Back-Alley Front Stage
First independent theater, Bucharest, Romania

Main authors
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Project data
Project group: Architecture, building and civil engineering
Client: Asociatia Culturala Grivita 53
Project background: Private investment
Planned start: April 2018

Summary and appraisal of the project by the jury
Within a historic quarter of Bucharest, this project transforms a dilapidated plot into the first independent theater in the city since 1946. It will house a theater company that has been operating without a dedicated space since 1999, anchoring a cultural institute into the city fabric. It wishes to engage. An initial design proposal envisioned placing the 150-seat theater below ground and maintaining the facades of the existing buildings on the plot within a slim volume. The jury was moved not by the project’s engagement with architecture or materials but by its strong statement on the cultural component of sustainability. The project’s use as an independent theater – a cultural program that also acts as a stage for democracy – was only strengthened by the community support shown through collective funding. From this firm social basis, the jury noted that the project was not yet architecturally convincing and that it is the hope that the support of the award can contribute to motivation to find an architectural solution as enlightened as the program.

Statements on the sustainability of the project by the authors
Economic viability
One of our goals was to build a project that is financially sustainable. In this way we designed a business plan, based on contemporary opportunities and constraints of the market we are part of, and ended up with the minimum number of seats (150 as breakeven). The criteria for choosing the land we bought was to accommodate this minimum number of seats. After checking with the architect the feasibility of such a project from a design point of view, we bought the land and started the G53 project. We will accommodate approx. 180 seats minimum.

Innovation and transferability
An innovative project. Energy effectiveness: the main functional spaces (theater, rehearsal hall & actors’ cabins) are below ground zero and more efficient to heat. In order to maximize the usage of the plot and at the same time respect legal requirements we are talking here about, an architectural innovation. Building below ground zero: the building will respect outside the design of the area, helping the conservation of the architectural heritage of the area. It will include historical facades of the current buildings.

Ethical standards and social inclusion
A people-centered project. It is designed to be financed via sponsorships, private persons collection, and other fundraising campaigns involving different communities (NGOs, business communities, etc.). It is aimed to be part of the community offering an alternative to the existing institutional theater. Independent scene is equivalent to transparency. An independent auditor will be hired to guarantee the transparency of both flows: money collection and spending. Enriching the cultural heritage of Bucharest is another key principle. The precinct where the project will be built, is one of the oldest areas of Bucharest and know between the two World Wars as the “Bucharest Montmartre”.

Further authors
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