THE BUILDING OF THE BANK OF ALBANIA
You may find this brochure in the following address:

www.bankofalbania.org

if you want to receive a hard copy of this brochure,
write to us at:

Banka e Shqipërisë, Sheshi “Skënderbej” Nr.1
Tirana, Albania,
Tel.: +355-(0)4-222152;
Fax: +355-(0)4-223558

or send an e-mail to:

public@bankofalbania.org

Printed in 1000 copies
Contents

Instead of an introduction... 4
The Bank of Albania in brief 6
The architect 7
The building’s urbanistic and architectonic composition 9
The Building of the Bank of Albania - Architecture 10
The main hall 14
The hallways 19
Working environments 22
The meeting room and the Governor’s office 30
The building of today 31
... instead of the conclusion 33
Album 35
Instead of an introduction...

The building housing the Bank of Albania is nearly 70 years old and it is located at the very center of Tirana. Judging from its ‘age’, one can immediately realize that the Bank has been present in the life of several generations inhabiting the capital. It has therefore been a witness of the major events that have transformed the life of the Albanians in the last 15 years, thus being an active protagonist in the uplift of people’s wellbeing, an encouragement and support for the overall economic development of the country.

The building was designed by the Italian architect Vittorio Ballio Morpurgo. Its style is in harmony with the main square of Tirana and its boulevard.

Solid and heavy-looking, it is surrounded with an original glow that stems from the auburn color of the facade and its soft semi round shape in accord with the great responsibilities this building carries on the inside and a reflection of trust and security it projects on the outside.

While formerly surrounded by a wider green area and presently located in an environment of a nice blend of modern and classic architecture, resulting from the many changes the centre of Tirana is undergoing, the Bank building still remains one of the living symbols of the capital.

Designed for a limited number of employees upon its construction in 1938, the building has undergone several changes during its’ lifetime’, which have not marred its identity. It continues to be the building of the Bank of Albania, unique in its kind and rivaled by none. It is the winner of a Beauty Pageant, accompanied by neither a first, nor a second runner up.

Soon the building will be subject to an overall construction and renovation project. Our aim is to transform it into a comfortable working environment for the staff of the Bank, while retaining the art and construction values of both the interior and the facade and above all, retaining its representative identity.

Inviting you to read the following brochure, we hope to have given you relevant information with regard to the history of the building, which for years on end has accompanied your lives with its quiet modesty.

Ardian Fullani
Governor
Governor of the Bank of Albania,
Mr. Ardian Fullani.
The Bank of Albania in brief

The Bank of Albania is Albanian’s central bank. Its main objective consists in achieving and maintaining price stability. The Bank of Albania also promotes and supports the development of the foreign exchange regime and system, the domestic financial market and the payment system, as well as the improvement of the monetary and lending conditions, being a support to the country’s economic developments and stability.

The Bank of Albania building is located in the center of Tirana, right in the “Skënderbej” square, near the National Theater for Children. At present, 380 employees work inside this building.

Construction work for building the edifice of the National Bank of Albania, as it was known in those years, began during February, 1937, while its opening ceremony was held in 30 October, 1938. The architectural design of the building, which was projected by one of the most important Italian architects of the time, Professor Vittorio Ballio Mopurgo, was entirely conducted by Italian specialists and constructors (aided by an Albanian work force). Unfortunately, only few photographs of the building taken during the ’30s exist. Hence, the majority of the photos used for this publication are of recent date.
The architect

Vittorio Ballio Morpurgo (1890-1966), was a well known Italian architect of the 1930-1940s, as well as one of Mussolini’s favorites. In 1938 Mussolini commissioned him with the reconstruction of Piazza Augusto Imperatore square, which was the first project of modern architecture in the historical center of Rome.

Another big project of Mogrupo is “The Roman Ships Museum” of Nemi.

Nonetheless, according to the architects that studied his work, the building of The Bank of Albania compared even to his Roman works is the work that in the most elegant way expresses Mogrupo’s professionalism as an architect.
The building’s urbanistic and architectonic composition

The Bank of Albania building is located in the center of Tirana, in the western part of “Sënderbej” square. Projected by talented Italian city planners and architects of the ‘30s, such as Florestano de Fausto, Armando Brasini and Gherardio Bosio, the building’s configuration was designed to be in harmony with the reconstruction plans for the city of Tirana.

These Italian experts were the ones that granted Tirana with the air of a modern western capital city, with the lines of the main rode axes, and especially those of the central boulevard. The building is known for the most outstanding urbanistic site planning of the entire axis of “Dëshmorët e Kombit” boulevard and “Zogu i Parë” boulevard.

