Brazil. He also worked for Geigy near Manchester. The skyline in Basel is marked by his buildings, whether high-rise or grouped in compact ensembles.

A natural leader, Martin Burckhardt organized his business by creating *ad hoc* teams for each commission, opening new offices as needed. He delegated his responsibilities. The heterogeneous *oeuvres complètes* form a collection of buildings, but they do not have the capacity to carry a message, and instead merely perpetuate the image of an unsophisticated and rather expensive modernity. Their sociological interest is predominant. Such buildings are seldom listed in guides to modernist and contemporary architecture when the selection is based on poetics, technical interest, personal creativity, or historic breakthrough.

In recapturing the Nestlé commission, we have only to open the architect's memoirs published under the pleasant title of *Baulust*, that is, *Urge and Joy to Build*. Burckhardt remembers how he asked his collective partners from the Basel, Paris, and Vienna offices to propose ideas in competition. *Variantes* were then developed and submitted to the patrons and the politicians. What Burckhardt does not say is that he also established a partnership with the Lausanne-based architect Frédéric Brugger, who was party to discussions of the project. A talented man, Brugger possessed at least two qualities useful to Burckhardt. First, he was born in Basel and had worked in the city on the Rhine.[30] Second, in choosing Lausanne as the place to found his personal practice, he was highly familiar with the local culture and policies. In September 1973, the commune of Vevey would deliver the building license to the "Association de planning Burckhardt and Brugger."[31]

The *variantes* developed by Burckhardt were humorously entitled "*Le Gentilhomme*," "*Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*," and "*Le Bourgeois*."[32] The *Gentilhomme* was a tower, perhaps an *hommage* to Tschumi. This solution courageously collided with the patriotic sense of "*opinion publique*" and with the strong lobby that defended the picturesque integrity of the terraced vineyards at Lavaux.[33] The *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* offered a combination of high- and low-rise structures. The *Bourgeois* was a compressed and inelegant solution that respected the legal height limit, and eventually gained the consensus of the neighbors and political authorities. One may recall that Tschumi's building had of course to answer to the same restrictive regulations.

The second building was laid out at the eastern limit of the park. The overall volume and surface were slightly less than those of Tschumi's, even if Burckhardt's building gives the visual impression of being a slightly larger mass.[34] The extension was divided into three parts: a northern 'wing' set back from avenues Savoie and Mont-Pélerin, a southern 'wing' detached in the park but linked in curve, and a polyhedric staircase creating a connection with Tschumi's building. On the one hand, a profusion of angles and profiles, on the other, a rule of imitation. Tschumi's building would be accompanied by a younger brother shaped like a glass and aluminum curtain wall superposed on a reinforced concrete base. The '*couleur locale*' would be respected. In this case, the 'difficult whole' is more a matter of the multiplication of circumstantial constraints than the pursuit of a sophisticated solution.

One of the difficulties in planning the extension was the horizontal connection with the floors of the pre-existing building. Working space was required for another one thousand employees, but it seems that the designers believed workers would not need to move *between* the two buildings, since this transition was not made convenient. Problems arose because of a difference in levels that started underground. Avenue de Savoie gradually descended toward the lake, and thus there could only be one underground level. In describing the organization of the massive reinforced concrete platform, the word basement might be more accurate than *rez-de-chaussée*. Tschumi's building contained five floors of offices plus an attic, and the extension followed the same vertical organization. Thus, it is difficult to understand why the new architects wanted to split the levels. The stair connection was designed as a separate container, a narrow polyhedric dungeon with split levels, and the promenade from the main building to the extension was awkwardly routed through an external passageway at ground level.

I remember my single visit. Nestlé had organized an open-house event. It was possible to walk from Tschumi's building into Burckhardt's. It was a striking moment, like falling from the heavenly mansion into purgatory without a parachute, or, to phrase it in a more polite way, to leave a Citroën DS and board a Land Rover. I was puzzled about the possibility of transmitting lessons in architecture. For lack of a complete explanation, I concluded that the architects of the extension hated Tschumi. And that was not even true. In any case, Burckhardt's *Bourgeois* was also a bickering neighbor. Such feelings do not prevent a building from being used, and so it was for over a decade.

Perhaps the main consequence of the extension was the relocation of the restaurant (with a capacity of 820) and the cafeteria (with a capacity of 300) to the park, at the foot of the southern wing. This solution answered the need to double the service capacity, but it did call into question the importance of the attic floor in the original building. Only ghosts appeared in the former curved core of the primitive structure. By contrast – and this would lead to further (re)consideration on the part of Nestlé management – the presence of the extension enhanced the qualities of Tschumi's building.

