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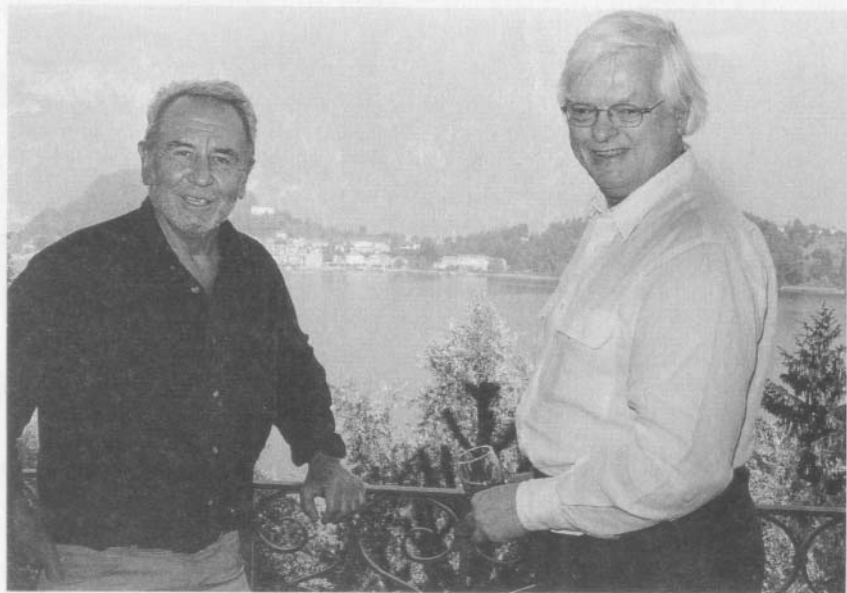


SOCIETE IMAGINAIRE

*International urban design studios of the MIT Department of Architecture in collaboration with the Société Imaginaire
~Altzella and urban and educational entities of Saxony*

The Department of Architecture of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology regularly conducts urban design studios internationally: in recent years in Tokyo, Taipei, Bangkok, Miami, San Juan, Barcelona, Chandigarh, and Boston. The studios receive economic support from the host city or organizations associated with it. Real problems of the city are addressed, but the results of the studio are conceptual projections for the consideration of the host—not contractual proposals for implementation.

The studios are successful pedagogically and for the host cities. Students work collaboratively with their professors and with professionals of the host cities on identifiably crucial problems. The cities benefit from comparative explorations that would not be commissioned on a professional basis. Students learn from their exposure to another culture; this is also true for students of a host city university as they observe and work with faculty and



Batuz, founder of the Société Imaginaire, and Stanford Anderson, Head of the Department of Architecture, MIT. Cadenabbia (May, 1998). Photo by Nancy Royal.

students from a different setting.

Dresden: MIT/Société Imaginaire/Saxony Urban Design Workshop and Studio

MIT is currently conducting an urban design workshop and studio in an unusually sustaining context made possible by collaboration with the Société Imaginaire base in Altzella and with governmental and educational entities of Saxony and Dresden. We recognize special benefits in this association. Dresden is an unusually rich context in which to work. A great historical city, it is also one that experienced extraordinary events in the bombing at the end of the second World War and in playing a distinctive role in the Cold War. The city can be appreciated and sustains study, but it is also a city that needs to reinvent itself. The current project is sustained over a full calendar year rather than for just one term, and there is the possibility of further work in future years. Extended time translates into deeper levels of learning and design projection. Studying a significant European city also allows us to engage a range of our faculty with special interest and preparedness, not only designers and urbanists, but also historians. The MIT department is organized around multiple discipline groups; the Dresden project facilitates the



MIT students take their leave of Professor Dr. Uli Zech, chief of the Projektgruppe Stadtentwicklung and host of the MIT team in Dresden, after an evening with Batuz at Altzella. Students (l. to r.): Jacob Kain, Heidi Rosenwald, Monika Durska, and Robert Shoaff (June 1998). Photo by Nancy Royal.

collaboration that is necessary to realize the benefits of that diversity.

