

Expo.02 : Curtain up for the National Exhibition

Switzerland is the only country in the world to hold a national exhibition once every generation -- the last one was in Lausanne in 1964. Now the time has come for a new one. Expo.02 opened its doors on 15 May. Commissioned by the Swiss Confederation, preparations for the Expo.02 started in the mid-nineties. For the first time, an entire region rather than a single location is the venue for the national exhibition. For 159 days the land of the Three Lakes will be the cultural capital of Switzerland.

LIKE its predecessors, the National Exhibition is a kind of up-to-the-minute snapshot of Switzerland and throws light on topical questions and problems. However, Expo.02 offers not only food for thought, it is also a huge festival and an unforgettable happening. The organisers expect around 14 million visitors.

Expo.02 is taking place from 15 May to 20 October 2002 in a spectacular but transitory work of architecture -- by autumn 2003 all the buildings will have disappeared. What will remain are the Land of the Three Lakes ... and a multitude of memories. Every "artepage" (the expression combines the words arte or art, and page or beach, and refers to the structures in which the exhibitions are embedded) has its own

character: Bienne is urbane, Murten poetic, Jura mobile, Yverdon sensual, Neuchâtel artistic.

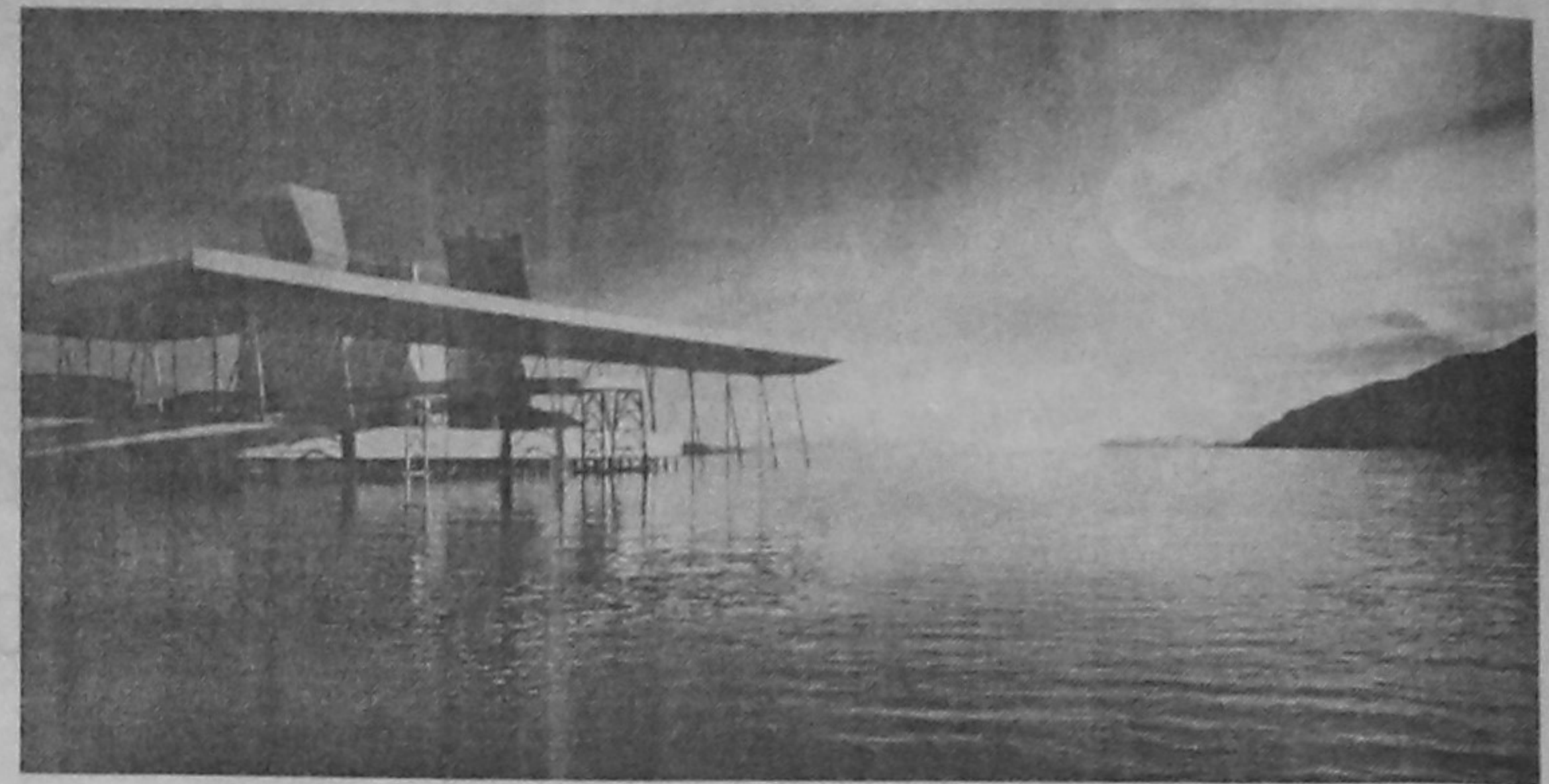
Five cantons, four towns, three lakes, two languages and one national exhibition: Welcome to the Land of the Three Lakes: The hallmark of the Bienne "artepage" consists of three enormous towers symbolising power. At a height of 38, 42 and 35 metres respectively, they offer a very special interior experience. One of the towers boasts a staircase and lift, another (the round so-called "tonal" tower) features unusual sounds. All three are supported by platforms which are capable of bearing a weight of 200 tonnes. Each of these platforms in turn rests on four 50-metre-long stilts directly embedded in the lake.