Richter and Dahl Rocha

Jacques Richter, a Swiss born in 1954, and Ignacio Dahl Rocha, an Argentinian born in 1956, met and fraternized at Yale at the beginning of the 1980s. They had both enrolled in the master's program. Richter had previously studied in Zurich, at the Federal Institute of Technology, Dahl Rocha in Buenos Aires, in the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Design at the University of Buenos Aires.[35] In New Haven, they shared impulses provided by Cesar Pelli and James Stirling, who epitomized transatlantic traffic in mores and ideas. Together, Richter and Dahl Rocha discovered the two museums erected on the campus by Louis Kahn. Repeated visits to the Mellon Center for British






Above and opposite page, left to right: Ignacio Dahl Rocha and Jacques Richter in their offices in Lausanne; Suburban House in San Isidro, Argentina (1988); Museum of Contemporary Art, Pully (1991); Elevation and interior view of Forest Refuge in Vallée-de-Joux (1996); Apartment Building in Prilly (1995); *Below and opposite page, left to right:* Espacité complex in La Chaux-de-Fonds (1995); Twin Houses in Chailly (1996); Jumbo Shopping Mall in Fribourg (1995).



Art provided solid ground for their developing friendship.

Richter went back to his hometown, Lausanne, where he gradually took over the practice of his father, Max Richter, who had been a devoted disciple and employee of Jean Tschumi.[36] Dahl Rocha returned back to his home metropolis of Buenos Aires, teaming up there with Francisco Billoch and Juan Ignacio Ramos. The Suburban House at San Isidro, huddled high up the steep bank of Rio de la Plata, was among the projects exhibited in Vicenza in competition for the first Palladio Prize in 1988. In 1987, Richter had won the competition for the Place sans Nom (Square without a Name) in La Chaux-de-Fonds. It was a "competition of ideas (*concours d'idées*)," and the program had expressed the need for a "courageous" urban proposal. The city of La Chaux-de-Fonds wanted to celebrate the centennial of its most illustrious child, Charles Édouard Jeanneret, known *urbi et orbi* as Le Corbusier.[37] On the main avenue that traverses the longitudinal urban center, Richter proposed to combine the row of an apartment house with the tower of an office building. These two elements were grafted onto a public garden that would become Place Le Corbusier. The circular metal tower, attached to the reinforced concrete rectangular elevator shaft, culminates in the belvedere of a café. The section is oblique and the steel framework is a high-tech solution. Richter had the opportunity to work with two creative engineers who were eager to create a technical event that could support the strong plasticity of the tower.[38] Such a spectacular structure was intended to stress the civic nature of the enterprise, a project promoted with public funds. It offered a contrast to the lower longitudinal row house, the '*mixité*' of which provided housing above retail storefronts. The dynamic relationship between the square and the panoramic belvedere of the café cultivated a new public awareness of the urban and aesthetic character of La Chaux-de-Fonds. Called Espacité, the project proposed a typical example of *réparation urbaine* as it was called in Europe in 1980s.

In 1993, Jacques Richter and Ignacio Dahl Rocha decided to collaborate, and opened their office in Lausanne. No doubt it was helpful to inherit Max Richter's practice, but each of the two partners had also proven his capacity to win prizes and competitions, and this would allow them to expand and deepen their own experiences.

Themes in architecture

What are Richter and Dahl Rocha's themes? Among their basic, obsessive, and recurrent preoccupations are four that could open chapters entitled 'plastic configuration', 'poetics of cladding', 'light and energy', and 'elegance and hedonism'.

The works of Richter and Dahl Rocha could be described as *articulated* boxes, as a reaction against the predominance of the basic box, the *precept* of the box, which was one of the leading tendencies in Swiss architecture in the 1990s.[39] The process of articulation is tied to the modern movement's tradition of the freestanding structure. Emphasis is placed on the physical perception of the building, which emanates a powerful material energy. This attitude is essentially at odds with architectural contextualism. For example, their small Forest Refuge in the Jurassic Vallée de Joux, built between 1993 and 1996, became a manifesto for breaking out of the singular pentagonal box of the Swiss chalet. The acute interpenetration and shifting of the boards offers a dynamic and raw perception that plays with the archetype in a clever way. The maintenance building for the Swiss Federal Railway company at the Cornavin Station in Geneva, built between 1995 and 1999, juxtaposes two longitudinal sheds that are shifted forward and back along the parallel lines of the rails. This building truly embodies the articulated box. But it also illustrates the tectonic effect of the cladding and the primordial importance of daylight in relation to working space: From the outside, the building seems to be a closed, almost hermetic configuration; on the inside, bright daylight is captured by the elaborate vaults of the sheds.

