

intervjuji

interviews



uvodnik
 esej
 predstavitev
 intervju
 natečaj
 kritika
 pogovor
 predavanje
 prevodi

milton braga
 wang shu
 aaron tan
 yvonne farrell
 maruša zorec
 francis kéré
 saša randić
 john wardle
 robert mccarter

pozabimo naučeno, tvegajmo

intervju z Miltonom Brago

Vlatka Ljubanović

avoid knowledge, take bigger risks

interview with Milton Braga

Vlatka Ljubanović



Foto: Peter Krapež

V sklopu Piranskih dni arhitekture smo lahko ravnokar poslušali vaše predavanje. S pozicije, v kateri se trenutno nahajamo, v kavarni Tartinijevega gledališča, pusti vsebina vašega predavanja še močnejši vtis. Pokazali ste svojo vizijo mesta - metropole, kot je São Paulo. V intervjuju bi se rada posvetila projektom vašega biroja MMBB (MMBB je arhitekturni biro, ki so ga leta 1990 v São Paulu ustanovili Fernando de Mello Franco, Marta Moreira in Milton Braga). Zanimiva se mi zdi na primer hiša Vila Romana, ki ste jo projektirali za umetnika Espirita Santa, in omenili tudi v vašem predavanju. Kakšna je filozofija biroja MMBB, katera prepričanje in kakšna načela vodijo vaše delo?

Ko razmišljaš o družbeni odgovornosti in o relevantnosti arhitekture, mislim, da se pokaže velika razlika med velikim in majhnim merilom. Drage individualne hiše prav gotovo ne pripomorejo prav veliko v smislu družbenega,

Hearing your lecture at the Piran Days of Architecture, the large scale and scope of your presentation were really impressive, especially from our current point of view as we sit in the tiny cafe of Tartini Theatre in the tiny town of Piran. You talked about your vision of São Paulo as a metropolis, but I'd like to talk about MMBB's specific projects [architectural practice MMBB was founded in São Paulo by Fernando de Mello Franco, Marta Moreira and Milton Braga in 1990], such as Vila Romana, home of the artist Espirito Santo, which you also mentioned during the lecture. Tell us more about the philosophy of MMBB and the principles and beliefs that guide your work.

I don't think there is a big difference between the large scale and the small scale in terms of social responsibility and relevance. Expensive houses obviously don't have much to contribute, although from the architectural point of view, even private houses have a public dimension, i.e. their façade. They are part of the city



čeprov se jih z arhitekturnega stališča obravnava kot neke vrste javni prostor. No, javna je vsaj njihova fasada, so pa tudi del mesta in morda lahko škodujejo sosedom. Pomembno je, da ustvarjajo diskurz. Arhitekti vzpostavljamo diskurz vsakokrat, ko se odločimo, da bomo nekaj naredili tako in ne drugače. Zato pa verjamem, da zgradbe vseh meril lahko, oziroma celo morajo, pripadati istemu diskurzu. Arhitekturni diskurz je vedno zelo zapleten in ga je le redko mogoče primerjati z jezikovnim. V intervjuju bom poskusil razložiti lastnosti naših projektov v jezikovnem diskurzu, s pomočjo govorjenega jezika. Pri MMBB v prvi vrsti želimo ustvarjati zgradbe, ki dajejo prostor za človeško delovanje. Zato gradimo zelo preproste zgradbe s pravilnimi volumni in čistimi pravilnimi prostori, pri čemer računamo predvsem na vložek, ki ga bodo v zgradbo prinesli uporabniki s svojim vsakdanjim življenjem. Zgradbe bodo dopolnjevali na način, ki bi mu lahko rekli urbani, saj je podoben urbanim situacijam, vedno nedokončan in dinamičen. Celo v evropskih mestih, ki so precej enotna, lahko pričakujemo spremembe, ki nastajajo zato, ker mesta sledijo spremembam v življenju meščanov. V tem smislu želimo, da bi se tudi naše zgradbe čimbolj spreminjale. Z drugimi besedami pri MMBB skušamo z arhitekturo ustvariti »strojno opremo«, uporabnike pa pozvati, da prispevajo svojo lastno »programsko opremo«. V pomorskem besednjaku, mi zgradimo ladjo, potniki pa prinesejo vse ostalo za udobno potovanje. Na podlagi tega, da ne določimo čisto vsega, uporabnikom zgradimo le osnovno zatočišče. Osredotočeni smo na učinek, ki ga želimo doseči z določeno zgradbo.

