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Project Details

Author
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Practice
Atelier Seraji Architectes & Associés

Title
Romeo & Juliet (also known as La résidence Victor Duruy)

74 Housing units: repetition and difference, 19 different ways to live in the same building

Output
Architecture, Landscape

Function
Housing

Practical Completion
2013

Client
OPHIS du Puy de Dôme (social housing landlord/association)
Funding Body
OPHIS du Puy de Dôme

Budget
8.2M Euros

Area / Size
6500m²

Contractor
ELTS AVANCE (deep foundations), DUMEZ LA GROSSE (grading and levelling, drainage, superstructure), ETTIC (insulation and waterproofing), Gauthier (windows and façade), Mettalerie ORCE-TOISE (metalwork), Billon (heating/ ventilation), CGA (plumbing, sanitation, photovoltaic panels), Moreno (Electricity high and low voltage), Otis (Lifts), SARF (dry walls and plaster work), SERVIBAT (carpentry), PEIXOTO (ceramic and tiling), CAR-REAUVERGNE (soft flooring), MAZET (painting), GATP (green spaces)

Contributing partners
Euclid (structural engineers, M&E), MDETC (QS) SVTARL DEBOST (proj management)
Summary of the Work and its Significance, Originality, and Rigor

Romeo and Juliette is a mixed public and private housing project that demonstrates the capacity of architecture to invent new ways of living, even with high structural, economical, urban, and environmental constraints.

In 2006 an open competition was launched by the housing agency Ophis du Puy de Dôme.

Proposals for 65 public housing units and 74 private units were submitted to the competition. Following the jury’s analysis (90 teams first phase, 5 teams final phase) two teams were selected to work on the project, including one local team to work on the social housing
and our practice to work on the private housing. However, this changed in the course of the project and we worked on a 50-50% mix of social and private housing.

• The project tackles important, discipline-specific issues including:
  Economy and cost effectiveness - Repetition and economical construction
  Material and structural research — How can solid brick, an ancient material with a high capacity to adapt to contemporary qualities such as insulation and aesthetics, be reintroduced to a culture of building where the construction industry habitually uses concrete and finishes the façade with cheap veneer materials.
  Seismic constraints and the role of structure as an architectural elastic stabiliser.
• Architecture as “urban connector” enabling the accessibility of the site and its environs.
• Architecture cannot be exclusive. Architecture is a right and not a privilege.
• The seismicity of this region specifically this site with a steep gradient can be successfully integrated in the design process and be an element of architecture.
• The rigor of economic and environmentally friendly solutions does not prohibit the notion of offering real quality of life to the inhabitants.
• Naturally ventilated car parks on street level are possible without degrading the streetscape.
Black brick of Romeo and Juliet versus the black volcanic stone of the Cathedral.
Angle sur paysage
Vue sur promenade
Duplex sur promenade
Traversant promenade - jardin
Traversant promenade - ville
Angle sur promenade
Duplex angle sur promenade
Angle sur jardin
Angle sur jardin 2
Vue sur jardin
Angle sur rue
Vue sur rue
Traversant jardin - rue
Duplex traversant jardin - rue
Traversant jardin - rue 2
Duplex traversant jardin - rue 2
Angle promenade - jardin
Vue sur jardin
Duplex vue sur jardin

19 manières de vivre

2 19 variations of living in 74 units
Originality

This project probed questions pertaining to the discipline of architecture, issues of topography, and how a site’s history can be integrated into a speculative housing proposal.

The project aimed to question and respond to three major problems in collective public and private housing today. These include:

- *Who is architecture for?*
  How can architecture work as a bridge spanning socioeconomic difference today?

- *What time is architecture?*
  How can contemporary architecture be integrated in the constituted historic city and its environs, and fit in the context as
if it has always been an integral part of the site without mimicking its neighbouring urban fabric or a particular historic period?

- *What horizons?*

  How can constraints be eliminated as impediments and be transformed to horizons, and consequently become a material for discourse while taking new positions relative to architectural meaning?

  These questions formed a conceptual road map for a variety of decisions subsequently made during the design process:

  The project successfully changed common perceptions that social housing cannot have different forms or possess the same quality as private housing.
It also proved that repetition is not necessarily the key to the economic viability of housing projects of a similar size.

The completed building is situated in Clermont Ferrand, a working-class city known for its volcanic stoned black facades (cf. Cathedral) with an important industrial history being the birthplace of the Michelin Tire Company. These two characteristics form part of the city’s physical and cultural identity—elements we attempted to engage in the design of the building.

Repetition of types does not necessarily offer an economical solution. The site’s steep topographical condition, its triangular odd shape is also seismically sensitive. This informed our design, particularly in how we designed
the foundations and the ground floor apartments as hollow boxes assuring the stability and rigidity of the block. It also drove the decisions on the design of the ground floor voluminous structure carrying the very light upper floor slabs. We used a series of films to look at the sequencing of the spaces and their relationship to the city.
Research Questions

• What does historical preservation mean for buildings around a “grade one” listed building?
• How can we reintroduce solid brick—an ancient material with a high capacity to resist contemporary qualities such as insulation and aesthetics?
• How can architecture become a right but not privilege?
• How can architecture allow for urban connectivity?
Two brick buildings of different periods using an innovative load-bearing metal structure. Romeo and Juliette creates an open street and connects two adjacent neighbourhoods that have been enclaved for many years.
Rigor

The Competition application was an European open type. One hundred architects applied and five were chosen to entre.

Throughout the design and construction phases of the project, we incorporated a rigorous system of communication with the client. Unlike the classic design stages of tri-monthly validation, bi-weekly workshops were instituted in order to continuously validate decision making, resulting in the appropriation and shared authorship of the project by the client.

