

# LOBBY

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Faith

# LOBBY

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## Editorial

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The Staircase \_\_\_\_\_ Marcela Aragüez  
The Lift \_\_\_\_\_ Nito Ramírez  
The Library \_\_\_\_\_ Gregorio Astengo  
The Toilets \_\_\_\_\_ Mrinal S. Rammohan

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**Fani Kostourou,**  
Contributing Writer

Fani is a Greek architect and urban designer from NTUA, ETHZ and UCL. She's currently doing a PhD at the Bartlett School of Architecture, and she's been writing for us since our very first issue. Fani loves reading up on people's everyday practices in big cities, as well as on mass housing, which makes her end up going late to bed every night, only to realise what a bad idea it was every morning. Fani's article can be found in pages 58–60 of the Exhibition Space.

**“I'd name my racehorse *Big Jet Plane*, to glorify our two shared passions: speed and the freedom to run away and travel. Or I'd simply call him *Forrest* only to be able to say, ‘Run, Forrest, Run!’”**

Twitter: @fani\_ko



**Micahel Novotný**  
Contributing Photographer

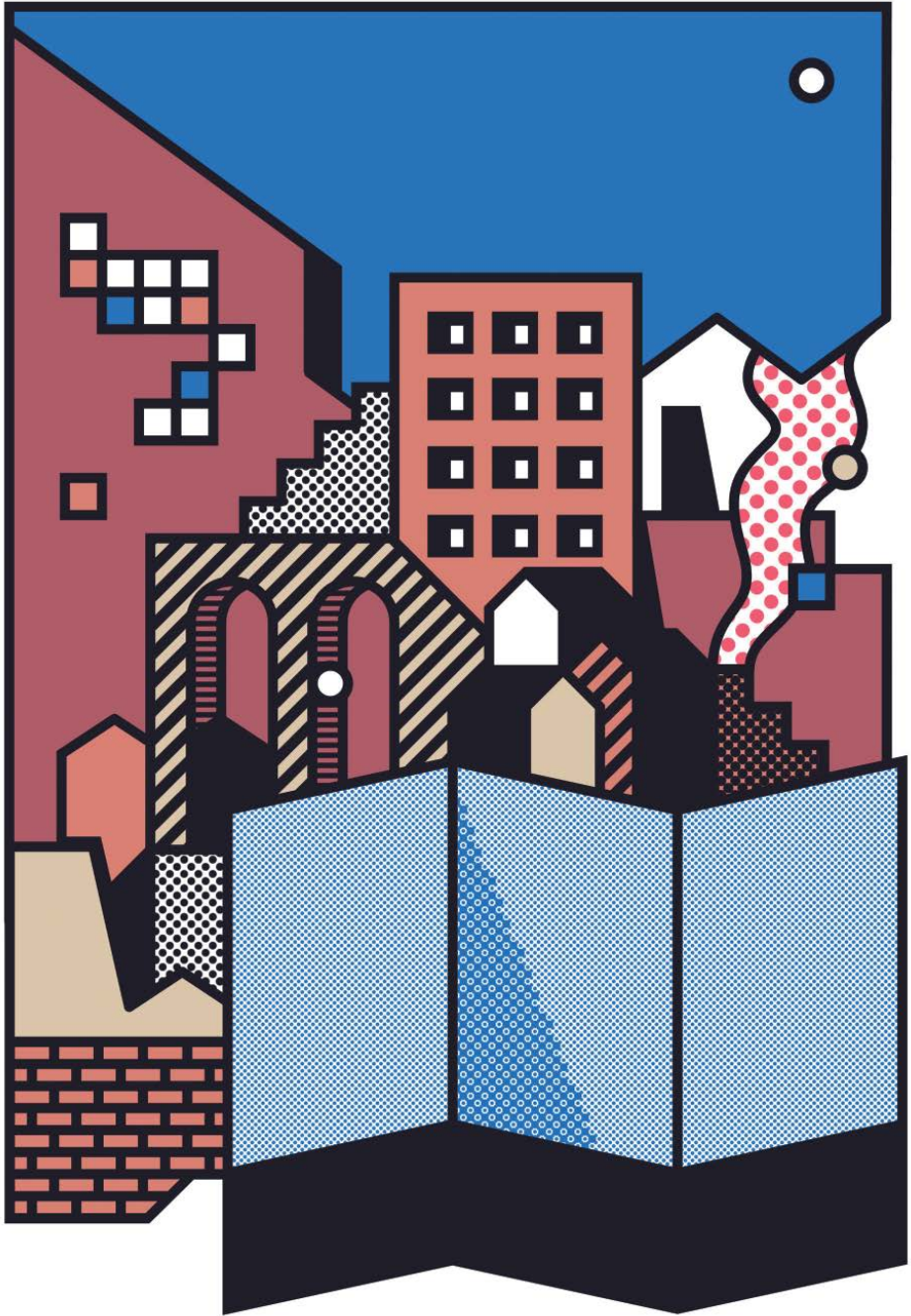
Michael Novotny is a young photographer from Prague, where he graduated from the Czech University of Life Sciences in 2013 with a Masters in Landscape Architecture. He's always been strongly influenced by nature, something which is clearly reflected in his work. Living what he calls a 'half-nomadic life', Michael spent the last year in Iceland, and currently lives in the Swiss Alps, travelling whenever possible. Using only analogue techniques, over the years he's developed a unique style; during his travels he captures diverse landscapes in their rawness and mixes them with a dreamy and mysterious touch. Take a look at Michael's photo essay in pages 46–53 of the Exhibition Space.