In the collaboration of diverse disciplines the *Société Imaginaire* sets an example. Visits at Altzella of the MIT-Saxony team together with notables from other disciplines and locales enrich the immediate work. More assuredly, they add important dimensions, across age groups, cultural areas, and disciplines, to the learning experience of all those who meet and exchange there. The *Société* is dedicated to broad goals of increased sympathy and understanding across both disciplinary and cultural lines. It seeks to provide a model or a laboratory for a future society where virtual community is proliferated yet direct contact and supportive settings remain vital. The *Société*, in an active stage marked by flexibility and growth, is committed to these goals not only as a matter of ideals, but also through projects with concrete results as measured in both work product and personal development. The MIT/SI/Saxony urban design studios are one important vehicle for this more concrete aspect of the *Société*. However, the *Société* and Saxony's commitment of resources at Altzella will only thrive if there is a regular flow of persons there who create an engaged intellectual environment for one another.

Projects such as the current one seek to benefit both the cities and the general educational environment of Saxony. The cities of Saxony experienced a tumultuous century: late and energetic industrial development; depression and war with, in some cases, particularly furious destruction; forty years of limited (and often problematic) development; and now development under



Kurt Biedenkopf, Prime Minister of Saxony, at a conference in the Stella Room of the School of Architecture and Planning, MIT (April, 1998). Photo by Nancy Royal.

complex and often disconcerting social and economic change. Both in terms of policy and physical design, this is a fruitful moment for exploratory conjectures. Primed with problem statements and information from state and city officials and agencies in Saxony, teams of bright students offer a proven resource for such speculative work. Through collaboration with the Technical University of Dresden, that institution receives learning opportunities similar to those of MIT. Observing the research programs and techniques of others and working across international boundaries is always fruitful. To a limited extent, students of TU Dresden can also have contact with MIT through visits to Cambridge. The Technical University may also benefit from association with nearby SI/Altzella in at least two ways: exposure to the international, cross-disciplinary environment it espouses and the opportunity to step outside university constraints and work with international colleagues in a studio setting that is well-equipped and available twenty-four hours a day while the project is in operation.

However, taken alone, the MIT/Dresden project does not, even in its moment, realize the full potential of the Altzella/Société Imaginaire program. Well-designed and conducted projects, as we intend MIT/Dresden to be, have, by definition, their own boundaries and completeness. It is the ambition of the Société also to engender creative, even serendipitous, encounters across disciplines and among people from different cultures. To this end it is necessary that Altzella be used intensely—especially that two or more simul-



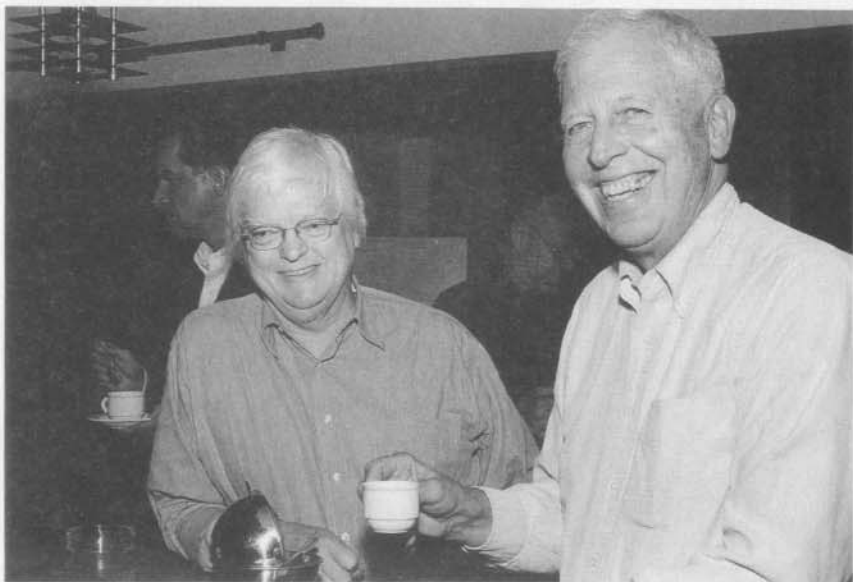
Hilmar von Lojewski of the City Planning Office of Dresden (standing) and Professor Michael Dennis of MIT before a map of Dresden in the offices of the Projektgruppe Stadtentwicklung (June 1998). Photo by Nancy Royal.

taneous projects bring contributive people into relation with one another. At a practical level, it is also only with such a more intense set of activities that the resources of Altzella will be adequately engaged.

