



artefact but that the two can fuse. Architecture can be completely fused with nature, and they connect through interior spaces. I think this is a very nice perspective, a very fresh one. We come from a space where, from the Classical period onwards, architecture is there as an abstraction, as a white cube amidst the nature. Interesting. His projects are really beautiful, such as the floating roof as a landscape of demolished houses you can walk on but never actually step onto.

Sensibility is usually thought of as a women's property. Can architecture be divided by gender?

No. A lot of men make architecture of great sensibility, and lots of women do things without any feeling. Rather than the issue of gender, I'm intrigued by the idea of how it is possible that as architects, we admire more or less the same things, but we're unable to create such architecture ourselves.

nič je nekaj

intervju z Yvonne Farrell

Andrej Hrausky

nothing is something

interview with Yvonne Farrell

Andrej Hrausky



Foto: Andraž Kavčič

Biografska opomba

Grafton Architects so nastali leta 1977 in so se doslej ukvarjali z načrtovanjem univerzitetnih stavb, šol, stanovanj, večnamenskih stavb in ustanov. So ustanovitveni član Group 91, arhitektov odgovornih za revitalizacijo območja Temple Bar v Dublinu. Zmagali so tudi na mednarodnem natečaju za Univerzo Luigi Bocconi v Milanu, za katero so leta 2008 prejeli nagrado za najboljšo stavbo na svetu (World Building Award). Stavba je bila tudi finalist Miesove nagrade 2009, istega leta pa so zanj prejeli tudi Downesovo medaljo. Za stavbo finančnega ministrstva v Dublinu (2008) so prejeli več nagrad: Nagrado Kraljevega arhitekturnega inštituta Irske (The Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland - RIAI), Irskega združenja arhitektov leta in Javnega sklada. V začetku leta 2010 so zmagali na mednarodnem natečaju za novo stavbo ekonomske fakultete v Toulousu.

Biro je prejel večje število nagrad, njihova dela pa so bila razstavljen na Irskem in v tujini, med drugim v razstavnici galeriji RIAI leta 1999, na beneškem

Biographical note

Grafton Architects were founded in 1977 and have designed university buildings, schools, flats, multi-purpose, and institutional buildings. They are the founding members of Group 91, the architects responsible for the revitalisation of Dublin's Temple Bar area. Grafton Architects also won the international competition for the Luigi Bocconi University in Milan, for which they received the World Building Award in 2008. The building was also the finalist for the 2009 Mies Award; the same year, it won the Downes Medal. They also received several awards for their Department of Finance building in Dublin (2008): the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland Award, the Architectural Association of Ireland Special Award of 2009, and the Civic Trust Award. In the beginning of 2010, they won the international competition for the Faculty of Economics in Toulouse. The practice has won numerous awards and their works have been exhibited in Ireland and abroad, including in the Architecture Gallery of the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland in 1999, the Venice Biennale in 2002, the Urban Centre in Milan in

bienalu 2002, v Urbanem središču (Urban Center Milano) v Milanu leta 2002, na razstavi nagrade Mies van der Rohe leta 2003, ter v Bergamu in Rimu leta 2006. Dela biroja so bila velikokrat objavljena.

Yvonne Farrell in Shelley McNamara sta ustanovni članici Grafton Architects iz leta 1977, obe sta diplomirali na UCD (University College Dublin) leta 1974. Danes vodita biro in poučujeta na UCD, obenem pa tudi predavata v tujini. So-direktorja: Gerard Carty in Philippe O'Sullivan sta se biroju pridružila leta 1993 in 1992. Od takrat sta delala kot vodilna projektanta in oblikovalca na mnogih uresničenih projektih biroja.

Citati

V enem svojih, navidezno absurdnih citatov Alejandro de la Sota pravi o arhitekturi: »treba je doseči toliko nič, kot je to le mogoče.«

Ta »nič« razumemo kot prostor vmes. Prostor med mestom in cesto, med cesto in pragom, med notranjostjo in zunanostjo, med tlemi in nebom, prostor, ki vsebuje svetlobo, zrak in volumen, prostor, kjer mi stojimo.

Gradivo je nasprotje »nič«. Zanima nas nekaj, kar je »nič«. Zanima nas prostor, volumen, kraj. Zanima nas transparentnost, ki je v bistvu sestavljena iz plasti »nič«, iluzije in učinkov.

