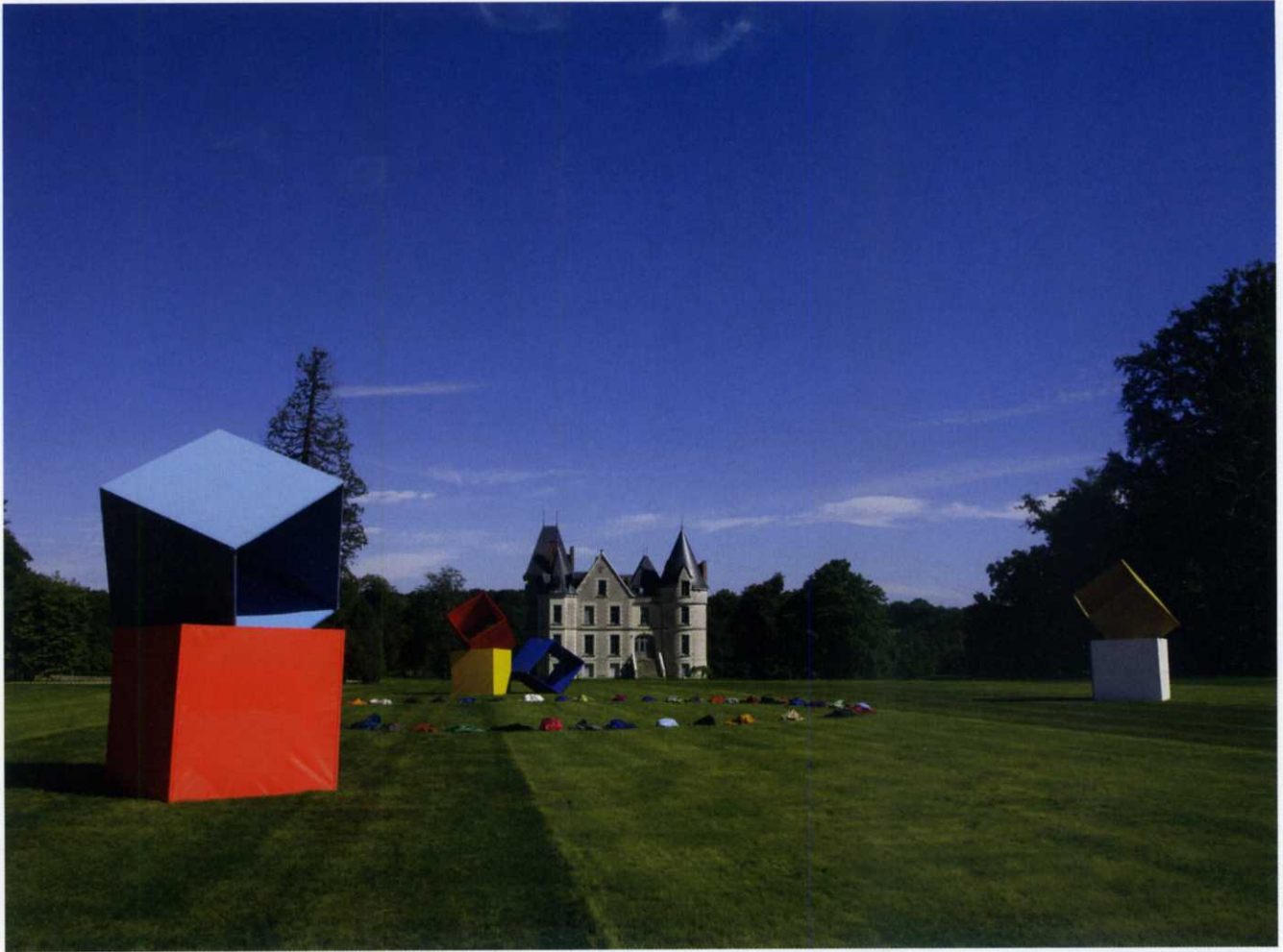


EDITOR: DANI DAEUN KIM

Alexander von Vegesack

Domaine de Boisbuchet





If you can spend a whole week with a designer that you've been wishing to meet for a long time at an antique chateau from the 16th century and a building by a famous architect standing next to a placid lake? In France, this dream becomes reality every summer. Boisbuchet Summer Workshop is the place where participants from all around the world and renowned designers visit. Alexander Von Vegesack, the president of Domaine de Boisbuchet and the former founding director of Vitra Design Museum, tells us about the workshop.

