

Another Architecture N°70 October — November 2017

# MARK

EUR 19,95 GBP 14 CHF 30 CAD 29,50  
USD 19,95 JPY 3,990 KRW 40,000



## Arrival

SelgasCano's Conference Centre has landed in Plasencia

**Productora**  
Bringing the Aztecs  
back to life

**Dennis Gassner**  
Designing  
Blade Runner 2049

**MVRDV**  
Colonising Seoul with  
232 plant species

# Plan

**010** Notice Board

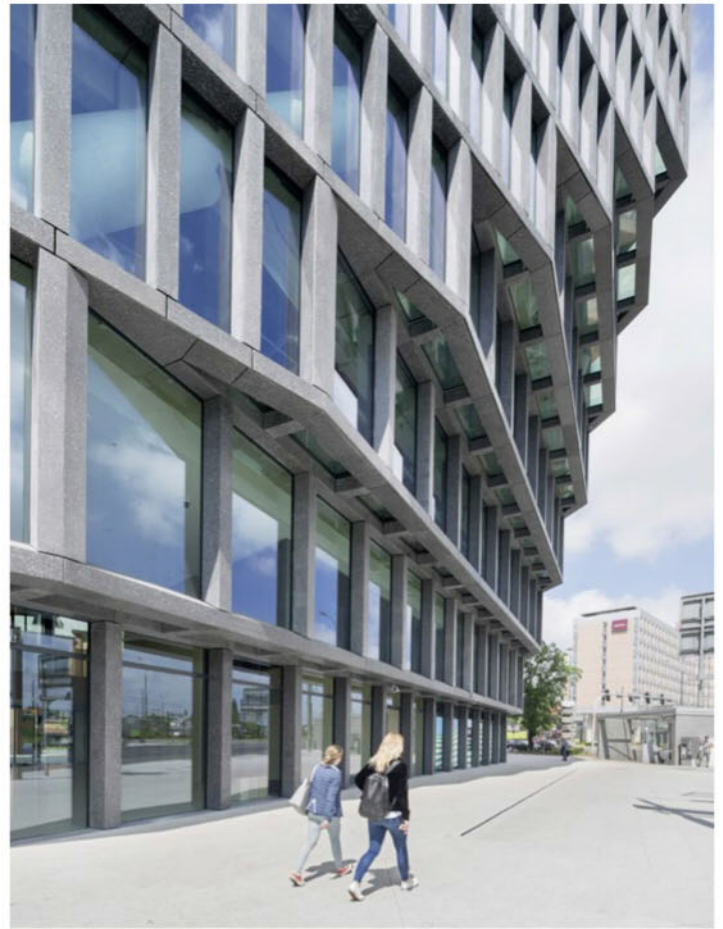
**020** Cross Section

- 022** MVRDV Poznań
- 024** Sanjay Puri Ranchi
- 026** Game Design
- 028** Next / Rudy Uytenhaak Utrecht
- 030** Eric Owen Moss Culver City
- 032** Andreas Gruber Barbiano
- 034** Pentaplan Graz
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- 042** Society of Architecture Seoul
- 044** CCPM Buenos Aires
- 046** AL\_A London
- 048** Aki Hamada Ayase
- 050** Freaks Fermanville
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**Affordable Housing in Los Angeles**

- 056** Michael Webb discusses LA's housing crisis.
- 058** Brooks + Scarpa provides shelter and security to formerly homeless people.
- 066** Lorcan O'Herlihy adds a bit of public space to a disparate city.
- 074** Michael Maltzan houses the homeless.

**022**



MVRDV  
Mixed-use building in Poznań  
Photo Ossip van Duivenbode

**058**



Brooks + Scarpa  
Housing in Los Angeles  
Photo Brooks + Scarpa

## 082 Long Section

084 **SelgasCano's** auditorium in Plasencia took 12 years to complete, but today it sits at the edge of the city, with no apparent plans to assimilate.

098 **Antonin Ziegler's** projects blend in with their surroundings, while also showing how they change over time.