The question of cladding is best expressed by the Italian phrase coined by Luciano Semerani and Boris Podrecca, *cultura del rivestimento*.[40] That the cladding of a wall would require a revived *tectonic* culture has been one of the main assumptions put forward in the European architectural debates since the beginning of the 1990s.[41] In Switzerland, the so-called oil crises of the 1970s generated federal laws regarding the control of thermostatic waste, both in public and private buildings. The modern phenomenon of the curtain wall or the reinforced concrete panel was thus put on trial, but the industry of materials had anticipated the situation. According to the logic of the marketplace, the new restrictions encouraged costly solutions. The attention of 'learned' architects was directed to the system of the double wall, and indeed, the metaphor of the skeleton was replaced by that of the sandwich. Two basic problems were posed: the control of the joints and the personal, moral adherence to one material that might be preferred over others.

Regarding the former, the network of the joints had the capacity to alter, if not dilapidate the visual mass inscribed in the volume. Would the face be a screen, a gate, a mask? Would the underwear become the suit?[42] But in terms of materials, unlike their contemporaries, Richter and Dahl Rocha do not show a signature preference for one cladding material. Rather, they employ a set of contradictory solutions that are combined in surprising ways, for instance rough spruce shingles and smooth aluminum siding at Cornavin, red cedar cladding and red bricks for their Jumbo Shopping Mall at Villars-sur-Glâne, or ceramic yellow brick and cedar panels for the Twin Houses in Chailly. The choice is based on the 'character' and scale of the building. The skin takes root in the volumetric configuration.
A genuine technical understanding of the various systems




Above and opposite page, left to right: Energie de l'Ouest-Suisse (EOS) Headquarters, Lausanne (1995); Maintenance building for Swiss Federal Railway, Cornavin Station, Geneva (1999); Extension, Valmont College, Chailly (1999); New Learning Centre, International Institute for Management Development (IMD), Lausanne (2002). *Below and opposite page, left to right:* Interior view of Golay Buchel Headquarters building, Lausanne (1997); Transformation of turn-of-the-century residential building into offices for the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), Nyon (1999).



translates the sensory into the sensual.

Light becomes a theme in architecture when it is related to a theoretical assumption.[43] After the proverbial assertions by Viollet-le-Duc that *light is a raw material for the architect*, and by Le Corbusier that the *eye and body are built to experience volumes in daylight*, the question must be applied to a specific ideological situation. In the twentieth century, two different proposals have been fundamental. The first regards heliotherapy and the social consequence of architecture preventing tuberculosis by bringing abundant sun into a dwelling, school, hospital, or factory. The second was Louis Kahn's own poetic statement that the *construction of light* depends from the choice of the structural organization: an organization in section that opposes transparent wells to opaque massive supports, a medieval metaphor expressed in reinforced concrete. This masterful lesson was learned by Richter and Dahl Rocha while they were students at Yale.

The proof that they were attentive to Kahn is inscribed in their Energie de l'Ouest Suisse (EOS) office building in Lausanne, built between 1991 and 1995, when one considers the way they bring daylight into the central courtyard covered by a lantern, and the way they display the nature of the materials – the wood of the vertical panels, the granite of the main floor. Kahn's drama has been tamed, but it remains the basic impulse for the design in reflecting on the study of the section. More radical extrapolations from Kahn can be found in very few buildings in western Switzerland.[44] The external expression of the EOS building is aeons away from that of the Mellon Center. The opaque walls and supports have disappeared. Light is conducted as part of the promenade organized within the building. Effects of literal transparency appear in both the vertical and the horizontal. These modulations determine the inner plasticity of the building, but they also derive from another preoccupation. The modulation of light is connected to the flow of passive solar energy. Richter and Dahl Rocha speak of their *ecological approach*, and explain that common sense about ventilation prevails over mechanical systems. The irony lies in the fact that this lesson is taught by a building for a company that sells electricity. Thus, a new corporate identity was unveiled for EOS. The universal value of air-conditioning in corporate buildings had reached its end. Empirical, energy-saving configurations were tested on models in Lausanne by the *École polytechnique fédérale*. However, if light is a flux of energy, it also exaggerates the physical, theatrical presence of people moving up and down stairs and back and forth through the galleries. From the outside, the EOS building is a dynamic composition of asymmetrical masses clad with polished green granite, sandblasted clear granite, and polished aluminum panels.

The concrete physical presence of materials leads to the question: can elegance be a theme in architecture? Is elegance a futile category, tied to fashion and rapid obsolescence? Is it moral? Does it reduce architecture to a rhetoric of seduction? What has it to do with the cultural value of architecture? Is elegance addressed to the client? Does it enhance the corporate identity of the client? Is it linked to the aesthetics of pleasure?

