

nazaj h koreninam

intervju z Francisem Kéréjem

Tanja Barle, Dominika Batista, Maja Ivanič

back to the roots

interview with Francis Kéré

Tanja Barle, Dominika Batista, Maja Ivanič



Foto: Peter Krapež

G. Kéré, kaj vas je pripeljalo v Evropo? In zakaj ste tu ostali?

Zelo preprosto – od nemške vlade sem dobil štipendijo v okviru aktivnega razvoja manj razvitega sveta. V Afriki sem se izučil za mizarja. Štipendija je bila priložnost, da odidem iz Afrike in nadaljujem s študijem – pridobim izobrazbo, ter na ta način pomagam svoji družini in krajanom.

Zakaj ste se odločili za študij arhitekture?

Arhitektura je bila moja velika želja že od majhnega. Kot otrok sem v obdobju vsake deževne sezone s stricem popravil hiše – hiše iz gline. Zelo rad sem to delal. Ob tem pa sem si resnično želel, da bi te hiše lahko tudi popravil, izboljšal, podaljšal njihovo dobo trajanja ... Svoj rodni kraj Gando sem prvič zapustil, ko sem začel hoditi v osnovno šolo, star sedem let. Šola je bila 20 kilometrov oddaljena od moje vasi. Ko si star sedem let, je zelo hudo zapustiti dom, brate in sestre, in oditi sam v tuj kraj, kjer nimaš družine. Zato je bil moj prvi arhitekturni projekt gradnja osnovne šole v Gandu. Želel sem pomagati svojim ljudem – omogočiti mlajšim bratom in sestram in drugim otrokom, da se šolajo v svojem domačem kraju, da jim ne bo treba oditi od doma.

V evropskih očeh je afriška kultura bogata s človeškimi kontakti. Evropski način življenja pa je zelo individualističen. Kaj pogrešate in kaj vam je všeč, ko delate in živite v Evropi – ne le v arhitekturi, ampak tudi v vsakdanjem življenju?

Navajen sem in želim biti v kontaktu z ljudmi, s prijatelji. Želim, da bi prišli ljudje in prijatelji k meni na obisk, ne da bi morali ta obisk planirati, se zanj v naprej dogovarjati. A odkar sem v Evropi, tudi mene čas omejuje. V Afriki je drugače, tam je časa na pretek. Čas je v Evropi denar, v Afriki pa življenje ... Afriški ljudje res uživajo življenje. Mnogo manj planirajo – pravzaprav sploh ne planirajo življenja, ampak ga kar živijo. Ne načrtujejo svojih otrok, ampak jih kar imajo. Otroci so srečni, igrajo se zunaj, med seboj, hodijo na obiske k svojim stricem, tetam ... Prenehajmo toliko načrtovati!

Opazil sem, da v Evropi veliko ljudi živi samih. Kakšna izguba prostora in energije! V Afriki tega pojava ni – vsi živijo v skupnosti, z drugimi ljudmi, družino. Struktura življenja je v Evropi res drugačna. A priznati moram, da Evropo ljubim. Obožujem menjavanje letnih časov, poletje in zimo ... Moderno življenje je fantastično, udobno. Prav zaradi kulturnih razlik smo zanimivi drug

Mr Kéré, what brought you to Europe? And what made you stay?

That's very simple – I won a scholarship by the German government as part of an active aid programme for developing countries. In Africa, I was trained as a carpenter. The scholarship was my opportunity to leave Africa and continue studying, to get an education and then help my family and fellow villagers.

Why did you choose to study architecture?

I've always wanted to, ever since when I was little. As a child, I spent every rainy season helping my uncle repair houses - clay houses. I liked doing that very much. But at the same time, I wished that I could also fix these houses, improve them, make them last longer.

I first left Gando, my birthplace, when I went to school at the age of seven. The school was 20 km away from my village. When you're seven, it's very difficult to leave home, your brothers and sisters, and go to a place you don't know and where you'll be alone, without your family. This is why my first architectural project was to build a primary school in Gando. I wanted to help my people, allow my younger brothers and sisters and other children to go to school where they live, so that they don't have to leave home.

