

Jury report

The 2021 Czech Architecture Award organized by the Czech Chamber of Architects had an impressive number of 170 projects submission. The projects ranged from sports centers, faculty buildings to landscape architecture, exhibition design, and lockouts. The submitted projects represented a unique collection of excellent architecture based on the Czech Republic's distinctive building tradition and culture.

The jury consisted of seven internationally established practitioners and academics from Europe, the Middle East and North America with expertise in architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning. The jury has received remarkably detailed information on the project before the first meeting, which was used by each juror to establish a suggested longlist of the finalist. The first online jury meeting focused on the selection of a long list of 30 projects.

The following meetings of the jury were held in the Czech Republic. During the time in the Czech Republic, the jury visited the majority of the finalist projects. Some members of the jury also visited some of Czech Republic's seminal examples of modern architecture buildings and the excellent exhibition on modern architecture in the Czech Republic that was held in Prague.

The jury was impressed by the quality of the submitted work which made the selection process very difficult. During the selection process, the jury had decided to focus on a specific set of criteria that included, among others, the innovation aspects of the project, the project's contribution to society and the discipline, the complexity of the architectural task, and the quality of the execution. Following the first round of selection, seven finalist projects were selected. The projects included: a renovation of a city hall and a cultural center, a sports facility, a faculty building, a private villa, an ancient castle renovation, revitalization of square and a pavilion. Although varied in scale and function, each of these projects was found to have a unique combination of achievements that are related to the above-mentioned criteria. The final round of selection was dedicated to select the winner. In this round, we looked for a project whose combination of qualities that fulfill the agreed set of criteria has put it above all others. Although the choice was not easy it was relatively fast clear that the Helfštýn Castle stands above all other finalists in its unique combination of the innovative concept, design sensitivity, and contribution to the architectural discipline and culture of the Czech Republic.

The jury has also decided to give a special mention to two very different projects that showed special and unique contributions at a certain criterion. The Moments of History exhibition's concept and execution have left a strong impression over the jury in relation to the clarity of the message on the history and culture of the city and the Czech Republic and the connection it generates between the space of the exhibition and its message. The second project that received a special mention was the Lookout Spike. Its delicate and intricate design solution in combination with the connection to its surrounding has highly impressed the jury.

It is important to mention that the entire competition and the jury process were held under the shadow of Covid-19. The jury felt that the pandemic urges us to rethink our priorities in life, but also the way we consume and design our environment. Several direct influences of covid were evident in the jury discussions, such as the importance we gave to the potential

diversity of the use of the project by the public and the influence it would have on the well-being of people in the Czech Republic.

We would like to express our deep appreciation to the Czech Chamber of Architects for the organization and the execution of the competition. We believe that the enthusiasm and the effort that has been given to the competition reflects the Czech architectural culture and its central role within the Czech culture. We feel that the competition and the design excellence it promotes have a notable influence over the architectural culture of the Czech Republic. We believe that these efforts, which are reflected in the execution of the competition in the last 6 years, are of even greater importance in current challenging times that are shadowed by the Covid 19 pandemic.