BEYOND COLOR

12th INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITION
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

People Meet In Architecture
Director: Kazuyo Sejima

ALBANIAN PARTICIPATION

Curator:
Gjergj Bakallbashi

Assistant Curators:
Enida Mitro
Egest Gjinali

CATALOGUE
Graphic/Editors/Coordinators
Gjergj Bakallbashi, Enida Mitro, Egest Gjinali

EXHIBITION
Design/Concept
Gjergj Bakallbashi, Enida Mitro, Egest Gjinali
Introduction

There was almost no color in Tirana before the project of painted facades, initiated and conceptualized by its mayor, Edi Rama. Now there is color almost everywhere in Tirana. We feel that the time is ripe to ask ourselves how we can move beyond color, while maintaining the tremendous momentum that the project of coloring the facades has created. Prompted both by the theme that Sejima has set for the biennale: PEOPLE MEET IN ARCHITECTURE, and by our curiosity to speculate about Albania’s most potent urban phenomenon: TIRANA, the team of curators decided to open up the pavilion to contributors from other countries and other fields. Through site specific proposals, film, photography, interviews and discussions as well as student work we create a topography that can serve as future territory for collaborations on architecture and design for Tirana and, we hope, other contexts.

Gjergj Bakallbashi, Curator
Enida Mitro, Egest Gjinali, Assistant Curators

Tirana Speculations

The Tirana train station sits at the northern end of Tirana’s main boulevard, and at its intersection with city’s first ringroad (the second is under construction/a third one is in the planning stage). Beyond, there are open fields, informal settlements, industrial warehouses, gypsy market, produce market, one of the largest and few remaining nurseries in the city. The open air platform allows for views past the actual terminal in all directions, and invites one to think about what may be the future of this area of the city.

1. Will the monumental gain the upperhand and drive to extinction the natural and the informal?
2. Will the monumental itself be replaced altogether by the commercial, or will there be a newly formulated balance between the monumental, the informal, the natural and the infrastructural?
3. Will the train station survive? And if it does what kind will it become? A conventional train station (with many shops and kiosks incorporated inside its precincts) or some other kind of station (a park station).

In the past 15 years Tirana has grown from 200.000 to ~1.000.000, without time for planning. In its explosion, Tirana embodies in a very explicit way the process of rapid urbanization and of the phenomena that accompany it.

We hope that we have given you a clear angle from which you can exercise your vision on the city and this specific site.
Svetlana Boym

OFF-MODERN TIRANA

Off-Modern Urbanism

Tirana is a belated modern capital that developed as a large urban center only in the twentieth century and went through much historic upheaval. Tirana’s “modernity-out-of-synch” that was often treated as its architectural disadvantage might turn instead into an exciting opportunity for the unconventional urban development that focuses on reinhabiting and reimagining the public realm of the city. At the moment Tirana is experiencing a unique urban renewal that brings forth creative potentials of art in the transformation of the public sphere.

I call such development “off-modern” urbanism. It rescues multiple modern histories of the city, including histories of “what if,” of the unexplored urban potentials and looks for creative and transformative uses of architecture and rehabilitation of marginalized public space. Off-modern in my definition focuses on the lateral potentialities of the modern project, on the roads not taken, expanding the understanding of “new media”, technology and artistic technique and practice.

“Off” as in “off quilter,” off Broadway, “off the path,” or “way off,” off-brand, off the wall and occasionally “off-color.” “Off-modern” is a detour into the unexplored potentials of the modern project. It recovers unforeseen pasts and ventures into the side-alleys of modern history at the margins of error of major philosophical, economic and technological narratives of modernization and progress.
Beyond Color

Commissioner:
The Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Albania

Curating Team:
Curator: Gjergj Bakallbashi, VIZA Arkitekts
Assistant Curators: Enida Mitro, Egest Gjinali,

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Gareth Doherty, Editor
New Geographies, a publication of Harvard University Press, Issue 3
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Nikolay Nedev | N C - o f f i c e | architecture / urbanism, Miami
Helidon Gjergji, Artist, New York
Maks Velo, Artist/Architect, Tirana
Armand Vokshi, AVATELIER, Tirana
Luciano Bojaxhiiu, Institute of Preservation of Historic Monuments, Tirana
Dritan Zajmi, Artist, Geneva,
Virginia Studio, Tirana
Dritan Mesareja, Artist, Tirana
Ledia Kostandini, Artist, Tirana
Paul Cohn, Tirana
A sensitive journey exploring the urban topography of the city, searching for what identity is made of.

* Carte blanche – a permission to act and make decisions without restriction
SINGING BIRDS
Zeinab Aghamahdi, Egest Gjinali
2010

Tirana was drastically transformed in few years from a city dominated by its idyllic context, mountains, rivers, orchards, gardens, into a metropolis in transition. In a new context where public space rapidly disappeared or has became unfriendly, we propose to use the existing train station structure as a meeting place for all inhabitants of the surrounding informal settlements. By implanting a living filter of birds and plants around the station, this project serves as a manifesto for the importance of poetic space in the city.

open/empty/paint/ship/construct

Installation
Gjergj Bakallbashi/VIZA Arkitekts
2010
TIRANA WONDERLAND: A techno-botanical menagerie

GA/C
2010

As it attempts to position itself in the global context, Albania is in a state of flux. Throughout its ancient history, networks from Tirana to the rest of the nation and beyond its borders have been established and broken, then reestablished. Our project celebrates the potential in change by combining the natural and the artificial in the form of a 15 story billboard slowly being taken over by the flora of Albania. This billboard gives the station a major presence on the ring road, making a mass transit mark on the urban traffic flow of new Tirana.

GA/C
General Architecture / Collaborative is a group of architects, landscape architects, industrial designers and visual artists operating in both the academic and professional realms to engage projects with a social agenda. We design and implement strategic and culturally specific architecture, landscape, urban design and planning solutions with disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.
Currently GA/C works with Association Dushyigikirane, a cooperative founded and operated by the widows of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, to plan and design a housing development for 70 families. In tandem, we are building a community center equipped with an auditorium, nursery school, clinic and a job training center.

BALSEROS
Nikolay Nedev | N C - o f f i c e |
2010
FISHERMEN HOUSING
Hashim Sarkis Studios
Tyre, Lebanon
2009
With photographic contributions from:
Albana Tollkuci, Architect
Ledia Kostandini, Artist
Paul Cohn, Photographer
Elda Kruja, Architect
Dritan Zajmi, Artist

Helidon Gjergji
2009

Dritan Zajmi
2009

Virginia Studio
Summer 2008