In Europe, we see African culture as very rich in human contact. Contrariwise, the European lifestyle is very individualistic. What do you miss and what do you like about living and working in Europe, not only in terms of architecture, but also everyday life?

I'm used to and I enjoy being with people, with friends. I wish people and friends would come and visit me, without having to plan their visit, without having to make arrangements. But since I've come to Europe, I, too, find that I'm pressed for time. In Africa, it's different, you have all the time in the world there. Time is money in Europe, but in Africa, it's life. African people really enjoy life. They do a lot less planning, in fact, they don't plan their lives at all, they simply live it. They don't plan their family, they simply have children. Children are happy, they play outside together, they go around visiting their uncles and aunts. We should stop planning things so much.

I've noticed that in Europe, many people live alone. What a waste of space and energy! You just don't have that in Africa: people live in communities, with other people, with their families. The structure of life really is different in Europe. But



drugemu. Privilegirani sem, ker lahko živim evropsko in afriško življenje.

Ste se nemščine naučili šele po svojem prihodu v Berlin?

Pred prihodom v Nemčijo nisem znal niti besedice nemško, naučil sem se je šele tu. Po šestih mesecih sem obvladal osnove, s prakso in vsakodnevnim življenjem pa sem precej izboljšal svoje znanje. Obožujem jezike. Komunikacija je pomembna, še posebej v moji deželi. Komunikacija je zelo pomemben del afriške kulture. Pa tudi evropske. Šele z znanjem jezika sem lahko sploh pridobil svojo izobrazbo. Izobrazba – to je res privilegij, ki se ga v Evropi ne zavedate, ker je za vas tako samoumeven. Jaz pa sem zelo srečen, da sem imel priložnost študirati, pridobiti znanje, se naučiti brati in pisati ... in na koncu študirati arhitekturo.

Vaša arhitektura je namenjena predvsem Afričanom, zelo cenjena oziroma popularna pa je postala tudi v zahodnem svetu, med zahodnimi arhitekti. Zakaj? Morda zato, ker nosi primarni pomen – arhitektura je lepo oblikovano zavetišče za človeka, kot bi rekel L. B. Alberti? Se strinjate?

Hvala za kompliment! Ponosen sem, da tako vidite mojo arhitekturo. To mi daje moč, da naredim še več, da vztrajam v svojem delu. Ja, vračanje h koreninam, gradnja z ljudmi za ljudi – to je bistvo arhitekture. Poceni hiše, preprosti načrti ... V Afriki mi ljudje rečejo: »O, ti si eden izmed nas! Torej bomo to hišo lahko zgradili.« Vedo, da jih poznam – poznam njihov način življenja, razmere, v katerih živijo in delajo. In vedo, da sem se šolal, da imam znanje. Zaupajo mi. Predstavljam jim vzor, da se v življenju da doseči več, uspeti, tudi če si Afričan. Res, to mi daje voljo im moč, da se bom trudil še naprej. Da bom naredil več.

Vaše predavanje je naredilo na vse močan vtis. Niste zveneli kot arhitekt, temveč predvsem kot ambasador afriškega naroda. A vendar, Evropejci nismo navajeni na tako neposreden pristop. Kako pripravite svoja predavanja? Je vaš arhitekturni jezik univerzalen? Razume vaše »sporočilo« ves svet?

Kako pripravim predavanje? Pravzaprav sploh ne razmišljam o tem, kakšno naj bo predavanje. Preprosto povem tisto, kar mislim. Ljudem pokažem, kaj delam. In kako to v Afriki naredimo. Ne morem drugače. Ko začnem govoriti, besede same stečejo. Pokažem svoje projekte. Pokažem, kako se uporabljajo materiali, kaj lahko iz njih iztisnemo; predstavim lokalne gradbene tehnike, ki jih poznam in obvladam.

