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### KEYWORDS

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### ABSTRACT

Educated at the crossroads of various influences – Japanese architecture, vernacular European architecture, and the Modern Movement – Roland Schweitzer (1925–2018) traced a distinctive path in the French architectural scene. He is considered today as a precursor for a form of sensitive contemporary architecture that remains connected with the environment. Schweitzer sought to achieve a certain syncretism between contemporary and traditional form. Throughout his professional life, the humanist dimension of his approach founded its full expression in buildings with a social vocation. From the beginning of his career in 1954, the architect established fruitful relationships with popular education organizations. This proximity led to numerous projects and achievements – youth hostels, summer camps, family holiday centers – as well as long-term architectural research on these specific types of social tourism infrastructures. This paper focuses on the summer camps built in France by Schweitzer between 1958 and 1974. The analysis of the emblematic projects – especially the Cieux and Ballan-Miré holiday camps – allows us to understand how, thanks to a dialogue with the project sponsors and potential users of the site, the architect developed typologies and, more generally, an architectural language that was as close as possible to the uses and the users, educators and children, and enables to evaluate how architecture participated in the popular education projects linked to the New Education movement.

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# An Architecture for New Education: Roland Schweitzer's Summer Camps (1958–74)

In the preface to the imposing 2014 monograph published by Roland Schweitzer on his own work,<sup>1</sup> the architect delivers his vision of architecture as a “collective discipline” and a “generous creation where the mastery of the material and the site responds to functions, but, above all, has since prehistoric times contributed to an art of living.”<sup>2</sup> From this definition, the historian interested in Schweitzer’s decisive contribution to the renewal of social tourism architecture in France during the 1950s and 1980s can retain five notions: *collective discipline, creation, mastery, function*, and the *art of living*. Yet a sixth, underlying, theme also serves as a major orientation for this architect: this is *continuity* – continuity both in time, between the past and the present, and in space, between humankind, architecture, and environment. From his first projects in 1954 until his last major realizations in the early 2000s, Schweitzer’s approach has undoubtedly rested on the “choice of a dynamic architecture that calls for participation and allows dialogue with the natural

environment,”<sup>3</sup> that is to say the search for an “open order,” which is expressed in a particularly convincing way in the summer camps conceived at the beginning of his career. More than any other French architect, Schweitzer has been particularly prolific in the field of social tourism architecture.<sup>4</sup> Born in Bruyères, Vosges, in eastern France, Schweitzer began to study architecture after the Second World War in Strasbourg than in Auguste Perret’s studio – Atelier de Bois – in Paris. He graduated (Ecole nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, Paris) in 1953 under the direction of Jean Prouvé. His sensitivity to architecture, inspired by his father – a surveyor strongly influenced by Corbusean Modernism working as municipal architect in Haguenau, Alsace – had been revealed during a visit to the 1937 International Exhibition, where Schweitzer discovered “the disquieting architecture of the German and USSR pavilions, and, in contrast, the peaceful, harmonious environment of the Japanese pavilion.”<sup>5</sup> From his childhood in Alsace,

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Cieux Preadolescent Summer Camp (also called *Domaine du Four* and/or *Village Le Four*). Haute-Vienne, France, 1967–73. Designed by Roland Schweitzer for the *Comité des œuvres laïques de vacances d'enfants et d'adolescents du département de la Seine* and *JPA, Jeunesse au plein air*. Dismissed in 1995. Today the building is private property, and in 2008 it was labelled as "Outstanding contemporary architecture." Roland Schweitzer, s.d. circa 1973, (*Centre d'archives d'architecture contemporaine – henceforth CAC, Paris, Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine –*, fonds Schweitzer, 455 AA, unquoted document).

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Ballan-Miré Summer Camp. Indre et Loire, France, 1973–77. Designed by Roland Schweitzer for the Social Services of the Ministry of the Economy and Finance, with the support of CEMEA, *Centre d'entraînement aux méthodes d'éducation active*. The building has been destroyed. Roland Schweitzer, August 1978 (CAC, fonds Schweitzer, 455 AA, unquoted document).

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Roland Schweitzer (at the center) and Albert Varier (on the right) at the inauguration of *Viazac Summer Camp*, 1979. Lot, France, 1958–79. Designed by Roland Schweitzer for *JPA, Jeunesse au plein air*. Roland Schweitzer (CAC, fonds Schweitzer, 455 AA, unquoted document).

Schweitzer always retained a taste for nature, for large forests, and for a particular material, timber, on which he focused on his architectural research. He was formed at the crossroads of various influences: Japanese architecture, in particular Zen, which in the late 1960s Schweitzer was one of the first French architects to discover; the "architecture of traditional societies";<sup>6</sup> and the great architects of the Modern Movement (Aalto, Behrens, Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, Prouvé, Taut, Scharoun, etc.).<sup>7</sup> Like Roland Simounet, André Lefèvre, Robert Auzelle, or Pierre Genton, as well as the architects of the *Atelier d'architecture et d'urbanisme (AUA)*, the *Atelier de Montrouge*, or the team surrounding Georges Candilis,<sup>8</sup> Schweitzer traced his own unique path through the French architectural scene, which between 1953 and 2006 he helped to shape. In France today he is regarded as one of the pioneers in the invention of a sensitive contemporary architecture that is linked to environmental issues. In this respect his approach is reminiscent of that of Umberto Riva in Italy, Dimitris Pikionis in Greece, or Fernando Távora in Portugal. In a way it is also reminiscent of the early work of Álvaro Siza in Matosinhos, James Stirling and James Gowan in the United Kingdom, and Charles Moore in the United States, even if these architects subsequently took very different directions. For Schweitzer's part, his architecture,

on the fringe of major trends, always sought to achieve a certain syncretism between contemporary and traditional themes. Throughout his professional life, the humanist dimension of his approach has found its full expression in social architecture, a field in which his work has become a benchmark.

Between 1954 and 1983 he built thirteen youth hostels, and from 1958 to 1974 designed more than a dozen vacation centers for children, young people, and/or families. Two summer camps in particular are, given their location and architecture, particularly emblematic of the renewal of this architectural form during the decades following the Second World War – decades which, in France and in Europe more generally, were the golden age of social tourism.<sup>9</sup> The first is the *Cieux Preadolescent Summer Camp*,<sup>10</sup> built in the center of France (Haute-Vienne), between 1967 and 1973, on the initiative of popular education organizations<sup>11</sup> that wanted to democratize access to vacations. **Fig. 1** In use until the end of the 1980s, and then abandoned in 1995, the buildings are now owned by a private property company and, despite having received the label of "Architecture contemporaine remarquable,"<sup>12</sup> are severely damaged. The *Ballan-Miré* summer camp was built between 1973 and 1977, in Indre-et-Loire, southwest of Tours, to host the young children of civil servants from the Ministry of Economy and Finance.