What should these additional activities be? In the spirit of serendipitous learning and project construction these activities must, of course, engage as many disciplines as possible: not only architecture, but art, writing, politics, scholarship, and more. In our visit in Dresden, I heard locals speak of the greater importance for Saxony of ties to its eastern and southern neighbors than to western Germany. So, new initiatives for Altzella should surely include universities and individuals from central and eastern Europe—Poland and the Czech Republic, in particular. Batuz has special knowledge and valuable relations in South America. This triangulation of North and South America with central Europe is a feature of the Société, and so should it be in the selection of universities and individuals conducting work at Altzella.

The ambitions of the Société would bring not only cultural but also socio-economic exchange among eastern and western Europe and North and South America. These larger goals will only be addressed if there is a successful range of concrete programs that exemplify and contribute to their realization. The MIT program is a small first step; it must be complemented by many others representing a broad array of disciplinary issues

Stanford Anderson



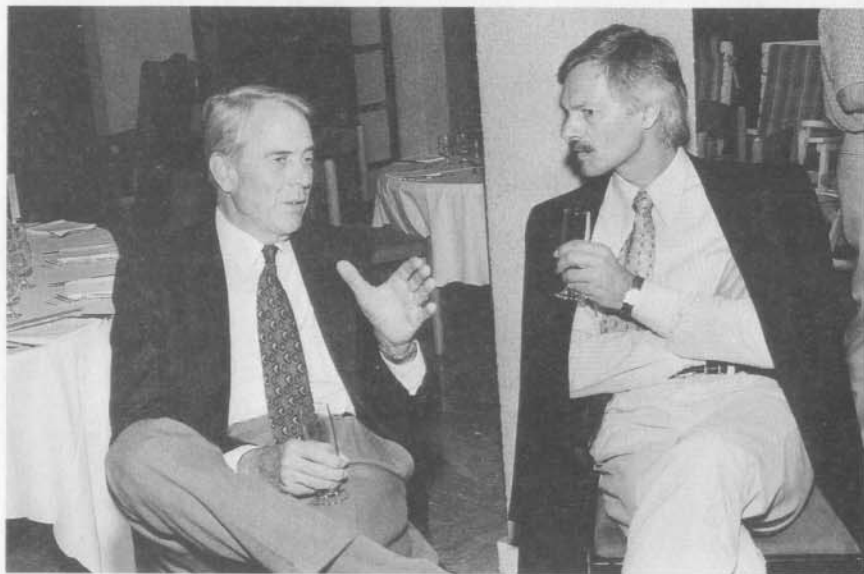
Villa La Collina, Cadenabbia, Lake Como: Stanford Anderson and Henry A. Millon, Dean of the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., during a cappuccino break. May 1998. Photo by Nancy Royal.



Kurt Biedenkopf, Prime Minister of Saxony, in Wadsworth House, presenting Sydney Verba, Carl H. Pforzheimer University Professor and Director of the Harvard University Library with a copy of a recent *Societe Imaginaire* portfolio, now kept in the Woodberry Poetry Room. April, 1998. Photo by Jane Reed, Harvard University.



Villa La Collina, May 1998: Batuz and Dr. Kajo Schommer, Minister of Economics and Labor of the State of Saxony. Photo by Nancy Royal.



Villa La Collina, May 1998: Dr. Herbert Limmer, former ambassador of Germany to Brazil, and Günther Portune, Saxony State Minister of Culture. Photo by Nancy Royal.