Kar je »nič«, je nekaj.

Danes imamo veliko arhitekturnih kritikov, ki so proti tako imenovane-mu zvezdništvu v arhitekturi, po drugi strani pa trdijo, da danes arhitektura ne sledi neki vodilni ideji kot v preteklosti, ko so se arhitekti zavzemali za modernizem, funkcionalizem, postmodernizem in podobno. Kje med tema dvema poloma vidite vaše mesto?

Menim, da je dobro, če se ne držimo nekih -izmov, kajti zame je -izem kot virus. Kar je pomembnejše za arhitekto, je, da v kulturnem smislu definirajo svojo pozicijo in, da se zavedajo, kaj lahko arhitektura prispeva. Nedavno sem se o tem pogovarjala s Charlesom Jencksom in zdi se, da lahko arhitekt zavzame dve stališči. Prvo je, da si prepričan, da si edinstven na svetu in, da imaš pravico, da izraziš svojo individualnost na povsem svojstven način. Drugo stališče pa je, da se kot arhitekt zavedaš, da si le »prevajalec« kulturnega fenomena bivanja, torej prostora, tradicij in izkušenj, ki ga izraziš v arhitekturi. Torej lahko arhitekt izbira ali bo umetnik ali pa kulturni »šaman« (mediator, o.p.). Želela bi, da bi imelo naše delo legitimno kulturno komponento. Ne trudimo se, da bi omejili našo individualnost, ampak v svojem biroju delamo kot skupina resnih arhitektov, ki želi ustvarjati pravo obrt in pravo kulturo. Bilbao efekt je druga skrajnost, kjer je arhitekturni izraz skrajno oseben in kiparski. Rekla bi, da v našem biroju stojimo za kulturno etiko gradnje stavb.

Vprašanje etike me zelo zanima. Živimo v sedanjem trenutku in vse naše izkušnje so vezane na preteklost. Vendar, ko arhitekt nekaj načrtuje, to počne za prihodnost in se zaveda, da bo stavba stala desetletja ali stoletja in, da ima odgovornost do prihodnosti. Edina opora pri tem, ko kritično presodi, kako bi bilo treba nekaj narediti bolje, mu je preteklost.

Spomnil si me na misel psihologinje dr. Mary Murray, ki sem jo nedavno prebrala v časopisu Irish Times: »Prihodnost ne bo več taka, kakršne smo je bili vajeni«. In pri tem je prihodnost popolnoma nepredvidljiva. Shelley McNamara mi je pravila, da je na svojem nedavnem predavanju v Dublinu Galfetti citiral svetega Avguština, ki je govoril, da ima sedanost vedno občutek preteklosti in vedno tudi občutek prihodnosti. Ne moremo ugibati, kaj se bo zgodilo, vemo le, kako je sedaj. Pri svojih projektih verjamemo, da morajo poleg funkcionalnih zahtev izpolnjevati tudi javno dobro. Menimo, da je naloga stroke, da v vsakem projektu najdejo izraz tudi tisti elementi, o katerih se običajno ne govori. Na primer pri projektu Bocconi smo skušali zabrisati delitev med mestom in univerzo. Pri šolah, ki jih načrtujemo, skušamo povezati učilnice z dvorišči, skušamo ustvariti energijo, ki jih bo povezala ne glede na zidove. Zato se mi zdi izrek »prihodnost ne bo več taka, kakršne smo je bili vajeni« kar pravi. Svet se spreminja in danes več kot polovica človeštva živi v mestih. Zato so danes arhitekti tisti, ki gradijo svet prihodnosti. Mi odločamo,

2002, at the Mies van der Rohe Awards exhibition in 2003, and in Bergamo and Rome in 2006. In print, their works have been published numerous times.

Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara are the founding partners of Grafton Architects from 1977 and are still the directors of the practice. Graduates of University College Dublin, they both teach there, as well as give lectures abroad. Associate Directors Gerard Carty and Philippe O'Sullivan joined the practice in 1993 and 1992 respectively. Since then, they have worked as head project engineers and designers on the practice's numerous built projects.

Quotes

In one of his seemingly absurd quotes, Alejandro de la Sota says about architecture: "One has to achieve as much of nothing as possible."

