

Graz University of Technology

NOVEMBER TALKS 2014

Pezo Von Ellrichshausen | Arno Brandlhuber | Carme Pigem | Saša Randić

PREFACE

The November Talks series has arrived to its fourth edition. The talks started in 2011 with a format of four guests—distinguished architects, interesting people—that repeatedly delighted our November Mondays. Along the past years we have had representative architects from our neighbor countries, have peeked into architecture phenomenas in the European context and have also reached beyond our continent with special guests from Shenzhen, Toronto, Beirut and Tokyo. The November Talks 2014 series maintains this tradition and counts once again with remarkable lecturers.

The special format of the talks is already well-known: each 45 minutes lecture is followed by a podium discussion of another 45 minutes. After obtaining an overview of the guest's work, the spontaneous talk offers insight in the architect's visions on the practice and teaching of the discipline. The casual podium discussion engages both the lecturers and the broad audience.

This year's list of guests was every bit as exciting as the ones before and opened up once again a variety of contemporary positions. First, we had the honor of welcoming Mauricio Pezo and Sofia von Ellrichshausen from Chile who showed us their unique and extremely sober body of work. The discussion—documented under the title "The Beauty of Structural Sobriety"—brought insight into their propensity to honest materials, their love for painting, the special relationship they cherish with clients and their ongoing teaching challenges. The next guest, Arno Brandlhuber electrified the audience by an utterly original way of approaching architecture.

Always "Out of the Box", he related to the practice of architecture as a performer. Intriguing reinterpretations of every-day constraints opened up new points of view for the mesmerized audience. The Catalan architect Carme Pigem from RCR arquitectes exposed the elegance and sheer beauty of the simple architectural gesture. The discussion captured important aspects of RCR's design philosophy in search for the "The Materiality of the Immaterial." Our fourth guest, Saša Randić offered a complex view of the Croatian architecture scene, spiced up by a fair dose of humor. His podium discussion—entitled here "The Practical Practice of Architecture"—rendered every-day challenges of a practicing architect with refreshing optimism.

The November Talks not only highlights the guests' oeuvre and their specific architectural positions but also the wide range of teaching approaches. These discussions nurture the educational program of our faculty. We captured these wonderful moments by producing this brochure.

Once again this series is generously supported by the Sto Foundation—very special thanks!—and brought to life by the committed staff members of the IAT—many thanks to this year's team members Žiga Kreševic, Marcus Stevens, Marisol Vidal and Claudia Volberg.

We proudly present this year's brochure depicting the special moments of the November Talks 2014 and are already looking forward to the November Talks 2015!

Roger Riewe

CONTENT

**PEZO VON ELLRICHSHAUSEN_9**

The Beauty of Structural Sobriety

**ARNO BRANDLHUBER_31**

Out of the Box

**CARME PIGEM_63**

The Materiality of the Immaterial

**SAŠA RANDIĆ_85**

The Practice of Practical Architecture



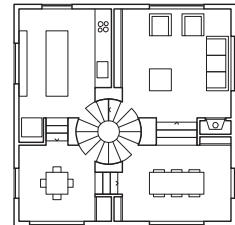
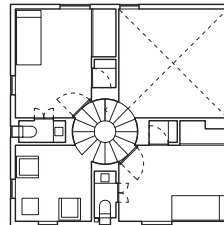
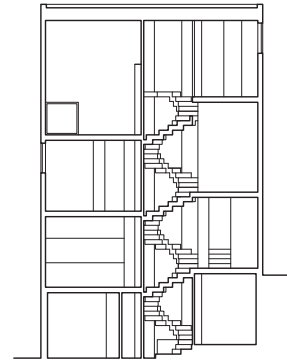
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INTERVIEW_19



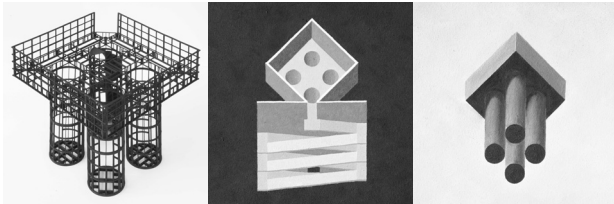
<What is most relevant for us is that precisely the position of the staircase introduces a void that allows for the diagonal connections to happen through the longest dimension of the volume and simultaneously, through many of the rooms. So it's actually a small house but the experience of it is very spacious.>



LECTURE
GAGO HOUSE | Cumbres, Chile | 2013



<... the railing is higher than the wall, so you are always looking upwards. But there are these peak moments, where you can be face to face with an angel, which is something that doesn't happen every day ...>



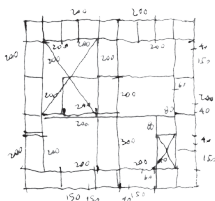
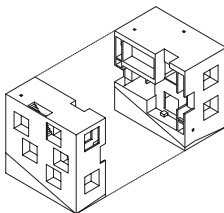
Royal Academy of Arts | **BLUE PAVILION** | London, Great Britain | 2014





<All the landscape around—because of the punctuated openings—is actually a mental reconstruction, you always see it fragmented.>

<We were trying to explore the notion of stability or a certain sense of rest of the piece in the landscape; something that is very gravitational, very stable, very opaque and solid, that transfers its loads directly to the ground without any mediation to the immediate surroundings.>



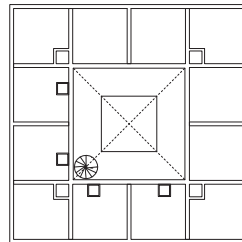
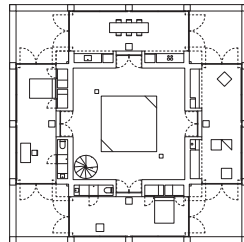
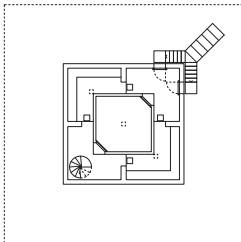
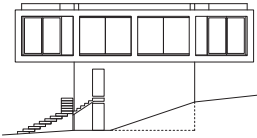
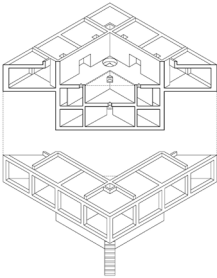
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POLI HOUSE | Coliumo, Chile | 2005





<The house is this culmination point that works more as a suspension, not only of itself in the surroundings, but also as a suspension of time, because there is no clear direction. This is the final point of arrival of the long staircase. It's somehow violent because it arrives directly to the corner of the house.>

SOLO HOUSE | Cretas, Spain | 2013

INTERVIEW

The Beauty of Structural Sobriety



SE_ Sofia von Ellrichhausen

MP_ Mauricio Pezo

RR_ Roger Riewe

CV_ Claudia Volberg

RR_ Thank you very much for this very inspiring lecture. First, you talked about your theory and then showed the projects—you could really see how these projects reflect part of your theory. And it seems very simple, easy, and completely clear. But isn't there a secret behind it? How do you convince a client of your theory or to build a project like this so that he'll just say: 'Ok, can you do my house?' How does the design process start in your office?

MP_ We don't think we have to convince anyone. The main decisions of the projects are very much based on common sense ... They're practical. At the beginning we don't discuss any ideology, theory or anything strictly related to the disciplinary subject that we're interested in, but only about the values that we can share in this relationship of two individuals interested in doing the best

out of an opportunity. We think the opposition between client and architect—one's desire against the architect's desire—is actually obsolete. It's a waste of time because there are a lot of architects with so many different approaches ... In fact we never call our clients 'clients.' We consider their needs, their wish to do something, and if what they want to do—because of a certain wish or a lifestyle—fits with our own vision, then it's right from the very beginning. We don't have to convince them to do anything. We just have to share these fundamental values which are, I could say, nothing more than human values. For example: 'would you prefer a plastic window frame imitating wood or a real wooden window frame?' I prefer the truth over the fake. If we agree on basic things, the rest goes without saying. The definition of the structure or the construction becomes less important than the main

subjects, which are values.

RR_ So, are you friends with your clients before starting the project?

MP_ Not before, but afterwards. [all laughing]

SE_ Sometimes yes ... What is most important is that the majority of our clients become good friends afterwards. That means we get along well. But I believe Pezo is saying that there has to be an understanding. We do very few projects and it gets extremely personal. I guess it is because we're a couple and ...

MP_ ... Legally. [all laughing]

SE_ [laughs] Legally, yes ... So, we are very conscious that the relationships we are creating are part of our own relationships. It affects us very closely. We cannot say: 'Now we are closing the office and returning to our private life ...' We just drag everything back and forth. In that sense, when we realize there is a project that doesn't offer something we can profit from ...

MP_ ... That we respect or value ...

SE_ ... Then we just don't do it. In that sense, we have really been lucky. Of course, there have been fights also ...

MP_ Now we are asked to do projects because clients know what we do; that's a filter somehow. But at the

beginning we didn't have projects to show or ideas to maintain. Then we were very careful about the client selection: not based on the site or the budget, but only based on the human connection.

SE_ We have a work format that is very schematic. We reach this format out of common sense. Certain decisions make sense and we agree on them in the meetings with the clients—our friends—so there's no imposition from our side. The best way to go is definitely to give them the explanations of what and why we are doing. Also, we never start determined on a detail or on a material; we develop a spatial structure as a very rough outline that can then resist many changes. So you don't create that friction, ever.

MP_ ... Because we don't start based on irrelevant matters, such as the type of wood or of concrete. Once we can build up a specific position towards site, context, program, we can develop something that is beyond the circumstances. It goes beyond the case.

CV_ But how do you approach a project? Do you have the interview first and ask the clients what they like to have or do you visit the site first? Since you are showing a lot of sensitivity to the place, how do you start?

SE_ Well, I think at the beginning we're very passive. It's a lot of discussing with clients, visiting the site and ... We don't do anything. It's the easy part. Then there is a lot of discussion among us. When we reach something that

might make sense, we discuss it with the owner and if he agrees, we go on. But it's always based on establishing essential—as Pezo was saying—almost typological situations. Relationships. It becomes irrelevant if you build it in concrete or wood, in blue or red.

CV_ So, you choose the material out of the structure.

MP_ The formal structure, yes.

RR_ I think I can't really let you off the hook yet. Do you really have a client saying 'I would like to have a house with 8 rooms exactly the same size?'

MP_ No, because it's impossible for them to imagine the potential. Normally, they ask for what they know. They don't even desire something else because you never desire what you don't know. What they know—the places they have visited, the place where they live—and what they want is more or less the same. They have a list of rooms and a total budget. Then they want something that is as big as possible and to have sunlight. That's it. [all laughing]

MP_ But it's not enough. With those facts, the insertion of a program in a site takes huge work. We spend a lot of time trying to articulate that. We are under the umbrella of 'the notion of naive intention:' up to what point is the work of an architect based on intentions and what is also based on chance? A lot of factors are out of your control. For example, the client saying 'I want five rooms' or 'I want

three rooms' is totally arbitrary, it's a circumstance. Then, you go to a site that is 10 meters long instead of 12. The reality in itself is arbitrary. It's full of circumstances that are beyond your control. We're trying to see up to what point we can articulate an architectonic intention—the roof, the structure, the proportions—with something that is totally out of our control.

RR_ You showed a few paintings and drawings as well, so you work as a classical architect, and then as well as an artist. There were two different kinds of paintings, an elevation and a geometrical drawing. When does the painting come into the design process?

SE_ The painting has become very important. We use it as a parallel tool. We're developing now some series that are autonomous, like the series of interiors we showed—very simple rooms with openings. That is a complete series that helps us understand ways of organizing space or relations. But we also use it as a specific representation tool for a project. We do paintings related to each project and find it more interesting than the usual computer rendering tools, because it allows us to be more selective. It takes more time, of course.

MP_ I think that's one of the main factors. Since we have this small practice, we try to do almost everything ... We don't do all the models but we like to participate, take pictures and paint, not just administrate a company. The paintings—some of them are sketches, some are acrylic, others are oil on canvas—take a lot of time. So many

layers, one after the other ... You can be painting 30 centimeters for two months. The slowness of this process allows us to be very selective, because you cannot produce too many representations to understand the project. You can produce many computer renderings, one after the other, but not take a decision until the end. In our case, since it's a slow process, you have to be very sure in defining the right thing to do.

SE_Also I think there is an abstractness in our paintings. We don't think any of the images we can produce is going to show the actual building. What we're producing is not an image. We're not interested in the image or in selling some kind of reality. So, the abstractness that is in the paintings allows us to continue with a distance. We're not simulating reality. Only the built object would be able to produce that information.

RR_I actually know the Swiss architect Peter Märkli does something quite similar. When he draws the plan of a house, he makes paintings of the facades. Every facade on one board ... Then he puts the board up so he can always imagine what that house might be about. It's very colorful and these colors don't resemble the reality, of course ... Just to figure out what the building might look like. Coming back to your theories, you got into the topic of the square and the cube, right? There is always the interpretation, the variation of this cube or the square itself. Where does this fascination come from?

SE_Oh, it's maybe related to some of need for control.

Geometry allows you to get that, of course. It's an illusion because built reality is never like that, especially not in our context, where a 90 degrees angle is never 90 degrees, it's 89 or 91. We made a little book on this. It's probably that necessity to say 'ok, when do I stop? What is the shape that I'm actually designing?' There are those very simple squares or circles ...

MP_Yes, and at the same time we've had that fascination for the understanding of basic forms. There is a necessity to make as much as possible with as little as possible. And if you can make a shape that is synthetic enough, we don't think it's necessary to do something else or more. I don't know if it's an ethical condition or it's more biological ...

SE_There is an implicit authority in these shapes. They are beyond you and me and I think that's very appealing.

CV_Does the model also help you to make this decision of forms? Because you also have always the paintings and then a model. Do you double check a little bit the space and the light you're creating and then restructure it? How do you decide then once you have the model?

SE_Yes, we use the models because the spatial structures we are creating are so simple. It's not something you can verify in plan or in section. Recently we've used models to understand singularities inside of those structures, not the totality.

RR_ When talking to the client in this design process—I'm always getting back to this design process because there must be something more behind it ...

SE_ ... You think we are intimidating our clients? [all laughing]

RR_ Maybe you're casting your clients and then you say 'OK, this one is the good one, the rest should go to the other architects ...'

MP_ It's interesting what we have discussed about clients and who sits at the other side of the table. Is it 'client,' 'owner' or 'friend?'

SE_ ... Or 'accomplice ...'

MP_ ... Yes, but we don't have a proper name; we haven't found an alternative word.

SE_ Any suggestions? [all laughing]

RR_ For the time being, let's say 'client' and maybe we find a better term later on! But looking into the design process in terms of communication: does the model then help a lot? Or does the drawing help?

SE_ Probably the model is the tool that helps most. We explain to them what we want to achieve. We explain intentions, we explain basic common sense relations and once they get that ... Then you read the plans, of course.

I don't think we do anything special, different than most architects. What do you do?

RR_ No, no, I ask the questions! [all laughing]

CV_ Your paintings also explain a lot to the clients ... Or are you using them more for yourself, for the design process?

SE_ It depends on our ... Let's invent a name: 'accomplice.' Sometimes the paintings don't mean much to them. Then the model becomes a very important tool.

MP_ There is something about models that comes from our childhood. We have a fascination for little things because we grew up with little cars or toys. When you give a model to a client—they can touch it, feel it—it's a kind of



trophy.

SE_ Yes, and it's a kind of reality in itself so, again, it has an implicit authority. Looking at the light in there, it is actual light. It's as close as you can get, probably closer than with a rendering.

RR_ Coming back to the theoretical level of your design process: is there a talk about others who have done something similar—the connection to the world of arts, like Sol LeWitt working on the cube or Donald Judd working on variations of the minimal? Is this also something you talk about with your clients?

MP_ No, because you can see variations within our practice, a body of work composed of several pieces. What we discuss with each client is not that body of work but a single case. So they don't have to agree with the rest of the things we do, we don't try to convince them. Overall, we're not preaching what architecture is; we're just trying to solve something extremely specific, tailored to a unique situation ... You can show references, you can quote, but it's never that unique case. That's one of the main difficulties of architectural education, because it's based on references, on fiction. You are simulating cases. After you finish your studies you're going to be faced with anything but what you did in school. Architecture is based on unique cases, one after the other.

RR_ Then, after you've solved the issue of the plan, comes the issue of the material itself. Do you have favorite

materials? Or no-go materials you would never use?

MP_ Natural materials, yes. It can be stone, concrete ...

SE_ In fact, many of our projects pass through different phases along the process. They might start in one material but then—because of the circumstances or the budget—we switch to another. We have no problem with that. That's exactly it: the project is able to withstand or be beyond its materialization.

CV_ Do you also think about the aging of the material? One color that might change over time?

SE_ Yes, that's a nice aspect, the aspect of almost timeless architecture—you don't know if it has just been built or not. It happened for example with the 'Cien' project. People always ask: 'what is it?', because they cannot relate to it. But we had a nicer question once by someone who said: 'what was it?' And precisely materials and their aging process give a time dimension that we, of course, prefer. That's why we don't use plastic materials that cannot embody that.

RR_ When looking at the concrete work in your projects, you use it in a very rough way. The finish is quite rough. Is this due to lack of craftsmanship or is it due to your wish to actually have it in this rough way?

MP_ All of the houses we have shown are built on a very tight budget. Even the house in Spain. You can also



find great, Swiss concrete in Chile but it costs ten times more and that's insane. It was not appropriate for the circumstances.

RR_ So if the craftsmen would make fantastic concrete, would you say: 'Oh no, this is bad?'

MP_ No, no.

SE_ No, no. For example, in the case of the Poli House, there is no way we could have had another concrete. It was going to be like this and we think it's beautiful so, of course, it's incorporated in the process. But if we were doing a project in a place where you can get fantastic concrete, we'll do a project with that. We're not simulating an effect, it's an actual consequence of the way things are done in what we consider to be a sensible budget.

MP_ Again, there is an ethical position, because we don't judge architecture according to budget or economic reasons. Nowadays architecture is very manipulated by media; there are a lot of competitions that say: 'it's better to do a communal center for poor people out of adobe than a bank clad in marble.' I think it's good in terms of public policies, but not in terms of architecture. You shouldn't judge architecture according to economic problems—that's relative—or program. What is better: the communal center or a church or a museum? I don't know. It's discrimination when the architect feels he can't be part of the society unless he only does poor things for poor communities. I think that's pure manipulation. It has nothing to do [applause from audience] with architecture.

RR_ So, you work on your plans ... And then there's the situation on the site. How does this communication actually work, how important are the plans and how important is your personal site supervision?

SE_ Pezo showed at the beginning this image of the bullring. The bullring is very easy to trace, it's just a circle, a dimension on the terrain ...

MP_ ... 50 meters ...

SE_ ... And then it's built however it's built. It's so strong in itself that you can always recognize it. Architecture in our context works a little bit like this. Our plans have a strong layout but many times the people reading the plans are not necessarily reading too much; so there's a lot going

on site and a lot of reaction on site. When things are not done properly—which happens all the time—you need to react because there's not enough budget to pull it down and start again. That's an important process and we haven't simulated it, it's not frustrating. Many times we find that you reach a better solution because of a mistake or because of the input we get on site.

