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2014
NO. 24
VOL. 22
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ARCHITECTURE
AND DESIGN



MATEJA PANTER, ŠPELA KUCHAR

Družinski center Mala ulica, Ljubljana

Family Centre Mala ulica, Ljubljana

✍️ ALENKA KRAMER 📷 BLAŽ BUDJA

Zgodbe iz Male ulice Stories from Mala Ulica

Inovativna arhitektura Družinskega centra Mala ulica v Ljubljani s svojim oblikovalskim konceptom pomanjšanega mesta buri otrokovo domišljijo, spodbuja igro in uči o prostoru. In še pomembneje: prepoveduje vstop otrokovemu največjemu sovražniku – dolgčasu.

With its design concept of a miniature city, the innovative architecture of the Mala Ulica Family Centre in Ljubljana stirs the child's imagination, promotes play and teaches about space. Even more importantly: it prohibits the child's greatest enemy – boredom – from entering the premises. 📖 99



Odkar je napis »Mestna ljudska kopelj« na pročelju stavbe na stiku Prečne in Male ulice v Ljubljani nadomestil napis »Mestno igrišče«, se na tem mestu vsak dan odvijajo razburljive zgodbe. Dirkanje po mestni ulici, sveža kavica v kavarni pod gradom, opazovanje krošenj v mestnem parku ali skrivanje v vijugastem labirintu. In vse to na toplem, pod streho in stran od mestnega hrupa. Stavba nekdanje javne kopalnice iz leta 1900, kamor so se desetletja hodili umivat manj premožni Ljubljanci, nato pa je vrsto let v njej delovala picerija, je znova postala družabno stičišče in srečevališče.

Na pobudo idejne vodje Eve Strmljan Kreslin je namreč prav v tej stavbi januarja 2013 odprl svoja vrata Družinski center Mala ulica. Ta deluje v okviru Javnega zavoda Mladi zmagaj, ki upravlja četrtne mladinske centre.

Namenjen je predšolskim otrokom v spremstvu skrbnikov in je v prvi vrsti notranje igrišče. Kot sodoben nadomestek vaškega trga vabi otroke k igri in srečevanju z drugimi otroki, njihove skrbnike pa h klepetu in izmenjavi izkušenj. Je središče dogajanja za mlade družine in zagotavlja nemoteno igro otrok v vseh letnih časih, neodvisno od vremena. V centru se vsakodnevno izvajajo raznovrstne aktivnosti, za imetnike letnih vstopnic pa nudijo tudi nekajurno varstvo.

Družinski center pa ni inovativen le po programu, temveč tudi po arhitekturnem oblikovanju. Celotno prenovno stavbo, ki že na daleč buri domišljijo s svojo nepravilno obliko in šestkotnim stolpom, sta vodili arhitektki Mateja Panter in Špela Kuhar. Za bogato rekonstruirano fasado sta v notranjosti poskusili uporabiti čim več danosti obstoječega objekta. Z občutljivostjo za otrokovo doživetje

prostora sta ustvarili unikatne prostore, oblikovane po njihovi meri. Otroci namreč prostora ne uporabljajo le za točno določen namen, temveč ga poskusijo izkusiti na vse mogoče načine. Iščejo izkušnje, ki zadovoljijo vse njihove čute naenkrat in uživajo v prostorih, ki jih spodbujajo k igri in domišljiji. To znanje sta arhitektki spretno uporabili v arhitekturni prenovi na več načinov: v merilu, obliki, materialu in zgodbi. Prostori so zasnovani v otrokovem merilu in vsepovsod se pojavljajo majhni, skriti kotički, ki omogočajo otroku nemoteno igro, stran od odraslih. Prostori so nepravilnih oblik, vogali zaobljeni, vseprisotna je mehkoča linij, uporabljeni materiali pa so pralni, mehki in kličejo k tipanju. Najpomembnejše pa je, da celotno prenovno povezuje močan in duhovit koncept oblikovanja – zgodba, ki iz prostorov ustvarja pravo pravcato mesto v malem.