Richter and Dahl Rocha admit: "We use elegance."[45] They argue that elegance is not tied to fashion and obsolescence, but rather to permanence. This assertion can be related to their own pleasure in designing profiles, joints, cornices, and canopies. Curved in a crescent shape, the apartment house at Prilly, near Lausanne, built between 1991 and 1995, evinces brisk profiles. The horizontal continuity of the balconies is embedded in an orthogonal mass anchored into the slope. The metaphor of architecture as sculpture must be recalled. Working in Lausanne, the two architects carefully studied Jean Tschumi's work, from which they derived two lessons. The first is that urban design proceeds from architecture, and not from master plan. City planning cannot exist without the program, the scale, and the articulation of a project in architecture. The second lesson regards technology as the medium to control the elegance of the form. The basic decisions about structure and configuration are potentially linked to the choice and mastering of details. Such a "striving for harmony and elegance" had been observed in Mario Campi's works.[46] Richter and Dahl Rocha's hedonism in building is linked to a subtle use of the pleasure delivered by the materials. Tactile impressions offer a sensual play of contrasts in texture. The ultimately almost ludic quality of their results has erased the difficulties, conflicts, and stresses inherent in the materialization.

The renovation in Vevey

In the second half of the fifteenth century, the Italian architect Filarete, active in Milan and Bergamo, depicted the relationship between the patron and the architect in a telling love story: the patron is the father, the architect the mother. When contaminated by love, the architect 'ruminates' and gives birth to a model presented to the father. This pleasant tale appears in Filarete's *Trattato*, a classic of architectural theory. It indicates the creative function of the patron.[47] Vasari would later foster the cult of artistic individuality, providing a veritable gallery of geniuses. But Filarete had already shown that architecture interprets the *client's* desires. What had been the prerogative of the Renaissance prince, the expression of his power in a palace or a chapel, was perpetuated in the nineteenth century when the cultural concept of *renaissance* was invented. Kings and magnates of the industrial world wanted to emulate the monarchs of the past. The 'question of the client' in particular became a major issue in architectural history in the last third of the twentieth century. Would it ever be possible to separate Gaudi from Guell, Wright from the Kaufmanns, Kahn from Salk, or Le Corbusier from Nehru or Père Couturier?

In the case of the Nestlé Headquarters in Vevey, an exchange of ideas and feeling based on trust grew up between the patrons and the architects. An insider tells us that, "from the start, a good relationship was struck between Ignacio Dahl Rocha and the CEO, Peter Brabeck-Letmathe. On the one hand, Brabeck-Letmathe was quick to understand design issues (he has an intuitive feel for shape, style, color, and materials, and a love of good design) and a strong rapport was built between the two. On the other hand, the Latino temperament and body language of Ignacio Dahl Rocha struck the right cords with Brabeck-Letmathe. For the architects it was vital to have the best possible working relationship with Nestlé at all levels, but especially at the top."[48] One of the reasons they had been preferred to the other architects under consideration was that they were able to refer with precision to Jean Tschumi, whose masterwork was to be renovated. One remembers that for Bignami and Corthésy, Tschumi's MVA Building had been the proof of competence that secured their patronage for the first building. In a similar way, the visit to Richter and Dahl Rocha's EOS building provided the latter-day patrons with certification of their capacity as architects.

Opposite page and above: Design team at work developing the project with Nestlé project management team. *Below and opposite page, left to right:* Dismantling Tschumi's curtain wall; Two views of interventions on the 6th or attic floor of Tschumi's building; Liaison Space under construction; Transformation of south facade; Scaffolding curtain decorated with a huge-scale detail of Ferdinand Hodler's painting, "Dents-du-Midi, vues de Champery, 1916" – a view of the mountain range visible across the lake from the Nestlé building.

Since Tschumi's building in Vevey was listed among the historic monuments of the Canton of Vaud, it was important for Nestlé to obtain some sort of public *nihil obstat*. An official and independent expert was appointed. He was to be paid by Nestlé. In return, the company would receive the symbolic and political credit for having contributed to the public domain. However, the planned intervention required 800 employees to be temporarily relocated, an onerous logistical problem. The heavyweight patron prepared to sponsor the restoration of its own 'palace' wanted to secure all guarantees before starting a process that would inevitably be fraught with nerve-racking moments on the building site. The architectural program was defined: an obsolete office building would be refurbished.

A 'renaissance' project

The term 'restoration' in architecture is open to contested definitions and interpretations. The status of the monument is based on social and collective values that transcend the notion of private property. If the state assumes the liability for listing, maintaining, and developing historical buildings, then the specific techniques and methods of restoration become a matter of debate. But if the state gradually loses the crucial funding to support its activity in consolidating and protecting the public monumental heritage, then its power will shrink to a limited catalogue of exempla dominated by an overwhelming burden of obsolete churches and parish houses. In spite of the basic Swiss patriotic instinct, it can't be disputed that, in the last decade of the twentieth century, the late Thatcheresque impulses of local politicians restricted the power and budgets traditionally assigned to the tutelage of public landmarks. What about the exponential number of historical modern buildings, many of which are privately owned? Leaving aside the citadels of secluded villas and factories, apartment houses and office buildings have been entered into the register and become monuments as well. Under such conditions, a private initiative to sponsor the renaissance of one's own building could be welcome, and the name of Maecenas could be revived – as in the case of important Italian medieval and Renaissance fresco cycles that have been restored by notorious industrialists.

