

Case Study on:



ARCHITECTURE PROJECT



Country Representative

European Business Awards 2011

Country Representative - Malta
Architecture Project



Architecture Project

Developing Integrated Design Solutions for the Built Environment

Words from the Judges

“Flexibility, expertise and innovation help blend the old with the new.”



Valletta Waterfront urban regeneration. Photo by David Pisani

Architecture Project (AP) is a network of architectural practices with offices in Valletta, London and Split. The network allows the team to make use of both local and global expertise in order to provide the very best integrated architectural and engineering design consultancy services for any given project.

It is the company's flexibility and innovation that have led the European Business Awards 2011 to select Architecture Project as one of only 15 Country Representatives from Malta.

AP has developed design processes that enable different specialisms to interact and produce a multi-angular approach to each project. The company never tackles a brief within a singular discipline, but instead takes elements from its core areas of expertise including architecture design, interior design, restoration theory & practice, master planning, sustainable architecture, engineering, education, research and brand development.

“The creative process is made up of a matrix of ideas, each bringing new possibilities, different answers and alternative ways of thinking. Our organisational structure is purposely flexible to allow us to address the specific criteria of any individual project by drawing on the talent and skills of the extended AP team.” David Felice, Director, Architecture Project

AP's design work does not exist in abstract isolation. Its work is frequently grounded in extensive research and in a deep understanding of place. It often includes a significant component of restoration or regeneration and the firm has developed strong capabilities in historical and site research and in restoration theory and applied practice. AP also has extensive experience in new build projects, which are approached with the same regard for the environmental, cultural and social context specific to the site, as well as the integration of contemporary technologies and materials.

“Our experience working within the confines of areas of historical significance, has given us an understanding of the importance of contributing to the quality of the built and unbuilt environment immediate to the project we are working on. That's not to say

that there isn't a time and place for standout designs; the important thing is to understand what is required of any given project and react accordingly.”

Research in energy efficiency is a mainstay of the firm's structure, in particular looking at how buildings and public spaces can minimise dependence on non-renewable resources. This is especially relevant when looking at how to introduce contemporary needs into sensitive historical environments, using emerging technology, modern materials and advanced construction methods.

AP implemented one of these emerging technologies when it integrated a Passive Hybrid Downdraft Cooling (PHDC) system in one of its projects – the new Malta Stock Exchange. This energy efficient cooling system is a sustainable alternative to traditional air-conditioning and has the ability to significantly reduce carbon emissions. Since 2008, AP has been one of the leading partners in a EU funded research project on PHDC including the organisation of a symposium in Malta, the creation of a Design Sourcebook and a Simplified Performance Assessment Tool for the design of PHDC systems.

“AP's approach is more about method. We undertake deep analysis of every project and work closely with our clients to develop our own brief. Energy efficiency is central to our design philosophy and is even more important when we are working within a historic environment. Trying to bring air-conditioning into a building that is hundreds of years old certainly has its hurdles, but the team's expertise and our innovative approach have allowed us to find workable solutions for these challenges.”

Currently the firm is working on a project in the Philippines for a hotel chain that is looking to achieve a zero carbon footprint. The hotel is located in an area that is completely natural, beautiful and unspoilt. It is a perfect example where context and the reciprocal relationship between the finished work and its physical, cultural and social environment become of primary concern, and one conceived through the direct participation of local communities in the design process.

Corporate Village, Malta Trade Centre



Pool Pavilion. Photo by Kurt Arrigo



“Difficult market conditions led Architecture Project to re-invent its approach to client services. It now addresses its business via a matrix approach where every project is viewed from a multi-disciplinary perspective to retain flexibility, address specific criteria and draw on the talent and skills of the entire team. The company's success can be measured by the fact that it has maintained profitability despite operating in a sector hardest hit by the prevailing economic climate.”

Phil Forrest, Chairman of Judges, European Business Awards 2011

Looking to the Future...

AP will keep building its creative community by extending the skills inherent in the continued training of architects to other related spheres, and working on applying the methods they have developed over the years for buildings, into other areas, taking into account five key aspects - education, research, context, attractiveness and technology.

AP has successfully forged links with leading Schools of Architecture across Europe and in particular in the UK. Students are invited to undertake placements at AP and are able to work across a wide range of different specialisations during their time with the company. The company is set to retain these links and develop further partnerships in other locations as its international activity expands.

The company will continue to make significant investments in R&D, looking at ways of using new technology to achieve improved energy performance in its buildings, and on extending its research capabilities that often provide the basis for its design work, both for buildings in a historical context and new build projects for individual, public and corporate clients alike. AP is now applying this method to other areas or industries and is using its expertise from past projects to shape a new future for the business.

AP has invested a great deal of time and resources in a number of projects researching and developing innovative design solutions, including the introduction of sustainable street furniture and a prototype to recycle municipal waste water in an urban regeneration project. The research involved in this initiative will take the form of comparative studies against conventional systems and will explore further possibilities to exploit the technology in public or private landscapes and gardens.

