

Reality check

Contentious urban connection

■ SARAJEVO (BA) — In 2008, a competition for the architectural and urban design of a bridge linking the Academy of Visual

Arts and Radićeva Street was won by a group of students from the Academy's Product Design Department. Now their long-awaited design (see A10 #21) has reached completion.

The first example of pedestrian infrastructure of contemporary design in central and historic Sarajevo has raised the quality of urban life as part of an overall project to link public green spaces and pedestrian zones. When, in the next phase, Radićeva Street is closed to motor vehicle traffic, the bridge will form a crucial transversal axis while adding a new dimension within the extremely linear configuration of the city's layout. The reason for beginning with the bridge goes beyond its connecting function — it has revived the neglected role of the River Miljacka in the townscape and restored nature's standing in the future urban transformation of Sarajevo.

Placed as it is directly opposite the eclectic edifice of the Academy, the sculptural form of the bridge seems to

extend a welcome to the world of art — a symbolic gateway — thereby compensating to some degree for the absence of a public space outside this cultural and educational institution. Though its relation to the Academy and the historic setting was defined as dialectical from initial concept, once the bridge was complete, it was reduced to the purely formal and necessary. The outcome of the interpolation of the bridge is not a harmony of spatial relations, but domination, which has given rise to heated debate within the profession. The non-standard geometry of the bridge required complex statics computations, as a result of which the structure had to be larger than planned. The innovative and original form has been preserved, but the bridge has lost its elegance, slenderness and proportionality.

The 38-metre-long steel span, paved with aluminium plates and fitted with wooden benches, has become a meeting place that provides a new urban vista. Its value should be considered in light of its primary aim — to create an attractive urban landmark that enhances the function of the urban organism. It has indeed achieved this, as can be seen on a daily basis. (ELŠA TURKUŠIĆ)

'Festina Lente' pedestrian bridge over the Miljacka River, 2008–2012
Architects Amila Hrustic, Adnan Alagic and Bojan Kalinic
Construction IPSA Institute, TRASA Sarajevo, TDV Graz
Realization GP ŽGP Sarajevo
Client Municipality Centre Sarajevo



Strangely familiar

■ LONDON (UK) — Buildings are brands. And at Chinese menswear fashion retailer Bosideng's new store in London, the idea behind the brand appears to be that of 'strangely familiar'.

Bosideng have taken zero risks with their entrance image to their first overseas flagship store and European headquarters. Purchased for 26 million euros in 2011, the shop sits on a narrow triangular plot that would otherwise have been unattainable for anything other than a very established brand. The shop's main entrance at the tip of the triangle overlooks one of the most famous, most

economically reliable and busiest fashion shopping areas in the world: Oxford Street. Combined with its address on the high-end fashion South Molton Street, Bosideng are clearly attempting to attract the masses. The irony is, of course, they are virtually unheard of.

Whereas this kind of extreme jump into retailing's deep end might usually be matched by radical, shiny, never-before-seen architecture, its designers, London-based practice DSDHA, have actually gone for something rather more conservative. It is a continuation of the company's marketing message, as is the whole building, really: the sense that it has always been there.

The six-storey building, from its footprint and form down to the detail of its curved glass windows, the dark terracotta of its tile facade and its exterior 'green' living wall areas, strongly reminisces its predecessor, the 1960s-era Hog in the Pound pub with its brick walls and hanging baskets. With a reinforced concrete frame to reduce column size, 28 Molton Street is an intelligent response to a tight site. Retail is spread over three floors, with an office and storage space on the two floors above and a small living space at the very top.