The distinction between *restoration*, *rehabilitation*, and *renovation* thrills puritans. The distinction between *historic* and *modern* heritage thrills other puritans. If architecture is basically a physical modification of the territory, which I believe it is, then the renewal of the urban fabric cannot be abstracted from political circumstances. The architectural program and technical requirements in Vevey were formulated by business – a business that constantly pursues feedback and value for investment. In this case, time was short, and the decisions taken by the protagonists followed empirical demands. Practice was the key word. Practice would perhaps one day achieve a kind of theoretical statement. But at no point was theory called in and expected to jump ahead of form. Nestlé proposed and respected a blanket gentleman's agreement with the Canton. From the outside, the appearance, the *image* of Tschumi's building would not change. This condition would force the architects to play with mimetic principles. Right from the start, the patrons had laid the cards on the table. Among the interviewed architects, "we eliminated those with a famous, predetermined style, with too fixed views to enable them to work on a building which had been designed and built by an already famous architect."[49] The new creature was to be true to the spirit of the *genius loci*. In other words, the patrons subscribed to the moral and sacrificial truth once proposed by John Ruskin: "Architecture is the art which so disposes and adorns the edifices raised by man for whatsoever uses, that the sight of them contribute to his mental health, power, and pleasure."[50]

The renovation of Tschumi's building was tackled as the design for a new construction. Measured drawings of the pre-existing monument provided no prerequisite, though several hundred documents were housed in the Nestlé archives. The program of updating the mechanical systems inspired the architects, who developed a project that expressed fluxes and streams not only in the way that they replaced the mechanical infrastructure, but also in the way they proposed to channel the circulation of occupants and visitors. Richter and Dahl Rocha assumed the full responsibility for supervision of the planning and execution: no general contractor was hired. The strategy they adopted prefigured the dismantling of the curtain wall, the removal of the partitions installed in the five office floors, and the preservation of the attic floor and the double helical staircase. Tschumi had installed reinforced concrete slabs on the steel frame, and this original structural work was stripped to the bones.[51] Asbestos was removed without difficulty. Meanwhile, the safety canvas covering the scaffolding would hide the building site while projecting a detail of Ferdinand Hodler's Alpine landscape enlarged to 2,000 square meters.[52]

While the company was expediting the temporary relocation of the employees to a loft structure, the architects measured the implications of their future reinstatement. Tschumi's and Burckhardt's buildings were communicating vessels, but we know that their ability to communicate was hampered by an unfortunate staircase. This handicap was converted into a central theme for Richter and Dahl Rocha's design: A new stairwell was proposed as a 'Liaison Space'. It concentrated on the principal constraints of the project: the necessity to link the two vessels with their uneven levels, to mediate the functional contents and pedestrian circulation, and to redefine the ground and attic floors. This stairwell is in essence a third building, "the hero of the renovation and innovation."[53] The problem of the uneven levels was resolved by introducing ramps supported by triangular beams reticulated on triangular consoles. Variations in height and length from one floor to the next led to a virtuoso computer graphic geometry, the pattern of which recalls the likeness of fractal objects to one another. The translation of this sophisticated network into the medium of reinforced concrete promised an audacious masterpiece, which would attract the attention of photographers who captured it as a fan, a spire, the belly of Moby Dick, or the Pequod's rigging.

In fact, the new stairwell is nothing but the Nestlé Headquarters' central lobby, a lobby that did not exist in the project for the 1970s extension, a lobby that was not even anticipated in the initial program for Richter and Dahl Rocha's renovation. The architects prudently put forward the proposal, which had significant consequences for the reorganization of the upper floor. Tschumi's attic had never been connected to Burckhardt's. With the proposal to join the two upper levels, it became possible to combine the activities of reception with an extended promenade, a continuous 'Belvedere' overlooking the panorama. This idea led to the emendation of the *Bourgeois* superstructures, where aluminum cornices were the principal device used to redesign the profiles. An effect of visual fluidity was achieved.



Opposite page, left to right: Richter and Dahl Rocha's perspective drawing for the project; Exterior view of the 6th floor looking toward the new Liaison Space; View showing transparent brand and product display panels on the 6th or Communication floor: *above:* Lighting display for the inauguration of the Nestlé Headquarters transformation, 11 April 2000; *below:* Views of the Liaison Space showing the articulation between Tschumi's original building and the Burckhardt extension.




