

New National Stadium of Albania, Tirana

Project: 2016 -2019

functional program: arena, hotel, soccer facilities, shopping center, offices, parking lot
total seats in covered stands: 22.000

Promoter and Construction Company:

ALB STAR shpk
(president, Idajet Ismailaj / general manager, Edmond Spahiu)
in collaboration with
FSHF Albania Football Association
Steel Structure Company: APM ltd

Architecture Design:

Archea Associati

Marco Casamonti
Laura Andreini
Silvia Fabi
Giovanni Polazzi

Project team:

Francesco Dall'Ò (chief architect), Emiliano Romanazzi, Alessandro Riccomi

Design team:

Giovanni Cinquini, Susanna Fagotti, Leonardo Lovecchio,
Antonio Miano, Giacomo Panfili, Giacomo Pazzaglia

Artistic Supervision on site:

Francesco Montani,
Mattia Borrione, Sara Casciano

Local Consultant: Atelier 4

Structures Engineering:

AEI Progetti
(Niccolò De Robertis, Stefano Valentini),
Archest (bleachers)

MEP Engineering:

STUDIO TI
TFE ingegneria
OE officina elettrica

Photos: Pietro Savorelli

Marco Casamonti / Archea Associati designs the urban stadium of Tirana

An arena for sports and recreation, a multi-purpose complex, a flywheel for the regeneration of a fundamental part of the city of Tirana.

The new National Stadium of Albania, located at the end of the main axis of the city of Tirana, opening took place on November 17, 2019, on the occasion of the Albania vs. Francia qualifying match for the European Football tournament.

This is a building replacement project since it is located in the same spot where the original sports complex dedicated to athletics and football once stood, designed in the late 1930s by Florentine architect Gherardo Bosio. The building, with the exception of the monumental entrance structure of the VIP stand, was completely demolished and rebuilt with the goal of constructing a facility able to satisfy UEFA standards, to create a completely covered football complex with attached services, functions and activities able to bring the building to life every day with continuity.

The new stadium is a work of architecture and engineering, entirely Made in Italy, designed by Marco Casamonti, founder of the Florentine studio, Archea Associati, for the architectural part and by AEI Progetti for the structural part. The goal of the project is to create a contemporary monument that, through an infrastructure dedicated to sports, can enhance the image and role of the Albanian capital.

An investment of 80 million euros: 70 financed by the company Albstar, which selected the Italian team for the design, and completely constructed the work of which it maintained ownership and management of all the non-sports functions, like the commercial spaces located on the ground floor, the building for offices above the original monumental part and the Hotel tower more than 100 meters high. Another 10 million euros were offered by the Albanian football federation, which will manage the sports part of the complex, which besides the field and the stands includes the locker rooms and gyms placed beneath the square in front of the monumental entrance. Obviously, direct effects are expected on the regeneration of the neighborhood, which will increase the real estate value of an area that is so important from the point of view of urban location, by that until now has deteriorated.

Three years of construction to built an architectural work of great iconic value in place of the stadium that opened in 1946 with 15,000 seats, which became 19,000 with the enlargement in 1974 on the occasion of Albania's 30th anniversary.

For the new national stadium, the Archea Associati studio satisfied the requirements of a private developer with the need for an economically sustainable project.

The demolition was necessary in order to be able to increase the stadium's capacity, to cover it any order, all the while preserving the same symbolic role that the original structure played within the city.

Furthermore, in order to respect the location's history and tradition and be able to keep the stadium within the same grounds, while enlarging the capacity, the Florentine studio adopted design solutions and innovative interpretations.

The urban design conceived by Roman architect Armando Brasini was maintained, then developed concretely by the Florentine rationalist architect, Gherardo Bosio, who also created the end part of

the city of Tirana, including the stadium and the university campus, built starting in the late 1930s and completed after the war. And, in continuity with the Bosio project, Archea Associati disassembled and rebuilt, philologically, the monumental façade of the VIP stand, restoring its value and role as an the element of access to the stadium's VIP areas.

