

KOSMOS

From: GRAM
 To: KOSMOS
 Date: 16/01/2017 | 11:05

Atch: None

From: KOSMOS
 To: GRAM
 Date: 21/01/2017 | 04:45

Atch: 01A / 01B / 01C / 01D

Dear GRAM,

Thanks for the introduction, we know QNDMC and even have one issue in our library. Thank you for proposing to be part of the first issue of GRAM. We would be delighted.

KOSMOS ARCHITECTS

Moscow / Basel / New York City.

Office founded in 2012.

KOSMOS Architects is an architectural office, which collaborates virtually from different continents and brings together partners who are currently based in Basel, Moscow and New York City. Over the past few years KOSMOS has won prizes in multiple international competitions, including Hans Christian Andersen Museum Competition in Denmark; Queensway Competition in New York City; Renovation of Triumphal Square in Moscow, 'Street Architecture' competition in New York City. Built projects of KOSMOS include museum pavilion for the 'Garage' Museum of Art; "EMA" - a renovation of a former industrial territory; street installation for New Museum in New York City; wooden structure in the fields of Hungary and others.

KOSMOS collaborates with artists, photographers, designers and researchers and does non-architectural projects, among which are: research about the grave of Kazimir Malevich, book about Buildings and Cocktails, photographic project about fake and anonymous architecture, self-initiated project of a floating art space in Basel.

Kosmos / Chaos

We use the word 'kosmos' in its original meaning, as 'order' or 'ordered universe' (kosmos means order in Ancient Greek), the opposite of 'chaos'. By 'chaos' in that context is the majority of the generic buildings and quotidian objects, which surround us - the anonymous and functional architecture that isn't even considered as part of 'architecture'.

'Chaos' includes the hidden infrastructure of the city, which plays a substantial role in everyday life, but remains hidden and mute. Transport facilities, railway bridges, retail signages, storage buildings and garages; electrical cables, scaffoldings, sprinklers, light fixtures, insulation materials, - all of those elements, excluded by default from aesthetic perception or labelled as junk.

Such architecture - anonymous and utilitarian, sometimes vernacular - inspires our work. By analysing the particular context for each project and organizing this 'chaos' and

learning from it, we create our projects, whether it is a pavilion wrapped in construction net, billboard-inspired vertical garden, zoning of a square with cables or facade covered with insulation foil.

Background of Partners:



Leonid Slonimskiy

Born in Moscow, 1987.

Education: Moscow Architectural Institute, Shibaura Institute of Technology, Tokyo, Columbia University GSAPP, New York .
Professional Experience: OMA New York, Herzog de Meuron; Adjunct professor in Chulalongkorn University, INDA, Bangkok.



Artem Kitaev

Born in Moscow, 1985.

Education: Moscow Architectural Institute.
Professional Experience: Rozhdestvenka, Meganom, Herzog de Meuron; Adjunct professor in Chulalongkorn University, INDA, Bangkok.



Nikolay Martynov

Born in Moscow, 1987.

Education: Moscow Architectural Institute, Shibaura Institute of Technology, Tokyo, Columbia University GSAPP, New York .
Professional Experience: Meganom; SLAB, New York; SOM New York.

Best regards,

Leonid Slonimskiy



From: GRAM	From: KOSMOS
To: KOSMOS	To: GRAM
Date: 31/01/2017 22:47	Date: 22/03/2017 03:10
Atch: 02A / 02B	Atch: None

Good evening Leonid and KOSMOS,

We are very happy to hear that an issue of QNDMC made it to KOSMOS (although we are not sure what that means physically, somewhere between Moscow, New York City and Basel)!

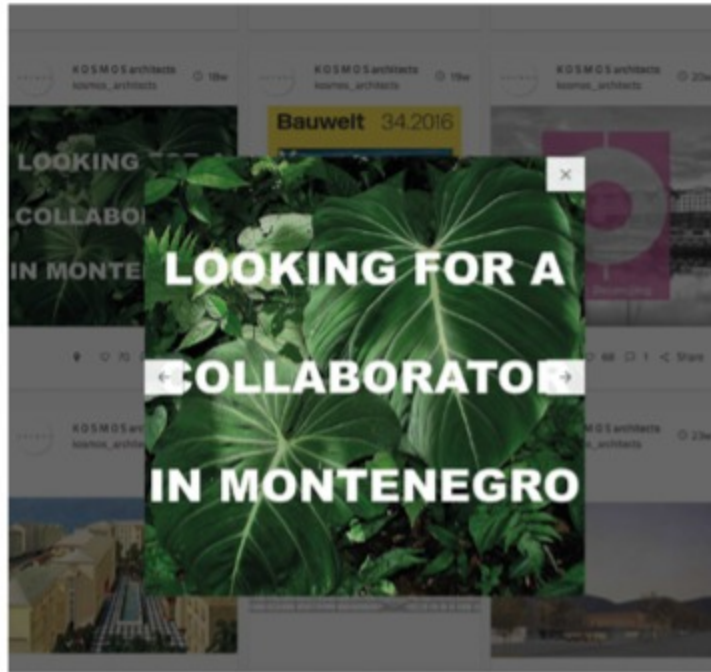
Your skype portrait illustrates so well your geographical positions, you have internet as an office! How does this extreme decentralisation nourish and better your process?