We understand this "nothing" as the space in between. The space between the city and the street, between the street and the doorstep, between the interior and the exterior, between the ground and the sky, as the space containing light, air, and volume, the space where we stand.

The building material is the opposite of "nothing". We're interested in something which is "nothing". We're interested in the space, the volume, the place. We're interested in transparency, which is in fact layer upon layer of "nothing", of illusion and the effect.

That which is "nothing" is something.

Nowadays, there are many architecture critics who are opposed to the so-called star architects and architecture, but on the other hand, they claim that in this day and age, architecture doesn't follow a leading idea the way it did in the past when architects committed themselves to Modernism, Functionalism, Post-modernism etc. Between these two ends of the scale, where does your practice fit in?

I think it's good that we don't have any -isms of one kind or another, because for me, an -ism is like a virus. It's much more important for architects to define their position in a cultural sense and to be aware of what architecture can contribute. I talked to Charles Jencks not long ago and it seems that there are two positions that an architect can take. The first one is that you assume that there's no one like you in the whole world and that you have the right to express your individuality in your own, utterly unique way. The other position is being aware that, as an architect, you're only the "translator" of the cultural phenomenon of habitation, i.e. space, tradition, and experience, which you express in architecture. An architect can therefore choose whether they want to be an artist or a cultural "shaman" [mediator, interviewer's note].

I'd like our work to have a legitimate cultural component. We're not trying to limit our individuality, but in our practice, we work as a group of serious architects who want to create real craft and real culture. The Bilbao effect is the other extreme where architectural expression is very personal and sculptor-like. I'd say that in our practice, we're committed to the cultural ethics of building.

I'm very interested in the question of ethics. We live in the present moment and all our experiences are tied to the past. Yet as an architect is designing something, they are doing it for the future, and they know that their building may stand for decades or centuries and that they have a responsibility to the future. Their only way to critically evaluate how something should be done to a higher standard is looking at the past.

I remembered a quote by psychologist Dr Marie Murray, which I recently read in the Irish Times: "The future won't be what we're used to anymore". And in this regard, the future is completely unpredictable. Shelley McNamara told me how in his recent lecture in Dublin, Galfetti quoted St Augustine, who said that the present always contains the feeling of the past and the feeling of the future. We can't guess what will happen, the only thing we know is what is now.

With our projects, we believe that beside satisfying functional requirements, they also have to satisfy the public interest. We believe that we as professionals, have to make certain that every project also incorporates elements which usually don't get the attention. With the Bocconi project, for example, we tried to



kako bodo ljudje doživljali svet, kje bodo hodili, kaj bodo srečevali, kje bodo sedeli. Naša stroka se mora ukvarjati z vsemi merili, od klopi v parku, na kateri sedi stara gospa, do največjih in najbolj futurističnih prostorov in pri tem moramo biti z nogami trdno na tleh. Stavba v kateri smo, je stara vsaj sto let in včeraj si rekel, da ni mogoče nikoli zasnovati stavbe tako funkcionalno, da nekoč njena funkcija ne bi bila presežena. Tega sem se zavedla danes dopoldne pri hrvaškem projektu (predavanje Saše Randića, o.p.), kjer so bila v večnamenskem objektu, stanovanja oblikovana drugače kot pisarne. In potem je prišla kriza in zato, ker so bili prostori oblikovani preveč funkcionalno, jih je bilo težko prilagoditi drugemu namenu. Arhitektura je v prvi vrsti posoda, ki mora predvidevati možnost prilagoditve spremembam. Sam si včeraj rekel, kako elegantne klasične stavbe z visokimi stropi kljubujejo času. To, kar si načel, pomeni, da ko svet postaja vse bolj zgrajen in vse manj del narave, je pri tistem, kar zgradimo, lepota vse pomembnejša, saj obogati življenje. In morda, ko govorimo o vzdržnostnem razvoju, v resnici potrebujemo poetiko lepote kot sestavni del projekta in ne kot nekaj, kar lahko nastane po naključju. Zdi se, da je vloga arhitekta pomembnejša kot kdajkoli prej. Zato imam rada misel Alejandra de la Sota o nič (praznini, o.p.), ki pravi, da je, na primer, volumen čudovitega prostora vse, da je nič odprtina elegantnega okna francoskega stanovanja, visok strop, prelepa površina zidov v ozadju, ki omogočajo, da stojimo med njimi. Morda bi morali kot arhitekti odriniti nazaj, navzgor in v stran naše površine, da bil ustvarjeni nič še bolj veličasten, veličasten za bivanje v našem, na novo zgrajenem, svetu.