Zaradi pomanjkanja časa – saj vidite, danes sem bil ves dan zaseden s snemanjem za nemško televizijo, komaj sem našel čas za intervju – torej, zaradi pomanjkanja časa ne morem veliko potovati, čeprav me vabijo na različne konce sveta. Rad bi delil svoje znanje z ljudmi. Moje sporočilo je »delati za ljudi«, tudi arhitekturo. Ljudje imajo radi preproste stvari, preproste, enostavne hiše, ki jih znajo sami zgraditi.

Trenutno sodelujem s priznanim nemškim umetnikom ter filmskim in gledališkim režiserjem Christophom Schlingensiefom. Delava opero, pravzaprav operno vas. Na začetku je bil projekt mišljen kot predstava – nekaj ne prav resnega. A sem zelo vesel, da so se nad projektom navdušili tudi mediji. Tako sem projekt spremenil v razsvetljen socialni projekt, ki bo koristen za ljudi Burkine Faso. Namesto operne infrastrukture – opera tudi v bogatih deželah predstavlja simbol moči in bogastva – bo najina opera pravzaprav večnamenski kulturni center, z učilnicami za pouk glasbe in filma, vrtcem, delavnicami za gradnjo socialnih bivališč, kinodvorano in gledališčem ter še mnogo več. Seveda so tudi pri tem projektu vaščani del procesa.

Naslov letošnje piranske arhitekturne konference je bil Novi izzivi: premisliti arhitekturo in prostor, premisliti vrednote, etiko in estetiko. Kaj so vaši izzivi? In kaj so po vašem izzivi evropske – zahodne arhitekture? Kako vidite sodobno arhitekturo zahodnega sveta?

Zame je izziv narediti to, kar je v realnosti mogoče zgraditi; izboljšati kakovost življenja skozi arhitekturo. Vrniti se moramo h koreninam, ponovno premisliti, kaj so naše prave potrebe. Predvsem pa zmanjšati porabo časa in energije, ki jo vlagamo v projekte. Moje risbe so vedno preproste, hitro narejene, zato

I have to admit that I love Europe. I love the changing of seasons, summer and winter. Modern life is fantastic, so comfortable. It's the cultural differences that makes us interesting to one another. I'm privileged to be able to live both the European and the African life.

Was it only after your arrival to Berlin that you learnt to speak German?

Before I came to Germany, I didn't know one word of German, it was only here that I learnt it. After six months, I knew the basics well, and I was able to improve my knowledge a lot through practice and everyday life.

I love languages. Communication is important, especially in my country. Communication is a very important part of African culture, as well as European. Only by being able to speak the language was I able to obtain my education. Education is an immense privilege, something you don't even realise in Europe - it's a matter of course for you. I, on the other hand, am very fortunate to have been given the opportunity to study, to obtain knowledge, learn to read and write, and study architecture in the end.

Your architecture is primarily intended for African people but it has become highly regarded and popular in the West and among Western architects. What is the reason for this, in your opinion? Is it because it carries a very primal meaning – architecture as a “well designed shelter for a human being”, as L. B. Alberti would put it?

You're very kind. It makes me proud that this is how you see my architecture. This gives me the strength to do even more, to persevere at what I do. Yes, going back to the roots, building with the people, for the people - that's the essence of architecture. Cheap houses, simple plans.

In Africa, people say to me, "Oh, you're one of us. This means we'll be able to build this." They know that I know them - I know the way they live, their living and working conditions. And they know that I went to school, that I have the knowledge. They trust me. They look up to be because they see that you can do more with your life, that you can succeed even if you're African. Indeed, this gives me the will and strength to keep trying my hardest, to do more.

Your lecture in Piran made a big impression on all present. You didn't sound like an architect but primarily like an ambassador of African people. In Europe, we are not used to such a direct approach. How do you prepare for your lectures? Is your architectural language universal – is your message understood anywhere in the world?

