

Apsolutna bezvremenost

Absolute Timelessness



RAZGOVARAO PUTEM
INTERNETSKE PLATFORME U
LIPNJU 2020. INTERVIEWED
VIA AN ONLINE PLATFORM IN
JUNE 2020 BY DAVID ADJAYE

Recentno ostvarenje švicarskog arhitekta Valerija Olgiatija, Centar za posjetitelje Biserne staze na bahreinskom otoku Muharaku, važno je simboličko mjesto otočne zajednice čiji se identitet temelji na tradiciji lova na bisere. Olgiatijev jedinstven arhitektonski jezik, specifična stvaralačka osobnost i pažljivo definiran medijski plasman radova potaknuli su nadilaženje uobičajenog formata kritičkog osvrta pa projekt predstavljamo kroz razgovor s autorom koji je putem internetske platforme vodio britanski arhitekt David Adjaye. Olgiat i Adjaye razgovaraju o arhitektonskom djelovanju u globaliziranom svijetu, uspostavljanju odnosa s nasljeđem, *bezvremenskim* formama i materijalnosti u arhitekturi – temama koje zauzimaju središnje mjesto u opusima obojice arhitekata.

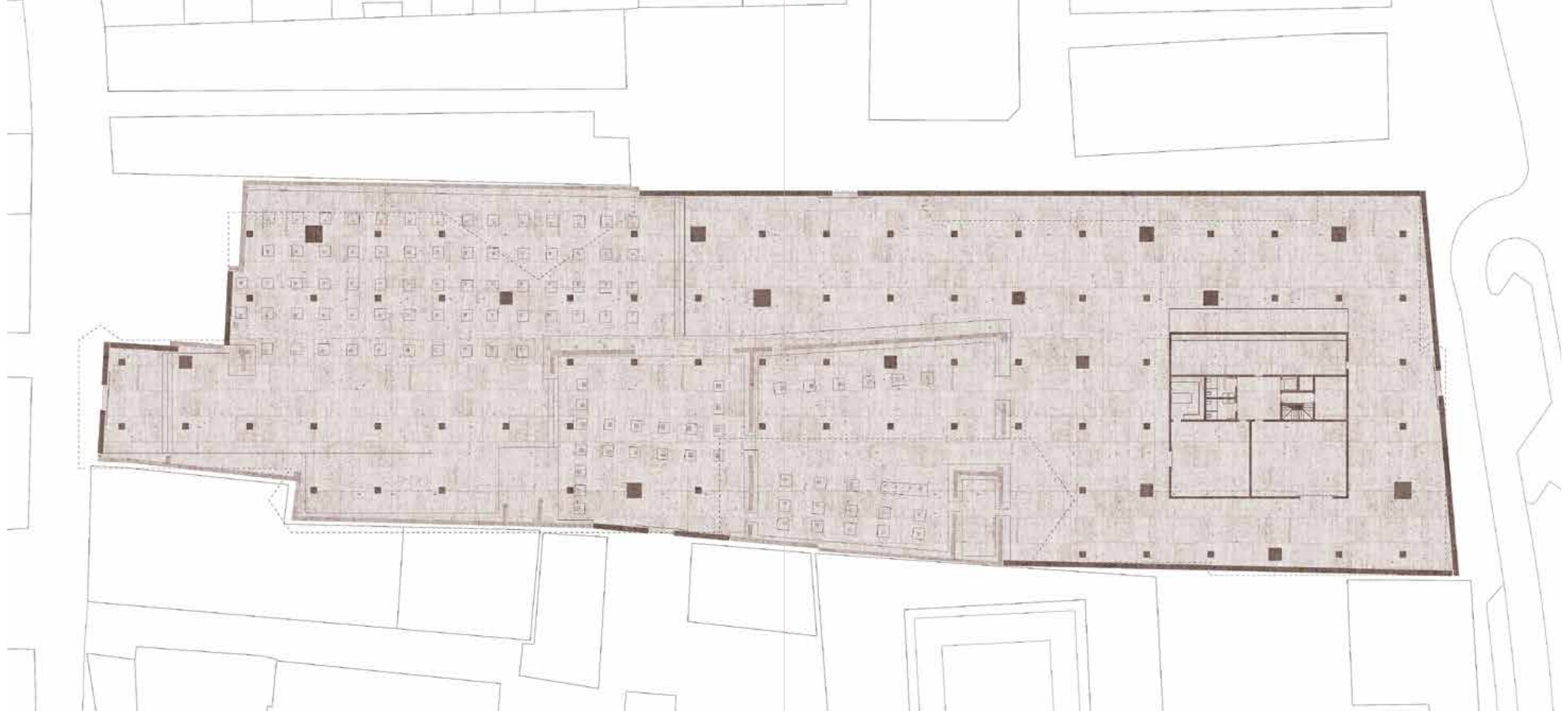
CENTAR ZA POSJETITELJE, MUZEJ I ULAZ U BISERNU STAZU, MUHARRAK, BAHREIN_PEARLING SITE, MUSEUM AND ENTRANCE TO THE PEARLING PATH, MUHARRAQ, BAHRAIN | autor_author VALERIO OLGIATI | suradnici_collaborators SOFIA ALBRIGO (PROJECT MANAGER), ANTHONY BONNICI | investor_client BAHREINSKI URED ZA KULTURU I STARINE_BAHRAIN AUTHORITY OF CULTURE & ANTIQUITIES | bruto površina_gross floor area 6 726 m² | realizacija_completed year 2019 | glavni izvođač_main constructor ALMOAYYED CONTRACTING GROUP, MANAMA, BAHREIN_BAHRAIN | fotografije_photographs by Arhiva_Archive Olgati