Pri hiši Vila Romana, na primer, smo želeli doseči kar največ udobja. Hišo za umetnika, ki živi sam brez družine, smo zato projektirali v eni sami etaži. Zanj je bilo udobno, da mu je vse pri roki, v enem samem odprtem prostoru. Nad vse pomembno je bilo tudi, na kakšen način smo vzpostavili odnos do okolice, ki je zelo izrazita mestna pokrajina, hiša pa ima razgled nad mestom in nad dolino največje reke v São Paulu.

Podoba terase s pogledom me spominja na Case Study House No. 22, hišo Stahl (Stahl House) Pierra Koeniga, in na ikonično fotografijo Juliusa Schulmana.

Ideja zgraditi hišo okoli razgleda ni seveda nič novega. Pri MMBB ne skušamo biti niti revolucionarni, niti ne skušamo biti modernisti. Raje se posvečamo odnosom med ljudmi in človeškemu pogledu na življenje v mestu in v naravi. Nič od tega pa se ni prav dosti spreminjalo. Shakespeare je ravno tako sodoben, kot so Case Study Houses. Učiti se je treba iz te tradicije in iz teh izkušenj. Predstavljamo se kot nadaljevalci modernistične tradicije, ker se mi zdi, da je v nekaterih pogledih še vedno veljaven način razmišljanja in, ker mnogo vprašanj, s katerimi se je modernizem ukvarjal, še vedno ostaja aktualnih. Od tradicije modernizma se razlikujemo po tem, da se jasno zavedamo, da je v arhitekturi potrebno pustiti prostor za ljudi. V svojih zgradbah na primer ne bi nikoli predpisali pohištva, saj o pohištvu niti ne razmišljamo kot o domeni arhitekture. Raje uporabnikom pustimo, da v arhitekturo nekaj vložijo tudi sami. Mislim, da je ravno v tem sodobnost našega pristopa.

Primerjava hiše z ladjo pa je vendar v modernističnem duhu ...

Seveda je. Vendar pa je po drugi strani tudi najmanj modernistični aspekt arhitekture, ki jo skušamo ustvarjati. Arhitekti modernizma so bili prepričani, da ljudem lahko zapovejo, kako je treba živeti. Mi pa tega nikakor nečemo. Mislim, da moramo pustiti prostor za uporabnike, da v arhitekturo prinesejo nekaj svojega in dopolnijo naše oblikovanje.

Modernizem je bil prepričan, da je modernistična arhitektura oblikovana trajnostno, čeprav morda niso uporabljali natanko tega izraza. Kakšen pa je vaš način, na katerega se spoprijemate s problemom trajnostnega oblikovanja, morda skozi posvečanje uporabnikom in njihovem vložku v oblikovanje?

Za primer vzemimo Severno Ameriko (pa ta še zdaleč ni edini primer), kjer ena družina v isti hiši ostane v povprečju po pet let, kar je, precej manj od življenjske dobe ene hiše. Hiša mora biti torej oblikovana ustrezno ne le za enega specifičnega uporabnika, ampak mora biti dovolj prilagodljiva, ne le v smislu praktičnosti, dajati mora tudi dovolj prostora, da se različni ljudje

and can harm their neighbours. Most of all, they represent a discourse. Architects establish discourse whenever we decide to do something rather than something else that we could also do. In this way, I think the small-scale and large-scale not only can, but should have the same discourse.

