

a house I
will build one
day.
could it be 2013.09.12.
ZHANG KE.

ZHANG KE

& THE ALVAR AALTO MEDAL

15 APRIL – 9 SEPTEMBER 2018



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The Alvar Aalto Medal Jury

ZHANG KE

Born in 1970, Zhang Ke received his Master of Architecture from the Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1998 and his Master and Bachelor of Architecture from Tsinghua University in Beijing. In 2001, he founded his studio ZAO/standardarchitecture in Beijing. The studio has emerged as one of the most important protagonists among the new generation of Chinese architects.

Recent works by the studio include the Novartis Campus Building in Shanghai, a number of hutong and courtyard transformation projects in the city center of Beijing, and various buildings imbedded in the landscape of Tibet. The work of Zhang Ke is always rooted in a cultural, historical and site-specific context, playing on both the sensory and intellectual register.

Many honors have been awarded to Zhang Ke and his studio, including the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 2016. His work has been featured at several international exhibitions, for example at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2016 and the Museum of Finnish Architecture in 2017.

2017 ALVAR AALTO MEDAL JURY STATEMENT

In 2017, we face unprecedented instability in the world at large, and witness human rights in jeopardy in both developing and developed nations. The jury therefore felt strongly that we reaffirm commitment to humanism in architecture in honor of Alvar Aalto's legacy. Alvar Aalto's architecture serves to enhance and strengthen the values of community and to enlighten generous and careful considerations for the coexistence of humanity. Therefore, for the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Medal, the jury felt that a pervasive influence of Alvar Aalto in a global context should be recognized.

His architecture engages with diverse people for whom intimate architectural experiences are accessible. The relevant and timeless idea of architecture as an important element in society that promotes social cohesion is a belief worth bringing forth especially today. Another idea we wanted to promote is to highlight contemporary architects who create harmonious relationships between landscape and architecture.

We felt strongly that this medal should recognize an emerging talent in architecture. In fifty years it has served as a harbinger of architects who matured over the years to receive other prestigious awards. We believe at this time that it is important to recognize this criterion which grew organically through this award's own history. As a jury, we came up with four important criteria to judge this year's winner of the Alvar Aalto Medal of 2017. These are: Creativity, Sustainability and Ecology, Context of the Award and Excellence in Design.

We are very happy to announce the winner, Zhang Ke of China. He is very creative in working with local material, technique and crafts and integrates landscape elements into his architecture. He incorporates historic elements in his contemporary design thus preserving tradition without nostalgia. His vision is motivated by enjoyment of the user, therefore making it experiential at human scale. His language of architecture is contemporary, but is purposely a quiet presence and does not overwhelm context.

Ecologically speaking he often uses discarded materials to encourage reuse of resources and incorporates the old into the new instead of demolishing existing structures. He is masterful at making something new through reuse of

otherwise mundane materials to rediscover a new beauty in it. The buildings are sensitively sited with considerations taken for the elements and forces of nature, thus protecting the environment as well as the ethos of its environs.

The architect stands to resist against the context of China's rapid urbanization and to promote individuality in an effort to manifest an alternative point of view, going against the commercial mainstream of the country's standard practices. In addition, he focuses on neglected rural areas to enhance its value and to encourage economic growth as well as to stabilize marginalized communities through architectural design and propositions. He also produces micro-architecture at small scale as a series of interventions that could be cathartic to productive change in society, creating safe and stable spaces that can be used by the community.

He demonstrates an extremely high understanding of details and material crafts in his architecture in sometimes very challenging circumstances, such as in remote communities with limited access to technology. He is adept at working with traditional builders to encourage them to use their skills to achieve a contemporary architecture based on their knowledge.

From an aesthetic point of view, his work shows pure beauty that stands by itself since his use of materials, detailing and siting are all in balance with one another. In our time where ambitious and effortful forms fill our eyes, it is rare to find such quiet yet persuasive beauty as that found in Zhang Ke's work.