To get to the urban Expo park, visitors cross a 450-metre long footbridge high above the bay.

A new peninsula has been created on the lake. Resting on

480 steel stilts, it is surrounded by hundreds of illuminated plastic rods. A bridge connects this extensive complex with the mainland. The whole structure

The monolith designed by Parisian architect Jean Nouvel appears to have been standing guard over them since time immemorial. A strange, rusty,



landscape, the panorama of the historic battle of Murten, and present-day Switzerland.

The mobile "artepage" of Jura is the most imaginative and unpredictable of all the artepages. This converted former gravel barge crosses from shore to shore, constantly changing. Even the events and exhibitions on board the are difficult to categorise. Following the principle of freedom, the Jura goes its own way.

"Nature and artifice" are the themes reflected in the architecture of the Neuchâtel "artepage". The whole exhibit

is aimed at reconciling these two apparent opposites. A broad park-like strip along the lakeshore is the venue of the "Expopark", in front of which a vast platform -- the "Forum" -- will lie anchored in the lake. Bridges will connect the two areas. A wooden causeway will be provided in the narrow stretch of water between the two display areas, offering an elegant promenade and a floating border between water and land. This picture will be completed by a series of vast roofs that will seem to float above the artepage like strange objects from the sky.

The Fifth Switzerland: In its message to parliament in 1999 the Federal Council expressly devoted Expo.02 to the Fifth Switzerland as well (four languages are spoken in Switzerland; and in this connection, the Swiss community living abroad is called the Fifth Switzerland).

The national exhibition should not only be an enriching experience for the Swiss people at home, but also have meaning for the Swiss abroad and raise awareness of the characteristics of Switzerland among other nationalities.

A Swiss Abroad Day will be held at Expo.02 under the motto "images suisses" (images of Switzerland). The Organisation for the Swiss Abroad has designated this special festive occasion on 10 August as the highlight of this year's congress.

Since the outset, the organisers of the Expo.02 have included the Fifth Switzerland in their plans. For instance, six catamarans to be used as ferries during the national exhibition are to be called after regions where the largest number of Swiss Abroad are domiciled. Two were already christened at the end of last year and bear the name "Lyon" and "NewYork".

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projects a kind of high-tech poetry.

Less poetic but wittier is the "Manna", a 15-metre-high, 48-metre-wide pudding. This composition of 21 giant cakes is made of plastic but smells of vanilla. The focus here is on eating habits and trends in the food industry.

The Yverdon-les-Bains "artepage" offers visitors a magical feast for the senses, with hills and dales, light-play and tonal shows. An extended wing with a membrane-like shed protects the exhibitions. Visitors cross a ramp to reach a huge, real-looking cloud which hovers above the southern part of the lake. Here you can wander around to your heart's content, or take the weight off your feet for a while.