Most recent realisation of Swiss architect Valerio Olgati, Pearling Site Museum and Entrance on the Bahrain island Muharraq, is an important symbolic place for the island community whose identity is based on the tradition of pearl harvesting. Olgati's unique architectural expression, specific creative personality and carefully planned media placement of his works have encouraged a somewhat different critical review so we are presenting the project through a conversation with the author made by British architect David Adjaye via an internet platform. Olgati and Adjaye discuss architectural activity in a globalised world, relation with the heritage, *timeless* forms and materiality in architecture – topics that occupy the central position in their respective oeuvres.

DAVID ADJAYE: Let us start off by speaking about what drew you to the geography of Bahrain and why you accepted this commission.

VALERIO OLGIATI: The commission was awarded by an invited competition from the Bahrain Authority of Culture and Antiquities. The president of the Authority, Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa, wanted to make a clear statement with this building. Along with the Director of Architecture, Noura Al Sayeh, their wish for the building was to give a cultural and public value to the city of Muharraq and its people. I have to say that I found this ambition to be extremely exciting and enriching. From the start I felt that the client strongly believed in giving my office maximum responsibility and freedom to create. Without a doubt, their trust and highly refined collaboration had a direct influence on how strong the architecture is.

DAVID ADJAYE: This speaks to the importance of cultivating a very careful and collaborative relationship with the client to pursue a collective vision. Did you relocate to Bahrain, or



▲
tlocrt prizemlja
ground floor plan

DAVID ADJAYE: Započnimo s time što Vas je privuklo geografiji Bahreina i zašto ste odlučili prihvatiti ovaj zadatak.

VALERIO OLGIATI: Narudžba je proizašla iz pozivnog natječaja Bahreinskog ureda za kulturu i starine. Predsjednica Ureda, šeiha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa, htjela je poslati jasnu poruku podizanjem ove građevine. Ona i ravnateljica Odjela arhitekture,

did you work with a local office?