How I prepare for a lecture? Actually, I don't even think about what the lecture will be like. I simply say what's on my mind. I show people what I do, and how we do things in Africa. For me, there is no other way - once I start talking, the words come out on their own. I show my projects. I show how materials are used, what potential there is in them. I present local construction techniques that I'm familiar with and know how to get the most out of them.

Due to time constraints - as you could see, I spent the whole day shooting for German TV, I barely found time to do this interview - I can't do a lot of travelling, even though I get invitations from all over the world. I'd like to share my knowledge with people. My message is "working for the people"; that's my architectural message, too. People like simple things, simple, uncomplicated houses that they can build by themselves.

At the moment, I'm collaborating with renowned German artist, film and theatre director Christoph Schlingensief. We're working on an opera building, in fact an opera village. In the beginning, the project was meant as a performance, nothing too serious. But I'm very happy that the media became interested in it. Consequently, I turned the project into an enlightened social project that's going to benefit for the people of Burkina Faso. Instead of building opera infrastructure - even in rich countries, opera is a symbol of power and wealth - our opera house will be a multi-purpose cultural centre complete with music and film classrooms, a kindergarten, social housing workshops, a cinema and a theatre, and much more. Here, too, the villagers are a part of the process.

The topic of this year's architectural conference in Piran was “New Challenges: Rethinking Architecture and Space, Rethinking Values, Ethics and Aesthetics”. What are your challenges? And what do you see as challenges

pa več časa posvetim analiziranju materialov – kako se material obnaša, kaj lahko iz njega potegnem. Ne uporabljam high-tech materialov. Sploh pa ti niso primerni za Afriko. Ne rečem, da niso lepi in zanimivi. A večina ljudi v Afriki ne zna niti brati, niti pisati. Kako naj bi potem razumeli zahtevna navodila za uporabo zapletenih sodobnih tehnologij? V Afriki je treba znati sezidati dober zid – ljudje so tako ponosni na svoje delo. Sodobni materiali ter kompleksna in zapletena tehnologija pa so daleč od osnovnih potreb ljudi.

Hiše, ki jih ustvarjate, morajo odgovarjati klimatskim zahtevam. Kako dejstvo, da leži Burkina Faso na robu Sahela, znanega kot prehodna cona na robu Sahare, z varirajočimi deževnimi obdobji, vpliva na vaše arhitekturne ideje?

Preprosto. Dežela je revna, podnebje tu je vroče. Ko razmišljam o novi hiši, iščem rešitev, ki bi zadostila različnim parametrom – naravnim danostim, podnebnim pogojem in tehnologiji gradnje, ki jo ljudje tukaj obvladujejo. Glede na to, da je dežela revna, si seveda ne morem privoščiti, da bi v svoji arhitekturi uporabljal drage sisteme. Moje hiše so vedno preproste, naravno prezračevane. Ker nimamo lesa, oziroma ker les potrebujemo za kurjenje ognja za pripravo hrane, so hiše zgrajene iz gline. Imamo pa delovno silo, sposobne ljudi, ki si želijo delati in ki potrebujejo delo. V Afriki ljudje zelo radi gradijo. In imajo veliko prvinskega znanja. Vse to vpliva na mojo arhitekturo.

Glavne teme vaših predavanj so bivanje in urbani razvoj, integracija lokalne delovne sile in lokalnih gradbenih tehnik. Kako bi lahko v ta proces integrirali tudi mogočno zapuščino plemena Fulan, na primer, njihove slamnate hiše?

Presenetilo bi vas, tako kot je presenetilo tudi vlado Burkine Faso, kako mi je uspelo ljudi vključiti v proces gradnje – odrasle, stare, otroke, moške, ženske ... Ko smo gradili šolo v Gando, otroci sploh niso hodili v šolo, ampak so na vsak način želeli pomagati pri gradnji. Še mene je ta zagnanost presenetila! Vesel sem, da ljudje v mojem delu vidijo svojo prihodnost. Kot sem že dejal – v arhitekturi je pomembno, da upoštevaš potrebe ljudi. Ko jih vključiš v gradbeni proces, je vsako stvar mogoče izpeljati. Zaupanje je bistveno. Moji ljudje vedo, da imam znanje, izobrazbo. Zato mi zaupajo. Pri gradnji pa mi morajo pomagati, ker imajo veliko znanja in praktičnih izkušenj. Skupaj rešujemo probleme, ne moremo drug brez drugega.