Imam občutek, da je vloga arhitekta podcenjena. Pri gradnji so vpleteni investitor, zakoni, politika, gradbeniki in drugi. Politiki se po koncu mandata zamenjajo, gradbinca zanima le dobiček, morda bodo čez nekaj let začeli z bolj donosnim poslom, investitor pa danes večinoma ne gradi več zase, ampak za trg, ter z gradnjo niti ne začne, če nima vnaprej prodanih stanovanj. In če jih prej prodaja, ga stavba ne zanima več, še preden je gradnja sploh zaključena. Arhitekt je edini, ki nosi odgovornost za stavbo, ki bo morda stala stoletja. Ali ne bi moral imeti arhitekt pomembnejše vloge?

Se popolnoma strinjam. Zanimivo pri krizi je, da smo spoznali, da nekateri, tako imenovani strokovnjaki, niso nobeni strokovnjaki. Da realnosti ni mogoče ustvariti iz mita, pa tudi, da je moč denarja zelo velika. Arhitekti bi morali močnejše verjeti v svoj dolgoročni prispevek družbi. Nismo umetniki v tem smislu, da smo popolnoma svobodni in zato moramo biti spoštljivi do svojih naročnikov. Verjetno bi morali iskati bolj inteligentne in razgledane naročnike in z njimi bi ustvariti pristnejši dialog. Zanimivo se mi zdi opazovati, kaj se danes dogaja z naložbami. Mnoge stavbe so prazne, saj so bili pred petimi leti ljudje prepričani vanje, a danes »prihodnost ni več taka, kakršne smo je bili vajeni«. To, kar mi je na piranski konferenci zanimivo, je, da skuša ponovno ovrednotiti konstantno. Po mojem bi morali arhitekti bolj braniti svoje pozicije. Na primer v projektu za Temple Bar v Dublinu v zgodnjih devetdesetih so svetovalci za naložbe menili, da je tvegano graditi stanovanja v centru mesta. Ko smo prepričevali investitorje, da bi gradili stanovanja s tremi spalnicami za družine, so govorili, da se ne bodo prodajala. Ko pa so bila stanovanja končana, so kupci stali v vrsti in stanovanja so bila v nekaj urah prodana. Takrat so bili zaskrbljeni glede trga, pa je le ta rasel, zdaj pa trg pada. Še vedno pa je naložba v »opeko in malto« najboljša stabilna.

Spomnim se nekega intervjuja, v katerem so gospoda Sonyja vprašali, koliko njegovo podjetje plačuje za raziskavo trga. Odgovoril je, da niti enega samega dolarja, saj trg ustvarjajo sami. Ne morete spraševati ljudi, če bi kupili walkman, če pa sploh še ne obstaja. To je popolnoma drugačno mišljenje. Ampak zanima me nekaj drugega. Kako sta dve dami uspeli v moškem svetu? Kako gresta tako suvereno skozi življenje in pobirata najprestižnejše nagrade?

Hvala Andrej. S Shelley se o tem včasih pogovarjava in najina pogleda se razlikujeta. Shelley ima prav, ko meni, da arhitektura nima nič opraviti s spolom, saj je spol stvar življenjskih naključij. Po moje smo lahko srečni, da imamo

blur the distinction between the city and the university. When we design schools, we try to connect the classrooms with the back yards, we try to create the type of energy that will connect them despite the walls. This is why I feel the quote "the future won't be what we're used to anymore" is appropriate. The world is changing and today, more than half of all people on Earth live in cities. This is why today, architects build the world of the future. We decide how people will experience the world, where they'll walk, what they'll meet, where they'll sit. Our profession has to deal with all orders of magnitude, from a park bench with an old lady sitting on it, to the biggest and most futuristic spaces.

