

Although it is still growing in size, it feels like this mountaintop is disappearing. The glacier will be gone in less than a hundred years, the hotel is no longer in use. It is difficult to describe the richness of this specific place but it begins and ends with the spectacular landscape. The feeling of ecstasy and loss experienced here has inspired explorers and painters since the eighteenth century.

Text and photography Hanne Van Dyck

Institut The Space
Furkablick

Furkart, the most legendary artist's residency you've never heard of

At the highest point of the Furkapass – 2,436 metres, a sign tells us – lies Hotel Furkablick, a big rectangular building with 41 bedrooms and a restaurant. The windows on the front and back walls have red-and-white-striped shutters, while the remaining two sides have green-and-white shutters, a work by Daniel Buren. The entrance is a construction of glass and metal, designed by Rem Koolhaas in 1988 and completed three years later. The restaurant, the terrace, with its panoramic view, and the kitchen are all designed by the architect, representing his smallest project and the only design by him to be found in Switzerland. In the restaurant, Tibetan refugees now sell local products. Here you can buy postcards that reveal the presence of Furkart¹, the most legendary artist's residency you've never heard of, and maps showing the location of the works present in the surrounding landscape. Without this aid it would be hard to find Jenny Holzer's *Truisms*, Mario Merz's *Passo Della Furka* or Lawrence Weiner's *Covered With Clouds*. And then there are the works that are housed in buildings spread across the Furka Zone; to enter these you must first find the keyholder.

In 1999 Marc Hostettler, the founder of Furkart, sold the hotel and all present artworks to the Alfred Richterich Foundation. Furkart became Institut

Furkablick, ushering in a new and still-developing era. For thirteen years now, Janis Osolin has taken care of the Furka Zone, imposing his own rules and style in the protection of Furkart's legacy, past and present. His stewardship extends to not only the hotel, but also a former military base and the land surrounding both properties. He takes great care in every decision, taking his time, sometimes multiple seasons, to consider, for example, whether the grass around Royden Rabinowitch's *Three rolled conic surfaces applied to a region of curvature maintaining local and somatic descriptions* should be cut or not, how Daniel Buren's shutters should be restored or if and how Rémy Zaugg's video will be shown. He collaborates with professionals who know what the place is about, people who are familiar with the objects in and around the hotel, but most of all the landscape. The illuminated cloud appearing from behind a mountaintop on a summer night, the wind following the curves of the mountains and the Milky Way clearly visible above the pass in August.

Institut Furkablick maintains a refreshing and critical policy. There is no website, no one answers the phone (a reference to Walter Maria's work in *When Attitude Becomes Form*) and it is not possible to visit the hotel without an appointment. This policy extends to a ban on photography of the hotel's interior.

Those lucky enough to make it inside will find relatively few works on view. This is mainly because most of the sixty or so artists who have participated in the residency were encouraged by Marc Hostettler to engage with the landscape. But you can see memories of performances and installations everywhere, everything is being conserved. Some works are recognisable while others are not easily distinguished from the hotel's interior and the artefacts that characterise a hotel from another era. Institut Furkablick's resistance to self-promoting platforms offered by the internet and social media, combined with the authenticity of its practices, underscores its opposition to the prevailing obsession with visibility and accessibility.

To experience this place, first you have to travel up the pass that is only open for around a hundred days a year due to adverse weather conditions. But if you do make it to the hotel, you are rewarded for your efforts. The road from the canton of Uri was made famous by the iconic chase sequence from the 1964 Bond movie *Goldfinger*. The canton of Wallis offers views of the Rhône glacier, the biggest attraction of the pass. Some hundreds of meters before you reach the hotel, on the opposite side of the road to a sign indicating a parking garage, is



a house owned by Panamarenko, which he used as his atelier for many summers. On the left side of the building you can see a bending structure made of cement, metal and Plexiglas, a work by Luc Deleu, whose work is formative for the Furka Zone. The windows of the house are all firmly closed, except for an attic window from which you can still see a telescope protruding. Arrows can be found drawn on both sides of the building, under the roof-ridge: *Wind Line Over The Furkapass / A Westward Walk / The Wind Direction at Every Half Hour* by Richard Long.

Institut Furkablick maintains a refreshing and critical policy. There is no website, no one answers the phone (a reference to Walter Maria's work in 'When Attitude Becomes Form')

1. On the Furkapass in 1983, James Lee Byars presents "A Drop of Black Perfume". before a group of merely fifty people. The interesting particular situation and the gained success of Byars intervention, incite Marc Hostettler, a Swiss gallerist, to reopen the Hotel Furkablick and start a retreat for artistic experimentation and realization. He invited around sixty artists over the course of sixteen years. Daniel Buren, Ulay and Marina Abramovic, Joseph Kosuth, James Lee Byars, Richard Long, Niele Toroni, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Olivier Mosset, Roman Signer, Panamarenko, Ria Pacquée and Jenny Holzer are just a few of the artists who came here.



The front of the building shows 35 white-painted squares, arranged in three rows, *Empreintes de pinceau n° 50 répétées à intervalles réguliers (30 cm)* by Niele Toroni.

On the other side of the street there is a mound, where a hotel once stood, built in 1850, which would eventually be abandoned and become dilapidated. At the perimeter of the site, Per Kirkeby built the red-brick sculpture *Furkapasshöhe*. The site is a popular place for snowboarders in spring and campers in summer, who make their campfires on the work *Feuerplatz Furkapass* by Max Bill, an installation of four granite slabs arranged in a square. Turning your gaze sharply to the right, taking in the landscape to the west, you can see the signature of 19th century Swiss landscape painter Ferdinand Hodler engraved in a stone, a work by Ian Hamilton Finlay. On the only wall still standing, which you can only see if you leave the spot and look back, you can see a large outdoor sculpture by Joseph Kosuth that takes the form of a sentence (a citation by Johan Wolfgang Goethe) picked out in metal.

On the walk from this site to Hotel Furkablick you are confronted once more with the landscape. Right in front are steep, sharp rocks, which make you understand why mountains were once perceived as ugly monsters. On the right is a green slope streaked with snow that disappears during summertime but never for long. On the left is a mountaintop wreathed with grass and big rocks and in the distance you can see the Sidelen glacier. It is very easy to ignore the horde of tourists spending the night in their campers or climbing up with their racing

bikes or shiny old-timers. But they are just as much part of the environment. They come with the sun and are nowhere to be seen when the weather changes, which can happen in the blink of an eye.

The deep and immediate impact of the landscape is hard to ignore, but the thing we should just as well pay attention to is something we cannot see: time. It is present in the Alps that are still growing with each year, in the numbers of participating artists passing away and in the increasing amount of effort the government puts into preserving their mountain culture. Time and preservation are inevitable concerns of every artistic project. The Furka Zone is a place for conservation and observation, a space that offers a view on the world. While the army looks to the sky, scientists are looking to the earth, tourists are looking through their cameras, curators are looking at objects. Here the memories you create are formed by the beauty of all that is present: the blue skies, the artworks, the fog, the rain, the water, the architecture, the birds, the wind, the opportunities, the rocks, the people. A guy parks his Ferrari and waves at me like a little child, his arm fixed and only his hand moving. He is not admiring the curves of his drone or the shutters of Daniel Buren but shouting to his friend to look at the beauty of the little terraces made with craftsmanship from a different time.

The deep and immediate impact of the landscape is hard to ignore, but the thing we should just as well pay attention to is something we cannot see: time