Kako bi lahko nomadski koncept saharskega življenja, ki ni specifičen le za Berbere, Tuarege, ampak tudi za Fulane, največjo nomadsko skupino na svetu, pozitivno vplival na dejstvo, da je arhitektura statična ... in na inovativen razvoj vaših projektov v prihodnosti?

Težko, a zanimivo vprašanje! Nomadi so majhne družine, ki potujejo zaradi živine – ko ta izrabljuje svojo pašo, se morajo premakniti na nove pašnike. Ljudje, ki se ne prestopajo, morajo potovati z vso svojo opremo in lastnino. Zato njihova arhitektura ne more biti statična, trdna, zasidrana ... konstantna. »Nomadska« arhitektura mora biti lahka, sestavljiva, narejena iz lahkih materialov, gradnja mora biti hitra in preprosta. Hm – kako bi zgradil šolo za nomade? Šola, ki bi potovala z njimi ... Zanimivo, o tem doslej še nisem razmišljal na ta način! Šola predstavlja neko fiksno točko, prostor, h kateremu ljudje prihajajo, kjer se srečujejo, družijo. Bi lahko ta koncept obrnil za 180°? Naredil šolo, ki potuje? Vstavil nomadski koncept v svojo arhitekturo? Ne vem. Zagotovo pa je afriški nomadski sistem popolnoma drugačen od zahodnega nomadstva. Evropski nomadi se premikajo z avtomobili, vlaki, letali, s seboj prenašajo le prenosne računalnike, mobilne telefone in kreditne kartice. Biti takšen nomad je veliko bolj preprosto, kot prenašati s seboj vse svoje imetje, vso družino in kulturo. Ne vem, ali bi lahko Fulanom omogočil pogoje, da bi ostali na istem mestu, da se jim zaradi živine ne bi bilo treba premikati. Zagotovo bi za njihovo arhitekturo uporabil lokalne materiale, lokalno znanje in tehnologije.

Kako bi opisali sodobno arhitekturo svoje dežele?

Najprej o tem, kako si predstavljam sodobno afriško arhitekturo: morala bi biti preprosta, poceni, narejena iz lokalnih materialov, z lokalno estetiko, namenjena predvsem ljudem. V Afriki ne potrebujemo simbolizma in »visoke

for European, or Western architecture? How do you see contemporary architecture of the Western world?

For me, the challenge is to do what is possible to build in real life, and to improve quality of living through architecture. We must go back to the roots, rethink our real needs. But first and foremost, we must reduce the time and energy that we invest into projects. My drawings are always simple, they never take me long, but I spend a lot of time analysing materials - how a material behaves, what it can do for me. I don't use high-tech materials, they aren't even suitable for Africa. They may be nice and interesting, but most people in Africa can't read or write, so how are they supposed to understand complicated instructions for use of complicated modern technology? In Africa, you have to know how to build a good wall - this way, people can be proud of their labour. Modern materials or complex and complicated technologies are not what people need.

The buildings that you create have to work in specific climate conditions. How do your architectural ideas reflect the fact that Burkina Faso lies on the edge of the Sahel, the transitional zone at the edge of the Sahara, where there rainfall is very uneven?

It's simple, really: the country is poor. The climate is hot. When I'm thinking about a new building, I look for a solution that would satisfy various requirements - natural attributes, climate conditions, and the building technology that the people here are comfortable with. Considering the country is poor, I can't afford to use expensive systems in my architecture. My houses are always simple, with natural ventilation. There is practically no wood, and the little that we do have is used to make fire and cook food; houses are made of clay. But there is lots of labour on hand, competent people who want and need work. In Africa, people love to build. And they have a lot of primal knowledge. All of this affects my architecture.