In the "artepage" of Murten, the exhibitions fit seamlessly into the mediaeval town and adjacent lakeside landscapes.

floating mausoleum, the monolith can be reached by boat and offers visitors three splendid panoramas: the surrounding

Development and transition SECO in investment promotion

PROCEDURES to promote developing countries and economies in transition are an important component of Switzerland's foreign policy and foreign economic affairs, apart from contributing to the development of Switzerland's relations with other countries, they strengthen Switzerland's position in multilateral institutions. In conjunction with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), SECO (the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs) is responsible for developing and implementing measures to promote developing countries and economies in transition.

SECO and the promotion of investment activities

SECO is responsible for promoting investments in its target countries. It promotes direct investment in those countries that in the last few years have attempted to combat inflation, reduce budget deficits, privatise large sectors of the economy, and improve the investment climate.

SECO's policy follows two objectives: on the one hand, the volume of private investment in developing and transition countries is to be increased, while on the other, the distribution of these investments is to be influenced. SECO's intention is to encourage private investors to direct their interests towards countries which have been classified as high-risk, to regions which are to be found beyond the growth extremes as well as to small and medium-sized projects. The most economically progressive countries are also supported by specific measures.

All measures taken by SECO are directed particularly towards small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). For example, SECO

supports private companies in developing countries and economies in transition via financial intermediaries such as venture capital, leasing or guarantee funds. The main principle of cooperation is sharing investment risks and the profits or losses that may result. No subsidies should be granted to the private sector. In addition, in the context of multilateral institutions SECO participates in projects that aim for improvements in framework conditions for investment.

In Zurich in 1997, on the initiative of SECO, the Swiss Organisation for Facilitating Investments (SOFI) was set up. The objective of this organisation in the pre-investment phase is to support Swiss firms and their partners in developing countries and economies in transition in planning investment projects as well as the related transfer of knowledge and technology. In addition, together with institutional investors, SECO has launched the Swiss Development Finance Corporation (SDFC), run by the private sector. Its aim is to promote long-term private direct investment in developing countries and economies in transition. The SDFC finances companies in developing countries and economies in transition according to commercial principles, in which SMEs (primarily from Switzerland but also from other developed countries) participate as investors, suppliers or customers.

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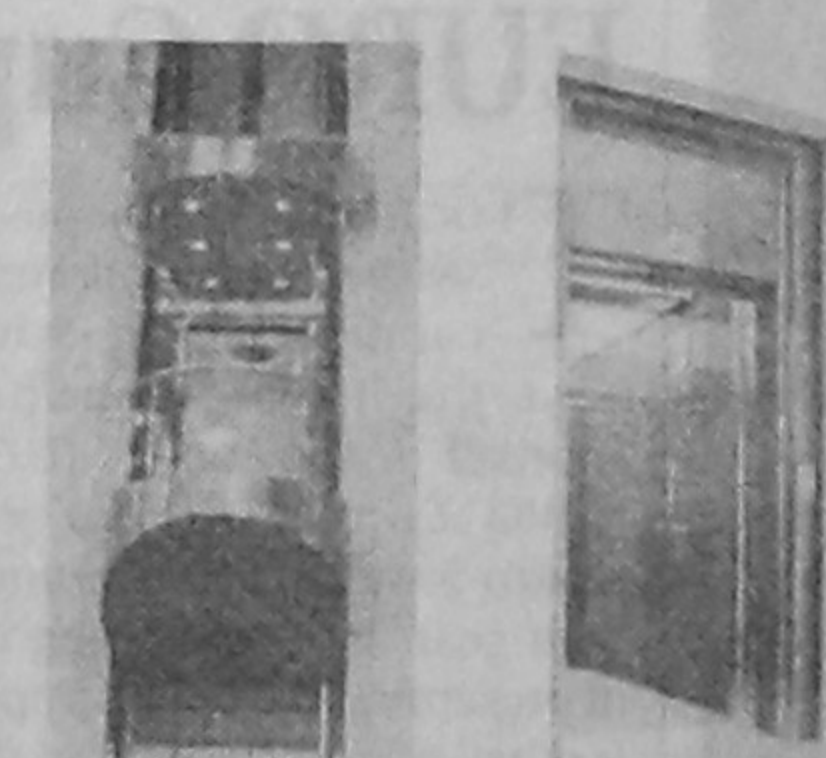
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- Concord Twin Tower (6-Escalators)
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- National University (4-Lifts)
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