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154 **Ramos Castellano** designed a hotel for hikers on the Cape Verdean island of São Vicente.

166 **Carlos Teixeira** talks about the books and magazines that influenced him and explains why reading Baudrillard is dangerous.

## 170 Tools

## 176 Exit

098



Antonin Ziegler  
Photo Alice Boursini

122



Blade Runner 2049  
Image Warner Bros.

# Roman Baroque

Labics builds public space on the  
eternal city's edge.

Text  
Aaron Betsky

Photos  
Marco Cappelletti







# 'We

wanted to work in a modern version of the Roman Baroque,' says Francesco Isidori of the mixed-use project he and his business partner, Maria Claudia Clemente, just finished on the edge of that city; 'I don't mean in terms of style, but in how it shapes the public outdoor space, how that shaping comes first and the building second.' Even the cantilevers and gravity-defying leaps the complex's structures make are meant, he says, to 'draw you in, to connect to what is there, to define the outdoor space'.

Isidori and Clemente, whose firm is called Labics, had the advantage of working close to a social housing project designed in the 1930s by Innocenzo Sabbatini, then head of Rome's Public Housing Authority, which is

anchored by his terraced 1929 Casa del Sole, or House of the Sun. They call their project the Città del Sole, or City of the Sun, and have worked hard to align its parts with the massing and entryways of the neighbouring buildings, while offering a buffer to the confusion of roads, bus parking and mixed commercial and residential structures to their south and east. 'We try to bring order to these spaces,' explains Clemente, 'which is why we suppressed the details of each building behind vertical blinds and struts. It is not about the building, it is about making a piece of the city.'

The project started when ATAC, Rome's municipal transport system, decided to redevelop a bus shed and yard near the new high-speed train station of Tiburtina. They issued a design/build challenge to developers and architects. Labics won the commission with Parsitalia, but their partner turned around and sold its interest to the American developer Hines Properties, who in turn sold it to the local firm Investere before the project was finished. Labics had to navigate these various ownerships while protecting what they thought was the most important aspect of their design, according to Isidori: 'The public space; most developers try to minimize that bit by bit to get more developable space. Luckily, we had

the city on our side, they set the minimum and stuck with that demand.'

Labics broke the 17,300-m<sup>2</sup> programme apart into five buildings. Two are commercial plinths, separated by a walkway that leads from the main road of Via della Lega Lombarda to the south to the location in the rear along Via Arduino where a staircase leads up from the street to the series of Sabbatini's semi-public courtyards on a hill to the north that Labics wanted to extend into their project. The stores continue into the alleyway they designed to line up with that staircase, bringing commercial life into the project's core. On top of the western part of this base, they designed an L-shaped office building. It comes down to the ground next to Via della Lega Lombarda, and then bridges a public plaza, which can be reached via broad stairs on top of the shops. A two-storey bar of offices extends further to the west, cantilevering over the site's tip to echo the cantilevered shed roof over the existing ATAC bus bar, which will be preserved and turned into a restaurant (it is currently used to house and preserve the archaeological remains that were inevitably found during the project's construction).

On top of the easternmost plinth a two-storey apartment building balances on >

# ***‘It is not about the building, it is about making a piece of the city’***

*Opposite* The project is articulated over different levels, with commercial activities and a public library at ground level, offices on the first floor and public spaces on top of those. Three buildings are suspended above this public area – one containing more offices and the other two for residential use.

*Below* A nearby pedestrian route is extended into the project.







A two-storey bar of offices cantilevers over the site's tip to echo the shed roof over the existing ATAC bus bar, which will be preserved and turned into a restaurant.



# ***‘We don’t want you to recognize what is social and what is market housing’***

*Right* The highest element of the complex is a tower containing 70 small and medium-sized apartments, partially enclosed with a horizontal glass brise-soleil.

