

MFO Park, Zurich, Switzerland

Raderschall Landschaftsarchitekten AG +
Burckhardt & Partner AG

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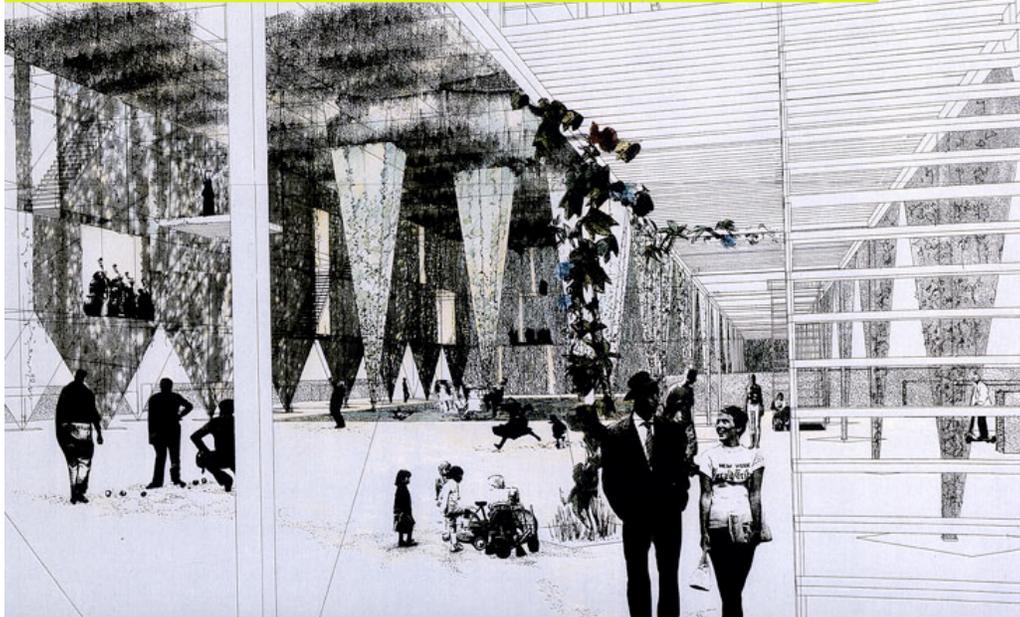
Multi-Tiered Vine Park



Photo: Nate Numstead

Imagine a city re-imagined and constructed out of the memory of weapons manufacturing and war. Factory makes way for community. The MFO Park is part of a massive redevelopment of one of Zurich's most industrial zones. New Orlikon represents Zurich's new vision of city living, with thought out residential blocks, schools, mixed neighborhoods, and green spaces. Spaces are filling in here, as are the new trees and foliage that define much of the area's new identity. One goal for the MFO Park was to create a public space for the neighborhood that could also serve as an event hall. The division between inside and outside is blurred, as well as the definition between park and building.

MFO-Park Zürich



Rendering, spatial qualities of the 'great hall.'
Image: Raderschall Landscape Architects.

"What used to be the 'Forbidden City', an industrial district that only those working there were allowed to enter: A public hall as big as the biggest industrial halls; a park as a walk-on sculpture; the green opera!... Here I am...where flourishing, scented, vital vegetation will make the filigree skeleton grow into an organic body over time. Here, you can joyfully and lightly take Zwingli's sentence seriously: 'For God's sake, do something brave!'"

-Jurg Altherr, artist, from a letter to the designers of the MFO Park

While the project may not dramatically alter the purpose of an urban park, its design elevates what a park can be in an urban context: vertical and spatial, architectural and green. archidose.org

City Statistics

City Population:
Zurich_361,129 (2008)
Oerlikon_almost 20,000

City Area:
Zurich_91.88 sq km
Oerlikon_2.67 sq. km

Geographical Coordinate:
47 North, 8 East

Year of neighborhood
incorporation: 1936

Factory Dismantled: 1999

1999-2001 planning period
2001-2002 construction

Client:
City of Zurich, Switzerland

City Historical Context

The north section of Zurich (highlighted in the city map below) is known as Neu Oerlikon. The entire area was once a weapons production and testing complex, which was understandably heavily guarded. The factory was dismantled in 1999.

Oerlikon has now been redeveloped; with 5,000 new inhabitants, an estimated 12,000 new jobs, and 3 new parks. Oerliker park, MFO park and Wahlenpark, along with the rest of the city, have been designed with geometry and scale reminiscent of the industrial history of this area.

The city redevelopment was estimated to take ten years. Construction was completed in only 5.



Small map of Zurich, indicating the burrow of Oerlikon in the northeast. Image:

Aerial view of New Oerlikon, shows industrial grid.

Mater plan of Oerlikon redevelopment. The green areas indicate the planned and implemented city green spaces within the post-industrial grid.