We always have to keep our feet firmly on the ground. The building we're in at the moment is at least one hundred years old. Yesterday, you said that you can never design a building so functional that its function wouldn't be surpassed one day. I realised that this morning in connection with the Croatian project [Saša Randić's lecture, interviewer's note] where in a multi-purpose building, the flats were designed differently than offices. And then the crisis came and because the spaces were designed too functionally, it was difficult to adapt them to a different purpose. Architecture is primarily a container that has to be able to anticipate adaptations to changes. You said it yourself yesterday when you said how well the elegant, classic buildings with high ceilings seem to stand the test of time.

Essentially, as the world grows ever more built and less and less a part of nature, the beauty of what we build becomes increasingly more important because it makes life richer. And when we talk about sustainable development, perhaps what we really need is the poetic of beauty as a constituent part of a project and not as something that may be created accidentally. It really does seem that the role of the architect is more important than it ever was. This is why I like Alejandro de la Sota's idea about nothingness, that the volume of a beautiful space is everything, for example, or that nothing is the opening of an elegant window in a French apartment, the beautiful surface of the walls in the background that enable us to stand between them. Maybe as architects, we should push our surfaces back, upwards, and aside in order to make this nothing even greater, greater to live in this newly-build world of ours.

I have the feeling that the role of the architect is undervalued. Construction involves the investor, the legislation, politics, the contractors, and others. Politicians are replaced at the end of their term, the contractors are only interested in making money, maybe they'll find a more lucrative line of business in a few years' time, and the investors don't build for themselves anymore but strictly for the market, and don't even start the construction if the flats aren't sold in advance. And if they are, the investor loses interest in the building before it's even finished. The architect is the only one who carries the responsibility for the building that may stand there for centuries. Shouldn't the architect have a more important role?

I completely agree. The interesting thing about the crisis is that it enabled us to see that some so-called experts aren't experts at all. That you can't create reality from myth, but also that the power of money really is great. In this respect, architects should have greater faith in their long-term contribution to the society. We're not artists in the sense that we're totally free, which is why we have to respect our clients. Perhaps we should look for more intelligent and enlightened clients and have a more open dialogue with them.

It's interesting to watch the state of the investments nowadays. Many buildings are empty - five years ago, people believed in them but today, "the future isn't what we're used to anymore". What I find interesting about the conference in Piran is that it's trying to re-evaluate the constant. I think we as architects should do more to defend our positions. For example, when we were doing the Temple Bar project in Dublin in the early 90s, investment advisors thought that building flats in the centre of the town was risky. When we were trying to get the investors to build three-bedroom family flats, they said that they wouldn't sell. But when the construction finished, the buyers went mad and the flats were sold in a matter of hours. Back then, they were worried about the market but it only kept rising, whereas the market is falling now. But brick-and-mortar investments are still the most stable.

