

»smo 'slow food' arhitekti«

intervju z Johnom Wardlom

Kristina Dešman, Miha Dešman

"we are 'slow food' architects"

interview with John Wardle

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Foto: Peter Krapež

John Wardle je ustanovitelj in vodja John Wardle Architects, arhitekturnega biroja srednje velikosti, ki je trenutno eden najboljših v Avstraliji. Biro se je razvijal počasi – začel je z naročili za individualne hiše, nadaljeval z manjšimi ustanovami, sedaj pa delajo velike komercialne in institucionalne projekte. V tem času so postali dozorel biro. V svoje delo skušajo vključiti raznolike poglede na okolico in kontekst, pri tem pa ostajajo pozorni do fizične in kulturne okolice. Njihove zgradbe, za katere so značilni dodelani in natančni detajli, poigravanje svetlobe in senc ter uporaba različnih tekstur, so na prvi pogled očitno »avstralske«. Njihova arhitektura je prejela mnoge nagrade Avstralskega kraljevega inštituta za arhitekturo (Royal Australian Institute of Architects), med drugim tudi prestižno nagrado Sir Zelman Cowena za javne zgradbe (Sir Zelman Cowen Award for Public Buildings).

Čprav so John Wardle Architects zrasli v velik biro, se trudijo ohranjati osebni odnos do vsakega projekta, ki se ga lotijo nadvse pazljivo. Oziroma, kakor povzamejo na svoji spletni strani: »V vsak projekt, ne glede na njegovo zvrst, želimo vplesti osebne in skupne zgodbe svojih naročnikov, s katerimi so naše ideje še bogatejše. Začnemo tako, da pozorno prisluhujemo zahtevam svojih naročnikov in, kar je še pomembnejše, njihovim pričakovanjem za prihodnost. Za naš pristop je značilno stalno raziskovanje, ne le predvidevanje.«

Še ena pomembna lastnost John Wardle Architects je organizacija njihovega biroja. O tem smo razpravljali tudi v intervjuju, vendar pa to najlepše povzemajo besede Leona van Schaika: »Arhitektovo oblikovanje lastnega biroja je, prav tako kot oblikovanje arhitekture, kreativno dejanje, saj je ravno biro tisti, ki postane gonilo, s pomočjo katerega se avtorsko delo lahko osvobodi omejenosti na to, kar lahko vodi ena sama oseba in postane delo v režiji arhitekta (v procesu, ki je v resnici precej podoben filmski režiji). Čprav tega ne bi rekel glede na individualizem ustanovitelja, pa ima biro, z zdaj že okoli petindvajset člani, že od vsega začetka trodelno simbiotsko obliko.«

V svojem predavanju je John Wardle predstavil širok izbor iz svojega dela, vključno z nekaj zgodnjimi projekti. Zgodnji projekt Vila Vinograd (The Vineyard House) je zgradba, ki naj bi bila odločilna za njihov biro. V našem, dokaj sproščenem, intervjuju na obali v Piranu smo se pogovarjali o razlikah med

John Wardle is the founder and the head of John Wardle Architects, a mid-sized architectural practice, currently one of the best in Australia. The practice has gradually evolved - from commissions for individual houses to small institutional buildings and finally to large commercial and institutional buildings, so today, they could be described as a mature practice. Their works try to include various landscape and contextual views, which makes them oriented towards their physical and cultural environment. Their buildings, characterised by precise detail, concise interplay of light and shadows, and the use of different textures, have a clearly Australian vibe. Their architecture has been recognised with many awards by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, including the prestigious Sir Zelman Cowen Award for Public Buildings.

Even if John Wardle Architects has grown significantly, they endeavour to retain a personal and studious approach towards design. Or, as the claim on their web site, "To each project, irrespective of type, we bring an interest in the personal and collective histories of our clients, which enter into and enrich our ideas. We start by listening closely to gain an understanding of our clients' requirements and, more importantly, their aspirations for the future. Our approach is one of research rather than assumption."

Another characteristic of John Wardle's practice is the organisation of their office. We discussed this in the interview, but we could sum it up nicely with the words of Leon van Schaik: "The creation of a firm by an architect is as much a creative act as is the design of a work of architecture, and it is the firm as such that becomes the vehicle through which authorship extends from being confined to what the hand of one person can compass, to works that are - in a process akin to that of film-making - directed by an architect. Hard to tell, given the intense singularity of its founder, but the firm he has designed - swelling to twenty-five strong in recent times - has had a form of the symbiotic and the triadic structures from its earliest days."

