ARCHMARATHON explores the most relevant issues in contemporary architecture across cultures.

Strongly human-centred and cosmopolitan in approach, ARCHMARATHON is based in Italy but has its roots in the wider world.

ARCHMARATHON demonstrates a successful negotiation of new and old, actual and latent resources and possibilities, vernacular and complementary languages, formal and informal modes of organization, the inspiration of nature, structure, colour, light, materiality and capabilities for hybridity. Together the overall selection represents an immense richness of human innovation and guiding responses, both to the life and times of today and to tomorrow's possibilities.
COURTYARD HOUSE PLUGIN

PEOPLE’S ARCHITECTURE OFFICE

Category: Retrofitting and refurbishment
Project selected: Courtyard House Plugin
Location: Beijing, China
Year: 2014

Description:
The award-winning Courtyard House Plugin is essentially a building within a house. It is a prefabricated building system for inserting modern living conditions into dilapidated courtyard houses. This alternative approach to urban renewal does not require tearing down existing structures or relocating residents. Currently, over a dozen Courtyard House Plugins have been built with more under construction. It is part of Dashihai Project, an initiative aimed at rejuvenating an historic district in the center of Beijing.

People’s Architecture Office has developed a proprietary prefabricated panel that can snap and lock together with a single hex wrench. The panels are light, easy to handle, and inexpensive to ship. A few people can construct a complete Plugin structure in one day, requiring no special skills or training. The result is a well-sealed and insulated interior that reduces energy use by one third. ‘Plugging in’ is half the cost of renovating and about a fifth of the cost of building a new courtyard house.

In China, vast areas are still being torn down, forcing people from their homes, severing social ties in tight-knit communities, and erasing traces of a rich and tumultuous history. The Courtyard House Plugin offers an alternative option. Its simplicity and low cost give local residents access to participate in the process of upgrading their city and preserving their heritage.
PEOPLE'S ARCHITECTURE OFFICE

Tiaczhou Hutong, Yard No.37 Xi
Cheng District, Beijing, China 100051
www.peoples-architecture.com

Description
Beijing-based People’s Architecture Office was founded by
He Zhe, James Shen and Zang Feng in 2010, and consist of
an international team of architects, engineers, product
designers and urbanists. The studio has been honored with
international awards including multiple Architizer A+ Awards
and Red Dot Awards as well as the World Architecture
Festival Award.

With the belief that design is for the masses, PAO aims to be
conceptually accessible and culturally pragmatic. Our work
is always socially motivated. The office is a historic courtyard
house in the center of Beijing and functions as a laboratory
for observation, testing, and building. People’s Architecture
Office draws inspiration from social and cultural issues that
arise from practicing in one of the most tumultuous and lively
locations today.

In collaboration with our sister company People’s Industrial
Design Office, PAO strives to integrate product design and
architecture. We view this as a way of bringing architecture to
a broader public.

Main projects
Court Yard House Rugi, Beijing, China
Tubular Ba He, Beijing, China
People’s Canopy, Preston, Lancashire, England
21 Gate Headquarters, Beijing, China
River Heights Pavilion, Taiyuan, Shanxi Province, China
River Heights Residences, Taiyuan, Shanxi Province, China
Jiang Tower Showroom, Taiyuan, Shanxi Province, China
Container Stack Pavilion, Taiyuan, Shanxi Province, China

Work in progress
Baitaiz Street Flatland Renovation, Beijing, China
Court Yard House Rugi, Beijing, China
Dal Village UNESCO Office, Guizhou Province, China
dal Village Horizon Center, Guizhou Province, China
Qin Mountain Courtyard Renovation, Huangshan, China
Kawazu Chinatown Urban Rejuvenation Project
Cangzhou Planning Exhibition Hall, Hebei Province, China