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**Fig. 2** As with Cieux, Ballan-Miré also ceased to operate in 1999, and in this case the buildings were destroyed.<sup>13</sup> Despite their sad fate, these two buildings remain exemplary of a certain conception of summer camp architecture at a time when so-called *New Education* was developing.<sup>14</sup>

#### AN ARCHITECTURE FOR THE NEW EDUCATION

Interviewed in 2013, René Sedes (1932–2020), who held important national responsibilities within youth movements during the 1950s and 1960s,<sup>15</sup> recalled the work carried out in collaboration with Schweitzer, this “young architect” who created a “style” of vacation centers “combining functionality and collective life on a human scale, which would mark this type of construction for many years.”<sup>16</sup> Schweitzer’s contact with the educators – or “pedagogues,” as he called them – of the youth movements was indeed decisive. From the beginning of his practice, the junior architect was determined to give a social dimension to his architectural work. Quite boldly, and with great foresight, he approached the socio-cultural services of the ministries, offering to provide lectures on architecture to managers and inspectors in training.<sup>17</sup> He quickly obtained his first commissions from associations promoting social tourism, before taking on the more official role of consulting architect.<sup>18</sup>

#### MEETING THE “PEDAGOGUES”

While he entered into discussion with many representatives of social tourism and delivered building for many clients,<sup>19</sup> Schweitzer developed his main summer camp projects in collaboration with FUAJ, JPA, and CEMEA,<sup>20</sup> the three main French associations of social tourism, for whom his work amounted to a veritable architectural and social project. The FUAJ hired Schweitzer in 1954. Heir to the Ligue française des auberges de jeunesse (LFA) created in 1930 by Marc Sangnier, to the Centre laïque des auberges de jeunesse (CLAJ) created in 1933 by Céline Grunebaum-Ballin, and to the Union française des auberges de jeunesse (UFAJ)<sup>21</sup> created in 1944 – established officially in 1956 – the FUAJ brought together most of the French youth hostels, federating the numerous territorial associations that managed the youth hostel network.<sup>22</sup> The FUAJ’s main goal was to provide the French territory with tourist accommodation structures that would make vacations economical and accessible, and to encourage encounters between people of all ages and from all over the world, while respecting their differences. As part of his role as architect-advisor, Schweitzer assisted the association in the site prospection, in the appropriation and refurbishment of existing buildings, and in the construction of new ones. The architect’s archive mentions 92 youth hostel projects:



however, only 13 were actually built.<sup>23</sup> They were located in small towns in the mountains (Savines-le-Lac, Mont-Dore) or by the sea (Concarneau, Trébeurden, Lorient, Brest), as well as in medium-sized touristic towns (Menton, Anglet, Chartres), or on the outskirts of large cities (Vénissieux in the suburb of Lyon, Échirolles near Grenoble, Choisy-le-Roi and Suresnes-Rueil-Malmaison near Paris). To carry out these projects, Schweitzer crisscrossed the French territory. On several occasions, he emphasized the importance of these trips, which allowed him to discover the French vernacular architecture:

I was already sensitive to this question through Alsatian architecture, [...]. So, [...] I discovered this architecture known as “traditional societies” [i.e., from before the Industrial Revolution], especially since I was commissioned hundreds of times to view properties, analyze them, discard them, or propose them and then discover their past architectural quality, often realized without architects.<sup>24</sup>

This reference point often influenced and fed his own answers, especially in social tourism programs.

A few years later, in 1958 and until 1996, Schweitzer became consulting architect for the JPA. **Fig. 3** The JPA was created

in 1938 under the name *Fédération nationale des œuvres laïques de Vacances d'enfants et d'adolescents*,<sup>25</sup> by Georges Lapierre, with the support of Jean Zay, Minister of National Education, Marc Rucart, Minister of Public Health, and Léo Lagrange, Under Secretary of State for Sports and Leisure. The organization's aim was to coordinate and facilitate the work of secular vacation organizations, and to enlarge and democratize holiday access.<sup>26</sup> Its work, interrupted during the Second World War, was relaunched after the conflict. Approved by ministerial decree (from the Ministry of National Education) on April 7, 1945, and recognized as a public utility by decree on June 20, 1949, it took the name of JPA.<sup>27</sup> At the time Schweitzer approached the association, it was chaired (1950–57) by Edouard Herriot, president of the Council of Ministers and the National Assembly, and was under the responsibility of René Bonissel, its secretary general (1950–70). Schweitzer began his collaboration with the JPA by designing the *Domaine de Viazac* (Lot, Occitanie), acquired and fitted out in 1958, as part of an experimental project to create a new kind of educative summer camp and institute. This project was directed by Albert Varier, general secretary of the JPA Committee of the Seine (then of Paris), and also an activist for the CEMEA and an organizer of staff training in Viazac, in addition to his work with summer camps for children. This



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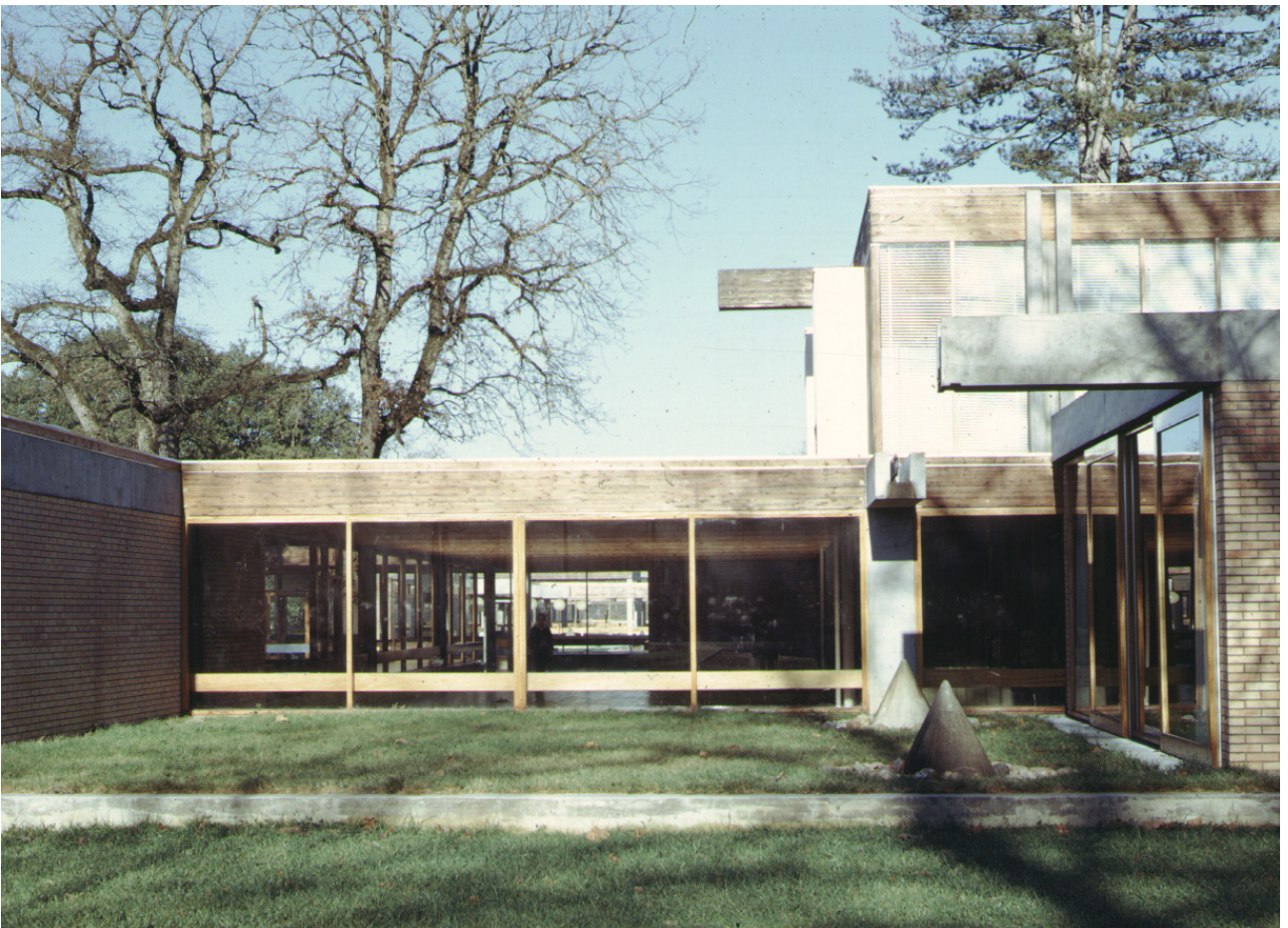
was a long-term project in which Schweitzer was involved many times between 1958 and 1979,<sup>28</sup> constructing new buildings and renovating old ones. Similarly, he worked at Bordeaux-Saint-Clair, which was acquired by the association in 1963 following a donation from Mr. and Mrs. Thurnauer, to provide vacation accommodation to children and adolescents facing social difficulties.<sup>29</sup> **Fig. 4** Between 1963 and 1972, Schweitzer subtly transformed the historic buildings and erected highly contemporary buildings in their immediate vicinity to increase the center's capacity and functionality. In Lavour (Tarn, Occitanie), the JPA project was quite different: it included a Center for Help through Work (Centre d'aide par le travail, CAT) and a Medicalized Therapeutic Center for disabled young people and adults. Both are still in use. **Fig. 5** While it may seem marginal to the topic of social tourism, the architecture of this project is worthy of consideration. Built and developed in several stages between 1969 and 1985 on a property owned by the Besse family, this project allowed Schweitzer to explore a subtle brutalism combining brick, concrete, and wood, which then influenced all his work, especially in Ballan-Miré. For its part, Cieux was a pioneering project in the development of an ecological architecture in wood, nourished by the influence of traditional Japanese architecture, which Schweitzer discovered in 1967.<sup>30</sup>