MP_ We draw every single detail, but not as a strict, legal document. Details can change. Since we go many times to the construction site, we use a set of plans as a reference for ourselves, to remember what we were thinking.

SE_ It is also a very liberating aspect. We cannot take all the decisions immediately, so—many times along the process, along the construction—we realize: 'maybe we can change this!' And you can, which is very good! It really



allows us to do those small changes within the project.

RR_ As we spoke before, you are traveling a lot. Also long distance. You are teaching in Chicago and you travel to Europe quite often, then you go to the building site ... How does that work?

MP_ We don't have so many projects at the same time, so ... It's working.

CV_ How do you structure your work? You're showing us the structures of your ideas and so it seems you are also great in organizing your time.

MP_ It's this German character [laughing]. We have an internal debate because I argue that you can judge architecture in itself, independent from economic or social conditions and even from the architect and he's intentions. Sofia thinks that you cannot judge architecture without considering the conditions in which it was produced. So she has less respect for an architect who does a great piece of architecture under terrible circumstances—working weekends and treating the interns badly

SE_ I need to explain! Nowadays we are all very judgmental but I think the judgment of buildings is being done very superficially. In contemporary cases one has to not only judge the building but also how that building was made. In historical cases you don't belong to the circumstances, you cannot or change or evaluate them. But buildings nowadays become role models. Also, the

way they are produced becomes a role model.

MP_Yes, a model for society.

SE_Therefore, if we praise or support buildings that are made exploiting people, we are also preaching that the profession has to go that way and that's what I'm not ...

MP_If you agree that architecture has to be based on human conditions when it's built, the machine that produces that human condition has to be human as well ...

SE_You don't agree with that?

MP_Yes, but I have the capacity to separate. I understand your point but I think that if there is a terrible architect ...

SE_... Doing great architecture, is it still great?

MP_Yes, that's our conflict, because I would appreciate the architecture but wouldn't talk to the architect.

RR_This is something you probably also talk to your students to about. How do you set your studio up? What is important? How do you get the students working?

MP_Now that we have a studio in Chile and one in Chicago ... We have had previous studios in the States ... There is a middle point in education, because of the different societies. One is very client-oriented and very

much based on options and excess. The other one is more discreet. In any case, we challenge our students to face problems and develop a capacity to solve these problems in an architectonic way. We don't teach them any style, technology or way of drawing, because they know how to do it, they can find a book. But the capacity to solve something is totally different. You need to be really focused on how to articulate conditions in a certain period of time. That can be applied to any scale and any field.

SE_If you consider education, it is a very narrow moment in time. We try to specify the conditions for our students to be focused on the aspect we want to develop or on the problem-solving situation. We are very restrictive about where the attention is put. So, it's very much about a focused project. That focus is based on what Pezo was mentioning about the 'naive intention:' be very aware of all the circumstances you are deciding on! Nowadays we tend to rationalize everything and architects seem to express that everything is under their control. And it's not. Many of the things we do are a bit capricious or are set from outside ... Consciousness and intentionality is important.

MP_Since we want to train them in solving problems, we invent problems that are beyond a site with a program. We put much more problems on top, an excess of problems—inventions—to draw anything and turn it into something else. We call that ...

SE_Traps.

MP_ Yes, traps, like obstructions. We put much more obstructions than what is necessary to solve a problem. So with that, they are forced to react in a very precise manner.

RR_ And the students don't complain?

SE_ Yes, students always complain. [all laughing]

MP_ For example, last semester we did a survey. We showed a series of floor plans of Roman churches. It was an arbitrary selection of churches that happened to be in Rome because there's an excess of churches everywhere. So, they did a selection and redrew the floor plans, and then they made a series of extrusions of that volume. That floor plan with variations of proportion had to be the project. They had to structure something based on a given floor plan, it was an additional obstruction for them to discover that if you want something that is more irrational on the site, you're forced to discover something that is out of their own expectations.

CV_ Is there a difference between the students from the States and the ones from Chile, when they approach this problem somehow? How would you describe this difference?

SE_ Well, of course, one can never generalize without offending everyone but ... The culture of the United States is a culture of excess and freedom is somehow understood as 'the more choices you have, the freer you

are.' And choice, of course, means options. Their way of thinking is about adding: 'the building is this and this and this.' So this way they delude responsibility. Whereas in our context we are used to stronger restrictions or austerity. This forces people to think more synthetically, to decide on one option instead of many. Probably that's the main distinction.

MP_ Perhaps, in Chile they are shyer, have less experience and reference. They are somehow more naïve and open to go for a single thing. It's opposed to excess of options ... It's very hard for us to explain to the American students that the additive process is not a reductive process but a synthetic one, which is completely different. It's not to get rid of the responsibility of solving something but to be precise within a certain frame of actions.

RR_ Sofia, Pezo, thank you very much for this wonderful talk and spending the evening with us!

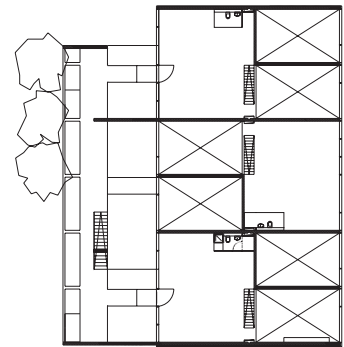
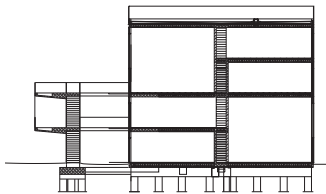
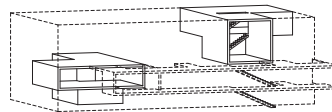
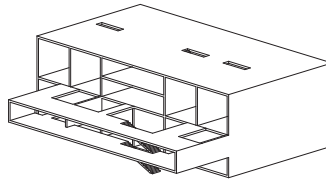


ARNO BRANDHUBER

NOVEMBER 17, 2014

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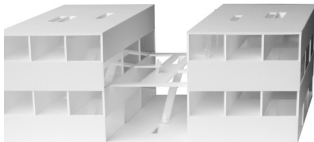
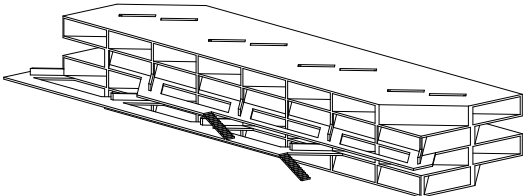
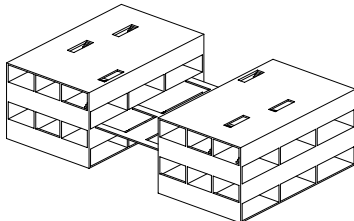
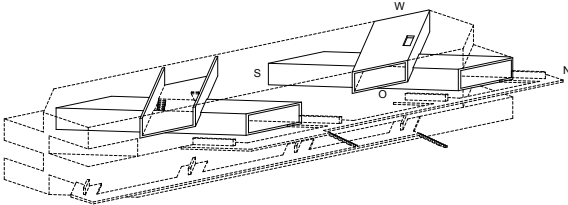
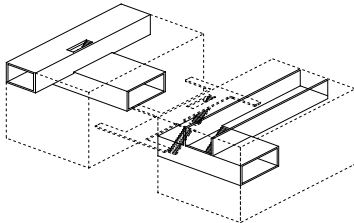
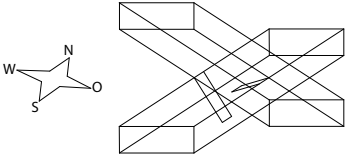
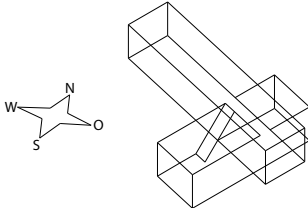
INTERVIEW_41



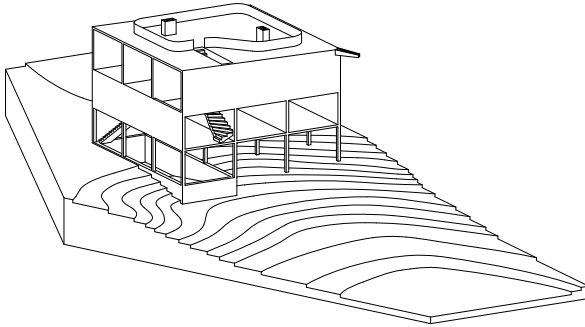
<... It is as easy as a box of cigarettes, if you put one up or lay one down. [...] You can put it either on the right, left, upper or bottom side. Then all options are combined and turned into a fine building. Nested within each other.>

LECTURE**KÖLNER BRETT** | Cologne, Germany | 1997-2000

VierRichtungsModule | Research Studies



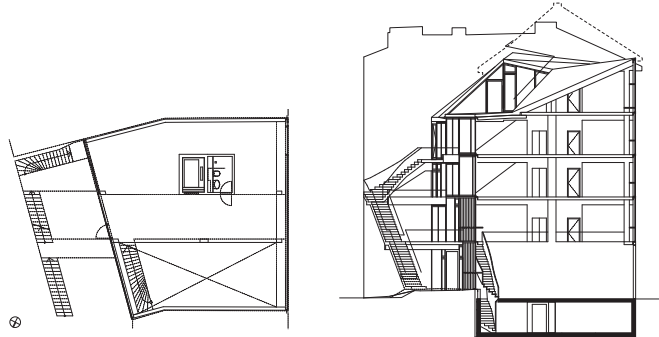
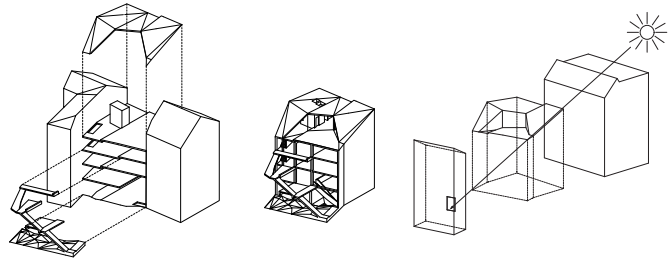
VierRichtungsModule Rocha | Rocha, Uruguay | 2011-



<So you have east-west and north-south oriented rooms connected through a joint. [...] Then you can place a common staircase in between. This means, you suddenly have a building that only has useable space; no interior stairway anymore. >

<Of course it is extremely impressive living in a room or apartment facing all four cardinal directions. Each inhabitant of the house can enjoy all four cardinal directions.>





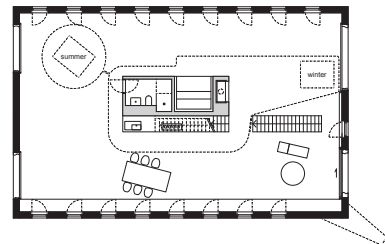
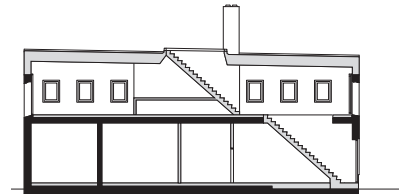
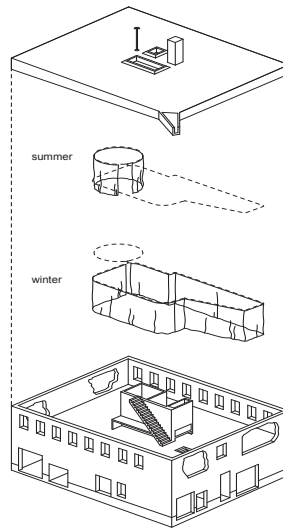
< It is basically the framing with a little bit of façade. A little bit of glass backwards and [...] much of this polycarbonate, since it is extremely cheap and sheds the greatest light inside, like Japanese paper walls. >

BRUNNENSTRASSE 9 | Berlin, Germany | 2007-2010





<If we do not use insulation, we take curtains. These really thin, nearly transparent curtains. [...] There is the fireplace that heats it up.>



<We invited friends over [...] and we had borrowed a lot of equipment. We had a dixie and beer as well, what else do you need? Then we stood there and said: 'The exit should be over there, that's a nice view!'>

ANTIVILLA | Krampnitz, Germany | 2010-

INTERVIEW

Out of the Box



AB_Arno Brandhuber

RR_Roger Riewe

MS_Marcus Stevens

RR_Lieber Arno. Herzlichen Dank für diesen tollen Vortrag mit dem fast genialen Ende. Wir wollen jetzt eine kleine Diskussion anschließen. In deinem Vortrag und auch im Film sind verschiedenste Themen gestreift worden, die mich zur ersten Frage leiten. Was ist das überhaupt für dich: Architektur?

AB_Im besten Fall alles, was in sich schlüssig ist und mit Raum zu tun hat.

RR_Ziemlich einfach. Und wenn es nicht der beste Fall ist?

AB_Dann machen wir es nicht. Also, das Weglassen hat seinen Preis, aber man muss ja nicht alles machen. Es gibt bei uns ein Projekt, das wir nicht mehr auf unserer

Homepage zeigen, weil wir schon vorher Pleite gegangen wären, wenn wir das nicht gemacht hätten. Aber es ist einfach ein extrem schlechter Grund Architektur zu machen, wenn man damit möglichst viel Geld verdienen will.

RR_Aber Architektur hat ja immer wieder mit Bauherren zu tun, mit dem Dialog mit Bauherren. Wie findet dieser bei dir statt?

AB_Ich gebe euch ein Beispiel. Es gibt einen relativ jungen japanischen Architekten. Der baut nur Wohnhäuser, nur private singuläre Wohnhäuser. Und die einzige Bedingung ist, er zieht dort mit ein. Er zieht so lange dort mit ein, bis er glaubt, er weiß, was die Familie für ein Haus will. Er hat eine riesige Warteliste. Viele akzeptiert er auch

RR_Dear Arno. Thank you for this great presentation and the brilliant conclusion. Now we would like to turn to a follow up discussion. In your presentation and in the film various topics have been touched, which lead me to the first question. What does architecture mean to you?

AB_At best, everything that is coherent and has to do with space.

RR_Rather simple. And aside from this ideal conception?

AB_Then we don't do it. Omission comes at a price, but you do not have to do everything. There is a project that we no longer show on our website; because we would have already gone bankrupt, if we had not done it. It is pathetic if the money is the primary motivation for making architecture.

RR_Yet, in architecture you are continuously in contact with clients. How do you approach this topic?

AB_I give you an example: there is a relatively young Japanese architect. He focuses on residential buildings. However, before he designs and builds a private home he asks the family to stay with them for a certain amount of time until he has comprehended the residential needs of the family. He has got a long waiting list and actually doesn't accept many requests. For a long time it had been quite difficult trying to find clients who share our joy and are not merely keen on yielding a high return of their capital investment. Brunnenstraße amounted to 1.000

EUR/m² including property. As it turns out people enjoy living with less parquet and less decoration. And if you raise the question whether they prefer repaying the loan until 65; or instead pay off until 50 and then do something else, the decision is a lot easier. Therefore we started to examine the energy savings act. These regulations are not invented by architects but are enforced from outside. In Austria heat recovery was, as far as I know, a big topic. Due to fugal infestation this measure got ruled out. However, I believe in this profession you can move and act productively without feeling obliged to accept everything.

MS_'Less' in the sense of the drafting process; as mentioned in your presentation you attempt to detach yourself from this process. You were referring to draft requirements. How did you come up with this approach? Has your attitude been shaped by pivotal moments or has this perception changed and developed continuously till today?

AB_First I am going to tell the publicly available story, although it is streamlined. I was an altar boy; in a church by Dominikus Böhm; actually his first church, built from 1922 till 1923; you could argue it was the first expressionist church. The church community has built it; the dwellers themselves had knocked the sandstone blocks. The church has an extremely simple roof structure with a wooden formwork made of boards, merely nailed so that they have a supporting effect—wonderful. That is, so to speak, early childhood imprinting. The second moment was near the end of our studies. We had rebuilt our

nicht. Umgekehrt kann man auch bei uns sagen, dass es relativ lange sehr mühsam war bis sich Bauherren einfanden, die den Kapitaleinsatz weniger als rein zu optimierende monetäre Verfügung sehen, sondern die den Spaß am Bauen mit uns teilen. Die Brunnenstraße hat 1.000 EUR/m² gekostet, inklusive Grundstück. Und es stellt sich inzwischen heraus, dass das Weniger an Komfort, weniger Parkett oder weniger Dekor durchaus sehr gut bewohnbar ist. Und wenn man sich die Frage stellt, ob man lieber bis 65 seinen Kredit für's Häuschen abbezahlt oder nur bis 50, und dann nochmal etwas ganz anderes machen könnte, dann wird die Entscheidung viel einfacher. Deswegen haben wir uns auch mit der Energieeinsparverordnung auseinandergesetzt. Diese Standards sind ja nichts, was Architekten sich ausdenken, sondern maßgeblich von außen bestimmt. In Österreich, glaube ich, war lange Wärmerückgewinnung ein Muss.. Inzwischen ist das, wegen den ganzen Verpilzungen, auch wieder auf dem Rückzug. Aber ich glaube, man kann sich auch aktiv in diesem Beruf bewegen, ohne alles von Grund auf zu akzeptieren.

MS_ Das Weniger bezieht sich bei dir auch auf den Entwurfsprozess. Du hast im Vortrag erwähnt wie ihr im Büro versucht euch schon in diesem Prozess herauszunehmen. Du hast von Entwurfsbedingungen gesprochen. Wie ist diese Herangehensweise entstanden? Gab es biographische Schlüsselmomente, die deine Haltung geprägt haben oder war es eher eine kontinuierliche Entwicklung bis heute?

AB_ Die öffentlich schönere Geschichte erzähle ich zuerst, obwohl sie auch postrationalisiert ist. Ich war Ministrant einer Kirche von Dominikus Böhm, und zwar seiner ersten, gebaut von 1922-23. Die erste expressionistische Kirche kann man sagen. Die Kirchengemeinde hat sie selbst gebaut, selbst die Sandsteinblöcke geschlagen. Die Kirche hat ein extrem einfaches Dachtragwerk mit einer Holzschalung aus Brettern, einfach so vernagelt, damit sie eine Tragwirkung haben. Wunderbar. Das ist, sozusagen, die frühkindliche Prägung. Die Zweite war kurz vor Ende des Studiums. Wir haben uns einen Arbeitsraum selbst umgebaut. Eine Wand war marode. Der Vermieter sagte: ‚Ich mauern die zu und mache zwei Fenster rein‘. Damals hätte das 3.000 DM gekostet: Wand mauern, zwei Fenster rein. Wir haben gesagt: ‚Gib uns die 3.000 DM. Wir machen uns selbst eine Fassade‘. Damit sind wir zu den Frankfurter Hochhausbaustellen gegangen und haben gefragt, was es an Überproduktion von Glas gibt, denn natürlich wird für große, gleiche Flächen immer überproduziert. Damit hatten wir also das Bild der Fassade, nicht weil wir—wie man das als Architekturstudent so gerne macht—eine Fassade entworfen haben, sondern weil das einfach die Scheiben waren, die wir hatten. Die haben das Bild ergeben. Das ist mir auch erst später klar geworden, dass das im Grunde genommen das erste ernstzunehmende Projekt von uns war, diese Bedingung einfach dermaßen Ernst zu nehmen. Und wenn man sich jetzt so eine Immobilienkrise—egal ob in den USA oder Spanien—anschaut, kommt man doch relativ einfach zu dem Schluss, dass es vielleicht ein bisschen unsinnig ist, in der Art von Standard—gerade

working space. One wall had been crumbling. The owner had said, 'I'm going to wall up and put in two windows.' Back then this measure cost 3.000 DM; one wall, two windows. We said, 'Give us these 3.000 DM. We make ourselves a façade.' So we went to the Frankfurt high-rise construction sites and asked for overproduction of glass, because surplus production is very common for large areas. The draft of the façade was set; contrarily to the common advancement of students of architecture who first design the façade we simply used the windowpane that had been there in the first place. These panes had coined the draft. It actually came to me later that our first serious project was taking this precondition seriously. And if we turn to the current estate crisis—whether in the US or in Spain—it is relatively easy to conclude that it might be pointless to continue building that kind of standard, especially with single-family houses. But that's exactly what we do in Germany. I think Austria is not doing better. From a different perspective the own occupation appears rather pathetic. This makes you think about what you do on the site anyway or otherwise; or you try to give a critical account within the project.

