

Dear participants on the Euregio Prize for Architecture, dear professors, ladies & gentlemen,

Some years ago i gave an introduction for the E13 exhibition in Maastricht, an exhibition on the work 13 architects out of the Euregio, and where i did it the other way round, starting at the end, knowing that every end means also a new beginning. Let's do it the same way now.

So first we want to thank some people, especially all the new graduated participating young architects with their beliefs and ambition, their research and positiveness. They gave the jury the opportunity to write down a list of thoughts, just 15 years after the 1992 "Treatee of Maastricht" and which i want to declare now, thus reflecting some quotes in the name of every jury member.

There are some points we want to stipulate. We quoted for ourselves "*What do we study when we are studying architecture?*", after the title of the 1997 exhibition by Andrea Deplazes in the Architekturmuseum in Basel where projects of the ETH-students were shown. So in a similar way, as a jury we are questioning some themes on architecture, which we saw during this two days program.

Point 1:

Let's make it clear: we do not want that architecture escapes further more out of our hands: so let's consider again own profession. This means: we need to go back to the proper roots of architecture, to its history, to the "basic forms" (*Grundformen* as Oswald Mathias Ungers said) while immediately having in mind the method for transformation. The city as an assembling part of autonomous thoughts, forms, meanings, images. Let's forget about being busy with other professionalisms, which don't belong to architecture. Let's create again some respect. But now: can't other starting points become more interesting to gain again the world of architecture: we know about the invention of steel structures and concrete bringing new typologies in the last centuries. Is it thus not possible that the nowadays research on sciences, on sustainability, on durability, on health and wellness can create new basic forms so that architecture becomes more rooted in the context of today? Isn't this the new task for architects for being busy with the wellness of being? With feeling well into spaces?

Point 2:

About the natural versus the nature. It's obvious that architecture should have a meaning which is natural, that forms are of a self-speaking order, understandable, readable without any questioning in the first view. A building needs to be understood by everybody but also needs different layers in more when going into depth. Architecture is thus reacting on nature, being a cultural intervention in nature. This does not mean we can't look at nature structures. But the way of transforming these structures needs immediately a material form, it needs architectural expression. We can't just take images of nature, we can't copy nature but can study and getting inspired by the images from, by or with nature. So what, where or how has nature to do with architecture?

Point 3:

On floating versus gravity. A building is not an airplane, nor it is a cloud. It stands on earth, it is rooted on a site, it has a specific context. Airplanes are constructed to stay in the air, buildings need to be constructed to stand on the ground. Even the "Wolkenbügel" project by El Lissitzky is situated on a dense crossing in Moscow, having three main

columns supporting the horizontal levels, and even Hadid or Coop Himmelblau's projects don't float. Why are architects using wrong words to explain their concepts?

Point 4:

Let's talk about the difference between a concept and an idea. A concept is a clear architectural statement of the basis intention in a building. Into a process a concept can be worked out further more to become present into spaces, so spatiality is inherent connected to the idea of a concept. In this means, having an idea remains at just having an idea because it loses its attachment to the realities of building, of architecture. In this way having an idea comes before having the concept. Thus with a wrong question one can't have a good concept, nor a good building. So do we have in the word "idea" a good point for taking other professions or items such as i.e. design for becoming a concept in architecture?

Point 5:

About branding and marketing with or against the context of nowadays building. A lot of building programs deal with the idea of temporary branding and marketing structures. Clients force architects to push them into their own world of urban ads. Is thus the building in its own urban context becoming public or becoming publicity? What's the task of the architect: being concerned on the evolution of the city or dealing with the first satisfaction of the client? Is it about saying "yes" to the public space or saying "yes" to the individual? Can or can't both come together in the centre of towns? What's the movement of suburban structures into city centres? What's the new life style? Can architecture deal with life style, can it deal with fashion? What's the new generation of architects think they can do with it?

Point 6:

About the moment of the promenade architecturale as a main idea becoming a spine into a project. We all know the villa Savoye and although we can understand the meaning of Le Corbusier in his five points of architecture which one can see as being just the opposite of 5 points of classical architecture, the concept (or is it idea?) of "promenade architecturale" is being used or even sometimes abused into building forms, routings, thus architecture expressing the routing in its form ... This Le Corbusier quote is many times used to create promenades over the buildings thus becoming a free pass to mark the building strategy. But thus creating a kind of second ground level when there is no need, taking global views and more ground plots than needed, is this the result of an architectural research? Finally: is passing becoming a main item in contemporary architecture or is it about "being"? Don't we forget that there is a need for being in a building rather than to have a look at it as a visitor by coincidence?

Point 7:

This brings us to the point 7 of our thoughts: it is about responsibility of the given world and the transmission towards new generations We are with more than 6 billion people using this globe so we all receive the whole landscape for which we need to take care. So our task is clear at that point. Donald Judd once quoted that one can only build on places where one has build before. Although we can't trace this quote all the way, we have to look at some urban developments like i.e. in China, but as an architect, we all need to remain as a critic into this aspect of use of land. So: is it a normal fact that green spaces and/or blanco landscape structures are used to put architecture when there is no need for? What are we leaving to the next generation? What's the idea of consciousness into architecture?

So, again to all the students: thanks. But as you could understand: please take note and join our concerns. We did look very well and precisely on your projects which gave us these reflections. We don't want to be pretentious about it; these words and sentences are a result out of a discussion that you all forced us to make in-between us, coming from different countries and origins. We were dealing the same aspects, have the same questions, and we are aware that we too have to search to find good concepts and solutions, which do result, into the world of the transmission of space and beauty, our main task. And this takes time.

