STONE AND WATER

AND THE WATER LOVES THE STONE - MORE THAN ANY OTHER MATERIAL, BECAUSE THE STONE HOLDS THE WATER, LIGHT PENETRATES IN SELECTED PLACES, AND THE STONE LIGHTS UP, THE WATER BEGINS TO SPARKLE AND THERE IS ALREADY THIS IRIDESCENT ATMOSPHERE THERE...

VALSER GNEISS AND THE BODIES OF HUMANS' TOPOGRAPHY AND COUNTRYSIDE ARE THE ROLE MODELS OF THE THERME. IT LOOKS AS IF IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THERE.

THE ROOMS, WHICH ARE MADE OF STONE, SHOULD CARESS THE BODY AND NOT COMPETE AGAINST IT BUT RATHER, GIVE IT ROOM. ROOM TO BE. QUIET FORMS, HIGH MATERIAL PRESENCE. STONE AND WATER AND A PINCH OF GOLD... ONLY THE CHAIRS ANTICIPATE SOME OF THE SOFTNESS OF THE HUMAN BODY WITH THEIR ANATOMICAL MOMENTUM. THE MORE WE TRUSTED IN STONE AND LET IT PLAY ITS MAIN ROLE, THE MORE IT BEGAN TO SHOW ITS SUBTLETIES, PATTERNS AND STRUCTURES - ITS BEAUTY.

ROOMS MAY OWE THEIR EXISTENCE TO AN IDEA, BUT IN THE END, THEY CONSIST OF SUBSTANCE, OF MATERIAL THAT OFTEN DOES NOT OBEY ANY IDEA BUT RATHER, WANTS TO COME INTO ITS OWN.

PETER ZUMTHOR.
**History of the baths**

The precise age of the thermal spring is unknown, but in the area where the Therme now stands, shards of earthenware from the Crestaulia culture (middle Bronze Age, 1500 - 1300 BC) were found, which suggests that the spring was known even then. Ever since, the thermal water has separated around 750,000 cubic metres of bedrock from the mountains.

The first written references of the thermal spring being used date back to the 17th century. The first chemical investigation of the water (1826) was carried out by a Chur apothecary, G.W. Capeller; the doctor J.A. Kaiser extended the analyses with a “histori-cal-topographical and therapeutic description of the mineral springs”. The “sour source” was compared to other similar places and

**VALS AT THE BASE OF THE SWISS ALPS IS ABOUT, WATER, AND THE LANDSCAPE.**

**THERME VALS IS ABOUT WATER, IN THE LANDSCAPE THROUGH NATURAL MATERIALS, LIGHT, VIEW AND VISTA.**
ENVIROMENTAL QUALITIES. VALS IS AT THE BASE OF THE ALPS, LOCATED ON EITHER SIDE OF A RIVER. THIS AREA RECEIVES A FAIR AMOUNT OF SNOWFALL IN THE WINTER, WITH TEMPERATE CLIMATE IN THE SUMMER.

qualified for therapeutic indication: “It is a light, clear water, soft, as if one has touched lukewarm water mixed with fine soap, with a very bland, barely perceptible, salty taste, its fixed components are primarily a fine clay and limestone... Its softening, soothing power which counteracts high irritability, cramp and stiffness of the limbs, damaged skin, an itch, eczema and ulcers of the same sort, rheumatic and gouty afflictions, has been proven by long years of experience.”

At the Viennese world exhibition in 1873, the Valser mineral spring was introduced by the Grison natural sciences society as the only thermal mineral spring in Grisons, along with the other mineral springs in the country.

With the construction of the road from Ilanz to Vals in 1880, the time to create new and bigger bathing facilities had come. A limited company, founded in 1891, acquired the spring and the baths property and commissioned a deep bore hole and a new tapping of a spring. In the summer of 1893, the first spa hotel Therme, with 60 beds and a bath house, was opened. At that time, the spa hotel was only open during the summer, from 15th June to 1st October. The public baths and hotel was a popular meeting place for the European elite from when they opened, up until the First World War. The newly founded enterprise not only promoted the beautiful mountain landscape and the hikes in the region, but also celebrated the benefits of the water for tuberculosis, anaemia, chronic inflammation, muscle wastage, joint pain and rheumatism.
The guests were picked up in Ilanz by horse and cart and were taken into the popular high mountain valley to the spa.

After several changes of ownership and direction, the health spa and baths business was abandoned in 1956 and was put up for sale. However, nobody came forward to purchase it until 1960, when an expert in mineral water acquired the spring and the property, created a new filling plant for the mineral water and commissioned the construction of an ambitious new aparthotel together with a medical spa area. The modern Hotel Therme was born.

