

57,5%

 „The building of minarets is prohibited.“
 Swiss Federal Constitution Art.72- 3

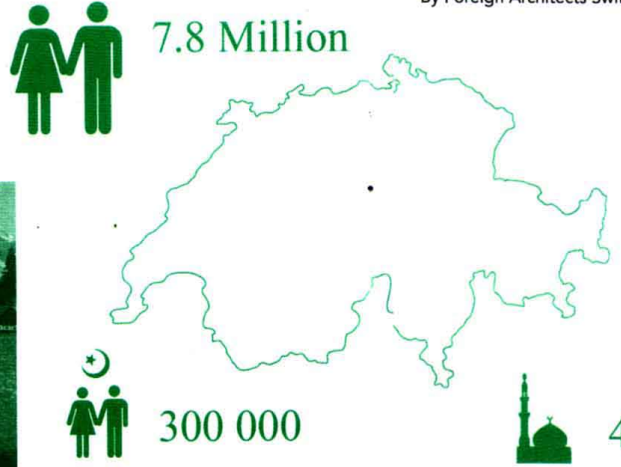


Why are minarets attacked?
 Is it really about that?

All images courtesy FAS

Another Shitty Day in Paradise

By Foreign Architects Switzerland



of the enclosed garden: in their compact size, order is easy to maintain. Landlocked and nestled within a mountainous terrain, the borders to Paradise are already defined. And a robust Federalist democracy ensures that Paradise is decided upon and built by the people that inhabit it.

But fear has threatened this paradise. Switzerland has become hysterical; provoked by hate mongering parties such as the Swiss People's Party and its softer right-wing acolytes, and pushed by angst-hungry media, the country is voting away the very freedoms that it celebrates. In the growing panic about immigrants (Muslims in particular), such paranoid citizens have forgotten two crucial facts. Firstly, foreign watchmakers and businessmen turned peasants into industrious paradise builders, and foreign workers helped turn the country into what it is today. Secondly, the recent population growth of the country is wholeheartedly attributed to immigration. This long-term domestic economic growth unarguably benefits the country, and the buildings that are being erected will ultimately house foreigners and foreign firms.

It is only right that Paradise is built for them too. We at FAS (Foreign Architects Switzerland) believe that architects must be responsible for the worlds that they create, not just the shapes of their buildings (or egos). Therefore, in response to the Swiss Minaret ban – a terrible direct attack against groups of foreigners – FAS (Foundation for Alpine Sabotage) launched a competition for an Islamic Centre at the Kronenwiese site in Zurich. Protesting this anti-Muslim initiative, as well as confronting the apathy of Swiss architects and the legitimacy of existing plans for yet another medium-scale housing competition in the city, we sought to present an alternative vision for the much disputed site that would promote cross-cultural exchange, fight prejudice, and restore the image of Switzerland. It is no accident that the competition winner offers a garden to rebuild the paradise. ●

Across the Abrahamic world, the meaning of Paradise has its roots not in heaven, but firmly on the earth in the form of an enclosed garden.* Although later use of the word

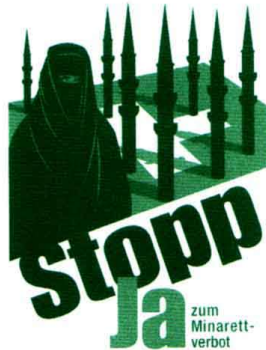
* PARADISE late 12c., from an Iranian source, Avestan *pairi-daeza* "enclosure, park" ... compound of *pairi-* "around" + *diz* "to make, form (a wall)."

equated it to an act of divine creation (as in the Garden of Eden), the original Avestan use of the word understood Paradise as something attainable, able to be constructed by human hands.

Under this assumption that humans can and have created paradises – ideal conditions for mankind here on earth – we look to Switzerland. Three Swiss so-called cities, Zurich, Geneva, and Bern, persistently sit at the top of several leading quality-of-life indices, which take into account criteria such as safety, education, hygiene, health care, culture, environment, recreation, political-economic stability and public transportation. Safe, organised, and clean, Swiss cities fit the analogy

Hochparterre Schweiz

News in Architektur und Design



A MOSQUE FOR ZÜRICH.

We at FAS would like to believe that we were wrong in thinking that the minaret-ban exposed something about the true face of the country: racism and xenophobia tainted with western supremacy and a zest of manipulation. We would like to believe that the self-comforting and condescending argument we have heard many times about the minaret ban is true, that "People are not truly against minarets, they have been manipulated."

If it is true that the minaret-ban was just that one-time hopeless reaction against world Islamist extremism (= terrorism) and only a delusion on the country's geo-political powers (a Swiss minaret-ban to combat terrorism?); if it is true that the minaret-ban only went through because shameless politicians, unconcerned with the interests of their fellow citizens but eager for power and fame, led the campaign -and by chance- won; and if it is true that the minaret-ban is not a first step towards other restrictions on the freedom of religion or further discriminations against one specific community; if all of this is true and if Switzerland wants to restore its image, then an Islamic Centre -a mosque- is the perfect move: a signal of peace, tolerance and hope for the world.

