

Bert by Precht

June, 2019

Bert is a family of modular houses that are shaped by playfulness and invite people to experience architecture and nature through the eyes of children.

Bert is the first collaboration of Precht with Baumbau, a start-up that specialises on tiny homes, treehouses and buildings for alternative tourism.

“We are fully aware that architecture is this serious and profound craft with a long culture and tradition. You see that when we architects find reference for our projects in art, philosophy, literature or nature. For this project, we also looked at art to find reference. But not at Michaelangelo or Dali. Rather we looked at cartoon characters of Sesamestreet or Minions. We took a playful look at this project and wanted to create a rather unique character than a conventional building. A quirky looking character that becomes part of the wildlife of a forest. I think this quirkiness can create feelings and emotions. And maybe these are attributes in architecture that are missing these days.”

More and more, the building industry is shaped by efficiency and profitability. Our cities are formed by an ‘International Style’ of buildings that have a structure of concrete and steel plus a curtainwall facade. Those buildings are easy to construct and really profitable. But they are a copy of a copy of a copy and they uniform our cities world-wide. No matter if Beijing, Vancouver, London or Rio, the glass-towers make our cities look similar to each other. But we used to build more diverse, climate appropriate and culturally defining. During the last decades, we’ve lost thousand years of building intelligence and building traditions. Architecture that is shaped by profit and greed becomes lazy and boring.

“We know that buildings like Bert are not the path forward on a big scale, but I think as an industry, we need to dare more, try more and experiment more towards a more diverse future of our cities,” says Chris Precht.

'We believe that future of tourism is not in large hotels and mass tourism, but rather in special buildings that offer a unique experience. With Bert, we cater to the people who seek adventure, nature and inspiration', says Rudolf Obauer, CEO of Baumbau.

Bert is the first treehouse conceptualised for Baumbau. "During the next months, we will announce further collaboration with architects and designers to create a catalog of unique buildings."

The modular system of Bert makes it easy to react to a client's brief in real time. The client informs the architects about the desired program, like bedrooms, kitchen, livingroom, library and bathroom, after which they can make immediately different variations of arrangements with all necessary information of cost, size, schedule, etc. That gives the clients a certain transparency about things that keep uncertain during a common design process for a long time.

Bert was conceptualised as a treehouse that was shaped by the forest. Like a trunk of a tree the building connects to the soil on a minimal footprint. All functions are stacked above and branch out in different directions. The interiors are kept in dark fabric which creates a cozy, cave-like atmosphere and orients the views towards the large glass openings. The leaf-like shingles on the facade are kept in various shades of browns and camouflages the structures with the natural background.

For regions with little cultivated forestry and wood-craftmanship, the main wood-structure can be replaced by steel. With that concept, Baumbau can work globally on unique structures.

Although Bert was designed as a tiny home, it is also possible to arrange the modules in larger configurations. From garden houses to multifamily homes to hotels or developments in the city. Bert is conceived as a modular building system and all its parts are prefabricated in a factory and put together () on site. Throughout its life-span, Bert is flexible to grow taller and wider by adding new modules.

Bert is developed as an independent character with solar panels either on roof or off-site, a composting toilet and a water treatment facility on the ground floor.

Designing Bert, we tried to remember back to our childhood when we were climbing trees and building shelters with branches. We experienced nature in a 3 dimensional way and saw our surrounding as a playground. "We tried to look at Bert from this perspective. How would children imagine a treehouse?", asks Fei Tang Precht. "As architects, no matter if young or old, we have an inner child that looks at the world with playfulness and curiosity. That curiosity makes us want to explore, experiment and create. That same curiosity gave birth to Bert."

Bert was designed by Studio Precht for Baumbau in 2019. The smallest structures of Bert start at 120.000€ and can be upgraded and extended by add-ons and modules. The first structures are expected to role out in spring 2020.

BY	Studio Precht
FOR	Baumbau - www.baumbau.at
PROJECTNAME	Bert
PROJECTTYPE	Modular Building System
PROJECTYEAR	2019
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