

Office V+ from Brussels is an important contributor to the contemporary Belgian architectural scene. Their work is based on a critical attitude towards public space and programme. In their projects, they emphasise the significance of symbolic, cultural, and social values while at the same time re-evaluating new spatial and technical solutions. In this way, the remit of their activity extends beyond the expected.

The office's full name is *Vers plus de bien-être* ("towards a greater well-being" (1)). It was founded in 2004 by partners Thierry Decuyper and Jörn Aram Bihain. Their work represents a relentless pursuit of distinctive expression. They address the public by means of projects, lectures, exhibitions, installations, and performances, both within the architectural discipline as well as in urban activist networks and artistic circles.

Decuyper's and Bihain's complementary collaboration was established already during the open competition for which they sought an alternative proposal for the re-evaluation of a crossing between the south and north Brussels (railway) station. The work extended into a year-long project and concluded with exhibition (1998–1999). "The name of our office contains its fundamentals, beliefs and its philosophy [...] Our name originates from the projects 1954 inaugural slogan 'the junction of south/north towards a greater well-being' because for us, with such a slogan, everything remains to be done." (2)

Both architects are active members of the Brussels and Belgian, as well as international architectural culture. Office V+ has been the recipient of various prizes, including the 2017 Mies Van der Rohe Emerging Architecture prize.

Belgian architecture is subject to a complicated and multi-layered context. Beside construction economics, each individual project's ambition, urban regulation, and the slow but persistent gentrification of Brussels, it further includes a very referential, distinctive architectural heritage of brick terraced houses, industrial complexes, intertwined and cacophonous city blocks, patios, and ultimately the important tradition of surrealism. Such a space is no place for self-referential architecture; architecture "depends" (3) on the context and all its individual factors. The architectural practice of office V+ occupies a special place precisely due to its flexible and indeterminate approach, which characterises their projects.

In projects running the gamut between zero to several tens of thousands square metres of area space, and between zero and several tens of millions' worth of investment, office V+ endeavours to retain, emphasise and leverage the context's multiple layers, which seem at first glance to inhibit a project's development possibilities. In this way, the beginning of each project is a "naive" but effective position of being indeterminate without prior ideas and objectives.

Such "undisciplined", non-hierarchical re-examination and exploration of the context enables the awareness of the bigger picture, which gives rise to unexpected questions and aspects. Each project underscores new questions and explores a new topic. As a result, each project is markedly different from all the others - they serve as a constant reminder that in architecture, one set of requirements must not drown out the others. "We remain reticent about a form of radical heroism, preferring to run the risk of being too complex." (4)

The office's architectural principles materialise through the complexity brought forth by the demands of "good architecture". Their being indeterminate, "undisciplined", and disinclined towards the conventional is frequently conducive to displacements, either physical or conceptual, or to modifying the expectations of the discipline and the parties involved. The multitude of non-hierarchical properties characteristic of each respective context results in architecture which is "less powerful but better adapted". (5)

Their projects are an expression of the efficiency of complex architecture which cannot be evaluated merely as technological, engineering, or economical architecture. It derives from the concern that any architectural gesture must ensure an improvement of the context and figure as an expression of the desire to create narrativity through a playful construction of space. Their projects embody "an emancipatory, multi-dimensional and relational architecture, which generates intensity, pleasure, and even humour." (6)

Jörn Aram Bihain (1973, Brussels) graduated in 1996 from the faculty of architecture at Saint-Luc, Brussels. Before forming office V+, he collaborated with Wolfgang Tschapeller and Henke Schreiheck in Vienna. From 2007, he teaches at the faculty of architecture at Saint-Luc Liège.

Thierry Decuyper (1973, Brussels) graduated in 1996 from Faculty of Architecture La Cambre Horta. Before forming office V+, he collaborated with Olivier Bastin (studio L'Escaut). From 2003, he teaches at Faculty of Architecture La Cambre Horta in Brussels.

Vlatka Ljubanović, Tina Javornik

1

"well-being"

noun - the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy.

2

"The name of our office contains its fundamentals, beliefs and its philosophy (...) Our name originates from the projects 1954 inaugural slogan "the junction of south/north towards a greater well-being" because for us, with such a slogan, everything remains to be done."

