

## Laudation

Anne Lacaton and Jean Philippe Vassal belong to the important representatives of today's varied and ambitious French architecture scene and they open new positions within the international architectural debate. With their high level of economic and social responsibility, they are creating atmospherically dense, human spaces. The Architecture Centre Vienna had already come across their work at an early time.

Lacaton & Vassal are probably the most radical architects today. Their radicality is not driven by the invention of new forms, but by the constant questioning of the adequacy in the use of material means in order to produce the optimal atmospheres. It is fascinating to observe how they always keep in mind the richest spatial options as the goal, regardless of the kind of design commission, from the simple, cheap single family dwelling to the luxury hotel. In this regard they liberate themselves fundamentally from all traditional images and conceptions and how they constantly attempt to question conventions. At a time such as this, in which architecture is primarily regarded as a producer of spectacular images, this attitude must be understood as being downright provocative, if the renunciation of such images is being propagated as a solution.

In 2000, Lacaton & Vassal were invited as the French contributors to the Architecture Biennale in Venice. The motto for this was "Less esthetics – more ethics". Lacaton & Vassal wanted to use the budget for this participation to buy water pumps for Africa and merely to document this process in their exhibition. That was too much for those responsible for the French pavilion, their participation was cancelled.

Their working method is equally radical as their architectural position. Nothing is documented in terms of a drawing: sketches might fixate them or their clients on initial images. Neither do they work with models as these could call for an external view or give rise to sculptural solutions. On the contrary, they are constantly expanding their working methods, searching for new techniques and processes in relation with the respective design commission.

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