MS_ This means your architectural projects—as shown in your 'shortcuts'—are based on a hands-on principle promoting the use of real resources and interpreting particular requirements and standards rather critically. How strong is your typological and structural component?

AB_ Actually, this is our longest aspiration that we constantly pursue and develop—the external opening

up, for example. There are two or three other approaches that we follow in order to update the tools. As architects we face the problem that when we're done with the study, there is hardly any exchange. As student you can reach a broad audience, but I think I was not very advanced back then. We have some kind of steady internal retraining that constantly continues; we don't just respond to a specific situation but are continuously able to offer; we would like to deal with this subject further. We have been with the diagonal 'VierRichtungsModul,' for example, for the past four or five years and just as recently as now it is probably built in Cologne. However, we also believe that this is extremely useful. These are types that are difficult to imagine and therefore hard to sell right up front. They need to be built, seen and perceived in the first place; only then it is possible to assess their quality. This type of one-to-one testing is rare. We do have our contract with



im Einfamilienhausbau—immer weiter zu bauen. Aber genau das machen wir in Deutschland. Ich glaube, in Österreich ist es nicht besser. Wenn man das aus einem anderen Maßstab betrachtet, kommt einem die eigene Berufstätigkeit ziemlich idiotisch vor. Dann kann man sich überlegen, was macht man an der Stelle trotzdem oder anders. Oder man versucht es irgendwie kritisch im Projekt zu beschreiben.

MS_ Das heißt, deine Architektur entsteht aus einem ‚hands-on‘ Prinzip, realen Ressourcen, aber auch als kritische Interpretation von bestimmten Vorgaben oder Standards, wie die von dir als ‚shortcuts‘ bezeichneten Projekte zeigen. Welche Rolle spielt dabei die typologisch, strukturelle Auseinandersetzung, die du in deinem Büro verfolgst?

AB_ Die gibt es am längsten eigentlich. Die treiben wir auch die ganze Zeit weiter, die Außenschließung zum Beispiel. Es gibt noch zwei, drei andere Stränge, die wir immer weiter entwickeln, einfach um das Handwerkszeug für sich abzuwerten. Wir haben ja das Problem als Architekten: wenn wir mit dem Studium fertig sind, gibt es kaum mehr Austausch. Man hat eine super Bühne als Student, aber ich war damals noch nicht besonders weit, glaube ich. Für uns ist es so eine Art interne Nachschulung, das ständig weiter zu betreiben und auch nicht immer auf eine spezifische Situation reagieren zu müssen, sondern einfach anbieten zu können, wir würden uns gern mit dem und dem Gegenstand weiter auseinandersetzen. Das diagonale ‚VierRichtungsModul‘,

zum Beispiel, tragen wir schon vier, fünf Jahre mit uns herum. Und das wird jetzt wahrscheinlich erst in Köln gebaut. Wir glauben aber auch daran, dass das extrem sinnvoll ist. Das sind Typologien, die man sich so kaum vorstellen kann. Die kann man nicht einfach vom Blatt weg verkaufen. Die muss man bauen, den Raum sehen und dann erst erkennt man, wie gut er funktioniert. Diese Art von eins zu eins Austesten haben wir ja kaum noch. Wir machen schon unseren Vertrag mit dem Rechtsanwalt, weil wir wissen, das nicht nur der Vertrag sondern jedes Detail, dass wir nicht nach neuestem Stand der Technik und nicht nach DIN xy machen, uns auf jeden Fall vor Gericht einholt. Das ist der Riesenvorteil, Häuser selbst zu bauen. Da kann man sich selbst nicht verklagen [alle lachen]. Man muss ja auch darüber nachdenken, dass es natürlich auch Nachbesserungsbedarf gibt. Wer sagt denn, dass bei so einem komplexen Vorgang wie dem Haus bauen hinterher, mit der Schlüsselübergabe, schon alles funktionieren muss? Warum lernen wir das eigentlich auf diese Art und Weise? Natürlich darf es da Fehler geben. Also wenn man 10.000 Entscheidungen mindestens—wahrscheinlich sind es noch viel mehr—trifft: welcher Türgriff, welcher Splint, Rosette, WC: besetzt ja oder nein usw., also es sind so viele Entscheidungen, da kann es doch gar nicht sein, dass man von 10.000 Entscheidungen 10.000 richtige Entscheidungen trifft. Aber wie schafft man sich diesen Freiraum, tatsächlich wieder diese Fehler machen zu können und im besten Fall kein Totalschaden zu landen, aber immer wieder nachjustieren zu können. Man lernt dann in Bereichen, die man in Detailheften nicht findet.

the lawyer, because we know that not only the contract but every detail must meet the latest state of the art and xy DIN to prevent any legal flaws. Building houses on your own is a big advantage since you cannot sue yourself [all laughing]. Amendments need to be considered as well. Who says that the complex process of building a house is a smooth one without any imperfections after the key delivery? Why do we take this smooth transition for granted? Of course, mistakes can happen. So if there are at least 10.000 decisions—upon which door handle, which split pin, which bathroom: occupied, yes or no, and so on—it is impossible to make 10.000 right decisions. How can this free space emerge; this freedom to make mistakes or even create total damage that can still be readjusted? Thus, you learn in areas that cannot be found in construction manuals.

RR_Berlin is a little different to Hamburg or Munich. You moved to Berlin and founded an office. Supposedly, you anticipated a certain foundation for realizing your imagination?

AB_Yes, definitely. If we had built the Brunnenstraße in Köln, no one would have cared two hoots about it. In Berlin there was a neuralgic atmosphere: quite a lot of young, not hip, not so highly monetarily equipped cultural producers, in the broadest sense. But construction output was completely different, more pursuing Prussian ideals and aspiring to rough working post-postmodernism. It was a perfect fit—the picture that matches the lifestyle—new constructions, not renovations. There were many

good temporary things; in Berlin there had already been a solid ground; but that there is a new construction that works is also a matter of coding and communication, e.g. that '032c' can be implemented—referring to a fashion art magazine. It is the venue of a certain environment; it does not just emerge from the interior office. As office you have to work as office; telephones ring, calls are received and answered. Cooperation with different producers is inspiring. It doesn't make much sense to look at pictures or sculptures by Manfred Pernice; however, it was extremely useful when we were invited to publish Brunnenstraße. There was only a cardboard model. We took photos in the office and looked at them. They all looked silly. So I asked Thomas Demand, 'Thomas, you're so good at shooting cardboard models.' He said, 'Come over, but don't talk to anyone'—now it has been a while—and suddenly it was there. This exchange made up for an earlier debt and prevented additional buying.

RR_The general drafting process was very complex. And we architects can never really determine when which decisions are made. However, we need to sell this full package to keep our clients calm. Yet, such a project always involves artists. Is it part of your strategy to say that you need not only the TGA planners, not only the building physicists, but also the other positions, for example those with an artistic background?

AB_I refer back to the beginning of your question. We do a competition; we are miserable in doing competitions, because we already have to know what it looks like,

RR_ Berlin ist ja etwas anders als Hamburg oder München. Du bist irgendwann nach Berlin gezogen und hast ein Büro dort aufgemacht. Hast du so antizipiert, dass da ein bestimmter Humus schon vorhanden ist, um deine Gedankenwelt besser realisieren zu können?

AB_ Das war auf jeden Fall so. Wenn wir die Brunnenstraße noch einmal in Köln gebaut hätten, hätte kein Hahn danach gekräht. In Berlin war es gerade so ein neuralgischer Moment: relativ viele junge, nicht hippe, nicht so hochgradig monetär ausgestattete kulturelle Produzenten, im weitesten Sinne. Aber die Bauproduktion hat völlig anders ausgesehen. Mehr eine an preußischen Idealen sich abarbeitende, steinerne Post-Postmoderne. Da hat das extrem gut reingepasst, das Bild, das zum ersten Mal mit einem Lebensgefühl zusammenkommt. Von Neubau, nicht Umbau. Da gab es viele sehr gute, auch temporäre Sachen. Da war in Berlin der Humus schon gelegt. Aber dass es einen Neubau gibt, und dass der offensichtlich auch funktioniert, hat natürlich auch mit der Programmierung zu tun—dass das ‚032c‘ da rein geht, das ist so ein Fashion Kunstmagazin—schon in der Vorkommunikation. Es findet sich dort ein Umfeld zusammen. Das entsteht eben nicht nur aus dem inneren Raum eines Büros, glaube ich. Weil man als Büro einfach auch funktioniert wie ein Büro. Da klingeln die Telefone. Man geht ran und beantwortet die Fragen. Es gibt aber andere Produzenten, von denen man nur durch Zusammenarbeit lernen kann. Es macht nicht viel Sinn, sich die Bilder oder die Skulpturen von Manfred Pernice anzusehen. Aber es hat extrem viel Sinn gemacht,

als wir die erste Einladung hatten, die Brunnenstraße zu publizieren. Es gab nur ein Pappmodell. Wir haben Fotos im Büro gemacht und haben sie angeschaut. Die sahen immer blöd aus. Da habe ich Thomas Demand gefragt: ‚Sag mal Thomas, du bist doch so gut mit dem Fotografieren von Pappmodellen‘? Sagte er: ‚Komm vorbei, sag’s aber keinem‘—jetzt ist es ja lang genug her—und plötzlich war es da. Das hat damit zu tun, dass der eine beim anderen Schulden hat, dass man Tauschverfahren einführt und nicht alles nur zukauf.

RR_ Der Entwurfsprozess ist ja im Allgemeinen relativ komplex. Und wir, als Architekten, können ja nie so richtig festlegen, wann welche Entscheidung und wie getroffen wird. Andererseits muss man es aber so verkaufen, damit die Bauherren nicht nervös werden. Aber wenn du so ein Projekt aufsetzt, werden immer Künstler beteiligt und hinzugezogen. Ist es Teil deiner Strategie, zu sagen: ich brauche nicht nur den TGA-Planer, nicht nur den Bauphysiker, sondern auch die anderen Positionen, aus der Kunst zum Beispiel kommend?

AB_ Ich gehe einmal an den Anfang der Frage zurück. Wir machen einen Wettbewerb. Wir sind eigentlich ganz schlecht im Wettbewerbe machen, weil man schon wissen muss, wie es aussieht, obwohl man noch nicht einmal mit der Baustelle angefangen hat. Wir haben für uns festgestellt, dass wir erst dann profitieren, wenn wir die Entscheidung zum Teil relativ spät treffen können, auch um zu sehen, dass das mit den ‚Löchern-mit-allem-zusammen-machen‘ [Projekt Anti-Villa] zum formalen Kürbis geführt



although to that date there is not even a construction site. We have found out that we only benefit if we make up our minds at a rather late stage of the process; also in order to say that 'we-make-holes-all-together' [Project Anti-Villa] was formally deficient and needed some readjustment. In competitions and tenders we architects offer a finished product to our customers. However, we had only invested three months or maybe only two weeks. Thus, the entire innovation period required for these structures is maximum two months. After the presentation we architects sell a finished product before clients even sign the contract. It should be vice versa. It is a matter of trust and we are trustworthy—saying that they'll have a building in the end—however, currently we don't know what it looks like. It is an extremely difficult methodology. It is different with artists: they create and the economic procedure comes after the completion of the product; though they also

retouch and reproduce. If you want to find a middle way you definitely need different cooperation models and clients. As example I want to refer back to the terrace house I showed before. Actually, a young English woman rang the bell at my office and said, 'Hello. I'd like to have a house from you.' I said, 'Yes, what kind?' She gave back, 'Studios. I listened to one of your presentations. Studios have tax benefits. [all laughing] You can live and work. I like that. I have two daughters and live alone with them. I need to work at home. So this appears obvious.' So I said, 'Do you have any idea?' She responded, 'No. You are the architect.' I said, 'Yes, ok. Should we make plans?' She said, 'I brought along your contract.' So we drew up a contract including all deadlines. Yes, you are laughing; everyone laughs. This is the ideal case, because she gave us all her trust and we needed no tricks: no budget or sustainability discussions. Actually, no talk at all was required, because the contract was signed. So you are in charge of establishing a top project without excluding your client. A feel-good project!

RR_ You have already received some post today. May I say that?

AB_ Sure.

RR_ I don't know whether this person is actually here. Our institute has just received a letter for Arno Brandlhuber. Post from St. Pölten. It is an offer for site development. [applause]

hat. Also muss man es nachjustieren. Wir Architekten vermitteln den Kunden—in Wettbewerben aber auch in jeder Ausschreibung—ein fertiges Produkt. Wir haben aber gerade mal zwei, drei Monate oder vielleicht auch nur zwei Wochen hineingesteckt. Das heißt, die ganze Innovation, die in den Architekturen drin steckt, ist maximal zwei Monate. Das Produkt wird als Fertiges verkauft, wenn man es dem Auftraggeber präsentiert, bevor der überhaupt einen Vertrag unterschreibt. Es müsste aber genau umgekehrt sein. Es geht um großes Vertrauen—und wir erfüllen es ja auch—zu sagen, am Schluss hast du ein Gebäude aber wir wissen heute noch nicht wie es aussieht. Es ist eine extrem schwierige Methode. Bei den Künstlern ist es genau anders herum: sie produzieren und der ökonomische Prozess kommt erst nach der Fertigstellung des Produkts, obwohl dort natürlich auch nachproduziert wird. Wenn man sich jetzt irgendwo in der Mitte platzieren will, braucht man tatsächlich andere Kooperationsmodelle mit Auftraggebern. Zum Beispiel dieses Terrassenhaus, das ich gezeigt habe. Es war tatsächlich so. Da kam eine junge Engländerin, klingelte am Büro und sagte: ‚Guten Tag. Ich möchte gern von ihnen ein Gebäude haben‘. Ich sagte: ‚Ja. Was denn?‘ Sagte sie: ‚So Ateliers. Das habe ich beim Vortrag von ihnen gehört. Ateliers, steuerlich gut. [alle lachen] Man kann wohnen und arbeiten. Das finde ich auch gut. Ich habe zwei Töchter. Lebe alleine mit denen. Aber deswegen muss ich auch zu Hause arbeiten. Also mir ist das nah‘. Und da sagte ich: ‚Haben sie eine Vorstellung?‘ Darauf sie: ‚Nein. Sie sind doch der Architekt‘. Sagte ich: ‚Ja gut. Sollen wir mal Entwürfe machen?‘ Sie: ‚Ja. Ich komme

nächste Woche wieder‘. Dann kam sie nächste Woche und wir waren am Basteln. Sie sagte: ‚Ich hab Ihren Vertrag mitgebracht‘. Wir haben also einen Vertrag mit allen Leistungsphasen gemacht. Ja, da lachst du. Natürlich lacht da jeder. Das ist ja der Idealfall, weil Folgendes passiert. Da sie uns das völlige Vertrauen geschenkt hat, können wir uns sowieso alle Tricks sparen: zu erzählen, das es billig oder energetisch super wird. Man muss ja gar nichts mehr erzählen, weil der Vertrag unterschrieben ist. Also hat man selbst die Verantwortung ein möglichst gutes Produkt zu machen und die Auftraggeber trotzdem in den Prozess mitzunehmen. Macht extrem viel Laune.

RR_Du hast heute auch schon Post bekommen. Darf ich es sagen?

AB_Ja.

RR_Ich weiß nicht, ob die Person jetzt überhaupt im Raum ist. Bei uns am Institut lag heute ein Kuvert für Arno Brandlhuber. Post aus St. Pölten. Angebot für die Entwicklung eines Grundstückes. [Applaus]

AB_Wenn sie mich jetzt fragen, ob das zu einem großen Büro führt, würde ich sagen, wir kommen auf jeden Fall nicht mehr in die Verlegenheit ein gut verdienendes Büro mit 100 Mitarbeitern zu werden. Es gibt ja die schwierigen Zwischengrößen von 10 bis 70, danach verdient man Geld, dazwischen verliert man nur die Kontrolle. Wenn man so arbeitet wie wir, arbeitet man lieber mit 10 Leuten. Man kennt sich gut. Es wächst einer hinein, ein anderer

AB_ If you asked me now, whether we turn into a big office, I would say that we are at least not abashed to become a well-earning office with 100 employees. 10 to 70 members of staff are difficult to handle; you lose control. After this benchmark you earn money. We prefer a workload for 10 people. Things are clear. One gets familiar with us; another one drops out and founds his or her own office.

MS_ Aside from office size, despite your small-scale projects for private clients you are having strong media coverage, exceeding the topic-related context. You use events—participate at the Venice Biennale—as incentives for recruiting and creating projects. Considering as example the project 'over the top'—a gap construction in Cologne—there are clips on the internet or on TV, critical comments and commercials; you do posters, exhibitions

and more. How strong do media influence your work as architect?

AB_ Let's put it like that, what's the scope of a medium-sized building? It might reach 100 meters. If it is going well and many people talk about it, maybe 500 meters. So buildings are overestimated in terms of their communicative range. Every other kind of communication is better. We came to this conclusion in the course of the 'Cologne Board.' We asked two musicians whether these 12 modules could be mounted and transformed into one record ... or whether they can imagine transforming this structural approach. Simultaneously we launched our own small publication. We have sold 36 pieces of this publication. There have been sold 18.000 records. All information could be found in the booklet. Suddenly 'Spex' or 'Rolling Stone' write about you and you are invited to conferences different to the same old boring construction conferences. Content-based questions might emerge. Presumably, I raise questions on the usefulness of insulating single-family houses. When you look at the whole energy expenditure you add up first the streets that are built and then the canals; cars drive back and forth from and to work, through the city and so on. So if you add up the sums, you can insulate as much as you want; it is nonsense. But how can you express that? Our conclusion is that publications, exhibitions, Biennale events and a general conversion with art support the transmission of ideas—like now in Berlin. Here in Graz you might handle that a bit subtler. Many German communities have conveyed public property via cross-border leasing and



geht und macht sein eigenes Büro.

