

## **Introduction - Sabina Brocal, Pro Helvetia**

Cinema and Architecture: Swiss Views is a series of fifteen film and video works devoted to architecture. During the 1990s, a number of films were made on this theme; this may be related, in part, to the international success of certain Swiss architects and to the prestige their buildings enjoy in Switzerland and abroad, leading critics to speak of a new modern era in Swiss contemporary architecture. On a more general level, architecture is receiving increased international attention, as witnessed by the development of veritable architectural tourism, from Bilbao in the Basque region of Spain to Vals in the Swiss Canton of Grisons.

One group of films explores the thought and the work of well-known architects, such as Mario Botta, Santiago Calatrava, Gion Caminada, Jean Nouvel, Alberto Sartoris, Peter Zumthor and the office of Herzog & de Meuron, by focusing on particular works, or by giving a cross-section of their production. Other films, such as "Die neue Wohnung", "Kenwin", and "Il Girasole" examine private space, constructing a portrait of a place and of the people who live there, while also showing the evolution of the concept of housing, as it abandons the traditional dwelling place as an object to be presented to visitors in favor of functional spaces put to use according to personal requirements, even to the point of linking them to the cosmos - such as "Il Girasole", the house that revolves with the sun. Then there are films like "Berlin-Cinéma, titre provisoire" and "A City at Chandigarh" which articulate concepts of urbanism and visionary reflections on the ideal city. In the only two films not made in the 1990s, "Die neue Wohnung" (1930) and "A City at Chandigarh" (1966), we see manifest the humanist utopia of the modern era, which imagined a new city, a new man, a new world of work. This gesture no longer seems topical, as these remarks of Mario Botta reflect, "In the years that followed 1968, we still thought we could in fact change society by means of architecture. Today, we know that we can only change architecture by means of architecture. This means that we should work within our domain and not outside it." Utopias are now out of place, and it is as an approach differentiated from social reality that contemporary thinkers understand the architecture of today.

Sabina Brocal, Pro Helvetia (2001)