*Opposite* Labics clad the complex in skins that emphasize mass, rather than use.



slender columns. This contains eight duplex apartments, ‘completely autonomous, like townhomes’, according to Isidori. They have their own entrances and roof terraces, all hiding behind glass and metal louvers so that the whole appears to be a mass. Finally, a nine-storey apartment block, which Labics split in the middle to both reveal its core and break up its mass, contains 70 smaller apartments, each with its own loggia. Part of this block balances on columns that interrupt the second public staircase, leading from the park area in front of the train station to the public areas on top of the plinth.

Labics clad the complex in skins that ‘emphasize mass, rather than use’, as Clemente says, though you can understand the different parts of the complex through the variations. The commercial base above and around the storefronts is obscured by closely spaced vertical metal slats. The office building hides its windows behind vertical louvers with horizontal slats. The main apartment building is a porous block of balconies behind a metal grid. The smaller apartment block, finally, shields its homes behind a combination of horizontal slats and vertical metal members.

‘It was important for us that you can’t really see the individual elements,’ says Isidori; ‘we don’t want you to recognize what is social and what is market housing, what is offices and what is the back. We want to express the volumes as a backdrop and shaper of the public spaces on the street and on the terraces we made.’ They see their raised plazas as offering a level in-between the confusion of the commercial area to the south and the more park-like courtyards above them and to the north.

There is no doubt that the Città del Sole is successful as a contribution to Rome’s public space. It is one of those rare modern structures that looks as if it has always been on the site, so well do its forms echo, respond to and complete the buildings and open spaces all around it. That does not mean the design is recessive. The abstraction of the volumes, along with the lifting, pushing, pulling and cantilevering of the blocks, creates continuing changing vistas and a composition of forms takes the implosion of the site and explodes it back out into a play of forms in the Roman light.

What concerns both Labics and this reviewer is those public spaces. While the large apartment block and half of the offices

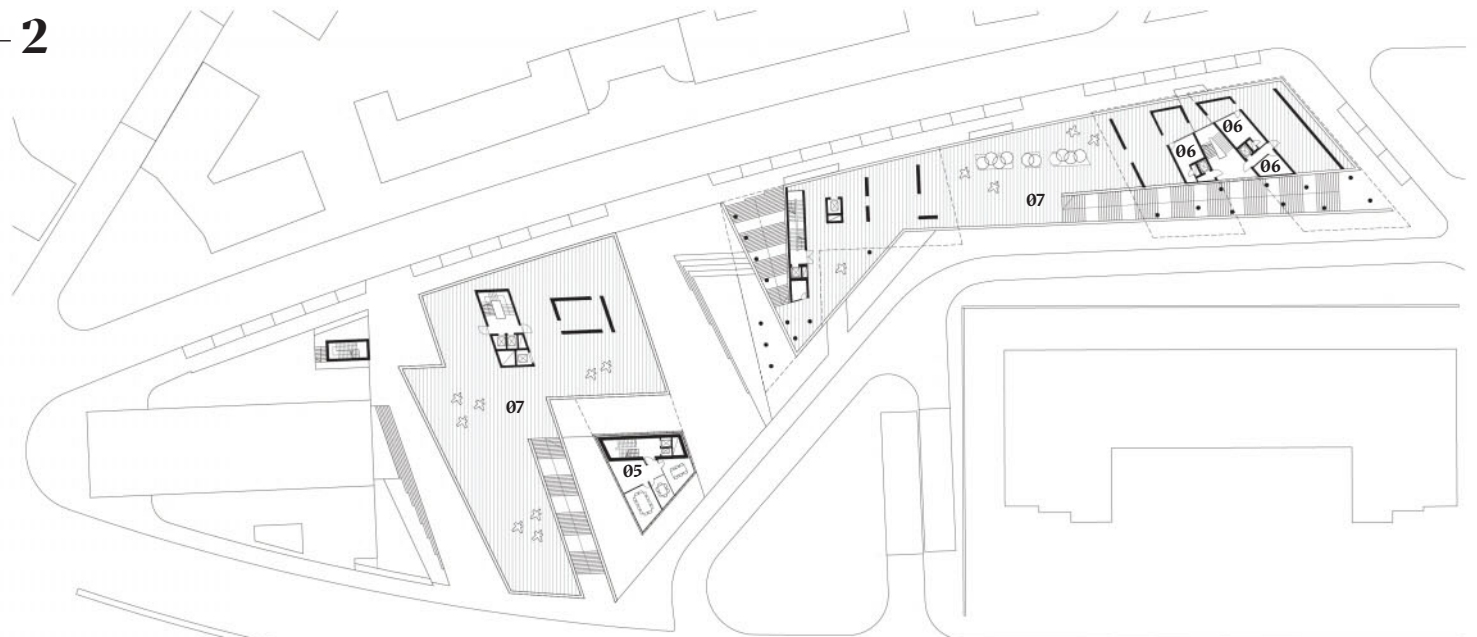
are now filled, and some stores and other commercial uses are venturing onto the site (a dentist occupies a suite on the ground floor), much of the townhomes sit empty. The raised plazas, moreover, are bare, which one assumes is all the developer would like them to be. ‘Yes, I am worried,’ says Clemente, ‘but it is a larger concern. Everywhere in Rome – and the world – there is this fear of public space and what might happen there, and there is this urge to close it off. They even want to close off the Trevi Fountain. I’m afraid that they will barricade the upper plazas, but I hope the city will fight. The public dimension of the city is under pressure and we must fight back.’