MS_ Abgesehen von der Größe deines Büros hast du trotz deiner Projekte im kleineren Maßstab für private Bauherren auch für Dich selbst eine beachtliche Medienpräsenz über den fachspezifischen Kontext hinaus aktiv erzeugt. Du nutzt Events—die Teilnahme an der Biennale Venedig—als Argumentationen, Projekte zu erzeugen. Zum Beispiel beim Projekt ‚over the top‘, einer Lückenbebauung in Köln. Man findet Filmbeiträge im Internet oder Fernsehen, die mal kritische Kommentare, mal Werbung sind. Du machst Plakataktionen, Ausstellungen und mehr. Welche Rolle spielt die Einbindung anderer Medien in deiner Arbeit als Architekt?

AB_ Sagen wir so, wie weit ist denn die Reichweite von einem mittelgroßen Gebäude? 100 Meter vielleicht. Wenn es sehr gut läuft und viele Leute darüber reden, vielleicht 500 Meter. Also Gebäude werden in sofern überschätzt, was ihre kommunikative Leistung angeht. Jede andere Form von Kommunikation ist wesentlich besser geeignet. Wir haben das durch das ‚Kölner Brett‘ festgestellt. Wir haben zwei Musiker gefragt, ob sie diese 12 Module, die ineinander verschoben sind, in eine Schallplatte transformieren können ... ob sie sich vorstellen können, dass dieser strukturelle Ansatz transformierbar ist. Gleichzeitig haben wir unsere erste kleine Publikation gemacht. Von der Publikation haben wir 36 Stück verkauft. Von der Platte wurden 18.000 verkauft. Da war aber im Booklet auch die ganze Information drin. Plötzlich ist man in der ‚Spex‘ oder im ‚Rolling Stone‘ Magazin und wird

plötzlich auf ganz andere Konferenzen eingeladen als immer der gleichen langweiligen Bauwelt. Und wenn dann inhaltliche Fragen kommen. Angenommen ich stelle in Frage, ob es denn wirklich Sinn macht Einfamilienhäuser zu dämmen. Wenn man es gesamtenergetisch betrachtet, wird erstmal so und soviel Straße gebaut, dann die ganzen Kanäle, also viel Energie aufgewendet. Die Autos fahren hin und her zur Arbeit und dann in die Stadt und so weiter. Also wenn man es gesamtbilanziert, kann man die noch so viel dämmen. Es ist trotzdem Unsinn. Aber wie kommuniziert man das? Wir haben einfach festgestellt, dass Formate wie Publikationen, Ausstellungen, Biennalen, eine Verschränkung mit Kunst sehr viel mehr dazu geeignet ist, Inhalte zu transportieren. Oder wie jetzt in Berlin. Ich nehme an, dass Graz da ein bißchen geschickter ist. Viele deutsche Kommunen haben öffentliches Eigentum wie Kanalnetze durch cross-border leasing weggegeben und dann festgestellt, dass die private Hand vielleicht doch nicht nur wohlätig unterwegs ist. Berlin ist es jetzt aufgefallen, aber viel zu spät, mit den Liegenschaften. Die haben einfach alle Stadtteile in Liegenschaften verhökert. Jetzt stellen sie fest, sie haben noch nicht einmal mehr Flächen, um eine Schule zu bauen oder einen Kindergarten. Also sind wir irgendwann gegen den Liegenschaftsfond angetreten, der die alle verwaltet. Da gibt es verschiedene Initiativen, die wir mit angestoßen haben. Aber es sind sehr viele beteiligt gewesen. Und inzwischen ist es tatsächlich so: als Erstes ist der Chef vom Liegenschaftsfond zurückgetreten; dann wurde das ganze Fachvermögen eingefroren; jetzt wird der Stadtentwicklungssenator, den wir seit zwei Jahren

then found out that some privates acted less charitable than expected. Berlin has found out about these properties much too late. The districts were hawked into real estates. Now they have realized they have no spaces to build schools and nurseries. Thus, we dissent the real estate fond that manages these properties. There are several initiatives we have triggered; but many others were involved as well. Meanwhile the CeO has resigned from his post. Then the assets were frozen. Now the senator in charge of urban development is becoming mayor. We have consulted him for the past two years. The senator of finance who has vetoed real estate sales has also just quit his job. All of a sudden there is movement within a case we connect with, even if it is just a marginal involvement. I believe that through publicity you can push procedures into the right direction.

RR_ Saving face is critical; if you want to convince someone who sees things differently. Setting and exploring limits is another one of your central issues. More regulations make you even keener on exploration. A broader foundation can be created. However, this might lead to a tricky situation, saying, 'We can make everything easier, now we don't need any laws.'

AB_ No, I would express that differently. First, we also don't know how it works; so you learn a lot from these processes. You never know everything. You need to work and it takes time; and this time is required to do and finish a project. This is one side. Laws are like playing chess; these are the rules of the game. The new mayor is

like the premier of the state and therefore the legislature and we have just started to write draft laws for him. This text I am most interested in currently raises the question, 'Can we change the things that bother us?' For example, while airspace can be sold to your neighbors in New York, in Berlin there is an eaves height of 23 meters. The cities look and are different; nothing is better or worse; yet a policy can change the entire appearance. And we argue whether a house should be painted red or blue. So whenever we talk about urban design we turn to politics. I exaggerate a little. In Berlin we face the problem that there are too few flats; and there is no more space for buildings of the housing associations. Flats should be available at 6,50 EUR. If someone offered me—supposedly at Brunnenstraße—to rent out the first floor at 6,50 EUR, I'd get a building lease for one more storey. Of course I would do that. This is a small deal, particularly in expensive sought after areas where social heterogeneity is fading. Of course they usually only get the first and second storey. Anyways, these simple mechanisms can regulate certain developments.

MS_ Where can these rules be enforced—by zoning law or development funds? There are different legal situations.

AB_ Housing funds are matters of state; therefore, for example in Berlin they can easily be filed and accessed. In Germany there is no federal law; but federal state law.

MS_ Do you regard it as role model for a more dynamic Berlin? In the context of current building culture, the

mitberaten, Oberbürgermeister; der Finanzsenator, der die Liegenschaftsverkäufe immer blockiert hat, ist zurückgetreten. Also plötzlich geht etwas, wo man, wenn auch nur marginal, beteiligt ist. Aber ich glaube, über diese Form von Öffentlichkeiten kann man tatsächlich solche Prozesse in die richtige Richtung drücken.

RR_Es geht ja auch immer um das Thema des Gesichtsverlustes, wenn man jemanden von etwas überzeugen möchte, was er vielleicht völlig anders gesehen hat. Und bei dir ist es ja auch immer das Ausloten von Grenzen. Je mehr Gesetze es eigentlich gibt, desto mehr Freude hast du daran, diese Dinge erstmal auszuloten, weil dann einfach eine große Basis aufgebaut werden kann. Aber dann müßte wahrscheinlich eines Tages eine nervöse Situation entstehen, wenn wir sagen: wir können alles leichter machen, jetzt brauchen wir keine Gesetze mehr.

AB_Nein, ich würde es anders sagen. Erstens wissen wir auch oft nicht, wie es genau geht. Das heißt, in solchen Prozessen muss man selbst auch lernen. Es ist ja nicht so, dass man das alles weiß. Man muss dann arbeiten und Arbeit braucht Zeit, und solange braucht eben auch ein Projekt. Das ist die eine Seite. Gesetze sind ja wie Schach spielen, sind ja auch Spielregeln. Wir fangen jetzt erstmalig an, dem neuen Oberbürgermeister—er ist auch sowas wie Ministerpräsident des Bundeslandes, also hat gesetzgeberische Kompetenz—einfach neue Gesetzesentwürfe zu schreiben. Das ist der Text, der mich derzeit am meisten interessiert. Können wir das,

worüber wir uns ärgern, tatsächlich ändern? Ein Beispiel: In New York kann man den Luftraum an den Nachbarn verkaufen. Deswegen sieht New York so aus und in Berlin, wo man das nicht kann, wo es eine Traufhöhe von 23 Meter gibt, sieht alles so aus. Es geht nicht darum, was besser oder schlechter ist, aber ein einziges Gesetz ändert die gesamte Stadterscheinung. Und wir unterhalten uns darüber, ob ein Haus rot oder blau sein soll. Dann ist es doch nur folgerichtig, dass wenn es um die Stadtgestalt geht, wir uns um die Gesetze kümmern. Ich übertreibe ein wenig. Wir haben in Berlin das Problem, dass wir zu wenige Wohnungen haben. Es gibt aber auch keine Flächen mehr für die Wohnungsbaugesellschaften, wo sie Wohnungen bauen können. Man will also Wohnungen für 6.50 EUR. Wenn mir jetzt jemand anbieten würde—angenommen Brunnenstraße—ich muss das erste Obergeschoss für 6.50 EUR für immer vermieten, dafür bekomme ich das Baurecht für ein Geschoss mehr. Klar würde ich das machen. Das ist ein kleiner Deal, zumindest in den teuren, nachgefragten Bereichen, wo am ehesten die soziale Mischung zu verschwinden droht. Natürlich bekommen die immer nur das erste oder zweite Geschoss. Na und? Aber über so einfache Mechanismen kann man, glaube ich, relativ viel steuern.

MS_Wo würde man solche Regelungen einschreiben, im Baurecht oder in Fördergesetzen? Das sind ja verschiedene rechtliche Situationen.

AB_Also die ganzen sozialen Wohnungsbauförderungen sind ja auf Landesebene, das heißt, das kann zum



city is characterized by these two distinctive sides; representatives of the stony Berlin on the one hand and representatives of the young bottom-up movement on the other hand. Do these new strategies promote the latter—those who got ruled out by the New-Tectonics? Are there new possibilities to incorporate their ideas?

AB_No. There are policies anyway; how they are shaped matters. Berlin comprises dialogic binaries: hedonism and economy, resistance and power, reconstruction and radical acceptance of what is. This lack of conciliation might make Berlin interesting. There are many different argumentation lines which could converge; deriving from dialectic entities—thesis, antithesis—, but might as well arise from dialogue—everything can exist simultaneously. I like heterogenic situations and I believe in the advantage of different social, cultural and religious environments that

shape the world into a whole.

MS_Is a basic democratic society a possible model in your opinion?

AB_Yes, Switzerland has advanced this approach; yet populist decisions obstruct the constructions of mosques. Concerning Berlin Tempelhofer Feld—former airport, city property—they finally can and must start constructing, but the referendum frustrates the project. Strategies based on participation hamper creative output; people say ‘no.’ They don’t get asked on how issues are tackled but can merely decide between ‘yes’ and ‘no.’ However, one could argue for a construction permit on top of existing buildings—let’s say multiplied by 0.3—to those who don’t build on an area but leave publicly accessible.

MS_... Meaning legal incentives in order to create win-win situations.

AB_Yes. Referenda could be re-interpreted. Citizens have decided that Tempelhofer field is no construction area. Thus, established airport buildings are built with another 30 storeys. Either-or decisions are reversed; the free area remains and apartments are built.

RR_In Nürnberg you chair architecture and urban research. It’s rather rare that an institute’s name is complemented with the term ‘research.’ How do you conduct research and what are your aims?

Beispiel Berlin in völlig freier Hand machen. Es ist ja kein Bundesgesetz in Deutschland, sondern Landesgesetz.

MS_ Wäre das für dich ein ‚role model‘ für ein dynamischeres Berlin? Die Stadt lebt ja auch von diesen zwei ausgeprägten Seiten im Baukulturdiskurs: den Vertretern des steinernen Berlins der Repräsentation, und demgegenüber den Vertretern jüngerer bottom-up Bewegungen. Siehst du in solchen gesetzlichen Strategien auch Möglichkeiten die Letzteren, die durch die Oberhand der ‚Neu-Tektoniker‘ in Berlin ja immer etwas im Abseits standen, zu fördern und diese Ideen auf Stadtebene stärker zu etablieren?

AB_ Nein. Es gibt ja sowieso Gesetze. Es ist ja nur die Frage, wie sie aussehen. Berlin könnte man beschreiben wie dialogische Paare: Hedonismus und Ökonomie, Widerstand und Macht, Rekonstruktion und radikale Akzeptanz des Bestehenden. Genau das macht ja vielleicht Berlin so interessant, dass es noch wenig Einigung gibt, dass es genug Flügel gibt, die das verschieden sehen. Und es ist vielleicht eher ein Modell zu versuchen, das zusammen zu denken, also aus dem Dialektischen herauszukommen—These, Antithese—sondern zu einem dialogischen Modell zu kommen, dass beides parallel existieren kann. Ich bin ein großer Freund von heterogenen Situationen und ich glaube, dass das jedem nur hilft in einer Stadt mit einer sozial, kulturell und religiös heterogenen Umgebung zu leben, um die Welt noch als Ganzes wahrzunehmen.

MS_ Wäre eine basisdemokratische Gesellschaft auch ein mögliches Modell für dich?

AB_ Die Schweiz hat das ja weiterentwickelt, aber auch da kommt es zu populistischen Entscheidungen, dass Moschee Neubauten verboten werden. In Berlin, zur Frage Tempelhofer Feld—ehemaliger Flughafen, Stadteigentum. Da könnten sie jetzt endlich bauen. Sie müssen bauen. Der Volksentscheid sagt aber, es soll nicht gebaut werden. Diese partizipativen Strategien haben nie einen kreatürlichen Bereich. Die werden ja nicht gefragt, ‚wie soll es denn gehen‘? und ‚was wollt ihr haben‘?, sondern können nur ‚ja‘ oder ‚nein‘ sagen. Für die Politik ist es die einzige Form, sich anders zu positionieren: die Möglichkeit zum ‚nein‘. Jetzt könnte man aber sagen, wer eine Fläche nicht bebaut, sondern radikal öffentlich macht, bekommt—sagen wir um den Faktor 0,3—die Erlaubnis auf bestehende Gebäude aufzubauen.

MS_ Also gesetzliche Anreize, ‚win-win‘ Situationen schaffen.

AB_ Ja. Dann könnte man nämlich den Volksentscheid umdeuten. Der Bürger hat entschieden, es wird hier nicht gebaut auf dem Tempelhofer Feld. Dafür dürfen die bestehenden Flughafengebäude um 30 Geschoße aufgestockt werden. Es ist nicht mehr das ‚entweder-oder‘, sondern die Fläche bleibt frei und wir bauen Wohnungen.

RR_ Du hast ja in Nürnberg den Lehrstuhl für Architektur und Stadtforschung. Und das hat man eher selten, dass

AB_The term 'urban research' has been lately adopted from sociology. The English conception is broader. The question is raised whether architecture is able to do research. Is there any empirical research in architecture? The discipline should reflect on itself critically. Empirical research that seeks to validate itself is not research. We've set up a simple task. We don't assign topics to students. Those who either don't have topics or don't find topics that they are interested in can go home. If students engage with their topics and need assistance in order to find out more we support them as well as possible. We basically encourage students' projects which make it easier to differentiate between their and our productive research output.

RR_So teaching and research are the same?

AB_Yes. We are a small institute that wants to advance research questions. We are basically in service. Thus, if someone is interested in speculative realism we might invite the German governor as guest lecturer. Inviting filmmakers interested in the urban designs of China and Dubai but having studied transverse flute can cause difficulties, particularly in terms of justifying this invitation to our administration.

RR_So the project task of designing a church or a residential building is not assigned?

AB_No.

RR_And the result is neither an object nor an urban structure?

AB_No. Two examples. The term 'construction sin' was investigated. Where does this term come from? It was kind of a religious yet extremely interesting work. Another student wanted to build on his own, but didn't have a property. Is it possible to build without construction permits? Then he scanned all construction regulations in terms of his request. Since public swimming pools used to have issues with distance, a 10 meters diving tower needs no permit. There are hundreds of similar topics. He made a catalogue, a manual on estates without construction permits. Of course research questions are not very precise from the outset; the student talks about this and that, so quite individual approaches need to be pushed into a more empirical direction, 'Ok, try to systemize. Compare different construction regulations. Search for parallels. Which exceptions are there?' Then, these poor guys sit for half a year and read building codes.

MS_At university students engage with specific questions on the phenomenology of the urban environment with regard to requirements, meanings, and possibilities. In this context between teaching and research you have triggered a new format. How important is the academy c/o for your investigative teachings, and how is it connected to your office tasks and office-related questions?

AB_University is regarded as university because it is only accessible to university attendants. Few colleagues

im Lehrbetrieb und als Bezeichnung für ein Institut das Wort Forschung dazugenommen wird. Wie betreibst du eigentlich dort die Stadtforschung und mit welchen Zielen?

AB_ Stadtforschung ist ja ein Begriff, der inzwischen institutionalisiert ist und zwar eher aus dem Soziologischen heraus. In englischer Sprache war ‚urban research‘ ja viel weiter gefasst. Die Frage ist, ob Architektur per se in der Lage ist zu forschen. Gibt es so etwas wie empirische Forschung in der Architektur, weil es ja nur die sein kann? Dann muss sie selbst in der Lage sein, eine Art kritisches Moment mitzubringen. Also jede empirische Forschung, die sich nur selbst bestätigt, ist eben keine Forschung. Wir haben das ganz einfach installiert. Wir geben keine Themen an Studenten mehr raus. Wer kein Thema hat oder eins hat, das ihn selbst nicht interessiert, kann wieder nach Hause gehen. Wer ein Thema hat, das ihn wirklich interessiert und wo er wirklich Hilfe braucht, um für sich in einem bestimmten Feld zu forschen, dem geben wir alle Unterstützung, die wir organisieren können. Es sind im Grunde genommen Forschungen der Teilnehmer, die wir unterstützen. Das macht es uns leichter, das nicht zu verwechseln mit unseren eigenen, sozusagen nutzbringenden Forschungsreihen.

RR_ Das heißt also, Lehre ist gleich Forschung?

AB_ Ja. Wir sind wie ein kleines Institut, das hilft, Fragen weiter zu entwickeln. Wir sind quasi ein Serviceleister. Das kann auch heißen, wenn sich jemand gerade mit dem neuen spekulativen Realismus beschäftigt, dass wir den

deutschen Stadthalter des spekulativen Realismus als nächsten Gastprofessor einladen. Wenn wir jemand holen, der autodidaktisch Filme—städtebauliche Analysen zu China und Dubai—dreht, aber Querflöte studiert hat, wird es dann manchmal schwierig der Verwaltung zu sagen, dass wir jetzt einen Querflötenspieler als Gastprofessor für Architektur einstellen.

RR_ Also kann die Aufgabe nie heißen, ‚entwerfen Sie bitte eine Kirche oder ein Wohnhaus‘?

AB_ Nein.

RR_ Und das Resultat ist dann auch nicht das Objekt oder eine Stadtstruktur?

AB_ Nein. Zwei Beispiele. Einer hat über den Begriff der Bausünde geforscht. Wo kommt der Begriff überhaupt her. Die Arbeit war ein bisschen religiös angehaucht, aber extrem interessant. Ein anderer hat gesagt: ‚Ich würde gerne selbst bauen, aber ich habe ja kein Grundstück. Kann man nicht auch Sachen ohne Baugenehmigung bauen?‘ Daraufhin hat er die gesamte Bauordnung durchgescannt, was denn eigentlich genehmigungsfrei ist. Und da gibt es einen ganzen Katalog an Ausnahmen. Ein 10 Meter Sprungturm ist genehmigungsfrei, weil die öffentlichen Schwimmbäder immer Abstandsprobleme hatten. Also, den kann man schon mal ohne Baugenehmigung bauen. Aber da gibt es hunderte solcher Sachen. Er hat einfach einen Katalog gemacht. Ein Handbuch zur Siedlung ohne Baugenehmigung. Klar

might support our findings, but basically academies are comprised of university graduates. We came up with a public lecture on spatial production of the Berlin republic assuming that the change of government location from Bonn to Berlin implied not merely a name change but also a revival of representative and ideological backgrounds. Apparently we couldn't do it on our own and we didn't want an institutional framework. So I intended to found an academy in its most inherent sense. Everyone can sign up. Thus, they are academics. Of course, we attracted certain people, 'Come on Slavoj Žižek, you must sign up; if there is your name, other people will get interested.' There are 700 to 800 academics; 50 to 100 come when we have events. They are supposed to hold an input lecture for about half an hour or sometimes only 20 minutes. Thus, it turns into a public lecture where notes are made and things are worked out. I can give you an example.