Da se v stavbi dogaja nekaj zanimivega, nas že pred vhodom opomni duhovito preurejena avtobusna postaja, ki služi kot pokrit prostor za vozčke. Vstopni prostor (garderoba in recepcija) Družinskega centra je poimenovan »Mestna vrata«, od tod pa vstopamo v večnamenski prostor »Mestni trg« ali v igralnico »Mestna ulica«. Oba prostora sta zelo svetla, saj sta poleg obstoječih oken opremljena tudi z nizom novih strešnih oken, pod katerimi so napeti kosi bele tkanine, ki postvarjajo nebo. Večnamenski prostor je oblikovan fleksibilno, da lahko kot pravi trg gosti najrazličnejše dogodke, neodvisno od dogajanja v igralnici. Poslastica za otroke in srce »Mesta« pa je »Mestna ulica«, velika igralnica, ki je razdeljena na posamezne dele glede na starost otrok. Večji del igralnice obsega večnamensko igralo, oblikovano kot ulični niz s pomanjšanimi fasadami pomembnih ljubljanskih stavb, ki jih je narisal znani ilustrator Damijan Stepančič. Po ulici lahko malčki drviyo z oblazinjenimi avtomobili ali se nad

njo spuščajo po toboganu, za fasadami se v spodnjem delu igrala skriva pomanjšano stanovanje, nad njim pa je galerija, s katere je otrokom omogočen pogled ven, na resnično Malo ulico, ali noter, na domišljijško Malo ulico. Igralo vsebuje tudi otroško kavarno, ki se povezuje z resnično kavarno za odrasle, kjer lahko skrbniki mirno pokramljajo, pa vendar obvladujejo situacijo na igrišču. Del igrišča je tudi »Ribnik«, oblazinjeno počivališče za dojenčke. Z dvema majhnima okroglima vhodoma pa je z igralnico povezan »Labirint« – temačen, z mehko tkanino oblazinjen vijugast prostor, naravnost idealen za skrivanje.

Tako z »Mestnega trga« kot z »Mestne ulice« je omogočen dostop v stolp, ki je bil v času javne kopalnice dimnik, sedaj pa so v njem oblikovani štiri manjši inovativni prostori, povezani z vijugastim stopniščem. V kleti stolpa je »Mestna ljudska kopel« s sanitarijami in unikatno fontano za igro z vodo, v pritličju v celoti oblazinjen prostor »Mestni park« s stiliziranimi debli in listjem, v

nadstropju »Mestna kockarnica« z okroglim oblazinjenim počivališčem za igro s kockami in v najvišjem delu stolpa »Knjižnica pod oblaki«.

Iz velike igralnice lahko dostopamo tudi na zunanje igrišče, katerega del je namenjen mlajšim otrokom, ki se lahko plazijo po razgibanem terenu, obdelanim z mehko gumo ali pa se zabavajo v peskovniku. Večji del pa obsega peščeno igrišče za starejše otroke, kamor so spretno umeščena inovativna igrala iz lesenih hlodov in vrvi ter sestavljive vijugaste klopi iz pranega betona. Na slepi fasadi stavbe ob igrišču pa že nastaja vertikalni vrt.

Inovativna arhitektura zgodbe »Mesta« v Družinskem centru Mala ulica tako vsakodnevno spodbuja nastajanje novih razburljivih otroških zgodb, ki se dogajajo v njihovem mestu, pomanjšanem mestu Ljubljana. Spoznavanje otrok s prostorom, v katerem živijo, pa je edini način, da ga vzamejo za svojega, se naučijo skrbeti zanj in spoznajo, da so oni tisti, ki ustvarjajo trajnostno prihodnost. ☺

Ever since the sign »Mestna Ljudska Kopelj« (City Public Bath) on the front of the building on the corner of the Ljubljana streets Prečna Ulica and Mala Ulica was replaced by the inscription »Mestno Igrišče« (City Playground), exciting stories have unfolded there every day. Running around a city street, a fresh cup of coffee in the café beneath the castle, observing the treetops in the city park, hiding in the winding maze... and all in a cosy covered area, far from the city noise. The building of the former public bathhouse dating back to 1900, where less well-off inhabitants of Ljubljana came to bathe for decades and which later housed a pizzeria for many years, has again become a social hub and meeting point.

