

is interested in new forms of the urban, who is open towards new articulations of social conditions in the public realm. That is, a client who takes risks. That's the strongest political statement a client can make today, and the public immediately reacts to that!

Let me give one example. If the skater community, a marginalised group that is exiled to anonymous outskirts of our cities, suddenly populates the central square of the city with their vehicles, something has changed. The situation is new. The "regular" users are not familiar with the topographical square, but they, like the new invaders, do not want to give up territory. Negotiations have to take place, with the client and architects serving as temporary mediators. We take it as a good sign that the youngsters have appropriated the space first. The ensuing public discussion proved that no form is dedicated to a single function.

LAAAC Architects | Stiefel Kramer Architecture
The project was conceived in collaboration with artist Christopher Gruener.

LAAAC Architects was founded 2009 by Kathrin Astre and Frank Lüdin. Recent realized projects include a communal multifunctional building in Tyrol and the widely published and multiply awarded mountain-top viewing platform "Top of Tyrol." Using concepts like "New Environments," "Active Landscapes," and "Built-in Velocity," LAAAC designs contemporary architectural solutions for urban and landscape challenges. Their work is widely published (e.g. *Architectura Now: Detail*) and received numerous awards (e.g. Detail Award; Alpine Interior Award). Kathrin Astre teaches at the University of Innsbruck, Austria and at the University of Liechtenstein. Frank Lüdin taught at the University of Innsbruck, Austria.

Stiefel Kramer Architecture, founded in 2003 by architect Hannes Stiefel and publicist Thomas Kramer, explores the role of observation and description as a constitutive component in the production of space, thus understanding users and observers as creative co-authors of built environments. The firm has participated in numerous exhibitions (the Biennale di Venezia 2006 and 2010), received many awards (the Austrian Award for Experimental Architecture; the Promoting Award of the City of Vienna) and writes regularly (such as in *Architettura 5/2011*). Stiefel has taught around the world, notably at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, as the McHale Fellow at the University at Buffalo, NY in 2009–2010, and recently as the Azrieli Visiting Professor at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. He currently teaches at the Lebanese American University in Beirut, Lebanon.

Austrian national holiday ceremony, two annual celebrations of the Jewish community, and the activities of those societies who regularly parade in the historical uniforms and weapons of 18th-century Tyrolean freedom fighters—a folkloric spectacle hardly to be understood by foreigners (and even myself).

Our design seeks to engage this history in such a way that it shifts the function of the square within the city so that it reformulates its emblematic and political significance. The intervention serves as a stage for a transformation which its form seeks to enable, but the potential alteration is up to the user. We tried to formulate a square that enriches the users' ability to interpret and appropriate its elements and functions. The liberation memorial is now embedded in an oblique surface that is part of the same continuous "floor sculpture" that forms the base for the menorah. This surface is simultaneously the stage for public events and everyday life, and at the same time it functions as a major transitional space for pedestrians, cyclists, and other "slow traffic"; this memorial will inescapably alter its function within the city, and also in the square. Programming a public square is a highly social and political act—new forms enable new programs.

SS: How does the square function as a political space today? In what way does the choice of concrete as a material help facilitate this use?

HS: Concrete is concrete! Every architectural intervention is a political statement. And concrete is a material for concrete formulations. Concrete allowed us to create a continuous (and simultaneously inconsistent) surface that contrasts with its surroundings, while combining the multifaceted elements of the square. Furthermore, the usage of stone in the form of this very particular, smoothly shaped concrete casts a new light on the similar coloured stone cladding of the rigid liberation monument. The square's political function today lies beyond the impact of the liberation monument and the National Socialist architecture of the Landhaus. The square's major function as a political space is an ongoing process. An endeavour that was installed at the beginning of the architectural competition was then established through the planning and realization and is now open to the plaza's users. I have to mention here that such a project would never be possible without a client who

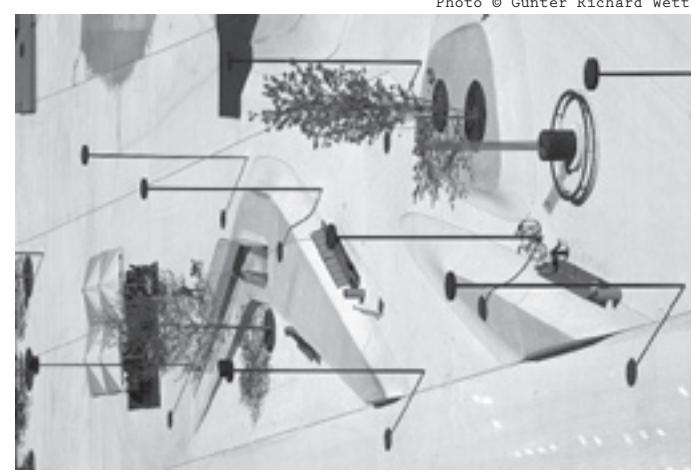


Photo © Günter Richard Wett

the facing façade of the Tyrolean provincial government building constructed during the National Socialist period, and by a large scale memorial that looks like a fascist monument but in fact commemorates the resistance against, and liberation from, National Socialism. The current intervention aims to expose existing misconceptions and reinforce the monument's historical significance. The new topography of the square offers a contemporary and transformative base for the memorials and makes them physically accessible for new perceptions. Access and movement are guided by the modulation of the surface, which accommodates spatial constraints, functional requirements, and morphological considerations.