pri nas dobro izobrazbo, živahno arhitekturno kulturo in veliko talentiranih arhitektov, ki so del našega biroja. V njem je približno polovica moških in polovica žensk. Mislim, da drugod ni tako. In vesela sem, da naši naročniki glede tega nimajo predsodkov. Vesela sem tudi, da nisem članica golf kluba na Irskem, v katerem ženske obravnavajo neenakopravno. Nedavno smo imeli odmeven sodni proces, ker nekateri klubi ne sprejemajo žensk. Takšne stvari me jezijo, če pomislim nanje. Če bi šlo za pravice kake manjšine, bi bil javni protest takoj močan. Sicer pa je lepo biti ženska in na svet gledati z ženskimi očmi. Daje ti izjemno zadovoljstvo. Glede posla pa smo Irke. V gaelščini obstaja oznaka za Irke »mna na h'eireann« kar pomeni ženske iz Irske v bojovniško-tovariškem smislu. Zdi se mi, da so tudi slovenske ženske zelo močne, in njihova inteligenca in eleganca sta name napravili vtis. Opazila sem, da so ta zanimiv in uspešen simpozij organizirale ženske. Žalostno je, da moram to posebej omeniti, a ni pogosto, da se ženske tako izpostavljajo v javnosti. Ena od težav žensk je, da se zapirajo v lastno življenje, da ljubijo lastno okolje in družino in, da se ne odpirajo poslovnemu svetu, kjer teh vrednot ne morejo najti. Ženske potrebujejo zelo močno domačo podporo, da se podajo v poslovni svet. Arhitekturno biro je lepa reč, a potrebuješ tudi svoje zasebno življenje, prijatelje in družino. Vesela sem, da delam v okolju, v katerem svoje sodelavce občudujem. Shelley, s katero skupaj delava že več kot 30 let, je zelo bistra in izkušena arhitektka, ki premika meje in v arhitekturi neprestano raziskuje nove možnosti. V biroju so: Gerard Carthy, Philippe O'Sullivan, Simona Castelli, Abi Hudson, Matt McCullagh, Kieran O'Brien in drugi, ki so talentirani, motivirani in predani arhitekti, ki k biroju veliko prispevajo. Medve jih skušava opogumljati, da svoje talente združujejo. V zadnjih dvajsetih ali tridesetih letih se arhitekturna kultura na Irskem vzpenja, pri čemer so nama pomembni najini kolegi, ki z nama delijo vero v arhitekturo. Danes na Irskem in v Dublinu deluje več generacij arhitektov, ki se ukvarjajo z učenjem in pisanjem o arhitekturi in so del tega razvoja. Ne delamo osamljeno. Na plimi misli se čolni dvigujejo skupaj, vendar rabiš dobre kolege in z njimi moraš imeti skupno platformo. V sedemdesetih in osemdesetih smo pripravljali razstave in Irsko arhitekturo skušali postaviti na zemljevid sveta. V poznih sedemdesetih smo izvedeli, da na veliki umetniški razstavi v Londonu z naslovom »Občutek Irske«, arhitekture sploh ne bo. Na hitro smo sestavili majhno arhitekturno razstavo, saj smo na področje umetnosti hoteli postaviti tudi arhitekturo. Danes, ko se oziramo nazaj, se zavedamo, kako pomembno je to bilo. Ko gledamo slike stavb, ki so bile prizadete v vojni, spoznamo, da so te stavbe pomenile sanje ljudi. In ko stavb ni več, postanejo slike teh stavb najbolj grozljive podobe človeštva. Po neurjih in požarih v Avstraliji, na primer, spoznaš, da je vsaka stavba spomenik nekega posameznika ali, v primeru mest, milijonov ljudi, ki vanje spravljajo svoje sanje. Morda je arhitektura naš »sanjski objekt« in je zato verjetno najpomembnejši kulturni poklic.

Rad rečem, da ko se vrnem s poti in pridem v svoje stanovanje, pogledam naokoli in se spomnim, kdo sem. A zanima me še nekaj. Niste uspeli čez noč. Že dolgo se ukvarjate z arhitekturo, a kakovost vajinega dela se še vzpenja. Vsak naslednji projekt je boljši. Poznamo toliko arhitektov, ki so uspeli mladi s prvimi projekti, pa jih niso nikoli mogli preseči.

Pri arhitekturi me navdušuje to, da vsak nov projekt pomeni ponoven začetek. Gre za zapleten posel, kjer se prepletajo prostor, denar in mnogi drugi dejavniki in kjer se neprestano učimo o kamnu, betonu ... Nikoli ne nehaš biti arhitekt. Oscar Niemeyer je star več kot sto let in še vedno dela. V muzeju v Colin's Barracks v Dublinu je film o Eileen Gray, ki, stara preko devetdeset let, dela v svojem stanovanju v Parizu in čaka na poseben material iz Japonske, da bi lahko dokončala svoj novi projekt. Spoznaš, da ne moreš nikoli prenehati biti kreativna oseba.

Drugič si v Sloveniji. Irsko in Slovenijo radi primerjamo med seboj kot dve manjši deželi, ki sta na robu Evropske skupnosti. Kakšen je tvoj vtis?

Menim, da je Slovenija lepa dežela z izjemno arhitekturno zgodovino, o kateri si nas vljudno seznanil (na predavanju na Trinity College v Dublinu leta 2005, o.p.) in to cenimo. Zdi se mi, da ste inteligentni in imate smisel

I remember an interview when they asked the head of Sony how much his company was paying for market research. He said that they weren't paying a penny because they were in the business of market creation. You can't ask people if they'd buy a walkman if it doesn't even exist yet. This is a completely different way of thinking. But I'm interested in something else - how did two ladies make it in a men's world? How do you manage to carry on so steadily and collect the most prestigious awards on your way?