In quantitative terms Schweitzer's collaboration with the CEMEA was less prolific than that with the FUAJ and the JPA, but for his architectural evolution it was just as decisive. The association, which still exists, was created in the context of the Popular Front<sup>31</sup> by André Lefèvre (1886–1946), then national commissioner of the secular scouting movement of the Éclaireurs de France, and by Gisèle de Faily (1905–89), a promoter of the New Education. The intention was to train the managers of summer camps, to replace the simple supervision of children "with the action of educators prepared for their task and supported in their work by a pedagogical conception, that of the New Education."<sup>32</sup> The association, active since 1937, was officially created on December 12, 1938, under the name of Centre d'entraînement pour la formation des personnels des colonies de vacances et des maisons de campagne des écoliers.<sup>33</sup> It received an official approval on October 6, 1944, and was recognized as a "public utility association" on July 22, 1966. The training of summer camps' staff remained its main activity until the 1990s. But, very quickly, the CEMEA diversified its audience to teachers, psychiatric hospitals staff, and educators in establishments for maladjusted children, etc. The association was also committed to cultural development and promoting a culture accessible to all. Schweitzer's main work for the CEMEA was realizing



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Bordeaux-Saint-Clair Holiday Home. Seine-Maritime, France, 1963–72. Designed by Roland Schweitzer for Jeunesse au Plein Air, JPA. General view showing the new buildings in the foreground and the historical ones in the background. Roland Schweitzer, June 1974 (CAC, fonds Schweitzer, 455 AA, unquoted document).

Medico-Professional Institute (IMP) of Lavaur, Tarn, France, 1969–72: IMP, then extensions in 1976–77 (Center for Help through work and residential homes) and 1985 (Balneal Institute of Reeduction). Designed by Roland Schweitzer for Jeunesse au Plein Air, JPA. General view of the MPI. Roland Schweitzer, s.d. circa 1972 (CAC, fonds Schweitzer, 455 AA, unquoted document).

the Centre national de formation et de stages des cadres (1967–72) in Bénouville, near Caen, in Normandy, and, in collaboration with the social services of the Ministry of Economy and Finance,<sup>34</sup> the Ballan-Miré summer camp, which embodies the full maturity of Schweitzer’s architectural approach to social tourism.

### DIALOGUE AS A BASIS FOR DESIGN

On a personal level, Schweitzer found his work on a project of collective interest to be very satisfying. Talking to people “concerned about mankind and its future”<sup>35</sup> interested him even more. From them he learned what he didn’t know, “that is to say, how to work with the very young, young, and older children, and with small and large groups of people.”<sup>36</sup> Thanks to this valuable dialogue with the pedagogues, Schweitzer came to base his design work on the social tourism centers on the needs of their users and of the educational project. The program, the hierarchy of the space, and the open or closed character of the complexes were all discussed as a group. In Cieux, he worked on the program and location of the summer camp with Albert Varier (1924–2016), who was convinced that the vacation center was the site of a utopia that had already been realized.<sup>37</sup> The Cieux camp was designed to host pre-adolescents – girls and boys – aged from 13 to 15, during the summer months. This seasonality led the architect to opt for a “simplified construction,”<sup>38</sup> a light architecture mainly made of wood, very open to

its environment and widely adapted to outdoor life. **Fig. 6** Ballan-Miré was designed to accommodate 54 young children – aged from 4 to 6 – and their 12 supervisors during the holidays. On the advice of the CEMEA, the principle adopted was to spatially divide the children into 3 groups of 18, according to their age (aged 4: young; aged 5: medium; aged 6: old) to meet the specific needs of each age group. The result was the definition of three accommodation units, but also three separate dining-rooms. The architecture was conceived on the scale of its users and contributed to the development of the child as envisaged by the proponents of the New Education.