Architectural discourse is always very complex and can't match verbal discourse. Here I'm trying to explain the quality of our projects by means of verbal discourse, spoken language. Primarily, we want to make buildings and constructions that offer space for whatever people choose to do in them. In fact, we build very simple buildings, regular volumes and clean regular spaces, counting mainly on the input provided by the occupants' everyday lives. They're going to complete the buildings in an urban way, let's say, since urban situations are always incomplete and dynamic. Even in European cities, which are quite consolidated, we can expect changes that follow the changes in the lives of their inhabitants. In that sense, we also hope that our buildings will change. In other words, MMBB aims at establishing "hardware" and letting people bring their own "software". In naval terms, we are taking care only of the fundamental function of the ship and expect the passengers to bring all the other necessities that will complete the ship. So, "not defining everything" is the grounds for providing our basic, fundamental, shelter. We focus on the effect to be achieved.

Take Vila Romana, for example. The most important effect was to provide a lot of comfort. The house was designed for an artist who lives alone, without a family, and features one residential floor. His convenience is to have everything close and available in one open space. But above all, the house provides him with a nice relationship with the landscape, the very powerful surrounding metropolitan cityscape, consisting of a panoramic, 360-degree view of the city, as well as the valley of São Paulo's principal river.

The image of the terrace with the view reminds me of Case Study House No. 22 in Los Angeles, a.k.a. Stahl House by Pierre Koenig, and the iconic photograph by Julius Schulman.

Indeed, this is not new. MMBB does not try to be revolutionary or Modernist. Instead, we try to focus on the relationship between people, on the human aspects of life in the city and in nature. None of them have changed very much. Shakespeare is very contemporary, as are the Case Study Houses. You have to learn from that tradition and experience. We are based in the Modernist tradition because I think it's still very relevant to our time. It addressed many issues that are still current. The main way we differ from that tradition is that we are aware that we have to leave room for people. For example, we would never fix the furniture, we would never think of the furniture as part of architecture, we'd rather let the occupants fill the architecture with their own input. That is the contemporary part of our statement.

However, the comparison of the house to the ship is really Modernist.

Yes, it is. But on the other hand, it's the least Modernist quality of the architecture we are trying to build. Modernists thought they could tell people how to live. We are not trying to do that. We think one has to leave room for the inhabitants to bring something of their own and complete our designs.

Modernists also thought their designs were sustainable, although they would not use the same term. Is your focus on the inhabitants' input in the role of completing architectural designs your way of addressing sustainability?

If you take North America as an example - there are others, too - the average period of a family occupying a house is five years, i.e. much less than the house's lifetime. A house should therefore not be designed for a particular occupant. We should think about flexible architecture not only in terms of practicality but also in terms of providing the space for people to express themselves following our expression. I like the example of the so-called "spaces without names" in Brazilian architecture and elsewhere. Those are spaces where the name does not stem from any pre-defined program or activity to be performed but reflects the quality of the architecture. We try to do architecture which is very purposeful and yet allows for a variety of activities.

lahko v njenem prostoru izrazijo še preko arhitekturnega oblikovanja. Zato mi je v brazilski arhitekturi zelo pri srcu pojav »krajci brez imena«, ki se seveda pojavljajo tudi drugod. »Krajci brez imena« so prostori, katerih ime ne izhaja iz njihovega vnaprej določenega programa, temveč iz arhitekturnih kvalitet samega prostora. Skušamo ustvarjati arhitekturo, ki je sicer zelo usmerjena, vseeno pa omogoča odvijanje različnih dejavnosti.

Tu se seveda moramo spomniti projekta Line Bo Bardi za Muzej umetnosti São Paulo (São Paulo Museum of Art), ki ste ga pokazali v predavanju.