Whatever the building speaks of Bosideng's desire to establish itself as a well-recognized, international brand, it gives it the best possible architectural chance to succeed. (ISABELLE PRIEST)

Bosideng flagship store, 2009–2012 Architect DSDHA Client Bosideng
Address 28 South Molton Street, London Info www.dsdha.co.uk



Books Shifting skies

Crisis? What crisis? In *The Sky's the Limit – Applying Radical Architecture* no trace can be found of the ideological and moral confusion of the architect that revolves around whether or not architecture focuses too much on the image, the icon, instead of purpose and sustainability. No battlefield over the influence on the construction process and access to competitions and procurements. And no financial meltdown of banks and stock markets. Indeed, it was once present, the crisis, but it is long since gone. And therefore the architectural icon has returned, stronger than ever. 'From it arose an opportunity to remake the image of both icon and the architectural field simultaneously. [...] The rebirth of the icon offers exciting new opportunities for sculptural architecture.' The architectural icon is now even freed of financial strength and power plays, and so aesthetics finally gets some room to breathe.

How gladly would we want to believe that, especially when the seductively presented images of the new era are strung together. The James Bond-like tourist centre by Reiulf Ramstad Architects in Norway (2012), the voluptuous curves of kindergarten La Bulle Enchantée by Paul Le Querrec & Michel Grasso (2011) in Sarreguemines, France, and the iridescent Music Hall in the

small Spanish village of Algueña by Cor & Asociados/Miquel Rodenas & Jesús Olivares (2011). Each one a European project from a European architecture bureau. In stark contrast stands *Shifts. Architecture after the 20th century*, by Hans Ibelings and Powerhouse Company, which appeared almost at the same time. The publication is a continuation of the exhibition *Rien ne va plus* (2008), in which the authors attempted to get a grip on the impact of the global economic crisis and its consequences for the architect in Western Europe. Now, four years later, it is still too early to predict how things will progress, but it is certain that we stand at the end of an era. Yet the authors still end the book with a moderately positive tone: 'Out of nothing, from zero and without preconceptions, it may be possible to envisage [...] a new practice in which yesterday's all-encompassing generalists [...] can develop a new consciousness and reinvent themselves.' But there is still a lot to overcome: the population is shrinking, there is hardly any manufacturing industry, and economic growth remains stagnant according to expectations. Moreover, the neoliberal political movement is ensuring a decrease in projects from the public sector.

Behind the bright facades of *The Sky's the Limit*, it is exactly this crisis being aptly documented. For Europe, this book is a kind of *Bonfire of the Vanities*. Although it remains unmentioned, we know that the

Spanish projects are funded with streams of European money that have now run dry. That projects from France, Germany, the Netherlands and Ireland have been established by public clients who are now hardly allowing anything to still be built. And although European buildings are still barely in the majority, other continents are on the march. In the rest of the world a great deal of architectural fun still lives on! In this respect, we really must go visit Georgia (Sarpi Border Checkpoint by Jürgen Mayer H, 2011), Beirut (USJ Campus de L'Innovation et du Sport by 109 Architects & Youssef Tohme, 2011), or Korea (Galleria Centricity by UNStudio, 2010). Yet, with the warnings and sombre tone of *Shifts* in mind, there is still something to learn from *The Sky's the Limit*. The celebration of architectural forms and application of new materials and structures also provides inspiration and innovative ways to get started in Old Europe. There is the beautiful experiment of Situ Studio at the Brooklyn Museum (2011), wherein a new architectural environment is created with lightweight and flexible fabric. And the architectural ruins of the Abbey of St. Maurice in Switzerland were breathtakingly covered by Savioz Fabrizzi Architects in 2010. The latter is perhaps a hopeful allegory of how new forms and material innovations can also lead to sustainability and servitude, without (wanting to be) an icon. (INDIRA VAN 'T KLOOSTER)



Shifts – Architecture after the 20th century
The Architecture Observer, 2012, Hans Ibelings,
96 pp., €18, ISBN 978-90-819207-0-4



The Sky's the Limit – Applying Radical Architecture
Die Gestalten, R. Klanten, S. Ehmann, S. Borges (eds.),
2012, 288 pp., €49.90, ISBN: 978-3-89955-422-9