How did Boisbuchet Summer Workshops start?

I always wanted to build an educational center to hand over my experience to young people. Selling a part of my furniture collection to the Austrian government allowed the realization of this dream. With the money earned, in 1986 I decided to buy the Domaine de Boisbuchet. I fell in love with the setting, where all the buildings are surrounded by acres of forests and fields, with the river Vienne bordering the East side of the property. The vast estate provided the necessary intimacy that I was looking for in order to build up a cultural center open to experimentation in design, art and architecture. Parallel to the early development of Boisbuchet, I also started the Vitra Design Museum, where I worked until 2011 as the founding director.

What is your role as the president?

As the founder of C.I.R.E.C.A. (Centre International de Recherche et d'Éducation Culturelle), which is the cultural non-profit organization behind all the activities at Boisbuchet, my goal is to find ways of financing our cultural program with an additional income from public sources and private sponsors. At Boisbuchet, we do not believe so much in pure sponsoring. Instead we prefer to offer professional services to our

industrial and public partners, like team building activities onsite, organizing competitions, product development, cooperations with universities, professional design training for companies. The team at Boisbuchet is composed of few, but very motivated young people. They come from various backgrounds in terms of culture and skill. My daily duty is to create a good and positive environment for everybody to feel at ease and part of the project, so that we can achieve the best results.

Where did your interest in design education start?

Already as a young boy, one of my favourite hobbies was to visit flea markets, learning about the stories of the objects that I found there. I had the chance to spend some time in the souks of Cairo, Egypt, and there I started to collect those objects in which I was emotionally involved and that attracted my attention because of their production process. Because of my growing collection, I gained a solid know how that enabled me to start to work on the first exhibitions about industrial design. After the working experiences with the American Federation of the Arts, the German government and later on with the Centre Pompidou, I became interested in handing over this practical and scientific expertise to young people.

Many internationally established designers have accepted your invitation to run the workshops at Domaine de Boisbuchet. How did you enlist these famous design stars?

Many of today's design stars already worked with me in the early days of the Vitra Design Museum. Moreover, Boisbuchet has been active for 23 years now. We have a very good reputation due to the quality of our workshop programs, which is unique on the international scene. The history of our institution is convincing enough for many design and architecture professionals, to whom we are truly thankful. They work more or less for free, as we can just afford to re-

fund them of their travel expenses, due to our non-profit status.

Before embarking on a workshop, do you request anything special to designers in terms of education?

Our selection is based on a very long process of selection, where we take into consideration different aspects of one's portfolio and activity. Is his/her work compatible with our principles and philosophy? Is it sustainable, both economically and environmentally? Is it innovative and challenging? How interesting is the work for our international community of young designers and students?

Can you explain about the curriculum outline of the workshop?

We try to integrate all the different aspects of design in our program: product, fashion, material driven, craft, light, graphics, communication, experimental and innovative practices. Of course the environmental attention and the sustainability of both materials and processes are the common base for all our activities. The site plays an important role, delivering a wide range of natural materials and different settings.

Every year, more than 400 people come from all over the world to participate in the Boisbuchet Summer Workshop. What do you think of the influence of the workshop on these participants?

Many participants join the workshops several years in a row. The major elements of interest for them are the practical experience, the close contact with the designer and the enormous amount of different cultures encountered. During a workshop in Boisbuchet, you have the chance of meeting in person some of the best designers of the present times and live closely with them for one week. Together with this, the international community of students and professionals that gather here every summer creates sort of a family atmosphere, where moments and decisions are shared in common.

Our ateliers are equipped in a basic way and therefore as