**“I don't like to race or compete against people. I just want to enjoy life without the need of being the best. So, if I'd ever get a racehorse I'd call it *Time*. I'd teach it to run as slowly as possible so I could enjoy every moment of the ride while others rush to get somewhere.”**

Instagram: @hazy\_island

# New Modesty

ARCHITECTURE OF A RISING GENERATION



In 1993 the American Institute of Architects established the AIA Young Architects Award, recognising for the first time in the history of the discipline the significance of young creatives' contribution to the profession. It's been a while since then, and for some time little progress was made. Lately, however—especially after the 2008 global financial crisis—young architecture has gained substantial prominence. In the absence of resources and building commissions, the standard big-name architecture found itself challenged. Focus shifted from 'old is gold' to what was being discussed informally and done alternatively.

Young architects started to be cautiously seen as a solution for current problems and as sources for reinvention and redirection within the field. The existence of more than 10 awards for students and young architects today suggests this is now truer than ever. Over the past year, a series of additional events occurred: the prestigious UK Turner art prize was awarded to Assemble; a number of emerging architects stood out in the 15th Venice Architecture Biennale; and the *New Architects 3* publication (by the Architecture Foundation) came out featuring the most imminent British practices. Who are those young architects? How does young architecture define itself? How does it differ from established practices? Does it actually have the answers or is this just another false alarm?

Four articles—by Geraldine Bedell for *The Observer* (2009), Robert Bevan for *The Evening Standard* (2015), Phineas Harper and Phil Pawlett

Jackson for *The Architectural Review* (2015) and Nicola Davison for *The Financial Times* (2016)—give some insight:

- 1 Young architects are pragmatic, enthusiastic, political, modest, tactical and interdisciplinary.
- 2 They're more interested in looking at existing things, rather than imposing new ones.
- 3 They're committed and engaged to people's needs getting them involved in the process and without projecting their own egos.
- 4 Young architecture is temporary, vulnerable, ambitious, minor and fashionable.

In the history of design knowledge, progress often came as a result of questioning the established status quo. Considering the current social and economic conditions, the young generation of architects has become sceptical of the so-called 'starchitecture' because it stopped performing how it was originally meant to: a socially-engaging, financially low-risk, functional architecture respectful of its cultural context.

Since Postmodernism, the formal architecture of spectacle had already faced criticism. Now, this moves one step further. Among young architects, styles have no real meaning. Tradition and history are not among their priorities. "Culture is more complicated than that. We're not as interested in the future as we used to be, certainly not the future as it looked

in the 1950s," says Kieran Long, Editor of the *Architects' Journal*. Similarly, Tom Emerson of 6a Architects expresses, "It's not an argument my peers and I discuss [...] It's just not interesting. It belongs to a generation who saw a real opposition between contemporary practice and history."

Writer and critic Geraldine Bedell argues that the young generation of today is neither afraid of history, nor dismissive of it. It's just more pragmatic, accepting and fearless, emancipating from the ghosts of a glorious past. As soon as they graduate, young architects understand that their work isn't going to transcend the norms of the profession overnight—nor are they obsessed with doing so. The past, which includes both history and legacy, is not to be disregarded naively of course: what we are and what we know today, are owed to older generations. For better or for worse, they've defined our existing physical, social and technological contexts. But what matters most is what the young generation will do with the past.