Passersby, users, and memorials act as protagonists on this new city stage, creating an operative public space and open forum between the main train station and the old town. Both time of day and year are powerfully dramatized on this backdrop. The bright surface of the square functions as a three-dimensional projection screen on which the protagonists and trees produce a dynamic play of light and shadow during the day, while indirect light reflected from the floor sculpture directs the scene at night.

In the northern part of the square, the spacious flat area in front of the Landhaus was conceived as a generous multi-purpose event space, and it incorporates the required infrastructure. A large-scale fountain creates the expanded field and cools the space in the summertime. South of the liberation monument the topography is varied for manifold uses.

The texture of the concrete surface changes according to its geometrical configuration. Beneath many trees, the floor continuously folds into seats with a terrazzo-like finish. The surface of the square is formed out of modulated slabs of in-situ concrete, connected by bolts to accommodate shear forces. Infrastructure is deployed across the surface in slab-fields of no more than 100 square metres, so that events can take place anywhere on the square. Drainage of the whole square, including the fountains, is located at open joints between the individual fields. There are no drains visible on site. A cistern system allows all surface water to be accommodated on site and re-circulated, despite the existence of a subterranean garage.

Scapegoat Says: The square is radical in its simplicity. Why did you design it to be built from only one material, concrete?

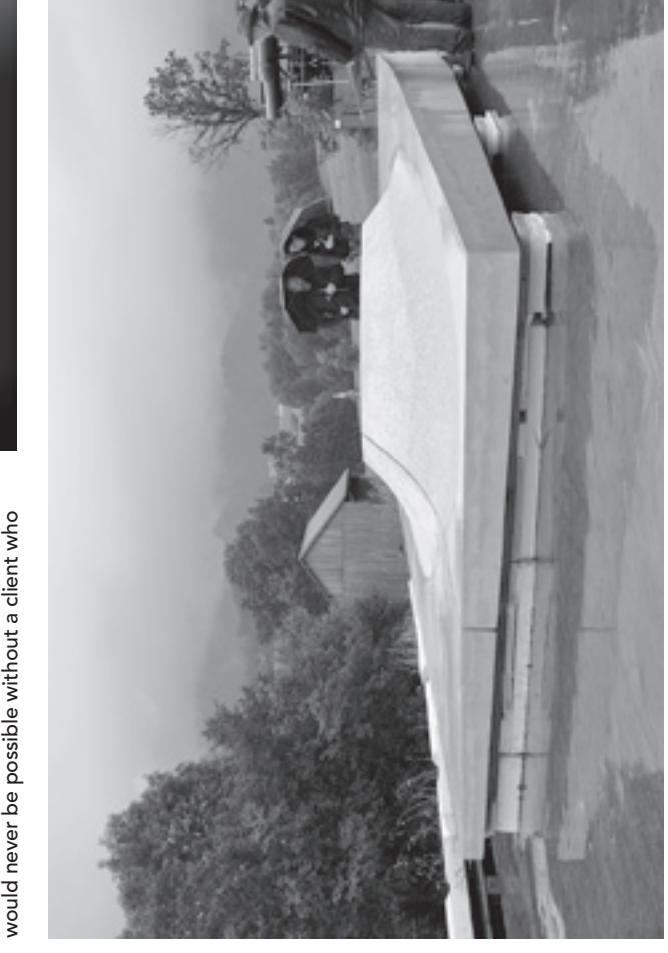
Hannes Stiefel: I assume that you use the term simplicity to refer to the square's general impression and the visual appearance of its details, because the construction's geometry is not that simple at all; a multitude of constraints and requirements led to a complex geometric configuration. As the square was supposed to serve as a base and stage for a diversity of objects and events we were looking for a unifying gesture. While we aimed to reflect the site's ambiguities through form, so material and colour were unified to hold the space together. The efficacy of mono-materiality in this place was the only thing that was very clear at the beginning of the project, before we found a precise form for it, and long before we made a decision for in-situ concrete.

SS: The location is historically charged. Can you outline the important events in the 20th-century history of the square and explain how you see your design engaging this history.



The goal of the intervention at Edvard-Wallnöfer-Platz (Landhausplatz) was to create a contemporary urban public space that negotiates the contradictory conditions and constraints of the existing site while establishing a stage for a new mélange of diverse urban activities. The realized project consists of a 9,000-square-metre concrete floor sculpture. Despite its status as the largest public square in Innsbruck's city centre, Edvard-Wallnöfer-Platz was a neglected space, and in 1985 a subterranean garage was built beneath it. The site nevertheless retains some symbolic significance because of the four memorials positioned there. Before its most recent transformation, the square's atmosphere and spatial appearance was dominated by

Landhausplatz Innsbruck, Tyrol, Austria by LAAAC Architects | Stiefel Kramer Architecture Interview with Hannes Stiefel



historical relevance in relation to these events: the menorah that recalls the assassination of four Jewish citizens of Innsbruck during "Kristallnacht" in 1938 was installed in 1997. Today, the square in front of the province's government building is the site of political demonstrations of all types, including the