Two of the main subjects of your lectures are housing and urban development, and the integration of local labour and local construction techniques. How would you go about integrating the great Fulani tribe heritage, such as their grass mat houses, into this process?

You'd be surprised, just like the Burkinabe government was, how I was able to include the people - adults, the elderly, children, men, women - into the process of construction. When we were building the school in Gando, the children didn't even go to school, instead they wanted to help out with the construction in any way they could. Even I was surprised by such enthusiasm.

I'm happy that people see their own future in my work. Like I said, in architecture, it's important to take people's needs into consideration. Once you include them into the construction process, you can get anything done. Trust is crucial. My people know that I have the knowledge, the education. That's why they trust me. But when it comes to building, they have to help me because they have a lot of knowledge and practical experience. We solve problems together, we can't do one without the other.

The nomadic life of Saharan ethnic groups is specific not only to the Berbers, the Tuareg, and the Toubou, but also to the Fulani, the largest nomadic group in the world. What positive influence could this concept have on the fact that architecture is stationary, and on the innovation in the future development of your projects?

A difficult question, but a very interesting one. Nomads are small families who travel with their livestock - when the animals exhaust all the pasture in one place, they have to move on. People who are constantly on the move have to travel with all their equipment and possessions. This is why their architecture can't be stationary, firm, anchored ... constant. Nomadic architecture has to be light, modular, lightweight, the construction has to be quick and simple.

How to build a school for nomads, a school that would travel with them? Interesting, I've never thought about it in this way. School represents a fixed point, a place people come to, where they meet, where they socialise. Could I turn this concept on its head? Make a school that travels? Implement the nomadic concept in my architecture? I don't know. But there's no doubt that the African nomadic system is completely different to the Western one. European nomads move about with cars, trains and aeroplanes, the only things that they carry



estetike«, saj si ju lahko privoščiti le peščica bogatašev. Realnost je seveda drugačna, dogajajo se napačne stvari, gradi se napačna arhitektura. Ta v večini primerov le posnema evropsko arhitekturo, brez kakršnegakoli kritičnega momenta. Zakaj? Krivde ne nosijo le evropski, ampak predvsem afriški arhitekti, ki se šolajo v tujini, v Parizu. Ko se vrnejo domov, ne znajo drugega, kot reproducirati tisto, česar so se naučili v tujini. Svojega znanja ne znajo prilagoditi afriškim pogojem. Uporabljajo komplicirane zahodnjaške tehnologije, ki so afriškim ljudem popolnoma neznane. In barve, ki so v afriškem okolju popolnoma banalne. Njihove arhitekture se ukvarja samo z obliko. Povsod je preveč dizajna! Je to sploh arhitektura?

Kakšni pa so afriški naročniki?

Veliko stvari se v Afriki zgradi z evropskim denarjem. A brez kakršnekoli povezave z afriško naravo, kulturo ali z resničnimi potrebami afriških ljudi. Povprečen afriški naročnik, ki si lahko privoščiti svojo vilo, želi seveda kopijo evropske vile. Če kot arhitekt delo odkloniš, bo vilo pač naredil drug arhitekt. Ali pa bo nastala celo brez arhitekta – večina ljudi prekopira hišo, ki stoji za vogalom.

Na televiziji vidimo veliko Afrike – bolezn, pobojev, plemenskih vojn, revščine ..., a v resnici ne vidimo Afrike; nevidna je predvsem med arhitekti. Projekti iz Afrike se v arhitekturnih revijah sploh ne pojavljajo. Kako komentirate to pomanjkanje afriške arhitekture v večini svetovnih arhitekturnih publikacij?

Odgovor je zelo preprost: ker ne obstaja afriška arhitekturna revija, ker Afrika ne izdaja nobene arhitekturne revije, ni dostopa do informacij. Zato ostaja afriška arhitektura povsem neznana. Ne mislim, da je treba arhitekto objavljati zaradi same objave, a le s pojavljanjem v medijih te ljudje spoznajo in ti začnejo zaupati. Dolgo je trajalo, da so Afričani spoznali moje delo. Šele zdaj jih moja arhitektura navdihuje. Morda bom, ko bom star sto eno leto, postal cenjen in slaven, kot postanejo cenjeni stari avtomobili.