In his lecture, John Wardle presented a wide selection of his works, including some from the early days of his practice. The Vineyard house is for example a building that is said to have defined their existence as a practice. In the course of a rather informal interview taking place on the seafront of Piran, we discussed the cultural differences between Europe and Australia. We also

Evropo in Avstralijo. Razpravljali smo tudi o arhitekturnih vplivih, njegovem načinu dela in o stvareh, ki jih počne v prostem času.

Pozdravljen John, in hvala še enkrat za sodelovanje na Piranskih dnevih arhitekture. Zadnja dva dni sta bila zapolnjena s predavanji, hkrati pa sta bila ta dva dneva priložnost, da smo v Piranu slišali dobesedno celi svet.

S tem se seveda moram strinjati. Konferenca je bila dobro organizirana, opravili ste čudovito delo, ko ste v Piran pripeljali toliko različnih predavateljev, ki so povedali toliko zanimivih zgodb iz različnih delov našega planeta. V užitek mi je bilo videti dela drugih arhitektov, katerih arhitektura je tako močna, ter slišati njihova mnenja.

Lahko bi rekli, da je bila konferenca izčrpen in točen pregled dogajanja na arhitekturni sceni po vsem svetu. Predavatelji so obdelali mnoga ključna vprašanja, ki se nam zastavljajo dandanes, in nam pokazali nekaj zelo dobre arhitekture, tudi takšne, ki prihaja iz delov sveta, ki jih slovenska arhitekturna javnost ne pozna tako zelo dobro, med katere spada tudi Avstralija. Avstralija se je znašla v izredno zanimivi poziciji: po eni strani je fizično ločena od ostalega sveta, po drugi pa je v njegovem središču, saj je dobro povezana tako z Evropo kot tudi s Kitajsko. Na kakšen način gojite povezave s svojim azijskim soseditvom?

Zgodovinsko in tradicionalno smo še vedno zelo povezani z Evropo. Vendar pa se v začetku 21. stoletja vedno močneje zavedamo tudi povezav z azijskimi narodi. Avstralija je trenutno v obdobju, ko preiščujemo o velikem delu svoje kulture. Avstralci smo Evropejci, ki so jih presadili drugam, toda geografsko smo del Azije. Iskanje povezav z azijskimi sosedi je nekaj, kar nas v prihodnosti ne čaka le kot kulturo, ampak pa tudi na osebni ravni, kot arhitekturni biro. Nisem se še dokončno odločil, na kakšen način se bomo lotili te naslednje faze našega dela. Mislim, da bomo v bodoče mnogo bolj pozorni na našo geografsko pozicijo in ne le na svoje zgodovinske korenine.

Ali je arhitektura v Avstraliji eden od izvoznih proizvodov, oziroma ali vi osebno izvažate svoje arhitekturno znanje?

V glavnem ne. Izven Avstralije sem delal le malo in še to le na Novi Zelandiji. Vendar pa bi si želel postati bolj mednarodni. Mislim, da je ena od naslednjih faz našega dela, da izpeljemo kakšen mednarodni projekt.

Za nas v Evropi se zdi Avstralija zelo daleč. Vidimo jo kot arhitekturno homogeno državo, verjetno pa je to precej daleč od resnice. Ali se Sydneyjska in Melbournska arhitektura med seboj razlikujeta?

Seveda, Sydney in Melbourne sta si popolnoma različna. Sever in jug Avstralije sta med seboj ločena z ogromno prazno površino, ki je povzročila razvoj dveh popolnoma različnih arhitekturnih tradicij. Melbourne je bolj povezan z Brisbanom in Queenslandom, že od nekdaj pa obstaja tudi rivalstvo med Melbournom in Sydneyjem.

Seveda, saj gre za dve veliki mesti ... Povsod po svetu je tako. Pri nas sta sinonima za avstralsko arhitekturo Glenn Murcutt in Harry Seidler, ki oba prihajata iz Sydneyja.

Murcutt je vplival na celo generacijo arhitektov, vendar bil njegov vpliv močnejši v Sydneyju kot v Melbournu. Sam prihajam iz druge arhitekturne tradicije, Melbournske, a je bil njegov vpliv tudi pri nas precej opazen.

