

AMELIA TAVELLA REVEALS THE ANCIENT LEGACY OF BALARUC-LES-BAINS FOR THE O'BALIA THERMAL SPA



Architect Amelia Tavella wins the design competition for the demolition, rehabilitation, and extension of the unique thermal Spa in the Mediterranean. Aware of the challenges and eager to realize its ambitions, the City of Balaruc-les-Bains initiated reflection on the rejuvenation of the O'Balìa thermal spa, incorporated within the broader redevelopment project of the Hespérides site.

The architect chose to direct attention towards the Thau lagoon and orchestrate a meeting between geology and genealogy. Numerous traces bear witness to Balaruc's Roman origins: archaeological remains, ancient buried baths, mosaics, and busts of statues.

This founding past is now invisible.



Writer Nina Bouraoui recounts the transformation of the O'Balìa thermal Spa:

"Water is our first kingdom. It is on the first day, at the first gesture, at the first heartbeat, at the first breath. We knew how to swim before we knew how to walk (...) Nature is a second mother, pouring forth soothing, beneficent water, purifying, gentle, salty, and bubbling, a friend to blood, bones, and skin. If the history of our evolution is a history of forgetting, the history of architecture is one of memory. This architecture does not construct, it resurrects; it does not destroy, it exhumes; it does not erase, it reveals. This architecture excavates, seeks, frees, it is archaeology, witchcraft, and mediumship. It looks to antiquity, guardian of miraculous water, that of Athena for Heracles, that of the citizen and the legions of soldiers riveted to Maimona, now Balaruc, temple of baths, of the body, of the first gesture, of the first heartbeat.



Mirror architecture, its new stones draw inspiration from the first. It shows, exhibits what is no longer seen. It builds from ruins, in the hollow of the Thau lagoon and the Gardiole massif. It opens to the future while retaining the furrows of the past. It follows the plans of another time, elevating columns, pillars, ghostly floors. This architecture is free and sealed to its place; it invents by continuing, it speaks what had become silent, straightening out horizontal and erased lines, saluting the gods and goddesses of yesteryear. Healing water becomes a sign, material, queen of the realm, falling from the sky and tracing a path."

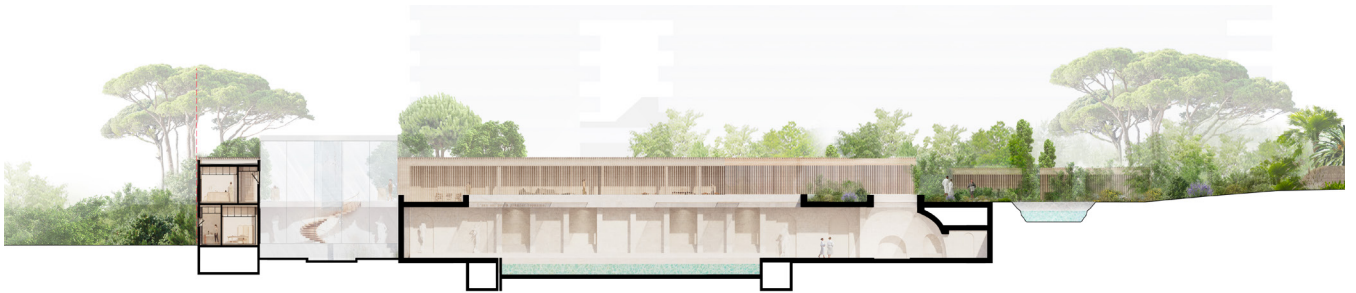
THERMAL SPA O'BALIA VIDEO :

<https://vimeo.com/930198113/d60b1ccb70?share=copy>



The architect follows the traces of a recent and ancient past. She reinvents without destroying, delicately composing with the existing structure :

"I have the desire to embark on a quest for the memory of Maimona, revealing from the ground, like an archaeologist, the traces of its past. The new thermal spa will be a meeting between geology and genealogy. Our architecture aims to reinvent without destroying, delicately composing with the existing structure: to be reborn without disowning. My architecture follows the traces of a recent and ancient past. The existing building thus serves as our guide. The slender architecture of the wooden wing is preserved, honoring the more recent past. A mineral graft, following the traces of an older time, descends the topography towards the shore.



Its new stones draw inspiration from the first, those of Maimona. Healing water becomes a sign, material, queen of the realm, falling from the sky and tracing a path."

Amelia Tavella's distinctive approach is exemplified by the O'Balìa Thermal Spa project :

"The Mediterranean is my matrix. I come from there, from this unique place. Child of the scrubland and sands, I learned the complexity of my profession as an architect here. Sea, rock, beach, my femininity has embraced the femininity of this sea, delicately exercising, repairing the damaged lace, drawing inspiration from sediments, soft, primal matter. My island taught me about light, color, slope, constantly reminding me that there is no valid creation without ethics and that history is the cradle of the present. Thus, my artistic approach is built, connected to my roots, to the origin."