APPROACH. THE MOUNTAIN SIDE WITH ITS GRASS. HISTORICALLY USED FOR SWISS FARMING ON THE SLOPES OF THE ALPS. THIS AREA HAS DYNAMIC WEATHER BECAUSE OF ITS SITING. TRADITIONAL SWISS BUILDINGS USING NATURAL STONE AND WOOD FOR CONSTRUCTION WITH STONE ROOFS, THIS AREA PROMOTES ACTIVITY.
BUILDING SITING. THERME VALS SITS IN THE HILLSIDE AS A NATURAL ROCK OUTCROPING, BALANCED BETWEEN THE EXISTING BUILDINGS ON THE SITE, NAVIGATING VIEWS AND VISITS.
therme vals context
BUILDING SITING. EXPERIENCE THE ROCK AND SITE OF THE PLACE. BUILDING FENESTRATION FRAME VERY SPECIFIC VIEWS OF THE LANDSCAPE ACROSS THE VALLEY, NOT THE VILLAGE BELOW. YOUR EXPERIENCE IS THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE.
SITE & VISTA. VALS ROOF EXTENDS OUT OF THE LANDSCAPE AS THE EXISTING HILL SIDE PLATEAUS. THE FRAC-TURES IN THE PLANTED ROOF SPEAK TO THE NATURAL RIDGES, AND EXPOSED ROCK IN THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE. THE VIEW FROM THE UPPER SIDE IS COMPARABLE TO THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE.
WINTER ROOF PLANE. SNOW COVERED EXTENDING THE NATURAL EXPERIENCE OF PLACE. CAREFULLY DIVIDED TO ALLOW LIGHT INTO THE SPACE BELOW AND BREAK THE SIZE OF THE ROOF AS PLATEAU.
SUMMER PLATEAUS. NATURAL VEGETATION EXTENDS ONTO THE ROOF MAKING IT A NATURAL PART OF THE SITE.
VIEWS. PUNCTUATING THE VALSNER GNEISS TO FRAME AND LOCATE SPECIFIC VIEWS. EXPERIENCE IS THE GUIDED TOWARD THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE NOT THE VILLAGE OR SURROUNDING HOUSES AND BUILDINGS.
material softness
massing breaks to exterior
building articulation
interior/ exterior volumes
interior brought outside
softness
lightness
cold
What the use of this scheme achieves is a seamless visual continuity of surfaces in which spaces seem to recede into one another, maintaining the appearance that each protruding volume or recess has been carved out of the same block of stone. Essential to this is the lack of a recognisable pattern of construction on the wall, a factor which is emulated by the construction of the corner joints. Their assembly is laid out precisely in the stone-course-layering scheme and relies on the alternating placement of cross-laminated slabs of stone of variable width and length to provide an interwoven joint system which serves as the origin for the offsetting of the bond joints. The slabs of stone are cut and finished to specific dimensions which, when laid in alternating directions, continue the irregular pattern of the walls and strengthen the continuous impression of the wall construction without compromising the sense of wholeness that characterises the baths.

Figure 11 and Figure 12: Photographs of corner joints.

Figure 13 (Below): Profile drawing of a corner joint.

Figure 14 (Above): Drawing illustrating the assembly of the corner joints.
WINTER ROOF PLANE. SNOW COVERED EXTENDING THE NATURAL EXPERIENCE OF PLACE. CAREFULLY DIVIDED TO ALLOW LIGHT INTO THE SPACE BELOW AND BREAK THE SIZE OF THE ROOF AS PLATEAU.
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SUMMER PLATEAUS. NATURAL VEGETATION EXTENDS ONTO THE ROOF MAKING IT A NATURAL PART OF THE SITE.
DETAILS.
PLACE: ASK HOW & WHY YOUR PROJECT SITS IN THE SURROUNDING CONTEXT? EXPERIENCE BEGINS WITH APPROACH AND THEN ENTERING.
PARTI DIAGRAM. INTERLOCKING MASSES THAT SPLIT TO CONTAIN BATHING WATER, MAKING PRIVACY WHERE NEEDED, VIEWS AND ACCESS TO LIGHT WHERE NEEDED. CREATES AN EXPERIENCE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL, OR VERY SMALL GROUP, WHILE BEING ABLE TO ACCOMMODATE LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE.
SKETCH PLAN. DEVELOPMENT OF EXPERIENCE ANNOTATED FOR VARIOUS WATER OFFERINGS.
SKETCH PLAN. MASS BECOMES CONTAINERS, OR VOLUMES THAT HAVE SIZE, STRUCTURE, AND RELATIONSHIP TO EACH OTHER.
PLAN. THERME VALS DISSOLVES THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR IN PLAN AND SECTION. THE PLAN FRAGMENTS CONTAIN THE VARIOUS BATHS, PROVIDING THE EXPERIENCE.
BUILDING ENVELOPE

CIRCULATION AS EXCHANGE

WATER... AS:

- CHAMBER,
- REST,
- RELAX,
- BREATH,
- COMMUNITY,
- EXPLORATION,
- JOURNEY,
- VIEW,
- VISTA,
- LIGHT,
- PASSAGE,
- WALK,
- SIT,
- LAY,
- LOUNGE.
1. Point of access/exit
2. Cleaners' storeroom
3. Make-up room
4. Hall with springwater, drinking fountains
5. Changing rooms
6. Showers
7. WCs
8. Sweat stone with Turkish showers and sweat chambers, humidity 75-100%
9. Indoor bath 32°C
10. Outdoor bath, 30°C in winter, 30-33°C in summer
11. Stone island
12. Rock terrace
13. Sauna bath 35°C
14. Fire bath 42°C
15. Cold bath 14°C
16. Shower stone
17. Drinking stone
18. Steaming stone
19. Flower bath 35°C
20. Rest space 1
21. Outdoor shower stone
22. Rest space 2
23. Massage
24. Rest space 3
25. Disabled WCs
26. Disabled cloak and first-aid room
27. Disabled access
28. Bath attendants
POINT OF ACCESS/ EXIT; CLEANER’S STOREROOM; MAKE-UP ROOM; HALL WITH SPRING WATER & DRINKING FOUNTAINS; CHANGING ROOMS; SHOWERS; WATER CLOSETS; SWEAT STONE WITH TURKISH SHOWERS & SWEAT CHAMBERS; INDOOR BATH; OUTDOOR BATH; STONE ISLAND; ROCK TERRACE; SOUND BATH; FIRE BATH; COLD BATH; SHOWER STONE; DRINKING STONE; SOUNDING STONE; FLOWER BATH; REST SPACE; OUTDOOR SHOWER STONE.