The stairwell lobby is a true work of *l'art conceptuel*, in the sense that the transparent structure reveals the presence of Tschumi and Burckhardt's buildings in continuity – a dialogue that had been blotted out by the *Bourgeois* stairwell. Transverse views were created, and both buildings are now visible in the grand hall of the ramps. In some way, this result corresponded to the desires of the employees, who had been consulted beforehand as part of the process: One of the suggestions of the Users' Committee was "to bring in more light and expose the beautiful setting."[54] Another suggestion regarded "the need to display more Nestlé brands in the building." These ideas were fully exploited in the renovation of Tschumi's attic. The upper roof terrace and the cinema meet at the employee lounge surrounding the Chambord staircase with its curved bar. The original suite of spaces was restored and connected to a new gallery, a showroom for an elaborate *allestimento* of Nestlé's full range of commercial brands and products. The modulation of Tschumi's attic was also studied in its vertical relationship with the suite of offices occupied by the directors located directly underneath: Tschumi's monumental board room was reassembled.

Richter and Dahl Rocha studied a new system of moveable panels for enclosing individual office spaces. The longitudinal sequence of service cores inherited from the original building would be flanked by parallel corridors whose transparent panels capture light from both facades. This study of enclosure and disclosure, permanence and mobility eventually raised the question of interior furnishings, and a furniture line was developed which would emulate Tschumi's elegance. Here again, the taste of the patron was predominant in the determination of the architects' creative attitude.

Epilogue

The renovation of the Nestlé Headquarters in Vevey addresses important questions concerning the maintenance of historic monuments when the assignation is applied to modern office buildings. The problem of the curtain wall was met with a strategy of *facsimile* insofar as new, updated aluminum and glass frames produce a copy of the original solution. This solution might be questioned. Why should the replacement windows try to look the same as the originals, if not for the sake of sacralizing Tschumi's image? Is it certain that the sophisticated copy will still look the same in a decade, and not come to seem anachronistic? Is it possible to construct a substitute for permanence? Does the stylistic approach and the linguistic code *à la manière de* confound or clarify the three moments of construction? Is mimetic practice a sign of *modesty* in architecture? Is it not rather a challenge? Whereas Burckhardt's second act had been a jocular *intermezzo*, Richter and Dahl Rocha were prepared to enter into a Platonic dialogue with Jean Tschumi. The situation beforehand amounted to no more than A + B = 2. After the year 2000, it corresponds to A + B + C = 1.

Have the architects interpreted *à la lettre* the options of the patrons? Nestlé wanted a classic blend. The investment in the renovation was anticipated as a leap into the twenty-first century, the sign of new management, a *renaissance* in the Reagan-era sense of the word. Richter and Dahl Rocha understood this drama and staged its architectural *mise en scène*.



Above, left to right: West Elevation of 6th floor; View of the park from the lobby, with the light ring of the Chambord staircase reflected in the glass curtain wall; View of the lakeside facade. *Opposite page, above:* Peter Brabeck-Letmathe, Nestlé CEO, architects Jacques Richter and Ignacio Dahl Rocha, and David Panchaud, Nestlé Project Manager. *Opposite page, below:* Alpine landscape reflected in the polished marble floor of the main lobby; View of the new Oculus at the top of Tschumi's Chambord staircase.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1 As it is called in Peter Brabeck-Letmathe's preface to Peter Bear, *Building on Our Foundations* (Vevey: The Nestlé Corporation, 2000), 7.

2 See François Neyroud, "Jean Tschumi ou le premier éclectique," *Ingénieurs et architectes suisses* 24 (1988): 1–7; "Dossier Jean Tschumi," *Faces* 39 (1996): 4–56, with a catalogue of the works compiled by Mylène Ducret and Agnès Perreten, 54–56.

3 *Histoire de l'École polytechnique, Lausanne: 1953–1978*, ed. Maurice Cosandey (Lausanne: PPUR, 1999), 370–83.

4 Jean-Pierre Vouga, "Les chemins de l'UIA," *Ingénieurs et architectes suisses* 24 (1988): 18–24; Pierre Vago, *Une vie intense* (Paris: Éditions AAM, 2000), 437f.

5 André Bloc, "Intégration des arts dans l'architecture," *Aujourd'hui. Art et architecture* 2/11 (1957): 12–22, with a presentation of the competition for the decoration of Tschumi's MVA building in Lausanne, 14–17.

6 François Neyroud, "Jean Tschumi et les maîtres de l'ouvrage," *Ingénieurs et architectes suisses* 24 (1988): 9.

7 *Ingénieurs et architectes suisses* 22 (1994), special issue on the MVA Insurance building in Lausanne, with texts by Sigfrido Lezzi, Gilles Barbey, Jacques Gubler, Pascal Schmidt, Hans Gutscher, 389–405; see also, Hans Gutscher, "L'immeuble administratif de la Vaudoise Assurances," *Faces* 39 (1996): 21–25.