Judging from the dimensions of the building, typical for European horizontal cities, from its adoption to the road axes and from its working environments placed around the inner courtyard, with a view at the “Skënderbej” square, the Bank remains a work of art. In other words, this building is one of the capital city’s most valuable architectural and urbanistic constructions.
The Building of the Bank of Albania- Architecture

The short construction history of the building begins with the initial project, which dates back to 1927. Its execution, which was finally not accomplished, was commissioned to Fiorini, an architect from S.V.E.A. At a later stage, a second project was designed by Vittorio Ballio Morpurgo, but again it could not be materialized. The third project, which was again designed by Morpurgo, was finally executed some years later, in 1936.

In its final version the Bank consists of the main arched hall, which has a representative function, and its operational part. During 1941 to 1943 Morpurgo made few changes to the original project, adding a side space and an additional floor. However, these last changes never came into life, due to the events of World War II.

The free and arch like shape of the building’s site planning is remarkable for the viewer’s eye, while the upper appearance resembles to a bird with open wings.

Nowadays the building is composed of its arch like central corpus and two small additional spaces, built through years due to the increasing number of the Bank’s staff. Together, these additional spaces account for most of the surfaces of the building, or around 2.150 m², while the building of the
Bank of Albania itself has a surface of around 3000m².

The Bank of Albania building facade stands out for its remarkable style. It excels from all points of view, in harmony and rhythm, the choice of the rational dimension of doors, windows, balconies, and the monumental portico; for the harmony of its colors and that of the covering materials of the facade, like the ceramic bricks, the stone, and the marble sheathing; for the clear framing of the parapets of the balconies and the window framing, or for the marble sheathing of the Portico that shines lying on the warm bricks.

The ceramics used to adorn the facade as well as the melting colors of the used material give the building a monumental appearance and quite an original character, different from the general atmosphere of the center of Tirana.

The architectonic details of the Bank’s facade, such as the central door, the high colons, the window bars and the windows placed throughout its facade, are masterly built. They are standing today still unchanged, undimmed by time and with a monumental air, transmitting to the observer the sense of confidence that a central banking institution should transmit.
The portico represents the main entrance of the building. Its air of safety welcomes you inside and it imposes itself with the power of its 11 meters high stature, as well as the space between the colons. The well known sculptor Alfredo Biagini covered the interior walls with a high relief of ceramic figures that symbolize the source of life and wealth of the country. The high relief elegantly adorns the tall internal walls of the portico.

The building has two main floors. The first floor is almost 6 meters tall and the second floor 4 meters. Between these two floors there are the functional mezzanine office floors. However, for the public view, the bank’s building remains a grandiose two high floor edifice. The marble and ceramic sheathing, the stone recovering and the nut wood doors give the building a simply decorated character. The building’s style as a whole follows its destined function.

The tall surrounding walls enforce the solemn appearance of the building, just like the embrasures did for the Albanian castles. The wall connects the two sides of the main arched corpus, closing like this the architectonic complex and allowing only a limited view of the internal part of the bank, to the public sight. The enclosure also adds to the mystic nature that has characterized the Bank for years.
The main hall

The spacious main hall emerges from the very first moment that you enter the central door of the bank’s building. The 6 meters tall portico, located in the semi circled pre entrance hall area, is framed by a black marble sheathing and decoration which gives the portico a solemn appearance, while its high stature gives the hall more presence. The portico leads the sight to the elegant oval ceiling.

The entire circle hall is adorned with a massive mosaic. This work of art in big dimensions has been created by the Italian artist Giulio Rosso, in 1939. Rosso has chosen a simple allegory for its work, “life- work- peace”, which is placed on top of the “treasury and money”. The mosaic demonstrates different moments
of labor during farming and fishing activities, and travels back in time to the begging of civilization, of group work and bartering. It is a simple circle of life, closed in the circled mosaic. (Photo from the mosaic in the hall of the Bank) Even though rich in a variety of colors, the one color that dominates the mosaic is ochre, while the other ones vibrate in scales of emerald, violet, green, etc.

The floor of the hall is also covered in a mosaic that in contrast with the colored and animated wall mosaic vibrates in darker shades of ocher. These nuances together with the “wrinkles” that the 75 year old floor has gained during its life, make up a serious and intense ground for the entire hall.
The hall is naturally lightened, through the openings of the dome at the top and through the entrance in the bottom. From the time of its construction the hall has had a well planned electric system. The white dome, the meandering light illuminating the hall and its mosaic, the natural air flow, the acoustic and every other detail make the hall one of the most beautiful parts of the building. The hall is 8 meters tall from the floor to the quite and curved ceiling.