Thank you, Andrej. Shelley and I talk about it sometimes and we don't share the same views. Shelley is right when she says that architecture has nothing to do with gender, and that gender is a random factor of life. I think we can be happy that we have good education, a healthy architectural culture and lots of talented architects as part of our practice. Half of them are men and half of them are women, and I don't think there are many places like this. And I'm happy that our clients aren't prejudiced about it. I'm also happy that I'm not a member of an Irish golf club that discriminates against women. A while ago, we had a high-profile court case because certain clubs don't admit female members. I get angry about such things if I think about them. If the rights of a minority were in question, you'd have an immediate public outcry. But other than that, it's good being a woman and see the world through women's eyes. It can be an immensely pleasurable experience.

But when it comes to business, we're Irish. There is a Gaelic word for Irish women, "mna na h'Eireann", which means women from Ireland with the additional connotation of being warriors and companions. I got the feeling that Slovene women are also very strong, and I was impressed by their intelligence and elegance. I noticed that this interesting and successful symposium was organised by women. It's sad that I even have to point it out this way, but it's not often that women get into the public eye in this way. One of the problems women have is that they enfold themselves in their own lives, that they are love their environment and their family and they don't open themselves to the world of business where they're unable to find these values. Women need very strong support from their home before they venture into the business world. Having an architectural office is nice but you also need your private lives, your friends and family.

I'm happy that I work in an environment where I admire the people I work with. Shelley, with whom I've worked together for more than 30 years, is a very smart and experienced architect who pushes the boundaries and constantly researches new possibilities of architecture. Other architects working in the office - Gerard Carthy, Philippe O'Sullivan, Simona Castelli, Abi Hudson, Matt McCullagh, Kieran O'Brien, and others - are all very talented, motivated and dedicated architects, who contribute a lot. Shelley and I try to encourage them to put their talents together.

In the last twenty or thirty years, architectural culture has been on the rise in Ireland and our colleagues who share our faith in architecture are invaluable to us. Today, there are several generations of architects working in Ireland and in Dublin who teach and write about architecture and are part of this development. We're not alone in what we do. On the tide of thoughts, the boats rise together, but you need to have good colleagues and share a common platform. In the 70s and 80s, we used to organise exhibitions, trying to put Irish architecture on the map on the world. There was a big art exhibition held in London in the late 70s, entitled "The Feeling of Ireland". We found out that Irish architecture wasn't even going to be represented, so we quickly put together a small architectural exhibition because we wanted architecture to be part of the art landscape, as well. Looking back at it today, we realise how important that was.

When we look at pictures of buildings damaged in wars, we realise that these buildings used to represent people's dreams. And when these buildings are gone, their pictures become the most gruesome images of humanity. After hurricanes or bushfires in Australia for example, you realise that each building is an individual's monument, or, in the case of cities, millions of people who keep their dreams in them. Perhaps architecture is our "dream object", which makes it possibly the most important cultural profession.



za humor, zato se Irci in Slovenci razumemo. O vaši arhitekturni zgodovini še ne vem dovolj. Zahvaljujem za knjige, ki sem jih prejela (organizatorji so predavateljem podarili knjigo o Edvardu Ravnikarju, o.p.), ki nas seznanjajo s prekrasno arhitekturo v Ljubljani in okolici. Menim, da delo v majhni državi daje posebno moč, saj se lahko na bolj diskreten način izogneš vplivom trendov. S Shelley bi lahko ostali v Londonu ali odšli v katerikoli del sveta, ko pa si del lastnega naroda spoznaš, kako pomembna je identiteta, kot si rekel, da greš domov in se ponovno najdeš. Lepo je potovati, rada potujem in pridem v Slovenijo, ampak na isti način, kot ste vi arhitekti v Sloveniji, ste njen del in jo lahko širite, tudi medve delujeva od doma. Radi zidava v tujini ampak, kot sem rekla včeraj (na predavanju, o.p.), ker ljubiva lastno mesto, lahko ljubiva tudi druga (na predavanju je povedala: »Ko prisluhnemo nekemu mestu, nam to pomaga razumeti druga, ko čutimo kulturo enega, nam pomaga, da vsrkamo drugega, ko hodimo po enem, nam to pomaga čutiti merilo drugega, ko gradimo v enem mestu, pomaga pri gradnji v drugem.«, o.p.).

