

ARCHITECTURE & FEMALE POWER

SANJA ABRAMOVIĆ
PODGORICA, MONTENEGRO, ME

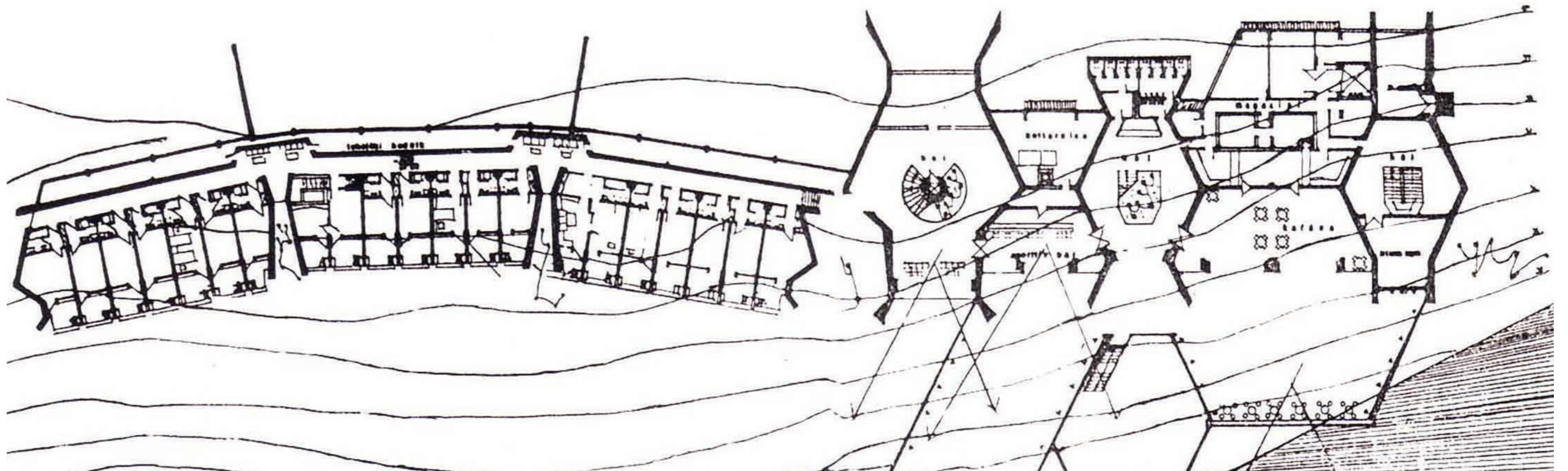
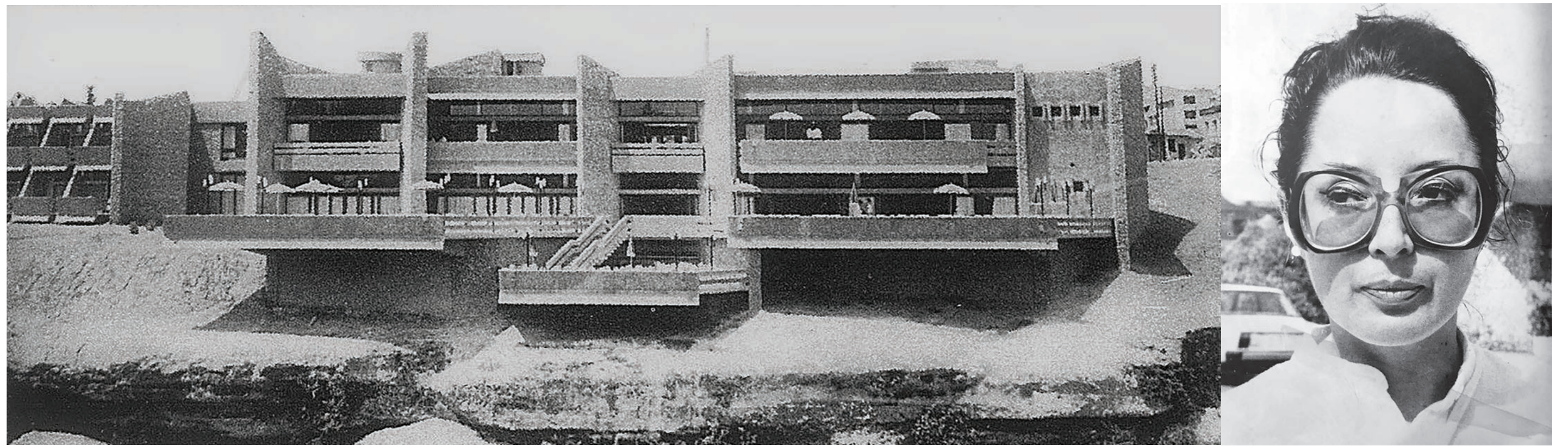
Svetlana Kana Radević was a woman of many firsts: she was the first female architect in Montenegro, the first and only woman to receive Yugoslavia's top architectural prize, and one of the first women in the United States to receive a PhD degree in architecture. Her work defined the Modern style in Montenegro and set a benchmark for architecture that only a few can do. She is the youngest winner and the first Montenegrin woman architect who won the federal Borba prize for architecture (1968). She was one of regular member of the Doclean Academy of Sciences and Arts, as well as a foreign member of the Russian Academy of Architecture and Construction, which she joined in 1994. She was a member of UNESCO and the Montenegrin PEN Center (AIA). With her history she is an inspiration for the future generation of Montenegrin females and she is the example how to set a goal and reach it.



