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Design and Function

INTRODUCTION KATHRYN MOORE ON THE FUNCTION OF DESIGN • **SPAIN** SEAFRONT PROMENADE BENIDORM • **FRANCE** QUAYS IN BORDEAUX • **CHINA** BOTANICAL GARDEN AND BUND IN SHANGHAI • **ISRAEL** TEL-AVIV JAFFA SHORELINE • **LEBANON** HARIRI MEMORIAL GARDEN, BEIRUT • **USA** BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK • **AUSTRALIA** UNIVERSITY CAMPUS AND PIRRAMA PARK IN SYDNEY • **SPECIAL** COMPETITION RESULTS SEA CHANGE 2030+



The Green Centre Ouerbett Park

Redesigning Ouerbett Park in the small town of Kayl in Luxembourg created a versatile public open space providing opportunities for relaxation, play and sports.

Embedded in the cultural landscape of the Kayl Valley in the south of Luxembourg and extending along the Kayl Stream from the middle of the little town of Kayl to the adjacent municipality of Tétange, the 2.5-hectare Ouerbett Park forms the northern end of this green link. With its new design, resolved by the town in 2008, the hitherto never designed green space on the southern edge of town with its dense stand of trees was to become an attractive urban park and the green centre of Kayl. Being the only local public open space of this size, Ouerbett Park was to be reorganised spatially and to provide, besides areas for sports, leisure and play, a venue for events.

The design response by WW+ architektur + management and wich architekten to these requirements is as understated as it is good: a zigzag path in a ring around the park providing access and subdividing it into two zones. One is the busy centre inside the path's ring. The other zone consists of the park's edges beyond the path, whose quality as peaceful places for relaxing away from the action unfortunately did not receive the same design attention as the lively centre.

The latter features play and sports areas and a broad open lawn with underground water and power supplies as a venue for festivals and concerts. It is characterised by the preserved stand of old ash-trees (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and bird cherry (*Prunus avium*), now complemented by additional ash-trees and striking solitaires such as American Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) and yellow poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*). In the south, a custom-designed playground strip of Robinia tree trunks accompanies the circular path. With various climbing, swinging and sliding elements it offers overlapping play experiences for children of different ages. Next to the path it is bordered by concrete benches, on the park side by flowerbeds. The field for ball games, situated in the west, was already completed before the park, because it was funded by grants. Although it is in the place the architects integrated into the design concept, it lacks a design connection. But fortunately this only slightly mars the park's otherwise high-quality overall impression.



In the southern part of the park stands the restaurant pavilion with a Corten steel facade. Beginning at that point is a custom-designed playground strip, from which rise Robinia tree trunks with swings, slides and nets.

A circular path structures and provides access to Ouerbett Park, which is surrounded by heterogeneous buildings and pastures. Crossing the park from north to south is the little Kayl Stream, accompanied by a second path.

The railings of the new footbridges across the Kayl Stream are also made of Corten steel repeating the perforated pattern of the pavilion's facade. They seem to glow red-hot when illuminated at night.



Another structuring element of the new open space is the Kayl Stream which crosses the middle of the park from south to north and has a second main path running next to it. This path leads from the northern entrance right to one of the park's central elements: the Pavillon Madeleine operated by Luxembourg's star chef Lea Linster. In its just 220 square metres, the 4.50-metre-high cube with a Corten steel facade contains everything a gourmet restaurant needs, including the open-concept kitchen Lea Linster wanted: guests are supposed to experience how their meal is prepared. The proposal to integrate gastronomy into the park came from the architects and proved to be a good idea because this way the park is busy into the evening hours.

So that the Kayl stream no longer represents a barrier the way it did when there was only one bridge before the park was built, two new footbridges cross it now. Their Corten steel railings repeat the perforated pattern of the pavilion's facade. They are illuminated at night, which makes them look like red-hot steel fresh from the blast-furnace. In fact, steel is the predominant material in Ouerbett Park. A total of 55 tons went into its construction and was used meticulously all the way down to the smallest detail, such as the refuse bins. Particularly the rusty red colour of corroded Corten steel dominates the design. For WW+ and wich architecten, one reason for choosing this material was the industrial history of Luxembourg. The small country with a population of just 500,000 was one of the major steel producers of Europe in the 19th century. The plentiful iron ore deposits in the south of Luxembourg, however, could long not be utilised efficiently. It was not until 1886 that the Englishman Sidney Gilchrist Thomas smoothed the way for the modern steel industry by developing the eponymous process for eliminating phosphorous from iron ore. But it was also the durability and robustness of the material that was decisive for the planners, especially for the prevention of vandalism.

Already at the two new entrance squares, large Corten steel letters spell the name of the park and greet visitors, thus drawing attention to the place, which is recessed from the street. With the two small squares, the planners succeeded in creating the desired opening of the park towards the town. Benches also made of Corten steel frame the zigzagged squares on one side each. The Corten steel structure conceived as a bus stop at the northern entrance displays the Pavillon Madeleine's menu behind the illuminated pane set into it. With Lea Linster's dishes, it entices people into the park.

With few but precisely implemented design means, the architects managed to develop Park Ouerbett into a variously usable green centre for Kayl which fully meets the requirements for an attractive urban open space. And with the planned urban development between Kayl and Tétange at the latest, the park will also be the green centre in geographical terms which it already represents in design terms now.



OUERBETT PARK, KAYL, LUXEMBURG

Client: Administration Communale de Kayl

Design team: WW-architektur + management sàrl, Esch-sur-Alzette; wich architecten, Munich

Area: 2.5 hectares

Completion: July 2010

Costs: 2.8 million euros (park and pavilions)