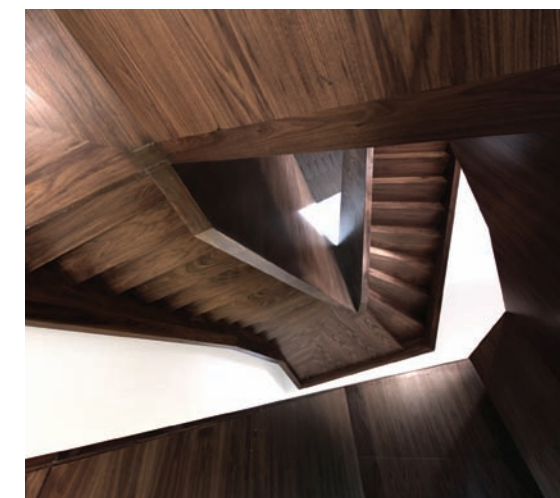
AP is using technology to make the most of its innovative network structure. In these times of rapid change, the company realises the importance of building reliable channels of communication to provide information and enable adequate platforms for dialogue.

The company has introduced a dedicated integrated management software system which will enable the network to keep updated

and interact in the most efficient and effective way possible. Both current and archived project data will allow anyone from the network to see immediately where any project is at any given point of time within its lifecycle and provide valuable access to information and lessons learnt from past work.

“Communication is of paramount importance in order to keep a project flowing smoothly. We are investing in the latest technology in order to build a means of streamlining our operations across a vast number of different teams, offices, geographical locations and time zones.” Tom Van Malderen, Chief executive, Architecture Project

In a move to improve its international competitiveness, AP is a recipient of European Union Regional Development Funding and has widened its participation in sectors ancillary to, or in support of, its core business. These include publishing and brand development. The company is also participating in, and organising, its own conferences, design festivals and workshops as a means of demonstrating the company's capabilities and its special interest in research and sustainability.



Conversion 18th century town house. Photo by David Pisani



“From a Maltese perspective, this is the first time that a company from the creative sector has challenged other more traditional local businesses. It is exciting to see an increased understanding of how creative forces can contribute to a more diverse economy. Putting our business out there on the European stage has been a very positive experience for both the company as a whole and for the team who are very proud to work as part of the AP network.”

David Felice
Director, Architecture Project



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About Architecture Project

Architecture Project is made up of 60 people working in a network of design practices with offices in Valletta, London and Split. Core skills across this network have been extended beyond the more orthodox realm of architectural design and the AP team is able to use a mix of local and global experts to ensure best fit. The company looks to bring together different capabilities in the areas of education, research and design.

The leadership of the organisation is built to support the continuous process of change, renewal and innovation by adopting measures that promote openness and inclusivity. The aim is to inspire the skilled team to take on challenges that will drive the business forward into new areas or to use new processes to push boundaries.

AP believes the key element of building a business is attracting the right people to the company. It is a combination of experience, skill set, raw intelligence and energy. The company is privileged to work with such a large network of specialists who have experience across a vast spectrum of projects.

AP has established its own high level of ethical conduct and enjoys working on projects that it feels are socially relevant. Although the company was originally set up with a primary focus on restoration or regeneration projects, it has found that the working practices learned in this niche market can be applied across a wider spectrum of activity in the architectural design sector. It has now developed strong capabilities and experience in areas as far ranging as interior design and master planning and achieved due recognition for this on an international platform.

The evolution of AP's work ethic which has allowed the company to thrive is the result of two decades of varied experiences, collaborations, mistakes, successes and risks; each playing an indelible part in the process of creating design and architecture that makes a real contribution to the built environment.

AP's work was recently awarded the 'Interior of the Year' Prize at the inaugural World Festival of Interiors in Barcelona in

the category of Creative Re-Use. It was also included in a short list of honourable mentions in the prestigious Philippe Rotthier European Prize for Architecture for 2011, which identifies notable renovations carried out in Europe during the past five years. Both recognitions confirm AP's success in the creative adaptation of historical buildings through inserting strong contemporary spatial elements.

The company currently invests approximately 20% of net profits in its R&D activities.

About the European Business Awards

Since 2007, the European Business Awards programme has been shining a light on the most pioneering businesses on the continent by promoting excellence, best practice and innovation in the European business community. The awards programme recognises excellence in all disciplines of business including individual business functions. Last year entrants ranged from fish farming organisations to renewable energy firms. Together they had a combined turnover greater than €1 trillion Euros (8.23% of EU GDP) and employed over 2.7 million people between them.

Businesses from over 30 European territories entered the Awards. The competition for it is fierce with many of the Europe's most established brands being represented. Entrants are judged by a panel of experts in their fields who bring experience, business acumen and understanding to the board.

Country Representatives are deemed by the judges to represent the very best companies in each territory. In 2011, the standard was particularly high, with the programme engaging with over 15,000 companies in the initial stages.