Radević receiving an award in 1967. Image: personal archive

KANA RADEVIĆ'S LANGUAGE

Svetlana Kana Radević was a rare exception to the rule of women designers remaining anonymous colleagues as a prolific principle designer and owner of her own firm. Radević won the competition for the Hotel Podgorica in the capital city of Montenegro 1964-1967. The building is designed to follow the Morača River's undulating bank, resulting in a symbiotic connection between plan and site. The residential quarters and communal facilities are framed by truncated three-story walls impregnated with local river pebbles, and their materiality further reconciles landscape and construction. Radević not only assimilated formal tendencies from contemporary Brutalism, but also established an idiosyncratic formal lexicon, as evidenced by this project.



Svetlana Kana Radević, Hotel Podgorica, plan and South facade, 1967.

KANA RADEVIĆ'S STYLE

Her style was distinguished by the materials she utilized, the way she melded the structures with their surroundings, and the scale and force of her creations. The Hotel Podgorica, her most well-known work, which won the Federal Borba Award for Architecture in 1967. In an unorthodox way, the structure reflects her style by using stone and pebble from Morača river, a regular building material, to play with distinctive shapes that protrude out from the façade, rendering the avant-garde structure with a mimetic touch. At the same time, the structure blends into the landscape as though its concrete mass that had always been a part of environment.

