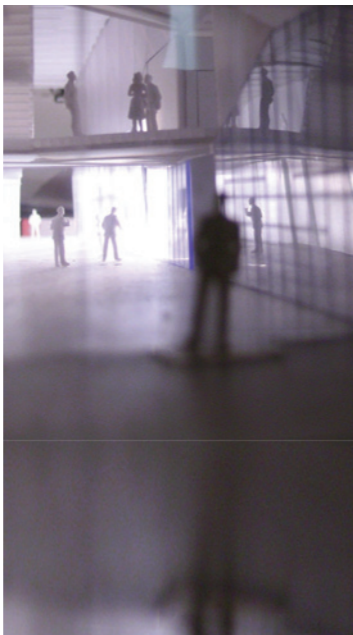


In terms of a socio-spatial organization, the floor plates of the two existing shells provided opposite challenges, the structure in Split being too deep, while the structure in Zadar was too shallow. In both cases, the architects responded with a miniature room typology, the capsule, inspired by Tokyo's capsule hotels. In Split these cells were configured in clusters, miniature train-cars (or large taxis), placed perpendicular to the façade. In Zadar, the cells were grouped into smaller four-unit clusters, placed parallel to the existing façade, the Forum and the sea. In Split, the greater depth led to the preservation of the department stores escalator and the development of an atrium space, a new social condenser. The resulting sensation is that of internal focus to the sulfuric public space in Split, which leaks out of the façade, not unlike the true smell of sulfur reaching the somewhat perturbed tourists from beneath the ancient site. In Zadar the lesser depth led to an op-art-like treatment of the hallways, with oscillating bands bombarding the optical nerve with a virtual increase or decrease of depth. Here the internal clusters of cells, a miniature façade offset from the frame, blur the reading of the existing façade, again evoking the artwork of the New Tendencies, while also giving the users the feeling of literally hanging out on the Forum. The suspended cage of young hedonists played against the properly dressed citizens of Zadar sipping coffees in cafes immediately below further duplicates the reading of the space.

The hostel cells are contrasted with larger rooms at the top in both projects. In Split, the more complex space generated by the pitched roof led to a series of loft-type rooms, whose windows allow the geometry of the neighboring roofs a dialogue with this interior, adding a faceted ground to the interiors faceted ceiling and undulating walls. Here a clinical white interior contrasts the Mediterranean roof scape of cheap Italian terracotta and satellite dishes. In Zadar, a relatively normative roofline in section is contrasted with faceted multi-sided rooms, in which poché servant spaces have been stuffed and the bathrooms continue a psychedelic theme. In Zadar, a different strategy of connecting inside and outside is staged, as the walls are treated with a highly reflective finish so as to continue a panoramic image of the roman forum, medieval square and sea, on their faceted surfaces. In both projects, the real lesson of the modernist aperture is reiterated, with the window functioning more so as an expanded space of transition than an obliteration of inside and outside, as so many critics have wrongly argued.

While the rigor of STUDIO UP's architectonic frames is almost self-evident, both in plan and in physical manifestation, the atmospheres produced are a more difficult subject to analyze. Here the collaboration with Damir Gamulin Gamba, the graphic designer in both projects, seems important, as his contributions have added narrative to the frame without forcing it to become overly rhetorical. Like the applied ornament in many OMA projects, or in the early collaborations of Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich, and unlike so much of the overly baroque contemporary work of the digifab generation, the graphic layers in both of these projects are clearly applied but at the same time contribute to the production of an atmosphere difficult to imagine in their absence. Gamba's interventions assist the real atmosphere builders, the staff of the hostel/hotel hybrids and the users, both local and trans-local. In the case of Split, the initial interaction between design team and staff were minimal prior to the fabrication of an atmosphere following the frame's construction. In the case of Zadar, the production of frame



and atmosphere were more collaboratively produced, with the design team still involved a year after 'construction' was complete. These differences in the continued construction of an atmosphere are as quantifiable as the architectonic frames, thanks to the sites like Tripadvisor and Booking.com. Since 2010 for Split, and 2012 for Zadar, both of these atmospheres have few parallels in their respective virtual lives.