The first participant was an evangelic theologian called Schieder. He talked about the new fence of the ministry of defense. Meck, an architect from Munich, had erected a memorial. Meanwhile there had been more fallen soldiers due to increased abroad operations. It was a great draft. In terms of architecture there was nothing to criticize. This is how it works: There is a fence and a memorial. Then there is a big board of metal bars. You can either enter from outside or you shift it and make it accessible via army terrains or the ministry of defense. Pushover. First, there is no communal memorial: either the public or the army. It is not a church but a civil-religious ritual. It is our intention to conceptualize definitions and thus give an account of the republic of Berlin. Now there might be some kind of end to that.

RR_ This summer you are going to teach at GSD in Harvard, and are therefore in charge of a different clientele as in Nürnberg, in Germany, and all of Europe. Which kind of program are you devising?

AB_ We are actually doing 'law-making,' because I reckon American students to be more pragmatic than the Germans; they have no ideological burden and are frank. They say, 'You want to make that? Do it!' It was interesting how many applied. As it is their first study including law-making it is rather difficult. Those who attempted listening to building law during their studies ... It is a very tedious discipline. For them it is more fluent. It is also related to the mayor's idea of using it as think tank. They are doing the first case studies on it.

sind die Fragestellungen am Anfang nicht so präzise, sehr eigen empirisch. Der Student sagt, er würde gern das und das machen, wo man eben unterstützt: ‚Ok, dann versuche das doch zu systematisieren. Vergleiche die verschiedenen Landesbauordnungen. Was ist übereinstimmend. Wo liegen die Ausnahmen‘. Dann sitzen die armen Forscher ein halbes Jahr lang und lesen nur Bauordnungen.

MS_ In deiner Hochschulforschung beschäftigten sich die Studenten also mit konkreten Fragestellungen zur Phänomenologie der urbanen Lebensumwelt in Bezug auf Rahmenbedingungen, Bedeutungen und Möglichkeiten. In diesem Kontext von Lehre und Forschung hast du ja über den Hochschulbereich hinaus ein weiteres Format etabliert. Welche Rolle spielt die ‚Akademie c/o‘ für diese forschende Lehre, die ihr macht, und in welcher Beziehung steht das zu deiner Bürotätigkeit und den Fragen, die euch dort beschäftigen?

AB_ Also der Hochschulrahmen ist insofern ein Hochschulrahmen, weil eigentlich nur Hochschule hinkommt. Unterstützung von außen gibt es vielleicht von ein paar Kollegen. Aber zumeist sind in den Akademien Akademiker. Wir haben uns gesagt, wir versuchen, ein öffentliches Seminar zur Raumproduktion der Berliner Republik zu gründen, weil wir vermutet haben, dass der Regierungswechsel von Bonn nach Berlin nicht nur den Stadtnamen ändert, sondern dass auch andere repräsentative, ideologische Backgrounds wieder hochkommen. Es war uns klar, dass wir das nicht alleine

erledigen können und wollten es auch nicht innerhalb eines institutionellen Rahmens machen. Also habe ich gesagt, wir gründen eine Akademie, im besten, ursprünglichsten Sinne. Jeder kann sich einschreiben. Damit ist er Akademiker. Wir haben natürlich bestimmte Leute angesprochen: ‚komm Slavoj Žižek, du musst dich hier einschreiben, denn wenn du da stehst, dann finden das auch andere interessant‘. Es gibt jetzt 700 oder 800 Akademiker und davon kommen zwischen 50 und 100, wenn wir Veranstaltungen machen. Die haben eigentlich nur eine halbe Stunde, manchmal auch nur 20 Minuten, für einen Inputvortrag. Damit ist es ein öffentliches Seminar, wo man versucht Dinge aufzuschreiben und an einer Sache zu arbeiten. Ich kann ihnen ein Beispiel geben. Der Erste, der kam, war ein evangelischer Theologe, Schieder. Er hat über den neuen Zaun des Bundesverteidigungsministeriums gesprochen. Da hat der Münchner Architekt Meck eine Gedenkstätte für die gefallenen deutschen Soldaten errichtet. Wir haben ja jetzt inzwischen wieder neue gefallene deutsche Soldaten, seit wir uns wieder im Ausland engagieren. Super Entwurf. Es gibt überhaupt nichts auf der Architekturebene zu kritisieren. Es funktioniert folgendermaßen: es gibt einen Zaun und eine Gedenkstätte. Dann gibt es eine große Tafel aus Blechgitter. Die kann man entweder von außen zugänglich machen oder man fährt sie rüber und dann ist sie vom Heeresgelände oder vom Bundesministerium zugänglich. Ganz einfache Sache. Erstens, es gibt kein gemeinsames Gedenken mehr: entweder die Öffentlichkeit oder das Heer. Dann ist es ja keine Kirche. Das heißt, es ist ein zivil-religiöses Ritual. Wir versuchen also auch

RR_Exciting. Even if the American way is quite different, I believe these new approaches are rewarding and refreshing; things are perceived and conceived differently, aren't they?

AB_Yes, they are. We might glorify social romance; they are rather prosaic and less emotional. You can already tell from the first theses that were sent in advance. They ask different questions, not on building, living or social conditions, but more in terms of Non Governance.

RR_What we've seen tonight is on the one hand the courageous dealing with policies and regulations and their conception as well as incomprehension on the other hand. This might facilitate a renewed spectrum for creating, for making architecture. That was quite convincing. We find it rather difficult to create architecture within these tight laws. Hope dies last. Arno Brandlhuber exemplifies how to make excellent architecture within all these policies. Thank you very much!

Begriffsbildungen zu machen und uns so Stück für Stück die Berliner Republik zu erklären. Und jetzt ist es damit vielleicht an eine Art Ende gekommen.

RR_Im kommenden Sommer wirst du in Boston an der GSD in Harvard unterrichten, das heißt also, im Studentenbereich für eine ganz andere Klientel als in Nürnberg, in Deutschland oder in Europa. Was für ein Programm wirst du eigentlich mit denen machen?

AB_Wir machen mit denen tatsächlich ‚law-making‘, weil ich glaube, dass die amerikanischen Studenten viel pragmatischer sind als deutsche, viel weniger ideologischen Ballast haben, viel geradliniger sind. Die sagen: ‚You wanna make that? Do it!‘ Und es war interessant, wie viele sich da gemeldet haben. Es ist auch ein bisschen schwierig; für sie ist es das erste Studio und dann schon law-making mit reinzuschreiben. Wer versucht hat, sich Baurecht im Studium anzuhören ... es ist wirklich die langweiligste Disziplin. Aber das ist für die anscheinend flüssiger. Es hängt auch damit zusammen, dass der neue Oberbürgermeister das auch als Think-Tank benutzen will. Und die machen die ersten Case Studies dazu.

RR_Spannend. Ich glaube, dass durch solche Sachen, auch wenn die amerikanische Welt ganz anders ist, trotzdem ein frischer Wind hineinkommt, weil die die Dinge einfach ganz anders sehen, oder?

AB_Ja, weil wir vielleicht etwas sozialromantisch verklärt

sind und sie alles nüchterner sehen. Das sieht man schon in den ersten kleinen Thesenpapieren, die sie dazu schicken sollten im Vorab. Die stellen ganz andere Fragen, gar nicht so sehr Wohnungsfragen, auch nicht unbedingt soziale Fragen, das ist ja dort nicht so ausgeprägt, sondern eher auf ganz anderen Ebenen, mehr im Bereich New Governance.

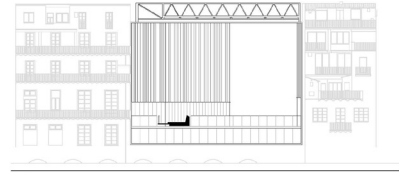
RR_Ich glaube, was heute Abend wirklich sehr gut herausgekommen ist, ist dieses Entlangarbeiten an Gesetzen und Richtlinien, zum einen, wenn man keine Scheu davor hat und zum anderen, wenn man sie versteht und dann kein Verständnis dafür hat. Das kann einfach ein total neues Spektrum öffnen, etwas zu gestalten, Architektur zu machen. Das ist sehr gut herübergekommen. Wir glauben ja eigentlich immer: diese ganzen Gesetze, wie kann man da eigentlich überhaupt noch ‚Architektur‘ machen? Die Hoffnung stirbt zuletzt und man sieht, Arno Brandlhuber ist ein hervorragendes Beispiel, mit den ganzen Gesetzen hervorragende Architektur zu machen. Vielen Dank!



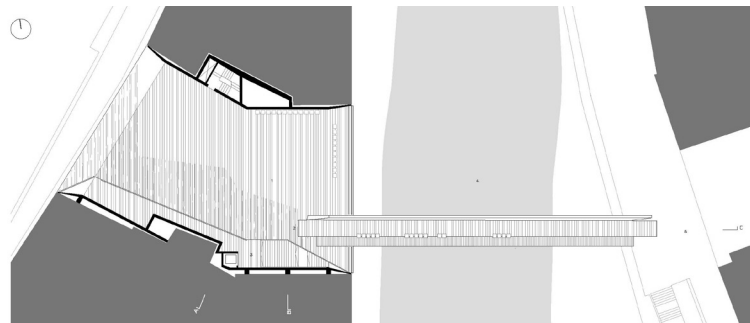
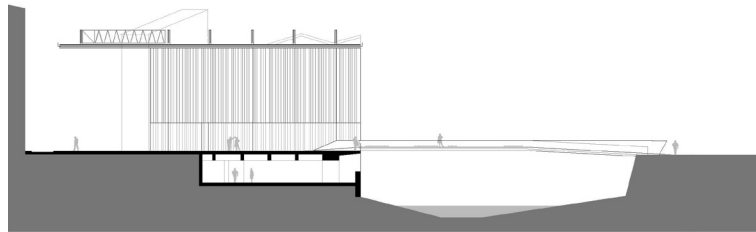
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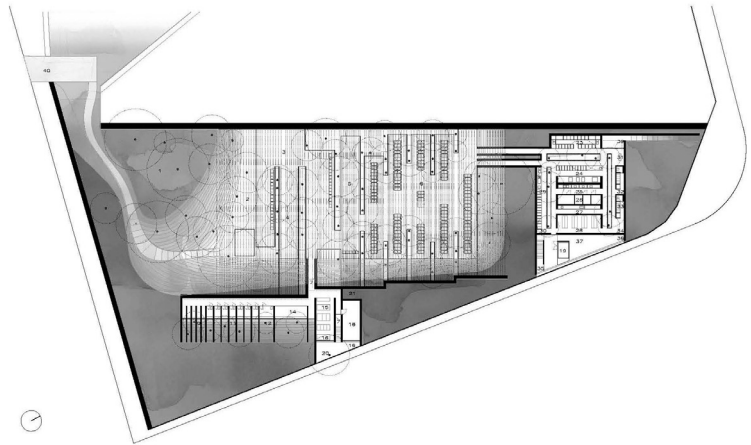
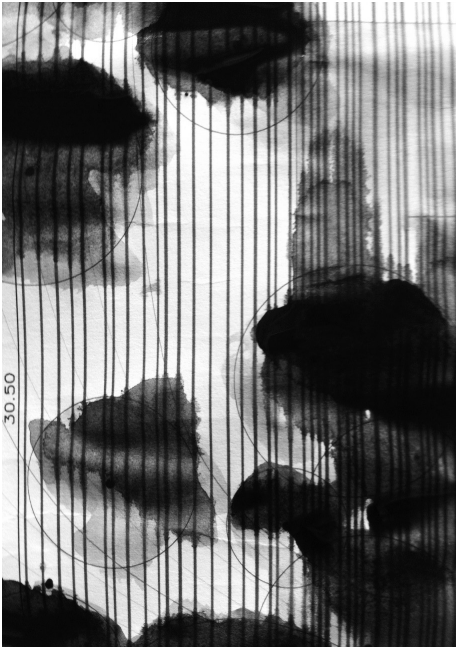
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<For us the void is a very, very important issue. Because it is like silence in music. [...] In fact this project makes a plaza, a covered square.>



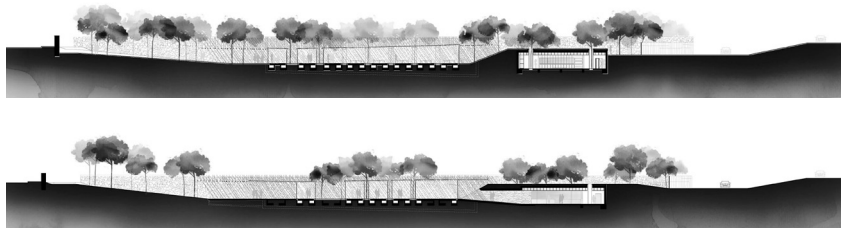
LECTURE**PUBLIC SPACE LIRA THEATRE | Ripoll, Spain | 2011**

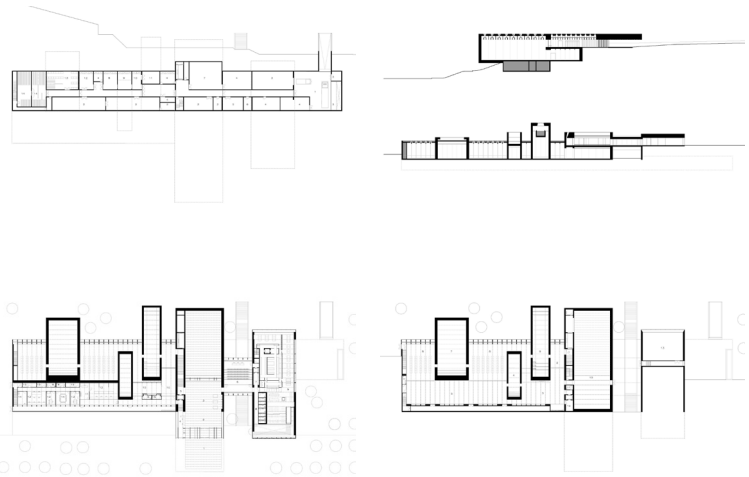
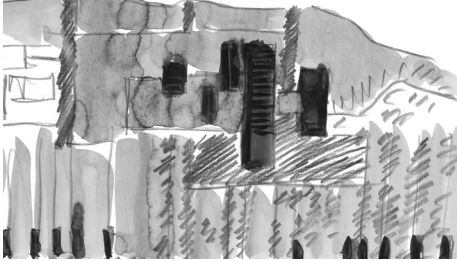


<And also the walls for the patios are not out of glass, but plastic. So the reflection and the transparency is ... It is like a fog. You see, but you don't really see. Ah, it's something not so clean and not so straight and not so bright.>

LES COLS PAVILIONS | Olot, Spain | 2006

<This is a roof and this roof is cut with many patios, with trees coming up. So, once again it's this void that defines the space, the positive space. It is always the relationship between the silence and the note.>



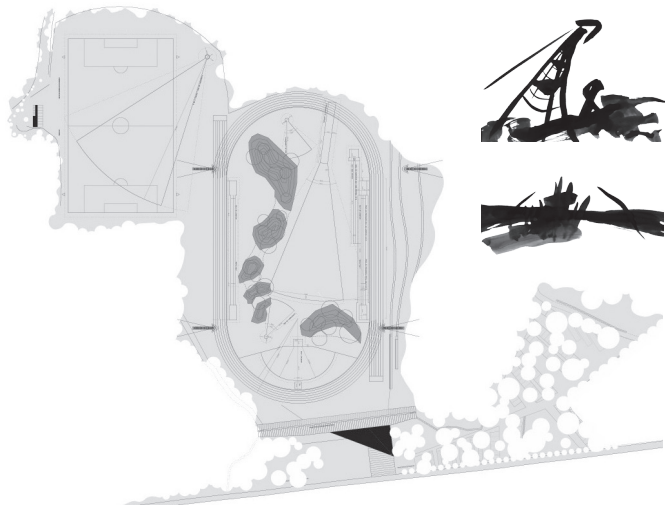


<He wanted a museum in a garden. [...] We tried to understand this site in order to put the museum in the garden, but trying not to hide the views to the cathedral, not to hide the views to the other neighbourhood and also trying to link both parts of the city.>

SOULAGES MUSEUM | Rodez, France | 2014



<We tried to keep [the forest] in the middle of this ring, because in this way we can have this feeling of running inside or in the middle of nature.>



TUSSOLS-BASIL ATHLETICS STADIUM | Olot, Spain | 2001

INTERVIEW

The Materiality of the Immaterial



CP_ Carme Pigem

RR_ Roger Riewe

MV_ Marisol Vidal

RR_ We'll continue with a small discussion following the presentation of Carme Pigem. Carme, there is actually hardly any difference when you see your paintings, the renderings and the real project. So, could this be a coincidence?

CP_ For us it is very important to be in the same line, from the first moment of the project until the last detail. It means you can recognize the whole architecture through a detail and you know which detail will come if you know the project. So we try to tell the same story and keep it from the beginning until the end, from the main concept to the last detail. This is very important to us.

RR_ I noticed in your presentation that the paintings themselves are quite important. But how do the steps from

the painting to the sketch and up to the project work?

CP_ These drawings set the idea. Then we start drawing it and we always compare. We cannot distance ourselves; we have to remain as close as we can to the initial idea.

MV_ That's interesting, because three weeks ago we had Pezo Von Ellrichshausen here and they showed us their oil paintings. But they do them along the evolution of the project because it takes long to do them. And your process quite different: you make these watercolors because they are done very quickly ...

CP_ Yes

MV_ And you do them at the beginning and then work

on that. So the idea is to catch the first glance and then develop it. Since you use a reduced color palette in your watercolors, how much materiality is there already? Does it have to do with the materials you like to work with or isn't any materiality implied yet?

CP_No, I don't think there is a sense of materiality in these watercolors. But indeed, we try to use a low variety of materials in our projects. We try to reduce the palette, that's true. We think that if we use less material, but in a very different way and very different registers, then the space renders better. Because you are not disturbed by the variety of materials. If you have many, many materials, then your perception is related to all of them. This is red, this is brown, this is black, you know? But when all is more genuine, it doesn't attract your attention. Then it's the space itself that attracts the attention and you feel involved in this atmosphere you can create with these various palettes of materials. We try.

RR_Actually, the palette of colors and materials you finally use reminds of 'Arte Povera'. So when you develop a project and there is a painting—a painting is something very personal, maybe even more personal than a sketch—is this painting done by one of the partners or do you all paint on the same painting? How does that work?