V Sloveniji opažam smisel za ljubezen in čutim, da ljudem ni vseeno. Zelo ste velikodušni in, čeprav sem tu le nekaj dni, so bili vsi moji pogovori z ljudmi inteligentni in tenkočutni. To je velika radost. Čutim, da so ljudje angažirani, in to, kar se greste tu, je resen užitek, kar je nekaj drugega, kot biti le resen. Fantastična priložnost novih držav je, da se zavedaš novih možnosti in interpretacij. Je pa tudi povsem v redu, da si na robu. Mi smo na robu Atlantika in vi ste tu, s štirideset kilometri obale Jadranskega morja. Dotikate se toliko drugih kultur, pa ste vseeno samosvoji. Zanimivo je načrtati meje in ugotoviti, kaj pomeniš znotraj njih. Včeraj, ko sem poslušala vašo arhitekto (predavanje Maruše Zorec, o.p.), ki je govorila o svojih projektih, me je moč in občutljivost njenega dela ganila. Morda je njeno delo izražalo, kakšni ljudje ste. Prej nisem poznala dela Maruše Zorec in ugotovila sem, da je res močno in poetično. To je bilo krasno, videlo se je, kako se identiteta vzpostavlja s pomočjo gradnje.

I like to say that when I come home from a trip and I get back into my flat, I look around and remember who I am. But there's another thing I'd like to know. Your success didn't come overnight. You've been doing architecture for a long time yet the quality of your work keeps getting better and better. Every project that you do surpasses the one before it. Yet there are so many architects that made it young, with their early projects, which they were then never able to surpass.

What I love about architecture is that each new project means a new beginning. Ours is a complex business where space, money and countless other factors come together and where we constantly learn about stone, concrete, etc. You never stop being an architect. Oscar Niemeyer is over 100 and he's still at it. In the Collins Barracks museum in Ireland, they're showing a film about Eileen Gray, who is over 90 years old but is in her Paris flat working on a new project, waiting for a special material to come from Japan so that she can finish it. It makes you realise that you never stop being a creative person.

This is your second visit to Slovenia. We like to compare Ireland and Slovenia as two small countries, each at its own end of EU. What's your impression?

I think Slovenia is a beautiful country with an amazing architectural history, which you kindly presented to us [in a lecture at Trinity College in Dublin in 2005, interviewer's note], and we appreciate that. I think you're intelligent and you've got a sense of humour, which is why the Irish and Slovenes get along so well. I don't know enough about your architectural history yet, and I'm thankful for the books I received [every lecturer received the book on Edvard Ravnikar from the organisers, interviewer's note], which inform us of the fabulous architecture of Ljubljana and its surroundings.

I think working in a small country empowers you in a special way as you can get away from the influence of trends in a more discreet way. Shelley and I could stay in London or go anywhere in the world, but when you're part of your own nation, you realise the importance of identity - like you said, to go home and find yourself again. It's nice to travel, I like travelling and coming to Slovenia, but in the same way that you're architects in Slovenia, you're part of it and can expand it, we work from our home. We love building abroad, but like I said yesterday [in the lecture, interviewer's note], because we love our city, we can love others, too [in her lecture, Yvonne said: "Listening to one city, we hear another. Feeling the culture of one helps us absorb another. Walking in one helps us understand the scale of another. Building in one helps us build in another.", interviewer's note].

In Slovenia, I can see a sense of love and I can tell that people care. You're very generous and although I've only been here a few days, all of my conversations with people were intelligent and heartfelt. This is a great joy. I can feel that people are committed, and what you do here is a serious pleasure, which is something else than just being serious. New countries offer a fantastic opportunity to become aware of new possibilities and interpretations. And there's nothing wrong with being on the edge. We're on the edge of the Atlantic, and you're here with your 40 km of Adriatic coast. You're next to so many different cultures and yet you're unlike any of them. It's interesting to draw a border and come to terms with what is your significance within this border. Yesterday, when I listened to your architect talk about her projects [Maruša Zorec's lecture, interviewer's note], I was touched by the power and the sensitivity of her work. Perhaps her work expressed just what kind of people you are. I wasn't familiar with Maruša Zorec's work before, and I learnt that it's really very powerful and poetic. It was great, you could see identity being established by means of construction.