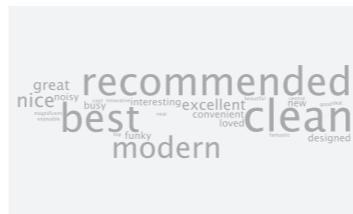
Of all the arts, architecture, according to John Cage, is most blessed with silence; being a poor conduit for direct messages, architecture has the opportunity to become a powerful and precise frame for all that is not architecture, it is unique in its ability to get out of the way, a master of the difficult act of disappearance. Unfortunately architecture's own silence has often been misread as a silencing of that which it frames, as seen within the various manifestations of rationalism and minimalism, just to name a few -isms. Conversely, STUDIO UP's architecture shows sympathy and empathy to its users without speaking for them, without attempting to directly express the supposed exuberance of use in the frame that is there to support that use. This work is certainly not neutral, unlike the fictional taxi driver we began our discussion with. It does not feign autonomy while simultaneously harboring resentment towards the passengers it is transporting. These projects demand an active participation from staff and user alike, as the different responses to essentially the same type in Split and Zadar indicate. STUDIO UP's recent investigations through these two projects suggest a more active understanding of the recently fashionable term in Croatian tourism, destination management, suggesting that more intense but surgical physical interventions, which frame but do not fully determine the hedonistic pursuits of leisure, are needed more than either conversation or a tabula rasa approach. One can imagine that this work can both grow in scale, to that of the city and the region, as well shrink to that of product design. I am sure that the story is not over.

