

Architects in action

Barozzi / Veiga was founded in Barcelona in 2004 by Fabrizio Barozzi and Alberto Veiga. The office has won numerous competitions, among them the refurbishment of the Palacio de Santa Clara in Ubeda, the Auditorium of Aguilas, Musée de Beaux-arts in Lausanne, and the Bündner Kunstmuseum extension in Chur. Their work has gained wide international recognition for design excellence. In 2014, the studio was selected as one of ten firms in that year's Design Vanguard by Architectural Record.

### Symphony of echoes: Szczecin Philharmonic Hall in Poland by Barozzi Veiga

Szczecin's concert hall, designed by Spanish architecture practice Estudio Barozzi Veiga, is a glowing white acoustically tuned space that may set as a beacon for a progressive future. But its relationship with the city's various pasts is more problematic, says John Jerry

Based in the rolling stacks of the Royal Institute of British Architects is a small guidebook by Szczęcin, published by Warsaw in 2013. It's a smug, and rather odd, object. Following the brief and highly partial introduction in French, Russian, Polish and English, there are 10 black-and-white photographs. Szczęcin was the capital of the Duchy of Pomerania for long periods, as well as a major player in the wealthy Hanseatic League and, later, a Swedish military outpost. Purchased by Prussia in 1720, it experienced a period of stagnation before expanding outwards at the end of the 19th century to become the largest German port on the Baltic, the third largest city in Germany.

This rich history is depicted in a series of illustrations under the various titles: 'Building in ruins, along with the level (ruined) and a few historical remains (followed) German architecture - ambitious new town planned by the work in Berlin - it ignored without imagery is devoted to the socialist project department since the new cinema, a bar, a school blocks, all for equally renamed streets populated by the houses. Magnolia trees blossom in the squares, the building pools and, in a series of massive photographs launched on the Oder, iron and steel are made of steel and steel.

This historical landscape was built, in part, by the Nazis who destroyed by their bombing during the War. And similar to the industrial revolution, the city is often seen as the Soviet sphere of influence of the past but a new era of reconstruction was introduced by the designers of the school Polish cities, when 'fracturedly occupied' by the Germans. Yet, in 1945, it was replaced by a new one from the east, resulting in a city that is a mix of old and new.

### Shaking Concert Hall Wins Europe's Top Architecture Award

The Szczecin Philharmonic Hall, designed by Spanish architects Barozzi Veiga, has won the 2015 Mies van der Rohe Award for Contemporary Architecture. The building is a glowing white structure that stands out in the city's landscape.

### Mies Award 2015: Philharmonic Hall Szczecin, by Barozzi Veiga: Italian-Spanish architecture office wins European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture

Studio Barozzi Veiga has won the European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture - Mies van der Rohe Award for the Szczecin Philharmonic Hall in Poland. The design is by the 'vocality of the city's residential architecture, the continuity of the upright elements of the facade and the heavy volumes of its classical building, dot its entire skyline and the traces of its past.'

### A glowing white ph... concert hall in Poland Veiga

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### "BLUE" project by Barozzi Architects will be the new Canton of Vaud in Switzerland

The project is a new public space dedicated to the city of Lausanne. It is a mix of old and new, reflecting the city's history. The building is a glowing white structure that stands out in the city's landscape.

### Winery HQ in Spain rises up solemnly.

On the edge of the small medieval town of Baza in the north of Spain, the new headquarters of the 'Bodega del Duero' rises up solemnly. The architects from the Estudio Barozzi Veiga office in Barcelona handled the new building and the restoration of the existing property.

The winery is defined by two simple architectural elements: The one is the new tower that announces the edge of town with great clarity and links with the flat surrounding countryside. The other is the ancient 18th-century hospital of San Juan, which, following restoration and expansion, is home to the new administrative wing of the headquarters. These two architectural elements are framed by two smaller volumes - the one houses from an existing building, the other comprises an existing old wall from a 17th-century church. Each of the two is perforated by circular windows of different sizes that serve as skylights and ensure that the rooms on the ground floor are suffused with natural light. The entire building, as well as a public plaza in the middle of the complex, are clad in the unpolished, stone typical for the region. The project's material properties thanks to the precise and clear treatment of the natural stone facades strengthen the way it relates to its surroundings.

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After finishing their poetic Headquarters of the Ribera de Duero Council in Spain, Alberto Veiga and Fabrizio Barozzi picked up the Mies van der Rohe Award earlier this year with their design for the Philharmonic in Szczecin, Poland. Both projects show a remarkable contextual originality and strength. With two more works coming up in two other European countries – the Tanzhaus Zürich, Switzerland, and the Music School in Bruneck, Italy – the duo is a perfect example of the 'Erasmus generation', having no specific home base but working just as easily anywhere in Europe. 'Most of our work comes from open competitions. Only a few have been invited competitions, or by direct commission.'