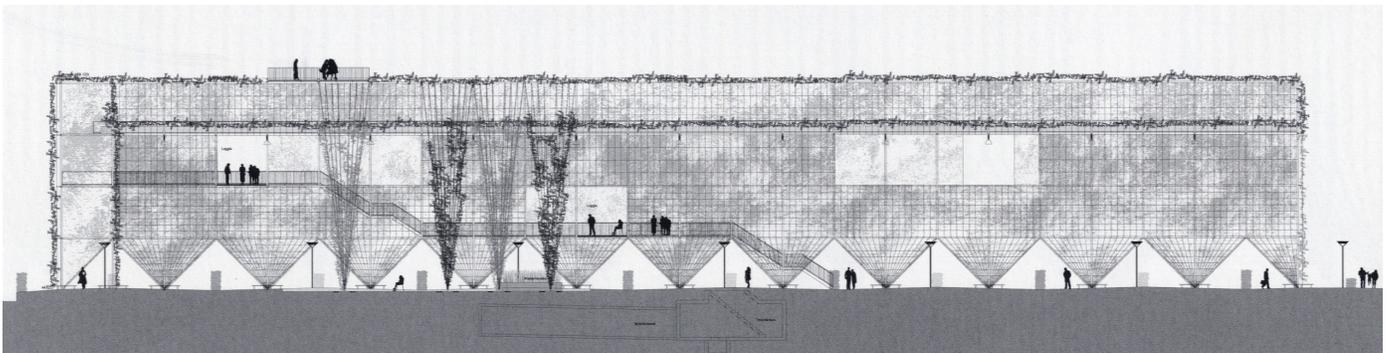
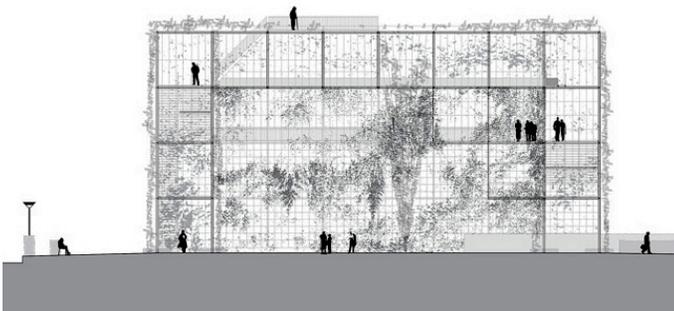
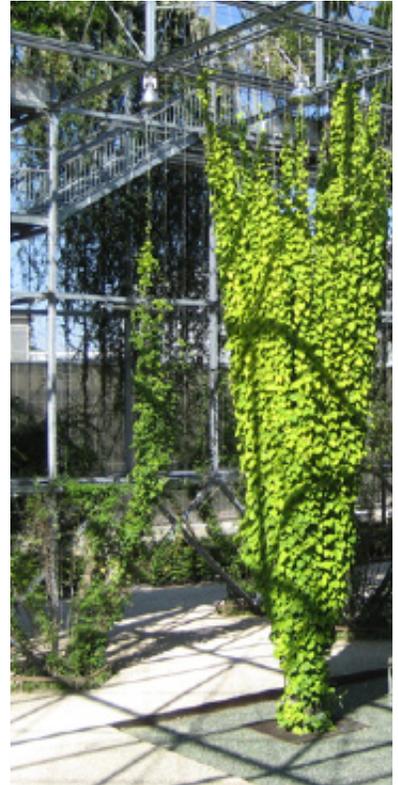
Within the Park

The illusion of a building is re-created at the MFO Park without structural walls. More of a three-dimensional plaza than a park, the green building is highly visible in this still re-developing area. The structure references the industrial history of the area. The frame is galvanized steel construction, woven with steel cables, and wrapped in a diverse selection of scented, deciduous climbing vines. The MFO Park landscape is most interesting in its vertical scale. On the ground plane, there is minimal vegetation, most is covered by pervious paving surfaces. One area is covered with recycled glass and slightly sunken. Within it, seating in the form of large lounging benches invites visitors to the outdoor living room. A lily pad shaped pond, fabricated in steel, is filled with water and plants.

Some clipped shrubs connect the interior/exterior spaces, and vines climb from the ground on steel cables both inside and along the invisible walls. The use of cables creates the illusion that the vines climb on the structure, without actually interfering in the frame's integrity. Planting boxes are located on upper floors, continuing the climbing green surfaces that define this structure.

Open frame stairs lead upward to walkways inside the frame. Cantilevered balconies extend the inside/outside space, and provide more seating options. The open top offers a view of the surrounding district. At night, the park is lit internally, and remains open to the public.

Below: Elevation_building is permeable and dynamic. Image: Living Systems; Transverse section_showing possible opportunities for exploring and interacting with the vertical park. Image: Raderschall Landscape Architects. Above, right: Climbing vines, Interior. Photo: Burckhardt Partner. Right: Exterior of MFO Park. Photo: Photo: Nate Numstead.





