



ZHANG KE AND THE ALVAR AALTO MEDAL

Exhibition 15 April – 9 September 2018

On the occasion of the exhibition *Alvar Aalto, architecte et designer* at the Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine in Paris (9 March-1 July 2018), Maison Louis Carré organizes an exhibition focusing on the Alvar Aalto Medal and its newest laureate, the Chinese architect Zhang Ke.

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. Created in the honor of Alvar Aalto, it was designed by himself. 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. The prize bearing Aalto's name is one of the most important honors bestowed on architects worldwide.

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

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

SYNOPSIS OF THE EXHIBITION

At Maison Louis Carré, the exhibition is mainly focused on two types of works: Zhang Ke's projects in Tibet, on one hand, and his interventions in the hutongs of Beijing, on the other hand. These projects are presented through models, photographs, plans and drawings, placed in the hall, the dining room and the living room of the villa.

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, in case the weather prevents travel by boat. The programmatic requirements are integrated into a series of ramps rising from the water and winding around several big poplar trees. The ramp culminates in a canopy over the water. Viewed from a distance, the building completely merges with the riverbank topography and becomes part of the greater landscape.

Construction materials are mainly local. All the walls and roofs are made of rocks collected from nearby the site. Tibetan masonry builders built the walls in the traditional manner and used local timber for the window and doorframes, ceilings and doors.

Namcha Barwa Visitor Centre, Tibet 2008

The Namcha Barwa Visitor Centre is located in Pai Town in Linzhi Prefecture. The building sits on a slope along the road leading to the last village Zhibai deep in the Grand Canyon of Yarlung Tsangpo, with the 7,782 m high Mount Namcha Barwa forming the backdrop to the east.

The building serves as a visitor centre, which provides comprehensive information about the region. It also serves as the "town centre" for the villagers and is used as supply base for the backpack hikers exploring the Grand Canyon nearby. 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, with no windows facing the incoming road from the west. 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. A stone retaining wall leads to the entrance with the reception and exhibition hall. The main hall is lit by skylights and has a panoramic window that frames the view to the north towards the village and the Yarlung Tsangpo River. The public toilets and the luggage storage are placed

behind a 1 m thick stone wall, while further behind the next stone wall the internet café, medical clinic and the drivers' rest space are located. Halfway between the two, a staircase leads to the second floor with the roof garden and meeting rooms. The water tank is hidden beneath the stairs and the electrical switch room is located in the basement.

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 and separates the riverbank from the nearby mountains. Within 20 km of the Yarlung Tsangpo Grand Canyon, the landscape of the Niyang River can be enjoyed from the road. Daze Village was chosen to be the entrance point for this tourist attraction. Since there is little land left for further development in the village, the riverbank along the road was the only site remaining for a tourist centre.

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. On top of the concrete foundation stands a 60 cm thick loadbearing stone wall. Most openings have deep recesses. The 40 cm thick walls on both sides of the openings work as buttresses, increasing the overall structural stability and reducing the interior span. Beams for bigger spans are made from several small logs bonded together. 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.

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. Concerned with the lack of technical and social facilities and the absence of quality communal space, residents are deciding to sell up and move out to bigger apartments on the outskirts. 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 one 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. These add-on structures are usually considered as urban scrap and all of them have been wiped out with the renovation practices of the past years.

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, public bathroom and other maintenance functions for the courtyard.

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.

By redesigning, renovating and reusing the add-on structures in the hutong courtyards, the project allows Beijing citizens and the government to see new and sustainable possibilities for how to put our messy additions to good use. Maybe they can be recognized as cultural relics and critical layers of recent Beijing's hutong life rather than things that should be erased entirely.

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.

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.

The scheme fulfills the requirement for an “office landscape,” linking public campus to the 5 more secluded courtyards with a path through the building. Another secret passage connects the east and west adjacent buildings, allowing sharing of all private gardens.

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. The level of social liveliness in daily professional life is considered crucial to the productivity and well-being of employees.

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 in 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.

The 3,5 m² service core, facilitated with kitchen, bathroom, laundry and storage, and the prefabricated Mini House, a completely independent fully equipped living unit, provide amenities largely lacking in Hutongs. Once propagating throughout the old city, the cores and the “Mini Houses” may solve urgent infrastructure problems and dramatically improve the quality of life among Hutong residents, against both the “tabula rasa” approach and the possible gentrification phenomenon that is common in the old city renewal practices.

Make New Hutong Metabolism

Conservation and revitalization in the old cities of China has always had a paradoxical relationship. Hutongs in Beijing, the traditional courtyard-and alley system of urban dwelling that is the most essential part of the city, have recently been captured at the center of the battlefield between development, conservation and renovation. After decades of development frenzy in the old city of Beijing, the hutongs are on the verge of being either completely erased to make space for office towers, apartments and shopping malls, or disfigured by kitsch restorations that fake images of a nostalgic past.

