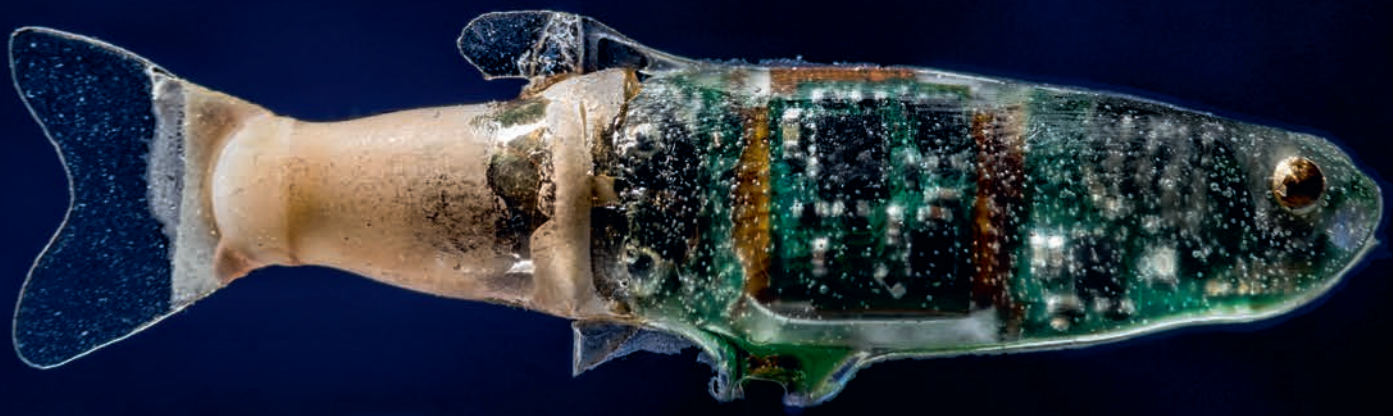

PERSPECTIVES ON EPFL

SCIENCE
Catherine Leutenegger

ARCHITECTURE
Bogdan Konopka

PEOPLE
Olivier Christinat

EPFL PRESS

To mark its 50th anniversary, the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) gave free rein to three photographers, who were asked to capture the essence of the School and its future direction. Catherine Leutenegger delivers many detailed portraits of science, blurring the lines between the images she creates and those that she discovers and makes her own. Bogdan Konopka strips EPFL›s buildings down to their still life form. And Olivier Christinat brings places to life by roaming the grounds and discreetly immersing himself in campus life.

© Bogdan Konopka

© Olivier Christinat

© Catherine Leutenegger (front cover)

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Elysée Lausanne

EPFL

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To Maurice Cosandey, founding father of EPFL

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FOREWORD

Tatyana Franck
Director of the Musée de l'Elysée

EPFL owes its existence to Maurice Cosandey, who passed away just as the School was getting ready to mark its 50th anniversary. A civil engineer by training, Maurice Cosandey drove the School's transformation into a Swiss federal institute of technology on equal terms with its sister school, ETH Zurich. He was a visionary and forward thinker who managed to convince people of the benefits — which seem so obvious to us today — of bringing together a number of apparently diverse yet highly complementary fields in order to make the most of available skills and resources.

This groundbreaking approach is now widely practiced. Once EPFL had become a federal institution and was no longer financed by the Canton of Vaud, it opened outposts in Fribourg (EPFL Fribourg), Neuchâtel (Microcity) and Sion (EPFL Valais-Wallis). It also has laboratories on Campus Biotech in Geneva.

The Musée de l'Elysée and EPFL team up regularly on research projects involving the Museum's collections, as well as on other editorial and artistic ventures. This is part and parcel of the Museum's push to expand the multifaceted relationship between art and science. After all, doesn't the field of photography owe its existence and ongoing evolution to scientific progress? Our kinship with science also explains why the Musée de l'Elysée holds the world's largest collection of prisms created by Gabriel Lippmann, who won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1908 for his work on the wave theory of light. And since the Museum — a "museum for photography" — recently celebrated its 30th anniversary, it seemed only fitting for us to be involved in EPFL's golden jubilee as well.

EPFL President Martin Vetterli decided to honor EPFL's extraordinary journey with a year full of events designed to celebrate science, research, education and innovation. He and I also came up with the idea of a book of photos that would illustrate the School's strategic priorities for the coming years, which include experiential learning, open science and digital technologies.

> A BOOK OF PHOTOS, YET WITH A FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHERS. THREE PERSPECTIVES, THREE APPROACHES, WHICH COMBINE TO CREATE A COHERENT VISION OF EPFL'S PRESENT AND FUTURE.

A book of photos, yet with a focus on photographers — three to be precise — who were each given free rein to capture, in 30 images, what EPFL is today and where it is headed. Rather than mapping out the School's history, our aim was to highlight a moment in time through three themes — science, architecture and people — each of which already forms an integral part of the photographers' respective portfolios. Three perspectives, three approaches, which combine to create a coherent vision of EPFL's present and future.

Switzerland boasts an extraordinarily rich cultural scene, and Lausanne — with 22 museums for just 150,000 inhabitants — is no exception. The city's dynamic student population, one of the densest in Europe, has something to do with that. Each day, the EPFL campus comes alive with more than 15,000 people, including some 11,200 students and 347 professors working alongside scientific and technical staff and the entrepreneurs in EPFL Innovation Park. More than 115 nationalities are represented

at the School, and 60% of students and teaching staff come from outside Switzerland.

