

Jury report Euregional Prize for Architecture 2013

by Marina van den Bergen

Every year the EAP allows the professional world a comparative view of the architecture schools in the Euregion Meuse-Rhine. In the exhibition you'll see the very best graduation projects of the five schools of architecture in the Euregion. Out of the 250+ master graduation projects, 29 were selected by the schools for the EAP. Yesterday the jury studied all the projects and received a brief ten minutes explanation on each project. After intense discussions 10 projects made it to the second round. This morning and afternoon the 10 projects were studied meticulously and discussed again. Sometimes it felt like comparing apples and oranges: e.g. the time the students have for their graduation differs between the schools; some students have to work within a tight frame, others are completely free to choose their graduation subjects, to name just two sides of the spectrum. Before announcing the prize winners, the jury would like to reflect on the architecture profession, the different architecture schools and the graduation projects in general.

The architecture profession

It goes without saying that our profession suffers a severe crisis. This is due to economics and the erosion of professional ethics. What is our profession about? We think it's about knowledge, involvement, concept, and formal experiment. Knowledge about the rich architectural history. Involvement as a means to connect architecture to society. Concept as an ability to translate all the different requirements and wishes into a clear design. And we need formal experiment to push our understanding of architecture to new frontiers. Architects make buildings and cities. This is our profession. This evening is a celebration of architecture.

The architecture schools

The students of *Hasselt University* can choose between a set theme - this year it was Labourscape - or choose a subject by themselves. One general remark about Hasselt University: the quality of the presentations is outstanding!

The students graduating at the *University of Liège* take part in one of the six studios the university sets up. The graduation project touches different scales, deals with a realistic program, and addresses real problems that are being faced in an urban environment. The jury is very much charmed about this approach, but... cannot ignore the fact that the brief provided by the university is too comprehensive for the students to grasp, given the time they are allowed to work on their project. Some important aspects on which architects should make clear statements are left out in the graduation projects: the materialisation, and the relation between the building and its surroundings.

The curriculum of the *Academy of architecture in Maastricht* focuses on the (changing) role of the architect. The school encourages the students to regard the architect as a so-called social engineer, as an initiator of projects. The graduation projects on show in the exhibition are the first to be produced in this new program.

FH Aachen focuses more on the technical part of the architectural profession. The students are free to choose their own subjects and have three months to work on their graduation programs.

The students at the *RWTH Aachen* are also free to choose their own graduation subjects, only they can work on it for six months. Most of the projects submitted by the RWTH are isolated objects in remote landscapes. The jury was a bit bewildered by this and had trouble to interpret the withdrawal of these young architects from the complexity of the common world, taken into account that most of the world population are living in cities.

Before I announce the names of the winning projects, some brief remarks about the graduation projects in general. What this generation of young architects have in common is that they seem to be unpretentious; their projects have everything but iconic ambition.

Furthermore the jury saw some very nice designs that seemed to be in search of good ideas. And some very good ideas which were not always translated into convincing designs.

Three projects – mentioned in alphabetical order - are given an Honourable Mention. Each of the projects touches on an important topic: a good narrative, social involvement, or an interest in coping with a complex urban environment. Projects that in their own - yet not always perfect - way contribute to the architectural discourse.

The first honourable mention goes to **Tivoli High School** by **Justine Gloesener en Carola Mineo** (ULg Liège).

This school interacts in an intelligent way with its surroundings, an industrial area, a park and another school. The mass is sculpted by the external flows and the volume of the building is designed as a continuous educational ascent.



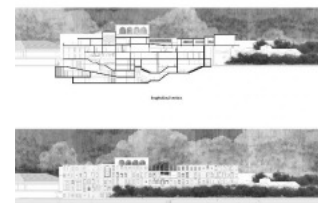
The second honourable mention goes to **Carte Blanche** by **Koen Savelkoul** (Maastricht Master of Architecture).

In this project there is a spatial experience addressing the Genius Loci within the region South Limburg. For this project, locals were asked to write a letter about their favourite place. These written stories were transformed in architectural stories on biographical places in the region.



The last honourable mention goes to the **European Consulate in Kyoto** by **Frédéric Schnee** (RWTH Aachen).

This design tells the story of a search for a collective European identity. The autonomous facade is a collection of window types found in the different parts of Europe. The program and plans of this design are very complex, a challenge and therefore very representative for a European Union in search of a proper identity.



And now for the winning projects.

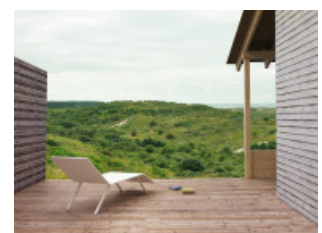
After two days of reviewing and discussing the projects, the jury awarded one project with the third prize, one with the second prize and one project with the first prize. These projects most of all reveal the talent of their authors.

The third prize goes to a project that in its humbleness is almost without a signature, it is almost absorbed by its surroundings. With this project the designer draws a simple building type into the world of architecture. It is an excellent piece of architecture. The project is about sustainability and its relation to the landscape. Set somewhere on a remote shore of a lake in Scotland, the building houses machines that provide clean electricity to the villages and farms in the neighbourhood.



The third prize goes to: **Hydropower station in the Highlands** by **Milica Vrbaski** (RWTH Aachen).

The project that is awarded the second prize, is an example of using references in an intelligent way. How to make the built architectural body of knowledge operational instead of copying it? Over the last six years the designer collected spaces: in memory, photos and drawings. Out of his collection of experienced atmospheres he composed a small holiday home. It's a very personal, beautiful and sensitive design dealing with a contemporary interpretation of Adolf Loos' the Raumplan.



The second prize goes to **Ein Haus** by **Leonard Wertgen** (RWTH Aachen)

The winning project touches everything our profession is about. A clear concept, knowledge, social involvement, formal experience. And it shows a personal signature of a very talented young architect, in the design of the project itself but also in the beautiful presentation: the drawings, the model, and the little book.

The project deals with the question of how to bring labour and production activity back into the city. An assignment given by the school. But the project also raises a second question, one about consumerism and especially the knowledge about the origin of our food, the meat we eat.

At an enclosed location in Sint Truiden where there used to be vegetable gardens and livestock, a slaughterhouse with restaurants and specialised shops is proposed. In a contemporary way the design refers to old market buildings, to times when food was produced locally. The materialisation is an interpretation of the daily slaughterhouse routines: like the scorched wood on the facade referring to the smoking of meat.

This graduation project is a clear and convincing design.

Therefore the first prize goes to: **'Interlinie – Re:meat'** by **Franky Larousselle** (PHL Hasselt) .



Hasselt, 16th November 2013

Jury: Chantal Dassonville (chairman), Reinhard Lepel, Branimir Medić, Dirk Somers, Alex Montiel Aguilar

Jury secretary: Marina van den Bergen