# Vagabond architects

SPAIN — TEXT: INDIRA VAN 'T KLOOSTER, ILLUSTRATION: KLAUSTOON

Alberto Veiga and Fabrizio Barozzi were not student pals. They were not even friends when they started working together. 'We worked at the same office, at Vázquez Consuegra, and after a competition win we decided to start an office on our own. The basic goal of doing competitions is to win them, obviously, but they are a good method for learning more about yourself and the other.' On the phone is Alberto, but he also speaks for Fabrizio. However pragmatic the start of their practice, they have quite similar roles in the design process. 'We don't like work where the technical one completes the conceptual one or that type of nonsense. We are fully grown designing personalities that happen to be able to work very well together.' So much for debunking a few myths on the romanticism of starting an office.

### Almost all of your projects are from winning competitions. What's the secret?

There are no secrets, we just try to do the competition the best we can. Even before asking ourselves about the brief, we think about the basic mainframe. Do we like the country, the location, its food, etc.? It may sound banal, but when you win a competition, you have to be there very often for a very long time, so you'd better be sure you're going to like it there. Then, it's really important that you like the idea of working there, and this includes food. Polish food is far better than you would expect. In Switzerland, we... prefer the landscape [laughs].

### Your office only does competitions, and you win one in every six. How do you proceed?

Select, find concept, develop concept, discover potential, introduce experts, criticize, manipulate, improve. In that particular order. But to win, I can give three tips. First: Dreams come first; you can sacrifice later. Second: Ask yourself, sincerely, 'Can I be good? Can I be the best?' We never pick hospitals, and we stopped doing housing. We mostly participate in competitions abroad. Then, you have to be really good and outsmart the local architects. Third: Check the small factors. Who is on the jury? How likely is it that it will get built? Is the process well-organized in time? Money? Procedures?

### Your clients are municipalities, and almost all your works are public and cultural. Do you specifically

### aim to get such clients and buildings?

At first, we didn't specifically choose cultural projects, but those happened to be the projects we won. The sad side is that we lost an awful lot of housing competitions and schools, but by winning – and building – the cultural projects, we gained a lot of experience in this typology. So now we are more picky. Maybe it also has to do with the fact that schools and social housing demand more in-depth knowledge of the location, the local regulations and laws, so those are easier for local architects to understand. Cultural buildings, in that sense, are a bit more free. Clients demand that they stand out in their surroundings, so for us as foreign architects, they are easier to tackle.

### Is your style perhaps very suitable for cultural buildings?

I think our style has been formed by our experience, and this of course means doing the cultural projects.

### You enjoy using words like harmony, monumentality, and geometry, but now public space seems more prominent. Has it become more important in your work?

Yes. We now know that it's sometimes more important to add space to the project, instead of adding a building to the available space. We coined it 'Iconic Void', which is not about architecture at all, but only about space. About doing as little as possible; about not filling the whole plot. Sometimes a square is more meaningful to a city than a building, but sometimes the city needs a monument like the Philharmonic in Szczecin. There, we didn't want to make something pure or aesthetic as such. This building replaces the old philharmonic that was destroyed during the Second World War. The old building was an important and significant place in people's minds. One thousand people used to go there on Friday nights, well-dressed and everything. We wanted to reflect that. We thought we had to take some risks, something that could be criticized and discussed, but very meaningful. An icon is a soulless answer to any question.

### Explain what you mean by 'risks'?

We have been very successful up until now, but we need to stay alert and eager. What is it that architecture can

do? How can we improve the compromise? Sometimes it's a risk not to make something kick-ass, but rather modest and humble. We are now working on a theatre close to Barcelona and a contest in Switzerland. Both are competitions, and it's high time we win one of them. Our last first prize was the Tanzhaus, in June 2014. You can only win when you take risks, and taking risks is also the reason why you can lose.

### Taking risks brought you big projects in several different countries. How?

Indeed, but we were also one of the first to be part of the Erasmus Programme some ten years ago; as a result, we worked abroad a lot, so we never developed any specific relations in Spain. We could just as well work in any other country.

### Have you discovered differences in (building) culture between Poland, Spain, Italy, and Switzerland?

Yes, in regulations, procedures, mentality. In Switzerland, an architect is a person that manages a project from beginning to end, like in Spain. But in Switzerland there is always a contractor in between that has incredible control over the building process. In Spain, you are completely free, also to fail, and then you're on your own. In Italy, the building process is much more controlled by politicians. The more south you go, the more local politicians take over. In the north of Europe, the separation between public and private is more strict. In Poland, it's no disadvantage to be young – everybody is young there! The mayor of Szczecin is the same age as we are; you can't believe how important that is for the process. To have a common ground, to go to the same concerts or festivals and to be done with the argument, 'When I was your age', or 'When you're as old as me, you'll understand'. In Italy, mayors are usually older, and this is much more difficult to work with.

### You have accomplished so much already. What are your ambitions for the future?

No plans. Every step so far has been the result of a desire or a feeling, but never of a plan. We try to find work and to have fun while trying to make a living of it. We meet new people all the time, which enriches our lives in a tremendous way. We want to go on like this for the next ten years.