V predavanju poudarjate, da je arhitektura tesno povezana z zgodovino. Ali gre za arhitekturno zgodovino ali tudi za lokalno zgodovino?

Ko projektiramo, skušamo vedno izpeljati natančno raziskavo lokacije. Arhitekturo skušamo povezati z zgodovino lokacije na eni strani, ter z zgodbo našega naročnika. Zgodovina in zgodbe so začetna točka večine našega dela.

Koga bi omenili kot svoje reference iz arhitekturne zgodovine, in kateri bi bilo vaši najljubši sodobni arhitekti?

Oh, toliko jih je! Zelo me je zanimalo današnje predavanje Roberta McCarterja o Louisu Kahnu, ki je bil zame vedno ena od pomembnih referenc. Ostali arhitekti, ki bi jih omenil kot najpomembnejše formalne reference, so Pierre Chereau s svojo Maison de Verre, ki sem ga omenil tudi v predavanju, pa Alvar Aalto, Carlo Scarpa ...

discussed his architectural influences, his way of working, and his past time activities.

Hello John, and thanks again for coming to Piran days of architecture. The last two days have been really intense with lectures, but at the same time it was fantastic to hear the whole world in Piran.

I agree. The conference was beautifully organised and an amazing job has been done in bringing so many diverse people with so many amazing stories to tell from different parts of the planet to Piran. I enjoyed seeing the work and hearing the opinions of other architects who work in such powerful ways.

It could be said the conference was a thorough and valid review of what is going on around globe in the architectural field. The lecturers have succeeded in addressing all the key current issues and present some great architecture, including architecture from parts of the world that the Slovene public didn't know very much about until now - not in the least Australia. Australia occupies an extremely interesting position; on the one hand, it's physically separated from the rest of the world, but on the other hand, it's very central, very well connected to Europe and China/Asia. How are you going about establishing connections with your Asian neighbours?

I think we are still traditionally and historically very connected to Europe. But in the 21st century we are finally becoming more and more aware of our associations with Asian nations. We are undergoing a period of reconsidering a large part of our culture. We Australians are transplanted Europeans, but geographically, we exist in Asia. Finding connection to our Asian neighbours is what's ahead of us as a culture, but also personally, as an architectural practice. I am not quite sure though how we will we address this next phase of our work. I think we will become much more aware of our geographic location rather than just of our historic roots.

Is the architectural profession in Australia also an export product, do you personally export your architectural knowledge?

I tend not to. I have done very little work outside Australia, actually only in New Zealand. But I would like to become more international. I think the next phase for our practice would be to do some work internationally.

For us in Europe, Australia feels very far away. From our position, we see it as a homogeneous country, but it is bound to be a diverse and differentiated continent. Are Sydney and Melbourne architecturally different?

Yes, Sydney and Melbourne are completely different. Australia is divided by a massive landmass which has resulted in development of two completely different cultures that evolved in two quite diverse architectural traditions. Melbourne is more connected with Brisbane and Queensland. And there is the great rivalry between Melbourne and Sydney.

Of course, two great cities ... it's the same all over the world, isn't it. For us, the architecture of Australia is very much synonymous with Glenn Murcutt and Harry Seidler. They both come from Sydney ...

Murcutt has been very influential for a whole generation of architects, but more so in Sydney than in Melbourne. So I think I come from a different architectural tradition, that of Melbourne, but he has been very influential nevertheless.

In your lecture, you said that your architecture is closely linked with history. Did you mean the history of architecture or with the local history?

We are always making an effort in producing architecture through a thorough research of the site. We try to link the architecture to the history of the site on one hand, and on the other with the story of our client. Stories or histories are a starting point of much of our work.

Who would you consider as influences or references from the history of architecture, and who would be your favourite contemporary architect?

Oh, so many! I was for example so interested to attend the Robert McCarter's lecture today about Louis Kahn, who has always been a great reference of mine. Pierre Chereau, whom I have mentioned in the lecture, with his Maison de verre in Paris; Alvar Aalto, Carlo Scarpa ... would probably be the major formal references in my architecture.

Kar pa se tiče sodobne arhitekture, občudujem delo Kazuyo Sejime iz Japonske, mednarodne projekte Herzog&De Meurona, pa Office dA iz Bostona, ZDA. Med avstralskimi arhitekti bi izpostavil Donovan Hill Architects iz Brisbane, McBride Charles Ryan iz mesta Prahran in Durbach Block Architects, ki so še en avstralski biro iz Sydneyja. V našem biroju se pogosto zgledujemo po delih drugih arhitektov.