In January 2013, in this very building, the Family Centre Mala Ulica opened its doors on the initiative of the project's »mastermind« Eva Strmljan Kreslin. The Centre operates within the scope of the Public Institute Mladi Zmaji (Young Dragons), which manages youth centres in the city quarters. It is aimed at preschool children accompanied by their guardians, and is primarily

an indoor playground. A contemporary substitute for the village square, it invites children to play and meet other children, while guardians can chat with each other and share their experience. It is the centre of happenings for young families, ensuring children uninterrupted play in all four seasons, irrespective of the weather. A range of diverse activities take place in the Centre on a daily basis and, for holders of an annual entrance ticket, childcare is even offered for a couple of hours.

However, the Family Centre is innovative not only in terms of its programme, but also regarding its architectural design. The integrated renovation of the building, which even from a distance stirs one's imagination with its irregular shape and its hexagonal tower, was led by Mateja Panter and Špela Kuhar. Behind the richly reconstructed facade, they tried to use as many characteristics of the existing building as possible in the interior. With a sensitivity towards how a child perceives space, they created unique areas made to a child's measure. Rather than using a space for just one specific purpose, children experience it in every way possible.





They seek an experience that satisfies all of their senses at once, and enjoy spaces that invite them to play and to use their imagination. In the architectural renovation, the architects used this knowledge skilfully in several ways: in the scale, the shapes and design, the material, and in the story. The spaces are designed on a child's scale, and everywhere there are small, hidden corners enabling children to play uninterrupted, away from adults. The spaces are irregular shapes, the edges are rounded and soft lines abound, while the materials used are washable and soft, inviting the visitor to touch them. Most important, however, is that the entire renovation is connected by a strong and witty design concept – a story that turns the spaces into a veritable small city.

The humorously redecorated bus stop in front of the entrance, which serves as a covered area for prams, immediately alerts us to the fact that something interesting must be going on in this building. The entrance hall (cloakroom and reception desk) of the Family Centre has been named the »City Gate«, from which we enter either a multi-purpose room called the »City Square« or the play area labelled the »City Street«. Both rooms are very bright, as they are equipped with a set of new skylights in addition to the existing windows. Under the skylights are pieces of white cloth recreating the sky. The multi-purpose room is flexible in design, so that it can host diverse

events independently from what is going on in the playroom, much like a real square. However, the real treat for children, and the heart of the »City«, is the »City Street«, a large play area divided into individual parts for children of different ages. The main part of this area is taken up by multi-purpose play equipment, designed as a street line with miniature facades of the important buildings of Ljubljana, drawn by the renowned illustrator Damijan Stepančič. Toddlers and children can run wild in the street with upholstered cars or ride toboggans above it. A diminutive apartment is hidden behind the facades in the lower part of this play equipment, while above there is a gallery that enables children to either look out at the real Mala Ulica (Small Street) or to observe the imaginary Mala Ulica inside. The play equipment also contains a children's café, which is linked to a real café for adults, where guardians can enjoy a peaceful chat while still supervising events in the playground. Part of the playground also forms a »Pond«, an upholstered resting area for babies. Two small round entrances connect the playroom to the »Maze« – a dark, softly cushioned winding space, simply perfect for playing hide-and-seek.

From both the »City Square« and the »City Street«, you can access the tower that used to be a chimney in the time of the public bathhouse but now houses four small innovative spaces interconnected with a winding staircase.

In the tower's basement, there is the »City People's Bath«, with toilets and a unique fountain for playing with water. On the ground floor is the entirely cushioned area of the »City Park«, with its stylised tree trunks and leaves, while the first floor houses the »City Dice House«, with its round cushioned resting area enabling comfortable play with building blocks. In the top part of the tower is the »Library under the Clouds«.

The outdoor playground can also be accessed from the large playroom. Part of the outdoor playground is aimed at younger children, who can crawl around the dynamic terrain of soft rubber or have fun in the sandpit, but a large part is dedicated to a sand playground for older children, featuring skilfully positioned innovative outdoor play equipment made from wooden logs and ropes, as well as puzzle-like winding benches made of washed concrete. A vertical garden is already in the making along the blind facade of the building next to the playground.

Every day, the innovative architecture of the story of the »City« in the Mala Ulica Family Centre promotes the creation of exciting new stories of children, which take place in their own city, a miniature version of Ljubljana. Familiarising children with the space they live in is practically the only way to ensure they will adopt it as their own, learn to take care of it, and realise that they are the ones creating a sustainable future. ☺