8 Bear, *Building on Our Foundations*, 61.

9 *Costruire la città dell'uomo, Adriano Olivetti e l'urbanistica*, ed. Carlo Olmo (Milano: Edizioni di Communità, 2001); Alberto Abriani and Evelina Calvi, "The Olivetti Advertising Dream," *Rassegna* 43/3 (12) (September 1990): 21–29; Vittorio Gregotti, *Il disegno del prodotto industriale, Italia 1860–1980*, with contributions by Giampiero Bosoni, Manolo De Giorgi, and Andrea Nulli (Milan: Electa, 1982), 234–36, 298–99, and 383–87, with ample bibliography.

10 I met Enrico Bignami in Lausanne in April 1990 for a brief conversation. He was an elegant and slim old man, all dressed in Italian wool. He stated his admiration for Werner Sombart, Adriano Olivetti, and Jean Tschumi. He remembered that the meetings with the architect took place during lunch breaks, so that Corthésy and Tschumi would not add to their portliness. Adriano Olivetti died from a cerebral hemorrhage on the Trans Europe Express train traveling between Lausanne and Milan in 1960.

11 A short film clip of the spectacle was broadcast every evening on Télévision Suisse Romande as part of the montage comprising the title sequence for prime time news. The potent image disappeared a few weeks after the collapse of the Twin Towers in New York on 11 September 2001.

12 Nicole Staehli-Canetta, "Le siège administratif de Nestlé à Vevey," *Faces* 39 (1996): 47.

13 Dominique Gillard, "Estimation de la valeur patrimoniale du bâtiment Nestlé à Vevey," 20 December 1995, unpublished evaluation by the expert on *Monuments historiques*, commissioned by the corporate administration, Nestlé Archives, ANV 71, 4–6.

14 The average number of employees increased to 1200–1500 in 1960 on the building's completion. See the elegant brochure, *The Nestlé International Headquarters at Vevey* (Vevey: Nestlé Corporation, 1960).

15 In 1958, Enrico Bignami asked Jean Tschumi to make proposals for a Nestlé office building in Paris. The site was located at Courbevoie, on the Left Bank of the Seine, close to the Neuilly Bridge. Construction was delayed. After Tschumi's death in 1962, the project was taken over by another architect.

16 Letter from the architect Alex Gerber to the author, 6 November 1996. An employee of Jean Tschumi in 1956, Gerber was part of the team of draftsmen working in the office, most of them students or disciples, who rapidly and competitively developed colorful renderings of the *variantes*. The model was exhibited at the town hall in Vevey in December 1956. In his private life, Tschumi liked to keep a direct, almost physical contact with his works. His bed in Paris rested upon a large wooden case where the most cherished drawings were sheltered.

17 "Feuille d'Avis de Vevey," 21 December 1956, 1, with a photograph of the model.

18 Nicole Staehli-Canetta, "Le siège administratif de Nestlé à Vevey," 46–47, n. 6. According to the architect Alin Décoppet, Willi Bühlmann was brought in by Tschumi himself and not by Nestlé's directors.

19 See the offprint of *Aluminium Suisse* (Zurich) 6 (1960).

20 Jürgen Joedicke, *Bürobauten* (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1959), 39. Joedicke calls the CIBA Building a "*dreibündige Anlage mit paralleler Flurentwicklung und reduzierter Kernzone.*"

21 The canopy is 14.5 meters long. It consists in the juxtaposition of hollow beams with triangular profiles. See the offprint *Aluminium Suisse* (Zurich) 6 (1960).

22 Hans Hofmann's AIAG Building in Zurich was built in 1955–56. See Joedicke, *Bürobauten*, 192–93; and Nicole Staehli-Canetta, "Le siège administratif de Nestlé à Vevey," 47, n. 11.

23 The exact figure is 1115, related to the five levels, according to a Nestlé memo in the archives of the Direction de l'Équipement of the municipality of Vevey, BDA/mj, 13 April 1977.

24 *Werk* 3 (1960); *Bauen + Wohnen* 5 (1960); *Architecture, Formes + Fonctions* 6 (1959) and 7 (1960–61); *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 89 (1960); *Baukunst und Werkform* 10 (1960); *L'architettura* 61 (1960); *The Architect and Building News* 37 (1960), *Architectural Record* (May 1960); *Architectural Design* 9 (1960).

25 Henri-F. Berchet, "Jean Tschumi, Prix Reynolds 1960, est le premier architecte suisse qui reçoit cette distinction synonyme de consécration universelle," *Architectures, Formes + Fonctions* 7 (1960–61): 227. Berchet was so proud of his fellow-citizen that he presented the Reynolds Award as the Nobel Prize in Architecture.

26 Bruno Zevi, "Una Y piccante più dell'Unesco," *L'Espresso*, 11 September 1960; reprinted in *Cronache di architetttura* (Bari: Laterza, 1971), vol. IV, 331.