Afrika ima 950 milijonov prebivalcev, od tega ima 41 odstotkov populacije manj kot 15 let – torej ima Afrika na svoji strani mladostni optimizem. Ste tudi vi optimistični glede prihodnosti svojega kontinenta?

Ja, seveda! Zelo sem optimističen. Upam, da se bo vedno več Afričanov šolalo, pridobilo znanje in izobrazilo in se na ta način borilo za svoje ljudstvo. Nove evropske generacije računajo na nas, Evropo in zahodni svet zanima, kaj se dogaja v Afriki. Obenem želijo pomagati s svojim znanjem. In tudi afriški ljudje so kreativni, polni entuziazma. V desetih letih bo prišlo iz Afrike veliko fantastičnih stvari.

Tel. +49 30 78952391 · Fax +49 30 78952398

www.kere-architecture.com · mail@kere-architecture.com

with them are laptops, mobile phones, and credit cards. Being such a nomad is much easier than carrying all your belongings, your family, and your culture with you. I'm not sure whether I could create conditions for the Fulani to be able to stay in one place, that they wouldn't have to move for the cattle. But whatever the case, I'd use local materials, and local knowledge and technologies for their architecture.

How could you describe contemporary architecture in your country?

First, I'd like to explain how I envision contemporary African architecture: it should be simple, cheap, made with local materials, with local aesthetic, meant primarily for the people. In Africa, we don't need symbolism and exalted aesthetics, because only a handful of rich people can afford that.

The reality is different, of course, the wrong things are happening, the wrong architecture is being built - architecture that for the most part simply mimics European architecture, without any reflection. Why is that? It's not only European architects who are to blame, but chiefly African ones who travel abroad, to Paris, to go to school. When they return home, the only thing they do is reproduce what they learnt while they were abroad. They aren't able to adapt their knowledge to African conditions. They use complicated Western technologies, which are completely unknown to African people. They use colours that come across as completely banal in African environment. Their architecture deals only with the form. Everywhere you look, there is too much design. Is it architecture at all?

What are African clients like?

In Africa, a lot of things are build with European money. But they have no connection with African nature, culture, or the real needs of African people. The average African investor that can afford his own mansion wants a copy of a European mansion. If you turn down the job as architect, it will get done by another architect ... or it might even get done without one - most people just copy the house standing around the corner.

There is a lot of Africa to be seen on TV: disease, massacres, tribal wars, misery. But we don't really see Africa. Particularly among architects, Africa is as good as invisible, projects from Africa are conspicuously missing from most architectural publications. What is your comment on this lack of African architecture in most of the world's architectural publications?

The answer to this is very simple: since there aren't any African architectural magazines, since there isn't a single one published in Africa, the access to information is non-existent. And that's why African architecture remains completely unknown. I don't think that architects have to get published just for publication's sake, but it is only through appearing in the media that people get to know you and begin to trust you. It took the African people long enough to get to know my work. It's been only recently that my architecture began to inspire them. Maybe by the time I'm 101, I will have gained some reputation and fame, the way classic cars do.

There are 950 million people living in Africa, forty-one per cent are younger than 15. It seems that Africa has the optimism of youth on its side. Are you also optimistic about the future of your continent?

Absolutely, I'm very optimistic. I hope that more and more African people go to school, obtain knowledge and an education, and fight for their people in this way. The new generations in Europe are counting on us, Europe and the Western world are interested in what's happening in Africa. They want to help with the knowledge that they have. And African people are also creative and full of enthusiasm. There'll be many fabulous things coming out of Africa in the next ten years.

Phone +49 30 78952391 · Fax +49 30 78952398

www.kere-architecture.com · mail@kere-architecture.com