Ivan Rupnik

Soorganizator



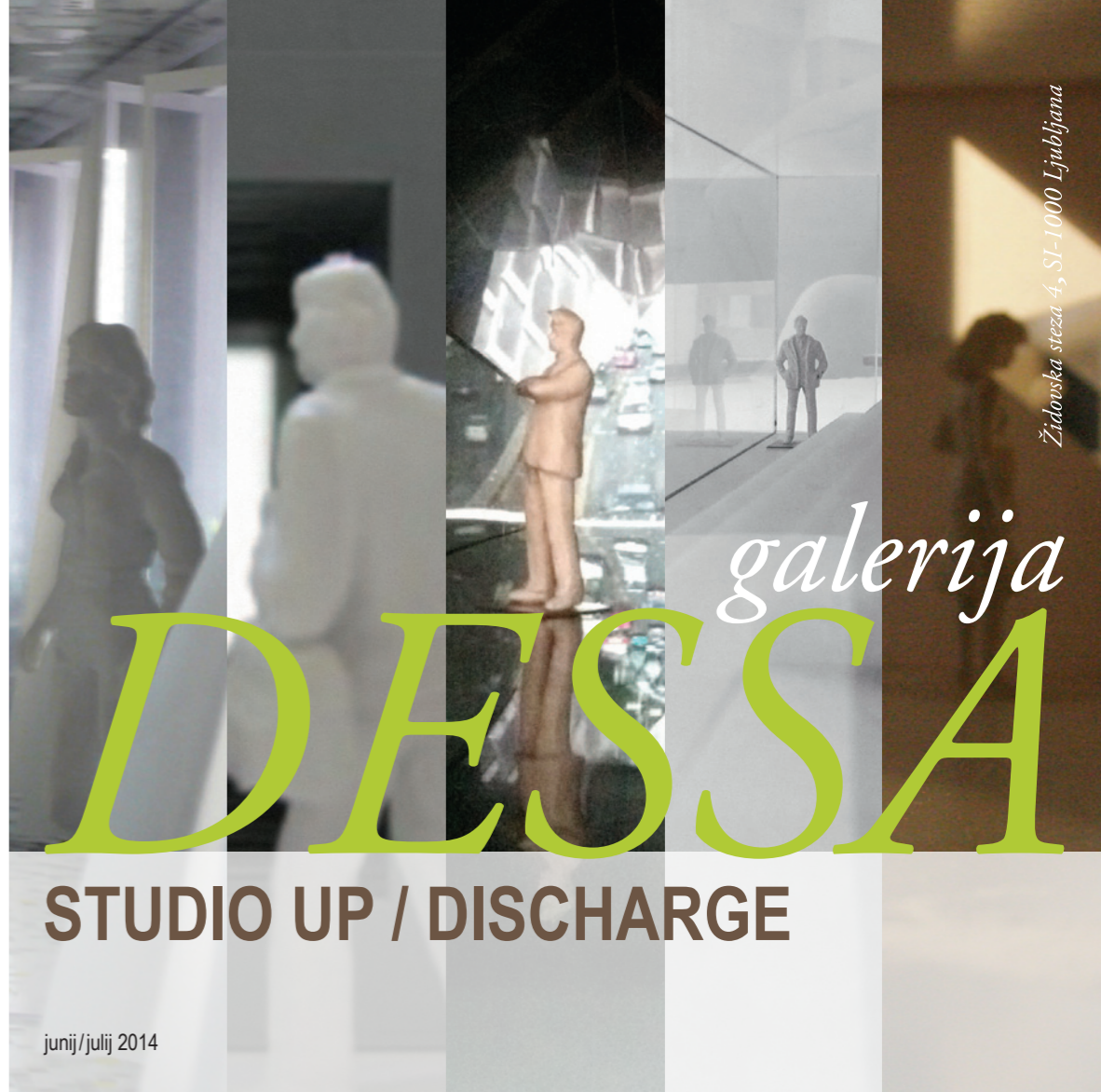
Razstavu sofinancira



**BUZZ-WORD CLOUDS AROUND GOLI ± BOSI AND THE FORUM**

A parallel to the dollhouse models developed as studies of the interaction of STUDIO UP's architectural frame and experiential atmosphere, these buzz word clouds were compiled from the experiences of the various guests in at the GOLI ± BOSI Design Hostel in Split from 2010 until May, 2014 and Boutique Hostel Forum in Zadar from 2012 until May, 2014 as recorded by tripadvisor.com. The adjectives related to 6 buzzwords have been mapped according to their relative frequency in the reviews with the assistance of www.wordle.net.

This analysis technique was developed and executed by Adam Sandore in dialogue with Ivan Rupnik as part of the Resilient Coastal Leisure Environments research studio at Northeastern University in 2013-2014.



galerija

**STUDIO UP / DISCHARGE**

junij/julij 2014

Židovska steza 4, SI-1000 Ljubljana

## Taxis and Doll Houses, Frames and Atmospheres: The Recent Work of STUDIO UP

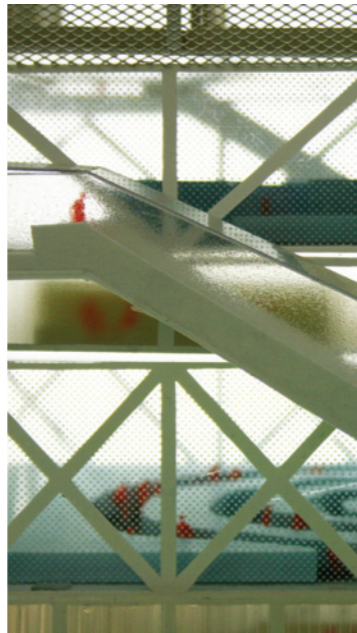
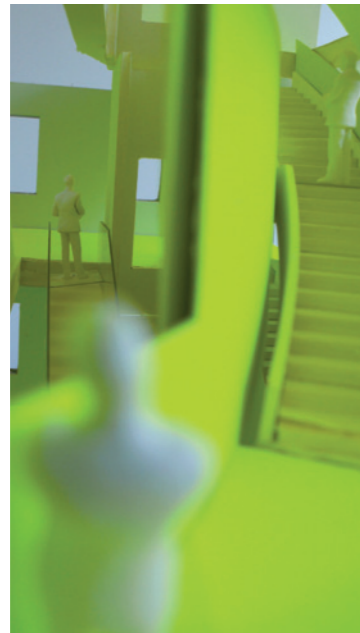
www.studioup.hr

In an act of vandalism against the barrier between author and critic, Lea Pelivan and Toma Plejić have put forth a provocation in the form of a quote from their favorite fictional taxi driver:

*All the animals come out at night – whores, skunk pussies, buggers, queens, fairies, dopers, junkies, sick, venal. Someday a real rain will come and wash all this scum off the streets. I go all over. I take people to the Bronx, Brooklyn, I take 'em to Harlem. I don't care. Don't make no difference to me. It does to some. Some won't even take spooks. Don't make no difference to me.*

....

*Travis Bickle, Taxi Driver (1976).*



If we were to assume that they are merely sympathetic to the colorful passengers or share Travis' seeming tolerance of the bizarre, the eccentric and even the monstrous, justly illuminating the monster within himself, we would miss much of what is interesting and unique in STUDIO UP's work. Neither they nor their work have direct commonalities with the hedonistic passengers or their puritanical driver, in both his passive and his aggressive incarnations. Alternatively, their work may have more in common with the formal and social construction of the taxi itself, brightly colored, even flashy on the inside, sturdy but jury-rigged, it gets you where you want to go but not without impassively stimulating the innate behaviors of its passengers, and why not? But before turning to the work, I will submit another piece of evidence for inspection, the inspiring but elusive urban core of Split, their home town, not as indicator of some *genus loci*, but as another kind of taxi, a formal vehicle, which not only tolerates, but supports, informality.