27 Joedicke, *Bürobauten*, 68–71.

28 Bear, *Building on Our Foundations*, 86.

29 "*Als Ersatz für den Verlust des Auftrages*," writes the architect in his humorous autobiography. Martin H. Burckhardt, *Baulust*, published by the author in Basel in 2000, 157.

30 On Brugger, see Bruno Marchand and Colette Fähndrich, "L'avènement d'une nouvelle rationalité," *Matières* 2 (1998): 76–87. The architect Bruno Marchand, who regularly approached Brugger and visited his archives, remembers that Brugger, eager to tell the story of his architectural life, never mentioned the building in Vevey. Can one infer from this silence that he considered the result to be unsatisfactory?

31 The document "Commune de Vevey, Permis de construire," was issued on 24 September 1973. It is held in the offices of the Direction de l'Équipement. The author thanks the architect Renée-Laure Hitz for her assistance.

32 Burckhardt, *Baulust*, 157.

33 The architect François Guth, a collaborator of Frédéric Brugger, remembers that Brugger preferred the tower.

34 Tschumi's building provided a volume of 150,000 cubic meters and office surface of 13,000 square meters, compared to 140,000 cubic meters and 11,600 square meters for the extension. Nestlé Archives, BDA/mj, 13 April 1977.

35 In Zurich, Richter studied with Bernhard Hoesli, Mario Campi, and Dolf Schebli; in Buenos Aires, Dahl Rocha studied during the military regime, when a parallel unit of the Facultad de Arquitectura, Diseño y Urbanismo (FADU), the Escuelíta, was organized at the University of Buenos Aires, where he met Ernesto Katzenstein and Jorge Francisco Liernur.

36 Max Richter (1928–2000) had studied in Lausanne. He worked in Tschumi's Paris studio as supervisor of the project for the Sandoz building in Orléans, which was completed in 1953. He then opened his practice in Lausanne in partnership with Marcel Gut.

37 How Jeanneret from La Chaux-de-Fonds developed into Le Corbusier in Paris, this metamorphosis has been described by H. Allen Brooks in *Le Corbusier's Formative Years* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

38 The engineers were Jean Petignat for steel and the GIESP Civil Engineering Group for reinforced concrete.

39 *Richter and Dahl Rocha*, ed. Lucas H. Guerra and Oscar Riera Ojeda, with foreword by Jorge Francisco Liernur and introduction by Jacques Gubler (Glouster, Mass.: Rockport, 1999), 11–15.

40 Giovanni Marras, "Rivestimento," in *Dizionario critico illustrato delle voci più utili all'architettura moderna*, ed. Luciano Semerani (Faenza: Edizioni C.E.L.I., 1993), 145–51.

41 Mirko Zardini, "Pelle, muro, facciata/Skin, Wall, Facade," *Lotus International* 82 (1994): 37–51.

42 Martin Steinmann, "Les dessous de Madonna ou le fait de présenter des matériaux qui ne sont pas destinés à cela," *Matières* (Lausanne) 1 (1997): 15–26.

43 This has been a subject of increasing interest in recent years. A forthcoming publication by the Chinati Foundation at Marfa, for example, documents a symposium on "Light in Architecture and Art: The Work of Dan Flavin," including an essay by Kurt W. Forster which outlines a cogent historical overview of the subject.

44 In particular, in the work of Vincent Mangeat. See the monographic issue of *Rivista Tecnica* 11 (1992): 20–25, dealing with the High School in Nyon.

45 Interview published in the *EOS Bulletin* 79 (March 1996).

46 Karin Möllfors, "Theory and practice," in *Mario Campi, Architekturen und Entwürfe/Architectures and Architectural Design* (Basle, Boston, & Berlin: Birkhäuser, 2002), 33. Jacques Richter had studied with Campi in Zurich, and they continued thereafter to share elective affinities.

47 Georg Germannn, *Einführung in die Geschichte der Architekturtheorie*, 3rd ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993), 65–80.

48 Bear, *Building on Our Foundations*, 117.

49 Statement by David Panchaud, head of Nestlé's Centre Administration, in Bear, *Building on Our Foundations*, 106.

50 John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1849), 7.

51 The cement was poured on a sheet of corrugated steel welded to the transverse beams. Directly inspired by the American Robertson system, this solution was tested in Switzerland by the Lausanne-based steel construction firm of Zwahlen & Mayr, in collaboration with the engineer Maurice Cosandey.

52 See Bear, *Building on Our Foundations*, 202–3.

53 Bear, *Building on Our Foundations*, 162. The preeminence of the stairwell has been discussed in an article published in *a+u* 362 (November 2000): 108–23.

54 Bear, *Building on Our Foundations*, 102.