### AN ARCHITECTURE WITH AN EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE

Schweitzer wanted to achieve a pedagogical architecture that contributed to children’s education and development. The years from the mid 1950s to the mid 1970s correspond to what Jean Houssaye has defined as the “psycho-pedagogical” era.<sup>39</sup> During these decades the educational needs of children were redefined in the light of child psychology. Paradoxically, these precepts were initially more often applied in leisure activities than at school itself.<sup>40</sup> In 1959 the CEMEA published the first report on young children’s summer camps. Three fundamental needs were promoted: *love*, *security*, and *activity*. According to the principles of New Education,





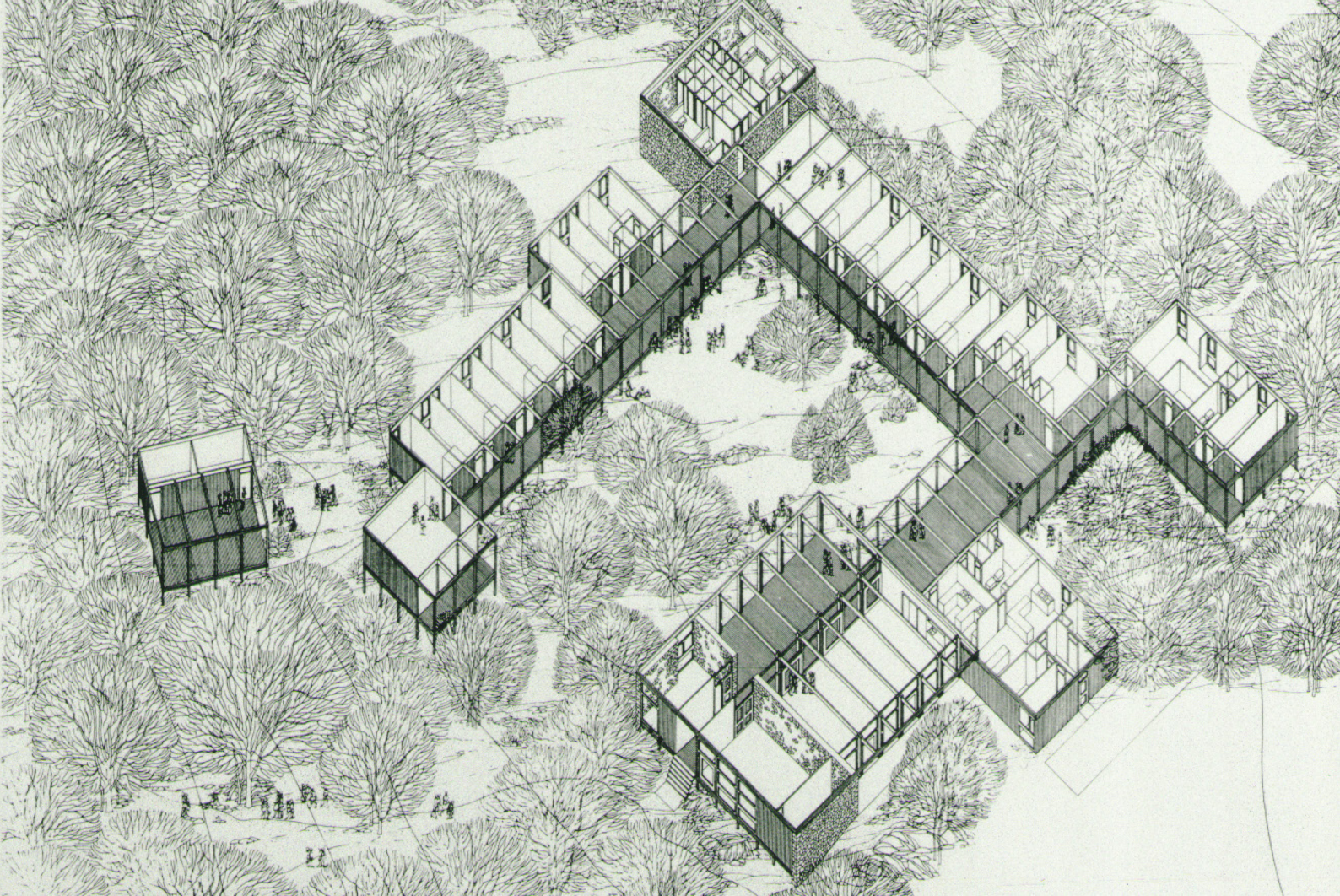
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love, or *affectivity*, must respect the necessity to not impose oneself; it can unfold in friendship, but also in the bond between children and animals. *Security* supposes both a calm atmosphere and a degree of order. *Activity* is identified as good health and balance, and includes a wide variety of well-designed games and workshops, freely chosen by the children who clearly know what they need.<sup>41</sup> the promotion of play and free initiative, the anchoring of learning by doing, the consideration of the children's tastes, and the experience of cooperation and teamwork were some of the principles of the New Education.<sup>42</sup> In summer camps which adopted this approach, such as those designed by Schweitzer, pedagogical freedom was fundamental, while the activities remained essentially those of daily life (washing, dressing, tidying up, eating, etc.), games (dressing-up, stories, etc.), and the immersion in nature (observing plants and animals, walks, excursions, etc.).<sup>43</sup> They were strongly linked to outdoor pedagogy and contact with nature: the aim was to prepare children for life.<sup>44</sup> Convinced that architecture could and must contribute to these goals, Schweitzer undertook to develop a conceptual system that was able to make architecture educational.

#### IN SEARCH OF A NEW ARCHITECTURAL ORDER: A COMPOSITION EXERCISE

Facing this key question, Schweitzer sought to elaborate a new architectural order that he characterized as "open," as acting on people and facilitating interrelationships with nature.<sup>45</sup> His design work began with a precise analysis of the program, then moved towards a careful reading of the site – in his words, "analyzing the space, its configuration, its texture, the plant cover, the exposures, the micro-climate." It ended with a skillful exercise in composition aimed at "putting the elements in tension with one another, and from this tension a resonance is born, a richness of exchange with the space, an availability."<sup>46</sup>

In each summer camp, Schweitzer articulated a series of living-spaces precisely responding to the users' needs, recognizing that these needs changed over the course of the day. While each project was unique, they all shared common traits, such as the adoption of organic plans that easily integrated the architecture and its users with nature. The Cieux complex is a perfect example of this logic. The pavilions were positioned at a natural hinge in the landscape. **Fig. 7** On one side, there was a welcoming, but also foreboding, forest; on the other, a meadow with calm



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contours, which Schweitzer described as a “tangible and reassuring space maintained by man.”<sup>47</sup> Centrally, between the different wings, he located a secure inner courtyard, a meeting place for the community. For the architect, who camped on site to determine the exact location of the buildings, the intention was to allow the adolescents to “make their way towards adulthood.”<sup>48</sup> The design was also conditioned by the natural morphology and vegetation, to preserve the existing trees, groves, and stones. Much the same was true for Ballan-Miré, located on the edge of the vast forest estate of the Château de la Carte, of which 40 hectares were reserved for the summer camp – a forest which, according to Schweitzer, made an excellent playground but could also “upset the children in overcast weather.”<sup>49</sup> In Ballan-Miré, as in many of Schweitzer’s projects, a segmented building – low-rise, generally single-floor – organized according to a central pole, became a second conceptual principle. This disposition of the space allowed the differentiation of functions and the harmonious insertion of the architecture into the landscape. The Cieux and Ballan-Miré summer camps were both defined as villages where the main elements of the program – administration, general services, accommodation units, indoor or outdoor

activity rooms – were distributed around a central square, constituting the heart of the village – the *agora*. Cieux includes three main modules – the administration-community dining module, the girls’ accommodation unit, the boys’ accommodation unit – and three secondary modules – the staff accommodation unit, sanitary block, and a shelter placed a little apart. From the access forecourt, the reception area was a planted patio circumscribed on one side by the kitchen pavilion and, on the other, by the staff accommodation unit. A large open porch formed a threshold and provided a view on the whole complex. It was extended by a covered gallery running around the central courtyard and serving all the buildings. This walkway, both protected and exposed, created an interface between nature and architecture. The living-room, immediately adjoined at its western end by the director’s office and the shared activity room, also ensured, by its position and the transparency of its facades, the link between the meadow and the interior courtyard. The two accommodation units – one for girls, the other for boys – were spread out around, while the sanitary block formed a pivot to the north of the complex. By organizing the buildings in a U-shape around the courtyard, Schweitzer intends to express the communal

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The transparency and lightness of the wooden architecture of Cieux Preadolescent Summer Camp, a building open to its environment. Roland Schweitzer, s.d. circa 1973 (CAC, fonds Schweitzer, 455 AA, unquoted document).