CP_We always try to keep our team as mixed as we can and we don't like to answer this ... Who is doing this, who is doing that. It's all of us doing everything together. [all laughing]

RR_No, actually I didn't really want to know who did which painting, but the painting you use to take a decision. And you have been working in the formation of three partners together for many years. How are these decisions then been taken?

CP_The main decisions, the beginning of the project and the visiting of the site are made by all three of us. So the main decisions of the project are taken during the site visit; we have fifty percent of the project. For us, the site is very important and it talks to us a lot. So we go together, to discuss it. And knowing the program—which we are trying to rethink—we enter a very deep and primary level. It is a little difficult to explain this, but we try to go from the program—by questioning what we have to do—deeper into the concept to a very primary state, like in a tabula rasa. It is like the lighthouse, you know? What is a lighthouse? Is it a tower? No, no, not at all! It is a fire. The first lighthouses were fires on the beach. So, it's just a fire, it's a point of light. For example: a restaurant for parties, what is it? Is it a very big space? No, it is a space to make a party that could be in a forest. We put the question of 'what?' that links to the program; rethink it. So this is one part of the story. And the other part is the site. We don't like to make airplanes that can fly anywhere. We try to make buildings that belong to the site so that, in the end, you cannot understand the site without the building anymore. Also, you cannot take this building and put it in another place. It belongs to the site. That's the reason why it's very important to visit the site together and then, with these two kinds of information, we try to find

the answer on how it could look and how we are going to give some kind of atmosphere to these spaces that belong to this program and this site. And then we try to make these spaces for feelings, so that people feel things when being there or visiting it. These first drawings—that question came from these first drawings—are also a way to communicate, to show, to explain.

MV_About the importance of the site, of the landscape in your work: the boundaries between your work and land, land-art and sculpture are very blurry. Have you been influenced by artists like Serra, Oteiza?

CP_It's true that we, in our way of learning or in our knowledge, have followed it in a way. There was a first moment when we learned a lot of things in school—still not enough, it's never enough what you learn in school—and then we tried to learn architecture from the big masters. We visited works from Mies, Kahn—a very personal architecture, you have to visit it—the big masters, in order to understand what a very big piece of architecture is. And then we understood how that was architecture, but that we are also in the world of creativity; in a way we are creators. So, maybe we have to study other creators as well. At that point we stopped studying and looking at architecture and we moved our look to artists, painters, sculptors ... Because they are working on the same issues as we do: spaces, composition ... The same, but free of budget, of laws, of gravity; in a more free way. So we moved our look to the artists and then we said: 'Okay, now, with all these influences, maybe it's time to make our own way.'

RR_Following the line of developing your project, when you come back from the site—where you did this intense thinking about all the issues of context, landscape, maybe even functions and so on—the project is taken back to the office ... What happens then? When does the model come in and when do the other people—the staff members of your office—come into the project?

CP_From the beginning, they start from the beginning ... And sometimes—very often—the people who are going to develop the project are also coming with us. Then we start drawing on the computer, we don't start with a model, no. We try to see if the program fits in this site that we have, in the idea that we have; we put these spaces in this site. We are trying to see how it fits.

RR_Okay, these are, let's say, the 'basics' you need to make a project work. But—when seeing the sensitivity in your projects—it's also an issue of communicating your way of thinking to the other members of the office, the people working for you. How does this work?

CP_It is easier with the people working with us. It's more difficult sometimes to communicate these ideas—as we were talking before—to the client, to the council, or to the constructor. Because, in fact, we can't do architecture alone. We have an idea, but then people have to draw it, they have to make a model, a 3D model ... Then you have to talk to the client, then you have to talk with the council, then you have to talk to the constructor ... I don't know ... In reality, it is a process that involves a very big number of

people. So, you have to try to put all of them on board of the project. That happens in the office, but also outside of the office.

MV_We saw the project of the museum and how the artist himself was involved in the process. He came to visit your office and you talked a lot about the concept of the museum. Is this kind of relationship something that always happens, or has to happen, with your clients in order to get this kind of common language?

CP_Always. We spend a lot of time doing meetings and sharing our time with the clients, a lot. You have to work with them and not against them. So they have to believe in the project and to feel that the project is for them—because it is.

MV_It's probably even more important for residential buildings, for houses. You have built many houses. We have seen more public buildings today, but you have many well-known houses ...

CP_Private houses. Yes, yes.

MV_Are the clients friends before you get the commission? Or how do you get to know them that well?

CP_Usually, that goes another way. The first house was for Ramón's sister—of course, right? For a family member ... And then a couple came to us because they loved the house ... And another one ... In the end, we all became

friends. So, it's more this other way.

RR_Continuing on this issue of communication, you say it's actually easier to communicate inside the office than with the client. But quite a few of your projects are now direct commissions or private clients. Isn't there a problem when you go in for an architectural competition? Because the communication for a competition is completely different, there is no possibility of communicating in the first phase.

CP_No, then you have to communicate with your materials, with your drawings or words. You always have to communicate ...

RR_This is, of course, a different kind of communication.

CP_Yes, sure.

RR_Do you do a lot of competitions to get work? Or is your work mostly done without competitions?

CP_No, because all public buildings come from competitions. In Spain and even in France it is not possible to have a commission for a public building without a competition. All commissions for public buildings come from competitions.

MV_But again, your projects are very atmospheric, something you really put a lot of weight and thought into. How can you translate this immaterial atmosphere in order

to communicate it?

CP_It is done mostly with the tool of 3D-renderings, this is the best way to show, to communicate, to explain and to see: 'no, this is too light; no, this is too dark ...' So you try to find a good view.

MV_At which moment of the project does materiality come into the ...

CP_From the first steps. Yes, more and more from the first steps: materiality, budget and other things. At the beginning we used to say: 'Okay, this doesn't matter or that doesn't matter;' but now we consider all the issues like budget, materials in the very, very first steps. We take all of this into consideration, as soon as possible.

RR_You showed in your lecture that Olot is based in that volcanic landscape area and, due to this, the projects based in Olot and its neighborhood use materials like volcanic stone. Also this specific color has been interpreted and then reused in your projects. So there is a really strong issue of locality in these projects. And now you are crossing the border, going to France. There is a different context, of course. So, how do you choose a material and a color now? How does that actually work in your office, with everything so strongly based in Olot with the volcanic landscape until now?

CP_Yes, I think our architecture has to be understood as part of our roots, where we are working and living. But—



we always say and feel—every project needs a kind of materiality linked to the program and linked to the site. So, for us, this way of thinking doesn't change by changing the location. The conditions change, the climate changes, many, many things change, but not our way of thinking.

MV_If there is a material we can see every now and then in your projects it would be steel, Cor-Ten steel. Why did you choose this material for so many projects and in this very strong way?

CP_In fact, we started with very white projects and also with stone, because we love real materials, their thickness. We don't like 'fake' materials. So, from the beginning on we used 'true' materials. And, also, we are perfectionists. We loved steel from the beginning because you give the size in millimeters and not in ... meters. That gives us a

precision that we really appreciate. We love the precision of this material on the one side and we also love the color of the material because it connects very well to the colors of nature. And it's not a flat color—it's not like painted—it has this water-movement. We love these two things: the precision and the color. There is a third thing we love: it is a material you can use for everything. So you can use it for floors, for ceilings, for walls, for the structure, for furniture ... But it is not the only material we use; right now we are doing a house in concrete. [laughs] And other things with glass ...

MV_ You also took glass to the limits with these pavilions, in les Cols. Was it about glass here? Was it about trying to take as much out of the material as possible, or ...?

CP_ Yes, trying to have as much of this material as possible and also because of the proportions of these pavilions. There were only five—for us it was not a hotel, but also the possibility to give a unique experience for one night or maybe two ... To feel naked with yourself. This is a space with no TV, little light ... So it is trying to make you feel naked with yourself. It is why we tried to use this glass, because you feel less protected with glass than with a big wall, you know? And to be naked with yourself in the nature. For example, the shower—it's the floor previous to the bath. The floor of the shower is made out of small stones. So, when you are walking there, you feel like you are in a river. You are not, but we are trying to give you some kind of relations or perceptions or some kind of analogies.

RR_ In your lecture you focus on the issue of creating space, but also creating the atmosphere of space. Very often architects try to create most neutral spaces; and there is, of course, the architectural discourse saying: 'there is no such thing as a neutral space.' Is it impossible to create something neutral?

CP_ Yes.

RR_ And now you go the other way. You say you are trying to create the atmosphere of space. At the same time you also say it is something like the background. You always try to create a background for people to utilize it, to use the space, to be actors, right? And where is this border now? How much atmosphere can you actually load into the space? And when do you say 'stop,' because there is still the actor, there is the user as the most special person



in space?

CP_In fact ... I think this is a very interesting question to discuss. For example, when we are saying 'neutral'—neutral can be set as objective. But objective doesn't exist. When you are thinking that everything is always subjective, then neutral actually doesn't exist. In fact, you prepare a set or a space and then, in reality, the perception of the real atmosphere comes from people. So, you are the only one who perceives this space in this way. Even your yellow ... Maybe it is not my yellow ... I don't know. Maybe my perception of things is not the same as yours. I am used to see the world as I have always seen it. But maybe this is not your way. We are preparing something that we think is good to have: this void, this rim, this silence ... Not to discover all things at the same time. So, we are preparing a kind of scenario. But in the end, every play in a theatre can be quite different. In fact you can see the same opera a thousand times and every time the actor or actress does it very differently. This is really nice, because that also comes from the understanding of the universe, that everything is the same but at the same time everything is different. We find that very interesting. Like us: we are all the same, but we are all completely different and unique. So, it goes in this direction. It is interesting.

MV_Your work has been broadly published, not only in Spain but also in Europe, in Japan ... There are always some construction drawings where you explain your project, where you can also see this atmosphere you are creating. So, it's not only a construction detail ... You

showed us before how the light comes into the space and so on. What role does the construction play for you?

CP_It is very important and very difficult, you know?

MV_The boundary between design and construction—is there any at all? How do you deal with that? First the project and then the construction, or ...?

CP_No, it is a process. You cannot say this is a phase and this is another phase. And, also, we try to rethink everything up to the last moment. So ... maybe it is not so good to do this [laughs], but even when we are already constructing the building, if we think that there is one thing that could be improved, we do it. We try to do it because we think the project has a life—a long life—and this project is born when you say 'ok, it's not mine anymore, it is yours.' But until that moment, we try to improve. It is something that goes from the first line up to the last detail; we are trying to do our best. We also realize how very difficult this is, because—you know—in architecture, the first prototype is in fact the final product. So, this is also very difficult when you are trying to make some research and develop new solutions in a way. It is difficult, because the first prototype is the final product. It is quite hard. [laughs]

RR_So you are really able to make atmospheric detail drawings, which is fascinating.

CP_ [laughs]



RR_ How do you actually convince a client that a project always has to take five years? What do you tell them?

CP_ I think it is not a thing to say on the first day, right? But as time is running ... [laughs]

RR_ It's because time is always a problem when developing a project, I agree with you in those terms. Especially when you go into construction drawings and materiality, things have to be developed and redeveloped and tendered—those are all things that architects know—and on the other hand the client gets really nervous: 'when is the construction beginning?'

CP_ Yes.

RR_ And are you really able to tell them: 'another year?'

CP_ [laughs] That things are happening, and then you are in the middle of the process ... So, step by step. You cannot say it at once.

RR_ So month by month ...

CP_ [laughs] No, step by step, not month by month ... [laughs]

RR_ Your projects have been growing and have become even more numerous, so the amount of your staff has been growing as well, the office has been growing. Where do you get your people from? Are they from Barcelona—the Barcelona school—or Madrid? How do you pick people to fit to your office?

CP_ In fact, because we are far from the big city, it was very difficult to have students coming to the studio. At the beginning, we worked with people studying interior design in Olot or with drafters. So, people with more basic studies. It was difficult to have other kinds of people. But one time someone sent us a letter saying: 'may I come for a practice in your office?' We said: 'Oh, what do we have to do? Yes, fantastic, please come!' And right now we have about ten to twelve people and this number is doubled by people coming through exchange programs—Erasmus—or people who need an internship before becoming an architect. So, there are people coming and going from the office; we ask them to spend 6 months to 1 year minimum, not less than that. But it was very difficult at the beginning, because we are far from any university.

MV_ And these people coming from around the world—at least Europe—can they step into this local or specific thinking of La Garrotxa and Olot, the place you know so well?

CP_ Yes.

MV_ Do they blend in fast, or is it difficult?

CP_ I think it also depends on the people, no? There are people who find it difficult to live in a small city and others who love it, because they are surrounded by nature. Right now, we have people from Portugal in our ‘herd’ that started coming for practice and are still there with us ... Or French architects. So, there are people who really love to stay with us and others who just aim for the experience and then say goodbye. It happens.

RR_ I believe you even have one student from Graz.

CP_ Yes. A very nice guy, yes.

RR_ Okay, you say that the university is quite far away and you and your partners are actually not teaching at universities. Is it a very specific position of yours to say ‘no, we don’t want to be teaching, because it takes too much time?’ On the other hand, I also heard that you bring the students to Olot, right? How does that work?

CP_ Yeah, we started having a cooperation with the university—Ramón and I were teaching at the University

of El Vallés—but we had to go twice a week and the commuting from Olot took four hours a day. So we couldn’t spend that much time, therefore we decided to stop. But then we realized that we liked it ... And that’s why right now we are preparing a workshop in our office for the summer. So we will spend the whole month of August doing this and we are happy now.

RR_ Is this the first time you are doing it or have you been doing it the last few years already?

CP_ It is the third edition in this format.

MV_ You have a very special attitude towards public relations. You don’t give too many lectures and on the homepage of ‘RCR architecture’ there is a sentence: ‘We close this window facing the street, while we open another onto the courtyard.’ And that’s all you will find there. That’s a luxury—I would say—to afford something like that as an architect, when all architects are just trying to sell and to publish and to communicate their work through the internet. To say ‘We are here, but we are not going to say anything ...’ Can you explain it?

CP_ Yeah. It links to the question before, no? Do you like to teach? Yes, but sometimes it is not possible. So we are very ... We like to work and we need a kind of quiet atmosphere. Maybe we are not able to do one hundred things at a time, so we need to do one thing and then another one ... We decided to do no more than one lecture per month—only one—trying to do up to ten-twelve

lectures a year. Sometimes people ask us to come and ... It is difficult to say 'no,' you know? But we think it is important. At the beginning of our career we had a list of 'yes' and a list of 'no.' And that's funny because when we finished our studies a professor said: 'Ah, you go to your village, this won't be good for your architecture.' We said: 'Okay, but in fact the most important thing for doing good architecture is saying no to a big promoter, knowing your door soon enough'. Does that make sense? And then one promoter came and said: 'Do you want to make 30 apartments for us?' It was a huge project! And we said no. Then we said: 'Ah, everything is done!' [laughs] So, trying to say no is more difficult than to say yes. If someone is asking something and you say yes, he feels pleased; but if you say no ... I think it is good to learn to say yes or to say no. We also had a very big project abroad once—in Dubai—and we decided to close our webpage. If there is someone who has real interest in us, he will find us. To avoid some noise ... I don't know.

RR_ So, Carme, I am very happy that we shifted from the 'no'-list to the 'yes'-list finally... I appreciate it and I think everybody here in the audience appreciates a lot having you here this evening. Thank you very much for your lecture and this very interesting discussion.

CP_ Thank you too.

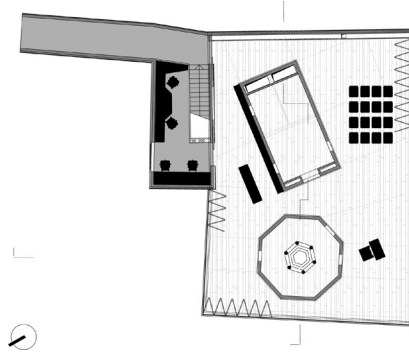


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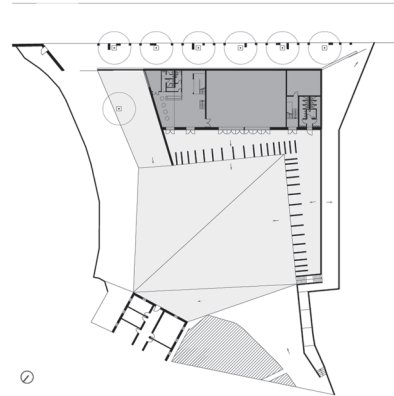
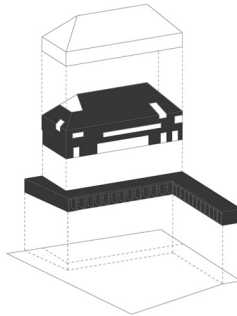
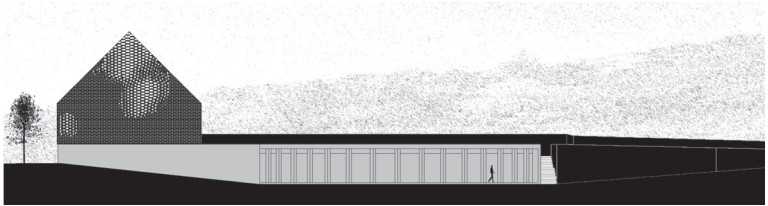
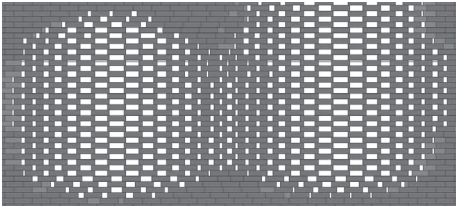
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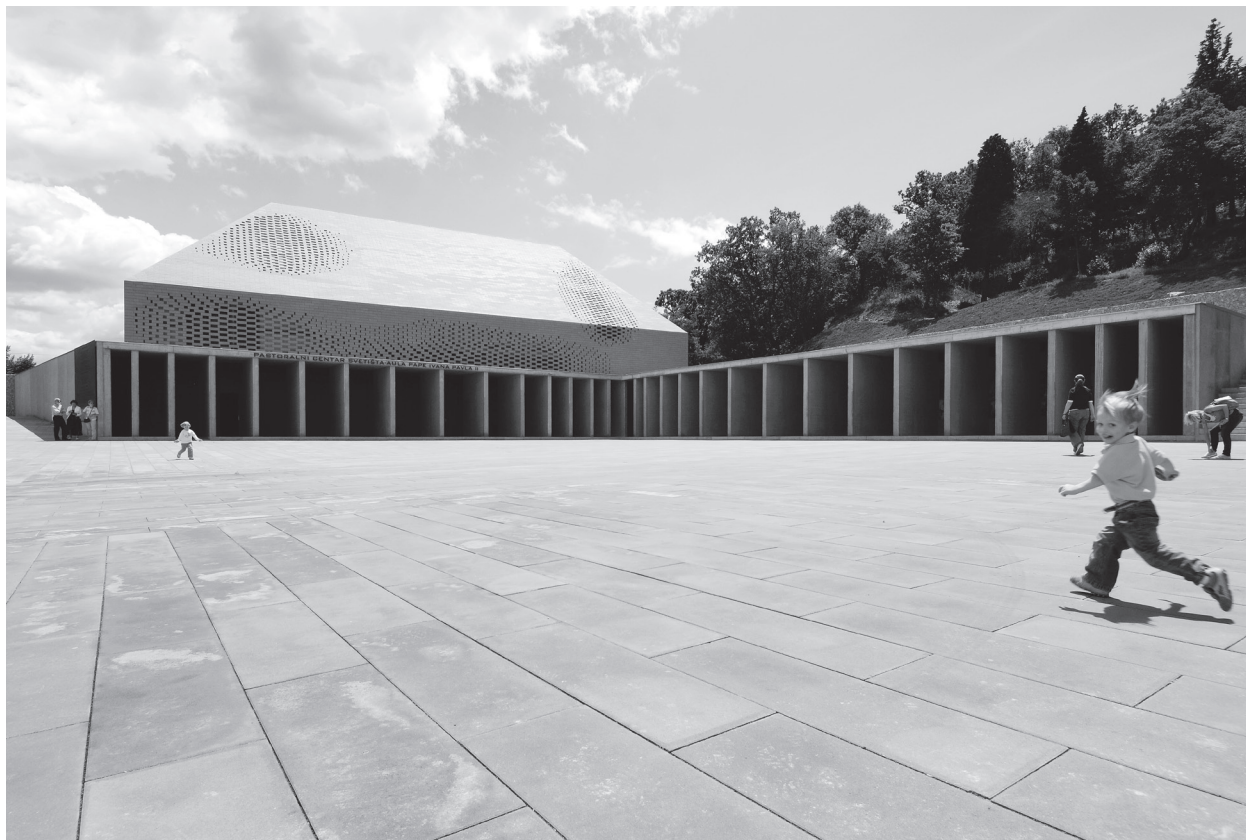
<The idea was to create something completely open, which was like a city living room. And the whole museum actually consists of these two concrete boxes.>