This brings us to the beginning of our declaration but now we question: "*What do we teach when we are teaching architecture?*" It's about the transmission of knowledge. Students need to study on architecture, teachers need to teach on what architectural thoughts and concepts can be. It's not only about length, width, height, but also about depth. This means: big programs hardly make that students can learn a lot. Giving programs of 45.000 m² and asking for a result in some 4 months, giving a specific program on a specific well defined site without any reflective part, knowing that the site isn't near so you hardly can go back to pick up the environmental context, knowing even that professional offices need the same period with a team of specialists for having architectural coherent spaces, is this the right way to do? Needs a final graduate project consider about the biggest volumetric or is it about the depth of architectural themes, about understanding the reasons, creating beautiful spaces, turning a study process into an attitude so somebody can evaluate into the reality of architecture? Isn't it the task of a teacher to study together with his students? Isn't it the task of students to react against their teachers? Can we still deliver students who are well skilled into 3D drawings, into modelling, without taking any time for concept, content and context, but thus couldn't get into tectonics, light and space, gravity?

At this point, our main starting concern into the 30 projects was about the "concept", not being intellectual but being intelligent, understanding the site, knowing the context, having content, and using a program as an excuse to explain something in architecture.

OK, let's go now for the final point everybody is waiting for. After a first selection the jury came out at a selection of 10 projects. In a second and third round we came to the final decision.

First let's talk about the honourable mention awards of which the jury discussed to have only two projects where the "idea" as it is posed is interesting.

The first honourable mention award is about the intersection of engineering and architecture. Here the ingenious concept of a technical system was appreciated, although the question of space and architecture wasn't elaborated enough. This way of taking in consideration new kind of interventions is quite positive but the jury discussed the missing link into architecture at both ends of the project.

The award is going to the project "Brücke über die Moldau in Prag" by Christoph Palmen from RWTH Aachen.

The second honourable mention award handles about a statement into a city centre as being interventions which are of a temporary setting. The jury appreciated very much the way a new kind of profession for the architect can be put, relating lost local sites into

heavy contrast between global iconic statements. Here the social context is taken as a starting point for punctual interventions, expressing that architecture is not only about the icons and the stars. Unfortunately the real architectural concept is not considered explicitly enough, even becoming more superfluous in some way. Triviality can be taking as a starting point, even dirty realism, but everybody knows well that the tricky system for translating a strategic moment into good architectural shapes isn't easy.

This second award is going to the project "Guillemins, een wijk in transformatie" by Fred Greve from the Academie van Bouwkunst in Maastricht.

Let's now go for the final prizewinners.

While becoming a specific assignment on a given site, the student needs always to think if the question was well posed. Displacements are normally used in contemporary art, but by reflecting on site, location, program, orientation, here a notion of counter-project came out which explains more out of the landscape, the setting, position than just about the form. Historical references to the work of Sant'Elia are not only gratuite but reinforce that architecture is not standing alone. Although the final architectural execution of the project is missing in the quality of the facades thus being just glass, the jury appreciated much the attitude, which tells a lot about knowledge and responsibility.

The third prize is for the project "Living Bridges – Studentisches Wohnen auf der Brücke" by Jane Dimacuha, from RWTH Aachen.

Building in the urban context is one of the toughest moments for an architectural statement. Here the notion of flexibility in the way of "use" like Peter Zumthor is always stating is becoming a main characteristic. But it's not always about "use" in the functional way, use in the architectural way or concept also means structure, space, light, proportion, and harmony. A self defined program on a chosen site, thus being the main driving source of the whole building with all the components of big space and connecting small cells, becoming a "centre" in an artistic, educational or institutional way, is one of the main tasks. This project for the second prize talks about rigor, about coherence, materiality, tectonics, and is thus very architectural. It is a project, which can be seen as a reference or example for all kind of new building structures. In a certain way it is about no dogma, no facadism, no formalism. It is what is it, nothing less, nothing more. It has the strength of what Swiss people would say "genau so und nicht anders".

The second Prize is for the project "Tanzzentrum Rotterdam" by David Capell from the RWTH Aachen.

The last decade, in architecture there are big discussions about complexity versus simpleness, about being versus movement, about presence and absence, about origin and alien, about the icon and disappearing. Everyone of us is reflecting on this nowadays themes in our own projects, our profession, our writings and critics. We know it's not an easy period, but it never was easy. We always had to deal with history; we always want to add the cultural level of architecture into building. Programs are only a reason for architectural research. There's nothing about inventing new space or structures, but we only can re-invent the existing ones. We only see that there are too much images, glamour, glossiness, and too less about the real life.

Every member of the jury agreed this line of thoughts and was surprised by one single project, which shows the directness of everyday life and landscape in combination with

some cultural finesse in such a way that all of the jury members were in a healthy way very jealous for not having made this project him- or herself! A simple volume reflecting a barn but intersected with very subtle cut-outs, thus having a cheap material on the outside but the setting of rough granite blocks in the inner courtyards, the openness towards the landscape while the zenital opening for the nearly contemplative setting of art pieces: no glossy images, no copy/paste, only Heimat and Rückriem.

The First prize of Euregio Architecture is going for the project "Double Museum" by Martina Malsbender from RWTH Aachen.

Christian Kieckens, 2007