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The Jury Speaks

The competition offered the jury a unique insight into the different European schools of architecture. 88 projects from 58 schools – from Jekaterinburg in Russia in the east of Europe to Catalonia in the west, from Sweden in the north to Florence in the south – were submitted to the jury. But the aim of rich, human architecture required by the competition was unfortunately not fully achieved. The aim of the competition was not merely to find technically feasible solutions for disabled people, which are also attractive to the nondisabled, but to develop a richer, more human type of architecture that appeals not only to the eye but to the other senses as well. This objective has not yet been fully achieved, although there were some interesting and stimulating approaches. This year, we received a number of intelligent statements, unfortunately only in a verbal form, that point in this direction and bear witness to a growing awareness of the need for such qualities.

Some of the students attempted to balance the predominance of form and construction, which seems to be prevalent in many schools, with a more human approach, more strongly directed towards everyday use. This orientation should be clearly encouraged in future. There was a lack of three-dimensional design experiments based on an in-depth analysis of the environment. This deficit clearly springs from an inability to come to grips with the task of developing a concept for an exhibition for disabled people as formulated by the competition. This exhibition was intended to bring art and the environment within disabled people's range of experience by encouraging them to use their intact senses to translate one genre of art into another. The projects could be divided into three groups: The emphasis of the first group is primarily on the link between the two banks of the Seine. In some projects, the new and extended connection on a higher level led to an entrance to the Palais de Tokyo. Most of these proposals were characterized by a primarily technical approach and concentrated on movement to the neglect of the other senses. The second group was chiefly occupied with the outdoor spaces of parks and gardens and designed improved approaches to the Seine embankments, accessing the Passerelle Debilly by a simple elevator. These proposals were chiefly concerned with an attractive integration in the surrounding urban fabric, including the conversion of the Palais de Tokyo into a public multipurpose hall. The third group tried to turn the connecting structure into a landscape. It proposed bridges connecting the existing vegetated areas on either bank of the Seine to form a green system.

The students' approach to the Palais de Tokyo was very varied. One group respected the building as it is and refrained from any intervention. Another group "deconstructed it down to the very bones," thereby breaking into its empty monumentality. These contrasts reveal the students' conflicting approaches when dealing with classicism and modernism. Only a few projects evidence a clear architectural standpoint, and this would appear to indicate that more instruction is required.

"Access for All" is meant to be more than just an architectural competition. It is also intended as an in-depth examination of an environment for people with different abilities. This could help to create a new attitude to the age-old question of how to come to grips with monumental architecture and human scale. In this sense, the task was very complex and made high demands upon the students. The jury suggested that it might be worth considering whether a less complex task should be set for the next competition as this might encourage a more in-depth approach.

The jury suggested organizing a special workshop for students with a special interest in the competition task of developing an exhibition concept for people with disabilities, even if they were unsuccessful. This workshop is to be headed by an experienced exhibition maker. The workshop could have an influence on the awareness and personal development of the participants. Over and above this, we hope to gain some insights for the next competition program. Thomas Sieverts, President of the jury

The Workshop

Location and date:

--> November 8–9, 2006, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Hoenggerberg, Zurich

Participants:

--> Tobias Klauser, Léonard Koçan, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich

--> Grzegorz Zietek, Technical University, Gdańsk

--> Manfred Sponseiler, Marta Neic, Marco Di Nallo, Technical University of Vienna

--> Philipp Luy, Holger Pausch, Bauhaus University, Weimar

--> Gerhard Dorninger, Claudia Neuber, Technical University of Vienna

--> Raluca Iulia Davidel, Mirela Constantina, Sebastian Serban, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest

Results:

--> On the website of Schindler Award
www.schindleraward.com