VALERIO OLGIATI: In Bahrain there is no building tradition for exposed in situ concrete. From the start our office led the local specialists and contractors in order to transfer our knowledge of concrete and how to execute it. Our office managed both the design and construction supervision during the construction to guarantee the expression of

Noura Al Sayeh, htjele su da projekt podari kulturnu i javnu vrijednost gradu Muharaku i njegovim stanovnicima. Tu ambiciju smatram izuzetno uzbudljivom i oplemenjujućom. Od početka sam osjećao da je klijent posvećen tome da mom uredu osigura maksimalnu slobodu i odgovornost stvaranja. Njihovo povjerenje i iznimno rafinirana suradnja izravno su doprinijeli snazi ove arhitekture.

DAVID ADJAYE: To govori o važnosti njegovanja brižljivog i

this major cultural building. This knowledge transfer continued throughout the 7-month construction period, where I had to set up my own team in Bahrain to work around the clock alongside up to 450 workers on site. During the construction, we also had weekly on-site walk-throughs with Shaikha Mai – a true



suradničkog odnosa s klijentom s ciljem ostvarivanja kolektivne vizije. Jeste li se morali preseliti u Bahrein ili ste surađivali s nekim lokalnim uredom?

VALERIO OLGIATI: U Bahreinu ne postoji graditeljska tradicija za sirovi *in situ* izliveni beton. Naš je ured od početka usmjeravao lokalne stručnjake i izvođače kako bi im prenio naše znanje o betonu i

testament to the level of care and dedication she had for the building.

DAVID ADJAYE: You are describing an unusual dynamic as the traditional relationship of the client is to stay away from the site until near completion, to never truly be integrated into the building process. Instead, it seems that the client-design team cultivated a very organic interaction

njegovoj izvedbi. Bavili smo se i projektiranjem i građevinskim nadzorom tijekom gradnje kako bi osigurali ekspresivnost ove značajne kulturne građevine. Taj se prijenos znanja nastavio i tijekom 7-mjesečnog razdoblja gradnje u kojemu sam morao smjestiti svoj tim u Bahrein kako bi cijelo vrijeme radili zajedno s 450 radnika na gradilištu. Tijekom gradnje imali smo tjedne obilaskе lokacije sa šei-kom Mai, što svjedoči o njezinoj iznimnoj brizi i posvećenosti ovoj zgradi.

DAVID ADJAYE: Opisujete jednu neuobičajenu dinamiku jer tradicionalan odnos klijenta prema projektu jest da se drži podalje od gradilišta sve do dovršetka i da nikad nije u potpunosti saživljen s graditeljskim procesom. No čini se da je tim klijent-projektant postigao vrlo organsku interakciju između svih sudionika i geografije kako bi se ostvarila zajednička vizija. To rasvjetljava ključne poveznice i odnose koji nastaju i održavaju se u tom procesu. Kako je izgledao izvorni projektantski zadatak?

VALERIO OLGIATI: Izvorni zadatak bio je projekt Centra za posjetitelje kao zgrade smještene na traženoj lokaciji koja sadrži i ruševine koje čine Bisernu stazu na UNESCO-voj listi. Kao što sam već istaknuo, klijentica je odlučila arhitektu dati maksimalnu slobodu u definiranju projekta. Moj prvotni prijedlog bila je zgrada koja bi uključivala cijelu lokaciju dugačku 170 m. Glavna je namjera bila stvoriti

between the participants and the geography to produce a shared vision. This sheds light on the vital connections and pivotal relationships that are created and sustained in the process. What was the original brief for the project?

VALERIO OLGIATI: The initial brief was for a visitor's centre as a freestanding building located somewhere on the given site that also contains ruins that form part of the UNESCO Pearling Path. As I said before, the client chose to give as much liberty to the architect as possible to define the project. My initial proposal was for the building to deal with the entire 170-metre long site. The overriding intention was to provide a roof,

as an archaic gesture, to offer vital shade for the people of Muharraq in this very hot climate, and produce a new and unique situation through its different scale at 10 metres



krov kao arhaičnu gestu, koji bi u ovoj izuzetno vrućoj klimi pružao nužnu hladovinu stanovnicima Muharaka i proizveo novu i jedinstvenu situaciju svojim drukčijim mjerilom 10 metara iznad tla. Prostor ispod krova trebao je postati ulazni foaje za UNESCO-vu Bisernu stazu i grad. Šeika Mai odmah je uvidjela potencijal

above the ground. The space underneath the roof was to become an entrance foyer for the UNESCO Pearling Path and the city beyond. Shaikha Mai understood straight away the potential for the intervention and encouraged us to go forward with the idea.