Leon van Schaik je spomladi obiskal Ljubljano. Ob tem je potekala razstava njegovih skic, pripravil je razstavo avstralskih hiš v galeriji Dessa. Razstavljena je bila tudi ena vaših hiš. Schaik stalno piše kritike vaših projektov, leta 2008 pa je napisal tudi knjigo o vašem biroju. Kakšen je vaju odnos?

Leon Schaik je moj veliki mentor. Večina mest ima svoj poseben kritični način pisanja zgodovine, ki je zelo individualen. Schaik je bil v svojem času zelo vplivna osebnost.

Obstaja še ena tema, ki je ni mogoče zaobiti, kadar se pogovarjaš z Avstralcem – Sydneyjska opera seveda. Na kakšen način razmišljate o Sydneyjski operi v povezavi z Utzonom? Ali je povezava z njim imela kakšen globlji vpliv na avstralsko arhitekturo, so Utzonove sledi še vedno prisotne?

Avstralija je imela veliko srečo, veliki preboj v svoji zgodovini, ko je Utzon tu zgradil svojo neverjetno arhitekturo, čeprav je bila takrat sprejeta precej hladno. Mislim, da je Opera do danes postala pomemben del Sydneyja, hkrati pa je tudi dober znak kulture, ki je prevladala in izsilila izpolnitev Utzonove vizije.

Nova Opera je povzročila pravo obsedenost s skandinavskim oblikovanjem, v Avstralijo je prihajalo pohištvo, keramika, blago, itd. Morda gre seveda za naključje, čeprav sem skoraj prepričan da ni, gotovo je to moralo biti povezano z dejstvom, da je v središču Sydneyja nastajala izjemna predstavica danske arhitekture. Nekaj ostankov je še zdaj v Avstraliji, danski dizajn je še vedno prisoten v starejših hišah. Naša družina na primer sede k večerji na danskih stolih. Eden mojih najljubših predmetov je danski čajnik, ki sem ga še kot študent kupil na razstavi v Melbournu.

Poleg tega da vodite biro, tudi poučujete arhitekturo. Kako ocenjujete kakovost avstralskih šol za arhitekturo, ali so uspešne pri izobraževanju dobrih mladih arhitektov?

Da, po mojem mnenju so. V arhitekturnem izobraževanju vlada velika konkurenca, različne šole pa dajejo zelo različne rezultate. Študiral sem na MIT, trenutno pa poučujem na Univerzi južne Avstralije (University of South Australia). Tekom svoje kariere sem poučeval na več različnih univerzah, spoznal sem različne ekskluzivne izobraževalne pristope, ki so bili značilni za različne univerze. Zopet moram poudariti, da sem zelo osredotočen na Melbourne, ampak upam si trditi, da so akademske in kulturne ideje, ki se porajajo iz melbournskega izobraževanja in univerz, še posebej močne, saj imajo tukaj šole neposredno možnost ustvarjanja malih birojev v mestu. Obstaja zelo močna povezava med univerzami, iz katerih prihaja mnogo mladih arhitektov in priložnostmi zanje, da ustanovijo svoj biro. Zdi se mi, da je to še posebej dobro urejeno v Melbournu in Brisbaneu.

Kakšne arhitekto želite vzgojiti?

Kakršnekoli, samo da so pripravljeni trdo delati za nas.

Vaše predavanje je pustilo velik vtis. Pokazali ste toliko projektov in vsi so tako dodelani! Kažejo izredno visok nivo estetske pa tudi tehnične dovršenosti. V Sloveniji bi bilo skoraj nemogoče doseči tako visoko kakovost izvedbe oziroma detajlov. Zanimivo je, kako je avstralska arhitekturna kultura tako brez napak, da včasih izgubi svojo grobost in neposrednost. Morda tako natančno izvedena arhitektura lahko nastajata le v krajih, ki niso v središču. Verjetno ni možna v Ameriki ali Evropi, nastane lahko v Avstraliji, ali morda v Kanadi.

V našem biroju delamo na način, ki je obenem zelo starinski, a kljub temu zelo sodoben. Od samih sebe in od drugih zahtevamo zelo veliko. Arhitektura je uspešna le, če je vse rešeno popolno in do najmanjšega detajla. Nekateri

As for the contemporary architecture, I admire the work of Kazuyo Sejima in Japan, Herzog & De Meuron internationally and Office dA from Boston, US. Among Australian architects, I would mention Donovan Hill Architects from Brisbane, McBride Charles Ryan from Prahran, and Durbach Block Architects, another Australian firm from Sydney. In our firm we are constantly engaged in looking at the work of other architects.

