

Hand-over of key for the ALMA Residencia

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Board Members, Executive Directors, distinguished guests, Pierre, ALMA staff, colleagues,

During the ALMA rebaselining in 2005, ESO agreed to deliver a Residencia, a proper home for the ALMA staff on site, who are all focused on the goal to have the array operating at peak efficiency to enable scientific discoveries.

The specifications were iterated with the JAO for two-and-half years during the mandate of Thijs de Graauw, and finalised in November 2010. This was followed by an international competition for the design in 2011, leading to the selection of the Finnish architects Kouvo and Partanen, and a design kick-off meeting on 2 January 2012. In the following year the first Call for Tender for construction went out, which however failed in that it did not result in an acceptable offer. A second call was done in 2014, with input from the firm Rigotti Simunovich Architects for adaptation to the Chilean market. This led to the selection of the AXIS-Ly&D consortium, but required convincing the ESO Council that the budget foreseen for the Residencia needed to be increased, as the goal was to deliver a quality home. The construction contract was signed in December 2014, and work started in February 2015, a little over two years ago, and completed in mid-October of 2016. Since that time the JAO has been busy organising the outfitting, which is now nearly finished.

It is somewhat ironic that a signature building near the Tropic of Capricorn in the world's driest desert, was designed by architects from ESO's most northern Member State Finland, which is crossed by the arctic circle!

The design is modular, and matches the stunning surroundings and the special nature of ALMA. It has already featured at the Biennale Exhibition in Venice in 2016. I believe it will be a good home to the staff that works here, who can even swim laps and enjoy the sauna. Overnight stays in the Residencia will also further enhance visits by VIPs and other dignitaries such as ALMA Board members, at least if ESO's longstanding experience with the Paranal Residencia is taken as a guide.

As you know, striking buildings have a tendency to attract the attention of James Bond. I suspect this one will too, --- after all, I believe there is a room numbered 007 already. If he does blow it up, I trust that you will be able to rebuild it as quickly as we did for the Paranal Residencia in 2008.

Finally, it is a pleasure to formally thank architects Kouvo and Partanen, who are here today, and also the representatives of the AXIS Ly&D Consortium who constructed the building. In ESO this project was under the overall responsibility of Wolfgang Wild, who could unfortunately not be here in person. The project owes much to Fabio Biancat Marchet and Claudio Cabrera who worked with the JAO on the specifications, making good use of the Paranal experience provided via Frank Ruseler. Construction was overseen by the ESO Site IPT, including Claudio Cabrera, Jimmy Arancibia, Cecilia Suazo and JAO safety. The outfitting was and is a very intense job, led efficiently by Donald Tait, with key roles for Charlotte Hermant and María Francisca Labayru from ESO Contracts and Procurements, and by Claudia Tapia from the JAO, all of whom are here.

And with that, I now formally hand over the key to the building to the Joint ALMA Observatory, represented by Pierre Cox. Use the building well!