

Contemporary Swiss architects

SWITZERLAND was the birthplace of one of the most influential architects of the 20th century: Le Corbusier (1887-1965) - born Charles-Edouard Jeanneret - who adopted French nationality in 1930. His diverse output ranged from town planning to furniture design. In 1922, Le Corbusier proposed principles for architecture: rationality, economy, and functionalism.

Lugano-based Mario Botta and the Basel-based partner-

ship Herzog and de Meuron are arguably the best-known Swiss architects practising today.

Botta's buildings include several museums in Switzerland and abroad, churches, banks, and even the bus terminal in Lugano. His museums include the Tinguely Museum in Basel, the Dürrenmatt Centre in Neuchâtel and also the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco. He has taught in a number of universities and been honoured by many more.

Herzog and de Meuron were responsible for two prize-winning projects in London: the redevelopment of the Bankside power station into the Tate Modern, and the design of the Laban Dance Centre. The Tate Modern has been so successful that it is to be expanded: Herzog and de Meuron are also responsible for the planned extension, due to be completed in 2012. They also designed the Schaulager in Basel, which combines the function of warehouse and museum.

Their current work includes the main stadium for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

Innovative Swiss-designed structures can be seen in many countries. The sleek Charles River Bridge in the US city of Boston is the work of a Swiss, Christian Menn. And the Basel-based architects Diener + Diener expanded the Swiss embassy in Berlin by merging a new structure with the part of the building dating from the 19th century.

Other much-praised Swiss buildings include the Thermal Baths in Vals designed by Peter Zumthor, and the Kirchner Museum in Davos by architects Annette Gion and Mike Guyer.

Architects' work of Herzog-Demeuron



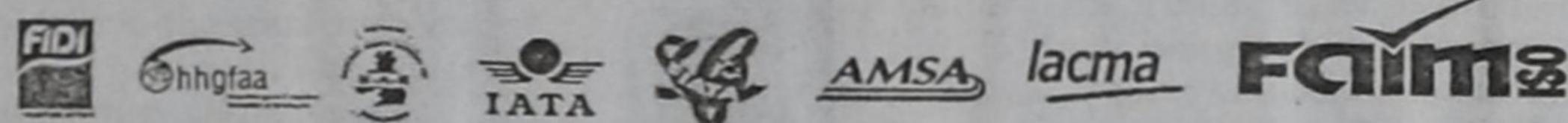
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Swiss rail



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part in the early 20th century, have become a tourist attraction in themselves, drawing rail enthusiasts from all over the world.

Europe's highest station is at the Jungfrauoch in the Bernese Oberland, at an altitude of 3,454 meters (11,330 ft).

From road to rail

The amount of road traffic increases year by year. In order to protect the population and environment, more road traffic should go by rail in the future. This is why the railways are being expanded. The ambitious NEAT project to construct two transalpine railways is currently under construction. It includes the Gotthard base tunnel, which at 57 km (35 miles) will be the longest in the world, and the Lötschberg base tunnel, 34.6 km (21.5 miles). The Lötschberg tunnel opened in June 2007, and the Gotthard is scheduled to open in 2016.

In another move to encourage the switch to rail, in 2001 Switzerland became the first country in Europe to introduce a tax for heavy vehicles calculated according to their weight and distance travelled.

2001 saw a further move to get freight off the roads: the start of the so-called "rolling highway," moving trucks by rail across Switzerland from the southern German city of Freiburg to Novara in northern Italy. The Lötschberg tunnel had to be specially adapted and the flatcars lowered to enable vehicles up to four meters high and 44 tonnes to use the system, which is calculated down to the last centimetre. It is hoped that in the medium term up to 350,000 trucks will use the service annually.

Swiss policy appears to be paying off. In 2005 the share of transalpine freight taken by rail stood at 65%, considerably more than in other Alpine countries.

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