

of young Italian secretary Valeria  
the aims of CiArch to

some 125,000 reg-  
ional population of 57  
Kingdom the ratio is  
15 million inhabitants  
300 architects to 40  
together the UK and  
to many architects as  
for that?

The figures you men-  
tion, CREME 2008  
Italy has one archi-  
tects. The European  
153 inhabitants. One  
that we have to deal

SC: But do you think we have too many  
schools and too many architects?

VM: Italian architecture schools have a  
liberal entrance policy and a predomi-  
nantly cultural-theoretical approach and  
this is probably the reason they attract  
so many students. While increasing the  
number of degree courses with a nume-  
rous classes and applying stricter entrance  
requirements would guarantee a high  
standard of education, I do not believe  
that limiting the number of students  
would be the solution. Nor do I think it  
would help to correlate their number with  
current needs. In our country public and  
private demand varies so much that it is  
almost impossible to quantify it.

SC: What role does CiArch want to play?

VM: The CREME 2008 report reveals

ing architecture as a cultural challenge  
but then they facilitate very enthusiastic  
impulse on the part of the client or the  
client or the administration. And here  
lies CiArch's main reason for being. We  
want to become a focal point for all the  
young architects in Italy, creating a net-  
work for the exchange of experience, debate  
and synergy. CiArch also wants to promote  
cultural exchange between architects and  
the rest of society. Finally, the association  
mediates between young architects and  
institutions. The intention is to protect  
and represent young professionals and  
their rights and to involve them more in  
the decision-making process in the con-  
struction field.

SC: What does CiArch want to achieve in  
terms of leading and representing young

a reference point for all young architects  
who need to be represented and men-  
tioned. The focus is on the ethical aspect.  
I think that one of the main problems  
faced by Italian architects today is under-  
standing their place in ethical terms. In  
Italy there is no clear relation between  
architecture and ethics. Architecture that  
is purely aesthetic is ephemeral. An archi-  
tect should express a political, religious or  
social message through his work – as we  
see in most of our historical architecture.  
We strive for an ethical beauty that comes  
from a new moral basis and leads to a new  
way of shaping our world. In this sense,  
CiArch wants to be the amplifier of this  
message both for the architectural com-  
munity and for mass culture. (SUVO COSTA)

Info: www.ciarch.it

## d service station

ANTWERPEN (BE) — Along  
Antwerp and Ghent stands a shiny new service station  
k architecture and engineering, which is nothing like what we  
the repetitive familiarity hitherto offered by oil companies  
want chains, the architects have served up a shiny silver blob  
of a UFO and a vintage American camper van. The building  
of a single fluid whole, an effect achieved with the help of a  
from boat building. A coating of polyurethane was sprayed  
blocks of insulation material, producing a facade that presents  
ulating surface. The massive rectangular awning of the old  
has been replaced by an appropriately fluid shape, and the car  
have been redesigned as an undulating landscape.

ing is a bit like a three-lobed oil stain. The recesses, where the  
located, are very open with large expanses of glass interrupted  
gular entrances – the only angular elements in the building.  
ies functions, such as the kitchen, washrooms and storage, are  
which have a closed facade. On the side with the entrance to  
hop, visitors are confronted by cars zooming past on the motor-  
roads contains the rest area, a sea of gently rolling lawns and  
third view is anchored in the adjacent landscape of gyrating  
s clearly not the usual spatial vacuum of interchangeable ser-  
but find yourself in a hinge point between incessant speed and

BOUY WONG

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← The wooden house in Podkoren is clearly a good example of critical regionalism. It is traditional and modern, archaic and contemporary. Vast glass surfaces, open living spaces, the graphic facade and sculptural form all belong to the present, while the use of wood and archetypal shape hark back to the past and the typical Slovenian hay-rack.

## Archaic and contemporary

PODKOREN (SI) — Podkoren, a small Slovenian Alpine village surrounded by the picturesque silhouettes of mountain peaks, recently grew a little bigger. A black house made of wood now occupies a place on the town's calm and sunny southeastern edge. It stands exposed in a sensitive region which rarely meets with the likes of contemporary architecture. How to design a contemporary house which radiates associations with traditional Alpine architecture was therefore the basic question posed by Vania Gregorc and Aleš Vrhovec. These two architects form the backbone of Gregorc Vrhovec arhitekti, an office involved in all stages of architectural production, from financing to design and marketing.

The house consists of three apart-  
ments, on the ground, first and attic floors  
respectively. Each unit has an open living  
space with kitchen, three bedrooms, a ter-  
race and loggia. The living area is oriented  
towards a vast window with spectacular  
panoramic views of the mountains.  
But the house also offers more material  
luxuries. The apartments are accessed by  
a small elevator, while the shared base-  
ment hides a sauna, parking and storage.

Aside from the basement, which is built  
in concrete, and the roof covered with tin  
sheeting, the house is made entirely from  
wood – a prefabricated wooden structure,  
wooden windows, wood floors and ceil-  
ings. The use of wood here finds its origins  
in traditional local farm buildings, where  
wood is used not only as planking but also  
for structural members.

The longitudinal volume and the steep  
pitched roof continue the agricultural  
architectural narrative. Even the choice of  
black was inspired by the buildings in the  
vicinity, for this was the only colour avail-  
able in wood-protective coatings back in  
the 1930s.

The house is definitely new and daring  
for this region. It sparked many debates,  
even eliciting a demand from locals to  
tear the house down. They claim it doesn't  
fit in, is too big, too dark and too conspic-  
uous. But how to explain the architectural  
qualities in an environment where the ref-  
erences points are no longer the region's  
traditional buildings but the anonymous  
single-family houses built in the 1970s;  
or even worse, the literal stylistic inter-  
pretations of things past? Let's hope the  
wooden house in Podkoren manages to  
overcome such banal readings and acts  
instead as a trigger for new architectural  
development in the region. (MAJA VARDJAN)

Apartment house, 2009. Architects: Gregorc Vrhovec  
arhitekti. Info: www.gregorcvrhovec.si