DAVID ADJAYE: Yes, people are now talking about Bahrain within the contemporary discourse of design — a landscape

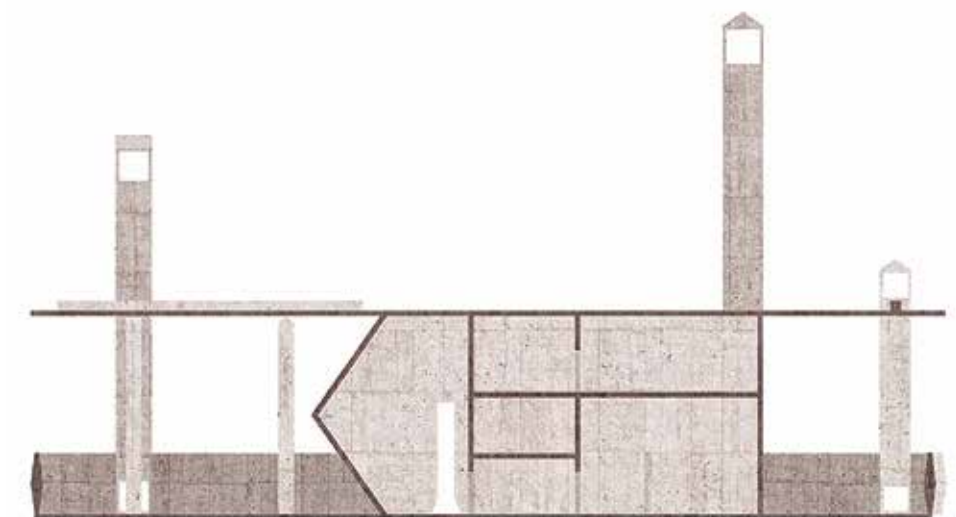
you've played a role in shifting. I want to explore the notion of the experience of architecture vs. cartography. We live in a world where people seem to fetishize plans. In my

own practice, the conversion from detailed drawings to architecture brings the personal interpretation of the architect into the task of building-making as it relates

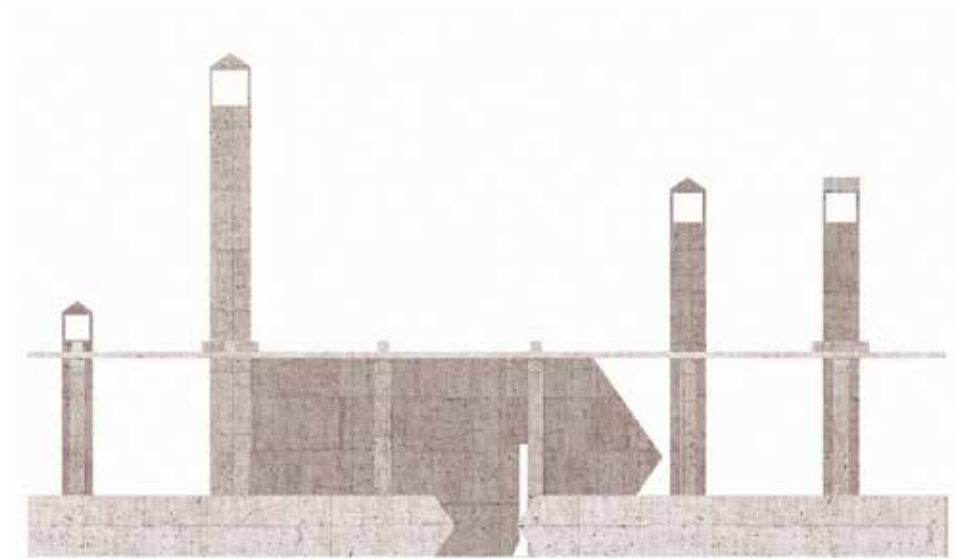
intervencije i potaknula nas da provedemo tu ideju.