The campus itself is home to two museums: Archizoom, which is dedicated to architecture, and the Bolo Museum, which looks at computer science. But this sort of historical perspective is obviously just one small part of the School — the science being carried out by

AT TIMES, AS PART OF HER THEATRICAL *MISE EN ABYME*, CATHERINE LEUTENEGGER BRINGS SCIENTIFIC EQUIPMENT INTO THE PHOTOGRAPHIC PROCESS.

EPFL's 20 institutes and more than 350 laboratories is resolutely forward-looking. And this is what photographer Catherine Leutenegger beckons us to discover. She has received several awards for her work, including the Manor Prize, the Raymond Weil International Photography Award, and Swiss Federal Design Awards in 2006 and 2008. For this book, she pulls back the curtain on EPFL's labs, revealing their choreography, props and inner workings with an amused and curious eye.

At times, as part of her theatrical *mise en abyme*, Catherine Leutenegger brings scientific equipment into the photographic process — in one instance capturing a mouse embryo with a microscope. In cryptographic images such as these, which she reproduces with only minimal intervention, she blurs the borders between created (or found) images and reappropriated ones. Some of the images involve cutting-edge techniques, like the photogram of white waves on a black background created via CT scan, or the image of a mouse's brain that shows the raw file produced by the scanner before the algorithm creates the final X-ray.

In her exploration of scientific research, Catherine Leutenegger conveys its diversity, from the infinitely large to the infinitely small, making the most of her access to the laboratories, the equipment, the professors and even some of the research in progress. Unlike in Olivier Christinat's work, which frames the bustling student life on campus, the researchers themselves are often absent from Catherine Leutenegger's images. Their presence can nevertheless be felt in both the order and disorder they generate.

Bogdan Konopka's approach is to strip EPFL's buildings down to their still life form. This photographer, who won the second Vevey International Photo Award, run by Festival Images, in 1998, seeks to capture the soul of a

THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF BOGDAN KONOPKA BREATHE LIFE INTO THE BUILDINGS THEY PORTRAY.

place and the memory of time. Although devoid of human presence, his photographs breathe life into the buildings they portray. The School's physical grounds are indeed in constant flux — over time, numerous buildings have been added to this large campus on the shores of Lake Geneva. Recent additions include the Rolex Learning Center, which was designed by Japanese architecture firm SANAA and holds EPFL's library — a public space that is home to over 500,000 documents. The SwissTech Convention Center, which opened in 2014, is another example. To vary the exposure, Bogdan Konopka uses three formats: two 4 x 5 view cameras (Japanese format) and an 8 x 10-inch view camera (US format).

Bogdan Konopka is particularly drawn to shadows, both literally and in keeping with the very nature of photography. In his work, timelessness prevails: "Even

modern-day architecture is photographed as if it were 1,000 years old." His grainy urban landscapes seize your attention with magnetic force. Rather than set foot in the labs, Konopka preferred to roam the building tops and shoot from a bird's-eye view, revealing the campus's architectural workings from above.

Like the other two photographers, Olivier Christinat, winner of the Rado Star Prize Switzerland 2013, was given access to the entire campus, which he visited around 40 times. He is an old hand at capturing the anniversary celebrations of local institutions, having

> AS HE OFTEN DOES, OLIVIER CHRISTINAT DISCREETLY IMMERSED HIMSELF IN EPFL LIFE.

been involved in the Musée de l'Elysée's "Un autre regard sur Paléo" exhibition to mark the 40th anniversary of the Paléo Music Festival, and the Museum's own 30th anniversary commemoration. For those projects, he was honoring the past and, above all, creating new memories through his work. This time around, as he often does, Olivier Christinat discreetly immersed himself in EPFL life. Blending in with the crowd gives him a unique perspective: "That's what fascinates me about photographing real life: something always ends up happening, and that something is never very different from what you had hoped for."

In his portraits, he zeroes in on simple and subtle gestures rather than attempting to isolate character traits or dramatize scenes. His images are a constant game of hide and seek, as the faces of the men and women interact and overlap. Chance being a wanderer's best friend, Olivier Christinat had very little reframing to do; the words of John Stuart Mill — "photography is a brief complicity between foresight and luck" — are apt here. Some of the shots taken from above, despite the clarity of certain faces in the crowd, depict the depth of life rather than focusing narrowly on a particular subject. The photographer used a full-format camera to enhance the contrast between the blurred and the clearly defined, and a medium-format camera with a very powerful lens to provide greater depth of field. At times, Olivier Christinat's work resembles an altered view of reality, with his colliding perspectives and converging camera shots.

We are pleased to once again be partnering with EPFL, this time as it marks its 50th anniversary. In addition to reaffirming our commitment to supporting photographic production, this is also an excellent opportunity to deepen the relationship between art and science, as part of the ongoing quest to make sense of a complex and rapidly changing world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

EPFL wishes to thank the three photographers — Catherine Leutenegger, Bogdan Konopka and Olivier Christinat — whose talent and generosity went into the creation of this book.

We are also grateful to Tatyana Franck, the director of the Musée de l'Elysée photography museum in Lausanne. As the president of the editorial committee, whose task was to select the photographers and photographs, she provided valuable expertise throughout the creative and publishing process. Our thanks naturally go to the other members of the editorial committee as well.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to Alain Herzog, Christine Metzler, Cyril Veillon, the researchers and everyone else who facilitated the photographers' work or who contributed in some way to the creation of this book and the ArtLab exhibition.

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