Multi-Tiered Vine Park

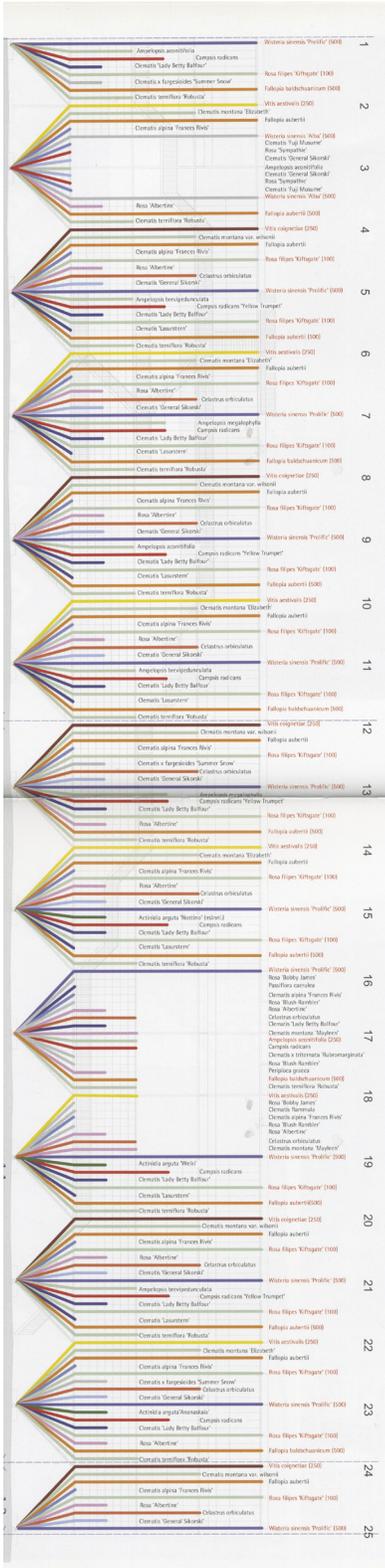
Vegetation

Walls of vegetation define the interior and exterior perimeters of this park. Multiple species of vines have been planted to grow up the steel cables. On the ground, vines are planted in radial patterns around cables. On the second level, trenches are planted with a second tier of vines, directed towards a thinner network of cables. Plant selection was based on height and foliage specifications. A total of 104 varieties of perennial woody vines and creepers were chosen, including: wisteria, clematis, climbing rose, jasmine, honeysuckle, hops, knotweed, Virginia creeper, silver lace vine. Each of these vertical plantings is designated to a separate cable. This allows each vine to show its individual character.

Irrigation for the vegetation uses the site's internal watershed. On the ground, water is directed to the planting pits. Excess water is collected in a cistern and pumped as needed to the upper level of plants.

The created walls of vines that define this steel frame's mass change through seasons, and over time. Spring and summer flowers add splashes of color to the green "walls." As the vines are deciduous, autumn brings additional foliage color to the structure, and winter shows the frame most visibly. The growth and added bulk of the woody vines will have to be monitored over time to ensure that the structural strength is not compromised.

Vertical plantings of 104 vine species. Each is designated its own steel cable.
Image: Living Systems



"I have never seen anything like this before, it was huge yet totally in proportion with the surrounding buildings, and very much in sympathy with the industrial surroundings whilst retaining a sense of green and peaceful open space." Ken Woolfenden, I.C.I.S.



Other: text or photo

Left: Autumn colors; Below: Winter structure; Below, right: Spring color. Photos: Burckhardt Partner.



Resources

Archidose. www.archidose.org/Aug07/13/dose.html

Burckhardt Partner. www.burckhardtpartner.ch/en/projekte/projektliste/mfo

Christian Barnard's Blog. www.christianbarnardblog.blogspot.com/2009/05/mfo-park-zurich-switzerland.html

Green Infrastructure Wiki. www.greeninfrastructurewiki.com/page/MFO+Park

Home Portal City of Zurich. www.stadt-zuerich.ch

International Clematis Society. www.clematisinternational.com/swiss200901.html

Land8. www.land8lounge.com/profiles/blogs/2025679:BlogPost:30696

Margolis, Liat; Alexander Robinson. *Living Systems: Innovative Materials and Technologies for Landscape Architecture*. Basel; Boston. 2007.



Multi-Tiered Vine Park



Left, top: Roof. Left, middle: Cantilevered Balcony. Left, below: Interior. Photos: Chrisitan Barnard Landscape Blog



MFO Park Structure

- Three-dimensional plaza of green
- Visually acknowledges the industrial past of the area
- Six-stories of open steel construction
- Steel cables run between supports
- Each cable hosts several varieties of vines
- 104 different vines provide range of growth and color
- Vegetation is intended to fill in “walls” of structure
- Seating available near interior pond, on cantilevered upper balconies
- Stairways and walkways provide access to and across upper levels
- Open for day and evening use.
- Program for park and community hall_movies and events.