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Structure of Cieux Preadolescent Summer Camp (s.d. circa 1967) (CAC, fonds Schweitzer, 455 AA, unquoted document).

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The open-air theater of the central courtyard of Ballan-Miré Summer Camp. Roland Schweitzer, August 1978 (CAC, fonds Schweitzer, 455 AA, unquoted document).

character of the program, as one of his masters, the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, had masterfully done in the City Hall and Civic Center of Säynätsalo (Finland, 1949–52). More broadly, the compositional principle developed by Schweitzer allowed everyone to instinctively perceive the different levels of the community. Through the design and distribution of the built volumes, through their more-or-less open or closed character, the different living units and their specific activities were instinctively perceptible. In Ballan-Miré, Schweitzer also set out to create a “sunny heart of the hamlet,” a central courtyard with an open-air theater. **Fig. 8** Around it, forming an open orthogonal framework, gravitated the four modules of the program: the first housed the administrative pavilion and the restaurant spaces; the three others corresponded to the accommodation units designed according to the age of the children. A paddling pool set slightly apart, in the line with the theater, invited the children to leave the protective framework of the interior courtyard and to venture out into nature. This multiplicity of living spaces met the expectations of groups as well as individuals, especially children.

#### AN ARCHITECTURE ON A CHILD'S SCALE

Schweitzer adopted the principle of self-contained housing units, which allowed children of the same age group (Ballan-Miré) or of the same gender (Cieux) to live in a family environment. In Cieux, the center had two housing units, one for girls, one for boys. Each unit had 4-bed rooms (two bunk beds) – six in the first accommodation unit and eight in the second, for a total capacity of 56 young people – plus the rooms for the supervisors, the director, or the assistant director, plus an isolation room and an activity room. Accommodation unit 1 also had a treatment room. In Ballan-Miré, the three accommodation units included: 6-bed rooms that could be transformed into 3-bed rooms by sliding partitions, two double rooms for the supervisors, and sanitary blocks. The blocks were connected by living rooms, which were communal living spaces specific to each group of children. **Fig. 9** In this way, between individuality and collectivity, freedom and security, personal experiences and guided learning, architecture was at the service of the New Education, as it was, for example, in the famous Orphanage School (1958–60) built by Aldo van Eyck in Amsterdam, visited

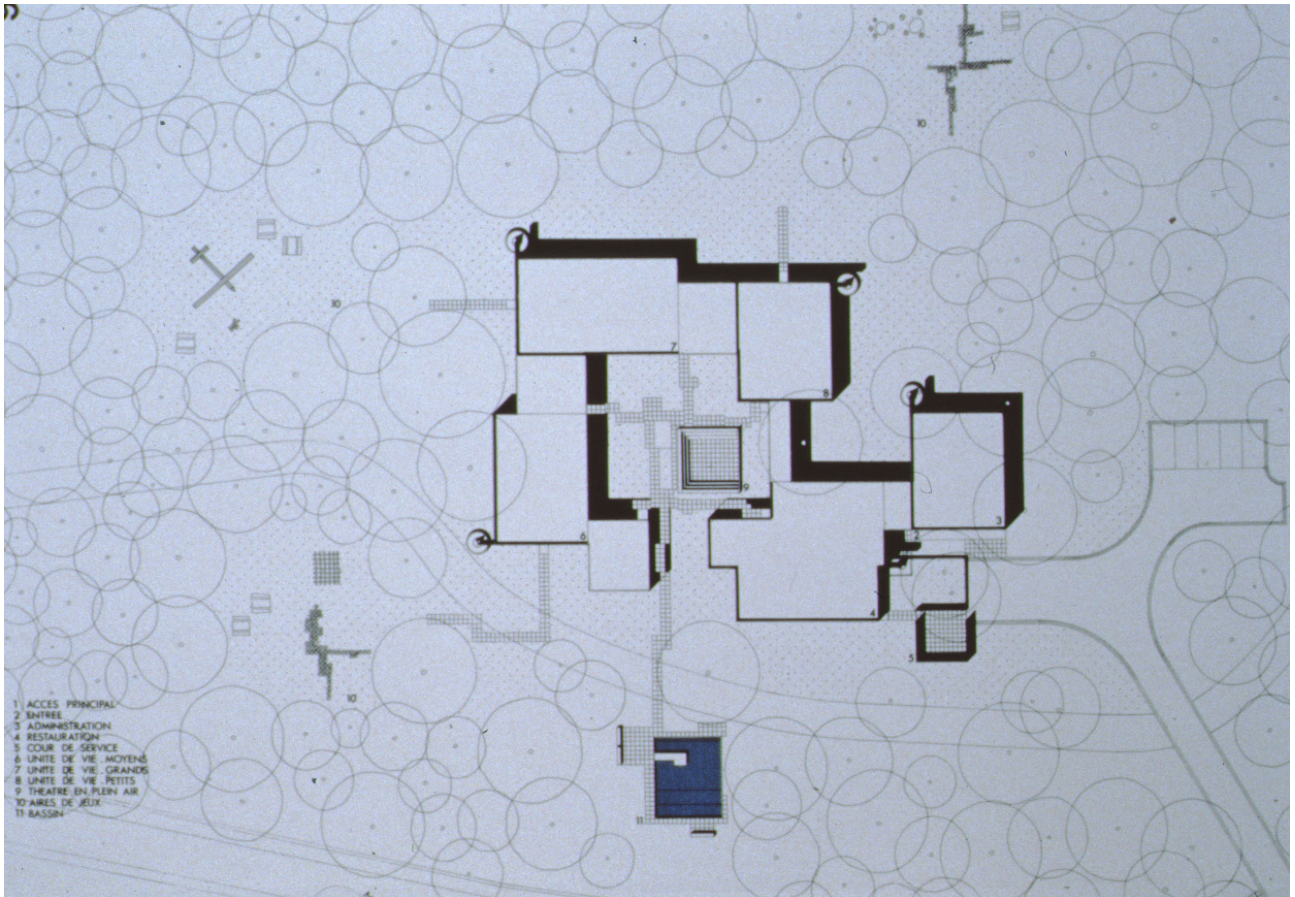


and carefully photographed by Schweitzer during his trip to the Netherlands in 1976.