DAVID ADJAYE: Da, ljudi sada govore o Bahreinu u kontekstu suvremenog diskursa o dizajnu – a to je krajolik koji ste pomogli transformirati. Htio bih prokomentirati ideju doživljaja arhitekture u odnosu prema kartografiji. Živimo u svijetu u kojem ljudi fetišiziraju nacрте. U mojoj vlastitoj praksi, transformacija detaljnih nacрта u arhitekturu uvodi arhitektovu osobnu interpretaciju u graditeljski zadatak jer se odnosi na doživljaj izgrađenog okoliša. Možete li opisati kako nastaju Vaši nacрте?

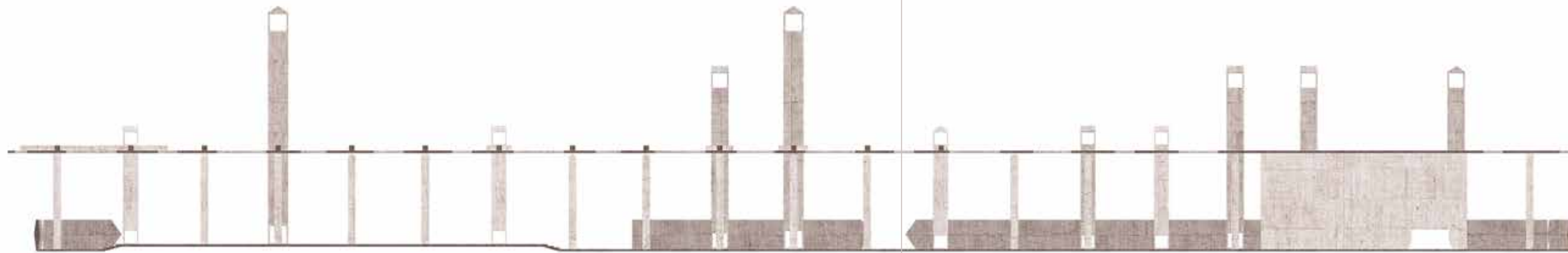
poprečni presjek ►
transversal section



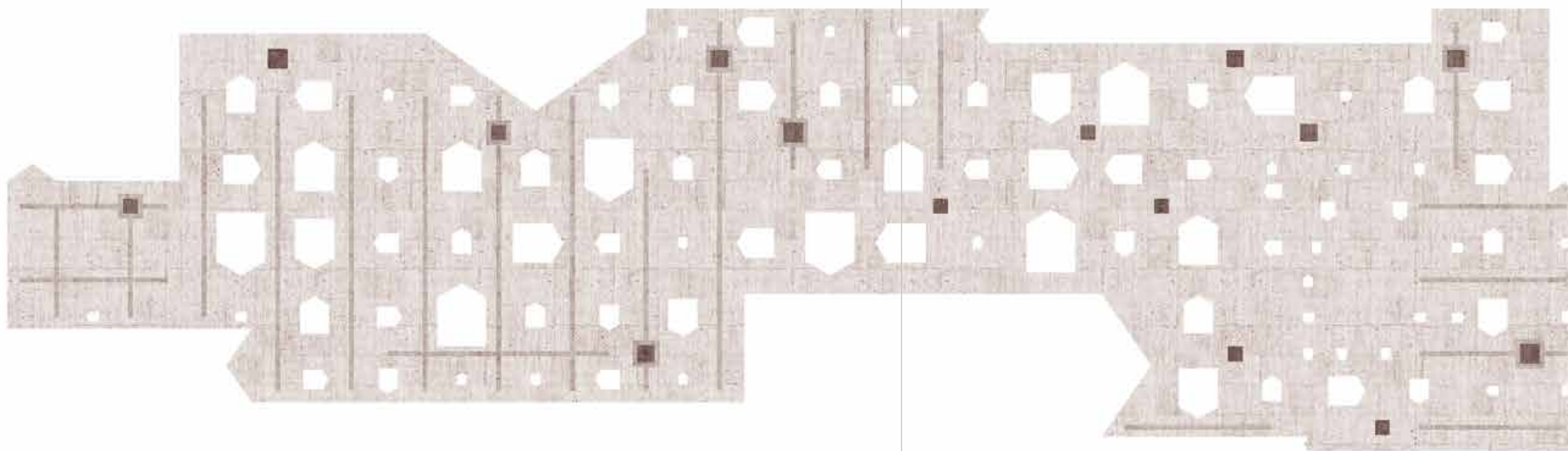
zapadno pročelje ►
western elevation







◀ uzdužni presjek
longitudinal section



◀ tlocrt krova
roof plan

to experiencing the built environment. Can you describe your own process of drawing these plans?

VALERIO OLGIATI: U ranijem razdoblju sve je bilo vrlo tehnički orijentirano, ali sada nacрте doživljavam kao, recimo, abecedu. Nacrt je kao abeceda, potpuno je apstraktan i ljudi iz njega moraju moći zamisliti stvarnost na isti način kao što promatrajući slova

VALERIO OLGIATI: In earlier times everything was technical, but now I understand plans as something like, let's say, the alphabet! The plan is like the alphabet: it has an absolute abstraction and people have to imagine reality out of this in

moramo zamisliti riječi, rečenice i dr. Shvatio sam da ljudi razmišljaju dijagramski pa kada promatraju nacрте kao apstrakciju nikad arhitekturu ne doživljavaju kao fizičko iskustvo. Nacrt je naravno tehnički, ali moj sljedeći korak bio je uvesti određenu

the same way that we have letters and must now imagine words, sentences etc. I found out that people seem to think diagrammatically, so they never understand architecture as a physical experience when looking at the plan as an abstraction. The plan was, of course, technical but my next step was to add a sort of texturing into the atmosphere. I



