

Industrious.

Exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts Bern, March 1 to May 6, 2012

Opening speech by Rolf Soiron, Chairman of the Board, Holcim Ltd

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am greatly impressed to be able to greet so many of you here. And I am also surprised. Are you truly aware of what awaits you here today? I'll let you in on it: you are all celebrating with us the start of a joyous year: the year in which Holcim celebrates its 100th birthday.

You all know very well, of course, who Holcim is: one of the large, global firms with roots and headquarters in Switzerland; one of the globally leading producers of cement, gravel and concrete; a company founded almost exactly to the day 100 years ago, on February 15, 1912 in Brugg in the canton of Aargau. The driving force and leading light behind the founding of this firm was the entrepreneur Adolf Gygi, the first Chairman of the Board was Edmund Schulthess, who later became a Federal Councilor. It was only a year after its founding that an entrepreneur from the Rhein Valley named Ernst Schmidheiny joined the company. He and his heirs would subsequently take over the reins for a long time.

But no worries, ladies and gentlemen, I won't detain you with a list of managers and Chairmen, and won't bore you with too many numbers. Today the stage doesn't belong to the Schmidheiny's, nor to the company's managers and directors, but to our 80,000 employees around the globe. That impressive number represents the extent to which our team has grown since a small handful of men took up their work in a cement factory in Holderbank in the canton of Aargau in 1912.

I am continuously amazed that this works. 80,000 people all connected together. In 150 cement factories and grinding stations around the world, in over 470 gravel and more than 100 asphalt plants. And in some 1,400 ready-mix concrete centers. 80,000 employees who, under the most diverse living conditions and in the most diverse regions of the world, every day carry out hundreds of interconnected functions. 80,000 people who, by their work, first transform the raw materials and energy into those things that the construction sites of this world need. In 2011, that was some 145 million tonnes of cement, 170 million tonnes of gravel and sand, more than 45 million cubic meters of ready mix concrete and 10 million tonnes of asphalt.

But enough about production statistics, which actually don't belong here. There'll be plenty to hear about them in the press conference and annual general meeting. Today only one number is relevant: and that's the number of the 80,000 employees around the world. Today our full attention belongs to them.



That's because they are Holcim. And they are exactly what we want to show you today. The people behind Holcim who we otherwise don't see. Not cleaned up, not prettified, not dressed in their Sunday best. Just so, as they are when they are working. At the places where they work. Clear in black und white. Undisguised.

And since they are among the best in their field, they should be portrayed by the best in the field of photography. For this, we were able to engage Marco Grob, David Hiepler and Fritz Brunier. From the outside they were to show us how they see us. And what, alongside its capital, Holcim is made of: namely, its people. What these three artists have captured is provocative at times. Above all, however, their pictures speak of an incredible self confidence, a great power and an impressive presence. That makes us proud!

And even if these pictures don't represent the full reality of Holcim, they do show many of the realities upon which the success of our company is based. We've collected the diverse people and worlds of the Holcim universe, as portrayed in these impressive pictures of Grob, Hiepler and Brunier, in a book. Its meant as an homage to and gift for all 80,000 employees who, together with their families, make up the foundations of our global concern. It is to them, the 80,000, that we want to pay our respects today.

Our thanks also go out to the photographers. They fought passionately for their ideas. That it was worth it, you can see for yourself here today. Marco Grob, David Hiepler and Fritz Brunier have done incredible work.

I would also like to thank all the specialists and others involved in setting our centennial celebrations in motion and making them possible.

Finally, I would like to thank Professor Christoph Schäublin and curator Matthias Frehner. Together with their whole team, they have not only generously shown us the hospitality of their house. They have taken the pictures by Grob, Hiepler and Brunier and made the exhibition in which are able to participate today. An exhibition that enthralls us with the power of the people and with the diversity of the ways of life that these three photographers, through their great skill, have brought closer to us.

Thank you very much!

Rolf Soiron
Chairman of the Board of Directors, Holcim Ltd