

26 Years Euregional Prize for Architecture

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Aachen Onsen

Participant info

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Project info

Aachen has an underground treasure. Plenty of hot spring water. Hot spring water is naturally warm water with minimum 20°C and rich in minerals.

While other countries appreciate their resource and embrace the use of it, Germany does use its water rarely.

In Japanese onsen cities the thermal water is perceptible everywhere. Through natural places, hot water fields or public baths the water becomes a part of the identity of the city. Especially the free to use smaller public bathes make the water and its benefits accessible for everybody. The atmosphere it generates is sensible all around the city and produces the unique feeling visiting these cities. The water generates an “in between”, like described by the Philosopher Watsuji in his book „Fudo“. While he wrote about how climate has influence on the people living in it, I transferred this idea on an onsen-climate and how it creates an atmosphere of communication and friendliness.

Via five projects around Aachen I show the diversity of possible interventions. Differing in size, function, an already existing free aspect, complexity and condition of the water, each project integrates itself in its given surrounding.

A Steam Window in which people can shortly enjoy the warm steam coming from the close by main source.

A Baptisteries connected to the Aachen Cathedral that uses the natural water for baptizing.

A Foot Bath under arches in a cozy court where people can enjoy drinks and dishes from the nearby cafes and use the free to use public bookcases.

A huge Graben in the existing central park in Aachen that digs down to the rock layer that carries the water.

And a Public Bath that is situated in a former public toilet.

To show the seamless feasibility of these places I built 1:25 models and one 1:200 model.