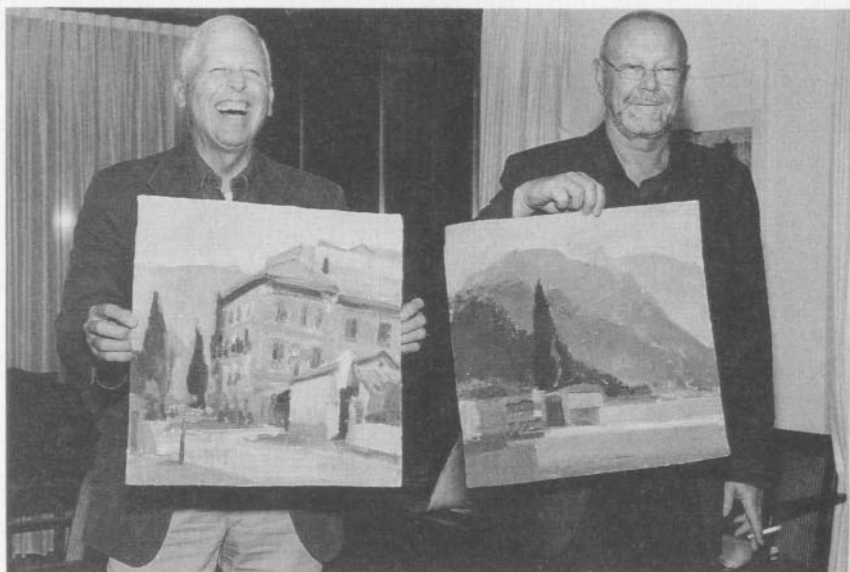
Villa La Collina, May 1998: Judy Millon and Polish poet Julia Hartwig. Photo by Nancy Royal.



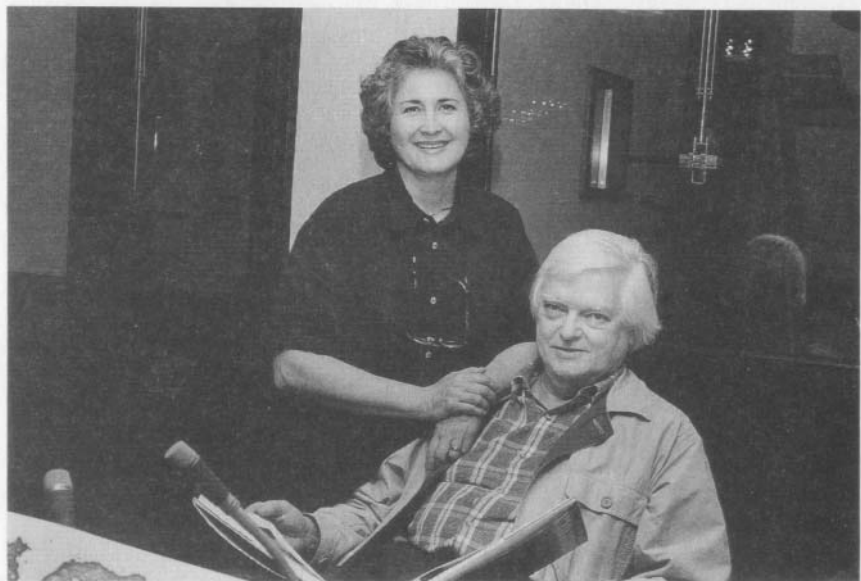
Villa La Collina, May 1998: Batuz chatting with visiting student artists from Germany and Poland. Photo by Nancy Royal.



Vila La Collina, May 1998: left to right: artists Michael Morgner and Ricardo Pascale, and Steven Mansbach and Henry A. Millon, judging artwork by visiting students. Photo by Nancy Royal.



Villa La Collina, May 1998: Henry A. Millon and Dr. Jochen Boberg, Director of Museum Services, Berlin, Germany, showing first and second prizes of student artwork. Photo by Nancy Royal.



Villa La Collina, May 1998: Nancy Royal, photographer, with her husband, Stanford Anderson of MIT. Photo by Judy Millon.