Leon van Schaik visited Ljubljana this spring. There was an exhibition of his ideograms and he prepared an exhibition of Australian houses in Dessa gallery. One of your houses was exhibited as well. He also wrote a book about your architecture in 2008 and keeps writing critiques of your buildings. What is your relation to him?

Leon Schaik was a great mentor of mine. Most cities have individual critical claims of their history, which are very individual. He had had an enormous influence in Melbourne in his time.

There is another topic that one simply has to bring up when one talks to an Australian - namely, how do you feel about the Opera House in Sydney in relation to Utzon? How did this relation affect Australian architecture, can you still see its traces?

Australia has been very fortunate to have had the incredible moment in history when Utzon produced his amazing building. It is one of the greatest pieces of architecture of the 20th century, even if it was received quite coolly. It think the Opera House is now a great part of Sydney, but also a great forte of the culture that prevailed and forced the completion of Utzon's vision.

This could well be a coincidence, but I think it may not be: the new Opera produced an absolute fascination with Scandinavian design at the time: furniture, ceramics, fabrics that came to Australia. Some of it must have been influenced by the fact that Sydney got this amazing bit of Danish architecture in its centre. And some of it still exists in Australia now. You can find Danish design in many old houses. When our family sits down for dinner we sit on the Danish dining chairs. My single most prized possession is a Danish teapot I bought at an exhibition in Melbourne when I was a student.

Besides working in your practice, you also teach architecture. How would you assess the quality of architectural schools in Australia, do they educate good young architects?

Yes, they do. Architectural education is very competitive and different schools produce quite different productive outcomes. I was educated at the MIT, but now I am a professor at the University of Melbourne and I am also adjunct professor at the University of South Australia. During my career I taught at quite some different universities; I got to know different educational prerogatives that were the hallmark of each of the universities. Again, I am very Melbourne-focused, but I would dare say the academic and cultural ideas that come out of the Melbourne's education and universities are particularly strong because the schools are directly linked with the opportunity for creating small practices in the city. There is a very strong link between the universities that provide plenty of young architects and the opportunities for them to set up a practice. Melbourne and Brisbane are the two cities in Australia that I think do that particularly well.

What kind of architects do you want to educate?

Anybody willing to come and work really hard for us.

I was very impressed with your presentation. The amount of work you have shown, and the preciseness of each of the buildings! The aesthetics, but also the technical execution are of an amazingly high degree. In Slovenia, it would be incredibly difficult to achieve such quality of execution, or of architectural detailing for example. It is interesting that your architectural culture is so refined, even to extent of its losing its roughness and directness. Perhaps such precision and refinement can only grow in the places that are not fully central. It would not be possible in America or in Europe for example, it is only possible in Australia, and maybe in Canada.

I think our practice is very old-fashioned and very contemporary at the same time. We are very demanding and we require a lot from ourselves. Architecture



problemi, s katerimi se soočamo, segajo daleč v tradicijo arhitekture, hkrati pa je naša strast ukvarjanje z 21. stoletjem. Naš proces dela je zelo sodoben. Naš biro je hibriden, pravi ustvarjalni hibrid.

Mislím, da lahko kot arhitekti najbolj delamo, kadar nam naročniki zaupajo. V Avstraliji se je mnogo tradicij izgubilo, vendar pa nam je ostala tradicija, da tudi velike projekte zaupamo mladim birojem. V Ameriki na primer vidim, da arhitekti, ki pripadajo moji generaciji, preprosto še niso dobili priložnosti, da bi delali na enakovrednih projektih kot mi v Avstraliji. Kar se tega tiče, mislim, da imamo veliko srečo. Sicer ne zaslužimo toliko kot v Ameriki ali v severni Evropi, vendar pa imamo večkrat priložnost graditi. Moj biro seveda ni več mlad, pa vseeno. V katerem koli drugem koncu sveta bi le težko našli toliko mladih birojev, v katere se vlaga toliko zaupanja, da lahko v mestih gradijo velike projekte.