Placed on Zürich's most desirable site, the Kronenwiese, a disputed location for years, an Islamic Centre will solve decades of fruitless discussions and the 7000 m2 would be of better use than the 95 apartments that the city plans after competition (this year) for 55 Million CHF.

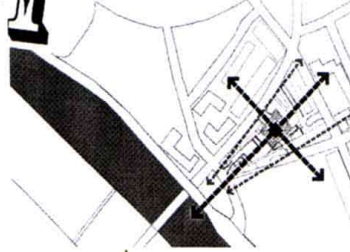
Consequently, and also because Swiss architects are asleep at the wheel, we at FAS launched the Islamic Centre competition. Hoping to catalyze a much needed discussion within the architectural community about cultural differences, we were pleased to receive such a plethora of thoughtful entries. Many, looking at 'integration' as a mutual exchange of information, found ways to bring Zürich into the Mosque, as well as bring the Mosque into Zürich. They challenged stylistic norms, some going so far as to suggest that religion, as well as architectural style, is bound to evolve in a changing cultural climate. It is no surprise that our entries came from all over the world, as Switzerland has recently become internationally notorious for this human rights issue.

Since local architecture platforms have been apathetic to their own problems, we at FAS recognize it as our responsibility to make voices heard, to open up to other cultures and mentalities.

The success of our call reaffirms this need for discussion as well as a real desire for architects to interact politically. Our next step is a move towards wider debate, deeper confrontation, and more real interactions. Therefore, we want to take the discussion outside of the architecture realm to the public forum and would demand the City Authorities to take responsibility and stand for a true democratic, tolerant and just Zürich: A city not only for Protestants bankers, catholic designers and Jewish seniors, not only for European hipster art students and Caucasians' depressed 'Kleinkindererzlerin'; but also for Muslim single cooks, Shias family mothers, Bangladeshi busboys, Albanian cops and Turkish architects.

If not for them, do it for your banks and your hostages.

1 Swapna Parab & Nubras Samayeen



Hall/ OBSTRUctures

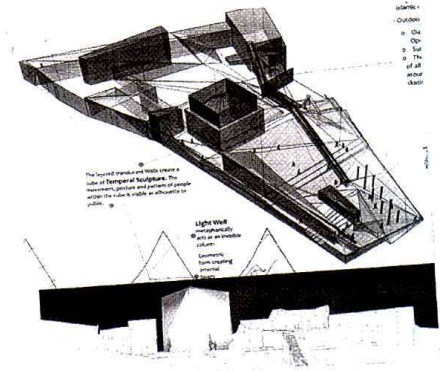


3 Frei+ saarinen



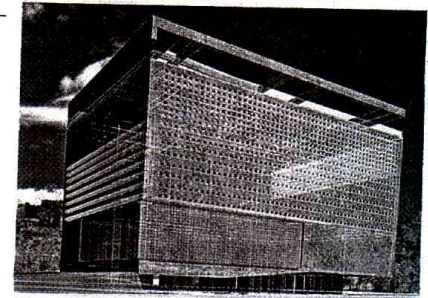
1st Prize

Directing energy towards a network of landforms, rather than built objects, this project succeeds in creating inviting spaces, somehow a peace offering between disparate factions. In lacing the site with an encyclopedic collection of Islamic metaphors, we were particularly interested that the "Paradise Garden" was somehow pious and secular at the same time. A Trojan Horse, it does not present its power outright; one could imagine being in the middle of this Islamic Center without even realizing it. The park avoids an unnecessary discussion about architectural style and minaret by focusing on urban strategies rather than architectural clarity. One could imagine it very well as the next 'Place to be' in Zürich.



2nd Prize

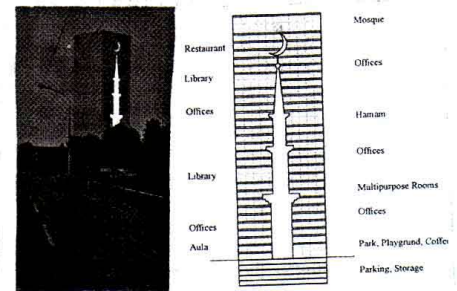
Stopp? Idealize? Regress? Imitate? Rationalize? Disguise? Bury? Rethink? Topple? Intert? Veil! Void! This project proposes that the Swiss minaret ban necessitates a reconceptualization of the minaret, and Islamic practice, in Switzerland: the "minaret" becomes an observation deck and prayer space on the top floor. However, its fortress-like appearance depicts an image of solidarity and singularity, introspective towards its site. Although menacing and undiplomatic, we found it to be symptomatic of a situation, that Islam is at odds with its surroundings in Europe.



3rd Prize

Ceci n'est pas un minaret

In rewriting the program, this 'Brave Swiss' mixes routine commercial space with the functions of the Islamic Center. In Zürich, where real estate is always in demand, it is particularly exciting to imagine that members of the conservative SVP (Schweizerische Volkspartei) might find their new headquarters looking out into a minaret-void. Ironically, the office tower and minaret are both symbols of power; their combination suggests that Switzerland's love of commerce outweighs its fear of Islam.



ARCHITECT'S RESPONSIBILITIES BEGIN WITH THEIR SILENCE AND THEIR DISENGAGEMENT.