ABSTRACT

Bevk Perović arhitekti was founded by Matija Bevk b. 1972, graduated from Faculty of Architecture University of Ljubljana) and Vasa J. Perović b. 1965, graduated from Faculty of Architecture University of Belgrade, YU; Master’s degree from Berlage Institute, Amsterdam). They work, alongside with the international team of 15 young architects, on a diverse range of projects in different European countries.

They have been awarded numerous national and international prizes - European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture - Mies van der Rohe Emerging Architect Award, Kunstpreis Berlin, Plečnik Prize, Piranesi Award, and others.

In order to understand and comprehend their work, one must examine their ‘dedicated choice’ to follow conditions in which a building emerges. These conditions range from political and social, to environmental and material their simple, yet complex architectural solutions strive to respond to those conditions beyond bare function.

For this publication we have selected two of the most recent finished public buildings: Islamic Religious and Cultural Centre Ljubljana and Neue Galerie und Kasematten / Neue Bastei, Wiener Neustadt 2016 - 2019.

Keywords: Conditions, Recognition, Intervention, Integration, Public space, Detail
The 'specificity' of the new location for the Islamic Religious and Cultural Centre is precisely its complete lack of specificity — an area that is near the city centre, but abandoned and forgotten, in a fragile undeveloped state, with an uncertain urban future. Much like its historical predecessors — the case of Sarajevo mosques during 19th century being a nearby example, where mosque complexes — built by rich donors — were the starting points, the 'seeds' for the development of the new parts of the city — the new complex becomes one such thing for this part of Ljubljana.

The programme of the centre consists of a religious school building, a cultural and office programme, an apartment building for the employees of the community, a restaurant, as well as the mosque, the first one to be built in Slovenia, all of them supported by car parking in the basement.
The new buildings of the centre are positioned as separate entities, autonomous buildings surrounding the central square area with a mosque in the centre of it. They are simple volumes, oriented always towards the ‘outside’ world with their respective programmes, simultaneously surrounding the mosque building and allowing views towards it from all sides through the gaps in-between them.

The mosque, sitting on and opening fully towards the square to allow for extension of the prayer space on the outside during large gatherings of the congregation, is the central element of the new complex. Rather than following obvious historical precedents, as well as the recent iconographically obvious examples, it is conceived as a steel structure – a 32/32/24 metre box constructed of 1-meter (45cm) deep and only 2 (8cm) centimetre thick steel latticework, filled with white concrete on the lower part, and transparent glass on the upper part, allowing for the sun to flood the interior space.

The cupola – the central element of the mosque – rather than topping the space, hangs suspended within its interior. As a representation of the sky in historical examples – it is made of transparent blue textile, the flimsiest and most fragile of materials, the material which in Islam has a long and rich history – from the Kiswah of Kaaba to the portable tent-mosques of Iran.
Photo on the left: Cupola detail
Photo below: The textile cupola – the central element of the mosque
Photo above right: Facade segment
Photo below right: View from the cascade garden towards the complex
The project is a result of a competition held in 2016 that set the task of making the casemates, an ammunition storage structure of the medieval fortress accessible to the general public in the form of new cultural centre/exhibition venue for the small city of Wiener Neustadt.

The project deals with the issue of reconstruction and integration of historical layers into the life of the city - the historical complex, hidden for a long time, can be experienced and understood in its entirety, while accepting new programmatic definition.

The area in front of the casemates is conceived as a gently sloping public square that connects the level of city to the semi-submerged level of the old structure, receiving visitors with a horizontally glazed ground floor. The visitor is then led through the maze-like - almost 'piranesian' structure of the old casemates, that have been transformed into an exhibition venue for the city.

Улазни трг - повезује ниво града са нивоом старих казамата / Entrance square - connects the level of the city with the level of the old casemates
Old casemates
Доле: Основа приземља / Bellow: Ground floor plan; Горе: Пресек / Above: Section
Old casemates
The new multipurpose hall, a kind of art gallery space lit from above, stands at the end of the subterranean promenade; it provides a natural, contemporary conclusion for the complex.

A gentle slope connects the area inside the casemates back with the level of the Stadtpark, thus finishing the topographical outline of the complex - from the city, through the subterranean historical layers of the fortress, back to the surface of the city and the green park.

The discipline of the intervention is stressed though the material definition of the additions - the brick wall of the historical structure is complemented and revealed through the cast concrete materiality of the additions - making the new and old visibly differ, yet appear united.
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