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The Swiss Museum of Transport in Lucerne introduces visitors to the industrial history of Switzerland. The complex is a hodgepodge of exhibition buildings. After operating for 50 years, the museum decided it was time to 'clean it up a bit and draw up a development plan for the future', says project manager Caspar Bresch of Gigon/Guyer Architekten, the firm that won a competition to carry out the assignment ten years ago. The new-build extension was completed precisely on time for the museum's 50th birthday.

The concept for the two-part addition is immediately visible in the entrance building. Behind the street wall of profiled glass, which resembles a display case, is a blurred array of all sorts of round objects conveying the idea of locomotion, from propellers and tire rims to cogs and steering wheels. Viewed from a certain angle and in the right light, these objects become invisible, ultimately revealing the image of an elongated architectural volume that connects the older exhibition halls.

The façades of the second volume, which accommodates an exhibition on road transport, are also self-explanatory. These walls feature Swiss

road signs. The original plan was to use recycled signage, but in spite of economic pressure, the architects found the dingy appearance of old road signs not quite in harmony with the anniversary celebration and the extension to the museum, so they opted for new signs after all. Mounted on the walls are blue, white and green Swiss road signs with reflective letters and characters: only on the back of the building they are reversed so as not to annoy the neighbours. A 7-m-wide, 6-m-high shelving unit inside the hall is equipped with an automatic parking system and moving platforms that display a collection of vintage vehicles. Visitors seated in the 'Car Theatre' can press a button to move the car of their choice to the middle of the theatre, where it slowly revolves for all to admire. Drive on!

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Text **Katharina Marchal**
Photos **Heinrich Helfenstein**

covers façades with
road signs and hubcaps

