



If stone walls could talk

■ DIVAČA (SI) — The Karst region is a very peculiar landscape between the Gulf of Trieste and the Vipavska Valley, characterized by a distinctive landscape of water-eroded limestone, rugged nature and vernacular stone architecture. The **Škratelj homestead** in Divača served as an inn for travellers from the 17th century until World War I. If stone walls could talk, the most amazing story would certainly be that of Rita Ina, Slovenia's first international film star, who was born here. She inspired the farmstead's conversion into the Museum of Slovenian Film Actors.



The conversion, carried out by young architects Matjaž Bolčina, Ernest Milčinovič and Teja Savelli, thoughtfully questions the relationships between contemporary interventions and cultural heritage, as well as between built

structures and the surrounding landscape. The project respects the existing footprint of the homestead within the village, while the characteristic Karst stone wall provided the main theme for the conversion. The



complex is composed of three buildings: the house will host the information centre, the former stables the museum collection, and the storehouse has been turned into a multi-purpose hall. The former stables have undergone the most

thorough transformation; an imposing steel structure rests on the old wall and carries the roof, walls and floor. The structure creates a U-shaped room that hovers in the space, leaving the area below without partitions.



The various parts of the complex, from street facade to inner courtyard and grass fields behind are defined by the old stone walls, simultaneously separating and connecting the programmes with the open-air cinema. While the original

walls were carefully preserved, new walls were erected using stones found on site. And the sustainable dimension of the project doesn't end here, for while the conversion of the homestead is finished, the natural surroundings still offer myriad

possibilities for future scenarios. (MAJA VARDJAN)
RENOVATION OF THE ŠKRATELJ HOMESTEAD INTO THE MUSEUM OF SLOVENIAN FILM ACTORS, 2008–2010
Architects Matjaž Bolčina, Ernest Milčinovič and Teja Savelli. Client: Museum of Slovenian Film Actors. Address: Divača 9 (Karst region). Info: www.muzejdivaca.si

Extension to extend the life of a building

■ GLASGOW (UK) — In the muddled mediocrity that is much of the urban form between Glasgow and Edinburgh, architects Elder & Cannon have produced a piece of simple sophistication, and a study in how an **extension**, completely of its own time, can both enhance and extend the life of a building almost 100 years its senior.

The sober classical Edwardian building had provided the Shettleston Co-operative Society with offices, a warehouse and a community hall since 1912. Refurbished by the Shettleston Housing Association as its offices in 1989, by 2000 it was already too small. Rather than move, the Housing Association recognized the importance of both the building and its community associations, and resolved to remodel it and extend into their car park.

The new building acknowledges the primacy of the old building by framing the two new floors of accommodation with a meticulously formed white

concrete grid which rises up to the eaves height of its old neighbour, enclosing a third-floor roof terrace. To the front the frame is divided into five sections, matching the vertical rhythm of the facade of the old building. The public enter the building between the new frame and the old building. Refurbishment of the old building retained much of the old fabric, but opened out each floor to create light-filled, glass-walled working spaces.

With a largely passive strategy for provision of light and ventilation, the services for the combined new and old buildings were rationalized. By restricting the new building to two storeys, the opportunity was taken to open up the south-facing top wall of the (higher) old building to bring light into the top floor. This is an example of high quality architecture carried out on a low budget, by an aspirational client with a strong commitment to the sustainability of their community in its broadest sense. (ANDREW GUEST)

SHETTLESTON HOUSING ASSOCIATION OFFICES, 2010
Architects Elder & Cannon. Client: Shettleston Housing Association. Address: 65 Petrow Street, Glasgow G32 7XR, Scotland. Info: www.shettleston.co.uk



Energy-neutral heritage

■ DRIEBERGEN (NL) — Listed buildings are a valued part of a society's cultural heritage, but at the same time their high maintenance and energy costs, together with the many restrictions placed on alterations, can make them an onerous burden for their owners. It is clear that with both adaptive reuse and sustainability becoming increasingly important themes, there is an urgent need for new architectural solutions for these buildings. This **renovation of a listed villa**, a collaboration between Zecc architecten and OPAI (One Planet Architecture institute, the knowledge centre of architect Thomas Rau), serves as an example for the future.

The high ambitions for the project began with the local authority which, rather than simply putting it up for sale, promised it to whoever could come up with the most sustainable renovation concept in combination with a reasonable offer. The prospective buyer (a foundation committed to sustainable renovation of historical buildings) consulted OPAI who came up with the idea of an energy-neutral heritage building, the first in the Netherlands.

The big challenge facing the designers from Zecc was that for each and every

intervention they had to strike a careful balance between the heritage quality of the building and the new energy concept. It was a form of integration for which no ready-made recipe existed and which in future, too, will have to be determined on a building by building basis.

With regard to the heritage value, it was decided to insulate the visually defusing front elevation on the inside. At the back of the building the rear elevation and an annex were insulated from the outside. By making the secondary glazing larger than the existing frames, all the interventions remain visible. They have also been carried out in such a way that everything can later be returned to its original state, should opinions change.

Apart from good insulation, energy-neutrality was achieved through the installation of a heat pump (making use of geothermal energy), solar panels (for hot tap water and central heating) and photovoltaic panels on the roof at the rear (for electricity). The house is connected to the electricity grid, on dark days it draws power from it, while at other times it returns surplus electricity to the grid. (KIRSTEN HANNEMAA)

RENOVATION OF A VILLA, 2009–2010
Architect Zecc architecten. Energy concept OPAI (One Planet Architecture institute). Client: Private (Foundation for sustainable renovation of historical buildings). Address: Driehuislaan 12, Driebergen. Info: www.zecc.nl



Retaining a church's spirit

■ RUSH (IE) — As more and more people turn their backs on religion, churches all over Europe are falling into disuse. The big old churches are too expensive for small communities to maintain and so smaller new ones are built — easier to maintain, much more comfortable and cheaper to operate. As it is difficult to fit new functions into the old churches, a lot of them — mainly from the post-war period — have already been demolished. The heritage buildings, however, are a different story. Careful attention is given to renovating these build-

ings in order to keep their spirits alive.

The **conversion of St Maur's Church** in Rush into the town library is one such sustainable intervention. McCullough Mulvin Architects decided right from the start not to make any changes to the traditional exterior. And although the interior has been modernized, the architects were at pains to 'rescue' existing materials and internal features as much as possible. By way of contrast, an undulating plane of American walnut was added, which fills the nave, pushing tensely against the older shell. The plane forms a continuous route from entrance to 'altar', accommodating a reception desk, new

galleries, book storage and a light shaft. Outside, the churchyard has become a garden. Combining strips of concrete, inset with the words Rush and Library, interspersed with channels planted with grasses and vegetables, the architects have merged the spirit of the graveyard with the

town's agricultural basis. The conversion project won the Best Restoration/Conservation category in the RIAI Irish Architecture Awards 2010. (KIRSTEN HANNEMAA)

RUSH LIBRARY, 2010
Architect McCullough Mulvin Architects. Client: Fingal County Council Wood American Hardwood Export Council. Address: Rush Library, Chapel Green, Rush Co. Dublin. Info: www.mcculloughmulvin.com, www.americanhardwood.org

