

PETER ZUMTHOR

2008–2013



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## 2008–2013

Buildings and Projects  
Volume 5

Edited by Thomas Durisch

Scheidegger & Spiess

Editor's biography: Thomas Durisch, born in Minneapolis in 1963, grew up in Binningen near Basel. 1990 degree in architecture at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, ETH Zurich. 1990–1994 worked at Atelier Peter Zumthor. 1995 established his own office in Zurich. Curated the exhibitions *Peter Zumthor – Bauten und Projekte 1986–2007* at Kunsthhaus Bregenz (2007) and at the LX Factory Lisbon (2008); and *Architekturmodelle Peter Zumthor* at Kunsthhaus Bregenz (2012–2014).

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What I Do

Atelier Zumthor, Haldenstein, Graubünden  
Shelter for Roman Archaeological Ruins, Chur, Graubünden  
Caplutta Sogn Benedetg, Sumvitg, Graubünden  
Spittelhof Housing Complex, Biel-Benken near Basel  
Rindermarkt Apartment Building, Zurich  
Rothorn Gondola Station, Valbella, Graubünden  
Apartments for Senior Citizens, Masans, Chur, Graubünden  
Bregenz Art Museum, Austria

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Therme Vals, Graubünden  
Topography of Terror, Berlin, Germany  
Herz Jesu Church, Munich, Germany  
Laban Centre for Movement and Dance, London, England  
Swiss Sound Box, Expo 2000, Hanover, Germany  
Luzi House, Jenaz, Graubünden  
Kolumba Art Museum, Cologne, Germany

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Harjunkulma Apartment Building, Jyväskylä, Finland  
Pingus Winery, Valbuena de Duero, Spain  
Bruder Klaus Field Chapel, Wachendorf, Germany  
Additional Cabins, Pension Briol, Barbian-Dreikirchen, Italy

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A Tower for Therme Vals, Graubünden  
Leis Houses, Oberhus and Unterhus, Vals, Graubünden  
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For Marlina Alba



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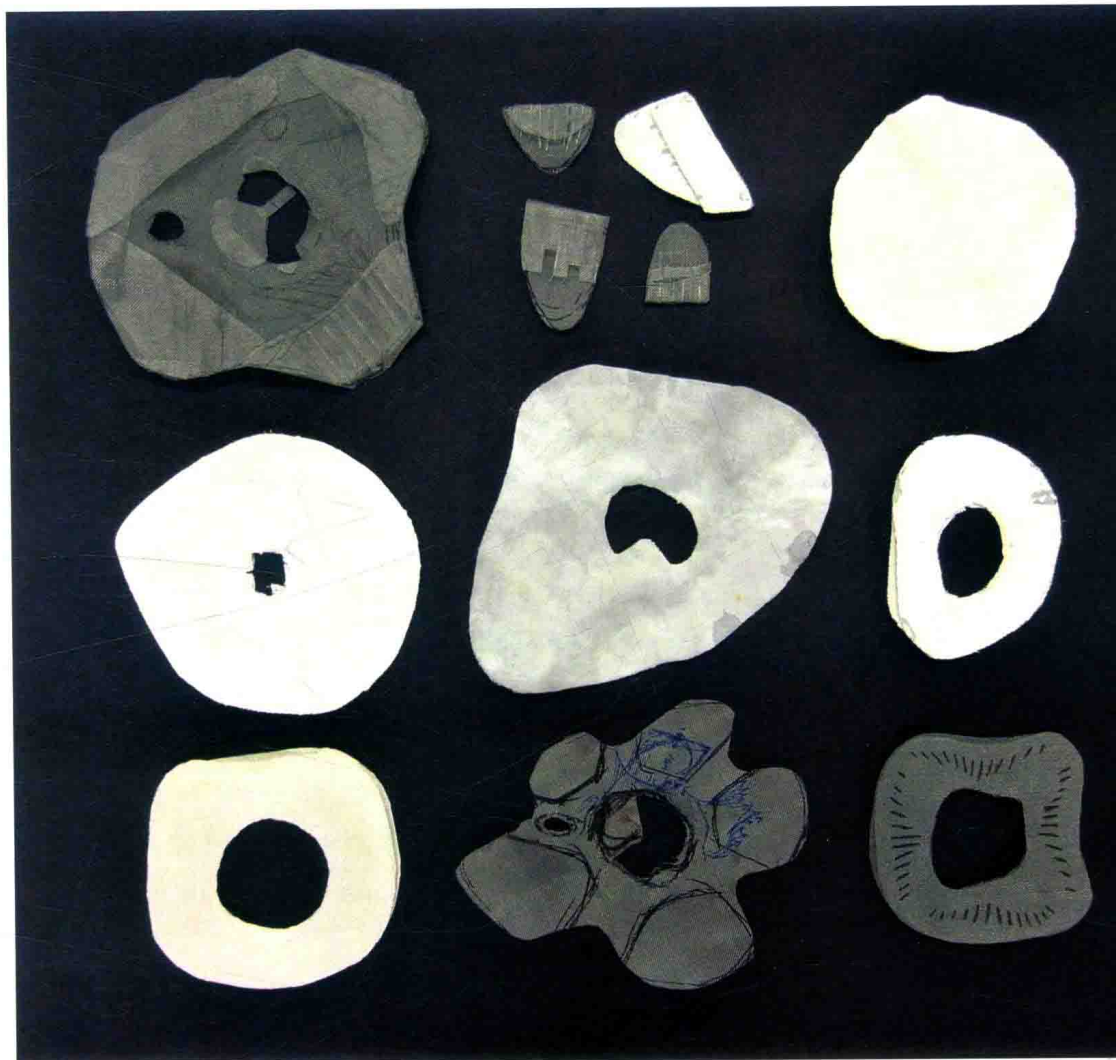


Nomads of Atacama Hotel, San Pedro de Atacama, Chile  
2008–2010











My client had acquired a tract of land in the Atacama Desert of Chile near San Pedro de Atacama and invited me to take a look at it. The scale of the landscape captivated me. Everything is big and looks big; everything is far-reaching and far away. The extinct Licancabur volcano dominates the silhouette of the Andes mountain range in the background. The sparse vegetation, scrubby trees, and isolated tufts of grass hardly encourage travelers to linger: one can see that the desert is at the mercy of the wind, driving the sand before it.