Own description of the office, available at the web address: <https://www.vplus.org/pages/about>, quoted 26. 8. 2022

3

"architecture depends"

Chabard, P., Dars, S., Menon C. (2015). V+ architecture: documents on five projects. Bruselj: Bozar, A+, Lannoo, page 11
Thill, J. (2009). Architecture depends. Cambridge, MA: MIT

4

"We remain reticent about a form of radical heroism, preferring to run the risk of being too complex."

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6

" (...) une architecture émancipatrice, multidimensionnelle et relationnelle, génératrice d'intensité, de plaisir, voire d'humour."

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TEATER

Deinze, Belgija, 2019, TRANS in V+ architecture
foto: Maxime Delvaux

THEATHER

Deinze, Belgium, 2019, TRANS and V+ architecture
photo: Maxime Delvaux



HIŠA JUPITER

Bruselj, Belgija, 2019-
foto: Maxime Delvaux

JUPITER HOUSE

Brussels, Belgium, 2019-
photo: Maxime Delvaux



galerija DESSA
Židovska steza 4, Ljubljana
www.dessa.si



REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA
MINISTRSTVO ZA KULTURO



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Tisk plakatov / Panels printing: Prima IP
Oblikovanje in tisk zloženek/Design and printing of depliants: Mat-Format

Pokroviteljja/Sponsors



SEDEM POGOJEV ZA DOBRO ARHITEKTURO

Nepretenciozna razstava

SEVEN CONDITIONS FOR GOOD ARCHITECTURE

An unpretentious exhibition

september/oktober 2022

Židovska steza 4, SI-1000 Ljubljana

Bruseljski biro V+ je pomemben soustvarjalec sodobne belgijske arhitekturne scene. Njihovo delo temelji na kritičnem odnosu do javnega prostora in programa. V projektih izpostavljajo pomen simbolnih, kulturnih in družbenih vrednot, hkrati pa preizprašujejo nove prostorske in tehnične rešitve. Tako odpirajo manevrski prostor svojega delovanja izven pričakovanega.

Biro s polnim imenom Vers plus de bien-être (slo. "k večji blaginji" (1)) sta leta 2004 ustanovila partnerja Thierry Decuyper in Jörn Aram Bihain. Pri svojem delu neumorno gradita samosvojo izraznost. Javnost naslavlja s projekti, predavanji, razstavami, z inštalacijami in performansi, tako v okviru arhitekturne discipline kot v urbanih aktivističnih mrežah in umetniških krogih. Njunjo dopolnjujoče sodelovanje se je vzpostavilo že med javnim natečajem, kjer sta iskala alternativni predlog prevrednotenja križišča med južno in severno bruseljsko (železniško) postajo. Delo se je raztegnilo v enoletni projekt in zaključilo z razstavo (1998–1999). *"Temelji, filozofija in upanja biroja se odražajo v njegovem imenu. (...) Naše ime izhaja iz inavguralnega slogana projekta iz leta 1954 «Križišče jug/sever k večji blaginji» (eng. "junction north/south towards a greater well being"), ki nam pomeni, da je vse potrebno šele narediti."* (2)

Oba arhitekta sta aktivna člana bruseljske in belgijske pa tudi mednarodne arhitekturne kulture. Biro V+ je prejemnik različnih nagrad, med njimi tudi Mies Van der Rohe nagrade za obetavne mlade arhitekta leta 2017. * * *

Belgijska arhitektura je podvržena zapletenemu in večplastnemu kontekstu. Ta poleg ekonomike gradnje, ambicij samega projekta, urbanističnih regulacij in bruseljske počasne, a vztrajne gentrifikacije, zajema tudi zelo referenčno, distinktivno arhitekturno dediščino opečnatih vrstnih hiš, industrijskih kompleksov, prepletenih in kakofoničnih stavbnih otokov, atrijskih dvorišč

in nenazadnje pomembno tradicijo surrealizma. V takšnem prostoru ni mesta za samoreferenčno arhitekturo; arhitektura je *"odvisna"* (3) od konteksta in vseh njegovih posameznih dejavnikov. Arhitekturna praksa biroja V+ zavzema posebno mesto prav zaradi fleksibilnega in nedoločenega pristopa, ki zaznamuje njihove projekte. V projektih, ki se raztezajo med nič in več deset tisoč kvadratnih metrov površine, med nič in več deset milijonskimi investicijami, si biro V+ prizadeva ohraniti, poudariti in izrabiti večplastnost konteksta, ki na prvi pogled omejuje možnosti razvoja projektov. Tako je začetek vsakega projekta "naivna", a učinkovita pozicija nedoločenosti brez vnaprejšnjih zamisli in ciljev.