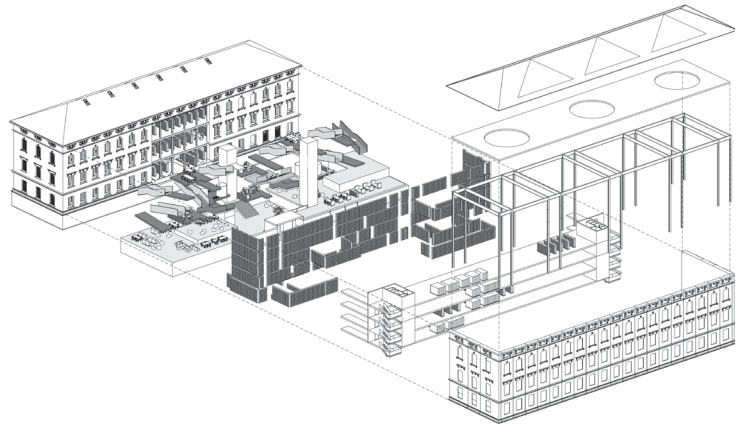
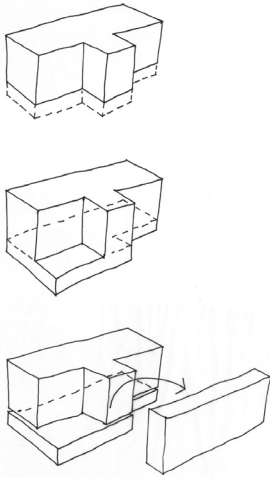
LECTURE**LAPIDARIUM NOVIGRAD** | Novigrad, Croatia | 2006



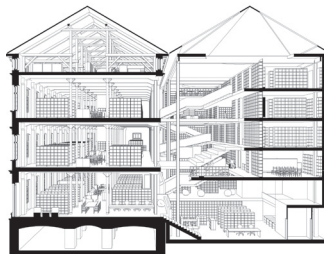
<We got this idea of creating a structure that would compete or somehow enter in a dialogue with the existing baroque complex of the monastery. Our idea was to make this whole with two elements. With a portico and with a kind of a primordial hut or with a generic volume of a house.>

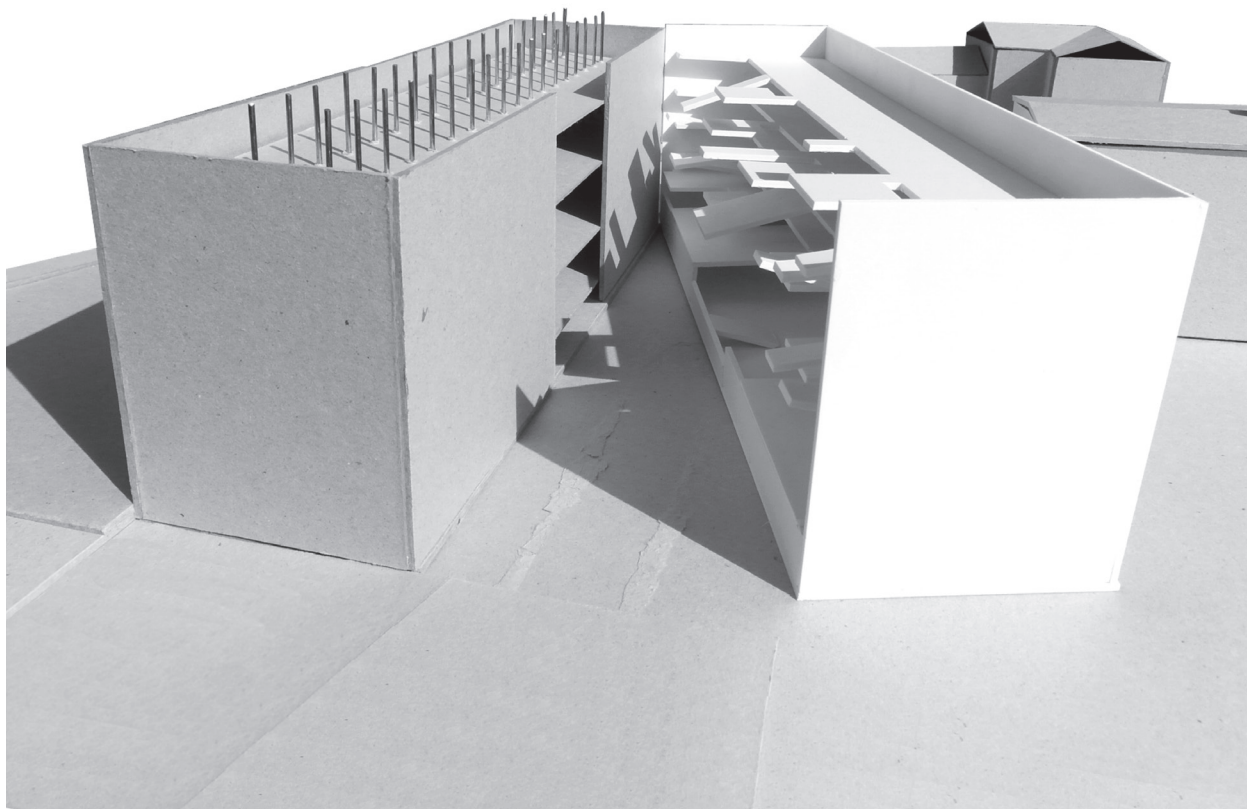
POPE JOHN PAUL II HALL | Rijeka, Croatia | 2008

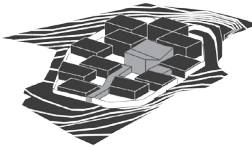




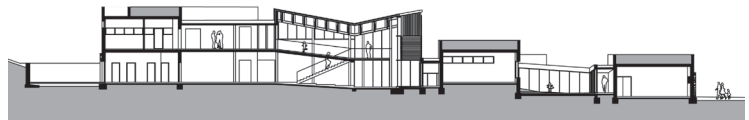
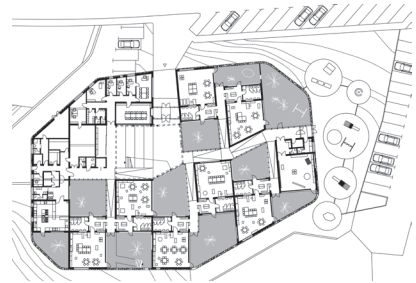
<If the old existing façade is good, to double it would be double good! So let's make an exact copy in prefab concrete, it's not going to cost much! [...] We created this hole in between volumes and this series of bridges, the façade of the old building was stripped away so you can see its content. >



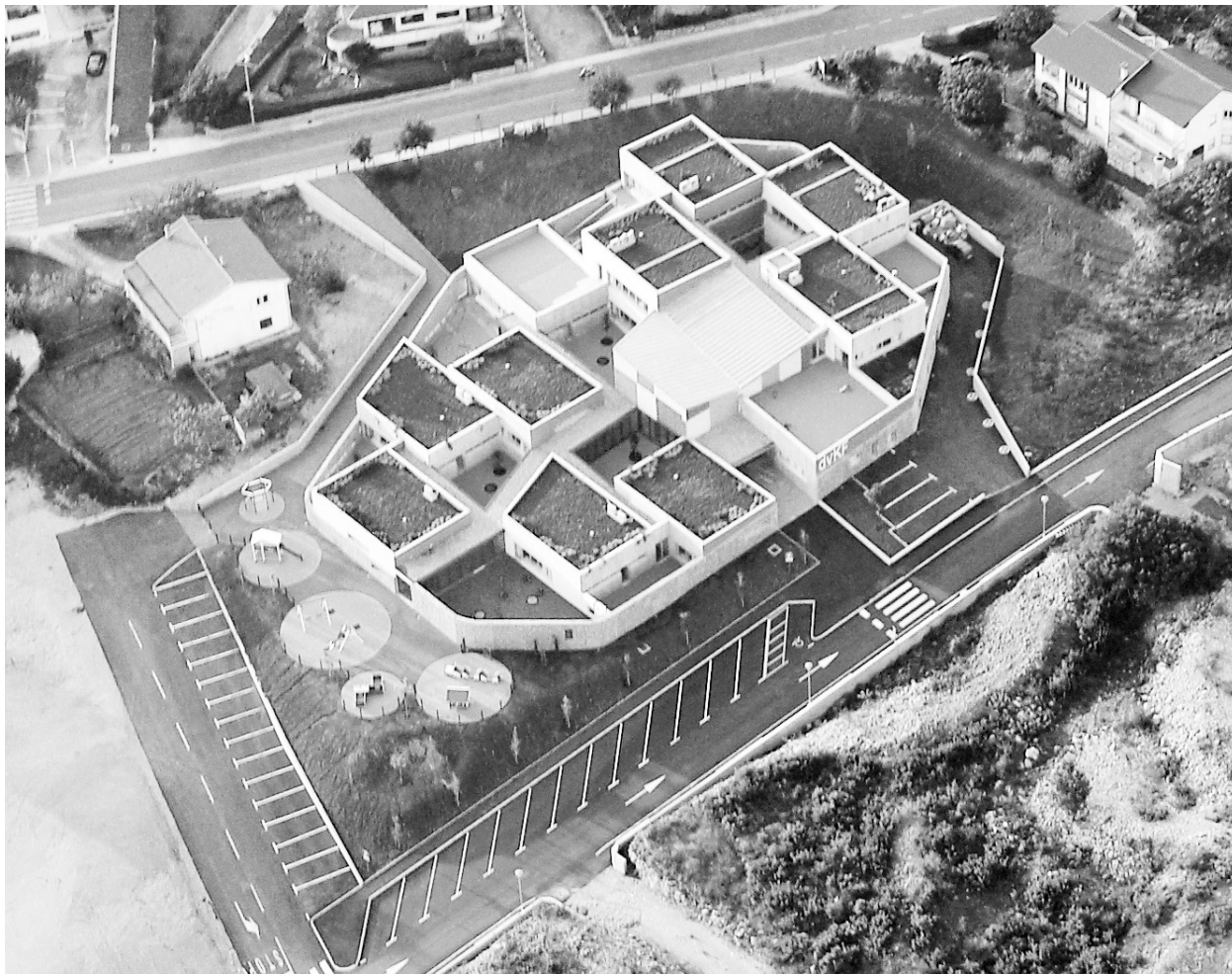
CITY LIBRARY | Rijeka, Croatia | -



<Our idea was to recreate the medieval city that they were used to. We made these fortifications and the courtyards were squares, the corridors were streets and the classrooms or the units were treated as houses.>



KINDERGARTEN "KATARINA FRANKOPAN" | Krk, Croatia | 2009



INTERVIEW

The Practice of Practical Architecture



SR_ Saša Randić

RR_ Roger Riewe

ŽK_ Žiga Kreševič

RR_ Saša, thank you very much for this speedy and very humorous lecture! Now, we will have another 45 minutes of a very interesting talk about your projects and your way of working; Žiga will join us in our discussion this evening. Something you actually pointed out right at the end of your lecture was the note of Herman Hertzberger. He was the dean at that time when you were studying at the Berlage Institute in Amsterdam and was obviously very influential. Was actually Herman Hertzberger the reason you went to Berlage or did you just want to leave Croatia and, at that time, Yugoslavia?

SR_ No, actually at the time when I left for this post-graduate study—and this is how rapidly things change—I was hesitating, because it was probably the best economic period of the whole Yugoslavian history, with a

really stable currency and lots of job prospects. I had just won the European competition in France—it was July or June of '91—and it was really like in James Bond movies: I was reading, you know, 'Le Monde' on Champs-Élysées, it was really posh. When they organize European, they don't kid around. It's really in the palaces of ministries and it's really big time! It was pre-internet time and I was reading in a newspaper that the Yugoslav border was closed; then the Slovenian one. So, for me all these situations are always very intimate in a way, all these war experiences. It was intimate in a rather unusual way. Anyway, the reason why I went to Berlage was not just because of Herman. Dutch architecture had—for some reason—really strong influence on Croatian architecture. It could be because of CIAM or it could be because of, I don't know, maybe the social agenda that was really well developed in the

Dutch society and this was something that we all—both architects and intellectuals in general—were driving to. They were simply capable of delivering these ideas of social housing, the whole idea of welfare-state and what is actually interesting is that all of this is gone today: the Holland of today is not the Holland I went to 20 or 25 years ago, so Europe is definitely changing. But Herman was a fantastic character and also Berlage was fantastic at that time. It was not just Herman, but Aldo and then Ken Frampton was there every two weeks and it was really a unique situation. But you are never aware of conditions you are in until you left them somehow.

RR_ So, the time at Berlage and your stay in Holland kind of positioned your way of thinking?

SR_ Well, I would say it was a stimulating environment and for me it was definitely a revealing experience in the way how the Dutch were discussing architecture, or how they were discussing anything to that matter. Because, you know, being raised in a South European catholic—or then socialist—state, you were not supposed to ask too much. It was not expected ... You know, just politely let it go and then you talked behind someone's back. There I presented my first project and I thought everybody hated me, because it was such a direct reaction. But then I realized it was really good, because you were able to learn what's wrong with your project. And this is what I'm trying to explain to my students—that I'm not really trying to molest them or do something nasty to them. It is better for them to hear about their mistakes—not about the good things

they did—and this is how we learn ... So I think it was a very good experience. What I benefited most from was the experience of teamwork, because we used to work in teams. Herman had this crazy idea—Berlage at that time was quite different than today or than most US schools or AA—and he wanted to have a laboratory that would simulate the office environment. This means we were working on actual projects, not imaginary ones. And we had to work on three projects at the same time, because he noticed problems with collaborators who were unable to shift from one project to another. So, I would say it was a pretty good experience and it led me to collaborate with Idis [Turato]. I was used to work alone and when I realized that it's much easier to work together with someone, we both decided that it was a good idea to reverse this trend and come back to Croatia in '92 when everybody else was leaving. And then we said: 'let's do something together.' It's much easier and much better and that's what we did.

ŽK_ Your former office 'Randic-Turato Architectes' is known for really innovative approaches to architecture. One of these approaches is the 'Hartera' project were you basically proposed—if I understand it correctly—instead of designing a building you just said: 'okay, let's test it in a real environment, let's test the program!' Could you say something more about that?

SR_ The thing is that Rijeka did not only lose all of its industry but it also lost all of the music clubs for live performances. It had a very strong music scene in former Yugoslavia, one of the strongest perhaps. A friend of

ours—a musician in a well-known Croatian band called Let3—wanted to find a place for a concert hall. He wanted to do it in this former paper mill. And since the noise is always a problem in any concert hall, there was no problem because there was no-one around. Also, people were used to the noise because it was the former industry. But, on the other hand, the problem was to recognize that this industry was gone and it really didn't have to go bankrupt, but it did because of the particularities of the Croatian transitional moment. The first concert was more like a test on how the public would react, so the city let us do it. The first one was the biggest one I think, 5.000 visitors came to this place. Once they saw that it was well accepted, they accepted to include it in their plans also.

ŽK_ So basically you could say that, as an architect, you have to search for alternatives, especially in today's conditions?

SR_ Yeah, absolutely, but as I said, it depends on the environment. In an environment that was just building itself it was much easier to impose yourself as an architect or as a—what they call it—public intellectual. Just try to promote your ideas and to push your way through it! You're in the same position as everyone else, so why don't take it advantage of it? Now that society is more structured, this could be slightly more difficult for the younger generations, but there are other forms of engagement.

RR_ If I would try to box your way of working, I would call it a 'direct encounter': you are very fast to observe the

local scene, and your observations are then transformed directly to a response. So, obviously this is strongly based on dialogue. My question now would be: in how far is this process transferred into your office then? You come to the site—you are invited maybe by the pope—and then you get the idea. How does this process continue in your office?

SR_ Well, we usually work in teams and that's basically a dialogue, I would say. It's not very different to other offices. I certainly do not come with finished drawings and expect them to be further developed or realized. I ask all my team members to contribute, everybody comes with an idea and we pick out the best one. So it's a dialogue, yeah, you pointed out right. It's probably the best way to approach the real situation. We try to make as many alternative proposals as possible to test the ideas we have. It is not always financially clever because it consumes money and time, but on the other hand, it's rewarding. Recycling really happens and I don't make a big deal out of it. If you have a bigger production and you can't implement an idea in one project, there is going to be another project where you can. So it's much easier to work on several projects than just focus on one.

RR_ So, you got this dialogue inside your office, but then there is also the necessity of a dialogue with the client. Is this really possible with competitions—because the procedure is completely different—or you don't go in for competitions because your way of working doesn't fit with the system of competitions?

SR_ Oh no, we do competitions and we lose a lot of them, obviously [laughs]. This is probably the faith of every architect. I was very much in favor of competitions because it was part of this spirit of getting normal in a way. We just wanted to be normal in this European integration narrative. But the problem with being normal is that 'normal' is actually a synonym for 'mediocre.' Usually competitions are mediocre—that's not my statement, Frank Lloyd Wright said it about competitions before. It depends a lot on the juries and I always try to look who is sitting in the jury, not just to waste my time and their time with the proposals [laughs]. But it's tough. You know how it works with the juries; it depends on the mood ...

RR_ Just to make things easier for you, a psychiatrist once told me: 'Be sure, there is no such thing as a normal person.' [laughs]

SR_ Yeah, that's right. That's even more troubling because I am not sure that we are a very normal nation. [laughs]

ŽK_ I listened to your lecture in Piran five years ago where you said that the crisis, or—as you put it at that time—'times of challenges,' basically have forced architecture to distance itself from the image, away from building 'Dubai-scenes,' and focusing on social engagement and building quality places for people. And then you said something about also engaging your personal views. Could you say more about that?

