

Jury report Euregional Prize for Architecture 2014

by Marina van den Bergen

Every year the EAP allows the professional world a comparative view of the graduation projects sent in by the five architectural schools of the Euregion. In the exhibition you'll see the very best projects of last year. Out of over 250 master graduation projects, 28 were selected by the schools for the EAP. The number of students in a school was normative for the number of projects the schools could send in. Yesterday the jury studied all projects and received a brief ten minutes explanation about each project, given by a lecturer of the school. After a productive discussion thirteen projects made it to the second round and after more discussion nine made it to the third round. This morning the nine projects were again studied, and in front of each project discussed.

Although there is a big difference between schools in the way the graduation process is set out - some students have only three months to complete their project, without support of their school, while other students can take almost as much time as they want, to name just two sides of the spectrum - the jury didn't take this into account. A small three-month project can be as well developed as a large scale six-month project.

Before announcing the prize winners, the jury would like to make some general remarks.

The jury noticed two kinds of approaches: conceptual and pragmatic. In other words: the graduation project as an independent research or the graduation project as an introduction to the professional world. The pragmatic proposes a realistic project that could be built. The program is sometimes even based on competition briefs or real programs for certain kinds of buildings. These projects serve the now and here. They accept the situation as it is, architecture 'supports' our society.

The conceptual projects tend to use architecture as a tool to explore the discipline. As a pure analytic instrument or an embodiment of utopian thoughts or for the pleasure of pure composition. Some of the projects express the society we want, not the one we are serving.

A few projects show how to make the city through architecture. In these projects the form is more important than the program. Often the simplicity of the form conceals the technical complexity of realising these kinds of buildings. After studying the details, the jury wondered if the architects-to-be are aware of this. But as one jury member remarked: "Maybe we, as jury members, are not aware of the latest techniques to solve these problems."

The jury wondered what happened to parametric design as an approach in architecture. As one jury member stressed, it offers a methodology to deal with the complexity of problems of our time. Convincing answers to these problems are lacking in most of the EAP projects.

Before I announce the winning projects, some last brief remarks about the presentations of the graduation projects you can see after this award ceremony. Sometimes these presentations could do with a bit more information. Often details are missing.

Models must have the intention of showing something specific. Only presenting a scale model of the building as a miniature is a lost opportunity.

Four projects are given an **Honourable Mention**. Each of these four projects touches an interesting and/or socially relevant topic. Projects that, in their own - yet not always perfect - way, make a contribution to the architectural discourse.

The first one

How to reconvert big modernistic buildings is a real architectural question for the very nearby future. How do you deal with them? How to scale them down without making them invisible?

This project is not about scaling them down, but about adding more floor area to an existing school. The project deals with the energy and light questions that are often connected to modernistic buildings. It creates new meeting places by placing a diagonal connection or, in the words of the students, a 'circulation apparatus'. The question is relevant, the answer is not satisfying. The elaboration could use a little bit more attention and time. The jury considers the project as work in progress. The honourable mention goes to **Paramedical School: An Extension** by **Quentin Colas and Adeline Stals** (ULg Liège).



The second project deals with heritage and landscape. It's a romantic project that is very contextual. It is a sculpture you can walk through. It seems to move on its spot. The project is executed consistently. It's an excellent architectural gesture, but unfortunately not more than that.

An honourable mention goes to **Refugium Senne** by **Maximilian Knapp** (RWTH Aachen).



The third project is about the quest for authenticity, real architecture and its elements, combined with sustainability. It is modest and has a naturalness combined with a strong form. The silent architecture is in contrast with its often noisy environment. The jury is very charmed by this project that tries to create atmosphere with pure architecture, but it lacked an intellectual context.

An honourable mention goes to **Sports and meeting centre** by **Marc Neycken** (FH Aachen).



Everywhere in the world former industry plants wait for transformations into....

Therefore the question raised in this project is very relevant. On the former automobile plant an algae farm is proposed. The project has a radical quality and a dualism in it. The form of the project corresponds with the program. But at the same time it is a showcase project. By turning the refinery part of the farm into a billboard, it becomes a symbolic project for a way of harvesting energy. It is architecture parlante. The project does not provide the jury with enough information to fully understand what the design decisions were.

The last honourable mention goes to **RE3 to algae** by **Giel Theuwis** (UHasselt).



And now the winning projects

After two days of reviewing and discussing, and again reviewing and discussing, the jury awarded one project with the third prize, one with the second prize, and one project with the first prize.

The graduation project is for most architects-to-be, the last chance to design something that cannot be built; to design a so-called theoretical project. **The third prize** goes to a storytelling project with poetic qualities. What happens if....

It's a purely theoretical project and the designer knows exactly what he is doing. It has intellectual potentials. The architectural expression is elaborated and corresponds with its program, a storage for objects that are connected with the history of the city it is situated in.

The third prize goes to **Prague. Heart & Brain** by **Michael Dolinski** (RWTH Aachen).



The second prize goes to a pragmatic project that can be built tomorrow. Nevertheless it has a poetic quality. The program is based on a competition brief addressing an existing problem. The project is a convincing answer to the question of how to make a city through architecture. Although the building acts as a sculpture, the relationship between the building and the urban environment is excellent. The way the program is organised - archive on the top floor, living quarters for artists under the ground - helps to make the expression of the building stronger.

The second prize goes to: **Documenta Archiv Kassel** by **Philipp Maaß** (RWTH Aachen).



And now the first prize

The jury had a long discussion about this project. Nobody challenged the qualities of this sensible project and the strong concept. In one way it is very pragmatic and on the other hand it is also poetic. The project keeps a good balance between the two. The project is coherent and makes a strong statement.

However discussion arose since the representation of the project has similarities with the first prize winning project of last year from a student of the same school. And, as can be seen in the student sketch book, it took this **very** project as a reference. But the jury is convinced that **this** project is nevertheless fundamentally different from last years' project.

The jury has chosen this project because it proposes, in a very convincing way, a new architectural form to express a new program. In this case a production unit for renewable energy in the form of a bio energy refinery. The project is a research for a new monumentality.

The first prize goes to **Transition** by **Rosalie Gielis** (UHasselt).



Jury: Raf Van Hulle (chairman) Ulrich Königs, Els Nulens, Iwan Strauven, Frans Sturkenboom

Jury secretary: Marina van den Bergen

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