"Eighty years later, our studio had to face a work designed by another architect from our city," says Marco Casamonti. "From the very beginning, we questioned ourselves about the choice of a respectful approach, about the need for a reconstructive restoration, for anastylosis of the monumental parts, a specific methodology that makes it possible to work with the stones of ancient structures. With the most innovative relief techniques, we scanned all the masonry of the building and after we individually counted the different ashlar, we stored them at the building site. Once the underground parts were reconstructed, which contain the stadium facilities," continues Casamonti, "we punctually repositioned the entire entrance of the stand which had been rebuilt under a bridge building, keeping unchanged the earlier monumental access, where the VIPs still enter today."

What's new in the concept. The new stadium features the presence of three stands, instead of four, and look like a kind of classical theater, also suggesting the idea of La Bombonera in Buenos Aires, in particular to respond to the limited space of the project area. Another distinctive element of the work is the 100-meter-high tower, where the doors of a Marriott hotel will open in a year.

"For many years, stadiums have been used exclusively for the commitment of the match. Only in recent years has this typology been renewed to meet the financial needs of football clubs and managers.

"In Tirana," says Marco Casamonti, "we designed a stadium with the ground floor completely dedicated to commercial activities, with a series of stores that face the street and 9 monumental stairways that give access to the first and second ring. The contemporary stadium is not simply a place to watch a sporting event, but, more generally, it is a gathering place with an active role 365 days a year. In fact, new stadiums must also be buildings that are sustainable economically and their multi-purpose nature ensure flexibility and adaptability for different uses and throughout the day."

In Tirana, in addition to the hotel, there are also plans for parking, commercial activities and restaurant spaces to complete the functional mix. Along the perimeter, on the urban front, there are spaces for office use, conference rooms and gyms designed to make the real estate transaction economically sustainable.

There is no shortage of examples of towers close to sports facilities, but in the case of Tirana, the tower becomes livable, so is it is not just a symbol, but it also makes the stadium visible from far away and it is an observation point for the city itself.

The design of Archea Associati tends to create an urban spatiality focused on the idea of increasing the value of public spaces, which create new areas and possibilities for use of the surfaces surrounding the stadium, previously denied to the community because it was an integral part of the sports facility. "In the stadium designed by Gherardo Bosio, with a traditional footprint, oval, these spaces were used to make space for the sports track which removes the curves of the field, taking up a large part of the little space available. On the other hand, the new stadium with the English-style shape, with stands close to the field, has a distinctive plan that features concave reverse curves that perfectly embrace the space in front of the individual façades of the stadium, creating squares to be used freely, with bars and cafés also facing onto them."

Building technology and envelope. The building envelope is the new sports infrastructure is distinctive in its red and black colors that recall the colors of the national flag.

All the façades, with a total surface of 30,000 sq.m., are surrounding by more than 3,200 columns/brise-soleil: vertical elements, one-story high, made ad hoc and decorated in bas-relief with a pattern that recalls the fabric of traditional Albanian rugs and clothes.

As for the building technology, they opted for a mixed solution, steel and concrete, so as to minimize the obstruction of the vertical structural elements for the benefit of the possibilities to use the commercial areas.

Archea Associati in a nutshell. For almost 15 years, Archea Associati studio has worked in Tirana, where it has created a tower, the 4 Evergreen, and has under construction a residential complex 45,000 sq.m., the Garden Building. On the topic of sports infrastructures, it has been a key player in Italy for the envelope of the new Dacia Arena in Udine, a reconstruction of the previous stadium. Known on an international level for works of the caliber of Cantina Antinori in Tuscany and the ceramics citadel in Liling, China, the Florentine studio reinforces its international reputation in Tirana with a work that combines the qualities of architectural design, development with an attention to the effects on the city.

For further information and interviews

Archea Associati
www.archea.it

Arch. Odeta Rrapi
odeta.rrapi@archea.it

Arch. Lara Tonicchi
lara.tonicchi@arhcea.it

T. +39 055 6580127