Da, ta muzej je za MMBB najpomembnejši vir navdiha, vsaj konceptualno. Čeprav je Brazilija nova država na novem kontinentu in ima le petsto let zgodovine in čeprav je zgodovina São Paula še krajša, le kakih sto let, saj je bilo mesto pred obdobjem industrializacije povsem nepomembno, imata tako Brazilija in še posebej São Paulo, bogato arhitekturno tradicijo. Tradicijo, na katero se opira tudi naše delo.

Gre za tradicijo Line Bo Bardi, Oscarja Niemeyerja, zadnje čase tudi João Batista Vilanova Artigasa in Paulo Mendes de Roche, s katerim smo si zelo blizu. Znanje, »know-how«, ki smo ga pridobili v sodelovanju z njim, je v našem delu zelo pomembno. Po eni strani je to dobro, po drugi pa slabo. »Know-how« lahko postane neke vrste predsodek, ki te spodbudi k hitremu sprejemanju odločitev brez premisleka. Po letih izkušenj smo pri MMBB dovolj zreli in dovolj samozavestni, da znamo pridobljeni »know-how« preoblikovati in na njegovi podlagi tudi samostojno eksperimentirati. Ko si mlajši od petinštirideset, ti pomanjkanje znanja in izkušenj daje svobodo. Čeprav znanje lahko osvobodi ideje, jih pogosto tudi omejuje. Več znanja in informacij sicer lahko prepreči nekatere neumnosti, včasih pa ti tudi onemogoči, da bi naredil tisto pravo stvar. Moraš se naučiti, kako se izogniti prepreki znanja in kako sprejemati večje tveganje. V portugalščini ima beseda za tveganje (risco) zanimiv dvojni pomen, saj namreč obenem pomeni tudi prostoročno potezo na papirju (risco).

Pri vaših projektih prerezi vedno izstopajo s svojimi posebnostmi. Brazilsko podnebje verjetno dopušča mnoge ideje ...

To je res, vendar so pri nas razmere ravno obratne [kot v Sloveniji, op. prev.], saj namesto naravne klime največji problem predstavlja družbena klima. Ves čas se je potrebno zavedati vprašanja varnosti. Mislim, da je v takšnih razmerah najslabša možna rešitev arhitektura strahu. Eksplicitne varnostne ukrepe bi morali narediti tako, da jih je mogoče odstraniti, če bodo postali odvečni, ko se bodo razmere popravile. V tem trenutku je varnost sicer resen problem, vseeno pa je ne bi smeli vgraditi med »strojno opremo« hiše.

Skušamo izkoristiti možnosti, ki nam jih odpira brazilsko podnebje, torej podnebje uporabiti v prid arhitekture. Primer je projekt za prenovalno stare kolonialne hiše v Salvador Bahiji (ki še ni dokončana), podobne katerakoli kolonialni vrstni hiši, ki so jih zgradili Portugalci. Obdržali smo le zunanje nosilne zidove in streho, vmes pa smo prostore oblikovali kot predore, ki med seboj povezujejo obe nasprotni fasadi. Hiša, ki ima le dve fasadi, je popolnoma odprta, tako da skozenjo s pogledom povežeš zunanjo okolico na obeh straneh. V pritličju smo predvideli plavalni bazen, ki je prav tako odprt, saj je v Salvador Bahiji stalna zunanja temperatura, podnevi in ponoči, poleti in pozimi okoli 25 stopinj Celzija. Namesto, da bi se omejili na običajni vrt pred in za hišo, smo naredili cel kup alternativnih zunanjih prostorov, spredaj in zadaj zgoraj in spodaj, običajni položaj smo zasakali za devetdeset stopinj. Mislim, da bi lahko naša hiša služila kot primer, kako uporabiti in izkoristiti ugodne podnebne razmere za ustvarjanje dobre arhitekture.

MMBB se očitno zaveda tudi socialnih problemov. Nam lahko poveste več o projektih javnih šol (Escola fundamental de Ensino /FDE), ki jasno ponazarjajo tako vašo skrb kot tudi vaš pristop?