The fact that we are located in such different – in terms of scale and character – cities, such as New York City, Basel and Moscow - lets us look at any question from different perspectives: both from global and local contexts. When we discuss a project, it is very refreshing to look at it both from a viewpoint of a New Yorker and a Basler. Yet, with this clash of attitudes, there is no problem in understanding each other: our common Moscow background helps in that.

The decentralisation helps not only in theory, but as well in practical work. Having partners on three continents, we

are able to simultaneously do projects in the United States, Russia and Europe, which is quite lucky for an office of a rather relatively small size.

Looking at your very productive few years in various platforms, it seems to have become your force. Were you ever working together? Is it now a choice to remain physically distant, by also recruiting employees who all live abroad, all in different countries?



We worked together physically (in the sense, that we were sitting in one room) on our two first projects: our winning proposal for Skolkovo Urban competition, and Garage Museum Summer Pavilion (built in Moscow in 2012). That was the time when we realized, that we work well as a team. Later we all went to different places, and since then lived in: Tokyo, New York City, Basel and Bangkok.

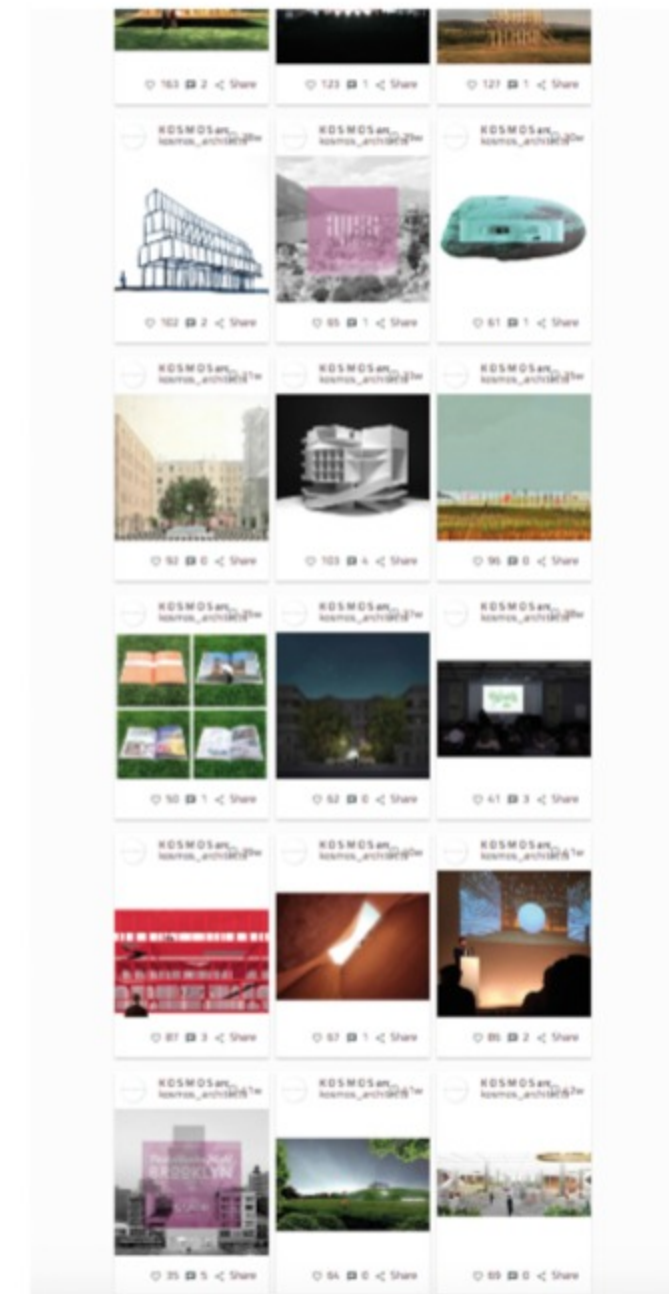
It was not our deliberate choice to be apart, yet we never wanted to stop our personal freedom of choosing which city to go, where to study etc., so when one of us decided to get a Masters' in Columbia University in New York City, or move to Switzerland, we all supported each other.

