

Regional Prize: Europe/Africa

# Urban Housing Paris: Town/Building/Apartment

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## TOWN

The project starts from the idea that to build a town and to build a dwelling emerge from the same principle - the attempt to define the limits of our way of living. The triptych of town, building, and apartment participates to this definition in stages from the intimacy of apartment to the environment of the nearest neighborhood and all the way to the making of the city. The architectural project defines itself also as a social project dealing with the inhabitants' relation to the other individuals and to the society.

The site is located between *Zac Rue de Flandre Sud* development area and the vast open space of the railroad yard of *Gare de l'Est* on the north side of the lively *Boulevard de la Villette*. The broken context of the turn-of-the-century working class housing is collected with a physical incision to the urban fabric. Green line - park - forms an oasis in the city life and creates public space in the quarter. Visually a whole, the park is divided into parts for each respective block and raised a little above the street level. The nature is set in the architectural frame. It is presented as a different space - living and seemingly homogeneous and confronted with the mix of buildings. The changes along the seasons condition the atmosphere of the park, which is opposite to the stability of the living buildings.

## BUILDING

The conditions of the site, the existing structure restrain physically the possibilities. Together with the new needs they are transformed into a solution which at the same time fulfills the requirements of the modern living and completes the site, revealing its possibilities.

The new housing fills the gaps in the blocks and replaces the uninhabited empty buildings between *Rue d'Aubervilliers* and the park and enforces the structure of narrow and deep building sites. The empty yard between twin buildings is the core of each housing unit. It is scene for daily living related to the activities and common spaces on the ground floors. This space is occasionally interrupted by light bridges which connect the lower building to the vertical circulation system of the bigger one. Twin buildings are adapted by their length

and width to their location as the dimensions and the nature of the yard remain untouched.

The buildings consist of the main core made of prefabricated concrete elements. The core is lined from one or two sides by steel structured zones which contain services, additional spaces, as well as technical installations and vertical transportation.

The building is not finished after its construction. It proposes a point of departure, the frames for the inhabitants.

## APARTMENT

The project is dealing with the border between empty and full, permanent and temporary, stable and transformable space in three different scales. As the scale diminishes the privacy increases and the flexibility grows. The idea of the apartment is based on the inhabitant who consciously shapes his nearest environment. The apartment is organized around the primary space bordered by one or two secondary zones. The nature, the extent, and the use of these areas are controlled by a number of elements, which differently combined, allow the flexibility of the space which evolves along the living.

The sliding doors, movable walls, together with transparent and translucent glass elements and wooden blinds, make possible the subtle definition between interior and exterior, private and public. The inhabitant is simultaneously protected and free in the dwelling. There is no neutral space. Each space has its own restrictions and rules. Yet the evident rules give and confirm the liberty of joy.

## JURY COMMENTS

The scheme shows a very good strategy for intervening in the block and also for introducing housing at a higher intensity in an existing context - it's really the best general solution for this problem that we've seen. The units are very well handled and developed. There is a great deal of sophistication in planning that is not traditional, but quite clear. The quality of the communal space that is provided between the buildings, especially as shown in the perspective, is extremely interesting; there's a lightness to it, a kind of late-twentieth-century abstraction to it that is very welcome.