Judging from the acoustic point of view, the center of the hall is a very interesting characteristic of the architecture of the Bank. If you stand in one certain point of the hall’s center, lay your eyes down and start talking, your voice will echo and reverberate in the entire hall.

In the low parts of the mosaic there are located some of the working environments of the building. They are situated throughout the internal part of the central hall, in a semicircle way and connect with the round hall through glass windows. The windows are sustained by sideboards in the shape of arches that even nowadays are made of the same original nut wood.
The hallways

The hallways that emerge from both sides of the central hall are long and tall, covered in terracotta, while the stairs are made of travertine marble, typical for the Apennine Peninsula. The stairs lead to the second floor of the building, stopping twice in the two mini halls with balconies constructed in the style of loggias. The hall located in the center of the second floor has a semicircle shape and is lightened by the natural light entering from the top. This detail, together with the four high colons and the fireplaces located in this environment demonstrate once again the particular and interesting nature of the inner spaces of the building.
Working environments

Almost all of the working environments are located in both sides of the main corpus. They are divided in the floors of the building according to the specific departments. The working environments located in the ground floor and the third floor have high ceilings and vast spaces, while the ones located in the mezzanines have low ceilings and small spaces. The characteristics of these environments are the nut wood veneer doors, as well as the oak tree parquet floors, all around 70 years old.
The meeting room and the Governor’s office

The meeting room is located in the first floor of the building, in its western part, and like all the other rooms in this floor it has a tall ceiling. The dignity of the environment is reflected in its dimensions and the rich finishing touches of the furniture that fill the room. It is precisely in this room that the meetings of the Supervising Committee of the Bank of Albania take place.

The Governor’s office is facing the meeting room and the two connect with each other through a lobby, where the secretariat is also located. Paintings of well known Albanian authors decorate all the walls of both saloons.
The canteen

The canteen is a recent facility built in these last years, and it is located in the ground floor of the building. With a surface of around 125m² this room has a capacity of 70 seats and a serving schedule starting from 8.00 to 9.00 and from 12.30 to 14.00. Decorated with paintings, joyful colors and a warm lightening, the canteen is the place where the staff have their break every working day, but it is also the place where work meetings and discussions take place, in front of a cup of coffee, tea or a friendly lunch.
The Mint room
From the many doors that have an exit to the Bank’s courtyard there is a specific one that wakes your curiosity the most. The Mint room is standing behind that door. This is the place where the coins that we all use in our every day life and also those used for numismatic purposes, are designed. Even though a small environment, it contains different machineries, like the pantographic one, the counting machine, the drop-hammer etc. Millions of coins have been passing through these machineries throughout the years of the Bank’s activity.
The building’s courtyard

The court yard of the building of the Bank of Albania is located in the edifice’s south-western part. It is surrounded by the Bank’s corpus and it has a surface of around 850m². Standing in the courtyard, you can admire the elegance of the internal facade, which is considered as one of the best works of the inner design of the building, with its curving pattern and its fine architectonic details.

The usage of the courtyard has changed through time. Once surrounded by green areas, it is nowadays the place that fills the inner environments with light and intimacy, protecting them from the traffic noise pollution generated in the center of the capital city. The courtyard is also used as a parking lot for some of the vehicles of the Bank.
The building of today

The building of the Bank of Albania and all the other institutions located in the main axis road of the city, are protected for their cultural value, by the decision no. 180 of the Council of Ministers, date 13.04.2000, “Proclaiming the main axis road of the historical center of the city of Tirana a monument of culture ensemble”. Nonetheless, the expanding functions covered by this institution together with the “signs of time” that the many years of activity have incised on this building, made it necessary to have a full reconstruction project for the building. For this reason, an international bid for “The project for the construction and renovation of the building of the Bank of Albania”, has actually been announced as opened.
I believe that a few things were mentioned from all those words deserving to be said about the Bank of Albania.

As a citizen of Tirana, I cannot help but add a few simple words that a respected employee of the Bank said to his little grandson upon being asked about the building: “This is the Bank of Albania where my colleagues and I have worked with all the honesty and devotion possible and which, in return, has given us the opportunity to live a better life, to be happy and respected in this city.”

Ardian Fullani
Governor
Literature

Geostat (2006), “Rivelimi i Bankës së Shqipërisë”


Alush Shima (Irises) oil on canvas

Sali Shijaku (portrait of an Albanian woman) oil on canvas

Jakup Keraj (landscape) oil on canvas

Ismail Lulani (landscape) oil on canvas