SR_ Well, the fact that there is no set of references that



all of us could use, doesn't mean that you can't really develop your own set of references. This is your own personal set of references. You can't really impose it on someone else. But I'm not saying you should be incoherent, you should have some line of reflection and of production. But the reach of your thinking is somehow limited to what you produce. And, when not much is built, this limitation increases.

ŽK_ And this set of references—also mentioned in your lecture—is nowadays often limited to ecology. Don't you think that the ecology topic is becoming an excuse or that it is getting exploited in architecture today?

SR_ Absolutely! There is a thing called 'Green ...' Well, green something. [all laughing] It's an association. It's all 'green' now and this green association is actually run by

real estate brokers and they are charging membership fees of 2.000-3.000 EUR per year. It's a big business now. I saw a cartoon representation of Žižek's lecture—I am not that far left but I like Žižek, a fantastic character—that coined the term 'cultural capitalism.' He said that ecology and sustainability, amongst other things, are becoming a new '-ism,' a new general narrative. In his view, this is just a new form of advanced capitalism; as in previous times Soros would grab his money during the day and become a philanthropist during night who would donate his money to different funds. But now, when you buy a product you don't buy the product but you buy into a product. As an example he used Starbucks: if you buy Starbucks coffee you are buying healthy production—the coffee is bought from people who are getting proper wages—so you are buying also absolution. You also have it here. I usually stay in the Starwood chain of hotels when I move around. They always ask you if you want to donate one euro for UNICEF. I am going to sound like a bastard now, but I always say 'No, thank you,' because I feel being played. I think the same goes with ecology. It has become a really big business. Of course you want your house to consume less energy but isn't it wiser to move to a nicer surroundings? Isn't it cheaper to fly to tropical areas instead of trying to make tropical climate in the middle of the Alps? You know what I mean? We are exaggerating these issues and I think it's all about common sense. Here is where I believe that the market value gives you a response whether something is wise or not. If it's too expensive, it doesn't really make sense.

RR_ Talking about market value, what made you make this move Baku?

SR_ Well, curiosity first of all. Curiosity and market value, obviously. [laughs] Baku is a really amazing city, I just showed a couple of images but it's worth a complete lecture. You probably didn't know that, but Nobel Prize money came out of Baku oil. The Nobel brothers made money over there first. Baku—or Azerbaijan—is known as the land of fire and in this peninsula there were tales from the 5th century about eternal fires, just flaming out of the land. The natural soil is muddy because the oil is just simply popping out; and so does the gas. Due to static electricity you sometimes have flames out of the sea. And imagine, this land, which is completely burned—it was only interesting to Zoroastrians during the Iranian times—was really a very hostile environment. But suddenly, within this hostile environment, you have this city, which is completely green with all these parks and buildings. It's really an amazing place. And what I said about the narrative: they call it 'azerbaijanism.' It is the official ideology. When you think about where Azerbaijan is located, it's not really a friendly neighborhood: they have Chechnya, Dagestan and the rest of Russia in the north; to the south they have Iran. Armenia is their neighbor to the west and they are still at war with them. So within this environment we have a culture that is built on the notion of tolerance and internationality. This is really interesting. Of course it's not a democracy like you would find in Norway or Finland but, on the other hand, you don't expect that. You really need to have a functioning state and—as a

friend of mine told me—wherever there's oil there's not much democracy. But nevertheless, they are a functioning society with a very strong feeling of solidarity. They are somehow maneuvering the transitional environment by directing investments in a way that all the rich guys are also contributing or giving back. For example, Eurovision song contest was a big thing; it was absolutely amazing. I landed there the second day after they won the prize and everyone was driving around sticking Azerbaijani flags out of the car windows. They were so extremely proud. I think they were also surprised of the audience of these shows, because it's a gay event and ... It's Caspian environment. But, nevertheless, they were pretty tolerant about that.

ŽK_ Switching the topic completely: previously you mentioned that architecture in Croatia played a really big role from 2000 to 2009, also for the general public. You are the founder of a blog, pogledaj.to. How did the role of architecture in the media change in the last five years? We saw the image of a contract being signed in 2003, with a huge presence of the media, and then a completely different picture in 2014.

SR_ Well, that's a thing the major of Rijeka and I have. It's a mutual misunderstanding, I would say. There are simply not so many projects. Also, because there were many projects that failed, the general public doesn't buy it any more. I was on a meeting with the new director of the Museum of Modern Arts in Rijeka, sitting together in the City Library. They had a rendering of the New City Library of Rijeka, designed by Hrvoje Njiric that is still on hold.

But I'm not so sure anything is going to happen ... The director noted that every institution has at least two models and renderings of these new buildings that are not going to happen. Well, this sense of suspicion has overcome the optimism from the period of growth.

RR_ So do you expect a positive development after Croatia joined the European Union, even if you have put a big question mark there? Do you also question if there are any narratives left now as a basis for architecture? In terms of real estate development, do you think there will be a big change now in Croatia?

SR_ No, unfortunately not. What has happened is that the real estate markets—in Austria, Germany or Switzerland in particular—are going up. They are not going down because people who have assets want to invest in safe countries, because of countries like Croatia ... or Greece or the rest of southern Europe. So I don't think we are going to see an investment boom in the foreseeable future; not just in Croatia but in the rest of the Mediterranean belt. This has also to do with the fact that there was an extreme amount of construction going on, mostly in Spain. I read somewhere—I have to verify, but if it's true it's really frightening—that the amount of square meters getting built in Spain was equal to the one in Italy and France combined. So now, being able to get a second home for 20.000-30.000 EUR in Spain in a relatively nice environment of an empty golf resort and pay 300 EUR per square meter, is not going to be an incentive for real estate development over here. The problem with banks

is that state has unfortunately bailed out banks—Hypo-Alpe-Adria Bank and others—not the citizens. We could have developed a model of lease not of sale for new social housing ... I don't own my office space, I rent it. And why shouldn't I rent my apartment? We have an extremely high rate of ownership of apartments—close to 90 percent I think. And buying your own apartment—really miniature apartments because you can't afford more—means being in a forced slavery of a bank until you die. Instead of that the state could have started with the program of state-apartments for rent that was also a part of the Dutch scene I mentioned before. But they didn't because of the banks that had a lot of unsold apartments. So the state decided to give 300 EUR/m² incentives to buy these empty apartments from the banks. And by doing that, the bank is still on the break-even point, they don't lose benefits. It's a game that is neither helping architects—the construction sector—nor the general public.

RR_ Regarding the situation in Austria, Switzerland and Germany, but especially in Berlin as a growing city with a lot of development and pressure from outside, the biggest investors are the Russians and the Greek. They have to find some safe place for their money. So, I see your curiosity in making this move to Baku. You talk fascinated about this new or different—not even saying strange—culture. But then you told me you are moving to Albania. But there is no oil!?

SR_ There is no oil, no. There is olive oil [laughs]. Well, I went to Albania last year, because of Edi Rama. He

was the major of Tirana, the one who painted all these buildings. He started a series of public competitions. I was on a competition there last week; it was like on a jury of X-Factor: you have to present in front of a jury—sitting at a table—and public audience. Everybody can ask you a question and we just had a buzzer to say yes or no. This was Edi's invention and I think it works in that particular environment because he is getting public attention and support. I first noticed Edi when he was ... It was an art biennale and I saw something strange going on in the projection room. Then I saw it was Edi doing his painting of the facades, which were totally grey. He wanted to put any color whatsoever to make them look better. And he said—as a conceptual artist—that being the major of Tirana is the ultimate form of conceptual art. I would agree with him. Now he has to invent the way to paint Albania and he should know what to do with a country in need



of lots of investments. Albania is just one hour flight from Ljubljana and you can enter with ID-card. So it's basically just around the corner and has fantastic restaurants and bars. The first time I went there I was more than pleasantly surprised by the transformations they're doing. I think it's a very interesting location right in the middle of Europe at the moment.

ŽK_ The projects you have shown, in Rijeka for example, have a lot of left-over industrial buildings. Do you think that the renovation of old buildings in urban areas is a key issue for the younger generations of architects?

SR_ I would say it's a key issue for a city, but our politicians or city administrations can't realize that cities can actually go bankrupt. It happened to Detroit recently, which is a far richer city than whole Croatia is ... Or it was. So the cities really do need to find sustainable economic strategies to survive. I was a bit critical about the idea that culture is going to transform cities, but, on the other hand, without a good cultural environment you can't really have new businesses coming into these cities. So there is a direct connection. The problem with this former industry—in all cities and in Rijeka in particular—is that it is basically too big. And it can't be solved with gradual transformations but with a steep rise of activity. This is anyway how the city of Rijeka was developed in the 1870s, about the time of the construction of Suez Canal. The Austrian Hungarian Empire built two ports, one was in Trieste and the other one was Rijeka and then this rise was really vertical. During the Italian division of the city it went down and then

in socialist Yugoslavia it went up again and now it went down. So it's more like an up and down. And now it's down and down and down ... [all laughing] But it does require a bright set of people to reinvent what can be used from this territory.

RR_ In your response we notice that the political issue is always on the table. It's so very there. Every day, probably also in the way you're dealing with it, in the way you're working on your projects ... I read in your CV that you also took a political position. You were also president, right? You were president of the Croatian architects association. What made you go in that direction?

SR_ In other European countries, practicing architects don't usually get too much involved in, let's say, political activities. This was not the case in Croatia, where, up until



recently, it was expected from well-established practicing architects to assume a role in the social infrastructure of architects, not the political structure. We had an association of architects—the chamber of architects was abolished in 1945 and it was re-established in 1999—that was playing the central role in the architectural environment. It had awards program—it still has—it organizes competitions, exhibitions and events. I was mostly interested in this cultural aspect in the work of the association. I was involved in the organization of congresses of architecture and exhibitions. It was very political; simply because of the environment I was working and growing in. On the other hand, Croatia is a really small country and it is normal to get involved in some sort of a discussion. It's your neighbor who is your major in a way—in my case literally. You do get engaged with him. There is this habit—it's the lowest form of self-expression—of these political discussions after a couple of bottles of wine. And this is something that we tend to do.

RR_ So you're traveling back and forth between Baku, Zagreb and Tirana. And you still have the teaching position in Split. You've mentioned a little bit what you tell your students, how you comment their work. But how do you set up the programs for your students?

SR_ Well, to be honest, we do not ... First of all, Split's school of architecture is a young school and it still hasn't been corrupted by the disease of higher education institutions in Croatia, meaning that they are self-reproducing. And, like any self-reproducing environment,

it brings degenerations after a while. If you have inbreeds ... We are still too young, we all share the table in the cafeteria. We are not divided yet. So the atmosphere is quite healthy. On the other hand, Bologna has not proven to be a very successful model. It's more like a prolonged high-school, taking on forever ... We work in studios with two professors and two assistants per 30 students—quite luxurious, I think—and we try to work on actual assignments. We try to do what Herman did: simulate an actual environment. Last semester we had a commission from a municipality on the coast. They wanted us to make different proposals on their master plan, so they could see which direction is better. It was good for the students because they were able to see how the dialogue works and how they can contribute to that.

ŽK_ And then there is some sort of a connection to Harvard?

SR_ This connection is now kind of fading out because we were unable to produce a book. When I went to Baku, I met the minister of culture and tourism and we became very good friends. He is an extraordinary guy and I convinced him to finance a research study by Harvard. I was a kind of a broker between Americans and Azerbaijanis. And it was fun sitting at a table in this state institute—there were Azerbaijani and American flags—and I was standing right there. It was a research seminar that was done in 2011 and it's a story that still hasn't had its happy ending. It's taking much more time than both I and the minister anticipated.

ŽK_ But this—taking a lot of time—is also something going on in the life of a practicing architect. Basically, you have to be very patient to get a project done.

SR_ Yeah, but once you get it, you have to get it done fast. The patience is then wearing out on the other side, so you need to progress immediately. It was also interesting how American students were relating to an environment that was completely different from their own experiences. These were post-graduate students—pretty bright people from Harvard—of a certain educational level and standards. Some of them were able to communicate quite freely and really take out much more than I was able to do. Somehow, being born in an empire gives you more freedom in communication.

RR_ It was interesting in your lecture that you showed projects that worked out well and project that failed—especially those which actually failed. Because usually you give a lecture and it's always the success story, but we all know—as architects—not everything is successful; there's also the dark side of our life. But when you went through these projects, it had something to do with your way of thinking, which is extremely fast. I think these projects can be really fast, even if one took like ten years. You signed the contract twice, so you had a second go. But what I really appreciate is the touch of humor you still have working as an architect, which gives the whole thing another kind of very positive glance.

SR_ You have to stay positive, I mean, otherwise ...

RR_ That's a good closing word! You have to stay positive! Saša, thank you very much for this very interesting lecture and the great talk we had here this evening!

SR_ Thank you!

Pezo Von Ellrichshausen_Concepción

Mauricio Pezo and Sofia von Ellrichshausen established their art and architecture studio PEZO VON ELLRICHSHAUSEN in Concepcion, southern Chile, in 2002. They teach regularly in Chile and have been Visiting Professors at The University of Texas (Austin, 2011-2014) and at Cornell University (New York, 2009). Their work has been distinguished with the MCHAP Emerge Prize by the IIT (Chicago, 2014), the Rice Design Alliance Prize (Houston, 2012) and the V Iberoamerican Architecture Biennial Award (Montevideo, 2006); edited in monographic issues of A+U (Tokyo, 2013), 2G (Barcelona, 2012) and ARQ (Santiago, 2007); and exhibited at La Biennale di Venezia (Venice, 2010), at the Royal Academy of Arts (London, 2014) and as part of the permanent Collection at the MoMA (New York, 2014).

www.pezo.cl

Arno Brandhuber_Berlin

Arno Brandhuber is the founder of brandhuber+ Berlin. He holds the chair of architecture and urban research at the Academy of Fine Arts, Nuremberg and is directing the nomadic masters program a42.org. He is co-founder of the public seminar Akademie c/o, currently researching on the spatial production of the Berlin Republic.

www.brandhuber.com

Carme Pigem_Olot

Carme Pigem formed the office RCR Arquitectes in Olot together with Ramón Vilalta and Rafael Aranda in 1987. RCR works on HOW the architectural question is proposed. Architecture is any space for any activity, anywhere. HOW is this space, HOW it satisfies the needs it is made for, HOW it fits into the designated place - our architecture is one answer to those questions. Architecture comes out of a blank; a void we have to cross in order to get to a space where light becomes discernible and our senses start feeling. This unexplainable step is what makes architecture a creative profession, intrinsically linked to the dreams of the designing team.

www.rcrarquitectes.es

Saša Randić_Zagreb

Saša Randić graduated from the University of Zagreb (1990). He was amongst the very first generations to graduate from the Berlage Institute in Amsterdam (1992). He established the office Randic-Turato Architects in 1993 together with Idis Turato. Randić and Associates, his present practice, was formed in 2009. He has received several prizes for his work and was shortlisted for Mies van der Rohe EU Prize for Architecture in 2007 and 2011, with the projects of Elementary School in Krk and DVKF Kindergarten. Besides his practice, in 2009 he initiated pogledaj.to, a leading Croatian blog on architecture. He teaches at the Split School of Architecture.

www.randic.hr

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page 7 9	Ana Crovetto
page 7 63	Pep Sau
page 7 85	Randić and Associates
page 10 11	Cristobal Palma
page 12 13	James Harris
page 14 15 16 17	Cristobal Palma
page 19 23 25 26	IAT_Fabian Reisenberger
page 32	Michael Reisch
	b&k+ Arno Brandlhuber & Bernd Kniess plans
	Brandlhuber+ axos
page 33	Stefan Schneider
page 34 35	Brandlhuber+
page 35	Marc Strunz Michels
page 36	Nathan Willock
	Brandlhuber+ Emde, Schneider plans & axos
page 37 38 39	Erica Overmeer
	Brandlhuber+ Emde, Schneider plans & axo
page 41 44 48 50 55 58	IAT_Fabian Reisenberger
page 64 65	Marc Checinski
page 66 67 68 69 70	Pep Sau
page 71	R. Prat
page 73 77 78 80	IAT_Fabian Reisenberger
page 86 87	Robert Leš
page 88 89	Sandro Lendler
page 91	Randić and Associates
page 92 93	Sandro Lendler
page 95 98 101 102	IAT_Fabian Reisenberger

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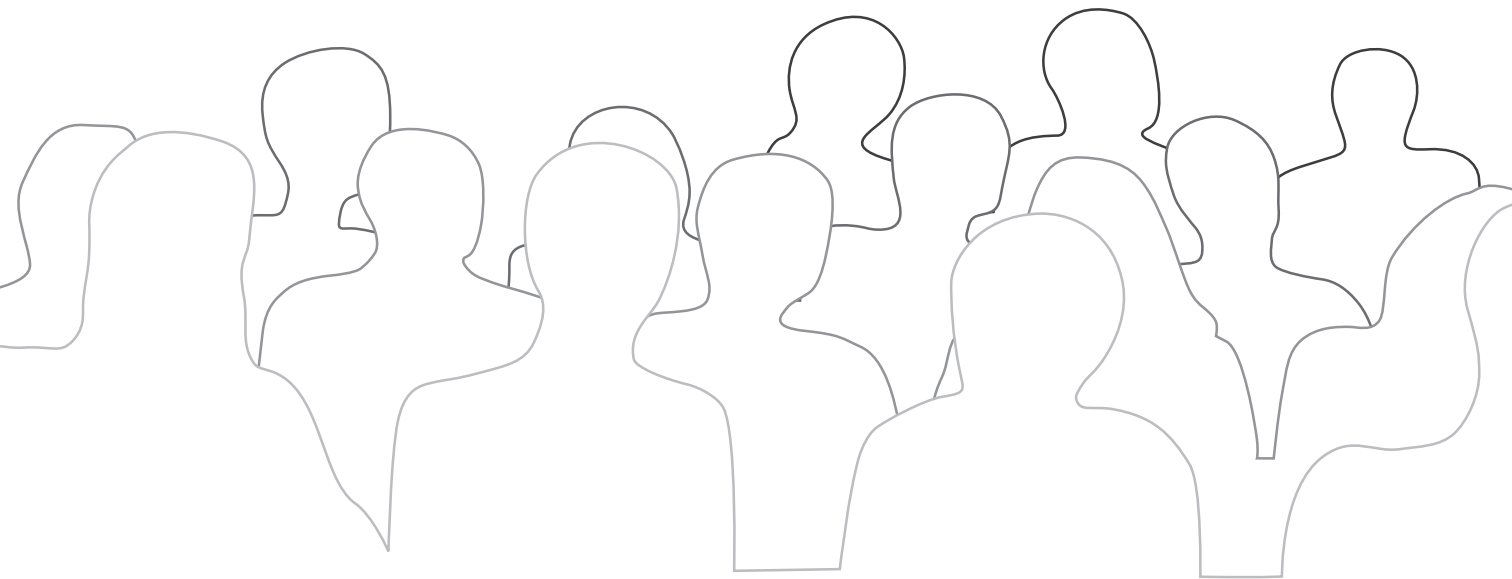
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