V tem pogledu ste res imeli srečo – ali je to zato, ker je v avstralski družbi arhitekturna kakovost cenjena višje kot drugje in zato daje mlajšim arhitektom več prostora za gradnjo? Ali je Avstralija uspela ubežati sistemu arhitekturnih zvezdnikov, ki prevladuje v sodobni arhitekturi?

Eden od razlogov je verjetno, da v Avstraliji vseskozi upoštevamo pravilo »previsokega maka«. Gre za to, da se poreže stebela makov, ki zrastejo previsoko – torej, da te skrajšajo za glavo, če jo dvigneš previsoko. Do svojih zvezd smo precej neusmiljeni. V Avstraliji deluje mnogo odličnih in ustvarjalnih birojev, ki trdo delajo, vendar pa jih po pravilu ne hvalimo in občudujemo zelo odkrito. Do sami sebe smo zelo strogi, skoraj grobi kritiki.

Poleg tega je v Avstraliji stalno prisoten občutek skupnosti. V Melbournu je skupnost arhitektov še posebej močna. Med nami obstaja nekakšna bratovščina, vseeno pa smo drug z drugim precej strogi. Med nami se vedno odvija kritični dialog, naše debate so zelo živahne in drug od drugega zahtevamo zelo veliko. Mislim, da je to posebnost melbournske arhitekturne kulture, ki se ne ponovi nikjer drugje v Avstraliji. Vzdržujemo pozitivno tekmovalnost.

Spregovorimo še par besed o vašem biroju. Kako je mogoče, da dosegate tako kakovost izvedenih del pri tako velikem številu projektov? Skupina ljudi dela tako dobro, le če so pod popolnim nadzorom ...

Moji zaposleni so preprosto izredni, moram priznati, da me njihovo delo vedno znova navdušuje. Potem ko sem končal šolanje, sem tri leta delal v biroju, v katerem smo projektirali le zasebne hiše. Ker sem bil le precej nepomemben arhitekt, ki je projektiral hiše, pravzaprav nisem nikoli pridobil veliko izkušenj z delom v biroju. Odvisen sem od dobro izučenih sodelavcev, ki so izkušnje z gradnjo velikih zgradb in stolpnic pridobili, preden so prišli delat k meni. Mislim, da smo dober tim, in zelo sem ponosen sam nase, da sem uspel oblikovati takšen biro. Oblikovati svoj lasten biro je podobno, kot načrtovati zgradbo.

Vendar pa je vaš biro začel kot majhen butični biro, ki je postopoma postajal vse večji. Ali vam je to uspelo s pomočjo arhitekturnih natečajev?

V začetku sem bil sam, vendar pa smo sčasoma zrastle, saj smo dobivali vse večja naročila. Naš biro smo po eni strani ustvarili skozi natečaje. Začeli smo se udeleževati natečajev, potem pa so nas vabili na naslednjega in na naslednjega. Vendar pa se to ni izkazalo kot dober način vodenja biroja, saj te kaj hitro kreativno omrtviči. Natečaji so bili za nas sicer zelo koristni, vendar pa so bili tudi stalen pritisk. Na splošno se mi natečaji ne zdijo najboljši način za iskanje najboljšega projekta.

Omenili ste, da si želite biro razširiti v mednarodne vode. Ali se nameravate udeležiti mednarodnih natečajev?

Oziram se po Sloveniji ...

Ali gojite mnogo mednarodnih povezav z biroji izven Avstralije?

Niti ne. Zato sem bil tako zadovoljen, da ste me povabili k sodelovanju na Piranskih dnevih arhitekture.

Všeč mi je bila vaša pripomba, da je proces oblikovanja hiše oblikovanje scenosleda življenja, ki se bo v njej odvijalo. Na kakšen način pri vas potek proces projektiranja? Začnete z risanjem, razmislekom, pisanjem?

Kot arhitekti vedno nosimo odgovornost, da pogovore, ki jih imamo z

is only successful when it is intrinsically resolved down to the smallest detail. Some of our preoccupations head back to the traditions of architecture but at the same time, our process is our passion through engagement with 21st century and is very contemporary. We are hybrid office, a creative hybrid.

I think as architects, we can work at our best when the clients trust us. In Australia, we have lost many traditions, but the one that we did not is the tradition of offering big commissions to younger practices. In America for example, I see that architects of my generation just have not been given the sort of commissions that we have been given in Australia. In that way I think we are very fortunate. Our fees are not as high as American or Northern European fees, but we have more opportunities to build. My practice is no longer young, but still, almost in any other part of the world it would be difficult to find as many young practices that have had the trust invested in them to build major projects in cities.