How did you manage to keep the atmosphere developed by the four of you, when you started to work with a constellation of people from different cultures, who have a different daily life?

Our common atmosphere is actually a possibility to hear each other's opinion, and the same as we did it between us in the beginning, we try to keep it with our distant collaborators. We believe, that the limitations of 'national' cultures are quite overrated: the physical boundaries are rather virtual and invented nowadays. As a simple example, we tend to visit our university Professor Eugene Asse in Moscow more often than some of our Moscow-based colleagues.

During the last few years we have collaborated with people from America, Chile, China, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand... It is tough sometimes to keep the discipline, but it rewards: we get to know new cultural specificities and viewpoints, which in the end enriches our work and lives.

We all live (whether we like it or not) in a globalised context, and the complicated thing here is to know how to balance between being open to new ideas and cultures, while not losing one's own specificity and stay oneself.



From:	GRAM	From:	KOSMOS
To:	KOSMOS	To:	GRAM
Date:	26/04/2017 09:32	Date:	27/06/2017 06:30
Atch:	None	Atch:	05A / 05B / 05C

Good morning Kosmos,

Please find below further questions to continue this discussion.

Process

Since there are different people from different cultures working on various projects, would you say that your process is rather varied and does not follow the same steps each time?

Yes, the structure of KOSMOS is fluctuating: for us it is interesting to collaborate with different people in different places, depending on the project.

The work flow is very different too, depending on the location, complexity and type of projects we do. For instance, for our recent exhibition in the Swiss Architecture museum, we were having Skype meetings with our curators between Chile, Basel and Bangkok while the team working on the project was primarily from Basel and Zurich.

At the same time, for the project of the Nike sports centre, which we are currently building in Moscow (editor's note: now built), we have a full team of people who are tightly connected to the site, speak local language and know local specifics.

And for our first project in Bangkok, which we are working on right now, we organized a local Thai team (primarily consisting of ex-students of the university where we currently teach, INDA faculty at Chulalongkorn University).

How do you develop a project together? We are curious to hear anything from meetings organisation to file naming!

Technologies help a lot: we have constant Skype meetings, chat groups in messengers, google drive folders. For one of our first projects, EMA, which was designed and built while we lived in 3 different locations: Basel, Moscow and New York City, we have even made a publication: it is a print-out of our Whatsapp Chat with all the references, fights and discussions which happened throughout a year, when we did the project.

But that's not the only thing: to create a coherent project on a distance, one has to be very organised and willing to collaborate. Distant work requires much more effort to achieve good result. At the same time, it gives such freedom and adds so much new experiences to our lives, that we are not yet thinking of changing that style of working to an established, constant office.

Projects

Your portfolio shows a lot of art related projects. Is the creation of (and the participation to) a backdrop to performances something that particularly interests you? Could you tell us more about the way you get to choose your projects?

Yes, that's true, we have lots of art-related projects. From our first project, pavilion for the GARAGE museum in Moscow, to our recent participation in the Swiss Art Awards, KOSMOS has been closely connected to the Art world. We are interested in other spheres as well (housing, public buildings), but artistic projects particularly interest us because they combine involvement of public, open-minded clients (usually) and quite a big freedom of experimentation.





From: GRAM	From: KOSMOS
To: KOSMOS	To: GRAM
Date: 04/07/2017 09:19	Date: 10/07/2017 10:31
Atch: 06A / 06B / 06C 06D / 06E / 06F / 06G	Atch: None

Dear Kosmos,

Many thanks for the very interesting WhatsApp publication pdf, unfortunately we are limited in its comprehension as it is in Russian but very much enjoyed the idea of the exercise.

Publication

Could you tell us more about the purpose for this publication? Was it to have a sort of visual map of this long distance process to understand or better the method?

We believe that architecture is not only buildings nowadays, but also its media image. It can be the atmosphere, the artefacts of it, social media photos, Iphone app, branding, and in that case - such a publication. This book is a continuation of the project itself. The project, to which it was dedicated, was a temporary one: it was demolished after 1 year. The publication is continuing its ephemeral life through the media world, and keeps a memory of the space. The book is available for free download, or you can buy a hard-copy from us for 15 EUR.

Drawings

Referring to this publication as well as your portfolio (images attached here as examples) we see many beautiful and different drawings. Could you share with us your reflection on representation and how it affects your design process?

We believe that drawings and representations are often as important as real, built architecture. Peter Märkli said, "Everything one invents is true." We agree with that saying, and we believe that not all architecture must be built, and on the contrary, not all that is built in a shape of a building is architecture. In our drawings we invent spaces, shapes, atmospheres, typologies.

Teaching

You speak of the trustful relationship you have with some of your ex-students who are now in charge of a project for you in Bangkok. How would you say teaching has changed or helped your practice?