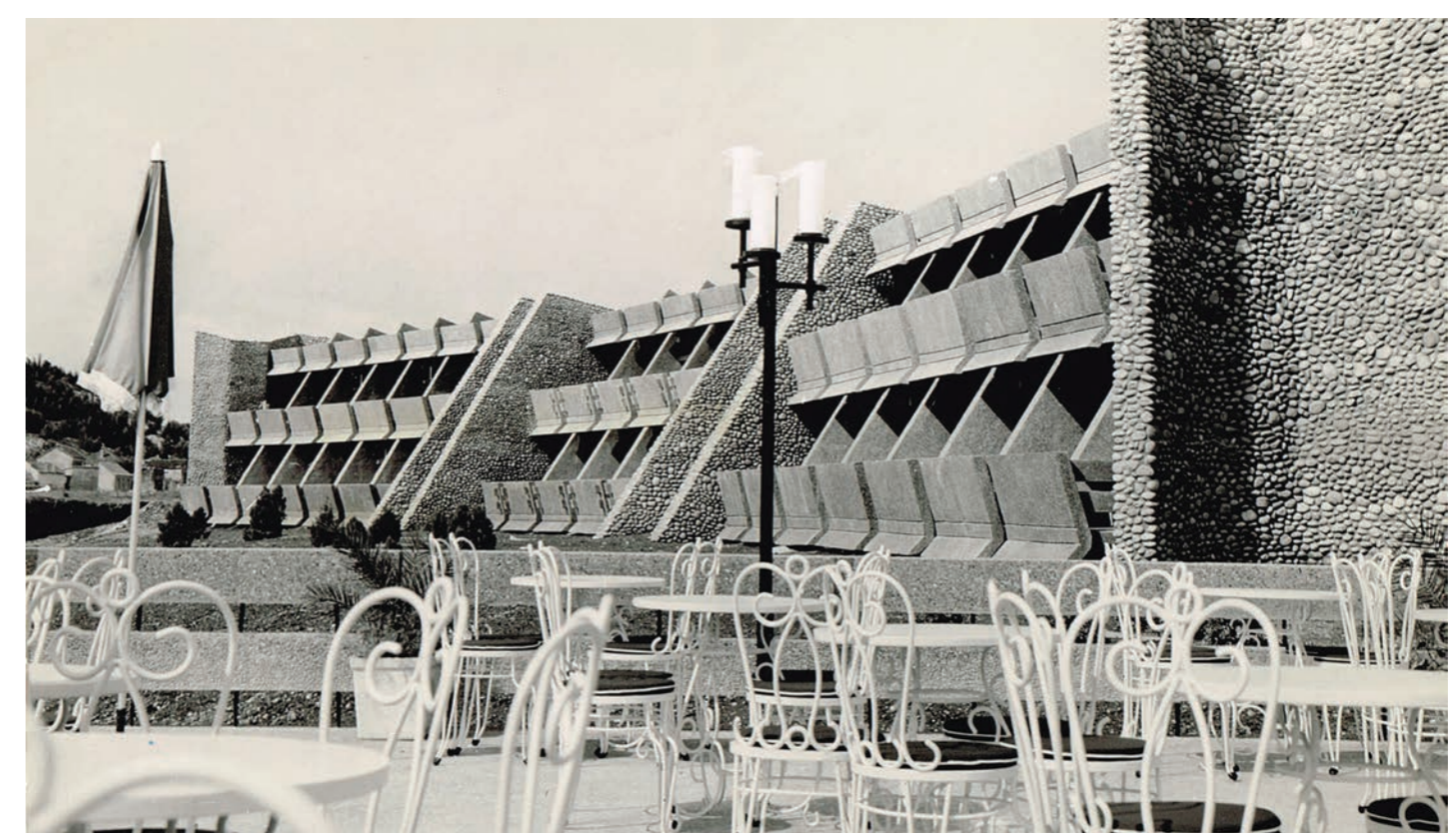
HOTEL PODGORICA

Hotel Podgorica is one of the iconic pieces of Kana's architectural work, as well as one of the key gathering spots of post-war Yugoslav youth. She was only 27 when she designed this hotel - not only did she design every detail of the building itself, but - as the drawings say - the entire interior with the furniture in it and the lamps on the famous terraces of Hotel Podgorica overlooking river Morača.