His architecture serves a big idea and a big picture that is universal even though each project is very specific to its program and locale. It is because his designs are coherent at every level from materiality, to approach to the program and to understanding of its social aspects. We feel that harmony is present at every level of his work. Therefore 2017 jury felt there

is a strong connection of his work with legacy of Alvar Aalto in a contemporary and global context in awarding Zhang Ke with Alvar Aalto medal in its fiftieth anniversary.

Toshiko Mori, Japan - Tina Saaby, Denmark -
Asmo Jaaksi, Finland - Vesa Oiva, Finland

THE ALVAR AALTO MEDAL

Established in 1967 by the Museum of Finnish Architecture and the Finnish Association of Architects, this medal is given intermittently in recognition of a significant contribution to creative architecture. The medal may be bestowed on a living person who is exceptionally accomplished in the field of creative architecture and has carried on Aalto's legacy of sustainable, humane design. A condition for the award is respect for ecology in building and the timeless principle of architecture as a societal tool and a reinforcer of social relationships.

During its 50 years of existence, the medal has been awarded to 13 architects or studios in 11 countries.

The recipients are the following:

Alvar Aalto, 1967 (Finland)

Hakon Ahlberg, 1973 (Sweden)

James Stirling, 1978 (UK)

Jørn Utzon, 1982 (Denmark)

Tadao Ando, 1985 (Japan)

Alvaro Siza, 1988 (Portugal)

Glenn Murcutt, 1992 (Australia)

Steven Holl, 1998 (United States)

Rogelio Salmona, 2003 (Colombia)

Tegnestuen Vandkunsten, 2009 (Denmark)

Paulo David, 2012 (Portugal)

Fuensanta Nieto et Enrique Sobejano, 2015 (Spain)

Zhang Ke, 2017 (China).

Today the medal is presented by the Museum of Finnish Architecture, the Finnish Association of Architects (SAFA), the Architectural Society, the Alvar Aalto Foundation and the City of Helsinki



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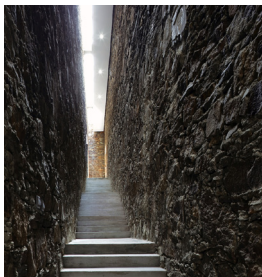
PROJECTS PRESENTED

Yarlung Tsangpo Boat Terminal, Tibet 2008



The boat terminal is located near Pai Town in the Linzhi area of Tibet. As the remotest stop along the Yarlung Tsangpo River, it allows both local people and travellers from elsewhere to journey by water deep into the valley and arrive at the foot of the Namcha Barwa Snow Mountain. Only 430 m² in area, the building programme is quite simple. It has a waiting lounge, a ticket office, toilets and a room for overnight stays. The programmatic requirements are integrated into a series of ramps rising from the water and winding around several big poplar trees. Construction materials are mainly local. All the walls and roofs are made of rocks collected from nearby the site and built by Tibetan masonry builders.

Namcha Barwa Visitor Centre, Tibet 2008



The Visitor Centre sits on a slope along the road leading to the last village Zhibai deep in the Grand Canyon of Yarlung Tsangpo, with the 7,782m-high Mount Namcha Barwa forming the backdrop to the east. The building serves as a visitor centre, which provides comprehensive information about the region. The program includes a reception and information hall, public toilets, a supply store, an internet café, a medical centre, changing rooms for hikers, meeting rooms, offices for tour guides and drivers, a water tank and an electrical station for the village. Like a few slices of rock extending out of the mountain, the building is conceived as a series of stone walls set into the slope. Approaching from the road people cannot be sure if this is a building or a row of retaining walls or even a Mani wall (to pay homage to the spirit of the place) at the foot of the mountain.

Niyang River Visitor Centre, Tibet 2010



Mirui Road is a tourist route that meets Highway 318 connecting Tibet and Sichuan Province. This road meanders southwards along the Niyang River. The building's external form is a response to the site conditions. The inner public space is "carved" out of the irregular-shaped volume. The central courtyard connects four openings, which respond to the orientation and circulation. The remaining volume after "carving" accommodates three major interior functions: a ticket office, a changing room for rafting, and toilets. The construction of the building adopted and developed the techniques of the local vernacular. A 15 cm-thick layer of Aga clay forms the waterproof membrane of the roof. Aga clay is a vernacular waterproofing material that also provides heat insulation. Colour is a crucial element of Tibetan visual culture. After experiments with strong traditional colours – which caused issues for religious local people – the stone walls were painted neutral white, which enhances the geometric spatial composition.