INFORMATIONS

SPA THERMAL O'BALIA

<i>Project Nature</i>	Demolition, rehabilitation, and extension of the O'Balìa thermal Spa
<i>Program</i>	Reception, shop, individual treatment spaces, gentle activity areas, administration, pool hall, collective experience spaces, Goddess Bath, hot spring park (6 themed pools), Sauna Village (saunas, steam room)
<i>Surfaces</i>	3 100 m ² gross floor area + 4 000 m ² landscaped park
<i>Construction Cost</i>	9 000 000 € excluding taxes
<i>Project owner</i>	City of Balaruc-les-Bains, France
<i>Project Management</i>	Amelia Tavella - Lead Architect
	Interior Design
	Artistic Approach, Architect-Writer
Nina Bouraoui	Writer
Atelier Franck Boutté	Environmental Quality
BETREC	Multidisciplinary Engineering
Scenarchie	Lighting Design
Alternative Studio	Acoustics
Atelier Bastien Morin	Signage
Christophe Gautrand	Landscaper
STC Ingenierie	Spa Engineering



BIOGRAPHY
AMELIA TAVELLA

DISTINCTIONS

- 2024 Mies Van der Rohe European Prize 2024 - Finalist (in progress)
- 2024 Building of the Year - Archdaily - Nominated
- 2023 Best project - Archlovers
- 2023 Social Media Favourites Project- Detail
- 2022 Architecture Medal Dejean Prize - Academy of Architecture
- 2022 International Architecture TECU Awards - First Prize
- 2022 Concrete Tropy - Nominated
- 2021 Knight in the National Order of Merit
- 2021 European Phillippe Rotthier "Genius Loci" Prize - Nominated
- 2021 Best Young Architect - Ideat Design awards
- 2020 Landscape Sensitivity Prize - Wood Sequence Awards
- 2019 Medium Prize - Regional Architecture Awards in Corsica
- 2019 Born Awards - Social Impact
- 2018 Choiseul City of Tomorrow prize list
- 2017 Pierre Cardin Prize - Academies of fine arts
- 2016 Young Woman Architect Prize



« *The Mediterranean is my matrix. I come from there, from this unique place. Child of the maquis and the sands, I learned the complexity of my job as an architect here. Sea, rock, beach, my femininity embraced the femininity of this sea, exercising with delicacy, reweaving damaged lace, taking inspiration from sediments, soft, original material. My island taught me light, color, slope, constantly reminding me that there is no valid creation without ethics and that history is the cradle of the present. This is how my artistic approach is built, originally linked to my roots.* »

Amelia Tavella was born in the heart of summer in Ajaccio. She considers her native Corsican island as a matrix. There she learns the importance nature, the urgency to protect it, to respect it. She experiences beauty, imbibes it, will seek it, always. Growing up on an island also means growing up on the sea. The gaze is fixed on the horizon, the reefs are shapes, the contours of the territory of lines, the crest of the mountains of drawings, the maquis a space in its own right. Childhood is a proscenium. The desire for architecture preceded her studies which she followed at the Special School of Architecture in Paris.

Daughter, wife, mother, Amelia Tavella founded her agency in 2007 in Aix-en-Provence. Committed, free, resistant, daring, in 2016 she received the **Young Woman Architect Prize**, in 2017 the **Pierre Cardin Prize from the Academy of Fine Arts**. In 2018 the **Choiseul City of Tomorrow prize list** salutes its innovative way of practicing architecture which it considers to be an art open to other arts.

Amelia Tavella invites the artist Pauline Guerrier, for her schools in Lumio, Villeurbanne and Cabriès, she collaborates with a historian and a socio-anthropologist for the Citadel and the Genoese city of Ajaccio, with the artist and video grapher Ange Leccia for the preservation and development of the ruins of Nonza, and with the writer Nina Bouraoui for The Balaruc Thermal baths and the castle of Nalys, stronghold of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, work commissioned by the Guigal family.

Her work is multi-awarded. In 2019, she won the **Born Awards - Social Impact Prize** and then the **Medium Prize of Regional ranking of Architecture in Corsica**. In 2020 she received the **Landscape Sensitivity Prize - Wood Sequence Palmarès**, Idéat designates her in 2021 among the best architects of her generation then she is nominated for the **European Prize of Architecture Philippe Rotthier "Genius Loci"**.

At the origin, among others, of the Saint-François Convent which will be praised throughout the world for its copper "graft" on the granite that connects the past to the present, from the Henri Tomasi Conservatory in association with Rudy Ricciotti, from the rehabilitation from the Château du Seuil in Provence, from the Piton de Cabriès school, from the award-winning A Strega school in the depths of the maquis. She will in 2021 promoted to the rank of **Knight in the National Order of Merit**. 2022 the crown again: **First prize during Tecu Architecture International Awards**, Architecture Medal - **Dejean Prize of the Academy of Architecture**.