Projekt za javne šole smo pripravili za Javno agencijo za izobraževanje (Fundação para o desenvolvimento da Educação), kot prijavo na razpis, h kateremu so leta 2003 povabili več mladih birojev. Na podlagi svojih dolgoletnih izkušenj z gradnjo šol v Braziliji, saj jih gradi že od leta 1960 dalje, je želela Javna agencija za izobraževanje vzpostaviti nove standarde za gradnjo šol.

Like the Lina Bo Bardi project for São Paulo Museum of Art presented during your lecture, I suppose?

This is the most important inspiration for MMBB in conceptual terms. Although Brazil is a new American country with five centuries of history – not São Paulo, though, here we're only talking about one hundred years; before the industrialisation, the city was unimportant – both Brazil in general and specifically São Paulo have a rich architectural tradition. Our small-scale work relies on that tradition.

There are Lina Bo Bardi, Oscar Niemeyer, and recently João Batista Vilanova Artigas and Paulo Mendes De Rocha, to whom we are very close. The know-how gained through our collaboration with him is present in our work. This is, however, both good and bad. Know-how can lead to prejudice, arriving at quick solutions without thinking. After years of experience, MMBB is confident and mature enough to transform this know-how and experiment with it in our own way. When you're forty-five or under, the lack of knowledge and experience gives you freedom. Although knowledge can set your ideas free, it can also restrain them. You know more, you have more information. That prevents you from doing silly things, but also stops you from getting to the right point. What you have to learn is how to avoid this knowledge barrier so you can take bigger risks. The Portuguese word for risk, "risco", has a great double meaning: beside "taking a risk", it also means "free-hand" or "sketched line".

In your designs, sections are always outstanding and important. Brazil's natural climate seems to open up many possibilities.

Yes, but the social climate is the other way around and it poses the biggest problem. You need to be conscious of the safety problems. In this regard, the best we can do is not to produce architecture of fear. We should try to make explicit security devices transient, which would allow us to get rid of them when they become obsolete, if everything goes well. Security is a real problem at the moment, but it should not become the "hardware" of the house.

We try to take advantage of the climate, use the climate to augment the architecture. Take for example the - not yet built - project of the house in Bahia, Salvador, a refurbishment of an old colonial house. It is like any colonial building in Portuguese fashion, i.e. a row house. We only kept the load-bearing walls of the perimeter and the roof, and proposed all the new floors to be like tunnels linking the opposite facades. The house has only two facades and it is totally open, you can literally look through it, so the two exterior situations are always linked. We also proposed the ground floor as a big swimming pool, open to the elements at all times, considering that the temperature is always around 25 degrees, day and night, summer and winter. So instead of being restricted to the usual back and forth, we have alternative outside spaces: beneath and above, up and down, it's a traditional situation shifted 90 degrees. This, I think, is one possible example of how one can take advantage of the natural climate to end up with good architecture.

MMBB is obviously concerned with social awareness. Could you tell us more about the public school (Escola fundamental de Ensino/FDE) project, which is a good illustration of both your concern and your approach?

The project was designed and developed for the educational public agency Fundação para o Desenvolvimento da Educação as a proposal for a commission open to several young practices in 2003. The educational agency wanted to establish new standards for schools based on the years of experience they had - they have been building schools in Brazil since the 1960s. They have documented catalogues of ambiences and the components used in construction, so every project has to follow these standards. They refer mainly to the structure, with the intent of achieving faster construction and having better control over it. A big problem facing architecture in Brazil is construction - due to corruption, not the technology. Another problem is the low culture of construction workers and engineers combined with the state's low criteria and standards. So, if the structure is standardised and industrialised, the state has better control.