### **A CODIFIED AND MEANINGFUL ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE**

Schweitzer's codified and meaningful architectural language accompanies users in their apprehension and understanding of space. Desiring a continuity between the architecture without architects – the “architecture of societies of tradition” – and contemporary expressions, Schweitzer used a reduced range of materials: in Ballan-Miré, using concrete, brick, and wood, he adopted the codes of architectural brutalism, a major trend in contemporary architecture whose conceptual contours had just been laid down by Reyner Banham,<sup>50</sup> in Cieux, using stone and wood, he developed an even more contextual and inclusive approach, which can be interpreted as a form of critical regionalism. The prototype of this architectural style can be found in the Medical-Professional Institute in Lavour, but also in Viazac and Quiers where Schweitzer had experimented with wood to design structures that were in harmony with the existing ones.<sup>51</sup>

In Cieux, the desire to produce a light, non-invasive architecture and to adapt the built volumes to the natural terrain led to the choice of wood. Its post-and-beam system of implementation, with its alternating solid and empty spaces, contributed to the spatial dynamics and played with the rhythm and the transparency of the architecture. Here Schweitzer still recollects the atmosphere from his first trip to Japan in 1967, and is also influenced by his meeting with the Finnish architects Kristian Gullinchen and Juhan Pallasmaa who, at the same time, were working on the Moduli-System (1968–75), a prefabricated-wood system for light housing. As in the Japanese tradition, in Cieux Schweitzer also strove to preserve the natural soil of the forest by using wooden pilings, punctuated support points that allowed the architect to avoid mechanization. The architecture was thus connected to the summer camp's educational project, where the site, rich in all its biodiversity, was apprehended as an environment for observation. And while wood dominated, all the materials used are deployed with great refinement. The floors of the galleries, which served both as circulation and as activity areas,<sup>52</sup> were made of wooden gratings that contrasted



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with the smooth concrete interior floors. This distinction visually confirmed the differentiation between closed and open spaces. Similarly, in contrast to the lightness of the wooden structures of most of the buildings, two local rubble stone constructions – the meeting rooms to the south and a sanitary block at the northern corner – display their special status.

In Ballan-Miré, the materiality of the architecture – although different – displayed the same key feature: the pavilions with roof terraces were made of brick and concrete (concrete structure, exterior and interior filling of exposed brick, wooden joinery); the living-rooms and galleries, made of wood, are widely opened out to the interior courtyard and to the surrounding countryside. **Fig. 10** In this case too, the contrasting colors and materials made it easier to read overall layout.

#### **MANIFESTOS FOR A SENSITIVE EXPERIENCE OF ARCHITECTURE AND THE WORLD**

For the Cieux and Ballan-Miré summer camps, Schweitzer designed on different scales of perception: first with an awareness of the village enclosure, and then through the definition of collective, semi-collective, semi-private, and, finally, private spaces. The architect's tools were spatial composition and architectural writing. Schweitzer's open architecture was part of an educational dynamic based on

closeness to nature; collective learning while respecting the individual; self-discovery and the discovery of others; and a physical and sensitive experience of the world. The JPA and CEMEA summer camps allowed the architect to refine and validate a hypothesis which runs through his entire production. With method and discipline, and throughout his entire professional life, Schweitzer strove to find a particular form of quotidian architecture, at the same time anachronic and atemporal, positioned between past and present. He publicly defended this position in August 1980 at the Svanhild Symposium, which brought together important architects for a sailboat cruise in the Gulf of Finland to discuss the links between European and American architecture.<sup>53</sup> This was a unique opportunity for Schweitzer, at the height of the Postmodern Season, to assert what he considered to be "the future of the Modern Movement."<sup>54</sup> According to him, beyond any quarrel over styles, the only way to be contemporary was to inscribe architecture in its natural, human, and environmental history. In other words, it is to seek permanence, not in rupture. This was also the quest of other French architects of his generation, such as Maurice Sauzet or the Salier-Courtois-Lajus-Sadirac-Fouquet Studio, who also convincingly experimented with the use of wood and emphasized the link between architecture and landscape, mainly in the design of single-family houses. However, thanks to his sustained activity in the field of

social tourism, Schweitzer had the opportunity, rare for an architect, to carry out what was perhaps a more in-depth and coherent project of research. In fact, the formulas he developed in his summer camp designs formed the basis of his entire architectural oeuvre.

Nevertheless, while the quality of the architecture was never questioned, the disastrous fate of most of the social tourism structures built by Schweitzer between 1958 and 1974 points to the intractable difficulty of building sustainably for a society in a state of incessant motion.<sup>55</sup> In this case, the architecture did not fail, but its owners did. Faced with the democratization and development of individual tourism, social tourism actors saw their field of action progressively reduced. If the architecture was struck by obsolescence, it was only by an obsolescence of use. Their adaptation seems still possible, but this would be a different chapter in the story.<sup>56</sup>

Auberges de jeunesse (AJ); Arlette Barthuel, "Notice de René Sedes dans le Maitron," notice SEDES René by Arlette Barthuel, July 31, 2014, <https://maitron.fr/spip.php?article161942>.

<sup>16</sup> "Interview avec René Sedes," in Besse, *Construire l'Éducation populaire*, 101.

<sup>17</sup> Author's interview with Schweitzer, May 30, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Schweitzer soon became the consulting architect for the FUJAJ (Fédération unie des auberges de jeunesse; a position he held from 1954 to 1996) and the JPA (Jeunesse au plein-air; a position he held from 1958 to 1980), two of the most important French associations dedicated to social tourism.

<sup>19</sup> Occasionally, Schweitzer designed and built tourism and social leisure structures for other sponsors: Frانس et franchises camarades for the Executive Training Center in Port-Mort (Eure, 1963–67); Municipality of Égletes for the Holiday Village Community Center in Égletes (Corrèze, 1965–68); City of Gentilly for the Maison de la jeunesse de Gentilly (Val-de-Marne, 1972–73); City of Murol for the Le Pré-Long Family Holiday Center (Murol, Puy-de-Dôme, 1967–73); AROCEA (Association régionale des œuvres périscolaires et éducatives de l'Académie de Paris) for an unrealized project for a summer camp in the Puy-de-Dôme; CENPA (paper and cardboard factory based in Schweighouse-sur-Moder) for an unrealized summer camp in La Rochette (Savoie); Ligue de l'enseignement for an unrealized project for a vacation village in Noyet (Claret, Hautes-Alpes). Sources: CAAC, fonds Roland Schweitzer, 455 AA.

<sup>20</sup> Centres d'entraînement aux méthodes d'éducation actives.

<sup>21</sup> LFA, French league of youth hostels; CLAJ, Lay centre of youth hostels; UFAJ (then FUJAJ), French union of youth hostels.

<sup>22</sup> Associations départementales d'auberges de jeunesse, ADAJ, County Associations of Youth Hostels. The ADAJs are made up of individual members.

<sup>23</sup> Menton (1956–58, construction), Savines-le-Lac (1959: construction, 1964: extension), Concarneau (1961, transformation), Anglet (1961–65, construction), Trébeurden (1961–66, construction), Chartres (1964–66, construction), Suresnes-Rueil Malmaison (1966–68, construction), Vénissieux (1964–69: construction, 1976: extension), Mont-Dore (1966–69, construction), Grenoble-Échirolles (1967–69, construction), Choisy-le-Roi (1969: construction, 1981: extension project), Lorient (1975–77, construction), Brest (1981–83 construction, 1983–84: construction of the director's pavilion). At least ten other architectural projects were particularly developed and advanced, although never realized: Grasse (1954), Saint-Nazaire (1965), Ile-Grande (1966), Lyon-La Duchère (1967), Douarnenez (1969), Strasbourg (1974), Corrençon-en-Vercors (1975), La Clusaz (1976), Chamonix (1977), Châlons-sur-Marne (now Châlons-en-Champagne, 1979), Bourg-en-Bresse (n.d.).