It inspires a lot, and gives us possibility to think of 24 different projects at the same time! What can train our creativity more than that? Additionally, we really like most of our students and enjoy to communicate with young and happy people who are not yet obsessed with profits, careers, deadlines, commerce, etc.







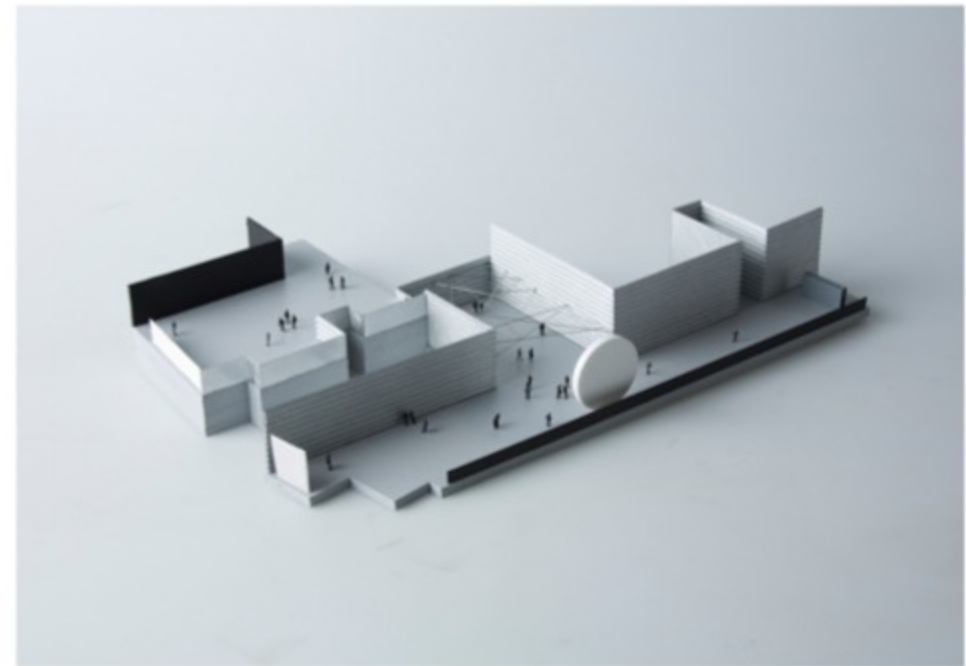
Projects

You mention enjoying the freedom that artistic projects give your practice as well as an interest for other programs such as residential and public buildings. You have an incredible geographical freedom that gives you opportunities worldwide which is not common for young and small(er) offices.

Would you say that there is a sort of zoning of programs in the projects you get to work on?

The division is not really by program, but rather by scale and speed of projects. It seems that in Europe it is much harder to get a proper, big commission, therefore main projects of ours in Europe are exhibitions, installations, art projects and several awarded competitions. In Russia things move often more quickly, and younger, smaller offices get to build real buildings more easily. Our first built work was a pavilion for the famous GARAGE museum, right next to the current building by OMA. As another example, we are currently working on a big airport project in Russia. Asia is new to us, but as well as Russia, it is so dynamic and fast-growing, that even small offices quickly get real projects of bigger scale. Right now we are working on a bicycle training centre on a Stadium.





From:	GRAM	From:	KOSMOS
To:	KOSMOS	To:	GRAM
Date:	13/07/2017 14:10	Date:	07/08/2017 12:00
Atch:	None	Atch:	09A / 09B

Good afternoon Leonid & KOSMOS,

Thank you so very much for having taken the time to exchange with us on your practice and your methods. It was a privilege to hear more in detail how you operate.

For the very last question, we would like you to share with us one of your special references that has been important in your practice and explain a bit why. It can be a craftsman, a film, a place etc.

Also please feel free to tell us more about any topic you wish and that we might not have brought forward during our discussion.

We very much look forward to your last email.

Kind regards,

GRAM

Dear GRAM, again, apologies for delayed reply.

I attach a PDF with some of the images which inspire us. These pictures will go to our future book, an Atlas of Temporary Infrastructural Architecture.

"By definition, architecture, with its root archi - (from Greek - chief, main) has an author and, therefore, authority. In case of infrastructural buildings, the definition would be just tecture (from Greek Tekton- builder).

What would be totally unaccepted as 'permanent' is completely fine, being labelled 'temporary'. Those utilitarian, mute and anonymous structures create a large part of the city environment but remain often excluded from perception of citizens and architects.

At the same time, we see these structures as a testing polygon for new architecture: their temporary character allows to test in the city very radical architectural solutions: huge scale of buildings, windowlessness of the surfaces, simple and iconic geometries, interference with people flows, striking colours etc."

Best,