To avoid these problems, the agency's requirement was the use of prefabricated elements. Together with four other offices, we had to establish a standard to



Dokumentirali in katalogizirali so vse možne strukturne elemente in standarde, ki jih je bilo treba upoštevati pri vsakem od projektov. Standardi so se večinoma nanašali na strukturo zgradbe, ki naj bi jo bilo možno zgraditi hitro in s čim boljšim nadzorom nad gradnjo. Velik problem arhitekture v Braziliji je ravno gradnja, in to ne zaradi tehnologije, temveč zaradi korupcije. Drugi problem je nizka kultura gradbenih delavcev in inženirjev, ki v kombinaciji z nizkimi državnimi merili in standardom potencira zapletenost gradbenega procesa. Če je struktura zgradbe standardizirana in proizvodnja strukturnih elementov industrializirana, ima država večji nadzor nad gradnjo. Da bi se vsemu temu izognila, je agencija predpisala uporabo prefabriciranih elementov. Skupaj s še štirimi arhitekturnimi biroji smo morali vzpostaviti standard in predpisati elemente. Podpirali smo idejo gradnje, ki bi izkoristila obstoječo lokalno industrijo, saj to ne bi zahtevalo vzpostavljanja drugačne. Da bi čim bolj znižali stroške vzdrževanja, smo se odločili za tehnološko nezapleteno, odporno strukturo: opeko, malto in barvo, ki jih je mogoče dobiti za vsakim vogalom. Šole, ki so jih že zgradili so trajne in se dobro starajo.

Kar se tiče tipologije, smo morali vključiti elemente, ki so prisotni v vsaki šoli, tako da smo jih skušali razmestiti na čim bolj pameten način. Športna dvorana v središču zgradbe je hkrati tudi osrednje dvorišče. Ker gre za osnovno šolo, se nam je zdelo, da bodo otroci glasni kjerkoli in v vsakem primeru. Patio s športno dvorano smo odprli na straneh, razredom pa smo dali nekoliko akustične zaščite. Skušali smo izkoristiti ugodne podnebne razmere in izkoristiti možnost naravnega prezračevanja. Opeke smo zasukali navpično in z njimi zgradili perforirane zidove, ki prepuščajo zvoke, otrokom pa dajejo svobodo. Druga ideja, ki smo jo imeli, pa je bila, da smo zunanje dvorišče na severni, sončni strani, povezali s prej omenjenim notranjim, tako da celotno območje šole postane del zgradbe. Prostorsko smo želeli povezati celotno območje, da bi ujeli gibanje, veselje in zvok od vhoda do zunanjega tlakovanega dvorišča na drugi strani zgradbe. Tipologija hiše s patiem je ena od najstarejših tipologij gradnje, mi pa smo patio uporabili kot športno dvorano, ostanek šolskega programa pa porazdelili okoli njega. Pri projektiranju smo imeli v mislih fakulteto za arhitekturo v São Paulu, projekt João Batista Vilanova Artigas, ki ima velik osrednji prostor, Caramel Saloon, ki je tipični »kraj brez imena« saj ime izhaja iz barve tlaka.

Šolska zgradba mora biti predvsem dober medij, omogočati mora prostor za druženje in biti mora prostor izmenjave. To je njena osnovna zamisel in ideja. S tem osrednjim prostorom smo omogočili družabni prostor, zgradbi pa smo po mojem mnenju zagotovili tudi nekaj dostojanstvenosti, saj smo povečali njen obseg, ne da bi to zahtevalo veliko več gradnje.

Blizu mi je izjava francoskega arhitekta Rolanda Castra: »V arhitekturi se prepletata dostojanstvo in lepota.« Izjava ima dandanes pomen predvsem v državah, kot je Brazilija. Družbena zavednost ni vedno nujno »družbena«, ampak gre predvsem za zavedanje tega, kje se nahajamo, saj brez tega zgrešimo bistvo.

V MMBB sodelujete z Mendes de Rocho. Ali lahko kaj več poveste o tem?