Niangou Terminal, Tibet 2014



The Niangou Terminal is located at the confluence of the Niyang River and Yarlung River, a still intact place of overwhelming beauty. The landing dock required installations for modernizing and expanding the existing capacities that would lead to a substantial increase in the human impact on the landscape. The new building is based upon the idea that it is vital to establish a contextual dialogue at the scale of the landscape. The new space requirements are organized under a zig-zag downhill promenade. The promenade follows the natural slope down for 30 m until reaching the lowest level river mark. The form structures and organizes all functions and gives them a hierarchic unity, which defines all interspatial relations. This way each space can find its own relationship with the landscape and mediate the connection with the human scale. The design for this project developed as a collaboration with the Lisbon-based architects Embaixada.

Micro-Hutong, Beijing 2013



Micro-Hutong is a building experiment for a small scale, socially acceptable intervention within the limitations of supertight courtyards in traditional hutongs. A light steel structure and plywood panel cladding enabled low-cost construction. The hutongs are currently in a critical phase of a relentless exodus of the occupants. Micro-Hutong is an architectural opera on that brings the courtyard back to the centre, by creating a direct relationship with its urban context and drawing social activities into its interior. Apart from enhancing the flow of air and light, the courtyard allows a direct relationship between the living space contained in the dynamic spatial volumes and an urban vestibule in the front part of the complex.

Micro Yuan'er, Beijing 2014



Cha'er Hutong is a quiet spot among the busy Dashilar area, situated 1 km from the Forbidden City in the city centre of Beijing. The #8 Cha'er Hutong courtyard is a typical "Da-Za-Yuan"—big messy courtyard—once occupied by over a dozen families. Over the past 50 years, each family built a small add-on kitchen in the courtyard. In symbiosis with the families who still live in the courtyard, a 9 m² community children's library built of concrete mixed with Chinese Ink was inserted underneath the pitched roof of an existing building. Under a big Chinese scholar-tree, one of the former kitchens was redesigned into a 6 m² mini art exhibition space. Besides these programs, the architect also proposed a dancing classroom, a painting classroom, a local handicrafts studio, public terraces and public bathroom. The materials—Concrete with Chinese Ink and recycled grey brick—were chosen to blend in seamlessly with the surrounding urban context, while reveals of warm plywood allude to the contemporary setting indoors.

Novartis Office Building, Shanghai 2016



Located in the southeast of the Novartis Shanghai Campus, Building C10 faces the big central courtyard on its north side, where a sharp cut identifies the main entrance of the building. It is bordered by a riverbank to the south. Based on an organic grid system, Building C10 takes form on an innovative structure as well as the composition of traditional Chinese courtyards. Spatial and structural lightness, a core design value, has led to an open and flexible working environment that encourages interaction and creativity, among people living in and around the building. Building C10 dwells on the idea of permeability, which mediates and animates the relationship between openness and enclosure. The goal is to provoke varying sensations and emphasizing them, thus challenging the neutral and static settings of conventional office buildings.

Baitasi Co-Living Courtyard, Beijing 2017



This project further explores a sustainable renewal strategy for the urban fabric in the Baitasi historical area in a subtle way. It aims to transform a 150 m² courtyard in a shared space for two households with the insertion of a prefabricated service core in the 80 m² main apartment and an 8 m² "Mini House" underneath the pitched roof. The boundary of the courtyard is clearly defined by its dated brick walls. By reinforcing them with a 9 cm thick casting concrete mixed with Chinese ink, and extending the roof structure to create integral roof scenery, we intended to give the courtyard enclosure and unity, refurbishing it instead of rebuilding it.