With the Città del Sole, Labics certainly has made a contribution to Rome’s public space and life. It is especially important that the architects have done so at the frayed edge where that common area needs most support. That they have done so with buildings that build beauty out of a combination of urban expression and detailed restraint makes their contribution all the more impressive. —

labics.it



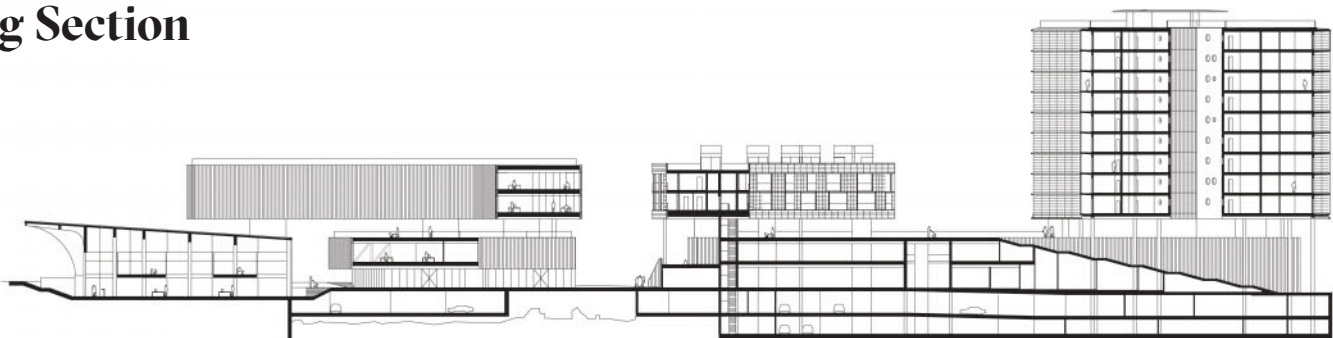
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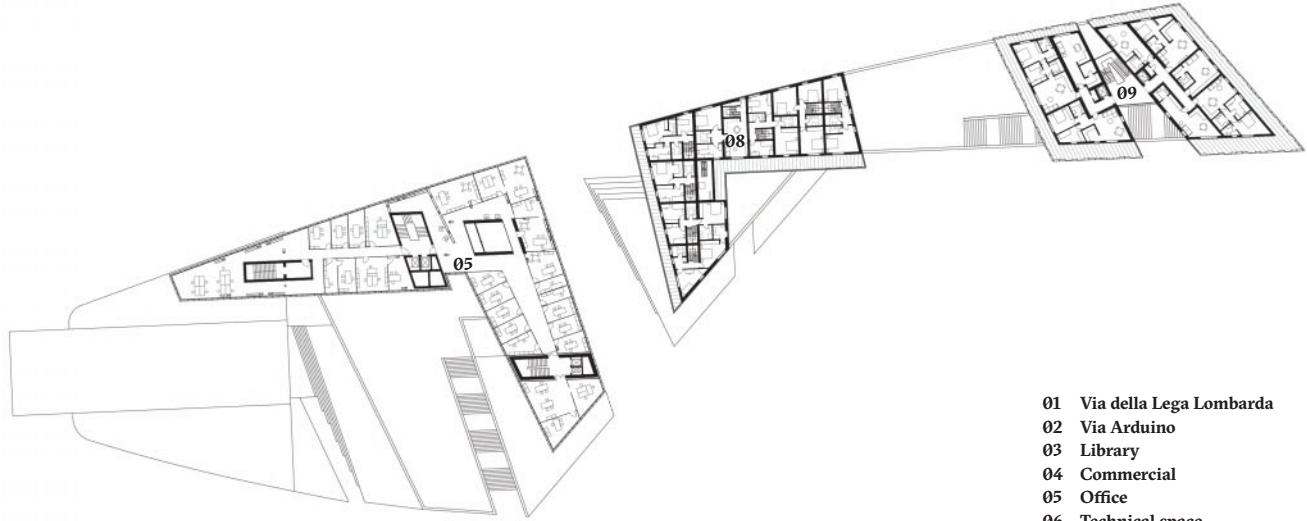
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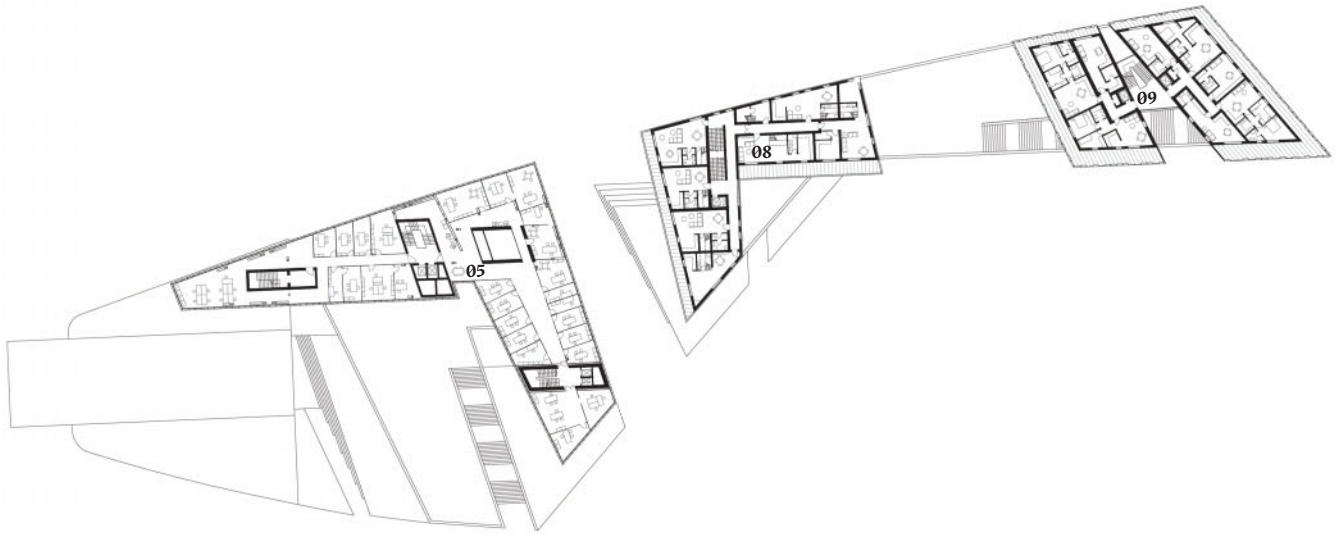
**Long Section**



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+ 3



### Axonometric