DAVID ADJAYE: Zgrada posjeduje jednu sablasnu kvalitetu jer djeluje poput ruševine. Ustvari, ne možete razlikovati prošlost i sadašnjost.

VALERIO OLGIATI: To je ta bezvremenost koja proizlazi iz boje. Naravno, to otvara pitanje kako koncipirati vrata tako monumentalne strukture, jer iako se radi o državnoj zgradi htio sam da ona pripada i stanovnicima. Ljudi koji borave na prostorima suka u medini rekli su mojim suradnicima da im se zgrada sviđa jer je to zgrada nalik njima – za mene je to značilo da je prihvaćaju.

DAVID ADJAYE: Da, primijetio sam u projektu da se forme i boja zgrade gotovo indirektno

referiraju na mjesto i ljude. Je li geometrija zgrade trebala evocirati prvotne oblike kuća koji se mogu vidjeti u lokalnoj stambenoj arhitekturi?

VALERIO OLGIATI: Da. Prije petnaest godina pronašao sam nacrt stare džamije čiji je tlocrt evocirao formu kuće i to me

DAVID ADJAYE: It's about timelessness?

VALERIO OLGIATI: Yes, an absolute timelessness. It's about going back to the essence of primordial creation. The colour can be a catalyst to transport you to a place of elsewhere, far from reality.

DAVID ADJAYE: The building has this eerie quality of being like a ruin. You can't distinguish so much between past and present.

VALERIO OLGIATI: This is the timelessness attributed to colour. Of course, this posed the question of how to open the doors of such a monumental structure, because even though it is a state building, I wanted it to be for the people. The people in the souk areas of the medina told my collaborator that they liked the building because it's a building like they are. For me, that meant they accepted it.

DAVID ADJAYE: Yes, I sensed within the design that the building's shapes and colour reference the place and people almost indirectly. Were the geometries meant to evoke the primary house form of the local residential buildings?

