

A10



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Update:
Reductionist aesthetics

This past month, our inbox saw a predominance of projects that celebrate the bare material, including the exceptional 'house kr.' in Locarno (see p. 29). The application of these is not necessarily to make things cheaper (sometimes it does not), but rather to honour the qualities of the materials themselves, or the skills of the architect. The result is a refreshing kind of architecture that could very well be called, according to A10 correspondent Miodrag Ninić, reductionist aesthetics – getting the most out of less.



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ČAČAK (RS) — Vibbet industrial hall by Milorad Vidojević, awarded Best Design Grand Prix of the 2013 Architecture Salon in Belgrade, is a highly disciplined and surprisingly classical piece of architecture. The design follows the pragmatic requirements of industrial architecture, applying standard limitations of programme and context to achieve maximum results from the bare minimum of elements. Using components produced by the Vibbet factory, such as prefabricated pillars and beams, for the load-bearing construction and compressed concrete blocks for the infill, the design achieves an elegant aesthetic that relies upon modularity, a reduced colour scheme and the visual qualities of bare concrete. The building maintains a quiet but intense dialogue with the natural environment of the wide, flat grassy field and the sky above. The reductionist aesthetic of the design is not the result of architect's caprice, or necessity with regard to limitations of programme or budget, but rather arises spontaneously out of its design philosophy. (MIODRAG NINIĆ)

Vibbet industrial hall, 2012

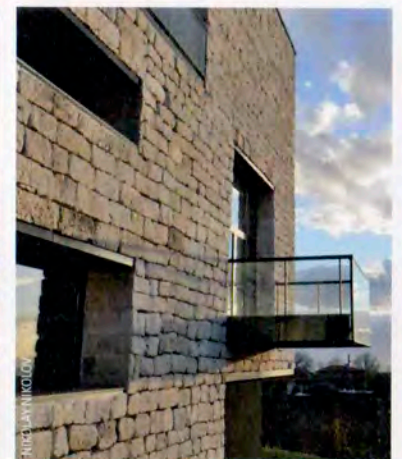


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ALCALÁ DE HENARES (ES) — This extension by Héctor Fernández Elorza exploits the most evident physical characteristics of every material used. No intention to distort or hide these features is revealed in its design, and no additional finishing layers that might hide real value or function are added. The existing, renovated structure is extended along its west facade, resulting in a separate, outstretched volume of 50 x 6 metres connected to the existing building by seven covered footbridges. Bare *in situ* concrete is extensively used throughout the project, for instance, in the four large, load-bearing cross walls, or for its cantilevering, 1.5-metre-high beams that are integrated within the facade as several deep brise soleil controlling the western light. Galvanized, steel-framed glass panels cover the full-height openings, and the various installation ducts are left exposed. This honesty is of pivotal value to the project's design approach, which even shows off the construction skills necessary to achieve its specific materialization, on display for all. (MARTA GONZÁLEZ ANTON)

Extension of the Faculty of Cellular and Genetic Biology, University of Alcalá, 2012

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PONTINHA (PT) — Since 2007, the public-private initiative aimed at remodelling 332 schools in Portugal has opened an unprecedented window for the expression of contemporary architecture in the country. In this case, the aim was to restructure the pre-existing pavilions around a central 'learning square' into a single building. The building strategy of CVDB Arquitectos allowed for an incredible balance between finish and price (€798/m²). The choices for certain construction solutions or use of materials came from a practical standpoint. Facades built in exposed *in situ* concrete and prefabricated elements allow for fast, inexpensive construction, as well as minimal maintenance costs. Inside the building, high resistance materials such as timber studs (multi-purpose hall) and concrete acoustic blocks (circulation spaces) ensure durability against very intense use. It takes but a glimpse at the school to understand the aesthetic value of these solutions and how they participate in the formulation of the design concept. (LUÍS CASTANHEIRA LOUREIRO)

Braamcamp Freire Secondary School, 2013



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SOFIA (BG) — When a family of six approached ZOOM Studio to design their home close to the Bulgarian capital of Sofia, they had a pile of ancient stones left from a ruined watermill and a plot in a hilly region on the southern outskirts of the Balkan mountains. The result is a minimalist stone block that makes a stunning appearance in a neighbourhood of mainly rural, socialist-style houses. The minimalism of the Lokorsko house plays with the vernacular tradition of local storehouses and mills, incorporating it with fine detailing and contemporary building techniques. The masonry of old limestone, so old that its surface had been turned into a layer of marble, is supported by a ten-centimetre-thick concrete wall left exposed in the interior. Though it looks humble, the house is by no means a low-cost investment according to Bulgarian standards, and makes an admirable effort in blending local with global. (ANETA VASILEVA)

Lokorsko house, 2012

Cemetery extension **INDUNO OLONA (IT)** — The new extension for the cemetery of Induno Olona is a scenographic addition to an existing cemetery designed in the 19th century by Carlo Maciachini, architect of the Monumental Cemetery of Milan. From a distance, it creates a white backdrop for the existing burial ground, while from behind the existing cemetery's former external wall, it disguises a covered space that provides natural light to the new part. Formed by white Carrara marble, the vertical panelling of the facade generates plays of natural light on the inside, taking advantage of direct light from the south. The pavement and columbarium units are clad with matte-polished Carrara marble, which gives the surfaces a pale white-azure appearance, due to the natural vein in the marble. Both the choice and use of materials are crucial to achieve the adequate solemnity for a funerary place and establish a clear dialogue with the existing cemetery. The project appears to escape from the classical monumentality that characterizes the majority of old cemeteries in Europe, often manifested by columns, capitals and other elements of classical orders, ornaments and sculptures, yet employs the same material as the existing cemetery. This intervention seems to initiate a contrasting dialogue with its existing context, though it uses a common language. If viewed from the perspective of other recent and similar cemetery extensions (see also *Update: Cemeteries in A10 #46*), the cemetery at Induno Olona can be regarded as part of a common approach, one characterized by pure volumes, white walls, and simple and monolithic shapes, which strives to achieve a certain degree of solemnity, yet connects with the existing configuration in form and materials, or symbolically. (SILVIO CARTA)

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