Tako "nedisciplinirano", nehierarhično preizpraševanje in raziskovanje konteksta omogoča zavedanje o širši sliki, v kateri se pojavijo tudi nepričakovana vprašanja in pogledi. Vsak projekt izpostavi nova vprašanja in raziskuje novo temo. Zato so tudi projekti med seboj tako različni: nenehno opominjajo, da v arhitekturi ene zahteve ne smejo nadvladati drugim. *"Ostajamo zadržani do oblike radikalnega junaštva in raje tvegamo, da bomo preveč zapleteni."* (4) * * *

Arhitekturni principi biroja se materializirajo skozi kompleksnost, ki jo vzpostavljajo zahteve "dobre arhitekture". Nedoločenost, "nedisciplina" in odpor do konvencionalnega se pogosto izrazijo skozi "premestitve" (eng. displacement); te so bodisi fizične bodisi konceptualne, ali pa v predružačenju pričakovani discipline in vpletenih akterjev. Spričo te množice nehierarhičnih, trenutnemu kontekstu lastnih posebnosti je rezultat arhitektura, ki je *"manj silovita, a bolj prilagojena"*. (5) Njihovi projekti so izraz učinkovitosti kompleksne arhitekture, ki je ni mogoče vrednotiti samo kot tehnološke, inženirske ali ekonomske. Izhaja iz skrbi, da mora vsakršna arhitekturna gesta zagotoviti izboljšanje konteksta in biti izraz želje po ustvarjanju pripovednosti

skozi igrivo grajenje prostora. Njihovi projekti utelešajo *"emancipatorno, večdimenzionalno in relacijsko arhitekturo, ki generira intenzivnost, užitek in celo humor."* (6)

* * *

Jörn Aram Bihain (1973, Bruselj) je leta 1996 diplomiral na fakulteti za arhitekturo Saint Luc v Bruslju. Pred ustanovitvijo biroja V+ je sodeloval z Wolfgangom Tschapellerjem ter Henkejem Schreihekom na Dunaju. Od leta 2007 poučuje na fakulteti za arhitekturo Saint Luc v Liegu.

Thierry Decuyper (1973, Bruselj) je leta 1996 diplomiral na fakulteti za arhitekturo La Cambre Horta. Pred ustanovitvijo biroja V+ je sodeloval z Olivierjem Bastinom (studio L'Escaut). Od leta 2003 poučuje na fakulteti za arhitekturo La Cambre Horta v Bruslju.

Vlatka Ljubanović, Tina Javornik

1
blaginja -e ž (i) : obilje materialnih dobrin

V tem primeru govorimo o blaginji širšega, splošnega pomena, ne samo o materialni; govorimo o dobrem počutju, dobrobiti.

2
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Lastni opis biroja, dostopno na spletnem naslovu:

<https://www.vplus.org/pages/about>, citirano 26. 8. 2022

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VODNI STOLP

Ghlin, Belgija, 2017
foto: Maxime Delvaux

WATER TOWER

Ghlin, Belgium, 2017
photo: Maxime Delvaux



KULTURNI CENTER

Marcq en Baroeul, Francija, 2021
HBAAT in V+ architecture
foto: Cyrille Weiner

CULTURAL CENTER

Marcq en Baroeul, France, 2021
HBAAT and V+ architecture
photo: Cyrille Weiner



HIŠA LATHUY

Lathuy, Belgija, 2015
foto: Maxime Delvaux

LATHUY HOUSE

Lathuy, Belgium, 2015
photo: Maxime Delvaux



MESTNA HIŠA MONTIGNY

Montigny-le-Tilleul, Belgija, 2013
foto: Maxime Delvaux

TOWN HALL MONTIGNY

Montigny-le-Tilleul, Belgium, 2013
photo: Maxime Delvaux