You say that you were fortunate in this regard - do you think the Australian society as a whole values the architectural quality better than elsewhere and lets younger architects have more space to build? How has Australia managed to escape the "star-system" of contemporary architecture?

One of the reasons would be that in Australia the "tall poppy syndrome" is clearly manifested. It means you cut down the tall poppies - you get your head cut off if you grow too high in other words. We are very tough on our stars. There are many creative, brilliant and hard working practices, but we tend not to celebrate or revere our stars as other countries do. We are very tough on ourselves, very harsh critics.

Also, the sense of community is very strong in Australia. Particularly Melbourne has strong community of architects. There is the sense of fraternity, but we are also very tough on each other. There is always a critical dialogue, we debate vigorously, and we demand a lot of each other. This is a particular part of the Melbourne architectural culture that is different from anywhere else in Australia. It creates a positive competition.

If we could have a few words about your practice ... the amount of work your office produces and the quality your studio achieves - how is this possible? One would think only a total control could have so many people keep performing so well.

I have an amazing staff. I have to say I am fascinated by their quality. After I have had graduated, for three years, I worked in a practice who only produced houses. Having only been a very junior architect working on residential commissions, I never got any major practice experience. I am reliant on very skilled staff that has had this experience before coming to my office when I work on big buildings and skyscrapers. We are an amazing team, I am very proud to have designed such practice, in the way I would have designed a building.

Your practice began as a tiny boutique practice and gradually grew bigger and bigger. Was it the competitions that helped it along?

At the beginning there was just me. But over time my practice grew, as we took larger and larger commissions. The competitions were in a way the making of our practice. We started with competitions and then got constantly invited into the next competitions and into the next competition. But this has not proved to be the best way to run a practice as it can become creatively debilitating. So the competitions have been both really good for us and a constant pressure. Overall I don't think a competition is the perfect way to find the best project.

You said that you intend to extend your practice internationally. Do you plan to participate in international competitions?

I have set my eyes to Slovenia...

Do you have many connections with practices from outside Australia?

No, not at all. I was therefore so pleased to participate in Piran Days of Architecture.

I really liked your remark about the process of designing a house as a storyboard for the life that is going to be happening in it. How does your design process evolve? Do you begin by drawing, thinking, writing?

I feel that as architects, we always have the responsibility to make the discussion with clients a part of the building. Within the framework of an architectural

naročniki, vključimo v končni izdelek. V okviru dela v svojem arhitekturnem biroju sem razvil celoten proces ustvarjanja arhitekture. To sem bil prisiljen uvesti, če sem hotel delati z drugimi ljudmi kot enoten biro. Najprej narišem celo serijo skic, na podlagi katerih eden od zaposlenih izdelava makete. V biroju komuniciramo preko svojih izdelkov, torej skic in maket. Mlajši zaposleni to potem prenesejo v računalnike, sam sem namreč računalniško nepismen. Pogosto rišem čez računalniške risbe drugih. Vedno znova se vračamo nazaj v vsak detajl in pregledujemo, kar smo do tedaj naredili.

Ali imate knjižnico detajlov, ki jih pogosto uporabljate, ali jih na novo izumljate vsakič znova?

Nimamo svoje knjižnice detajlov, ko bi jo le imeli! Vedno znova ustvarjamo nove detajle, verjetno bi morali tiste, ki se posrečijo uporabiti pogosteje. Vedno znova vlagamo v projekte in mislim, da s tem ohranjamo svojo kondicijo.

Mnogi arhitekti se navežejo na svoje naročnike in skozi daljši čas delajo z enimi in istimi naročniki. Ali pogosto večkrat delate za istega naročnika?

Niti ne. Delamo za univerze, za raziskovalne organizacije in zasebne naročnike, ki gradijo svoje domove.

Očitno je, da so vaše individualne hiše projektirane na enak način kot raziskovalna središča ali univerzitetne knjižnice. Manjše hiše projektirate z enako skrbnostjo kot velike projekte, večje zgradbe imajo prav toliko drobnih detajlov kot majhne. V čem se projekt za univerzo razlikuje od projekta za individualno hišo?

