

Grand Prix of architects: traditional and non-traditional

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Traditionally, the competition includes seven categories; works are traditionally assessed by an international jury, this year, however, non-traditionally the whole jury from abroad, with missing Czech artist or theorist. Among its members, there were Antal Puhl from Hungary, Heinrich Degelo from Switzerland, Andrej Černichov from Russia, Andreas Klok Pedersen from Denmark and Peter Gero from Germany (he, however, represented Slovakia in the jury). Traditionally, prizes are a certain surprise, because foreign jury members are not influenced by local relationships and have no knowledge about Czech architecture stars, resp. - they do not care. Traditionally, discussion will be held whether the prizes were allocated correctly and whether all people participated in the competition who were to participate in it. This is, however, the problem of all competitions - juries assess only what they receive, and it does not matter whether those are machines, beautiful girls or nice buildings. Jury members do not search in any dark corners. This is, perhaps, the task of the Academy of Architecture where it is not still obvious who are its members and who delegates them into it. Moreover - it can only nominate a building but if the author does not want, he need not send up his work - which was done by ten architects this year.

Reconstruction: ČS and ČVUT

It also becomes to be a tradition that the jury of the Grand Prix of architects does not give too much prizes. This year, it granted only six of them, while some categories did not get any. Without any prize were categories of town planning, landscape architecture, as well as design and plastic art, perhaps also for the reason that very few works competed in them (3, 4, 8). But in some other categories, the jury awarded two prizes.

One prize was awarded in the category Reconstruction (23 works). Surprisingly, it was not received by any of frequently published constructions, either by the favoured Karlov hotel in Benešov, but reconstruction performed without larger blatancy and perhaps also without interest of the professional public of a new renaissance building of Česká spořitelna in the Prague Rytířská street (Gabriela Kaprálová). The jury appreciated in particular how the author respected the original values of the building, how with discretion she worked with the space and also the fact that "...also the charming spirit of the building was revitalized".

One prize was enough also for the category Interior (15 works). This was the part for transformation of one of atriums of the building of the ČVUT Construction Faculty into an originally designed schoolroom (Ateliér Vyšehrad). The open space with inserted cells which are only half-shaped rooms is sufficiently inspiring exactly as a studio for teaching of future architects.

Two prizes for family houses

Two prizes were awarded in the new category Family house (22 works). This category reflects the number of this type of constructions but it still remains a bit different with its clear type purpose. Why, for example, there is no category Residential building or a category Fitness centre? Suddenly, things are mixed together, for example a family house can be a new construction, as well as a reconstruction ... If this is to work as an incentive for larger spread of family houses as a big task for architects then it is a bit useless - that one who needs to know that he/she should prepare a family house with an architect is in particular the potential building owner. However the earlier awarded prize for the investor, therefore for the

potential building owner, silently disappeared from the competition.

One of the prizes was granted to an unusual building in Zdiměřice (Stanislav Fiala, D3A Studio). The building is minimalistic, at the same time full of nearly romantic poetics, closed outwards, concentrated around its open and free core. Among hard combined and overlaying cubistic shapes of the majority of constructions in this category it represented in fact an appreciable refreshment.

As well as another “winner” - a week-end house with a play ground in Rudoltice in Bohemia (Pavel Hladík, Filip Dubský, Nolimat). A wooden volume on an irregular five-square ground plan, with rich functions including a swimming-pool, again with minimum of elements and material - glass and wood, also with rolling grate when closed. (Although - is a week-end house really a family house? Or are categories even more mixed here?)

Grand Prix for the studio Kuba&Pilař architects

Among new constructions (26 works), the Municipal House in Brno was awarded (Helena Boráková, Dalibor Borák, Martin Příhoda), in which there are shops, offices and apartments, as it used to be usual in towns, and how it was favoured in particular during functionalism. The prize in that category was received also by the Study and Scientific Library in Hradec Králové (Projektil architects), the X-shaped ground plan of which creates an unexpected link of spaces and round windows give the building with their “fuzzy” arrangement a charming playfulness. Although the town planning circumstances of the building were not mentioned, in fact.

The Grand Prix was received by a construction from Pardubice, Chemical and Technology Faculty and physical-education facility of the University Pardubice (Kuba&Pilař architects). According to the jury: “The building builds on the best tradition of Czech constructivists and moves up architecture into new dimensions ... it draws strength from homogeneity of its design“. It is hard to add anything to it. Perhaps only the fact that this construction had not been nominated to the competition by the Academy of Architecture ... Which is, in fact, a pleasant finding. Among other prizes, the Academy scored half by half, three had been recommended, three left without mentioning. The jury assessed responsibly according to its view.

Exhibition of all sent up works can be seen in Veletržní palace (Trade Fair Palace) in Prague, the space Pasáž, daily except Mondays from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., until August 2. A catalogue has been issued to the exhibition.

Photographs:

- 1,2 - Chemical and Technology Faculty and physical-education facility of the University Pardubice (Kuba&Pilař architects)
- 3 - Transformation of one of atriums of the building of Construction Faculty ČVUT into an originally designed schoolroom (studio Ateliér Vyšehrad)
- 4 - Reconstruction of the new renaissance building of Česká spořitelna in the Prague Rytířská street (Gabriela Kaprálová)
- 5 - Building in Zdiměřice (Stanislav Fiala, D3A Studio)
- 6 - Municipal house in Brno (Helena Boráková, Dalibor Borák, Martin Příhoda)

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