



## Expo 2005 Aichi, Japan — Swiss Pavilion

### The Media of the Exhibition

iart developed the media for the Swiss Pavilion at the World's Fair Expo 2005 in Aichi, which the group 'Panorama2000' designed as a mountain. 'Panorama2000', of which Valentin Spiess was a member, filled the Swiss Pavilion with a mountain that, on the surface, confirmed all the clichés about Switzerland but that in fact, through exhibits from various Swiss institutions, enabled visitors to immerse themselves more deeply in Swiss cultural history, environmental research and technological development. A special feature was the audio guide in the shape of a used

Swiss military torch equipped with the latest electronics, which provided visitors with sounds or information about the exhibits lit up by the torch. The descent through the valley accompanied by sounds from Switzerland's mountain world harmonised with the three-dimensional image of the mountain. iart was also responsible for the pavilion's technical management.

iart was charged with developing and carrying into effect an interpretive concept for visitors' guidance, content interpretation and contextualisation; as such, it needed to be closely networked with all aspects of the pavilion.



### The Exhibition

The planning began with the pavilion's 35 x 35 x 10-metre space provided by the organisers. The aim was to promote Switzerland — in keeping with the Expo 2005 theme 'The Wisdom of Nature' — as a nature-oriented, environmentally aware and innovative country. The group 'Panorama2000' decided that visitors should be greeted on their arrival by a traditional — not to say clichéd — image of Switzerland, which would then be progressively broadened and reoriented as they passed through the pavilion. The result was a mountainscape that virtually filled the entire allotted space and that enclosed an exhibition. This exhibition inside the vast wooden edifice comprised some 100 exhibits drawn from Swiss museums and other institutions. Themed under the banners 'Swiss Myths', 'Visions', 'Risks and Caution' and 'Top of Science', the exhibits drew attention to Switzerland's traditions, but also to its pioneering spirit. When conceptualising the exhibition design, iart started by tackling the more practical considerations such as the expected high number of visitors and the climatic conditions. As a precaution against careless visitors and the

raised temperature / humidity that high visitor numbers would entail, the exhibits were arranged against the inner wall of the mountain either side of the central walkway. Transparent film was then used to form four bubble-shaped chambers that channelled the visitors through the exhibition area. The skin of these 'bubbles' served to keep the visitors and exhibits apart by forming a kind of show-case in reverse: the 'bubbles' helped to separate the objects thematically and allowed the exhibits to be cost-effectively and energy-efficiently air-conditioned.

The fifth and last 'bubble' was self-contained and encased in white. Courtesy of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETHZ), this was where visitors were treated to an atmospheric multimedia experience that encompassed light, sound and projected images on a theme that centred on the rebuilding of the Swiss Alpine Club's refuge on Switzerland's highest peak, the 'Monte Rosa'. Steps then led up to the viewing platform on top of the mountainscape. To leave it, visitors took a path down a valley echoing to the sound of nature.



### The Media

The interpretive media integrated extremely well with the overall concept of the pavilion: sonic atmospheres, video installations and projected images contributed to the overall ambience and to an interpretation of the exhibits in the mountain. All the media components were networked and could be choreographed using the central control system (the sip server). For example, Japanese haikus (traditional miniature poems) created specially for the pavilion were shown every three minutes on all the screens and projected surfaces to provide a form of rhythmical undertow both to the presentation and the stream of visitors.

As a souvenir of the pavilion, every visitor received a small folding leaflet that included the pavilion's website address. The website, which contained more details about what was on show, received no fewer than 700 000 hits during the Expo — not far from the one million visitors who actually crossed the pavilion's threshold.

A technical innovation inside the mountain was a source of considerable interest: 948 historic Swiss Army torches, dating

from 1928 to 1942, which had been rebuilt to act as interactive guiding systems for the visitors' self-navigation of the exhibition and its exhibits. These torches proved to be immensely popular. For one thing, they were themselves original exhibits which — amazingly — could be held and used. And for another thing, the technology they incorporated meant that the exhibits could be protected from constant illumination: the inside of the mountain was dimly lit, but when the visitors 'shone' their torches at a group of exhibits, they were illuminated by spotlights as if the torch were shining on them. And, thanks to a speaker built into the torch, the latter also acted as an audio guide by giving a spoken contextualisation of what the visitors were seeing. Thanks to the illuminating (pun intended!) dual role played by the torch, the visitors found themselves almost unconsciously interacting with the exhibits. The speech function, in particular, caused quite a stir, which led to further interaction — this time between the visitors themselves, as they chatted animatedly about this amusing interactive navigation aid. This interweaving of knowledge, experience and interaction provided by the Swiss Pavilion's inner-mountain exhibition and its interactive torch represents much of what modern content interpretation is



Viewing platform of the mountain

about. It is this that iart is intending to deploy throughout its work and products. The torch is at the same time exhibit, research tool and interpretive medium — and comes with a generous sprinkling of fun. It accompanies the visitor throughout the exhibition without dictating what he or she should be looking at next. The visitor finds an interesting-looking object and 'shines' the torch on it. This triggers the spotlights on the object and its related neighbours and plays the interpretive commentary via the torch's loudspeaker, thereby setting the object in a wider context.

The visitor sees the illuminated exhibit in a new or different light, as it were; further thematic spheres present themselves, and other objects come into view. Aided by the information the visitor receives via the combination of visual and aural inputs, which are determined by his or her personal preferences, he or she is able to forge personal links with the exhibition and its thematic contents. That way, the contextual relationships keep rearranging themselves and forming a variety of narrative paths.



Exhibition in the mountain (Foto David Buser)

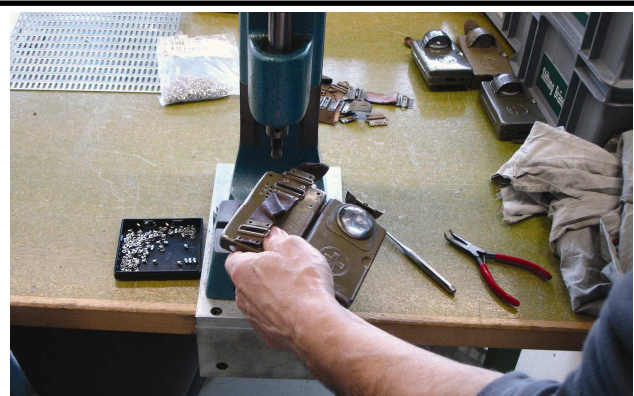
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Wood construction of the mountain



Conversion of the 'Talking Torch'

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#### Client / Customer

Presence Switzerland, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

#### Services iart

Concept and planning of the multimedia installations and the guide system (custom design torches)  
Realisation in cooperation with Kunstumsetzung GmbH  
Audioproduktion  
Technical management of the pavilion

#### Media

1000 Audioguides tegoro c100 (Custom Design Torches)  
Atmospherical sound installations  
Video installations  
Projections

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#### Project Partners

Group 'Panorama2000' (Ursula Freiburghaus, Claudia Müller, Julia Müller, Andreas Reuter, Dominique Salathé, Valentin Spiess, Juri Steiner, Monica Studer, Christoph van den Berg, Volker Trommersdorff, Pius Tschumi, Emanuel Tschumi),  
Concept  
tegoro solutions ag, Technical realisation and installation

#### Project Duration

1,5 years

#### Opening

25 March 2005

#### Exhibition Duration

25/3/2005 — 25/9/2005

#### Exhibition Area

1300 m<sup>2</sup>