Amelia Tavella proceeds like an archaeologist, each site seems to be xrayed, excavated, invested, to honor, extend what previously existed. She builds without undoing, she invents without denying. Attention to detail, esthete, ecologist, hard worker woman, her projects embrace a form of poetry. Feminine and feminist, she is one of the rare women to the head of an agency.

The Mediterranean architect built in Corsica and after Corsica, from a French island to the French continent her works are respond, mirror works that bear a signature, Amelia Tavella has found her way. She has a print. She has her voice, her writing. His work is recognizable, admirable. It will take place in 2023 in Florence as part of **the Reuse the ruin** student workshop then in Bologna for the **YACademy** one.

Its so-called "sensitive" architecture unfolds according to the place that receives it. Amelia Tavella never separates the building from the space itself already a work of nature or of the city. It is, each time, a form of wedding between what is and what will be.

Her relationship with materials is sensual, so she chose the theme of Skin to articulate and illustrate the May issue. 2023 of the Italian architecture magazine **IQD** of which she is the editor-in-chief, a theme taken up in a round table at **La Cité de Architecture and Heritage** for Carte Blanche – City which in the same year housed the copper installation of its Convent Saint-François for the **Duos of the architectural platform** followed by a conference/debate with the architect barcelona Carles Enrich and the architecture critic Ivan Blasi.

Amelia Tavella is currently exhibiting some of her projects at **La Galerie d'Architecture**, in Paris and will be at the center of special issue devoted to **Architecture d'Aujourd'hui** in 2024.

Her practice is multifaceted, her interventions precious, she is a judge for several prizes and stands out as a model for young architects. It opened the wall that separates disciplines. With Amelia Tavella, architecture summons sciences humanities, literature, photography, sculpture. Expressing the diversity of the world could be his motto.

The Corsican architect is a European architect since he is now finalist for the prestigious **Mies van Der Rohe Prize 2024**.

CONFERENCES

Octobre 2024	<i>Les journées de l'Architecture - Karlsruhe, Allemagne</i>
Octobre 2024	<i>Carte blanche Archinov - Architect @ Work - Paris</i>
Octobre 2024	<i>Congrès de l'UNSFSA - Reims</i>
2024	Noces : L'Art & La Manière - Pavillon de l'Arsenal - Paris
2023	Carte Blanche La peau - Cité de l'Architecture - Paris
2023	YACademy - Architecture for Heritage - Bologne, Italie
2023	Reuse the Ruines - ReUse Italie - Florence, Italie
2023	Duos - Débats - Carles Enrich versus Amelia Tavella - Cité de l'Architecture - Paris

EXHIBITIONS

2024	Noces : L' Art et La Manière - La Galerie de l'Architecture - Paris
2023	Biennale d'Architecture de Cracovie - Cracovie, Pologne
2023	Duos - Installation Carles Enrich /Amelia Tavella - Cité de l'Architecture - Paris

WORKSHOPS

2023	YACademy - Architecture for Heritage - Bologne, Italie
2023	Summer Workshop Reuse the RUIN - ReUse Italie - Florence, Italie

JURY

Octobre 2024	<i>Archello Awards 2024 - Archello - Amsterdam, Pays-Bas</i>
2024	AAI Awards 2024 - Architectural Association of Ireland - Dublin, Irlande
2024	Reuse the Thermae - ReUse Italy – Florence, Italie
2023	Archiproducts Design Awards - Archiproducts – Milan, Italie

EDITION

2024	<i>Architecture d'Aujourd'hui Hors-Série monographique</i>
2023	IQD - rédactrice en chef du numéro 71 - Avril juin 2023 - La peau
2023	Maquis volume 5
2023	Beautiful Houses by the Water - Images Publishing
2022	Habiter la Mer - Phaidon
2022	Firenze Architettura
2021	Life's a Beach - Gestalten
2021	21 Femmes qui font la Corse - Scudo
2019	Maquis volume 1

TV

2024	Twist L'Hebdomadaire culturel - Arte - Comment sauver notre monde ?
2023	CROA - Conversation - L'architecture, le 3e professeur. Penser l'école
2022	D'umani - France TV - La Citadelle cherche une nouvelle vie
2020	D'umani - France TV - L'Alta Rocca, l'avenir des racines
2020	Agora - France TV - Ces femmes qui font rayonner l'île
2022	La Corse au Féminin : Amelia Tavella au chevet du patrimoine – JT TF1
2020	Le RDV - France TV - Société : Hommes femmes, à armes égales ?
2019	Le RDV - France TV - Amelia Tavella & Rudy Ricciotti
2019	Tema - France TV - Architecture, urbansime et patrimoine ancien en Corse
2017	Inseme - France TV - Amelia Tavella, prix d'architecture de l'Académie des Beaux-Arts
2017	Inseme - France TV - Amelia Tavella, élue jeune femme architecte 2016

PODCAST

2023	Emotions de peau - my Blend - Amelia Tavella
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