<sup>24</sup> Author's interview with Schweitzer, May 30, 2017 (translation by the author).

<sup>25</sup> National Lay Federation for Children's and Teenagers' Holidays.

<sup>26</sup> According to figures provided by the CEMEA, 200,000 children went to summer camps in 1937, 350,000 in 1945, 880,000 in 1948, 900,000 in 1952, 1,030,000 in 1955, 1,221,440 in 1958, 1,316,461 in 1963, and 1,335,762 in 1964. The figures then dropped: 1,285,067 in 1965, 1,314,258 in 1966, 1,318,086 in 1967, 1,243,800 in 1968, 1,254,613 in 1969, 1,202,303 in 1970, 1,188,483 in 1971. In 1972, the number of children in summer camps rose again to a record 1,436,457. Denis Bordat, *Les CEMEA, qu'est-ce que c'est?* (Paris: Maspero, 1976), 319–406.

<sup>27</sup> Archives départementales du Val-de-Marne, Fonds 525 J PAJEP. *Notice de présentation du fonds*, 4–5.

<sup>28</sup> Schweitzer carried out projects in Viazac practically up until the moment when the vacation center, which for a long time had functioned essentially in summer, and then all year, ceased all activity (1981).

<sup>29</sup> Incorporated in the Agence pour l'aide sociale à l'enfance (ASE; Children's social welfare agency).

<sup>30</sup> Marantz, "Extension du domaine de l'architecture."

<sup>31</sup> The Front Populaire designates the coalition of left-wing parties governing France from May 1936 to April 1938.

<sup>32</sup> The association bore this name until 1940, when it became the Secrétariat pour la formation du personnel des colonies de vacances (1941–42, Secretary for the training of summer camp staff), then the Service des Centres d'entraînement aux méthodes de pédagogie active (CEMPA, 1943–44, Service for learning centers of active pedagogy), before becoming CEMEA on September 16, 1944. Archives départementales du Val-de-Marne, Archives de l'association nationale des Centres d'entraînement aux méthodes d'éducation actives (CEMEA), fonds 512 J PAJEP, *Notice de présentation du fonds*, 4; Bordat, *Les CEMEA*.

<sup>33</sup> Training center for the staff of summer camps and for schoolchildren's country houses.

<sup>34</sup> The project was operated by Éducation Plein Air Finances (EPAF), an association created in June 1956 and governed by the law of July 1, 1901. It manages vacation services for children and social tourism for the benefit of the agents of the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

<sup>35</sup> Roland Schweitzer, "For a Continuity," *Werk, Bauen + Wohnen* 68, no. 6 (June 1981): 13.

<sup>36</sup> Renaud Barrès's interview with Roland Schweitzer, in *Roland Schweitzer*, a documentary film directed by François Talairach (CAUE de l'Aude, 2017).

<sup>37</sup> Albert Varier was seconded from the National Education Ministry in 1953 and worked for the JPA as an organizer of vacation centers, and for the CEMEA as an

<sup>1</sup> Roland Schweitzer, *1954–2014. Soixante ans d'architecture* (Paris: Arsino Éditions, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Roland Schweitzer, "Introduction," in *1954–2014*, 9 (translation by the author).

<sup>3</sup> Schweitzer, *1954–2014*, 303.

<sup>4</sup> The figures speak for themselves: of the 424 projects and achievements listed in Schweitzer's archives [List of Affairs (1950–1992), Centre d'archives d'architecture contemporaine (henceforth CAAC, Paris, Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine), fonds Roland Schweitzer, 455 AA], 148 are directly related to social tourism programs: primarily youth hostels, but also summer camps of various kinds: outdoor youth centers, vacation centers, vacation villages, family vacation centers, vacation centers for pre-teens, multipurpose vacation centers, maternal vacation centers, international youth villages, international youth centers, vacation camps, and vacation homes for children with particular social needs.

<sup>5</sup> Author's interview with Roland Schweitzer, June 30, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Roland Schweitzer deliberately uses the expression "architecture of traditional societies" to refer to architectural production that pre-dates the Industrial Revolution.

<sup>7</sup> Éléonore Marantz, "Extension du domaine de l'architecture. Roland Schweitzer et les corpus de références dans les années 1950 et 1960," in *L'architecte et ses modèles. Intentions, connaissance et projets à la période contemporaine*, ed. Jean-Philippe Garric (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2021), 75–92.

<sup>8</sup> Maurice Besset, *New French Architecture* (New York-Washington: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1967).

<sup>9</sup> Laurent Besse, *Construire l'éducation populaire. Naissance d'une politique de jeunesse (1958-1970)* (Paris: La Documentation française, 2014); Jean-Michel Ducomte, Jean-Paul Martin, and Joël Roman, *Anthologie de l'éducation populaire* (Paris: Éditions Privat, 2013); Philippe Poirrier, "De l'éducation populaire à la politique culturelle : un demi-siècle d'action culturelle en région," in *ABC, 60 ans déjà* (Dijon: ABC, 2005); Philippe Poirrier, "Culture populaire et politique culturelle en France : un rendez-vous manqué ?," in *Retour vers le présent : La culture populaire en Suisse*, eds. Thomas Antonietti, Bruno Meier, and Katrin Rieder (Baden: Verlag für Kultur und Geschichte, 2008), 176–83; Jean-Marie Mignon, *Une histoire de l'Éducation Populaire* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Also called Domaine du Four and/or Village Le Four.

<sup>11</sup> Comité des œuvres laïques de vacances d'enfants et d'adolescents du département de la Seine (Lay committee for children and teenager's holidays, Department of Seine) and Jeunesse au plein-air (JPA, Youth in the outdoors).

<sup>12</sup> Label "Outstanding contemporary architecture" (formerly the label "Heritage of the XX<sup>e</sup> century"), by order of January 21, 2008. This label, awarded by the Ministry of Culture, draws attention to the architectural quality of a building but does not constitute any protection as a historical monument.

<sup>13</sup> The Ballan-Miré summer camp was built on the property of the Château de la Carte. Until 1999 the 'castle' was used as a convalescent home and the new buildings as a summer camp. In 2000 the castle was refurbished to become a hotel that "has 22 rooms which are distributed throughout the castle and its annexes" (EPAF Vacances, *Le château de la Carte, des finances aux finances*, brochure, n.d.).

<sup>14</sup> Laurent Gutierrez, Laurent Besse, and Antoine Prost, eds., *Réformer l'école. L'apport de l'Éducation nouvelle (1930-1970)* (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> René Sedes was involved in the organizations Jeunesse au plein air (JPA) and

instructor, training course supervisor, and national manager. In 1957–58, at the JPA, he created the experimental family home of the Château de Viazac, entrusting the architectural project to Schweitzer. Jacques Girault, "Notice Albert Varier," *Le Maitron: Dictionnaire biographique Mouvement ouvrier Mouvement social*, April 13, 2016, <https://maitron.fr/spip.php?article179873>; see also Jacques Girault, "Notice de Lucie Varier," *Le Maitron: Dictionnaire biographique Mouvement ouvrier Mouvement social*, accessed November 3, 2023, <http://maitron-en-ligne.univ-paris1.fr/spip.php?article180564>.