Split has often been read as both a neutral structure and one that has, for centuries, safely housed the influxes of barbarous hordes seeking shelter within its architectural frame, with little interaction occurring between the two. Some have preferred the formal structure, reading within it permanence and universality, others have preferred the informal interventions, representative of both individual and collective intent. As a side note, it is interesting that southerners, for example Aldo Rossi, tended to fantasize the former, and northerners, for example Brian Eno, the latter. However, the truth of the matter is actually stranger than the fictions projected upon the artifact. Nearly a century ago, Don Frane Bulić and Ljubo Karaman transformed the binary between structure and infill, formal and informal into a more complex trinity between the Palace, the urban fabric and a series of parameters interpreted from Roman Law by 'barbarians', which both protected the original structure and provided for its use and adaptation. Their research was not just simply intellectual curiosity but a direct response to the disappearance of this third artifact and a means to impede the parallel desires of those seeking to 'disencumber' the Palace's infill and those who usurped the structure unregulated. Split's construct was not only the result of a neutral structure in juxtaposition with two millennia of colorful characters, but was also framed by a series of formal, if not inflexible social and spatial practices, which had allowed for this complex artifact to maintain a degree of equilibrium, unlike the story of the taxi driver.

STUDIO UP's work, as constituted by the projects that both guide the construction of the material artifacts and frame the performance of certain socio-spatial practices, also seeks a degree of equilibrium. As clearly demonstrated by their primary instruments of architectural inquiry, doll-house-like architectural models, they disagree with Bernard Tschumi's formulation of architecture as event, as some sort of frozen music, and instead follow a logic more aligned with Rem Koolhaas' warning that, where architecture happens, nothing else can happen, causing them to study how to best frame, not express, potential scenarios. It is a calculated dance between architecture and user, one that must maintain a healthy distance so as not to preclude potential scenarios, while at the same time avoiding altogether indifference. Quoting Robin Evans, it would be "foolish to suggest that there is anything in a plan which could compel people to behave in a specific way towards one another, enforcing a day-to-day regime of gregarious sensuality", but it be even more foolish "to suggest that a plan could not prevent



people from behaving in a particular way, or at least hinder them from doing so." Much of their design process seems to involve taking what are otherwise highly rational structures and disassembling them of such hindrances, sprinkling provocations to elicit response in their place.

This sensibility is certainly present in their most famous and earliest project, GYMNASIUM 46 09 N / 16 50 E (2003-2007), and can be seen even further developed in projects like the Spectator Office Building (2008-09), where the work of a number of artists is both framed by STUDIO UP's spatial structures and further anticipates and provokes user experience. However, since 2010, the Croatian context has been barren of the kinds of public competitions that resulted in the GYMNASIUM or the kinds of enlightened private clients that supported the Spectator Office Building. Only one economic sector has remained relatively unscathed by the economic crisis: Tourism. With few exceptions, neither the profession nor the private or public sector at large have been able to channel this increasingly dominant force to any productive or innovative ends. It is against this backdrop that one should read STUDIO UP's ongoing investigation into a new typological variant of the hotel, the Boutique Hostel, through two projects, GOLJ ± BOSI Design Hostel in Split (2010) and Boutique Hostel Forum in Zadar (2012).

In the GYMNASIUM project, the initial arbitrator was a jury of colleagues, sympathetic to and understanding of the proposals objectives, with STUDIO UP anticipating, hoping for and framing the maximum teen age angst one could expect from a somewhat sleepy industrial town. In the Spectator Office Building, the banalities of the daily work routine of a luxury goods and services company were nudged towards the world of a cultural institution, at least before the company's ultimate bankruptcy. In both cases, the relationship between client, architect and user was generally stable and clear. In both of these projects a minimal, but certainly not minimalist architecture is achieved, with a clear spatial and tectonic framework, carefully studied through a series of dollhouse scaled models to host a maximal atmosphere. While this design approach, fusing a rigorous frame with a loosely choreographed atmosphere, is also visible in the two hotel-hostel hybrids in Split and Zadar, the framework for these projects is significantly different from those earlier iterations tendered through public commission or private patronage. The two recent projects, both rehabilitations of existing structures executed at breakneck speed during the off-season, reflect a new and even more unstable reality in Croatia, one where tourism has increasingly come to dominate all other activities, economic as well as social and cultural. However, for STUDIO UP it has provided the opportunity to evolve a new typology in two very different sites.

In both projects, the presence of existing structures creates a double frame condition. The first project in Split, occupying a Secessionist mixed-use building which had been converted into a department store during Socialism, and the second project, in Zadar, located on the eastern edge of that city Roman Forum, onto which a hotel had also been added during the postwar period. Furthermore, both buildings face an important public space, and in the second case, the sea as well. In Split, the structure's depth led to the lobby being hybridized with a restaurant, flooding the full footprint and rendered in black. In Zadar, the small lobby is perched up, suspended within the space of the arcade.