So far, young architecture appears modest. It firstly seeks to deeply understand the context, then going for *subtle* responses to it—avoiding any 'wow' effects. In this sense, buildings are just another layer of the city rather than individual eruptions. Patrick Lynch of Lynch Architects claims that there is a general disappointment with "the kind of thinking that it's OK to go and build for a completely unpalatable regime and fuck up the planet for money, because you're working in your signature style and it's an expression of individual creativity." Carmody Groarke, a London-based architectural

practice founded in 2006, calls this architectural approach as a means to an end, rather than the end result.

New modesty is the new trend: modesty in form, in scope and in cost. Young architects don't claim to have solutions to every problem. Instead they hope that change may come through a number of small, collective acts, while still having political vision. It's not as though young architects have stopped dreaming. They just have different dreams: that of a more sustainable architectural future by and for society—a future that commits to people's needs, involving them in the process. "We create opportunities, we don't tell them [people] what to do," explains Architecture 00's David Saxby. He continues, "We are confident enough not to worry about controlling everything." London practices such as Architecture 00, Carl Turner Architects, Russian for Fish, Studio Weave and We Made That, all have this in common.

This modesty is also a result of cautiousness—an aftereffect of the economic recession that got dumped on our laps. All over the world, small offices struggle to survive, big offices lay off their staff, the construction industry grinds to a halt and recent graduates struggle to be employed. According to Bedell, more than 1,500 architects are currently claiming benefits. Amidst this chaos, some claim recessions are vital for new ideas and practices to emerge. "There is a huge group of people for whom it would seem a rather grim joke to talk of a period of creativity," says Emerson, "but for those who are working, the opportunities are quite interesting and refreshing." It's an opportunity for the young to reflect on the past and present of the profession, seeking new directions for its future.

Young architecture has neither illusions nor great expectations. It knows it's mostly self-initiated, improvised—maybe even temporary. It's often either unbuilt or made out

of cheap materials, and without any concrete objective. For some architectural critics and designers, such a future should not be celebrated. But where some see problems, others see opportunities. The greatest achievement of the new emerging architecture is its opening to other disciplines. Young architects no longer claim to be the absolute experts of our built environment, instead calling for interdisciplinarity, entrepreneurship and collaboration. Brussels-based KGDVS combines practical work with theoretical research projects; Berlin-based Something Fantastic runs alongside a creative agency working in the publishing and fashion industry; in London, Dyvik Kahlen collaborate with artists, graphic designers and other architects, while Muf architecture is seen both as architecture and art; even more, Assemble is composed of architects, artists, historians and sociologists.

We're dealing with an abolishment of traditional boundaries. A clue of this can be found in the anonymity behind practices' names. You may have never heard of the individuals behind the above mentioned collectives, for instance. Instead, we meet architects that gain prominence through collaborations, who are willing to let go of the traditional role of the architect. A fitting example is Jesko Fezer, a Berlin-based author, artist, exhibition designer, academic, bookshop manager and architect. His example incorporates the versatile interdisciplinarity of young architecture, proving a deep shift from an *authored* to an *author-less* architectural production. New modesty has no name.

Of course, there are people that see inexperience in youth and anonymity, due to a common perception that knowledge and skills take years to consolidate. It's true that often success comes at a later stage of an architect's career. But this isn't

always the case. Le Corbusier was 27 when he conceived Dom-ino House. When they started Hunstanton School in Norfolk, Peter and Alison Smithson were 26 and 21 respectively, and Charles Rennie Mackintosh was 28 when he worked on the Glasgow School of Art. These young, iconic architects weren't discouraged because of their age or inexperience; instead they were proactive, ambitious and innovative.

The future doesn't have to have a name, and it certainly doesn't need to be old. While the older generation fears letting go, the younger struggles to remain competent in a rapidly changing globalised world. Young architects desire authenticity, but aren't so keen on the idea of revolution; they condemn Asian urbanism as a result of authoritarian capitalism, but downplay West democratic building frameworks; they decry institutionalised architectural elitism but yearn to become part of it as soon as they get the chance. So despite being out of the system, they like to keep one foot within—just in case. Because it's one thing to be enthusiastic and challenge the established status quo in a period of crisis, and a different thing to remain enthusiastic and relevant once you become established. Young architects now act as the opposition while the veterans still hold the office. Maybe this new modesty is a way to play it safe. However, I believe there's more to this. Modesty is a new direction, an attitude that comes from a deep realisation that lessons have been learned, and that amidst a torrent of information and specialised knowledge, no architect is an island. ☺