<sup>38</sup> Schweitzer, 1954–2014, 199.

<sup>39</sup> Jean Houssaye, *Le livre des colos. Histoire et évolution des centres de vacances pour enfants* (Paris: La Documentation française, 1989).

<sup>40</sup> Laurent Gutierrez, Laurent Besse, and Antoine Prost, "Introduction," in Gutierrez, Besse, and Prost, *Réformer l'école*, 9–10, 14.

<sup>41</sup> CEMEA, *La vie à la colonie maternelle* (Paris: Éditions du Scarabée, 1959), 17; Gérard Mendel and Christian Vogt, *Le Manifeste éducatif* (Paris: Payot, 1973); Christian Vogt, "Les CEMEA dans la dynamique sociale," in Bordat, *Les CEMEA*, 254–72.

<sup>42</sup> Jean-François Condette, "Un coin d'Éducation nouvelle en plein cœur de l'École? Les loisirs dirigés dans les collèges et les lycées (1937–39)," in Gutierrez, Besse, and Prost, *Réformer l'école*, 171–72. The principles of the New Education are more generally set out by its supporters in the magazine *Vers l'éducation nouvelle* (Editions du Scarabée), which appeared from April 1, 1946, and already had 1,500 subscribers by May 1946.

<sup>43</sup> Houssaye, *Le livre des colos*, 100.

<sup>44</sup> Nicolas Palluau, "Le scoutisme : vers une 'Éducation nouvelle' entre modernité et archaïsme," in Gutierrez, Besse, and Prost, *Réformer l'école*, 251.

<sup>45</sup> The open architectural order "arouses a participation which enables a dialogue with the environment, the opposite to a frozen, static architecture, which relegates Man to the rank of mere spectator." Élisabeth Allain-Dupré, "Entretien avec Roland Schweitzer," *Techniques and architecture*, no. 339 (December 1981): 80 (translation by the author).

<sup>46</sup> Allain-Dupré, "Entretien avec Roland Schweitzer."

<sup>47</sup> Schweitzer, 1954–2014, 199.

<sup>48</sup> "At the Four, we camped on site with a teacher specializing in the problems of pre-adolescents, for whom this vacation center was intended. We had 24 hectares in the middle of nature. We had to find a location that would allow the preteens, in their journey towards adulthood, to find both the incentive to discover, with all its worries, but also security and assurance. We surveyed this area for forty-eight hours, finally selecting a site in the forest, slightly sloped, with some rocks. The buildings were organized like those of a village, around a square that ensures a sense of security, but, as soon as one leaves the Center, there is the forest with all its adventure." Allain-Dupré, "Entretien avec Roland Schweitzer," 79 (translation by the author).

<sup>49</sup> Schweitzer, 1954–2014, 243.

<sup>50</sup> Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism. Ethic or Aesthetic?* (London: The Architectural Press, 1966).

<sup>51</sup> "The material of wood, thanks to its post-and-beam technique, alternates between full and empty spaces in a way that contributes to the spatial dynamics. The results obtained in this operation [Quiers] were so convincing that I considered it, in my career, as a manifesto that would influence my architectural practice." Roland Schweitzer, "About Quiers," in Schweitzer, 1954–2014, 104 (translation by the author).

<sup>52</sup> The alleys, passages between the collective premises and the accommodation units, form paths that narrow and also dilate to become meeting spaces.

<sup>53</sup> Svanhild Symposium, America–Europe Architecture Dialogue: lecture series by Gerald Allen (New York), Kenneth Frampton (New York), Michael Graves (Princeton), Frances Halsband (New York), Robert Kliment (New York), Heinrich Klotz (Marburg), Daniel Libeskind (Bloomfield Hills), Kjell Lund (Oslo), Rodolfo Machado (Boston), Charles W. Moore (Los Angeles), Carl Nyren (Stockholm), Richard B. Oliver (New York), Stefanos Polizoides (South Pasadena), Peter Pran (Chicago), Anton Schweighofer (Vienna), Roland Schweitzer (Paris), Jean-Claude Steinegger (Zürich), Dennis Sharp (London), Michael Sorkin (New York), and Bartholomew Voorsanger (New York), organized by the University of Technology of Otaniemi and the Museum of Finnish Architecture.

<sup>54</sup> Roland Schweitzer's lecture was entitled "The Future of the Modern Movement." Text reproduced in Schweitzer, 1954–2014, 303.

<sup>55</sup> According to the survey we conducted as part of this research, thirty to sixty years after their opening, more than half (about 60%) of the social tourism architectural projects designed by Roland Schweitzer have become obsolete or privately owned.

<sup>56</sup> On July 27, 2023, the French Minister for Solidarity and Families announced the creation of a scheme, the "passe colo," to help children aged 10–11 go on holiday camps. Observers interpret this measure as "a gesture of support for a sector in crisis, where many buildings have lost their original purpose." Jade Le Deley, "La deuxième vie de la colonie de vacances du Pré-Jeantet, dans l'Ain," *Le Monde. Le Mag*, August 2, 2023.

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# Architettura per una nuova educazione: le colonie estive di Roland Schweitzer (1958–74)

Éléonore Marantz

## KEYWORDS

Roland Schweitzer; colonie per l'infanzia; nuova educazione; turismo; Francia

## ABSTRACT

Formatosi all'incrocio di diverse influenze – l'architettura giapponese, l'architettura vernacolare europea e il Movimento Moderno – Roland Schweitzer (1925–2018) ha tracciato un particolare percorso nel panorama architettonico francese. Oggi è considerato un precursore di un'architettura contemporanea sensibile e legata all'ambiente. Schweitzer ha cercato di raggiungere un certo sincretismo tra forma contemporanea e tradizionale. Nel corso della sua vita professionale, la dimensione umanistica del suo approccio ha trovato piena espressione in edifici a vocazione sociale. Fin dall'inizio della sua carriera, a partire dal 1954, l'architetto instaurò rapporti proficui con alcune organizzazioni di educazione popolare. Questa vicinanza ha portato a numerosi progetti e realizzazioni – ostelli della gioventù, campi estivi, centri di vacanza per famiglie – e a una ricerca architettonica a lungo termine su queste specifiche tipologie di infrastrutture di turismo sociale.

Il presente lavoro si concentra sui campi estivi costruiti in Francia da Schweitzer tra il 1958 e il 1974. L'analisi dei progetti emblematici – in particolare le colonie di Cieux e Ballan-Miré – permette di capire come, grazie al dialogo con i committenti e i potenziali utenti del sito, l'architetto abbia sviluppato tipologie e, più in generale, un linguaggio architettonico il più possibile vicino agli usi e agli utenti, educatori e bambini, e consente di valutare come l'architettura abbia partecipato ai progetti di educazione popolare legati al movimento della Nuova Educazione.

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