MONTENEGRO PAVILION at the 14th International Architecture Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia

TREASURES IN DISGUISE

Curated by Boštjan Vuga (SADAR+VUGA), Dijana Vučinić (DVARP), Simon Hartmann (HHF Architects), Ilka & Andreas Ruby (Ruby Press), and Nebojša Adžić

Treasures in Disguise is an exhibition exploring the past, present, and possible futures of Yugoslav architecture in Montenegro for the 14th International Architecture Exhibition at la Biennale di Venezia.

The Montenegro Pavilion presents four examples of late-modernist architecture that were built in Montenegro between 1960 and 1986: Dom Revolucije, Hotel Fjord, Kayak Club “Galeb,” and Spomen Dom. Curated by an international group of architects and architectural critics, the exhibition seeks to start a conversation about urban regeneration in Montenegro and the future of the former Yugoslavia’s architecture.

When the four buildings on display first opened, they radiated their builders’ enthusiasm and confidence about the new society they were building. Today, only a few decades later, these buildings embody the complete opposite: poorly used (if at all) and maintained (if ever completed), they are a testament to the failure of modernism and the breakdown of Yugoslavia. Nobody seems to be able to recognize their value, hence their fate seems sealed: decay and demolition.

But how can something that was born out of a collective optimism lose its promise in such a short period of time? Is the demise of these buildings really due to an intrinsic lack of quality, or have we been unable to treat them with enough empathy to awaken a dormant potential that might be hidden underneath the patina of our own ideological disenchantment with modernism?

The curators of this pavilion believe it is the latter. These buildings represent a cultural resource that is too precious to destroy; if given a second chance, they will surprise us with their unique spatial, programmatic, and social potential. The aim of the exhibition is therefore to help the audience, through architectural representations of the interiors and exteriors of the four buildings, discover the uncanny beauty of structures that, while they look like ruins today, are nothing but treasures in disguise.

EXHIBITION DETAILS:

Opening: Thursday June 5, 2014, 6 PM
Press conference: Thursday June 5, 2014, 5 PM
Exhibition: June 7 to November 23, 2014, 10 AM to 6 PM
Address: Palazzo Malipiero, Ramo Malipiero San Marco, 3079
For further information, please visit www.treasures-in-disguise.net

PRESS INFORMATION:

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To download high-resolution press images and the press release, please visit: press section at www.treasures-in-disguise.net
Images should be credited, but can be used free of charge.
About the buildings:

DOM REVOLUCIJE

Architect: Marko Mušić
Location: Nikšić, Montenegro
Years of construction: 1979-1989, unfinished
Area (built): 20,468 square meters

Dom Revolucije (“Revolution Home” in English) was built as a memorial to those who died during the Second World War and as a landmark and cultural center for the city of Nikšić. At the time, Nikšić was growing as an industrial center in Yugoslavia. During the design process, the surface area of Dom Revolucije tripled from its original 7,230 square meters to 21,738 square meters. The construction work on the building stopped in 1989.

Image courtesy of Marko Mušić's archive
Hotel Fjord stands in a prime location, at the very end of Boka Kotorska Bay and close to the old town of Kotor, a UNESCO-protected site. The design by Zlatko Ugljen, a Yugoslavian architect of Bosnian origin, was selected through an open architecture competition. When it was completed in 1986, the hotel had 155 rooms, 4 suites, and many amenities, including restaurants, bars, tennis courts, a swimming pool, and a conference center. After nineteen years of operating as a hotel, the building was privatized and sold. In 2005, it was closed down and slated for demolition, and today it is vacant and unused.
Kayak Club “Galeb” is located in Podgorica, on the left bank of Morača river and just above Labud beach. Initially, the building included a restaurant, beach café, and kayaking club, combining sports, recreation, and leisure. “Galeb” was abandoned after several attempts to maintain the beach bar; the original kayaking club did not last longer than one summer. The building is currently used by the kayaking club Morača, but it is in very poor condition and closed to the public.
Spomen Dom (“Memorial Home” in English) is located in the city center of Kolašin, in the northern part of Montenegro. It was built to commemorate the first assembly of the National Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Montenegro and Boka, the southern region of Montenegro, and functioned as a cultural and administrative center for Kolašin and its surrounding areas. The local authorities maintained the building up until the early 90s, but since then its maintenance costs have been removed from the region's budget. The building is therefore in very poor condition today. A few years ago, they considered demolishing it in order to build a new tourism complex on the site. However, this plan has been stalled by the economic crisis. The building is still used today for municipal administration and by local political parties. It is also considered one of Montenegro’s most beautiful examples of post-war architecture.
Boštjan Vuga is the co-director (with Jurij Sadar) of the award-winning Slovenian architecture office SADAR+VUGA, which focuses on open, innovative, and integral architectural design and urban planning. Vuga regularly lectures at architectural schools, conferences, and symposia in Slovenia and at institutions abroad. He is currently a guest professor at the University of Applied Sciences, Münster. Vuga guest edited two issues of the Architects’ Bulletin (ab) and has written about current events in architecture and urban planning for diverse publications.

Dijana Vučinić is a practicing architect from Montenegro. She recently founded DVARP, an interdisciplinary architectural and design practice with projects that range from urban design and residential buildings to stage design. She is also the founder of the Kotor Architectural Prison Summer School (APSS), a platform for further research on and development of urban structures in Kotor, Montenegro. Vučinić writes for several periodicals and scholarly publications in Montenegro and is also a co-founder and member of the Urbanism and Architecture Association of Montenegro.

Simon Hartmann studied architecture at the ETH Lausanne, Technische Universität Berlin, and ETH Zürich. In 2002, he became a teaching assistant at the ETH Studio Basel, an institute for urban research, and in 2003, he co-founded HHF Architects with Simon Frommenwiler and Tilo Herlach. Between 2009 and 2011, Hartmann taught as a professor at the Hochschule für Technik und Architektur Freiburg, where he now teaches the Joint Master of Architecture program. Since 2010, Hartmann has been a member of the Federation of Swiss Architects.

Ilka & Andreas Ruby publish, curate, teach, and consult on issues around architecture and urbanism. Trained as an architect and an architectural historian, respectively, Ilka Ruby and Andreas Ruby are the founders of textbild, an office for architectural communication, and Ruby Press, an award-winning publishing house based in Berlin. They have organized several international symposia on architecture and design, such as the “Min to Max” symposium on affordable housing. In 2012, they curated the exhibition Druot, Lacaton & Vassal—Tour Bois le Prêtre for the German Architecture Museum in Frankfurt. Ilka & Andreas Ruby are the founders of the German architecture debate platform www.bkult.de.

Nebojša Adžić is the current president of the Union of Architects of Montenegro and the founder of the first Montenegrin salon of architecture. He is one of the first architects in Montenegro to promote and apply sustainable, ecological, and energy-efficient design. From 2003 and 2008, he worked as an assistant during the development of the University of Montenegro’s Faculty of Architecture in Podgorica. Adžić is currently involved in an urban renewal project in his hometown of Nikšić.