

HOTEL BELVEDERE DUBROVNIK  
DUBROVNIK, CROATIA  
2015

The Belvedere is a large hotel built in the 1980s near the city of Dubrovnik, – a UNESCO World Heritage Site –, and partially destroyed in 1991 during the Croatian independence war. The hotel is a disproportionate building that was bought by Russian investor Viktor Vekselberg with the purpose of demolishing it and building an entirely new hospitality concept. Holding an invited competition held in 2 stages between 10 international architecture firms, the project was won by 3Ihd of Croatia.

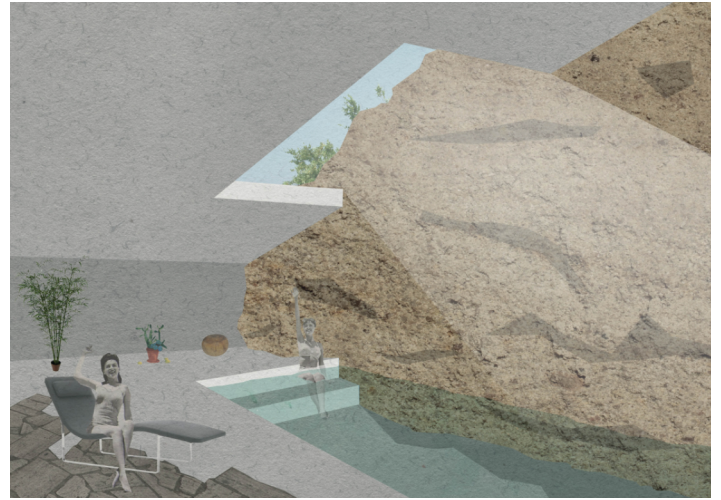
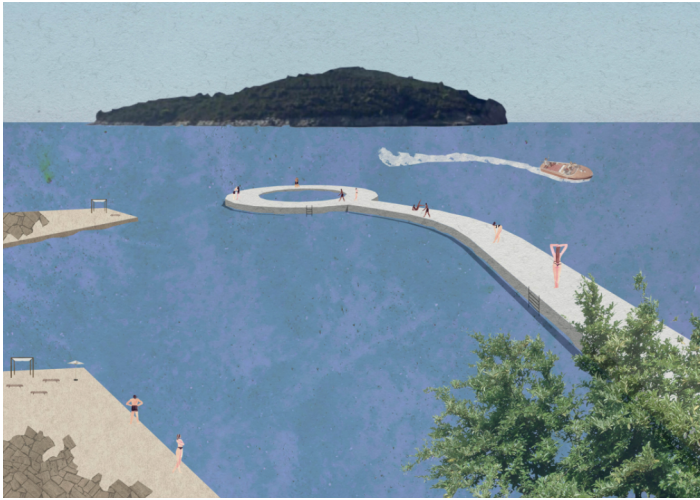
With an incline in excess of 70m to the shoreline and located east of the walled city, the site embodies the quintessential landscape of the Croatian coast around Dubrovnik. Our premise was to create a small hamlet encrusted and disseminated in the topography, rather than a large “objectified” building; an ensemble of individual units which adapt to each particular condition of the topography, whilst still working as a whole.

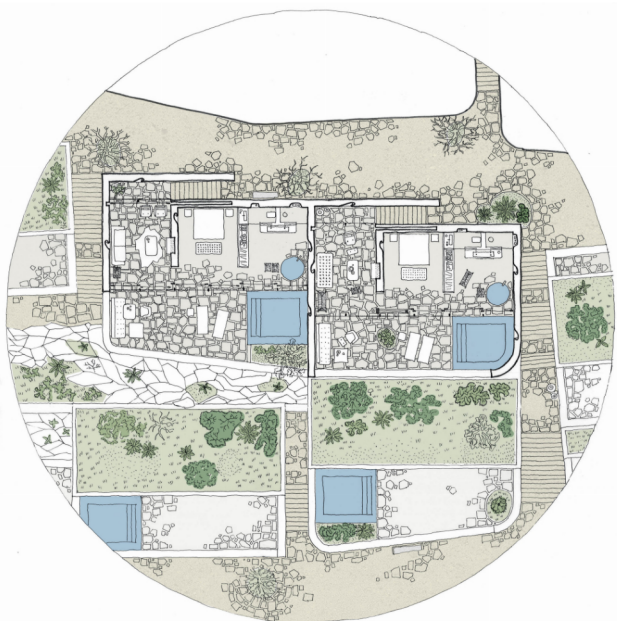
Based on the principle of a quasi-natural occupation of the terrain, and as a metaphor, we could imagine tracing the roads and paths after the zigzagging trails left by the cunning equilibrium of mountain goats. Land access to the hotel is made from the existing upper road. The arrival experience is emphasized by the iconic 2-storey reception turret; the only outstanding element of the whole ensemble and the actual ‘belvedere’ that gives name to the hotel. Nearby guests leave their cars in a parking garage concealed in the topography by taking advantage of the man-made *plateau* left over from the previous construction. From hereon electric carts take guests to their individual suites. As an alternative to the carts, there is an elevator sunk into the cliffs that takes guests straight from the reception to the waterfront promenade and pier. We envisioned this tunnel as something special, something between a James Turrell light installation and an exquisite wine cellar.

The rooms are spread along a winding path encrusted in the topography, generating a gentler promenade through the village’s main street as a natural way of overcoming the topography. Along the way, a secondary system of meandering alleys and stairways criss-crosses this main street parallel to the slope, while offering a path of vistas from multifarious angles. Each room is unique and individualized in terms of shape, height, orientation and views. On the lower side of the West of the plot, the waterfront was devised as an area of restaurants and beach facilities with fresh and saltwater pools. Guests can swim in the actual seawater without fear of being stung by the notoriously frightening medusas that increasingly wander through Mediterranean waters. Along the waterfront, our idea was to create a walkway built on timber stilts intertwined with gazebos and relaxation areas. In addition, segments of imbedded arcades along this promenade can offer summer shading and shelter from the rain, as well as picture frame views of the Dubrovnik citadel.

This promenade, from East to West, connects the beach and pool facilities to the pier harbour on the opposite side. The East edge of the plot was the location chosen for the four villas, –an area of great seclusion and exclusivity within the hotel grounds.

Conceived as 3-storey structures, the buildings have large loggias which offer wide views and absolute privacy, – like a modern-day Villa Jovis. We imagined the Spa, not as a single building, but rather as a series of individual rooms imbedded in the cliff on different levels and with equally different ambiances, amenities and views. The main experience of this Spa would culminate in a thalasso pool, devised as a kind of mysterious grotto sunk deeply into the terrain and dramatically lit from above. We aimed to intensify the Mediterranean experience by re-naturalizing and recovering as much as possible the local flora in the terrain. In terms of materials, we would make extensive use of hand-made and dry-bond walls in local limestone with pavements of thick and irregular cobbles, – reused from demolitions whenever possible – drawing inspiration from the hardscape of famous Philapappos pathway to the Acropolis by Dimitri Pikionis, made of ancient remnants, as well as Bernard Rudofsky's lessons on the Mediterranean.





Location: Dubrovnik, Croatia  
Client: Vila Larus D.o.o./ Lamesa Group (Dr. Viktor Vekselberg)  
Project Management: Fanzun AG Scope of Services Architecture  
Project Brief: 5-star hotel resort with 50 keys (36 suites, 10 residences and 4 villas)  
Plot Size: 43,000 sq. m Gross Built Area 14,000 sq. m  
Project Status: 2015 (invited competition)