

Working on a smaller scale than in most cases, Paul Andreu here succeeds in putting forward not his own ego as an architect, but rather the function and beauty of a sport. This acceptance of the modesty befitting of the designer who serves his client and his project is a tribute to Andreu's personality.

08 Ski Jump - Winter Olympics Courchevel

Country: France
Use: Ski jump
Start of project: 1988
Completion: 1991
Lengths of jumps: 70 m / 90 m
Capacity: 24,000 spectators



The Three Valley ski area of France is the world largest with 188 ski lifts and 600 kilometers of trails. It includes five resorts: Courchevel, Meribel, Val Thoren s, Les Menuires and La Tania. Paul Andreu was called on to design the ski jump facilities in Courchevel in time for the 1992 Winter Olympics. Though the Winter Games were based in nearby Albertville, the Ski Jumping event took place here. Taking on a task that was obviously quite different than airport design, Andreu went about his work in a carefully studied way. "I spent a lot of time trying to understand the mechanics of ski jumping," he says, "from beginning to end. I mean from the time the skier leaves his or her hotel, takes the life, warms up, concentrates, and finally faces the terrifying slope to do the best and longest jump possible." The architect underlines the basic

The simple powerful lines of the ski jump give an indication of Paul Andreu's ability to adapt his talents to the very specific requirements of this sport. Far from attempting to give an "airport" feeling to the facility, he has given the leading role to the ski jump, and thus to the athletes themselves.



The curved forms and the use of concrete and wood corresponds well both to the natural environment, the site and the architectural style of ski resorts. With its angled windows, the tower to the right emphasizes the slope and indeed gives some of the sense of movement that Andreu often gives to his work.



10 functional geometries that dictate form in this instance, much as he would analyze transportation facilities. It should be obvious that the case of the ski jump is somewhat particular and does also involve flight, albeit in a less industrial mode than airports imply. "There are at least seven or eight geometrical constraints determining the settling and the form of the building: vertical and horizontal viewing angles, relative heights, etc.," says Andreu, "I grouped the judges tower for both jumps in the same construction. Afterwards, I decided not to try to do anything more than transcribe the functional exigencies, so that the close relationship between the judges' tower, the ski jumps and the surrounding landscape could be understood or felt." Working with the Committee for the Organization of the Olympic Games (COJO) and Aéroports de Paris, Andreu created a facility with two jumps – 70 and 90 meter runs, and a capacity of 24,000 spectators. Paul Andreu also puts great emphasis on such basic matters of the line of sight of visitors, judges and skiers. His design is obviously subordinated to functional constraints, but in a way this is a signature element of his style. First he solves the technical problems involved with a project, he seeks out the most efficient engineering and architectural solutions for the basic shape keeping in mind not only the basics, but also the overall effect of the design. In this instance, he has truly concentrated on the needs of the facility, creating



an elongated six-level semi-circular tower at the top of the jump for the various facilities. Andreu compares the focus of this structure on ski run, sky and earth to the single-minded organization of the observatories at Jaipur with their oblique ramps. "For the rest," he says, "everything is simple and associated

to the landscape: the buildings are faced with wood in their rounded parts, whereas the flat parts expose the concrete. The same materials are used for the ski run, faced with wood over its entire height and ending in banks of concrete, a line in space, what is left of the idea that everything 'floats' in the air."