The subtle complexity of the hutongs as authentic contemporary urban spaces have been overlooked by both advocates of “tabula rasa” redevelopment, and by the defenders of historical restoration. In either case, the operation involves the relentless exodus of hutong’s traditional dwellers, resulting in the gradual disappearance of ethnic diversities in the hutong communities and a rapid diminishing of hutong’s traditional cultures.

The “Make New Hutong Metabolism” installation, presenting three projects located in the hutong areas of Beijing: Micro Yuan’er Children’s Library and Art Centre, Micro Huyong, and Co-Living Courtyard by architect Zhang Ke and his ZAO/standardarchitecture will explore alternative perspectives of looking at China’s historical cities and their problems, to consider them as living organisms, to study them both as macro scale infrastructures and in micro scale units, to respond to the problems with both historic and futuristic thinking, and to explore the potential of old hutongs and courtyards as generator of communal spaces and catalyst of social interaction. “Hutong Metabolism” refers also to the historical Metabolism Movement, in an old city background and a renewed perception.

LOUIS CARRÉ (1897-1977)

Louis Carré was one of those wise collectors and art dealers who got involved in the avant-garde movements during the 20th century. After academic training as a jurist and a career as an antique dealer specializing in French plate, he opened his Parisian gallery in 1938 with Paul Klee, Juan Gris and Le Corbusier.

Louis Carré's militant renown in the arena of modern art asserted itself during the hardships of the Occupation when he defended the new French creativity of Dufy, Matisse, Rouault, Vuillart, Jacques Villon and André Marchand. During the post-war period, he especially exhibited Bazaine, Kupka, Estève and Léger.

In the manner of Guggenheim and Maeght, Louis Carré left as a legacy an architectural work: his villa in Bazoches-sur-Guyonne, close to Versailles, designed by his friend, the Finnish Alvar Aalto, one of the greatest architects and designers of the 20th century.

MAISON LOUIS CARRÉ BY ALVAR AALTO: AN OUTSTANDING EXHIBITION VENUE

Listed as a historical monument in 1996 and opened to the public eleven years later, the house is the single representative in France of the architecture of Alvar Aalto (1898-1976). Its design is the embodiment of the perfect understanding between the two men, who saw art as a material way of improving and enhancing the ordinary daily life.

Louis and Olga Carré's principal residence in the countryside, this house is considered one of the architect's masterpieces. Faithful to his fluid conception of space, and his very personal vision – eminently humanist – of modernism, Aalto succeeded perfectly in integrating his villa into the soft landscape of Ile-de-France's and fulfilling the wishes of his client. He designed everything, from the general plan and the garden to the furniture and fittings, thus creating a total work of art.

The dwelling of a prosperous couple, comfortable and sophisticated yet without ostentation, the villa was also intended to be a setting for its owners' magnificent collection, featuring paintings by Bonnard, Léger, Picasso, Dufy, Lansky and Klee and sculptures by Laurens, Degas, Calder and Giacometti, as well as African art pieces. When Olga Carré passed away in 2002, these artworks were sold and dispersed, and the house thus lost one of its essential functions. It is precisely this dimension, dear to Louis Carré, that we seek to reawaken by temporary exhibitions.

Since 2014, the Association presents two to three exhibitions of contemporary art per year. Until the present day, paintings, photographs, sculpture, drawings, design and installations have found a natural place throughout the spaces of this modern villa. Zhang Ke & the Alvar Aalto Medal is the first exhibition of architecture organized in the house.

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Open:

March to November, Saturdays and Sundays 2-6pm upon reservation.
Private visits and groups upon request. Maximum size of a tour 19 persons.
Group visits outside normal opening days and hours are possible on arrangement.

Admission fees:

15€ for adults, 5€ reduced price, free for children under 12 with family.

10€ for groups over 10 persons.

The admission fee includes a guided tour in English/French.

Maison Louis Carré has been the property of Association Alvar Aalto en France since 2006. The cultural program includes exhibitions, seminars, concerts and lectures.

www.standardarchitecture.cn

IMAGES AVAILABLE



1 – Micro Yuan'er, Beijing
2014

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2 – Micro Yuan'er, Beijing
2014

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3 – Niangou Terminal, Tibet
2014

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4 – Yarlung Tsangpo Boat Terminal, Tibet
2008

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5 – Micro Hutong, Beijing
2013

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6 – Micro Hutong, Beijing
2013

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7 – Micro Hutong, Beijing
2013

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8 – Micro Hutong, Beijing
2013

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9 – Zhang Ke, portrait

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10 – The Alvar Aalto Medal



11 – Maison Louis Carré
1959

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12 – Installation view

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13 – Installation view

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14 – Installation view

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15 – Installation view

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16 – Installation view

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17 – Installation view

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18 – Installation view

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19 – Installation view

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20 – Installation view

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21 – Installation view

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22 – Opening guests

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23 – Opening guests

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**24 – Zhang Ke and Asdis Olafsdottir,
Director of Maison Louis Carré**

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24 – Zhang Ke and Asdis Olafsdottir

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