Njegovo delo zelo spoštujemo, še posebej njegovo občutljivost, ki bi jo rad razvil tudi sam. Paul Mendes de Rocha je bil moj mentor na univerzi v São Paulu, kjer sva se tudi spoznala. Po koncu študija, ko sem odprl svoj biro, sva ostala v stiku in se tu pa tam srečala. Leta 1995, pet let po odprtju biroja, smo dobili naročilo za oblikovanje javnega prevoza, avtobusnega koridorja, v São Paulu. Šlo je za najpomembnejšo avtobusno proggo, ki je prečkala mestno središče, tako da se nam je zdelo, da projekta ne bi smeli delati sami. K sodelovanju smo povabili Paula, ki je povabilo sprejel. Tako smo začeli redno sodelovati in skupaj delamo na številnih projektih.

Kakšen je vaš vtis o Piranskih dnevih arhitekture?

V zadnjem času sem sodeloval na več podobnih srečanjih, toda po mojem mnenju so bili Piranski dnevi najbolj izčrpani med njimi. V program so bili vključeni ljudje iz vsega sveta, iz Azije, Afrike, Južne Amerike, Avstralije in Evrope. Mislim, da so bila predavanja zelo kakovostna, izbor predavateljev pa izredno zanimiv. Veselil me je tudi pogovor z različnimi ljudmi. Iskreno rečeno, odlično srečanje.

define the elements. The idea was to build on the local industry standard and not to invent a new one. And to reduce maintenance costs, we decided to use low-tech, resistant construction: bricks, mortar, and paint available on any corner. Consequently, the school building is resistant and ageing well.

As far as the typology is concerned, we had to use the elements present in any school, so we worked on placing the elements in a really powerful way. The gym is in the middle of the building and represents the central courtyard - patio. We're talking about a primary school, so we thought, the kids are going to be loud anyway, and anywhere. The sides of this inner courtyard-cum-gym are open as much as possible, and we provided the classrooms with some acoustic protection. We again made use of the favourable climate conditions, in particular when it came to natural ventilation. We turned the bricks on their sides to create perforated walls, setting both the sound and the kids free.

A second idea for the school was to have the outside yard connect to and complement the inner one on the north side, where the sun is, so that the entire site would become part of the building. We aimed to create the spatial connection to catch the joy, the movement, the sound from both the entrance and the exterior yard on opposite sides of the site. The typology of a house with patio, which this arrangement resembles, is one of the most ancient typologies in the history; what we did with it is to use the idea of the patio for the sports hall and put the rest of the school program all around. During the development of the project, we had in mind the Faculty of Architecture in São Paulo by João Batista Vilanova Artigas. It's characterised by a big space called Caramel Saloon, a typical "space without a name" named after the color of the pavement.

More than anything else, a school building should be a very good medium, a powerful provider of places for meetings and a place for exchange. That's the core concept, the main idea. By having this space, we believe we provided a meeting place and gave some dignity to the building. At any rate, we considerably enlarged the overall space of the school for free, i.e. without exceeding the construction parameters.

I heard a very good quote by French architect Roland Castro the other day: "In architecture, dignity and beauty overlap." This is especially true nowadays in a country like Brazil. Social awareness is not strictly "social" – it is the awareness of where we are, otherwise you miss the point.

MMBB has collaborated with Mendes de Rocha: can you tell us more about this collaboration?

We are great admirers of his work, especially his sensibility. I would love to possess such sensibility. He was my teacher at the University of São Paulo - that's how we met. After I graduated and started my practice, we kept in touch and we met occasionally. In 1995, five years after I'd started the practice, we got a commission to design a public transportation system, a bus corridor, for São Paulo. The line in question was a trunk bus line that would cross the city centre, i.e. the most important one, so we thought we shouldn't do this on our own. We invited Paulo to collaborate with us and he accepted. That is how we started to collaborate on a regular basis. Now we work jointly on numerous projects.

What's your impression of Piran Days of Architecture?

I've been to several similar meetings recently, but the Piran Days of Architecture is the most comprehensive, with people from all over the world Asia, Africa, South America, Australia, and Europe included in the programme. I think the lectures were really good, and the selection was very interesting. It was very nice to talk to so many different people. A great meeting, sincerely.