Mislim, da se sploh ne razlikuje. Obe vrsti projektov ponavadi delamo hkrati, na mizah so v našem biroju vedno projekti različnih velikosti. Njihovo število seveda ni vedno enako, ponavadi jih je okoli dvanajst. Nekaj majhnih hiš, nekaj večjih, nekateri v fazi projektiranja, nekateri v fazi gradnje. Velike in majhne projekte delamo obenem in na enak način.

Med seboj so zelo podobni, spreminja se le merilo. Komunikacije z naročniki naših velikih projektov smo se naučili iz intimnega sodelovanja z naročniki naših manjših projektov. Kot arhitekti smo se morali naučiti komunikacije z naročniki. Stalno opiranje na naše minule projekte je za naš biro prav tako zelo pomembno.

Pogosto se zgodi, da v birojih, ki so dobri pri projektiranju majhnih zgradb, kakovost močno pade, ko začnejo graditi večje projekte. Kako ste se uspeli temu izogniti?

Nekaj podobnega so napovedovali tudi našemu biroju, zato smo se še toliko bolj pazljivo lotili večjih projektov in poskrbeli, da nam je bil vsak detajl vrednota sam po sebi.

Včeraj smo od kitajskih predavateljev slišali, kako hiter je proces gradnje na Kitajskem. Eno leto je zanje cela večnost, medtem ko v Evropi tri leta v »gradbenem času« niso skoraj nič. Kako hitro poteka proces gradnje in projektiranja v Avstraliji?

Mislim, da je nekje vmes med Kitajsko in Evropo. Mislim pa, da mi kot biro svoje delo izvajamo počasi. Smo slow food arhitekti.

Koliko prostega časa vam potem sploh ostane?

Seveda si vzamem čas zase. Na Tasmaniji imam posestvo, kjer počnem čisto nore stvari. Sadim drevesa.

Posestvo na katerem sadite drevesa. Slišati je podobno kot starec iz Gionojeve zgodbe z naslovom »Mož, ki je sadil drevesa«. Starec je leta in leta sadil drevesa, dokler ni pogozdil velikega dela pokrajine nekje v Provansi. Kako lep način preživljanja prostega časa!

practice I have developed the whole procedure of creating architecture. I had to establish that in order to be able to work with other people as one practice. I make a whole series of sketches and then a member of my staff builds models. Our practice converses through what we do: sketches and models. And then my younger staff puts it into computers. I myself am completely computer-illiterate. I draw over other people's computer drawings. We constantly review, and we return back to over and over every detail.

Do you have a library of details that you use often or you invent them every single time?

No, we have not built a library, if only we had! We are constantly producing new details; we should probably recycle the good ones more often. We keep reinvesting into the projects all the time, with every commission, and that maybe keeps us cool.

Many architects become attached to their clients and tend to work with the same ones for longer periods. Are your clients mainly the same ones?

No, not really. I work with universities, research organisations, and private investors for their family homes.

It is immediately evident how your individual family houses are made just in the same way as your research centres or university libraries for example. Small houses are designed with the same care as the larger buildings; the larger buildings on the other hand, have as many small details as the smaller ones. In which way is a commission for a university different from designing a family home?

I do not think it really is different. We do both simultaneously most of the time. We always have different sized projects on the table at the office. Their number varies constantly, but there are usually around twelve at the same time. Some smaller houses some larger ones, some in designing and the others in building. We work on larger and smaller projects at the same time and in the same way.

There are so many similarities, only the scale is shifting. We understand how to engage with our big project clients because we do it so intimately with our individual clients. We are educated as architects in how to communicate with our clients. Constant reference back to our work is very important for our practice.

It often happens that when an office is really good at building small projects and then starts to build larger buildings, the quality often deteriorates. How did you manage to avoid this?

The same was predicted to happen to our office, so we were very self-conscious with the larger work to make sure it has that intrinsic value invested in the detail.

Yesterday, we heard from the Chinese that the building process in China is extremely fast. One year is like an eternity to them, while in Europe, three years is almost nothing in "building time". How quick are the design and building process in Australia?

I think we would be somewhere between the Chinese and the European experience. I think we as a practice produce our work slowly. We are slow food architects.

How much time do you have left for yourself then?

I do have time for myself. I have a farm in Tasmania where I go and do crazy things: I plant trees.

You have a farm where you plant trees ... well, you sound just like the old man in "The Man who Planted Trees", a novel by Jean Giono. There is a character in the novel that spends years planting trees, finally covering the whole area of Provence with forest. What a beautiful thing to do with your spare time!