VALERIO OLGIATI: Yes. Fifteen years ago, I found this plan of an ancient mosque that evoked the house form in the floor plan and found it deeply inspiring ever since. I think the house form fits well with the Islamic idea of not making

don't want people to just interpret my buildings. I want them to also experience them as a means of imagining reality.

DAVID ADJAYE: Let's talk colour.

teksturu u atmosferu. Ne želim da ljudi samo interpretiraju moje zgrade, želim da ih iskuse kao instrument zamišljenja stvarnosti.

DAVID ADJAYE: Porazgovarajmo o boji.

VALERIO OLGIATI: Htio sam da Centar za posjetitelje Biserne staze izgleda kao zemlja. Iako u Bahreinu postoji samo pijesak i zbog pustinjske klime zemlja ne postoji, ipak sam zgradom htio naglasiti tu boju kako bi istovremeno postigao koheziju i isticanje – u vremenu i izvan vremena.

DAVID ADJAYE: Riječ je o bezvremenosti?

VALERIO OLGIATI: Da, apsolutnoj bezvremenosti. Radi se o povratku biti primordijalnog stvaranja. Boja može biti katalizator koji vas prenosi na mjesta udaljena od stvarnosti.

VALERIO OLGIATI: I wanted Pearling Site to look like Earth. Even though Bahrain is just sand and there is no earth because of the desert weather, I still wanted to emphasize this colour with the building to create both cohesion and a standing out — both of time and out of time.







purely abstract images, but rather pulling together the idea of order into these ornaments.

DAVID ADJAYE: Islamic ornaments are an agglomeration

of primary geometries that add to a collective complexity. Is there a choreography happening between the shapes and the interplay of light? If you look at your roof plan, it creates a definite engagement with darkness and light. What determines or informs the movement of light across the site for you?

VALERIO OLGATI: We wanted this opening to have the same light quantity like the alleys of the medina. When you enter, we wanted that, spatially, the *urban room* feels like a continuation of the medina.

DAVID ADJAYE: From my visit, I was struck by the

do danas inspirira. Smatram da se forma kuće lijepo uklapa u islamsku ideju stvaranja ne posve apstraktnih slika već stvaranja ideje reda pomoću ornamenata.

DAVID ADJAYE: Islamski ornamenti aglomeracija su primarnih geometrija koje doprinose kolektivnoj složenosti. Nastaje li između oblika i igre svjetlosti koreografija? Kada pogledamo Vaš nacrt krova, on uključuje tamu i svjetlost. Možete li nam pojasniti što određuje kretanje svjetlosti lokalitetom?

VALERIO OLGATI: Htjeli smo da taj prostor prima jednaku količinu svjetlosti kao i ulice u medini. Htjeli smo da se ulaskom *urbana soba* prostorno doživi kao nastavak medine.

DAVID ADJAYE: Kada sam pogledao projekt, dojmilo me se tumačenje vjetrohvata ili dimnjaka kao nastavka vanjskog javnog prostora. Obično se dimnjak nalazi u unutrašnjosti zgrade, ali ovdje ste ga smjestili u javni prostor kako biste rashladili prostor koji nije zatvoren. Ustvari ste iskoristili tehnike svojstvene tipologiji tipične kuće i preobrazili vanjski prostor u *urbanu sobu*. Kako je došlo do toga?

VALERIO OLGATI: Tako je, foaje je i projektiran kao *urbana soba* u mjerilu javnog parka za stanovnike Muharaka. Vjetrohvati ne hlade prostor kao što bi to napravili klimatizacijski



uređaji, ali iznad 12 metara visine imate zaljevski vjetar. Taj vjetar je nekada 5 stupnjeva hladniji od zraka na tlu. Naši su vjetrohvati visoki 12 ili više metara. Kada je 50 stupnjeva, gotovo je nemoguće hodati uokolo kao što biste šetali ulicama. No, kada zadete ispod nadstrešnice, stupovi djeluju kao vjetrohvati i stvaraju rashladni učinak, a geometrijski otvori u krovu razbijaju vrućinu. Postiže se vrlo poželjna i smirujuća atmosfera.