We also developed the following design methods for the project:

• We used archival materials to understand the structural genius and how heavy stone was used as non-
load-bearing material in the grade-one listed building by Émile Camut (1883-1888) opposite to our site;
• We commissioned the building of full-scale sectional wall prototypes in order to test the loading capacities of brick in the seismic conditions;
• All details of balconies, handrails, terraces, flashings were drawn and modelled. The handrails were designed in such a way to create a variety of transparencies depending on the angle of vision (detail drawings);
• The specific geometry of the plan was tightly studied to allow for division between flats without resorting to vertical separations. Through the above mentioned methods, we were able to achieve singularity, originality, and excellence.
These methods resulted in the construction of a project composed of apartments, which are imagined as autonomous housing units. They feature specific distributions of space and program, distinctive orientations devised through a study of light conditions, and certain morphological factors that allow for a maximum of types in an apartment block.

1. The distribution of the plans and their internal organisation
2. The number of orientations and diversity of light conditions
3. The morphology (flat or duplex) of each apartment
Hans Scharoun’s Romeo and Juliet housing project in Zuffenhausen, Stuttgart, Germany, circa 1954-1959, an inspiration for treating two buildings tightly placed on the same site. The buildings work with the terraces as an external added room open to the sky.
Isolation extérieure
Profil aluminium anodisé

Profil aluminium anodisé

Main courante
Bois écologique

Main courante
Plat 60mm x 10mm acier galvanisé
barre double tubes acier galvanisé diam. 12 mm

Trop plein
Tube en acier galvanisé diam 30mm
Plaque acier galvanisé épaisseur 1cm
Platelage bois
Lamboires
Dalle BA
Sous-face béton
Significance

Romeo and Juliet represents an attempt to contribute to the architectural history of collective housing since the early 20th century. Hans Scharoun and his Romeo and Juliet housing project in Zuffenhausen, Stuttgart, Germany, circa 1954-1959, was the main and major inspiration for our project. In particular, we were inspired by the proximity of the two buildings and their incredible relationship with the outside. Their torturous geometry that increases and unfolds the façade are only a few of the observations which have lead us to our initial thoughts on the ground plane of the project. Recurrent questions of how to “learn from” as well as “transcend a precedent” –the two guiding pedagogical and design methods within the discipline
of architecture—formed the conceptual axis of our intellectual ambitions.

Since the completion of our building, the client has developed and commissioned two other major projects in the immediate vicinity using the physical urban continuity that we had initiated with our project. A neighbourhood—les Normaliennes—is born.

The project has enjoyed numerous citations and has become a reference for new housing in the region and the country at large. In 2014, it was selected as a premier site to be included in France’s annual celebration of architecture and heritage days—“les Journées du patrimoines”—the first time a housing project has ever been chosen for this honour.

- The project has won two major
Diagrammatic sections describing the main ideas of a project. The site and the project allow for physical urban continuity between the adjacent neighbourhoods.
awards: the prize of the CAUE of the region, the National prize of Equerre d’Argent (never given to housing before). It has been written about in architectural magazines as well as a book published about the neighbourhood (Les Normaliennes, cf. attached)--Les Normaliennes - Agence Qui Plus Est

- It has catalyzed shifts in local regional policies through the project’s capacity to renew the urban fabric and make possible the full urban renewal of the area around the project.
- It has been exhibited at a range of venues and locations, including the CAUE of Puy de Dôme (2012) the Pavillon de L’arsenal in Paris (2013), and at the Cité de l’architecture at the occasion of the prize of Equerre
d’Argent ceremonies (2013).
• It has been reviewed in numerous national press outlets, including *Libération* and *Le Monde*, and a range of professional magazines such as *AMC*, *Memar*, and *Shahrestan*. 
Dissemination and Evidence of Peer Review


l’aménagement Auvergne. Auvergne: URCAUE Auvergne.

Bibliography


Giuliani, Hugo, Seismic Resistant Architecture: A Theory for the architectural design of buildings in seismic zones. Location of publisher: Publisher, Date.

Godard, Jean Luc, Opération Béton, released in 1953(film)

Godard, Jean Luc, Deux trios Choses que je sais d’elle, released in 1967(film)


Rhomar, Eric, L’arbre, le maire et la médiathèque, released in 1993 (film)
Hans Scharoun

PHAI DON

deux ou trois choses que je sais d’elle...

Marina Vlady

MARINA VLADY

PREMIER PRÊX:

Jean-Luc Godard

OPÉRATION „BÉTON”

Modern Architecture

Alan Colquhoun

Oxford History of Art
Appendix

Related publications by the designer:


Books, journals, and references to the project written by others:


Le Moniteur emploi. ‘Logements à Clermont-Ferrand (Puy-de-Dôme ) : Quatorze variations autour d’une même maniè d’habiter. Le Moniteur emploi, 17 Jan, 2014.
HOUSING, SUBSTANCE OF OUR CITIES
EUROPEAN CHRONICLE 1900-2007
NASRINE SERAJI

LOGEMENT, MATIÈRE DE NOS VILLES
CHRONIQUE EUROPÉENNE 1900-2007
NASRINE SERAJI
Interior distribution of apartments
For the first time private housing and public housing share a common garden.
The Department of Architecture educates students in an active culture of service, scholarship and invention. Uniquely situated at the crossroads of China and global influence, the Department takes the approach that design is best explored from a sophisticated understanding of both. With a multidisciplinary curriculum emphasizing technology, history and culture, students gain broad knowledge and skills in the management of the environmental, social, and aesthetic challenges of contemporary architectural practice. With opportunities for design workshops, international exchanges, and study travel, graduates of the Department of Architecture are well prepared for contribution to both international and local communities of architects and designers.