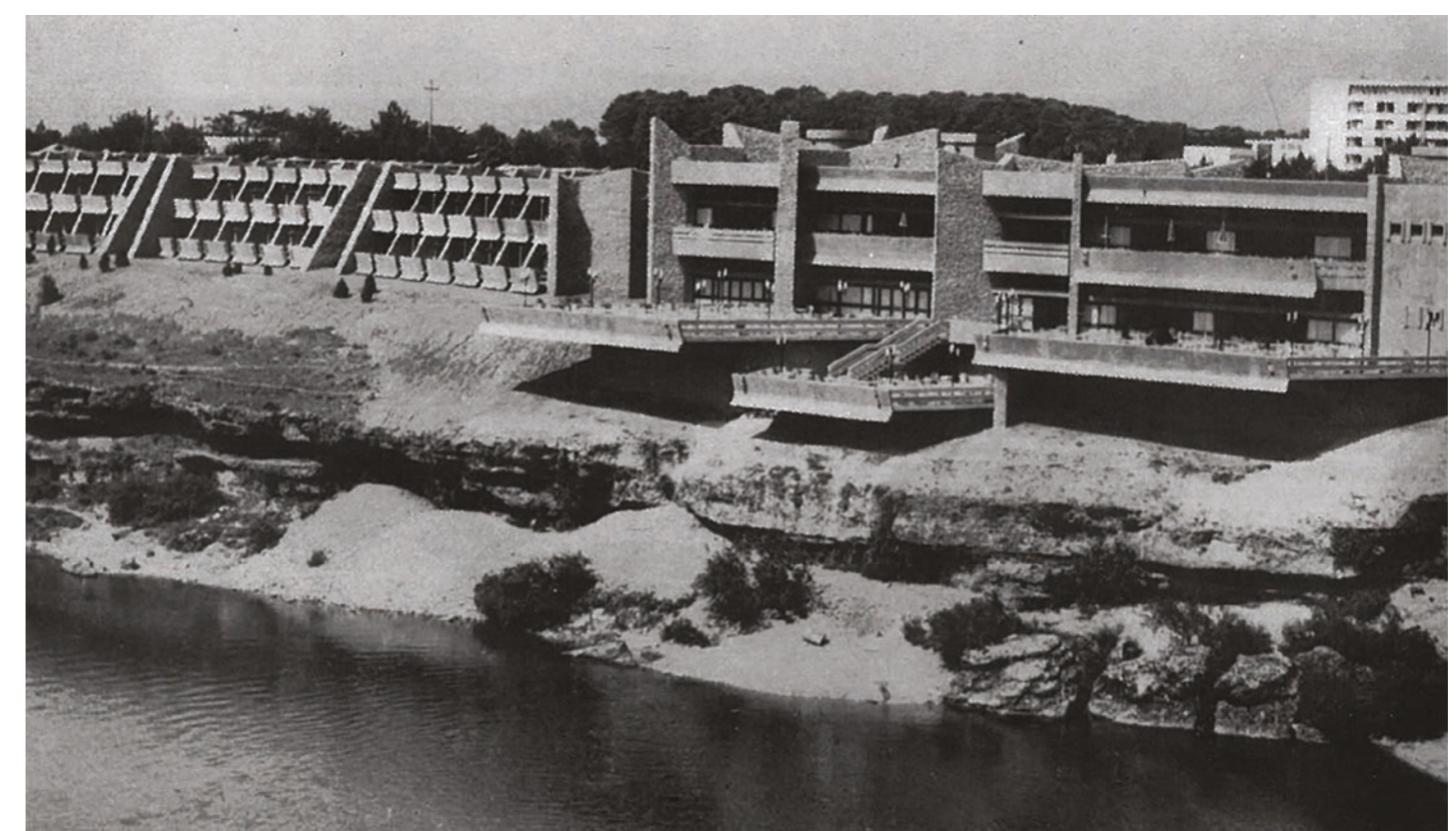
The hotel was officially open on July 13th 1967, the Montenegrin National Day. Calm form of hotel wing follows the contour lines and eventually it ends up building a tower, namely a very distinctive set of walls, which tend to flow across the steep terrain. Moreover, the two components of the form reflect the inner, functional zones - calm, intimate room units and more dramatic public spaces like restaurants and bars. Two-storey building consists of two important levels - upper and lower ground floor, and below - bold cantilever terraces, hovering above the emerald water of the Morača. Unfortunately, the original interior spaces underwent restoration in 2000s, which lead to covering of pebble stone walls with marble.



The main entrance of Hotel Podgorica, North West facade, after finishing the construction 1967.



The balconies and terrace of Hotel Podgorica, exterior and furniture design by Svetlana Kana Radević. Image: archive of Pobjeda



Hotel Podgorica, after the construction in 1967.