DAVID ADJAYE: Zamijetio sam i motiv povezanosti s tkivom postojeće tržnice. Je li zgrada povezana sa susjednom zgradom? Postoji li u središtu os koja ih povezuje?

VALERIO OLGATI: Da, postoje troja vrata koja su otvorena

reference of the wind tower or the chimney as an extension of the public outdoor space. Usually, a chimney is found on the inside of the building but here you've placed it within the public space as a way to cool unenclosed space. You've taken the techniques of a typical house typology and transformed the outdoor space into an *urban room*. Could you speak about how this came about?

VALERIO OLGATI: Yes, the foyer was always planned as an *urban room* for the people of Muharraq, with the scale of a

na ulicu tijekom dana. Četvrta vrata vode na postojeću tržnicu. Ono što je posebnost zgrada koje se nalaze duž UNESCO-va lokaliteta jest činjenica da su napravljene od kamena koji se ovdje naziva *korajnim kamenom*, iako se ustvari ne radi o koralju. Taj kamen više ne postoji, ali možete ga vidjeti na mnogim zgradama pod zaštitom UNESCO-a. Želio sam vratiti to obilježje u projekt, iako nismo imali identičan materijal. Naša je ambicija bila zaštititi bit topologije originalnog koraljnog kamena upotrebom nekog drugog materijala – stvoriti most od davnine do suvremenosti.

DAVID ADJAYE: Smatram da danas postoji vrlo malen broj arhitekata poput mene koji svijet doživljavaju kao planet, a ne kao politički dijagram. Zadatak je arhitekta uključiti se u tijek znanja koji već postoji. Vi ste definitivno jedan od svjetskih arhitekata koji to čine.

VALERIO OLGIATI: Kada projektiram razmišljam o tome što će ljudi doživjeti u mojim zgradama, kao pojedinci ili kao kolektiv. Promatrajući sve te drevne kulture, umjesto suvremene arhitekture, pronalazim inspiraciju. Američki ekspresionist, Barnett Newman, jednom je rekao: *Ne bismo više trebali pratiti klasičnu europsku arhitekturu i umjetnost. Trebali bismo promatrati kulturu koja nema veze s Europom.* Shvaćam to kao instrument stvaranja suvremenih djela ukorijenjenih u nečem drevnome.

public park. The wind towers do not cool down the space in the way that an air conditioner would, but above 12 metres you have wind in the Gulf. This wind is sometimes around maybe 5 degrees cooler than the air on the ground. Our towers, they go up 12 metres or higher. When it's 50 degrees, it's almost impossible to walk around there, as you would through the streets. But when you go under the canopy, the columns act as wind catchers to create a cooling effect and the geometric openings in the roof break up the heat. It is a very desirable and calm condition.

DAVID ADJAYE: Another theme was the connection to the fabric of the existing market hall. Does it connect to a building next door? Is there an axis in the middle that connects?

VALERIO OLGIATI: Yes, I have three doors that are open to the street during the day. The fourth door leads to an existing party hall. What is more important or very special about the neighbouring buildings along the UNESCO site is that they are made with a stone which is locally called *coral stone*, even though it is not technically coral. They don't have this stone anymore, but you can see it used in many of the UNESCO protected buildings. I wanted to bring this back into the design even though we didn't have the exact material. The ambition here was to protect the essence of the original coral stone topology through the use of another kind of material - a bridge from the ancient to the contemporary.

DAVID ADJAYE: For me, there are few architects like myself who understand the world as a planet, not as a political diagram. The task of the architect is to tap into the knowledge flow that is already present in our histories.

VALERIO OLGIATI: When I design, I like to think about what people will experience in my buildings, either as individuals or as a collective. By looking at all these ancient cultures instead of contemporary architecture, I find inspiration. Barnett Newman, an American expressionist, once said: *We should not look at the classic European architecture and art anymore. We should go and look at a culture that has no connection to Europe.* I understand this very well as a means to developing contemporary work rooted in something ancient.