But these desert parcels of land, known as *melgas*, have water rights. Water flows down into the desert from the distant Andes in little channels, where it is directed periodically into square retaining pools enclosed within dirt walls. The moment the water flows into the pools, the desert starts turning green. The plant seeds in the sand of the *melgas* have just been waiting for the water.

As an architect whose everyday challenge involves dealing with the valley gorges of the Alpine landscape and responding to densely built and tightly structured situations, in Switzerland and elsewhere, it was a great joy to design something for the desert, for its expanses and wide horizon.

Forty-eight hotel rooms laid out on an endless horizon of 360 degrees for people wanting to experience the extremes of nature—this is the design that came out of that joy.

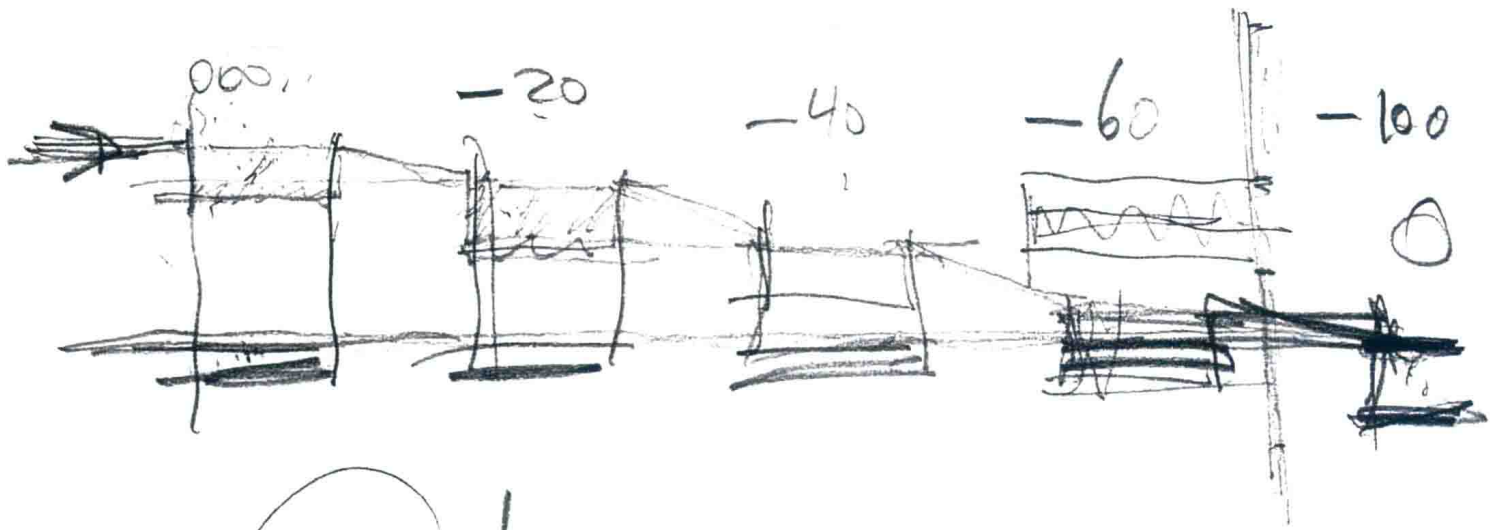
The center of the hotel is an oasis, created with the water that flows into our tract of land every twenty-five days. We use this water to create the special vegetation of an oasis and we store it in basins under the great shell roofs of the hotel, where it provides natural cooling through evaporation.

Structurally, the hotel consists of a ring-shaped roof plate and a shell-like floor plate, which vaults up and down four times, here touching the ground and there melding into the roof plate. The engineers Sven Plieninger and Stefan Justiz from Stuttgart helped us develop the load-bearing structure. Four honeycomb units with lateral cantilevers are combined to make the whole form a ring. The public spaces of the hotel—lobby, restaurant, pool, and the main lounge—are situated in the areas where the floor plate vaults upward.

In these areas, protected by the vaulting roof, we imagine guests spending time out in the open. Supplied with special clothing and blankets, they experience the desert, the winds, and the cold nights, using furniture designed especially for the outdoors. And they warm themselves at open fires, as we had done in San Pedro de Atacama.

Swaying pedestrian bridges lead from the oasis, a large protected courtyard, to the hotel rooms that open out into the landscape. Once in their rooms, the guests live in the view, as if they were on a large windowsill. Beds and bathrooms are in the rear. From there, every room has a stairway up to the roof. The hotel lies 2500 meters above sea level: the night sky is clear, the view of the stars overhead stupendous. I would have enjoyed being there for the hotel's inauguration; I would have taken some woolen blankets, climbed the stairs to the roof, and gazed up into the heavens.





25 days

